

# Learning for LIFE



An ESL Literacy  
Handbook

**BOWVALLEY**  
COLLEGE

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### **Learning for LIFE: An ESL Literacy Handbook**

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## Executive Summary

This handbook is designed for instructors, program coordinators, and other stakeholders in ESL literacy. It is primarily intended to be a practical handbook, outlining promising practices in program considerations, strategies for the classroom, and four different levels of ESL literacy. The handbook also includes a toolbox of materials and ideas for teaching, a literature review of the field of ESL literacy, and an annotated bibliography of relevant sources in the field.

The information in the handbook is based on research into the literature, a series of focus groups held in Alberta and at two national conferences, and a survey of over a hundred ESL literacy providers worldwide. It also comes directly out of our experience in the classroom and is a reflection of what we have learned from our students about their lives, their needs, their goals, and what works best for them.

There is no widely accepted definition of ESL literacy, but most sources agree that it is the intersection of two fields, and that ESL literacy learners are facing two challenges: they are learning English at the same time as they are developing literacy. In this handbook we frame ESL literacy learners in terms of their educational background before learning English; we call our students Learners with Interrupted Formal Education (LIFE).

LIFE have between zero and ten years of formal education, which has often been interrupted by war, famine, displacement, poverty, or periods of social or political unrest. Because of this interrupted formal education, LIFE rarely thrive in mainstream ESL classes, and because of their lower levels of English, they face great difficulties in mainstream adult basic education. We advocate for a separate stream of ESL literacy classes with the recognition that LIFE have different needs, different advantages, different ways of learning, and often different goals than mainstream ESL learners.

The first section of the handbook examines program considerations. It looks at defining and identifying LIFE as Learners with Interrupted Formal Education, and then discusses learner needs, community needs, and program goals. Needs assessments are a key stage in setting program goals; an effective ESL literacy program is based on the needs of the learners as well as the needs of the community. This section also discusses developing program outcomes, whether a program uses the participatory or the competency approach; strategies for placing LIFE in levels; and the need to view learners holistically, supporting them inside the classroom and recognizing their need for support outside of the classroom.

The second section of the handbook focuses on strategies for the classroom, dealing with theories, methodology, approaches, and techniques, looking at the nuts and bolts of teaching with many practical ideas for the classroom. Several key themes emerge in this section, no matter what level or skill is being taught. The first is the need to teach oral fluency and vocabulary

before teaching the same ideas in written form; LIFE should already be familiar and comfortable with vocabulary and structure before encountering them in print. The second is the need to directly and explicitly teach strategies for reading, writing, and learning. The third is the need to scaffold, recycle, and spiral material. Scaffolding provides learners with the support they need to accomplish a task and gradually removes this support as the learner is able to function more independently. Recycling allows learners to encounter the same vocabulary, sight words, structures, and outcomes many times in different ways, helping them internalize the material, making it their own. Spiralling is similar to recycling, but over a longer period of time, as learners build their skills, expand their knowledge, gradually become more independent.

The third section of the handbook looks at four levels of ESL literacy in depth. These levels are based on the document *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* and range from Foundation Phase, where learners acquire the foundational or pre-literate skills such as holding a pencil, to Phase III, where learners organize their writing into paragraphs and tackle more challenging texts.

The handbook concludes with a summary of promising practices in programs of excellence and classrooms of excellence:

**Programs of excellence:**

1. ESL literacy is recognized as a distinct stream of classes, separate from mainstream ESL and mainstream literacy.
2. The ESL literacy stream is comprised of a series of steps progressing in small increments along the literacy continuum.
3. The ESL literacy program offers higher-level ESL literacy classes.
4. The program provides professional development opportunities for teachers.
5. Instructors are given allotted time to make materials.
6. There is a program into which learners can transition.
7. There is a numeracy component in the instruction.
8. There is support for the program and for the learners.

**Classrooms of excellence:**

1. Learning must be learner-centred, meaning-based, and linked to community.
2. Learning is repeated and recycled.
3. There is a dedicated classroom for each ESL literacy class.
4. Class size is limited.
5. There is specific oral and vocabulary development.
6. There is a focus on strategies for reading, writing, and learning.



# Introduction

## Introduction

ESL literacy is a growing field in Canada and throughout the English speaking world, both as numbers of refugees and immigrants increase, and as awareness grows of the literacy requirements of some of these learners. The recognition that many immigrants and refugees have literacy needs as well as linguistic needs is also growing in non-English speaking countries, as many places in Europe are seeking to educate their newcomers and give them the skills to embrace life in their new countries. As in the rest of the world, ESL educators in Alberta are recognizing the increasing need for literacy and language development, and this handbook is in direct response to this need.

ESL literacy is an exciting field to work in as a teacher or program administrator, for it is an opportunity to provide learners with the language, skills, and strategies that will help them thrive in their new homes. It is also a very exciting place for many learners, who are experiencing the immense privilege, joy, and challenge of education, often for the first time.

This handbook is intended to support these learners as they develop their skills, administrators in the development of effective programs, and instructors in their roles as facilitators of learning. It discusses program considerations and provides a thorough introduction to classroom instruction and a platform from which our readers can further explore the field.

The demographic covered by this handbook are students we have called LIFE, or Learners with Interrupted Formal Education. These are learners who have had between zero and ten years of formal education, which has often been interrupted because of periods of war, famine, poverty, lack of access, or political or social unrest. Although LIFE can be of all ages, this handbook focuses on adult learners. LIFE have very diverse backgrounds but are all facing the challenge of learning English as they develop skills and strategies for literacy. The handbook covers a broad range of literacy, from learners at the foundational stage, who may be encountering print for the first time, to learners who are able to understand and produce a variety of texts, but who lack the literacy skills and strategies which will allow them to thrive in mainstream ESL classes, in Adult Basic Education (ABE), in their communities, and in the workforce. In this handbook, the term LIFE refers to the learners, while ESL literacy refers to the field of education.

This handbook has been made possible by the generous support of Alberta Employment and Immigration and was researched and written by a team of educators at Bow Valley College, in Calgary, Alberta.

What is ESL literacy? It is not the same thing as ESL; nor is it the same thing as Adult Basic Education. Rather, it is the intersection of two fields: the acquisition of a second language at the same time as the development of literacy. In this way, LIFE face two main educational challenges: learning to speak English and developing the ability to read and write. Moreover, they often face these challenges in addition to coping with life in a new country, raising children, working part-time or full-time, caring for relatives, and dealing with countless other responsibilities, including childcare, health care, poverty, and housing.

The definitions of ESL literacy vary widely in the literature. Some views of ESL literacy are extremely broad, seeing all ESL learners as literacy learners in English, no matter what their previous education has been. Others are narrower than this, and include any learner whose native language uses a non-Roman script, again regardless of previous education. The other end of the spectrum is too narrow. This is the view that ESL literacy only includes learners who are at a foundational level

(learners who are picking up a pen for the first time, who have no ability to decode, and so on.) This view does not recognize the range of literacy learners in the field of ESL and leads to a dichotomous understanding of literacy: a learner is seen as either literate or illiterate, rather than somewhere along a continuum of learning.

The authors of this handbook connect ESL literacy directly to level of formal education but recognize the broad range of literacy. All ESL learners certainly face challenges in reading and writing in a second language, particularly if they are unfamiliar with the Roman alphabet; however, learners who have limited literacy in any language face entirely different challenges than those learners who have advanced literacy in their first language. The skills and strategies involved in becoming literate in a first language are transferrable to a second language, at least to a large degree: you only learn to read once.

It is our experience that the literacy level of a learner is directly connected to the level of formal education the learner has had in his or her first or even second language. Some learners have had no or nearly no formal education; however, this is not where the field of literacy ends. Many learners have had some previous education, but this might have been interrupted or limited in some way. These learners may have some literacy skills and strategies but still may find the literacy requirements of mainstream ESL classes too challenging. Generally speaking, any

### LIFE

#### Learners with Interrupted Formal Education

The term LIFE is used for any ESL learner with literacy needs. LIFE have had between zero and ten years of formal education, often interrupted by war, political unrest, famine, displacement, or poverty. For some learners, this education is interrupted before they even begin.

learner with fewer than ten years of formal education, and especially with interrupted formal education, is likely to benefit from ESL literacy instruction.

Literacy is a set of skills and strategies that can be developed over time; there is no dichotomy of literacy/illiteracy, but rather a continuum. All people can – and often do – increase their literacy over their entire lives, as they continue to encounter text, enrich their vocabulary, write in a variety of genres, and so on. Similarly, learners who are developing literacy will not be “cured” of their literacy “problem” after one or two semesters in a dedicated literacy class but are likely to require longer support to be able to achieve their goals.

It is for these reasons that we have chosen to call our learners LIFE (Learners with Interrupted Formal Education). This acronym reflects the broad scope of ESL literacy, highlighting the needs of this group of learners, and more accurately reflecting the diversity of their educational backgrounds and experiences.

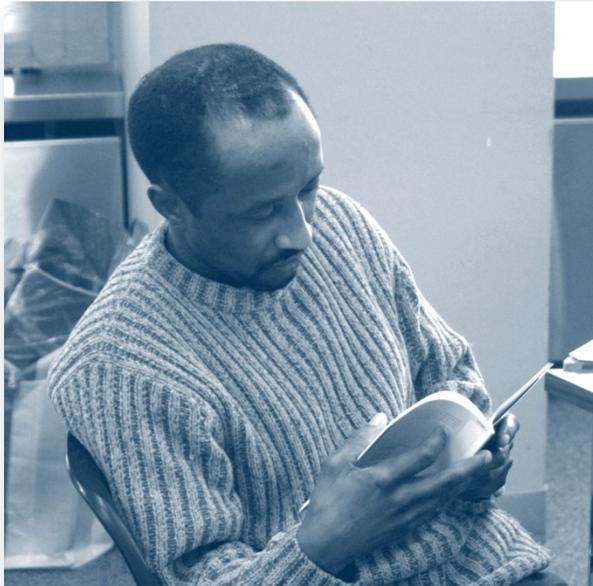
## LIFE and the Canadian Language Benchmarks

In 2000, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, through the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB), produced a document entitled *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language for Adults*. This document sets outcomes – what a learner can do – for four different skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and twelve different levels (called Benchmarks). They followed this document with *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners*. This second document focuses on the skills and strategies needed to develop literacy in English. It looks at three skill areas (reading, writing, and numeracy), and four different levels (called Phases), the Foundation Phase, Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III. Each Phase is further divided into stages: Initial, Developing, and Adequate. ESL literacy learners who are assessed according to these documents are usually given a Phase for reading, writing, and numeracy, and a Benchmark (or CLB) for listening and speaking. For example, Aziza, a learner, is currently Phase II Developing in reading, Phase II Initial in writing, Phase I Initial in numeracy, and CLB 3 in listening and speaking.

At Bow Valley College, we adhere to the Benchmarks and Phases outlined by the CCLB, and so this handbook refers to *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* extensively in terms of the way levels and outcomes are organized. This document is not the only way to set outcomes, develop levels, and measure progress of learners; however, there are two clear advantages to this system. The first is that the CCLB recognizes that the development of literacy is an on-going process and has set outcomes for a wide range of skill areas, from the Foundation Phase, where learners might be picking up a pen for the very first time, to Phase III, where learners are working to express opinions in a paragraph and infer meaning as they read.

The other advantage is that this is a national standard in Canada, so if Aziza moves from Calgary to Halifax, her new instructors will understand her level and what she has been learning.

Any readers of this handbook who are unfamiliar with the CLBs and the literacy Phases are encouraged to read the CCLB documents and Section Three of this handbook, which outlines



principles of teaching ESL literacy at each Phase. This will give a good introduction to the Phases. Instructors who do not currently use the CCLB Phases in their classrooms can still find this handbook useful. The principles and practices we discuss can be applied to other systems of organizing levels and setting outcomes. However, we recommend that instructors and program coordinators working in Canada read and move toward implementing the literacy Phases in their programs.

## Intentions of this Handbook

It is the intention of the authors that this handbook ends up well-thumbed, with notes in the margins, in an accessible place on your desk or bookshelf. In other words, it is our hope that it will be useful and well-used.

First and foremost, this handbook is for the learners. In producing the handbook, we hope to express the challenges faced by this group of students, the enormous gifts they bring with them to their new home and to our classrooms, and promising practices in program design and teaching, so that these learners can achieve their goals and thrive in their new communities.

The handbook is intended to be a thorough introduction to program design and instruction in ESL literacy. We have outlined a variety of approaches, with their benefits and drawbacks. We have also included what we consider to be promising practices in ESL literacy instruction and working with LIFE. At Bow Valley College, we use all of the practices we included here in our programs and in our classrooms.

We do not attempt to answer every question about ESL literacy or discuss every aspect of instruction, but we sincerely hope that we have produced a handbook that is informative enough

to provide a very good introduction to instructors and administrators new to ESL literacy, and in depth enough to resonate with those who are experienced in the field.

There are other approaches to teaching LIFE and to designing programs that we have not included in the handbook, but this does not mean that they are not valid or effective. We have also avoided choosing one approach as the answer to all ESL literacy instruction; we recognize that most instructors collect pieces of theory, approaches, and activities, and find a mixture that works for them and their learners in their classrooms. We hope this handbook helps you to find the combination that works best for you.

## Sources of the Handbook

This handbook is the product of a collaborative effort made by a number of ESL literacy instructors and program coordinators at Bow Valley College. The sources of the handbook have been practical, theoretical, and collegial.

The first source for the information in this book is our learners, both in what they have told us about their lives, needs, and goals, and in how they have responded to different approaches, theories, practices, and activities. We have tried everything we discuss in this book in the classroom, in many variations, over a number of years. Our primary intentions are to be true to the needs and goals of our learners and to be useful to instructors.

Our research is also grounded in theory, in the form of articles and books, and in the many presentations, workshops, and conferences we have attended and given worldwide. For the theoretical framework of the handbook, and as sources for further reading, please see the literature review and the annotated bibliography.

Finally, we have been privileged to discuss the handbook in its various stages with our colleagues at other institutions in Alberta and the rest of Canada. We have led a number of focus groups, both to investigate the needs of instructors in the field and to elicit feedback on drafts of the handbook. We have also researched ESL literacy programs on a local, provincial, national, and international level, looking at a full range of programs, from community programs to those in colleges. Our focus in this research has been to describe and evaluate: to investigate what we do and what works best.

## Sections of the Handbook

There are three sections of this handbook as well as several appendices. The handbook discusses program considerations and teaching strategies and then examines these principles in action at four different levels.

- Section One: Program Considerations
  - identifying learners, developing outcomes, and building program supports
- Section Two: Strategies for the Classroom
  - principles and theories of ESL literacy instruction
  - teaching reading, writing, strategies, and oral fluency
  - materials and theme units
  - assessment
  - numeracy and technology
- Section Three: Levels of ESL Literacy
  - Foundation Phase
  - Phase I
  - Phase II
  - Phase III

Following these three sections, there are several appendices, including a literature review, which provides a thorough theoretical examination of the field of ESL literacy; an annotated bibliography, which is an excellent source for further reading; and a toolbox, which includes rubrics, models, tables, and activities that you might find helpful in your classroom. The tools in the toolbox are also interspersed throughout the book, often including tips for their use in the classroom or in planning. Clean, reproducible copies of these tools can be found in the toolbox in the back of the book. These tools may be reproduced for educational purposes. We encourage you to use the tools as examples and to adapt them for specific learners, levels, themes, or lessons.

## Glossary of Terms

There are a number of terms used throughout this handbook:

**ESL** – English as a Second Language

**LIFE** – Learners with Interrupted Formal Education; in the context of this handbook, refers to adult learners.

**Mainstream ESL** – Non-literacy ESL

**ESL literacy** – The field of ESL literacy, referring to education focused on both the development of English as a second language and literacy.

**ABE** – Adult Basic Education, referring to non-ESL literacy. Although many learners in ABE are in fact ESL learners, ABE requires a high level of oral fluency and does not specifically focus on oral language development.

**CCLB** – Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks

**CLB** – Canadian Language Benchmark, referring to a level in the document *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language – for adults*

**Literacy Phase** – A Phase, referring to a level in the document *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners*

**CLB Literacy Document** – *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners*

**CLB Benchmarks Document** – *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language – for adults*

**TPR** – Total Physical Response

**LEA** – Language Experience Approach

**ILVARC** – Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment Referral Centre (Calgary, AB)

**LARCC** – Language Assessment, Referral, and Counselling Centre (Edmonton, AB)







## Section 1: Program Considerations

**Chapter 1:**  
Identifying LIFE: ESL Literacy  
Learners

**Chapter 2:**  
Learner Needs and Program  
Goals

**Chapter 3:**  
Developing Outcomes

**Chapter 4:**  
Placing LIFE in Levels

**Chapter 5:**  
Supporting Learners

# Chapter 1 Outline

Introduction: LIFE, ESL Literacy, and Formal Education

The Diversity of LIFE

How are LIFE Different from Mainstream ESL Learners?

Identifying LIFE

Identifying LIFE in Mainstream ESL Classes

Identifying Mainstream ESL Learners in ESL Literacy Classes

Conclusions



# Identifying LIFE: ESL Literacy Learners

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## Objectives

To define Learners with Interrupted Formal Education

To recognize the diversity of these learners

To identify Learners with Interrupted Formal Education

To recognize the importance of a separate stream for ESL literacy

## Introduction: LIFE, ESL Literacy, and Formal Education

The learners described and targeted in this handbook are in need of ESL literacy support. We have called them LIFE: Learners with Interrupted Formal Education. These literacy learners are a very diverse group, but they have two things in common: they are acquiring proficiency in English and, at the same time, they are developing literacy skills. Throughout this handbook, when we refer to LIFE, we mean the learners themselves; when we refer to ESL literacy, we mean the field of education.

The recommended place for this development is a separate, dedicated ESL literacy classroom. Learners with Interrupted Formal Education will not thrive in a mainstream ESL classroom, by which we mean an ESL class with no special consideration for the development of literacy. In this handbook we use “mainstream ESL” to refer to all non-literacy ESL classes. LIFE rarely thrive in mainstream ESL classes as they do not have the literacy skills and learning strategies necessary to handle the material. Nor is a mainstream ABE classroom (Adult Basic Education, generally intended for learners with a high degree of oral fluency) always the best place for them, as they are still learning spoken English, and they lack rich vocabulary and understanding of structure. It is important to note that in today’s society, many learners in an ABE are in fact ESL learners, but these learners speak English at a high level. ABE is a fine goal for LIFE, but not before they have had some time in ESL literacy.



LIFE come from a wide range of backgrounds – socially, culturally, linguistically, and in terms of their previous education – and it is a mistake to make any assumptions about what they have or have not experienced, or what they can or cannot do. However, it is still necessary to be able to recognize ESL literacy learners in order to provide them with the support they need to achieve their goals.

Generally speaking, LIFE have from zero to up to ten years of formal education, but this education itself can vary widely. As is indicated in the acronym LIFE, literacy learners almost always have an interrupted formal education. For some, their education was interrupted before it even began, and they have had no opportunity to go to school and study formally, while other learners have had to leave school after a few years. Some learners have continued in school, but have had their education interrupted by any number of factors, including conflict, war, poverty,

lack of access, or a changing social, cultural, or political climate. The result is that LIFE, to a varying degree, find it difficult to cope with the literacy expectations of their new countries.

It is also important to understand that not all education is the same and not all schools have the same access to resources, educated instructors, or safe, well-equipped classrooms. This means that learners who have had some education have not necessarily received the same education as they would have received in a western school system. Approaches to education vary considerably in different places. Most western approaches encourage learners to question and to analyze; however, these skills might be unfamiliar to many learners in an ESL literacy classroom. Some of these learners may have been taught through memorization; other learners may have been taught in an entirely religious context, where questioning the text or the instructor is often considered inappropriate. Some learners may not have been taught in their first language at all, but may have received some instruction in a second language, as is the case with many learners who speak a range of African languages as their first language, but who have received some schooling in Arabic. On the other hand, other learners may have been taught using a very similar approach to the western system, in a school equipped with science laboratories and computers, but may have had to leave school for a variety of reasons. The point here is not that the western system is ideal – all systems of education have advantages and disadvantages – but rather that instructors of LIFE must leave all of their assumptions about their learners’ education at the door.

## The Diversity of LIFE

We have already seen that Learners with Interrupted Formal Education come from a very broad range of formal educational experiences. It is therefore not surprising that they come from an equally broad range of cultures and languages, and that they have varying abilities in spoken English and in reading, writing, and numeracy.

Although instructors might notice the effect of immigration and refugee patterns on the demographics of their classrooms – they may have a high concentration of learners from one particular country at one particular point – no assumptions can be made about a learner’s cultural background or immigration or refugee status. Learners’ countries of origin should never be used as an indicator of their literacy or educational background. LIFE can come from any country in the world, and ESL literacy classes are often extremely diverse.

Similarly, the abilities of LIFE are diverse. This is most noticeable in their level of oral English. When beginning, some literacy learners do not speak any English at all while other learners might have fairly fluent spoken English; typically, LIFE can be anywhere from a CLB 1 to CLB

6 in listening and speaking, or anywhere from absolute beginner to upper intermediate. The level of oral English alone cannot be used to determine whether a learner has literacy needs.

There is also a broad range of reading, writing, and numeracy skills found in ESL literacy classes. The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) recognizes four Phases of ESL literacy in their document: *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners*, referred to as the CLB Literacy Document in this handbook. The first Phase, the Foundation Phase, begins with foundational literacy skills, such as the fine motor skills to hold a pencil and the ability to distinguish between different symbols, while the final Phase, Phase III, involves an increased ability to read and to comprehend a variety of texts and the skills to express opinions in a paragraph form. Learners who are at any stage along this path will benefit from ESL literacy instruction. It is generally fairly easy for most instructors to recognize the lower Phases of literacy; it is learners in the upper Phases who are at increased risk of being misplaced in a mainstream class, with no extra literacy support.

## How are LIFE Different from Mainstream ESL Learners?

The biggest difference between Learners with Interrupted Formal Education and mainstream ESL learners is the years of formal education. LIFE have between zero and about ten years of education, but this education has almost always either been cut short or interrupted. What this means is that Learners with Interrupted Formal Education do not necessarily have the skills and strategies for coping with the literacy demands in a mainstream classroom or in their new communities.

This interrupted formal education has a variety of effects in the classroom. In reading, learners may have difficulty decoding unfamiliar words (using the sound-symbol relationship to figure out what a word says), or may have a very limited sight word bank (the words a person can automatically recognize without decoding; educated native speakers of English “read” almost entirely through recognizing sight words). In the higher Phases, learners are better able to decode and recognize sight words, but may have a good deal of difficulty in understanding the main idea of a text, in identifying the author’s purpose, and in a range of comprehension strategies such as distinguishing fact from opinion, identifying cause and effect, recognizing figurative language, and predicting. In writing, learners in the lower Phases are learning to do everything from holding a pencil to writing on a line to copying accurately. They move from this level to the ability to fill in words, to compose a sentence, and then to compose a paragraph. All of this learning requires considerable support from the instructor.

The other key difference between LIFE and mainstream ESL learners is the use of learning strategies and the placement of reading and writing in the process of learning. Generally speaking, learners with a previous formal education have learning strategies in place; they know

how to learn. First and foremost, they recognize that print has meaning and understand that there are many different kinds of texts, with many possible types of meaning. They can organize information, recognize patterns, generalize, and analyze. What is more, they can use their literacy skills – their ability to read and write at a higher level – to support their language learning. Mainstream ESL learners often have higher benchmarks in reading and writing than in listening and speaking. This gives them the ability to learn through reading and to make notes. LIFE, on the other hand, are learning to read and cannot rely on reading and writing skills in order to learn English. LIFE almost always have higher benchmarks in listening and speaking than in reading and writing; they learn English orally first and use their oral language to help learn to read and write English.

The following chart shows the key cultural differences between high-oracy and high-literacy societies. Many LIFE come from high-oracy societies, such as the Dinka in Sudan. Their new country is a high-literacy society, such as Canada.

Features of High-Oracy and High-Literacy Societies	
Traditional High-Oracy Society	Technological High-Literacy Society
oral communication	written communication
highly personal interactions	impersonal and bureaucratic
collaborative work	individualized work
tasks attended to as they come up	time is scheduled
figurative and allegorical	abstract and theoretical
self-referenced and intuitive	factual and logical
holistic interpretation of perceptions	analytical interpretation of perceptions
defers to traditional wisdom	speculative
hierarchical	democratic
fatalistic	focus on causality
hands-on training	hypothetical training situations
process modelled and imitated to acquire skill	theory taught to be applied to a process
community training	institutional training
informal training	standardized training

Instructors of ESL literacy are encouraged to think about cultural difference and the impact it plays in the classroom. LIFE often come to class with a completely different set of experiences and expectations and we do well to respect and understand these differences. For ideas for teaching LIFE, please see Section Two and Section Three of the handbook.

## Identifying LIFE

Identifying Learners with Interrupted Formal Education is one of the key stages to developing an effective ESL literacy program. This process begins with an understanding of literacy learners: it is critical that the assessor understand what he or she is looking for.

There are a number of ways of identifying LIFE:

**Canadian Language Benchmark Assessments:** Canadian Language Benchmark Assessments can be used to assess literacy learners, and Assessment Centres, such as ILVARC (Immigrant Language and Vocational Referral Centre) in southern Alberta and LARCC (Language Assessment, Referral, and Counselling Centre) northern Alberta, also look for signs that a learner has literacy needs. Even if a learner has not been flagged as a literacy learner by an Assessment Centre, a sign that a learner has possible literacy needs is that the learner has higher benchmarks in listening and speaking than in reading and writing, often significantly higher. When this information is paired with the years of formal education (zero to ten generally indicates a Learner with Interrupted Formal Education), the literacy requirements of the learner become even clearer.

**In-House Placement Tests:** Many programs and institutions prefer to develop their own in-house placement tools for assessing literacy. These tools often begin with easier reading and writing tasks and then become progressively more difficult. The amount of the assessment that a learner is able to correctly complete demonstrates the level of literacy. In-house placement tests should be carefully constructed to test **literacy** rather than the level of English understanding, so that a literacy learner can be distinguished from a low-level mainstream learner, such as a CLB 1. A good way to do this is to include tasks that require a higher level of strategy or format-recognition, but a low level of English vocabulary; the CLB 1 learner will be able to complete these tasks, while a literacy learner generally will not. CLB Assessment Centres also have a placement tool available for ESL literacy learners; there are two books, the first for Foundation Phase to Phase I and the second for Phase II. Currently there is no book for Phase III.

**First Language Assessments:** Albertan CLB Assessment Centres as well as some institutions have literacy assessments available in a number of languages. These are particularly useful tools for learners with very low benchmarks in listening and speaking, as they can show the level of the learners' literacy as opposed to their ability to understand English. A learner may have a CLB 1 in reading but have no difficulty with literacy; the issue is the language, not the ability to read. A difficulty with first language assessments is in the logistics: first language assessments often (but do not always) require that the assessor speaks some of the first language, and there are many languages for which there is no written code.

**Face-to-Face Interviews:** The chance to meet with a learner in person is a valuable literacy assessment tool. In these interviews, the assessor can ask questions about the learner's life and educational background, through an interpreter if necessary. Appropriate questions can include:

- How old were you when you left school? (You can also ask if he or she was a child, older child, teenager, or adult.)
- What did your school look like? (Did you have many books, did you have a computer, did you have a classroom, how many students were there in a class?)
- What language did you use at school? What language did you speak at home?
- Did you have a job in your country? What did you do?

In a face-to-face interview, the assessor can also ask a learner to do some reading. An effective way of doing this is to provide a variety of realia for reading, in a range of reading levels: a food wrapper, a can of pop, a flyer, an advertisement, a newspaper, etc. The assessor asks the learner what he or she would like to read. This gives learners some control in the assessment and the chance to demonstrate what they can read and where their interests lie.

## Identifying LIFE in Mainstream ESL Classes

Not every learner with literacy needs is placed in a literacy class initially, for a variety of reasons: perhaps there was no effective literacy assessment tool, or the learner seemed to have stronger reading and writing skills during the assessment than he or she demonstrates in the classroom. Higher level literacy learners in particular are at risk of being overlooked; this is perhaps more serious than it seems. Literacy learners rarely have the skills and strategies needed to thrive in a mainstream ESL class and may feel frustrated or discouraged, or may mistakenly believe that they are not intelligent enough for school. Misplaced literacy learners are at a high risk for dropping out.

There are signs that learners may have literacy needs. Learners with literacy needs may:

- be very disorganized
- have difficulty recognizing and applying patterns
- prefer to do assignments at home
- work very slowly
- copy from other classmates

- make slow or erratic progress
- be inconsistent with their work: one day they can do a task; the next they have forgotten
- have someone in particular to rely on for help in class
- rarely complete work independently
- have difficulty understanding and following directions
- have difficulty with comprehension and analysis

# Kwo Myo's Story

## ***An ESL literacy learner misplaced in a mainstream ESL class***

*Kwo Myo has been placed in a mainstream CLB 1 class and is a cheerful, friendly, and enthusiastic learner. His instructor is surprised by the blunt way he explains, with gestures and a few words, what happened to his family in Burma when he was a child, and even more surprised that he lived his life as a soldier in the jungle, struggling to keep his growing family safe.*

*Kwo Myo's listening and speaking skills are very low, so that when he arrives in his class, the information from the assessment centre reads as "pre-benchmark" – below CLB 1 – in listening and speaking. Because his oral English skills are so limited, it is difficult to assess his reading and writing skills as well. Kwo Myo's instructor quickly realizes that he has had limited exposure to text. It takes him longer than others to find the page in his text book, and he has unusual placement of writing on a page. It takes him much more time than the other CLB 1 learners to complete a task. Kwo Myo has likely never seen a binder either, so after his instructor gives him one, he puts all of his papers in the front pocket, or in his picture dictionary, until his instructor takes the time to help him find appropriate places for each page.*

*As Kwo Myo's listening and speaking skills develop, and his instructor gets to know him better, she begins to think that he has been misplaced in mainstream ESL and would be better served in an ESL literacy class. After two weeks in mainstream ESL, she finds a place for him in a Phase I class.*



## Identifying Mainstream ESL Learners in ESL Literacy Classes

Learners with Interrupted Formal Education are not the only learners who are commonly misplaced in ESL classes. Mainstream ESL learners may also be misplaced and put in a literacy class. This is not an ideal solution for anyone involved; it is not ideal for the learner who is misplaced, and it is not ideal for the rest of the learners in the class who have literacy needs. Learners who are most commonly misplaced in literacy classes fall into three general categories. The first are well-educated learners who have very little familiarity with the Roman alphabet and often very low benchmarks overall. These learners can appear to have literacy needs because they have difficulty decoding English words. They tend to fit into a literacy classroom for the first few weeks, because the pace of the class is slow and because there is a focus on decoding and building a sight word bank. However, once these learners build familiarity with the Roman alphabet, they progress very quickly, because the literacy skills and strategies they have in their first language are transferred into English. They very quickly outgrow the material in the class and realize that they have skills and strategies the other learners do not yet possess.

In the second category are learners who have only studied English in its written form, and so appear not to be able to decode because they have no understanding of sound-symbol correspondence. To be very clear, this is not a literacy issue; this is an issue with oral language. Once these learners begin to speak and comprehend oral English, they recognize the correspondence between the symbols and the sounds. Again, after a few weeks in a literacy classroom they quickly outgrow the material.

The third category is for learners who have a formal education, but for one reason or another do not seem to fit into a mainstream ESL program. In some situations, ESL literacy programs can unfortunately be seen as a catch-all for any kind of learning difficulty, including age. Whether or not this is appropriate is usually decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on whether the learner is thriving in the literacy class, and on the effect of the learner's placement on the other learners in the class.

Placing mainstream ESL learners in a literacy class is not an ideal solution for anyone involved. The mainstream learners usually quickly outgrow the material and are not appropriately challenged. The LIFE in the class can also be affected, because having mainstream ESL learners in the class detracts from focus of the instruction on developing literacy and can be discouraging.

# Mei Ling's Story

## ***A mainstream ESL learner misplaced in an ESL literacy class***

*Mei Ling has recently moved to Calgary from China, where she had eleven years of education, including some form of English instruction. She has basic Chinese literacy skills and effective learning strategies. She is twenty-two years old and came to Canada to marry the son of an established immigrant Chinese family. She is a CLB 1 in listening and speaking.*

*Mei Ling's Chinese education has given her very good learning strategies. She can apply abstract rules, she can recognize and follow patterns, and she has excellent arithmetic skills. Her rudimentary English instruction taught her to form the English alphabet and to copy neatly and accurately. Mei Ling can recognize and understand the meaning of certain written English words, but she has no capacity to say them because she has had no opportunity to hear or produce spoken English. She can write a variety of simple English sentences, but she can't read them aloud.*

*Mei Ling's lack of knowledge of the sound-symbol correspondence of English and her inability to read aloud has made it difficult for her to function in a regular ESL class, and so she has been placed in a Phase II class, even though Mei Ling does not have difficulty with literacy. What she really needs is practice in speaking and listening. Mei Ling does benefit from being with learners who speak at a much higher level, but the situation is far from ideal. Within weeks, she outgrows the material and the level.*



## Conclusions

The goal of any ESL program, literacy or otherwise, is to create an effective learning environment for the learners and to help them achieve their goals. LIFE are strongly in need of programming separate from mainstream ESL classes in order to meet their literacy needs. Accurately identifying which learners have literacy needs – which learners have had an interrupted formal education – is the first step to creating an effective program.

## Chapter 2 Outline

Introduction: Basing a Program on Community and Learner Needs

Community Needs Assessments

Learner Needs and Learner Goals

Learner Needs Assessments

Methods of Conducting a Needs Assessment

Conclusions



# Learner Needs and Program Goals

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## Objectives

To define the role of a needs assessment in setting program goals

To recognize two kinds of needs assessments: learner and community

To demonstrate how to conduct a community needs assessment

To demonstrate how to conduct a learner needs assessment

## Introduction: Basing a Program on Community and Learner Needs

In an effective ESL literacy program, the program goals are based on two factors: the needs of the learners and the needs of the community. For learners to thrive, they must thrive within a community, and for a community to thrive, it must educate the members of the population. Meeting these needs is best done by conducting needs assessments as part of the process of program development and as an ongoing part of program evaluation and evolution. A needs assessment is a means of asking questions about the requirements of the community and the learners, and a good needs assessment takes several things into consideration: who to ask, what to ask, and how to ask.

A needs assessment is a means of determining the needs of a community and a group of learners. It should be an early step in the development of a program, because it will help identify target learners and their needs, as well as possible gaps in existing programming, which are necessary steps in developing program goals. However, the development stage is not the only time that a needs assessment should be carried out; in fact, needs assessments should be conducted periodically in order to keep a program on track and to monitor whether the needs of the community or the learners have changed. Nothing about education is static; education is a process of change in its very nature and needs assessments are a way of actively participating in that change.

What a needs assessment provides to a program is accountability. It is a means of developing a program in accordance with the needs of the learners, and of staying accountable to those learners and to the wider community. There are two different kinds of needs assessments that a program can carry out, and they involve different groups of interested people, or stakeholders: the community and the learners.

## Community Needs Assessments

For a program to be truly effective in a particular area, it is not enough to meet the needs of the learners alone – a program must also meet the needs of the community. This is particularly important when a program is seeking initial or continued funding. A community needs assessment can be a critical step in attaining that funding.

When developing (or refining) an ESL literacy program, it is important to look at the wider community to determine what programs already exist and whether there are any gaps in programming. A program should look at several different kinds of programs and see what they offer: ESL literacy programs, mainstream ESL programs, and Adult Basic Education programs. This process helps eliminate unnecessary duplication, secure funding, and identify what makes a

particular program special and effective. Looking at community needs is a critical step in identifying learners and determining program goals. There are many possible types of programs, meeting many different kinds of needs. These include:

- community-based programs
- church-based programs
- library-based programs
- college programs
- private schools
- programs connected to the K-12 school system, particularly involving young adults
- programs connected to a particular group of learners (from a particular culture or gender, for example)
- employers

When conducting a community needs assessment, it is important to approach all of these kinds of programs to find out what they do, who their learners are, and where the gaps are. Although the logistics of conducting a community needs assessment seem easier than a learner needs assessment – interpreters and realia are not necessary, for example – identifying the right person to talk to in each organization and phrasing questions so that you get the information that you need is still a challenge.

In a community needs assessment, you are trying to determine the extent of existing programs in your area, the learners they serve, and the goals they set.

Questions can include:

- Who are your learners? What demographic do you serve? (Age, gender, culture, background education, etc.)
- What kinds of ESL and ESL literacy classes do you have? How many levels do you have? How many learners are there in each level? Is it a part-time or a full-time program?
- What are your program goals? (Settlement, employment, transition to further education, etc.)
- How do you measure program success?
- How are you funded? How are your learners funded?

- Where do your learners go when they complete your program?
- Who are your instructors? How do you support your instructors? (Continuous or casual positions, opportunities for professional development, etc.)
- How do you set outcomes? Do you use a particular set of outcomes, such as the Canadian Language Benchmarks or Phases?
- How do you develop curriculum? Do you use a competency-based approach, participatory learning, something else, or a combination?
- How do you assess your learners?
- What do you think the community needs? Are there learner needs that aren't being met?
- Are there people you must turn away from your program? Where do you send them?
- Are there people whom you think you serve inadequately?

One thing to be aware of are the possible differences in terminology. ESL is a field full of different acronyms and different ways of expressing similar ideas – just think of all of the different acronyms for ESL itself: ESL (English as Second Language), ESOL (English as a Second or Other Language), EAL (English as an Additional Language), ELL (English Language Learning), and so on. Another issue is the range of educational backgrounds of instructors and program administrators themselves; this is not a discussion of the validity of different qualifications, but a recognition that different ESL literacy instructors will have different backgrounds and be comfortable with different kinds of terminology. Some instructors have a background in education, others in linguistics, others in community programming, and so on. The implication of this diversity is that a community needs assessment should be written as clearly as possible.

## Learner Needs and Learner Goals

First and foremost, an effective program meets the needs of the learners; if students are not learning what they need to know to thrive in their communities and to achieve their goals, then their needs are not being met by the program. Learners can have a very diverse set of needs, and instructors often face as many sets of needs as they have learners in the class. One of the best ways to discover the needs of the learners is to ask them, through a needs assessment. However, in order to ask the right questions, instructors and program administrators must understand the kinds of needs individual learners have in common with each other. Learner needs can be directly linked to their goals, which can be grouped into three categories.

**Settlement:** Learners with settlement goals want to learn things that will be useful to their everyday lives in their new country. These are things that will help them to fully function in their communities. Settlement goals include the ability to:

- communicate with doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals
- fill in forms
- communicate with children’s schools and community programs
- write notes to excuse absences
- shop for food, clothing, furniture, a car, etc.
- find housing
- hook up utilities and pay bills
- negotiate government funding
- complete banking tasks
- get a driver’s license
- communicate effectively with children’s schools
- make literacy a part of family life



**Further Education:** Learners with goals for further education want to transition out of ESL literacy into a variety of educational settings. Most of these learners identify the first step as Adult Basic Education or high school upgrading but will often have goals that reach beyond a high school diploma. Some of these goals are ambitious, depending on the learner, and instructors sometimes face literacy learners who dream of becoming doctors or engineers. Learners do not always understand what is involved in such dreams, but an instructor can help a learner to identify shorter-term goals without destroying the dream. Instructors should expect that learners’ goals will grow or change as they learn and discover more about their new country and the possibilities available to them. This process should not be a surprise: the same thing happens to everybody as they progress from primary to secondary school to beyond.

Learner goals for further education can include:

- mainstream (non-literacy) ESL classes

- ABE (Adult Basic Education)
- high School Equivalency
- apprenticeships and trade training programs
- college career certificates and diplomas
- university

**Employment:** Employment goals vary widely depending on the learner. Some learners want employment of any kind; their goal is to be able to keep a job and earn an income. Other learners – many learners, in fact – are already employed, or were employed before entering full-time ESL literacy classes. They may set goals to keep or maintain a job (especially in a complicated job market), or get a job of a very particular type (perhaps something similar to what they did in their first countries, or perhaps a job that they have identified as being well-paid, interesting, supported by their communities, etc.). They may also be interested in getting a “better” job, and a needs assessment can reveal what they consider to be a better job; typically they are looking for better pay, better working conditions, or more fulfilling work, like the rest of us. Instructors and program coordinators may be aware of stepping stone programs, or programs following completion of ESL that assist learners in gaining employment. Learners cannot be expected to know about these programs without being told about them.

## Learner Needs and Needs Assessments

Learner needs assessments should focus on the needs and the goals of the learners. The best way to understand the needs of the learners is to talk to them directly. In a learner needs assessment, consider talking to:

- **Current learners in the program:** These learners can provide a wealth of information about their current needs and their goals for the future.
- **Potential learners:** Meet potential learners through referral agencies, open houses, community meetings, and focus groups.
- **Past learners:** They may be able to identify what worked for them, what didn't work, and what would have been useful.
- **Community settlement and cultural programs:** Many refugee aide or settlement programs will be able to discuss the needs of the learners.
- **Experienced instructors:** Don't overlook this important source of information about learner needs; experienced ESL literacy instructors have taught hundreds if not thousands of learners and have a good idea of the range of needs and goals learners have.

Although settlement workers and instructors can both be valuable sources of information, the prime source in a learner needs assessment is the learners themselves.



What to ask the learners is the next question, and it is the skill of the person developing and conducting the needs assessment that will determine the success of the process. This is especially true in learner needs assessments in ESL literacy. LIFE are adults, and have adult understanding of the world and an enormous set of skills. Their abilities can never be forgotten, underestimated, or devalued, and learners must be an integral part of the process of

determining the goals for any program seeking to meet their needs. However, LIFE cannot be expected to know exactly what they will need to know to thrive in a new country, especially in one that places extremely high value on literacy, a set of skills they do not fully possess or even

necessarily understand. Therefore, a needs assessment must provide them with enough choices to accurately reflect their interests, goals, and needs and must be conducted in a way that they can understand. One way to do this is to provide learners with a range of choices to consider – perhaps a series of photographs of common situations – rather than ask them to brainstorm a list from scratch.

The questions in a needs assessment must reflect the level of the learner, in terms of both oral fluency and literacy; Phase III learners with a CLB 5 in speaking and listening may be quite capable of discussing their goals for themselves regarding further education or future employment, whereas Phase I learners with a CLB 1 in speaking and listening do not possess the spoken English for this kind of discussion and may or may not be aware of the variety of possibilities opened up by literacy. What they will be aware of is the way that literacy affects their lives right now, and the interviewer must recognize the level of the learner when directing the questions so that they are meaningful to the learner and allow the learner to express his or her needs.

How to ask the questions is therefore as important as what to ask. A needs assessment can include all kinds of aides, such as:

- **Photographs or pictures:** Use large, easily understood photographs of situations learners might encounter, such as those that take place in doctor’s offices, children’s schools, the supermarket, apartment buildings, the bank, etc.
- **Realia:** Use actual items that learners may find challenging and are likely to have seen, such as utility bills, applications for housing, or common government forms. The important factor in realia is that it is real and recognizable to the learners; so, for example, choose bills from local utility companies.
- **An interpreter or a first language assessment:** An interpreter can be very helpful in a needs assessment. In some situations, a needs assessment can be conducted entirely in the learner’s first language.

The questions themselves can vary widely, depending on the program and the level of the learners. The needs assessment does not need to be a static event; the interviewer can follow up a question, or clarify, or use some of the learner’s responses to formulate new questions. It is a good idea to make questions as concrete and easily understood as possible. Many LIFE have difficulty with hypothetical situations, the conditional, or imagining the future, so try to avoid these constructions. Instead of asking “Where do you see yourself in five years?” you might ask, “What do you want to do when you finish ESL?” or “Do you want to get a job?” Instead of asking “If you could learn anything at school, what would it be?” you might ask “Does anyone help you with reading and writing English? Who helps you? When do they help you?” It is also important to ascertain whether learners understand the role of education and literacy in their new

country and whether they understand the educational system. Some learners might state employment as a goal without necessarily understanding what kind of education is required for the employment they have in mind. Questions to consider in a learner needs assessment can include:

- Does anyone help you with reading and writing? Where do they help you? (Give a list of possibilities: bank, doctor's office, supermarket, etc.)
- What do you want to read/write?
- Why do you want to improve your reading and writing? (Job, daily life, etc.) Or: Why do you want to go to school?
- Do you have a job right now? Do you like your job?
- Do you want a job in the future? What kind of job do you want?
- Where do you need help with reading and writing? (Give a list of possibilities.)

## Methods of Conducting a Needs Assessment

There are a variety of methods of conducting a needs assessment. When conducting a needs assessment with learners, the most recommended method is the face-to-face interview, especially with learners with lower levels of spoken English. When conducting a community needs assessment with other stakeholders, a range of methods can be used, each with their advantages and disadvantages.

## Methods of Conducting a Needs Assessment

Assessment Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Focus Group</b>	<p>Possible to elicit detailed answers. Discussions can provide additional useful information. Can be an opportunity to establish/improve community and stakeholder relations. Possible to include relatively large numbers of participants in one session. Less time-consuming than interviews.</p>	<p>Scheduling issues: arranging suitable time and date for all participants. Potential dominance of discussion. Costs involved: venue, refreshments, etc. Reliance on skills of the facilitator. Need to limit numbers participating. Difficult for learners with lower levels of spoken English to participate. May not have all key stakeholders at the table.</p>
<b>Electronic or Written Survey</b>	<p>Cost-effective way to contact stakeholders. Can be completed electronically. No scheduling necessary. No limit on number of stakeholders included. No reliance on a third party: comments are received “word for word” from stakeholders.</p>	<p>Designing an effective survey can be time-consuming and difficult. May receive limited numbers of replies. May have to follow up with phone calls to encourage responses. Answers may not be sufficiently detailed. May not be a good way of contacting learners. Requires knowledge of technology.</p>
<b>Interview: Face-to-Face</b>	<p>Possible to elicit detailed answers. Possible to follow up on and clarify responses. Often the most thorough way to collect information. Possible to use realia and visual aides. Possible to use an interpreter if necessary.</p>	<p>Scheduling issues for interviewer and interviewees. Time consuming: may mean limiting numbers of stakeholders contacted. Reliance on the skills of the interviewer. Potential costs: e.g. venue, participant travel expenses, use of interpreter, etc.</p>
<b>Interview: Telephone</b>	<p>Cost-effective way to contact stakeholders. Possible to elicit detailed answers. Possible to follow up on and clarify responses.</p>	<p>Scheduling issues. Time consuming: may mean limiting numbers of stakeholders contacted. Reliance on interviewer skills. Cannot use visual aides or realia; difficult to use an interpreter. Can be a challenge for language learners.</p>

## Conclusions

Conducting needs assessments is highly worthwhile in the development, evaluation, and evolution of an ESL literacy program. It is not a one-time deal: needs assessments should be carried out periodically, both with the learners and in the community, to make sure that a program is on track and meeting the needs of everyone involved. The result of conducting and following needs assessments is that learners become successful within the community, and the program serves its purpose.

# Chapter 3 Outline

Introduction: What are Outcomes?

Outcomes and the CCLB

Developing Outcomes

Types of Outcomes

Conclusions



# Developing Outcomes

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## Objectives

To define outcomes and their role in a program and classroom

To examine the role of the CCLB in setting outcomes

To describe two different approaches in setting outcomes: competency-based and participatory

To recognize the four areas in an ESL literacy program where outcomes will need to be set: core literacy skills, literacy and learning strategies, oral language skills, and life skills

## Introduction: What are Outcomes?

Outcomes describe what learners can do when they complete a class. Outcomes are a set of increasingly difficult skills and strategies in the key areas of a program. In this way, outcomes are the actual, demonstrable goals of the class, and, over a longer term, the program itself. They are always phrased as a task that is possible to accomplish and can be demonstrated to an instructor, to the learners themselves, and to anyone else witnessing the progress of the learners. For example, “The learner can read and understand a story” is **not** an outcome; it is too vague and cannot be demonstrated, since it is very difficult to demonstrate understanding in itself. In contrast, “The learner can read a simple, one-paragraph story and identify the main idea and some details” is an outcome that is precise and demonstrable.

Outcomes form the cornerstone of a program. There are a number of advantages to using outcomes in a program:

- **Outcomes define the goals of the program:** Outcomes define goals in terms that can be easily understood, measured, and demonstrated to all involved: instructors, program administrators, funders, and the learners themselves, who are motivated by tangible proof of their progress.
- **Outcomes can be broken down into small achievable pieces:** Outcomes can be scaffolded and broken down into achievable pieces, providing supported learning and an opportunity for success.
- **Outcomes work with themes and curriculum content:** Outcomes provide a series of goals that can be adapted to different themes or vocabulary units, providing instructors the opportunity to recycle outcomes while introducing fresh content.
- **Outcomes motivate learners to achieve:** Learners can see that they are progressing because they are able to do things that they couldn't do before.
- **Outcomes ensure accountability:** Since outcomes clearly define the goals of a program, all stakeholders become accountable to these goals, including the instructors, the learners, the program administrators, and the funders.

## Outcomes and the CCLB

The Centre for Canadian Literacy Benchmarks (the CCLB) has published two sets of outcomes. The first is *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000*, which defines outcomes for listening, speaking, reading, and writing at twelve different levels (Benchmarks). This first document is intended for use with adult learners who have had a formal education. The CCLB then followed this publication with *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners*. This document sets outcomes in three different skill areas: reading, writing, and numeracy, at four different levels (Phases). These levels are further divided into three stages: Initial, Developing, and Adequate. Please note that the Foundation Phase does not include numeracy and does not include all stages.

The CLB Literacy Phases					
Foundation Phase	 Initial Reading Initial Writing	→	Developing Reading		
Phase I	 Initial Reading Initial Writing Initial Numeracy	→	Developing Reading	→	Adequate Reading
		→	Developing Writing	→	Adequate Writing
		→	Developing Numeracy	→	Adequate Numeracy
Phase II	 Initial Reading Initial Writing Initial Numeracy	→	Developing Reading	→	Adequate Reading
		→	Developing Writing	→	Adequate Writing
		→	Developing Numeracy	→	Adequate Numeracy
Phase III	 Initial Reading Initial Writing Initial Numeracy	→	Developing Reading	→	Adequate Reading
		→	Developing Writing	→	Adequate Writing
		→	Developing Numeracy	→	Adequate Numeracy

The distinctions among Initial, Developing, and Adequate are particularly important in the literacy Phases, because learners can take a long time at each Phase, and the achievements made in the different stages of the Phase are significant. There is a considerable difference between a Phase II Initial learner and a Phase II Adequate learner.

Both of the CLB documents are relevant to LIFE; the CLB Literacy Document defines outcomes for reading, writing, and numeracy, while the original CLB Benchmarks Document defines outcomes for listening and speaking. The original CLB Benchmarks Document (for learners with a formal education) should not be used to set outcomes for reading and writing for literacy learners, because the reading and writing outcomes for the benchmarks assume a formal education and an academic understanding.

Note that the CLB Literacy Document includes not only outcomes but also conditions for these outcomes. These conditions describe the situations in which the learners can be expected to achieve the outcomes. They include textual features, such as font size, white space, legibility, length of text, and visuals; contextual features, such as relevance to the learners' lives; and the level of support expected and required from the instructor.

There are several clear advantages to basing program outcomes on the CLB documents:

- **The documents already exist:** Many years of work went into creating these outcomes and they are an excellent source when designing and implementing a program.
- **In Canada, the CCLB sets a national standard:** This means that if learners move to another program, city, or province, their new instructors will understand their level and what they have been studying.
- **The CCLB recognizes the broad range of literacy:** The CLB Literacy Document covers outcomes from the Foundation Phase (which includes many foundational literacy skills, such as fine motor skills) to Phase III (where students are learning to express themselves more accurately in writing and to understand far more complicated texts). Learners with many different kinds of literacy needs are recognized and included in the document.

Because we use the CLB Literacy Document in our own program at Bow Valley College and have found it effective, we use it in this handbook and recommend it to other Canadian programs in ESL literacy.

## Developing Outcomes

When developing outcomes for a program, less is more: it is a good idea to choose fewer outcomes but to ensure that each learner has ample class time to actually achieve and master each outcome. The number of outcomes depends on the type of program, the length of class time, the level of the learners, and specific program goals (settlement vs. preparation for further education, for example). While outcomes are defined in the initial stages of program development, an effective program periodically revisits, monitors, evaluates, and changes outcomes as necessary. As classes and programs evolve, outcomes will also evolve.

In actual classroom instruction, outcomes will be practiced, recycled, and repeated until learners achieve mastery. It is the challenge for the instructor to determine how to do this without making the lessons seem repetitive or boring. One excellent way of recycling outcomes is to teach a variety of themes in terms of content or vocabulary while practicing the same outcomes. Instructors can also recycle outcomes while providing decreasing levels of scaffolding, or instructor support, until learners are able to achieve the outcome independently (or as close to independently as their level will allow).

There are two clear approaches to developing outcomes for a program, and both approaches have their advantages:

**The Competency-Based (or Performance-Based) Approach:** In this approach, outcomes are set before instruction begins, often in the initial development stage of the program. The outcomes are generally based on a needs assessment or on a document such as the CLB Literacy Document, or on a combination of the two. In a competency-based program, instructors are expected to follow the outcomes set by the program, and learners are assessed on how well they can accomplish these outcomes at the end of the class. The main advantage to the competency-based approach is accountability and planning: it allows instructors and program administrators to develop a program with specific goals.

This approach is generally favoured by more formal programs, such as college programs or

In the **competency-based approach**, class and level outcomes are set before instruction begins. Outcomes are often based on a needs assessment or on a document such as the CLB Literacy Document. Learners have less input in the outcomes of the class, but this approach allows for accountability and planning.

In the **participatory approach**, learners and the instructor set outcomes for the class together, based on the needs and interests of the individual learners in the class. This approach views developing literacy as a process of empowerment. It allows learners ownership of their learning but means that outcomes can vary considerably from semester to semester.

programs intending to provide learners with a transition to further education or specific employment.

**The Participatory (or Emergent) Approach:** In participatory learning, the learners in the class play a large role in setting the outcomes for the class. This is different from the process of using a learner needs assessment prior to developing program outcomes in that it is the actual learners in each specific class who provide the basis for the outcomes for that class. In this way, the outcomes of the class will vary from semester to semester, and meet the direct needs of the particular group of learners. Proponents of participatory learning view the development of literacy as empowerment, arguing that participatory learning allows learners to take ownership of their education and their classroom and use their new literacy skills to make positive changes in their lives. The main advantage to participatory learning is motivation: learners can see the direct benefit to their lives of everything they learn in the classroom. The participatory approach is often chosen by community-based programs or programs with a higher degree of flexibility in their goals.

Although these two approaches might appear to be diametrically opposed to each other, it is entirely possible to use a combination of the two to develop outcomes. A program mainly using the participatory approach may still choose to set several core literacy outcomes at each level, while a program using the competency-based approach may allow some flexibility within the curriculum to meet the direct needs of the learners in each class. A competency-based program can also choose to set the outcomes but allow the learners to develop the themes. Any class where there is participatory learning involved will require an increased level of preparation for the instructor, who will not be able to rely on material used before. In a literacy class of any kind, however, this is often the case; many instructors create or adapt the bulk of their material themselves, based on what happens in class and the needs of the specific learners.

## Types of Outcomes

There are a wide variety of outcomes that an ESL literacy program can choose for its classes and its learners. These outcomes fall loosely into four categories: core literacy skills, literacy and learning strategies, oral language skills, and life skills.

Most educators consider the core literacy skills to be reading, writing, and numeracy, and certainly these must form the focus of any ESL literacy program. It is also possible to differentiate the skills required for reading, writing, and numeracy from the **strategies** involved in each area. An example of a reading skill is the ability to read a short, formatted text and identify the main message. An example of a reading strategy is the ability to predict meaning based on format, images, title, or other factors. Both are necessary in the development of

literacy. Many programs consider outcomes for reading strategies, writing strategies, numeracy strategies, and learning strategies.

In an ESL literacy program, however, learners are also deliberately working to develop their abilities in oral English. This is what differentiates ESL literacy from mainstream ABE (Adult Basic Education). This need for language development means that any literacy program must also set outcomes in listening and speaking. In fact, for literacy learners, the development of listening and speaking happens before the development of similar vocabulary and structures in reading and writing, and so listening and speaking are essential to a good classroom. It is also possible to further differentiate the acquisition of vocabulary from listening and speaking, and many programs set outcomes in vocabulary acquisition as well.

The fourth skill area to consider is life skills. HRSDC (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada) have defined a set of Essential Skills for living and working in Canada. Some of these skills are possible to tackle directly in an ESL literacy class, while others require a higher level of literacy than LIFE necessarily have; however, it is possible to build towards the acquisition of all Essential Skills by teaching life skills, beginning at the lowest levels, and helping learners to actively participate in the workplace and other areas of society. Life skills involve skills directly related to employment, such as working with others; skills in understanding the culture of the new country, such as the importance of punctuality in western culture; skills involved in being a citizen, such as voting; and other life skills, such as asking for help before a problem becomes a crisis.

Consider developing outcomes in the following areas:

Skill Areas for Setting Outcomes			
Core Literacy Skills	Literacy and Learning Strategies	Oral Language Skills	Life Skills
Reading Writing Numeracy	Reading Strategies Writing Strategies Numeracy Strategies Learning Strategies	Listening Speaking Vocabulary	Employment Skills Citizenship Skills Cultural Skills

Remember that outcomes are precise, demonstrable, and appropriate for the level. There are quite literally hundreds of possible outcomes an instructor could choose in each skill area, as long as they are precise, demonstrable, and appropriate, and they are in keeping with the goals of the learners and the program. In the examples given below, the Literacy Phase is given for each outcome, except for speaking outcomes. Remember that the CLB Literacy Document does not include listening and speaking.

Examples of outcomes in each skill area include:

*The learner can copy his or her name to a line directly below the name. (Writing, Phase I Initial)*

*The learner can scan a familiar formatted text for specific information. (Reading Strategy, Phase II Developing)*

*The learner can tell a story in chronological order with adequate detail. (Speaking, CLB 5)*

*The learner is able to phone the instructor and leave an appropriate message when he or she is going to miss class. (Life Skill/Cultural Skill)*

## Conclusions

Outcomes, however they are developed, provide the cornerstone for a program, allowing all stakeholders to understand the goals and expectations of the classes. Outcomes are always phrased as achievable, demonstrable tasks. They bring accountability to instructors and program administrators and motivation and the joy of success to learners. In the process of developing outcomes, remember that outcomes must be:

- **Precise:** Outcomes must be precise, yet flexible enough to work for different learners, different instructors, and in conjunction with different themes or content.
- **Demonstrable:** Outcomes must be phrased as something that a learner can do.
- **Appropriate for the level:** Outcomes must also contain conditions that describe the textual and contextual situation for the outcome and the level of instructor support required.

Although there are key outcome areas that are addressed by most ESL literacy programs, there are many possibilities for the actual individual outcomes within these areas. For examples of outcomes appropriate to each level, see Section Three of this handbook or *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners*.



## Chapter 4 Outline

Introduction: The Need for a Separate Stream for LIFE and ESL Literacy

Recommendations for Placing LIFE

Meeting Challenges in Placing LIFE in Levels

Conclusions



# Placing LIFE in Levels

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## Objectives

To demonstrate the need for a separate stream of classes for ESL literacy

To share promising practices in placing LIFE in levels

To recognize some of the challenges in implementing these promising practices

## Introduction: The Need for a Separate Stream for ESL Literacy

Learners with Interrupted Formal Education are facing the dual challenge of developing literacy skills and fluency in English, and they are often doing this having little experience with formal learning or classrooms and in a situation where instruction is in a second language. The best place for this learning to happen is in a separate class intentionally designed for ESL literacy. This is a class, and preferably a stream of classes, which solely teaches ESL literacy to LIFE. The instructors deliberately and explicitly teach the skills and strategies necessary for developing literacy as well as for developing oral English. A separate ESL literacy class provides many benefits to the learners (and to the instructor), most notably that the materials are appropriate, learning strategies are directly taught, and instruction can focus on the skills that the learners need to thrive. In a separate ESL literacy class, it is possible to determine outcomes based on the needs of the learners, recycle these outcomes as necessary, and move at an appropriate pace.

Note that while we are advocating for a separate stream of ESL literacy, it does not mean that our learners will not eventually be capable of joining mainstream ESL or mainstream Adult Basic Education classes, once they have spent time in ESL literacy and have acquired the language and the literacy necessary to effectively make the transition. Once learners move from ESL literacy to mainstream ESL (if that is their goal), they should not be placed in a CLB 1 class, as this will be entirely inappropriate. The ESL literacy stream is parallel and concurrent with the mainstream ESL stream. The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks recognizes the parallel streams of mainstream ESL and ESL literacy and provides information to compare levels; please see *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* for further information.

Unfortunately, not all LIFE are able to enrol in separate designated ESL literacy classes. There are two other possibilities for LIFE, neither of which is ideal. The first is that LIFE are placed in mainstream ESL classes, alongside learners who have had a formal education, often to very high levels.



There are several reasons this is not a good placement solution:

- **Lack of direct literacy instruction:** Mainstream ESL classes are designed for learners with advanced literacy and do not have direct instruction on the development of literacy, even at the lowest levels.
- **Pace:** Mainstream ESL classes are taught at a pace designed for learners with a formal education and move far too quickly for LIFE.
- **Materials:** The materials in mainstream ESL classes are designed for learners with advanced literacy and can leave LIFE stranded.
- **Strategies:** LIFE do not have the same strategies for learning as mainstream ESL learners. This means that they are lacking in certain learning strategies which mainstream learners are likely to use, but also that they have different learning strategies which mainstream ESL learners do not often use.
- **Cognitive development:** In a dedicated ESL literacy class, instructors can use the learning strategies of LIFE to foster the cognitive skills that are foundational for developing literacy in western education. Most mainstream ESL literacy classes do not focus on cognitive development, nor do they approach instruction from the specific strategies for oracy (strategies that LIFE typically use). These are the strategies LIFE bring to the classroom.
- **Listening and speaking vs. reading and writing:** LIFE nearly always have higher listening and speaking skills than reading and writing, while mainstream ESL learners nearly always have higher reading and writing skills than listening and speaking. This leads to a further difficulty in placement: if LIFE are placed based on their listening and speaking, then the reading and writing materials will be far too advanced.
- **Risk of dropping out:** LIFE placed in mainstream ESL classes are at a far higher risk of dropping out. The causes of this can vary; some major causes are a frustration at a perceived lack of progress, a feeling of failure, or a lack of support for their needs.
- **Invisibility:** Mainstream ESL classes are less likely to recognize the enormous range of skills and gifts that LIFE bring to a classroom. This recognition is vital to the development of self-esteem and confidence in learning.

In some programs, LIFE are grouped together with very low-level mainstream learners (CLB 1, for example). This is also less than ideal; literacy learners and low-level mainstream ESL learners have very different sets of skills, very different needs, and different strategies for meeting those needs. Mainstream ESL learners at a low level are working to improve their oral English more than anything. To do this they are able to draw on a range of literacy skills; they

can read to improve vocabulary, they can recognize patterns and make predictions, and they can access their prior knowledge of text. LIFE, on the other hand, need to be explicitly taught the skills and strategies for developing literacy.

The other possibility is that LIFE are placed in ABE (Adult Basic Education). Although this might be a medium-term goal for many learners, it is not an ideal situation until learners have a high degree of oral fluency in English and have spent time in an ESL literacy program. Although many ABE programs have a number of learners who do not speak English as a first language, most programs are designed for native speakers of English or for learners with high oral fluency. There is a considerable difference in approaches between ESL literacy and mainstream literacy. Learners with high oral fluency (like the learners in mainstream adult literacy) are able to rely more heavily on their oral skills while developing literacy. This means that they already have a sense of the sounds and the structure of English, allowing them a greater ability to predict what might come next or to recognize when a word “sounds right.” Learners with high oral fluency in English have another key advantage when developing literacy: they already have an enormous wealth of cultural knowledge and a familiarity with the stories, the expectations, and the patterns of their new country. Until LIFE develop this level of oral fluency and cultural familiarity, they are best served in a separate ESL literacy class.

## Recommendations for Placing LIFE

Although we recognize that it is not always possible to follow these guidelines, we recommend a series of promising practices in grouping Learners with Interrupted Formal Education in a program. For a discussion of what to do when it is not possible to follow these recommendations, please see the next part of this chapter. These promising practices give learners an opportunity to develop the skills and strategies they need to achieve their goals. Learners are placed with other learners of similar abilities, in designated ESL literacy classes, with a series of small progressions through the program. The following practices are recommended:

**Create a Separate Stream for ESL Literacy:** The most important consideration in the placement of LIFE in levels is to create classes that are specifically and solely designed for ESL literacy. This is the best way to meet the needs of this group of learners.

**Base Levels on the CLB Literacy Document:** There are several advantages to using the CLB Phases when determining levels. This is a national standard, understood by programs and institutions across Canada, which is an advantage both to the program and to the learners. There is material already created for the CLB Phases, most notably the document itself, which provides outcomes in reading, writing, and numeracy for each Phase. Additionally, the CLB Literacy

Document recognizes that literacy is more than just one level, and that learners with a range of literacy skills will still require support in the classroom. When possible, create literacy levels based on the Phases, or at least on a recognition of the range of literacy abilities learners will have. This usually means that more than one literacy class is necessary, as learners progress through the Phases.

**Place Learners with Similar Abilities in the Same Level:** Learners should be placed in levels with other learners with similar skills and abilities. This gives the instructor an opportunity to target the specific needs of a group of learners. It should be noted that no group of learners, no matter how carefully they are assessed and placed, will have identical skill levels or identical needs; all learners are different, and bring different strengths to the classroom. This should be acknowledged and celebrated – for one thing, it allows learners to help each other and learn from each other – but it is a good idea to keep the level of a class relatively uniform. Again, this usually means that more than one literacy class is necessary.

**Place Learners in Levels Based on their Reading and Writing Skills:** Learners should be placed in levels based on their weakest skills. In the case of literacy learners, this is usually their reading and writing. This means that there will be a range of oral abilities in the classroom, but that learners will have similar (although never exactly the same) abilities in literacy.

**Use Small Level Increments:** Acquiring a second language is often a slow process; acquiring literacy is an even slower process. This is not to say that

LIFE are particularly slow learners, although they do require a significant amount of time to meet their goals. Children acquiring literacy in their first language also require extensive time; depending on the measurement of literacy, this process takes native speakers seven to ten years. The Phases, from Initial to Developing to Adequate, are extensive, and the difference between each stage of each Phase is considerable. Therefore, it is a good idea to create classes with small increments. Learners will take time to progress through the different literacy Phases, especially in the lowest levels. Any progress should be celebrated. If classes are too broad, learners can feel that they are stagnating, even though they are acquiring valuable skills.



**Limit Class Size:** LIFE need individualized attention and plenty of support from the instructor. This is easier if the number of learners in the class is limited. How many learners are in each class will depend on the program and the level – a Phase I class should have fewer learners than a Phase III class, for example – but in an ideal situation, there would be no more than ten to fifteen learners in a class.

**Pull Out Learners for Numeracy Instruction:** If learners are placed in levels based on their reading and writing Phases, they will have a huge range of abilities with numeracy. There is no strong correlation between the reading and writing Phase and the numeracy Phase of learners. The best way of handling this situation is to assess and regroup learners for numeracy instruction as part of the class. A full-time program with three literacy levels, for example, might choose to regroup their learners for numeracy instruction several times a week.

## Meeting Challenges in Placing LIFE in Levels

The set of recommendations in the previous section describes promising practices in teaching LIFE. Although it is a system that has been found to be highly effective, it is not the only possible way of placing learners in levels. It is also a system that assumes a certain number of learners and instructors, and the resources to support a number of classes. Depending on the program or the institution, this is not always possible. Smaller programs can have LIFE too, and still need to be able to meet the needs of these learners.

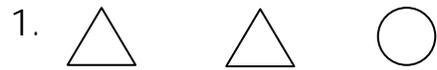
One situation that often occurs in smaller programs, or in programs with limited resources or limited numbers of learners, is the multi-level class. While every classroom is by nature a multi-level class – all learners have a variety of skills and needs – many instructors find themselves teaching classes with a very broad range of literacy learners. If not ideal, it is at least a common situation. It is still possible to run an effective program with a multi-level class; for very specific suggestions in instructional considerations in teaching a multi-level class, please see Chapter Twelve.

Another possible solution for programs that do not have the resources or the number of learners to support a full separate literacy stream is collaboration. Programs might consider working together with other ESL providers in the community, pooling resources and learners for ESL literacy.

ESL Literacy Assessment Sample

**Tips for Use**  
 Excerpt from an ESL literacy assessment tool  
 The tasks get progressively more difficult  
 A full assessment is longer and the tasks continue to increase in difficulty

**A. Circle the one that is different:**



2. L      F      F

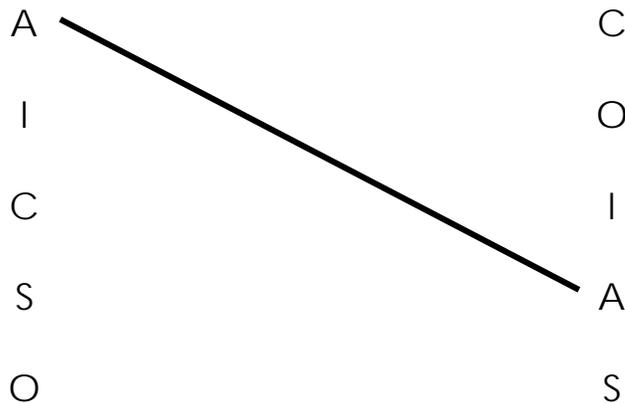
3. 1      7      7

4. E      E      T

5. 2      7      2

6. E      E      B

**B. Match the ones that are the same:**



**C. Copy:**

Ex. S S

V \_\_\_\_\_

P \_\_\_\_\_

5 \_\_\_\_\_

**D. Print the big letters of the alphabet:**

A B C \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**E. Copy:**

I am a student.

\_\_\_\_\_

I live in Canada.

\_\_\_\_\_

## Conclusions

An effective program in ESL literacy provides learners with the skills and strategies they need to achieve their goals and thrive as members of their communities. The best place for LIFE is in a separate, designated program designed specifically for ESL literacy. Ideally, this program should provide learners with a series of levels to meet their needs as they progress through the Phases of literacy and language acquisition. These levels should be focused enough to give learners a feeling of success at each stage, and learners should be placed in the levels based on their core literacy skills in reading and writing. There are still many possible challenges in literacy instruction; for approaches, teaching strategies, suggestions, tips, and tricks, please see Section Two of the handbook.

# Chapter 5 Outline

Introduction: The Need for Learner Support

Common Barriers to Learning

Identifying Learners with Barriers

Academic Support

Setting Goals

Conclusions



# Supporting Learners

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## Objectives

To recognize common barriers to learning

To highlight the need for learner support

To describe four steps in helping learners overcome barriers: hire a support worker; view learners holistically; show flexibility and understanding; and promote support, empowerment, and respect

To show the need for academic support and help with setting goals

## Introduction: The Need for Learner Support

Learners with Interrupted Formal Education are working to improve their English and to develop literacy at the same time: a path that is filled with challenges and requires intense effort. Anyone who has seen a group of ESL literacy learners at the end of the day knows that acquiring language and literacy is hard, tiring work. This is compounded by the fact that LIFE are often unfamiliar with the expectations and requirements of the western school system and are being asked to learn something that is likely very different from the kinds of work they have done before.

The requirements of developing language and literacy are not the only challenges that our learners face, however; LIFE have full, complex lives as adults in a new country and they often confront a wide range of barriers to their learning before they even step into the classroom. These barriers can include issues such as finances, housing, transportation, past trauma, child care, a lack of self-esteem, and so on. There is no easy solution to helping learners overcome barriers to learning, but there are things a program can do to support and empower learners.

LIFE are also in need of academic support, to understand the educational system and their place within it, to meet the challenges of the classroom, and to set short-, medium-, and long-term goals for themselves. An effective ESL literacy program must recognize that learners need support and must work with learners to meet their challenges so that they can come to school, and when they are there, learn and achieve their goals.

## Common Barriers to Learning

There are a lot of possible barriers to learning, but there are common patterns of barriers that affect many learners. This is not an exhaustive list; any problem that keeps learners from the classroom, or keeps learners from focusing when they are there, is a barrier to learning and should be taken seriously by the learner, the instructor, and the program.

Common barriers include:

- **Financial barriers:** accessing funding, budgeting, lack of understanding of banking systems, not having enough money for routine costs such as food, housing, transportation, bills, and child care, as well as not having enough money for emergency situations, such as a sick child, a car breaking down, or an emergency back home
- **Housing:** inadequate housing, unsafe housing, a lack of housing, impending eviction, or utilities being shut off

- **Transportation:** inaccessibility of transportation, lack of money for public transportation, or in some situations, car problems, cost of parking, or lack of a driver's license
- **Child care:** lack of access to child care, lack of money for child care, lack of safe child care, or issues surrounding scheduling of child care
- **Lack of support:** no social support network, no one to talk to, loneliness, homesickness, or no one to support learning
- **Mental health:** depression, anxiety, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, or nightmares
- **Health care:** illness, lack of access, lack of understanding of the health care system, or lack of money for a dentist or glasses
- **Legal issues:** divorce, restraining orders, parking tickets, traffic violations
- **Abuse:** current or past physical, emotional or sexual abuse of self or family
- **Addiction:** alcohol, gambling, or drugs
- **Affective barriers:** lack of self-esteem, lack of confidence, fear of failure, fear of change, or fear of the unknown
- **Family problems:** illness in the family, family member in trouble, family member with criminal charges, family in danger, raising children in a new culture, or problems at children's schools
- **Employment:** unemployment, underemployment, lack of skills to write a resume or do an interview, current employment conflict with school, or balancing work and school
- **Changing expectations of new culture:** changing views and expectations of marriage and relationships, children, responsibilities, or gender roles
- **Scheduling:** fitting school, employment, housework, child care, etc. into the day

## Identifying Learners with Barriers

When learners are in a safe, supportive, welcoming, open environment, they will often volunteer information about their lives, including problems that they are facing. Some learners feel comfortable asking for help, in particular learners with higher oral skills, who are better able to identify and verbalize problems.

Not all learners are able to discuss what is bothering them, however; this might be a matter of pride, of not knowing whether it is appropriate to ask an instructor for help, or of not being able to either identify or express the cause of a problem. It still may be clear that a learner is struggling or facing difficulties outside of the classroom. Sometimes the signs are extremely obvious, such as a learner who comes to class exhausted, or one who constantly complains of headaches, or one who cannot see the board. In most cases, however, barriers to learning manifest themselves as problems with either punctuality or attendance. This is a sure sign that a problem is a true barrier to learning; it is such a barrier that it is stopping a learner from making it into the classroom. It is therefore important that instructors are observant of their class and know their learners. When a learner has an attendance issue, the first step is to have a discussion with the learner.

Not all barriers to learning are obvious, however, and some learners might struggle quietly with their problems. In an ESL literacy program it is really not enough to sit back and wait for learners to say when there's a problem; a program, and all those who work in a program, must be proactive. Without making assumptions about the needs of a specific learner, a program can still recognize that there are barriers that affect many LIFE. A program should have certain measures in place to help learners with common problems and emergency situations. One of the most common problems learners face is not having enough money, which in itself can lead to many other problems: eviction, hunger, utilities being shut off (which can be an emergency situation in a Canadian winter), further fines, or pulling children out of child care. Instructors, program administrators, or support workers can make lists of community services that help people in need, including food banks, services that provide glasses at reduced cost or for free, shelters, legal aid, and so on. A program might also consider implementing an emergency fund for learners. This can include bus tickets, taxi vouchers, gift cards for local grocery stores, and cheques to cover emergency rent or utility bills. These are admittedly stop-gap measures, and it will usually still be necessary to help the learner to find a long-term solution to the problem, but sometimes stop-gap measures are needed. When there is no food in the house it means that the children will be hungry tonight.

# John's Story

## **A learner overcoming challenges**

*John, a young man from Chad, was a learner in a Phase III class; he spoke English at a CLB 5 and often sounded Canadian in his use of expressions and idioms. In John's class the learners wrote dialogue journals with their instructor several times a week. John chose to discuss what was happening in his life, and over several weeks disclosed that his wife was returning to Africa for six weeks to visit family, leaving him in charge of their five-year-old son. He explained to the instructor that this was why he often was late or had to leave early; he needed to pick up his son from daycare.*

*John's instructor noticed that John was beginning to miss more and more school and was increasingly distracted in class. Normally a talkative, friendly man, always laughing and joking, John began to be quiet and distant. On break one day, John's instructor asked him if he was okay, and he began to cry, explaining that without his wife's income, he was really struggling to make ends meet, and that he hadn't had food in the house for several days. His son had been asking for milk, which John couldn't afford to give him. John's instructor, with the support of the dean of her college, was able to access the student emergency fund for John, providing him with a series of grocery gift cards that same day. They also connected him with a local food bank. This tided him and his son over until he found work the next week.*

## **The Instructor's Strategy**

John's financial barriers did not present themselves as financial barriers; instead, John began having problems with punctuality and attendance and became withdrawn and distracted during class time. Seeing through these problems to find the root cause was not something that happened overnight; John's instructor had built up a relationship with John over weeks. She knew him and could tell that something was bothering him. Instead of approaching his punctuality and attendance problems with rules and discipline, she gave John opportunities for open communication and showed him that she valued and respected him. He felt comfortable sharing his situation with her, and she followed up with him. There is no clear "recipe" to follow when helping learners overcome barriers, but respect and communication are key.

## Helping Learners Overcome Barriers

Helping learners overcome their barriers is not an easy thing to do; in many instances, it might not even be entirely possible. Many of the barriers learners face are unlikely to be changed by a quick fix; learners need long-term support to deal with ongoing problems, as well as any new problems that might arise. There are, however, a few things that an effective program can do:

- hire a support worker to discuss barriers and connect learners to community supports
- view learners holistically and build in program supports
- show flexibility and understanding
- promote support, empowerment, and respect

One of the key recommendations is to hire dedicated support workers who are available to learners. Support workers can help with any kind of issue, from filling out funding applications to setting goals to coping with loss, addiction, or trauma. A support worker is able to talk to learners, to provide information, and to give referrals to other programs or professionals if necessary. Support workers also work well within a program; they give learners a place to go when they need help, and they are aware of learners' situation in the program. Once a program has a dedicated support worker, it is important to regularly inform learners about the support available and encourage them to see the support worker whenever necessary.

The next stage to helping learners deal with their barriers is to view learners holistically and to recognize the wide range of barriers that often affect learners and the challenges these pose to learners achieving their goals, both inside the classroom and out. There is a clear need for anyone involved in ESL literacy education to view learners holistically. Learners are in fact more than just learners; they are people, coping with complex needs and wants, challenges, joys, dreams, experiences, intentions, strengths, weaknesses, fears, and so on, and they do not cease to be these full people because they are sitting in the classroom. This isn't to take away from the focus of the class on language learning and literacy development; it is to recognize that there may be many issues in learners' lives that affect this learning, both positively and negatively. Helping learners achieve their goals starts with viewing them holistically and recognizing their strengths and their barriers.

A program in ESL literacy should be flexible and understanding with the learners. While it is best to avoid making generalizations about LIFE, or about any learners, many instructors and programs observe that LIFE face considerably more barriers to learning than mainstream learners. This makes sense, as mainstream learners have a wider range of skills to support them in their lives and are therefore likely to be better able to manage when challenges arise. An effective ESL literacy program recognizes the degree to which our learners face barriers and thus

also the need for flexibility and understanding when dealing with learners. This can mean different things to different programs, but can include, for example, flexibility with punctuality or attendance in certain situations, or simply a willingness to work with a learner to brainstorm possible solutions to a problem.

After recognizing barriers and showing willingness to assist learners to overcome them, instructors and program administrators need to decide how they best can help. Learners facing barriers need three things from a program:

- support
- empowerment
- respect

A program can often best support its learners by providing information and referrals. Instructors and program administrators can do this, but they are not always the best people for this job; support workers are a good choice. They are available to answer questions; to listen; to help with funding, help agencies, or referrals; and to provide information. Once a support worker is in place, learners need to know about the worker and understand that they can talk to him or her about anything.

In order to provide learners with accurate information about other programs and with referrals, the program must then build connections with the community. There are many help and aide programs that provide a range of services to people in need. Learners may want information about many of these programs, including:

- doctors or medical care, including women's health
- dentists, especially subsidized dental care
- glasses and eyecare, especially subsidies for this or free glasses programs
- community housing
- justice or legal aid, including parking ticket payment plans
- community kitchens, food banks and hamper programs
- second-hand stores
- programs for free things, including bicycles, coats and winter clothing, furniture, etc.
- career fairs
- finances, including budgeting and taxes
- immigration, including family sponsorship

It is essential that a program does not view its learners, or even its learners' problems, as things to be fixed. First, it is unlikely that anyone will be able to "fix" all of the problems faced by a

group of learners, and second, any long-term change to learners' situations must come from the learners themselves. Therefore it is a much better idea to work together with learners to identify barriers they are facing and brainstorm ways of overcoming or managing these barriers. This process empowers learners; their voices are heard, they discover that they have some control over the problems in their lives, and they begin to learn problem-solving skills that they can use independently. Ultimately, an ESL literacy program is trying to create independent learners.

The third issue in helping learners overcome their barriers is respect; one of the cornerstones of an effective educational program is respect for the learners. This means respecting what learners say about their own lives; it also means respecting learners' right to choose when they are ready to deal with a problem, or to decide whether something is a problem for them at all.

This issue is particularly important when it comes to dealing with past – or current – trauma or abuse. Many LIFE have lived through or witnessed very difficult experiences, and an essential part of empowering them to deal with their problems is to respect their right to say when, how, and if they are going to deal with them. The best thing an instructor, program administrator, or support worker can do in this case is be a willing listener, when and if a learner is ready. It is also important to remember that most instructors and program administrators are not counselors, psychologists, or social workers; they are educators. An instructor cannot tackle all of the learners' personal problems, but he or she can refer the learners to people or organizations who can help.

LIFE need so much more than just language and literacy skills. Language classes are a place where other vital life skills are built. In one class in Calgary, during a winter with temperatures as low as  $-48^{\circ}\text{C}$  with wind chill, one student couldn't find her way to her new home. She got lost and wandered around for three hours until she found the building by chance. With her permission, the instructor used this as a "What to do when..." conversation, giving learners ideas of what they can do if they find themselves in similar situations. Strategies for managing crises like these are absolutely necessary in ESL literacy classes.

**Too Many Parking Tickets? What Next?**

Do you have too many parking or speeding tickets? Do you need to go to court?  
When you go to talk to someone, you should be ready to ask questions.

**Tips for Use**

Learners take this with them to appointments

Can be adapted for other levels or situations

**What do you need to bring?** A pen, paper, and this form

**Write:**

Name of the person you are talking to: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number of the person you are talking to: \_\_\_\_\_

**What questions should you ask?**

I have a parking/speeding ticket. What should I do?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I have to pay a fine?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I have to go to court?

\_\_\_\_\_

Can I get someone who speaks my language to help me?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I need a lawyer?

\_\_\_\_\_

Will a lawyer cost money?

\_\_\_\_\_

What papers do I need to bring with me?

\_\_\_\_\_

What will happen if I don't pay the fine (money)?

\_\_\_\_\_

What do they tell you? If you are nervous and can't write it down, ask **THEM** to write the information here:

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**Words you should know:**

violation	offence	traffic ticket	plead	court	charge
lawyer	sentence	interpreter	fine	guilty	innocent

**Notes:** Write down **OTHER** information that will help you.

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**Contact:** Who else do you need to call?

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**Follow up:** What are the next steps? What do you need to do now? Is there anyone else you need to call? If you need to pay money, write down what you need to do. Write down important dates and information.

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## Academic Support

In any ESL literacy program, learners need academic support, both inside and outside the classroom. Inside the classroom, the job of providing academic support falls on the instructor, and for a further discussion of what to do in the classroom, please see Section Two of this handbook. Outside of the classroom, however, learners still need support so that they can cope with the school system effectively and make informed choices for themselves.

Academic support may be necessary in the form of homework help, tutoring, or extra instruction in a particular area. Some learners find that they need help with one thing in particular; this is an excellent case for tutoring or for extra instruction. Other ways to support learners academically include providing a quiet space for completing homework (depending on the level of the learners) or a time when they can ask an instructor any questions they may have. Programs can also begin homework clubs, where learners can come together and support each other. This helps learners to value education and to create a support network for themselves.

Learners need help to understand the academic system in their new country and to understand their place within it. This understanding is essential to the process of setting goals and making informed decisions. In most urban centres, there are many programs available to learners as they develop their literacy. Some of these programs are academic in nature, such as high school upgrading programs, while some are designed to train learners for the workforce. Learners who are getting close to transitioning out of ESL literacy will need to be informed about what is available to them in order to plan their next step. This knowledge should not just be reserved for higher-level literacy learners; an awareness of future possibilities can be a powerful motivator for lower-level learners as well. It is also important for learners to understand the natural progression of the education system and the length of time required at each step in order to set short-, medium- and long-term goals.

ESL Literacy → ABE → High School Upgrading → College or University Programs

They need to understand that there are options outside of this pattern too; for example, not all apprenticeship programs require a high school diploma, or many learners may spend time in mainstream ESL following ESL literacy.



## Setting Goals

Although learning about the educational systems and a learner's place in it is a vital process, it can be a little disheartening for some learners to see "how far they have to go," especially if they have specific dreams or long-term goals in mind. Even if these dreams may seem unrealistic based on the learner's current level, age, family responsibilities, and so on, it really isn't the instructor's role to decide whether or not it is possible for a learner to realize that dream. Some learners dream of becoming doctors or engineers. An instructor doesn't need to challenge this dream but can help the learner to understand what is involved in that level of education and to set some short-term and medium-term goals. Instructors should expect that learners will adjust their dreams and goals as they get closer to realizing them.

Setting goals is a critically important learning strategy. Simply put, setting goals creates independent learners. It is also a process that involves a lot of transferrable skills: goal-setting involves identifying where you currently are, thinking about the future, and creating a logical step-by-step plan that will lead to that future, with an awareness of how long each step will take. For many learners, this is a highly complicated process, requiring a significant amount of cognitive development as well as cultural understanding of the education/employment system of their new country. That is why it is important to begin goal-setting at early levels in a highly supported environment and continue with learners as they develop their literacy.

Instructors need to help learners to understand the difference between short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals and how these goals can work together to get learners to where they want to go. In early levels, the time frame for goal-setting can be quite short, so that learners can understand the process and have the opportunity to quickly meet some of their goals. Some instructors have their learners set weekly or even daily goals. All goals are highly personal and depend on the learners themselves, particularly on their current level. The chart below illustrates some possible learner goals; for some learners, even the short-term goals listed here will be medium-term, while other learners are close to realizing the long-term goals on the list. The goals for an individual learner will be very specific. For more information on goal setting, please see Chapter Eleven. Goals can include:

## Short-, Medium-, and Long-Term Goals

Short-Term Goals	Medium-Term Goals	Long-Term Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Score 9/10 on a spelling test</li> <li>• Come to class on time every day for a week</li> <li>• Copy a model of a note, fill in the blanks, and send it to a child's instructor</li> <li>• Write a paragraph with help from the instructor</li> <li>• Share writing with the class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete this level</li> <li>• Be able to talk to the landlord about painting the apartment</li> <li>• Be able to read bedtime stories to children in English</li> <li>• Be able to go to a doctor's appointment alone</li> <li>• Get a driver's license</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish Phase III</li> <li>• Go to ABE (Adult Basic Education)</li> <li>• Finish High School Equivalency</li> <li>• Support family financially</li> <li>• Work in a store as a cashier</li> <li>• Help children with their homework</li> </ul>

## Conclusions

Support for learners is a vital part of an ESL literacy program, as it directly helps learners stay in the program and achieve success while they are there. This should take the form of both academic support, which helps learners understand where they are in the system, how to best succeed, and where to go next; and support in overcoming barriers to learning, whatever they may be. Instructors, support workers, and program administrators need to be aware of the difficulties many learners face outside of the classroom as well as the difficulties in helping learners overcome these challenges. It is not easy to “fix” a problem for anyone, but a program can help by viewing learners holistically; showing flexibility and understanding; and promoting support, empowerment, and respect. Once again, it is highly recommended that an effective ESL literacy program have a dedicated support worker for the learners.







## Section 2: Strategies for the Classroom

**Chapter 6:**  
**Strategies for Teaching LIFE**

**Chapter 7:**  
**Theories of ESL Literacy  
Instruction**

**Chapter 8:**  
**Methods and Techniques in  
ESL Literacy Instruction**

**Chapter 9:**  
**Choosing, Adapting, and  
Designing Materials for LIFE**

**Chapter 10:**  
**Developing Theme Units and  
Projects**

**Chapter 11:**  
**Assessment**

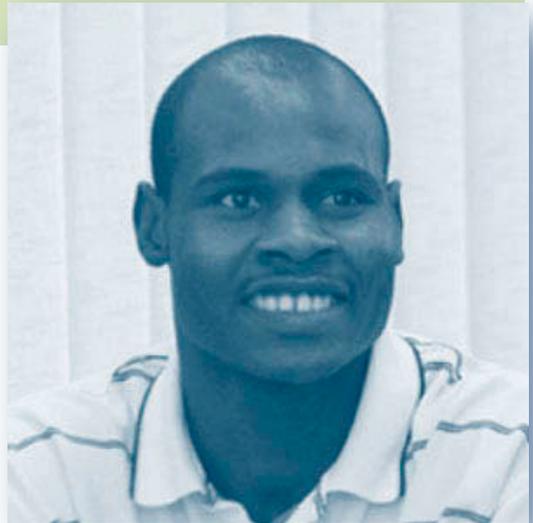
**Chapter 12:**  
**Beyond the Whiteboard**

# Chapter 6 Outline

Introduction: Why are Teaching Strategies Necessary?

The Strategies

Conclusions



# Strategies for Teaching LIFE

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## Objectives

To describe ten guiding strategies for working with  
Learners with Interrupted Formal Education

To demonstrate how these strategies apply to a learner in  
the classroom

## Introduction: Why are Teaching Strategies Necessary?

Learners with Interrupted Formal Education (LIFE) have usually had limited or no access to formal education, but despite this, they will have acquired certain skills and strategies related to their individual life experiences. It is important to value and respect this previous learning and recognize the significance of these skills and strategies in their new countries. Most LIFE have had an enormous range of experiences in their lives, often including trauma or witnessing trauma, and all have managed to negotiate survival and to make their way to a new country. What they lack in formal education, they will often compensate for in courage, determination, and experience.

LIFE can face many challenges once they begin their lives in their new countries, as factors such as financial hardship and family responsibilities often impact their integration into society. These learners need the classroom to serve as a bridge between their past experiences and their lives in their new country. They must be supported in their quest to learn the language, literacy, and life skills necessary to achieve their goals. Consequently, LIFE need their instructor to be not only an instructor but a skilled guide, someone who can help them overcome the challenges related to living, working, and studying in a new country.

LIFE have diverse needs in the classroom, going beyond the ability to read and write, which can be challenging – and highly rewarding – for instructors. In this respect, listed below are ten guiding strategies for working with ESL literacy learners. The strategies reflect the diversity of this group and highlight how to ensure that learners are provided with an environment which will encourage them to succeed.

In this chapter, meet Adam, a learner from Somalia in a Phase II class. His struggles and successes with ESL literacy illustrate the strategies.



## The Strategies

**View Learners Holistically:** Respect their past life experiences and their roles as adults. Understand the challenges learners face in adapting to life in a new country. Make the classroom a positive place where learners feel comfortable and confident. Viewing learners holistically also means understanding that they have lives outside of the classroom and may have barriers to learning. Create a program and a classroom that supports learners. For more information on supporting learners, see Chapter Five.

*Adam is a twenty-eight year old refugee from Somalia with a wife and three children who has recently moved to Calgary. He had six years of previous formal education. Before coming to Canada, Adam lived in a refugee camp where he was trained to fill in forms because of his neat hand-writing. When he arrived in Canada, he was disheartened to realize that his limited literacy skills also limited his job opportunities and ability to provide for his family. At first, he was ashamed to ask for help. Then his instructor helped him access various immigrant-serving organizations and fill out forms for low-cost transit passes and subsidized healthcare. He is beginning to understand that he can learn how to do things independently by first asking for help. He now takes pride in helping his classmates to fill in their own forms.*

**View Learning as a Social Activity:** Most LIFE are used to collaborative work and have an enormous amount that they can teach each other. Encourage partner and group work. Invite local community groups to visit the class and send learners into the community when possible. Foster a sense of belonging within the classroom and to the wider community. For more information on learning as a social activity, see Chapters Eight and Twelve.

*Adam spent his childhood in his family's large rural compound where everyone made a contribution. Consequently, he works best in a group. He likes to work on tasks in class with Aisha, who has lived in Canada for ten years and knows a lot about getting things done but does not read or write as well as Adam. Through Aisha and volunteers who have come to help in the classroom, Adam is learning about the variety of resources that exist in the community. A class volunteer told him about available part-time jobs, and he has found out that his local community group has a program to help members write resumes. Now Adam has a part-time job where he can practice his English and support his family. He enjoys trying new things with his classmates, like ice skating. When he finds something he likes, he shares it with his family on the weekend, and he recently took his children to the ice rink for the first time. This makes him feel like a Canadian.*

**Teach Thematically:** Create theme units that present related vocabulary, language structures, and concepts. Theme units motivate learners and give instructors a chance to recycle outcomes. Ensure that the themes are practical and interesting to the learners and incorporate topics and materials that relate to their needs and goals. Create simple, accessible materials, with basic formatting, a large font, and lots of white space. For more information on theme teaching, see Chapter Ten. For more on materials, see Chapter Nine.

*A month ago, Adam's daughter brought home a note from school that he couldn't understand. His instructor helped him read the note, which told him that the school thought his daughter needed glasses. Adam was worried about the expense, but his instructor helped him read about a government subsidy program to pay for children's eye checkups and glasses and helped him fill out the relevant application forms. Adam's daughter got her glasses and is now doing better in school. This week, Adam's class is working on a health unit, and the instructor asked Adam to explain how he got glasses for his daughter. The school note and application forms for the glasses were too difficult for the class to read on their own, so the instructor made simpler versions to allow for class practice. Adam's instructor usually makes the materials for the class, which means they work with materials that are relevant to daily life, while suitably adjusted to the class reading level.*

**Create a Print-Rich Environment:** Use charts, posters, pictures, etc. on the classroom walls to help learners absorb written language into their visual memory. Give learners practice arranging language patterns in a kinetic and sensory manner. A wall pocket chart is a good way to do this. Keep books of an appropriate level and picture dictionaries (or beginner dictionaries for higher levels) readily accessible in the classroom. For more information on a print-rich environment, see Chapter Eight and Section Three.

*Adam has difficulty writing down what he wants to say. The right words don't seem to end up on his paper in the right order. It helps Adam when his instructor gives him scrambled sentences on flashcards so he can experiment with word order, reading the sentences out loud, changing the flashcards, reading the sentences again, and adjusting the word order until the sentences sound right. He likes to work on this with a partner, and if they both agree it sounds right, it usually is. Adam says seeing new vocabulary words and class Language Experience Stories on the classroom walls helps him to learn new words and phrases.*

**Create a Classroom Routine:** Establish a regular daily routine. This helps learners to understand the importance of punctuality in western society and gives them a feeling of comfort and stability in the classroom. Maximize the effectiveness of the routine by varying and alternating activities according to learners' interest level and concentration span. Regularly

doing activities together helps learners appreciate their importance, such as filing papers in the right section of their binders. For more information on appropriate classroom routines for each Phase, see Section Three.

*At first Adam was unsettled by the importance Canadians placed on time. He thought it was important to get things done for his family and friends but not to do things on a set schedule. Canadians seemed to put time ahead of people. Through his class he is starting to understand that Canadian culture is different from his own and that the people around him expect things to happen at a set time. While he still believes in putting people ahead of time, he has learned that there are some advantages to the western approach. Having a schedule means he knows when there will be homework correction and spelling quizzes, so he is always ready. He doesn't lose papers anymore, because he makes time to file things away in his binder after every lesson. Following the schedule of the class helps him feel organized and ready.*

**Start with Oral Learning:** LIFE are nearly always more proficient at speaking than at reading and writing English. Always begin with the oral: teach new vocabulary and concepts orally before learners encounter them in print. Help learners recognize the words they already use. Allow learners to write the sentences they speak. Make learners aware of the patterns in language and the benefits of understanding those patterns. For more information on oral learning, see Chapter Eight.

*Adam thinks English is easy to speak but really hard to read and write. He recognizes a lot of English words because he has seen them so often, but he finds it hard to figure out which English sound goes with which letter. When he tries to write down a sentence, he frequently leaves out a word that his instructor says is important. He is starting to read aloud what he has written to hear if it sounds okay, and he finds that is the best way to fix his mistakes. It is also easier to write about something after talking about it. He can't imagine how some learners in other classes can read and write well even though their spoken English isn't nearly as good as his.*

**Give Plenty of Time for Practicing Writing:** Learning to write is like learning to swim; it requires a lot of actual practice. Provide learners with time in class for writing. Depending on the level, learners begin with copying, then move on to adding a few words to complete a template. They gradually advance until they can compose more independently. Teach learners to follow a writing process; let learners revise, edit, and make good copies of their work. For more information on teaching writing, see Chapter Eight.

*Adam wants to be able to write letters to his landlord and his daughter's instructor, but he can't put his ideas on paper. His instructor has been giving him samples of letters where he can put in words and phrases to talk about his own situation. Gradually, he has been able to add in more and more of his own words. His instructor gives him a lot of help in class as he writes, and he sees that he is gradually becoming a better writer. If he has to send a letter to his daughter's teacher, he can copy from one of his model letters. Both Adam and his daughter are proud of these letters.*

**Respect Learners' Knowledge while Providing Them with New Understanding:** Respect learners, their different cultures, and their understanding of the world. At the same time, expose learners to alternative ways of looking at things. Demonstrate the advantages of understanding concepts and strategies in keeping with living in a literate, technological society, but continue to value the skills and understanding that learners bring with them from their own cultures. Help learners develop the cognitive skills they will need to effectively deal with print. For more information on cultural understanding and cognitive development, see Chapters One and Twelve.

*Adam never thought it was important to consider why something happened, to predict what was going to happen next, or to explain why he believed something. He wonders if worrying about these things changes anything, but Canadians seem to find the answers to these questions important. Adam isn't ready to talk about cause and effect yet, and he can't always put his reasons for doing things into words. It is much easier to explain things to his instructor because she gives him a lot of time to talk about a problem and she never gets annoyed. His instructor shows him ways to learn and to organize his ideas, and she understands that this is all new for him. He is beginning to see how similar things can be part of a group, and he is starting to classify things under generic terms. He is starting to recount events in chronological order. He looks for patterns in spelling words and sentences and can sometimes figure things out through a process of elimination. He reads over what he has written and checks off words in a word bank as he uses them. He thinks about what he is good at and what he must work on. He is beginning to learn new ways of learning.*

**Establish Outcomes:** Outcomes provide motivation to learners and accountability to instructors and programs. Ensure that what is taught in class relates to a useful, relevant learning outcome. Accept that learners will progress at different rates. Celebrate all success. For more information on outcomes, see Chapter Three and Section Three.

*Adam doesn't understand forms and notices as well as Aisha, but they both know it is important to learn how to read and use them. Aisha seems to understand what is on a paper even though she can't read all the words as well as Adam. Aisha just knows what is going on. Adam can write sentences a lot better than Aisha even though he cannot speak as well as she does. Adam and Aisha are very different in class, but the instructor says they are both good learners. Some of the learners in the class never had Adam's chance to go to school and they haven't lived in Canada as long as Aisha, so things are much harder for them. The instructor never gets annoyed when learners in the class can't do something, and she is always happy when someone does a good job. They can all concentrate on trying new things without worrying about failing.*

**Incorporate Technology:** Introduce learners to different forms of technology as soon as possible. Encourage them to use technology and teach them that technology plays a large role in Canadian society. Remember that technology means more than just computers; for many learners, all kinds of electronic machines can provide a challenge, and, when mastered, be very helpful in their lives, including ATMs, ticket dispensers for public transit, microwave ovens, and so on. For more information on technology in the classroom, see Chapter Twelve.

*Adam learns a lot from the programs he uses on the computer. He can match the spelling and sounds of words to pictures. He can experiment with the order of letters in words or words in sentences and get immediate feedback. He can fill in some information and the computer will write a story about him. It's fun to do the math and spelling games. He finds he remembers things better if he has seen them on the computer screen. He is also becoming familiar with the computer keyboard, and he is starting to write his own sentences. He knows he will have to use computers in the future, and he is happy that he is starting to learn something about them.*

## Conclusions

LIFE are not the same as mainstream ESL learners; they bring different strengths with them to the classroom, they have different needs, and they do not always learn in the same way. This can bring challenges to ESL literacy instructors, but also great joy, and if we are flexible and intentional in our approaches to our learners, we can create effective and cheerful classrooms. The strategies outlined in this chapter provide a framework for approaching ESL literacy and teaching LIFE; the coming chapters will discuss in more detail the nuts and bolts of teaching ESL literacy, including reading and writing, learning strategies, materials, themes, and assessment.

Although LIFE are quite different from mainstream learners, have different needs, and learn at a different pace, they achieve success in our classrooms and reach their goals for themselves. Every success along this path should be recognized and celebrated, both by the instructor and by the learners.



# Chapter 7 Outline

Introduction: Theories of Teaching ESL Literacy

The Participatory Approach

The Whole Language Approach

The Language Experience Approach

The Competency or Performance Based Approach

The Functional Approach

The Communicative Approach

The Ethnographic Approach

The Task-Based Approach

The Project-Based Approach

The Natural Approach

Total Physical Response

Conclusions



# Theories of ESL Literacy Instruction

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## Objectives

To describe a range of theories used in ESL literacy instruction

To recognize that a combination of these theories can be used in an ESL literacy classroom

## Introduction: Theories of Teaching ESL Literacy

There are a number of theories about ESL acquisition and ESL literacy acquisition, focusing on different ideas of how people best learn literacy in a second language. The role of theory in the classroom often depends on the background and interests of the instructor, and most instructors, regardless of their interests, tend to collect and use pieces of several theories in their instruction. This chapter is meant to provide an introduction to a range of theories in ESL and ESL literacy acquisition. While some of these theories are widely accepted today, not every theory listed here will resonate with every instructor. However, instructors will be able to recognize theories as they are discussed in other texts and in other places in the handbook and can choose which theories are most useful to them and their learners.

## The Participatory Approach

Paolo Friere (1972) viewed teaching literacy as empowering the oppressed through education. He believed that education and knowledge only have value when they enable people to free themselves from the conditions that society forces upon them. This highly learner-centred approach seeks to build literacy through discussion of the learners' real-life issues and concerns. Initially, "generative words" are chosen to help learners begin to discuss these issues and concerns as well as begin reading (decoding) and writing (encoding). Learners and instructors can then sit face to face and engage in meaningful discussion. This approach stresses instructor and learner as collaborators. Learners and instructor use objects, pictures, and written texts to help them describe and examine relationships between the different aspects of the issue they are discussing. As they clearly articulate the problem, they are able to propose solutions. The instructor is seen as the facilitator of language learning and is an equal participant in the class, learning along with the learners. Learners become equipped to transform themselves and the society around them (Peyton & Crandall, 1995; Huerta-Macias, 1993).



## The Whole Language Approach

Whole Language proponents believe that language should be learned from top to bottom. That is, language must be first considered in its whole and complete form before it is consistently broken down into smaller, decontextualized pieces. Language is a social process to be used for the purpose of interaction. Learners, whether children or adults, bring a tremendous amount of



background knowledge to the classroom. Instructors must respect and value each learner's personal expertise and use it as a platform for building language skills. Like the Participatory Approach, Whole Language centres on the needs of the learner and considers the learner to be the driving force in the development of his or her language skills. The learner is encouraged to take risks, both orally and in writing. Function (the ability to communicate) comes first and form

(standardized spelling, grammatical endings, etc.) follows. The Whole Language Approach emphasizes the importance of a collaborative approach to learning. Both published and learner-produced texts are useful. Instruction focuses more on strategies for reading and writing, while issues such as spelling and grammar are taught in response to learner questions (Peyton & Crandall, 1995; Huerta-Macias, 1993).

## The Language Experience Approach

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is a teaching technique or strategy which is consistent with the Participatory and Whole Language Approaches. Language Experience capitalizes on the learner's background knowledge and allows instructors to provide target experiences designed to enrich language learning. Learners' experiences are dictated and then written down, either by the instructor or by another language learner. This can be done either as a whole group, in small groups, or one-on-one. The transcribed text is then used as reading material. There is some debate as to the instructor's involvement in correcting the text; some instructors argue that true language experience stories are entirely in the learners' own words, regardless of mistakes in grammar or structure, while other instructors prefer to help shape the text. Whichever approach is taken, the substance of the text comes entirely from the learners (Peyton & Crandall, 1995; Taylor, 1992).

The instructor can take learning deeper by developing vocabulary lists, using the text to produce cloze exercises, or focusing on other more mechanical aspects of writing. Many Learners with Interrupted Formal Education have strong oral language skills and a relatively weaker ability to translate what they know into a written text. This technique capitalizes on a learner's ability to verbalize his or her experiences and provides a way for reading and writing to grow naturally. The LEA also helps to solve a common problem in literacy teaching: finding age-appropriate reading material for low literacy adult ESL learners. LEA is a very common approach, especially at the lower levels of ESL literacy, because it allows instructors access to texts that are entirely based on the vocabulary of the learners, and it allows learners a chance to author and own their own texts.

### The Competency- or Performance-Based Approach

This approach begins with the instructor asking the question, "What do the learners need to learn?" What follows is a list of "competencies" or task-based instructional outcomes, such as *The learner can read and follow signs in the environment*. Learner evaluation is based on whether or not the learner can perform the tasks on the list. The intent of this approach is learner-centered in that each group of learners is assessed and instruction is based on their needs. (Peyton & Crandall, 1995) A good example of this approach is the CLB Literacy Document, which indicates what a learner must be able to do to be considered competent at a given Phase. For more information on the CLB Literacy Document, please see the Introduction, Chapter Three, and Section Three.

### The Functional Approach

Life and workplace skills are at the heart of this approach to teaching. A needs analysis allows the instructor to assess which functional skills the learners need to learn. Learner outcomes are usually written as competencies and are sequenced according to priority. This approach focuses on skills the learners need in order to function at home or at work. Communicative and behavioural skills are combined with linguistic objectives. This approach tends to neglect the development of creativity in language and avoids social issues (Mora, 2008).

## The Communicative Approach

Abstract concepts such as when, where, how far, and how much as well as culturally appropriate communication are the core of the Communicative Approach. Functional language such as apologizing, complaining, contradicting, and offering allows learners to communicate well with native English speakers. This approach will suit learners who want to become bi-cultural and who see learning English as a way of “fitting in” with the society around them. Like the Functional Approach, this teaching method tends to downplay the expressive and creative aspects of language (Mora, 2008).

## The Ethnographic Approach

Combining aspects of the Communicative and Participatory Approaches, the Ethnographic Approach considers the socio-cultural aspects of language as well as linguistic and cultural awareness to be the focus of language teaching. This approach helps learners to become aware of how people communicate in their own lives and the community in which they live. Instructors use ethnographic strategies to examine the struggles their learners face. Learners become observers of language as it occurs naturally around them: on the bus, in the doctor’s office, and in the supermarket. As learners identify what they need to learn, they become invested in language learning (Watson-Gegeo, 1998). This approach is more effective with higher-level literacy learners who have the cognitive and oral language skills needed to analyze the language they hear around them.



## The Task-Based Approach

Task-based teaching primarily involves the importance of pair and group work as opposed to instructor-fronted instruction. The instructor provides learners with tasks that are intended to foster genuine and meaningful communication. These tasks are interactive and can concern topics that are new or unfamiliar to the learners. Most effective are topics that involve a problem or ethical dilemma of some kind. Participants must exchange information and opinions with each other and the task must have a specific outcome – such as making a decision by reaching a consensus. Information gap exercises where all learners have information to share with their group or partner are also effective as they require all participants to take roughly equal parts in

completing the task. Research indicates that learners who are working through these kinds of tasks speak in longer sentences and work harder to understand what others are saying (Moss & Ross-Feldman, 2003).

## The Project-Based Approach

In this approach, learners are involved in lengthy projects instead of short-term tasks. Like the Task-Based Approach, projects are heavily dependent on pair and small group work and involve the pair or group solving a problem or producing a product. The learners must communicate clearly and cooperate to plan and achieve their goals. Also, like the Task-Based Approach, projects require learners to use both language and cognitive skills to deal with real problems. This gives language learning a real context and allows learners to practice skills they will need in their home and work lives (Moss & Van Cuzer, 1998; Gaer, 1998; Wrigley, 1998). For more information on Project-Based learning, please see Chapter Ten.

## The Natural Approach

When learners enter the ESL literacy classroom with little or no English, the Natural Approach seeks to help them develop English in much the same way as they developed in their first language. This approach is meaning-based and allows learners to receive extended language input (listening and later reading) before requiring language output (speaking and later writing). Learners begin with single words and then move on to two and three word combinations. Finally, they are able to use whole sentences. The Natural Approach requires a safe and supportive classroom environment where learners are encouraged and their errors are not corrected (Illinois Resource Center, 2005).

## Total Physical Response

Like the Natural Approach, Total Physical Response is a good choice for teaching beginning LIFE. TPR, as it is known, focuses on developing oral language through physical response to commands. This not only allows for extended exposure to English before the learners begin to speak but also helps learners to remember what they have learned through muscle memory. Children learn their first language through interaction with their family members. These interactions are both physical and verbal. When children begin to speak, they are rewarded by the positive response of the family members (Asher, 1995). In the ESL classroom, this approach relies heavily on language in the imperative case: “Sit down. Stand up. Close the door.” While this method cannot fill an entire language program, it can provide variety to a lesson and it

requires the full engagement of the learner. It also gets the learners moving around, often a welcome break to pen and paper work. TPR is a very common technique at lower levels, when learners are still developing concrete vocabulary. It is less effective at higher levels, as it is very difficult to use TPR to acquire abstract vocabulary.

## Conclusions

This chapter outlines a number of different theories and methodological approaches to teaching ESL literacy. Certain methodologies will be more effectively used in certain situations with certain learner demographics. Many instructors use a mixture of approaches in their classrooms, piecing together an amalgam of techniques and emphases that bring out the best in them and their learners.

# Chapter 8 Outline

Introduction: The Five Core Strands of ESL Literacy

Developing Oral Fluency, Vocabulary, and Background Concepts

Foundational Literacy Instruction

Reading Instruction

Writing Instruction

Strategy Instruction

Conclusions



# Methods and Techniques in ESL Literacy Instruction

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## Objectives

To describe teaching methodology in the core strands in ESL literacy: oral fluency, foundational literacy, reading, writing, and strategies

To recognize the needs of LIFE in the classroom

To share tips, tricks, and teaching strategies for an effective ESL literacy classroom

## Introduction: The Five Core Strands of ESL Literacy

This chapter seeks to answer the question of how to teach Learners with Interrupted Formal Education and where to begin. In any ESL literacy classroom, no matter what the purpose of the program is, there are five core strands to consider: oral fluency, foundational literacy instruction, reading instruction, writing instruction, and strategy instruction. There are a variety of ways of approaching the teaching of these strands in an ESL literacy class; in this chapter we examine some of these methods and look into promising practices and helpful tips and techniques in deciding what needs to be taught, in what order, and how to do it. We also recognize that there are other ways to approach teaching; we do not examine every possible technique here, but absence from the handbook should not necessarily mean that a technique is ineffective or unsuitable. This chapter examines:

- developing oral fluency, vocabulary, and background concepts
- foundational literacy instruction
- reading instruction
- writing instruction
- strategy instruction

## Developing Oral Fluency, Vocabulary, and Background Concepts

LIFE are learning to read rather than reading to learn. Although most educators see their lack of ability to read as the most important educational issue, it is really only a part of the problem. LIFE are principally oral learners; the majority of learning in their lives to this point has been done through speaking, listening, and watching. This means that LIFE are almost inevitably better at speaking and listening than reading and writing English. Effective ESL literacy instruction takes this preference for oral learning into consideration; in a good ESL literacy classroom, all new vocabulary and concepts are taught orally before they are taught in a written form.

The development of oral language is therefore crucial to LIFE, not only for their continued integration into and comfort in their new communities, but also because it provides the basis for the development of literacy. The development of oral language by necessity includes continued development of vocabulary. Often it is not enough to teach vocabulary, however, without also teaching a number of background concepts to give the vocabulary context and meaning, as well as categorization and spatial relationships so that LIFE can organize their learning. So, in addition to developing oral language, LIFE need to be taught continued vocabulary development, background concepts, categorization, and spatial relationships, in addition to simple facts and content. All of this learning is equally important as, and a crucial step in, developing reading and writing.

### *Why Begin with Oral Language?*

LIFE come to class lacking many basic skills in reading and writing. It seems natural and productive to spend most of the time focusing on these areas rather than on their listening and speaking skills, which are often relatively high. However, developing their oral skills actually enhances their written skills. Since these adults are learning to read as opposed to reading to learn, it is crucial to first teach them vocabulary and concepts orally before moving to print. This means teaching through their strength, oral communication, and then moving to their weaker skill, written communication. It is also important because many of the approaches used in



teaching reading and writing rely on the learners reading their own words. Oral competency must be developed before learners can transition into reading and writing. Before teaching literacy-related activities such as reading texts, completing cloze exercises, or organizing sentence strips, the instructor begins with an oral discussion. Learners can talk while the instructor writes down what they say (using the Language Experience

Approach). The language they speak becomes the text which they will later read. This technique provides a way in, or a bridge over the gap between oral and written language. Discussing the topic and activating learners' prior knowledge also helps reading comprehension. The oral work is used as a scaffold for the literacy component.

By reinforcing learning with listening and speaking as well as reading and writing, instructors also accommodate different learning styles. Many LIFE are audio or kinesthetic learners and learn best when listening or moving. By giving them plenty of practice in oral work in the classroom, their oral fluency improves and their newly learned vocabulary can be recycled and reinforced.

### *Developing a Rich Vocabulary*

In order to be able to communicate both in speaking and in writing, learners need to develop a rich vocabulary. Ideally, this vocabulary is generated from the learners' needs so that it is

personally relevant. Before new words are taught in writing, they should be taught orally, perhaps related to pictures or other words the learners know. Synonyms for the words can be used to aid in memory and understanding (big, large, huge, enormous, gigantic, vast). Sometimes the new vocabulary item can be acted out, for instance, with the instructor slumping down in a chair to show the new word “relax”. ESL literacy instructors should always be ready to play a bit of the clown in the classroom, demonstrating the meaning of words when an oral explanation won’t work. If you can make your learners laugh, it’s even better, catching their attention and interest and lowering their stress levels.

For Foundation Phase and Phase I learners, Total Physical Response (TPR) can be a useful tool for learning concrete vocabulary. In TPR, learners are given oral commands which they must physically follow, such as “touch your toes” or “stand up.” The physical response to the language helps learners activate muscle memory. Because most LIFE are oral learners, clapping and singing can also be used as a bridge to more difficult tasks. For instance, clapping out syllables helps the learner first hear, then say, the new word. Singing can be used to introduce and reinforce new vocabulary, improve fluency, and learn set phrases. It is also a low-stress learning activity for many learners.

After many instances of hearing and using a new word in speaking, learners then encounter the word in print where they learn to read it and finally to copy or spell it, depending on the level. New vocabulary will need to be heard and said in many different contexts before being fully acquired and becoming part of the learners’ repertoires. Thus, the instructor must be diligent at recycling the word into future lessons and encouraging the learners to use the word orally and, eventually, in their reading and writing. This vocabulary enrichment will aid the learners enormously in their reading comprehension.

### *Developing Background Concepts*

ESL literacy instructors teach not only vocabulary and fluency, but also the background concepts that give this vocabulary context and meaning. Because of their limited formal education, many LIFE lack various concepts that are generally taught in school. It is usually in formal schooling that we learn, for instance, about forming hypotheses or analyzing grammar into discrete units of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. It is also generally in school that we develop an understanding of science, geography, and the universe. Many cultures teach history orally, but this is often a very localized history, so LIFE may also lack an understanding of the wider world. Since LIFE may not have encountered many of these concepts before, they will need to be specifically taught them. Without fully understanding meaning, vocabulary acquisition becomes a less than useful exercise in rote memorization.

In higher-level literacy classes, LIFE need to be able to use the abstract concepts they encounter, but without identifying and understanding these concepts, the learners simply end up decoding without any understanding (Ernst-Slavit, Moore, & Maloney, 2002). In order to teach these concepts, the instructor must first identify what the concept is, then break it into sequences which slowly progress from concrete examples to more and more complex and abstract concepts, all the while recycling the vocabulary and the literacy skills (Muir, 2003). Concepts and understanding will slowly be built up and expanded upon with repeated exposure.

### *Developing Categorization and Classification*

Two particular concepts that LIFE may lack are categorization and classification, both of which build essential blocks in the development of abstract thinking (Feuerstein, 1980). To prepare for this abstract thinking, LIFE need to be able to organize and integrate new information into what they already know, and categorization and classification are both methods of doing this. Categorization must be formally taught in a concrete, step-by-step manner. Beginning in Foundation Phase, instructors can introduce the concepts of same and different, with different being the easier concept to understand. After mastering the visual discrimination needed to make simple comparisons of same and different, categorization can be introduced. An effective way to teach categories is to use basic charts with two or three columns and a picture or word bank. A good place to begin is to use two categories of vocabulary the learners already know and that are obviously distinct, such as clothing and food. As the concept of categories is acquired, more difficult distinctions and more categories can be introduced, again, going from oral to written.



In an effective ESL literacy classroom, learners gradually learn to apply different principles of classification and become aware of grouping and regrouping according to their needs. Games such as UNO or Crazy 8s can be introduced to teach “one-step differences” where two cards are identical except for one single thing they have different. Simple concrete exercises are used, such as classifying cars and bicycles as subsets of the set vehicles. Experience has taught us that abstract classifications, such as classifying nouns, verbs, and adjectives as parts of speech, can be introduced at Phase III. Classification across hierarchies can be taught using a family tree and then moving on to more abstract classifications such as creating a paragraph outline. Again, using vocabulary that the learner has already acquired, the instructor can move from the spoken

to the written, from concrete to more abstract, introducing a few new vocabulary classification words to assist in the tasks.

### *Developing Spatial Understanding*

Spatial concepts like map reading, perspective, and scale may also need to be taught. Initially learners will need to develop the concept that a two-dimensional picture can represent a three-dimensional object. In lower levels, LIFE may have difficulty recognizing a line drawing as a representation of, for example, a person. Many learners are also unfamiliar with using maps and diagrams. They may be unable to point to their country on a globe or identify rivers or other land marks that they know by name. In order to understand maps, they may need to be taught scale and perspective. Indeed, they may lack not only the vocabulary but also the relative system of reference necessary to describe spatial relationships; both the vocabulary and the reference system must be taught step-by-step in order to be able to successfully work with images and read maps and diagrams.



A starting point, once LIFE have learned a few prepositions, is to use realia. Using miniature furniture or farm equipment, the teacher can instruct the learners on where to put what. By Phase II, the instructor can draw a “map” of the farm or kitchen on the whiteboard. The learners can then move magnetic furniture or farm equipment around following the instructor’s directions. The learner progresses in being able to follow directions using three-dimensional objects to manipulating two-dimensional objects to finally “reading” a diagram or map.

### *Increasing Knowledge and Understanding*

In addition to these concepts outlined above, LIFE may lack what we think of as basic facts. For instance, they may not know much about their own country as this is not something they have been taught. Although they may be able to provide a bit of information when prodded, it is not always something they have consciously thought about, and they will need to be made aware of

the importance of an understanding of the world in their new home. The learners may not know that the earth rotates around the sun, that a cold is caused by a virus, or that a whale is a mammal. They may not know very much about aspects of science and experimentation or prediction and hypothesis. If the learners are in an ESL literacy program that focuses on academic readiness, they will need to be taught to approach science with curiosity.

### *Conclusions: Developing Oral Fluency, Vocabulary, and Background Concepts*

Becoming literate is more than simply learning to decode. Learners have to become active participants in their reading. This is done by continuing to develop their vocabulary, which will lead to improving their reading comprehension. They also need to develop critical concepts such as classification, spatial understanding, and basic knowledge of the world. Oral work is used to scaffold this literacy development by working from the oral to the written and breaking down the tasks into manageable chunks in a slow and steady fashion.

## Foundational Literacy Instruction

Foundational literacy is literacy at its most basic form; beginning foundational learners have no literacy whatsoever and need to be taught a range of skills before they can begin to “read” and “write” in its strictest sense, including the directionality required for following text, the understanding that text has meaning, the fine motor skills required to hold a pencil and make shapes with it, and the ability to distinguish between same and different. Foundational literacy is beginning literacy; in this chapter, it is separated from the other stages of literacy because it requires teaching an initial set of skills before learners can pick up a pencil or open a book. The other parts of this chapter deal with literacy beyond the foundational level, divided into oral, reading, writing, and strategy instruction.

Most ESL instructors are probably quite comfortable walking into a new class, doing a warm up activity to get to know the learners, and then opening up a text book or handing out an activity to begin the lesson. When teaching the foundational adult, however, instructors step outside that comfort zone.

They face a group of adults who can barely tell you their

Foundational literacy, also called pre-literacy, is the very lowest stage of literacy development. It includes the skills that learners will need to develop before they can begin to work with text, such as fine motor skills, visual discrimination, and the recognition that text has meaning. Learners who have never held a pencil before or who have never needed to distinguish between marks on a page will need to spend time developing hand-eye coordination and an understanding of same and different.

names and cannot write their names down, let alone open the book to the correct page. In a foundational literacy class, the instructor must figure out how to teach adults who are more than likely sitting in a classroom for the first time. Teaching foundational literacy can appear to be a daunting task, but there is also great joy in the foundational literacy classroom as learners pick up pencils for the first time and begin their development of literacy. For further information on Foundational Literacy, please see Chapter Thirteen.

This section focuses on important aspects of teaching foundational learners:

- what is foundational literacy?
- an effective foundational literacy classroom environment
- developing fine motor skills
- developing visual discrimination
- learning that text has meaning
- suggestions for supporting foundational learners
- developing oral communication

### *What is Foundational Literacy?*

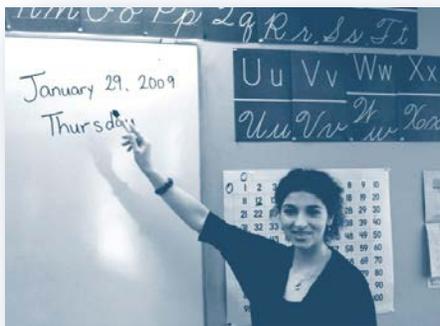
Foundational learners have few literacy skills whatsoever in either their first language or in English and may not even realize that literacy is essential in everyday communication in their new country. In terms of the CLB Phases, foundational learners are at the very beginning stages of Foundation Phase. Foundational “denotes a period of initial encounter with the behavioural practices of literate people at a personal and community level” (Gunn, 2007). This means that foundational learners are encountering literacy, and literate people, for the first time. These learners may be from foundational societies where the language has no written code, or they may simply have had no opportunity to learn to read or write. They almost always come from societies where the spoken word is used more commonly than the written word to relay information (Achren, 2006). It is in the foundational literacy classroom that these adults will begin the very first steps to developing literacy.

Because we do them so automatically, we are often unaware that reading and writing are very complex processes. According to research done in the field, reading can be broken down into four separate components (Burt, 2008): alphabetic (what we commonly think of as phonics), fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Foundational learners not only lack the knowledge of these four components, but also more basic skills which form the building blocks to reading, such as fine motor skills, visual discrimination, and the realization that print has meaning.

Foundational learners face an enormous task in the development of literacy. Before they can begin to learn to decode and build a sight word vocabulary, and well before they begin to make meaning of longer sections of text, these learners need to know that print conveys meaning and that it has a direction of left to right and top to bottom. If the learners are totally unfamiliar with reading and have never been around books, they may have to be taught how to hold a pencil and how to sit for long periods of time in a chair. They will also need to develop the concept that line drawings represent real, three-dimensional objects, a good step in understanding that lines on paper convey meaning. Foundational learners are unlikely to have had any exposure to formal classroom instruction and the classroom setting, so all classroom expectations will be new to them, such as waiting while someone else speaks and watching the instructor. It is also likely that these learners do not yet have a good command of spoken English, and that will also need to be taught.

### *An Effective Foundational Literacy Classroom Environment*

Research has shown that rather than having foundational learners integrated into a regular beginners class where they will rapidly fall behind (Gunn, 2007), it is much better to have a classroom dedicated specifically to foundational literacy (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2007; Jangles Productions, 2006; Bell & Burnaby, 1984). These learners need consistency, so having the same instructor for the duration of the class is also important (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2007). Most researchers strongly advise small learner numbers, since foundational adults are not independent learners. Inside the classroom, there is also a lot that an instructor can do to make an appropriate environment for effective learning. Instructors should create a print-rich environment if possible, with posters, word banks, language experience stories, and anything else that can help support learners posted on the walls. The materials used and posters displayed on the walls need to be both suitable for adults and culturally appropriate. Although unable to read or write, foundational adults have a wide range of knowledge and experience; they have raised families, farmed, and navigated their way through our complex immigration and refugee system. As one researcher argues, teaching “is most effective if it is tied to the lives of the learners and



reflects their experiences as community members, parents and participants in the workforce” (Wrigley, 1993). The physical classroom and the materials taught should reflect this.

Generally, foundational adults have immediate language needs and, since it is unlikely that they are going on to academia, the curriculum can focus on these needs. Common needs include using public transportation, going to the doctor, and learning the

names of the streets in their community (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2007). Finding existing classroom material for these integral settlement themes aimed at foundational adults, however, can be challenging. Similar to other ESL literacy levels, much of the materials have to be instructor-produced in order to ensure their appropriateness for the adult learner with no reading skills. Fonts must be large, clear, and consistent, while the page itself needs a great deal of whitespace. The use of authentic material, such as grocery store flyers or government ID, links the learning to the learners' lives, although this material must usually be modified by the instructor. In general, textbooks and pre-packaged materials are of limited use; even those designed for a literacy classroom often have to be modified into smaller units with several versions to be repeated (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2007).

In an effective foundational classroom, the three main skill areas that need to be specifically taught are fine motor skills, visual discrimination, and the realization that print has meaning. In addition to these skills, oral language development, especially vocabulary building, will also need to be taught.

### *Developing Fine Motor Skills*

Learners who have never held a pen before will need exercises to increase manual dexterity, hand-eye coordination, and fine motor skills. Writing in the air or in sand helps develop these skills before learners are able to grasp a pencil. Some learners benefit from using their fingers to trace over larger letters (like magnet letters). Many experts recommend gradually progressing from writing with markers on flip board paper to writing with pencils on smaller unlined paper. Whiteboards and blackboards are also good to practice fine motor skills on, with the added benefit of being able to erase anything the learner is not satisfied with. This reduces the risk of the task as the learner can control what stays on the board; being able to erase mistakes makes it less of a risk to make a mistake. Some learners who have rarely used their fine motor skills may take a bit of time to feel comfortable using a pencil, while others, who have perhaps done fine needle work, will make rapid progress. Once the learner is able to comfortably hold a pencil, pseudo-letters are often used to practice writing motions. This involves the learner practicing drawing circles and lines until they are comfortable enough to practice writing actual letters. Learners are usually eager to begin practicing real letters right away, in which case an ideal exercise is for them to practice copying their names. This is a meaningful exercise,



much more so than copying pseudo-letters, and one that has immediate relevance for the learner.

After pseudo-letters or name-writing practice, the learner can move on to forming all the letters of the alphabet, both capital and lower case. There are various teaching philosophies on the exact order of teaching the letters and on whether to teach capital or lower case letters first, and each method has its advantages, so the instructor and the learner can decide together. Learners often like to copy everything around them once they have caught on to using a pencil. In addition to copying their first and last names, they can copy their addresses and phone numbers, even doing so in a simple form. It can be helpful if the instructor types up a reference sheet for each learner with his or her personal information in a large, clear font and affixes this to the learner's binder or some other permanent spot. This way, with the instructor's guidance, the learner can continue to practice this meaningful and authentic task throughout the duration of the term.

The learners' name, and perhaps even other family members' names and their country, can be made into simple cloze exercises with a single letter missing, thus providing repeated opportunities to learn to spell these important words. Over weeks or months, the original is moved further and further away as the learner's skills improve. Learners progress from copying immediately beside or below the original, to copying from a separate paper on the desk, to copying directly from the board or overhead. Sitting at a desk and using a pencil is an intense activity and can be quite taxing on both the body and the mind, so it is crucial that it only be done for short bursts of time before moving on to other activities involving movement or oral practice.

Other exercises which are less intense, yet continue to develop pre-writing skills are cutting, folding, colouring, and drawing. For example, the class can make posters for the classroom walls by making collages of magazine pictures. One good example of this is to have learners find pictures that feature a particular colour, following a lesson on the names of the different colours. Alternatively, the learners can take turns drawing pictures on the board while the instructor calls out simple vocabulary items such as a flower or banana. This usually leads to laughter, which is a great destresser and shows the learners that learning can be fun.



### *Developing Visual Discrimination*

Visual discrimination is an important pre-reading skill and one that must be explicitly taught. LIFE may have little experience with paper and pictures. Line drawings may have little meaning. Even at higher levels of literacy, LIFE can have difficulty interpreting line drawings or cartoons. By Phase III, they are often able to recognize that a series of lines represents a person, but they might not understand that it's the same person in each frame of a cartoon. Instructors should begin working with drawings and images early on in the development of literacy. The concepts of same and different are also introduced at this stage to teach visual discrimination, with different being the easier of the two and introduced first. The concept of different can be introduced first using real objects (three pens and one pair of scissors) and then with pictures on a page, then shapes, and finally letters. In an effort to minimize the cognitive burden on learners, the instructor should use consistent practices, such as always asking learners to cross out the different item.

At the same time as learners are becoming familiar with individual letters, they also need to acquire a bank of sight words. For instance, they need to recognize their name, along with other important words such as 911, EXIT, name, and OPEN (differences in capitalization are intentional). These sight words are learned as a chunk or shape and memorized in the same way literate learners do. Generally, foundational learners also have a desire to learn the alphabet, as this is what they associate with learning to read. Some time can be spent on putting individual ABC flashcards in order. For more beginning learners, magnetic letters are easier to manipulate than cards. This is a useful activity to introduce directionality as well.

### *Learning that Text has Meaning*

In addition to practicing penmanship and recognizing letters and sight words, learners need to become aware that, like the spoken word, written text conveys meaning and can be used to tell a story or give information. Walks around the school can be used to draw learners' attention to print around them as instructors point out any words they see such as STOP, PUSH, PULL, or EXIT. Instructors can create a print-rich environment by having the learners put up labels around the classroom for words like door, chair, whiteboard, and window. Learners' photos can be pinned on a world map with a string connecting the photo to the learner's country. City maps can be used to show learners their streets. Once learners have a dozen or more vocabulary words, the instructor can introduce the idea of matching picture cards to words. This can be done as a classroom-wide activity where the cards are matched on a magnetic whiteboard and then gradually progress to an activity where the learners do the matching individually or in pairs at their desk. The instructor is there to provide hints if needed so that each learner has a feeling of success.

Instructors can also vary the ways that activities are completed, depending on the focus of the activity. Manipulating cards and pictures is much less taxing for the learners than doing a worksheet matching exercise because, with cards, there is no writing involved, so the learner can fully concentrate on matching rather than on letter formation and copying.

To teach directionality, small sets of three or four pictures can be sequenced in a left to right, top down direction. Using the learners' lives, simple LEA (Language Experience Approach) stories can be written on the board. The instructor can read the story several times and then do a choral reading with the learners. Learners can be asked to point to or circle a certain letter or word (like their name or another familiar word). Words can be erased so that the learner supplies the missing words and the instructor writes in the supplied word. All of these sorts of activities help learners make the connection between words and meaning.

### *Suggestions for Supporting Foundational Learners*

Because foundational literacy learners lack experience with formal education, there are many things the instructor can do to facilitate learning. Many learners have never had an eye test and may need glasses. The middle-aged learners may need reading glasses, and even those who have glasses may not be in the routine of having them with them all the time for school. It is helpful to keep a few pairs of drugstore reading glasses in the classroom for these times. Creating routines in the classroom schedule helps learners feel comfortable and assists them in their learning. Because of their unfamiliarity with the classroom and western society in general, learners may need help internalizing the concepts of time and punctuality. This will need to be taught in class.

Repetition and review are important to all ESL learners, but for the foundational learner they are essential, since foundational learners are not able to go home and look up a word in the dictionary or reread their notes. The instructor is often the only reference guide for the learners, and the classroom is usually the only place where learning can take place.

Interspersed with all of these tasks, there should be frequent breaks and changes in pace to help maintain the learners' concentration. Clapping games, singing, and board games help break up all this intensive mind work.

### *Developing Oral Communication*

Although this section has outlined a number of skills in the development of literacy, the foundational learner also needs to be taught meaningful oral communication. Learning the

spoken language is crucial as this is the main form of communication with this group, and they are good oral learners. Developing oral language is also a critical step in developing literacy. For a further discussion of developing oral communication and vocabulary, see the “Developing Oral Fluency, Vocabulary, and Background Concepts” section earlier in this chapter. One researcher sums up the value of learning English very succinctly: “Learning to speak English is one of the first steps they can take to get control of their lives” (Croydon, 2005).

### *Conclusions: Foundational Literacy Instruction*

Foundational learners are at the very beginning of a long process of acquiring literacy. They need to develop specific skills before they can be expected to open a book to page one and begin reading, or pick up a pencil and write their names. This includes developing fine motor skills, developing visual discrimination, and learning that print has meaning. As learners progress and acquire these skills, they can begin the process of building a sight word bank and copying letters. Foundational literacy can be challenging to teach, but also highly rewarding, as the world unlocked by literacy becomes visible to learners for the first time.

## Reading Instruction

Most adult educators are used to the idea of reading to learn, mostly because educators themselves are generally highly adept at learning and engaging with information and ideas from text (for example, the process instructors and program coordinators go through when they read a handbook on ESL literacy). The role of reading in ESL literacy instruction, however, is entirely different. Learners with Interrupted Formal Education are in the stages of developing literacy: they are learning to read. This means that ESL literacy instruction must be quite different from mainstream ESL, where instruction uses book-guided exercises about rules, organizational patterns, and hypothetical situations. This is very abstract. Where do we start when we are faced with a classroom of adult learners who see the alphabet as meaningless squiggles? These

learners have often led very practical lives focused on the tangible here and now; they have had little schooling but have adapted successfully to a hands-on training mode of learning. We must consider who these learners are. What are their strengths? What new skills do they need to acquire? How can we make language and literacy training hands-on and concrete?



Reading is a complicated process and there is a whole series of skills that LIFE will need in order to develop literacy. Not all learners begin at the earliest stages of literacy development, but for the sake of understanding the overall progression of learning to read, this section begins with the most basic skills and moves forward from there. However, reading is a highly involved process, and every learner is different, bringing different abilities, strengths, and challenges to the classroom, so these skills should not be viewed as a series of steps, where one is completed before another is begun, but rather as elements in fluid development. Learning to read includes:

- developing sight words
- recognizing phonetic clues
- understanding sentences
- sequencing and directionality
- using reading strategies

### *Developing Sight Words*

LIFE usually have poor phonological awareness, and it can take them quite some time to catch on to decoding words using phonetic strategies (i.e. sounding out a word). Rather than starting reading instruction with phonics, instructors should begin with building a sight word vocabulary (a bank of words they recognize without decoding; literate readers read almost entirely through recognizing sight words.). LIFE will need quite a repertoire of sight words to read with any facility. When you are working with LIFE, start with words from their own experience: their own name, brand names, or signs. Only work with words the learners understand orally. Go for walks and read signs, such as push, pull, exit, and stairs. Make labels for everything in the classroom: door, window, or desk. Pick out words from flyers. Have learners cut out pictures to make their own picture dictionaries, labeling pictures with your help.



As learners are developing sight words, always keep checking that they can discriminate the sound of the words they are using from other words, and that they know the meaning of the words. Through tracing, copying, seeing labels, and drilling with flashcards, students learn to recognize the configuration of familiar words. It is still necessary to make sure the learners are aware of the precise word, for example the difference between “Calgary Foods” and “Cargill

Foods.” Check that learners have an accurate concept of a word’s meaning. Do they understand the differences in the relationships between “under” and “over.” “up” and “down,; and “top” and “bottom?” Learners who are developing sight words benefit from a lot of opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of vocabulary through Total Physical Response.

### *Phonetic Clues*

Although most practiced readers read almost entirely through recognizing sight words, readers still need phonetic understanding. This helps not only in reading, but also in the development of listening and writing. Work on building up sight vocabulary while introducing the use of phonetic clues for word recognition. First, work on letter recognition. Learners may confuse M,N,W; E,F; and b,p,d (differences in capitalization here are intentional). Practice visually and aurally discriminating between problem letters, alone and in words. One difficult area is that learners may not hear the exact English sound that corresponds to the English use of the letter. The English sound may not be in the repertoire of sounds for their first language. Thus, pronunciation and listening are vital to learning to read. Show them the position of the tongue, lips, and teeth for English phonic sounds. Work on auditory and visual discrimination with minimal pairs, such as cat/sat or pat/pan. Use initial, medial, and final sounds as clues, but don’t decode words phonetically right from the start. Trying to decode an entire word as a beginning reader can be a bit disheartening; it is important to recognize that many, many English words have irregular spelling and are difficult to decode phonetically (light, for example). Rhyming words help learners recognize similar patterns of letters in similar sounding words.

### *Understanding Sentences*

When learners begin to read sentences, they tend to read word by word, slowly and deliberately. When a text is approached this way, the reader is focused on individual words and does not piece the words together into meaningful phrases. This means that they don’t understand what they are reading. However, LIFE almost always hear language holistically, focusing on meaning, not analyzing individual words. In fact, learners are not always aware that oral phrases are comprised of individual words. “Whasyunname” might seem like one discrete language item, not a structure of four individual words, “What is your name?” Introduce phrases and short sentences right from the beginning. Encourage learners to read phrase by phrase, not word by word. This process is called chunking. Through chunking, learners’ reading comprehension will improve more quickly.

In order to build the connections between words and to make meaning from longer phrases and sentences, use Language Experience Stories (LEA) as the first texts. In LEA, learners dictate

what they want the instructor to write on a flip chart to create a story. Because the language comes directly from the learners themselves, the ideas, structure, and vocabulary are perfectly tailored to their comprehension capabilities and interests. Every phrase is meaningful. LEA stories demonstrate to learners how spoken ideas translate into print. For more information on LEA, please see Chapter Seven.

### *Sequencing and Directionality*

Sequencing and directionality are two skills that experienced readers may take for granted, but they are absolutely crucial to beginning learners and will need to be taught explicitly. Some beginning learners have trouble with left to right progression and have a tendency to skip words. This generally means that the learners are having trouble controlling eye movements. Arabic or Farsi speakers have an added difficulty in that any literacy training in their native language has been right to left. There are a number of ways to deliberately teach learners sequencing and directionality. Have learners put pictures into order from left to right. Ask the learners to sequence phrases on flashcards from left to right into English sentences, and then have the learners read them. Put a small piece of cardboard under the line of the text to encourage the eye to follow a line. Read with the learner while using a finger or pencil to follow the line, making sure the learner is actually reading. In this technique, called paired reading, the instructor adjusts his or her reading speed so that the instructor and the reader speak together.

Help learners with eye-tracking by providing strips of cardstock to lay beneath the line they are reading. This helps learners understand how lines work on a page and trains their eyes to follow a line.

In the beginning, the simple mechanics of reading is a great challenge. The eye must be controlled to move from left to right in a straight line. Other skilled tasks, such as carpentry or sewing, demand that the eyes sweep all over the work. As the reader's eyes move along this straight line, he or she must repeatedly recognize one letter configuration, similar to many other such

configurations, as representing a particular word. Then the reader has to note if there is an "s" on the end to show there is more than one. The eye has to take in these words in chunks or phrases because words depend on the words around them for meaning. After the reader's brain has managed to take in all these complex perceptions, the brain has to make sense of it. With all that is going on, the learner must become an "active" reader. The deliberate use of reading strategies – ways of decoding and making meaning – will help LIFE to become active readers and to progress as learners.

Once LIFE have developed a basic sight word bank and have learned some decoding strategies, the next most important step in learning to read is to actively use reading strategies. The meaning embedded in text is never self-evident, although it may seem that way to proficient readers who have long forgotten their early struggles with reading. Learners must acquire a variety of strategies and techniques to become effective readers. The actual number of strategies that good readers use is staggering, but initially it is a good idea to focus on several core strategies. When teaching strategies, be as obvious and explicit as possible. Choose one or two strategies to highlight at a time, and draw the learners' attention to the use of these strategies, showing the learners when they can use a strategy, how to use it, and when they have done it correctly. For a further discussion of strategies, see "Strategy Instruction" later on in this chapter. We have included some of the more important reading strategies here.

**Identify the Purpose of the Text:** When learners begin to use their literacy skills for everyday living, they must be able to identify the purpose of a text. Are they reading to find a piece of information, to get instructions to complete a task, to understand an opinion, or to be amused by a human interest story? Are they looking through the newspaper to see if there is anything interesting? Discuss with the learners the purpose of a text and the best way to read it. Should the reader skim, scan, visualize, or summarize? Bring several different kinds of texts into the classroom and discuss their use. LIFE should be encouraged to think about reading in different ways as soon as they start to read simple short paragraphs, at Phase III.

**Activate Prior Knowledge and Make Predictions:** Active readers link new information to previously acquired information and take an active role in making meaning from a text. Help learners to become active readers. Establish that reading for comprehension is the goal, rather than simply decoding. Predicting the ideas in the text before starting to read teaches learners to add the new information in the reading passage to the old information in their heads. Help learners make predictions from all the clues available. Discuss the title or illustrations. What does this tell us to expect in the text? Brainstorm likely vocabulary. After the learners have read a bit of text, ask "wh-" questions to check on comprehension and discuss whether their initial predictions were correct. Get the learners to predict what will come next. Let them read most of a story and predict the ending.

**Use Contextual Clues:** Active readers also figure out the meaning of new words using contextual clues. Give the learners a passage with an unfamiliar word underlined. Have the learners look for clues in other descriptive words, verbs, and location phrases in the sentence to lead them to the meaning of the word. Lead the learners through a process of figuring out the meaning of the word by asking a series of questions: What does it look like? What do you do with it? Where do you find it? Give the learners fill-in-the-blank exercises, making them focus

on contextual clues. When teaching learners to use contextual clues, it is important to know that a learner must be able to read over 90% of the words in a text before they have enough context to be able to understand the missing 10%. When focusing on teaching a strategy, choose a text that will be reasonably easy for learners to understand so that the challenge becomes the use of the strategy rather than understanding the general meaning of the text.

**Scan:** Scanning is a process of reading faster than usual to find specific pieces of information. Active readers often scan for information in ads, notices, and timetables. When scanning, the eye does not move from left to right along a line but sweeps the format, looking for specific words and numbers. In order to follow text at all, beginning readers have been practicing a very controlled left to right eye movement along a straight line, starting at the top left corner, and they may be resistant to practicing a new eye pattern. However, once LIFE become reasonably proficient at left-right directionality, they should be taught to scan. They will need lots of practice scanning formatted writing, such as ads, notices, and timetables, before they start to scan paragraphs for information, because embedded information in sentences and paragraphs is much harder to find.

To find information in a paragraph efficiently, the reader has to scan the text for the key words that will lead to the passage with the right information. Once learners are ready to scan paragraphs, teach them to use logical strategies to find information in a text. Discourage trial and error guessing. This process will also help with overall comprehension. Learners must understand what they are looking for before they begin to scan a paragraph for information. Teach learners to find:

- words that refer to people to find out “who”
- time phrases to find out “when”
- phrases with location prepositions to find out “where”
- phrases with “by” or “with” to find out “how”
- phrases that match cause to effect to find out “why”

A good step is to teach learners to predict the kind of words that will lead to the information they are looking for and then have them scan for those words. With practice, learners become more efficient at finding information in text. At higher levels of ESL literacy, make sure that learners comprehend what they are scanning for by asking questions using synonyms or slightly different phrasing. Teach them to find the part of the text that matches the right meaning rather than simply the right sequence of words.

**Skim:** Skimming is reading faster than usual to find only the main ideas of a text. Finding the main idea in a text is not only a goal in itself but also the first step in improving retention of detail. Have the learners skim a passage for the gist. Discuss it with them so that they are quite

sure of the broad meaning. Then have them do a second reading for the details. There are different ways to skim a text, such as focusing on key words or reading the first and last sentences of the paragraphs.

It is not easy for beginning readers to make the connection from words and individual sentences to the main idea. Have learners match word banks of eight or ten words to statements of main ideas. Discuss their reasons for linking a particular idea to a particular word bank. Highlight key words in a short paragraph, uncover the paragraph just long enough for learners to read the key words, cover the paragraph, and then discuss what could be the gist of the text. Do a newspaper scavenger hunt with more advanced learners, in which they must find a happy story, a tragic story, a sports story, and an international news story.

**Make an Outline of the Text and Summarize:** Outlining the order in a piece of writing helps inexperienced readers to retain what they have read. Learners who can't retell the sequence of events in a narrative have little sense of chronological order and don't see the pattern of organization in the story. Help learners build these skills. Give them a story that comes with a sequence of pictures. Copy the pictures and cut them up, and have the learners write a caption for each picture that tells the part of the story the picture illustrates. After this, the learners can move on to sequencing the written passages without the pictures. Next ask the learners to retell the whole story. See if they can take the next step and summarize the story.

**Use Inference:** Many LIFE need encouragement to imagine the hypothetical and to go beyond a self-referenced world. They may not understand the impersonal "you." When asked, "How do you get to The Bay?" they might respond, "I don't go to The Bay. I never shop there." Such learners often find only a very literal meaning in a text and miss the inferences. Start discussing inferences using statements with easy meanings to infer: "If you go out, make sure you have your umbrella" means it is probably going to rain. Continue to develop an understanding of inference. Even learners at lower levels can understand simple inference; this understanding should develop as the skills of the learner and the complexity of the texts grow.

#### **Reading Strategies**

Identify the Purpose of the Text  
Activate Prior Knowledge and Make Predictions  
Use Contextual Clues  
Scan  
Skim  
Make an Outline of the Text and Summarize  
Use Inference  
Recognize Other Points of View  
Visualize

**Recognize Other Points of View:** Many LIFE are used to a fatalistic view of the world and have never wondered "what if?" and "why?" These learners may have trouble linking cause and effect if it is outside their immediate experience. Often they graft their own moral views and

opinions on to characters in a story, unable to comprehend that someone might think differently from them. This makes it difficult to understand different points of view, which also means that it is challenging to differentiate between fact and opinion. However, all of these strategies are necessary steps to becoming good readers. Give learners examples of factual information and personal opinions and discuss how they differ.

**Visualize:** Since many LIFE have not had the luxury of spending time on imaginative speculation, they might need encouragement to visualize characters and settings in their mind. Good readers make movies in their heads while reading a story, so encourage your learners to find evocative photographs in magazines to illustrate their vision of the story. This is an important step in reading for vicarious experience and personal enjoyment.

### *Conclusions: Reading Instruction*

As LIFE evolve as readers, they need instructors who expose them to texts that expand their understanding, who spark their imagination, and who are truly interested in discussing the learners' observations and opinions. When teaching LIFE to read, begin with building a sight word bank of important, familiar words. Remember that all vocabulary must be mastered orally before it is attempted in print. As the learners' sight word banks develop, begin teaching decoding skills, and then comprehension skills. Reading is much more than decoding letters and words, although decoding is also important; true reading comprehension involves a complex cooperation of skills as LIFE learn to make meaning out of text.

## Writing Instruction

The human mind has been pre-wired to make sense of language, and everyone goes through an unconscious process of patterning communication to make it comprehensible and effective. School formalizes this process, teaching learners the often arbitrary rules of grammar as well as conventions of rhetoric. LIFE, however, haven't been in school long enough to develop abstract concepts of the way language works. This is actually an advantage for those who have a "good ear" for language and can quickly pick up the rhythms and sound patterns of spoken English. Many LIFE are very fluent in spoken English and have a wonderful colloquial quality to their speech. They haven't been bogged down, over-monitoring every sentence for grammatical accuracy. On the other hand, the process that generates their oral language often fails them as soon as they pick up a pencil. There are a number of things to consider when teaching writing, including:

- letter and word formation
- composing sentences
- writing topics
- spelling
- correcting writing
- composing paragraphs



### *Letter and Word Formation*

Some learners have difficulties with letter formation and need time to form letters carefully. Have learners do various activities to practice fine motor skills such as cutting, pasting, and handling small pieces of paper. Copying also plays a very important role in acquiring writing skills and allows beginning learners to get a proficient piece of writing down on paper using a model. In everyday life, accurate copying is of utmost importance to record essential names, addresses, and telephone numbers. In the beginning, while letter formation is still a chore, spend the most time on very practical tasks, such as filling out information forms. A common ESL literacy activity is labeling pictures to reinforce new vocabulary, but labelling can actually be a very tedious chore, and matching exercises reinforce word recognition more effectively. Learners can draw a line to match pictures to words or glue pictures beside words. If you want learners to focus on word recognition, don't distract them with the chore of producing written letters, for they are two very distinct tasks to the beginning writer.

Composing sentences is an ongoing challenge, even for learners who are quite fluent in English. To effectively use language for writing, a person must see how words relate to each other. The formal study of language in school teaches these relationships between words, but most LIFE

### **Writing Stories, Making Books**

This activity takes place over several lessons and involves each learner creating a book. After spending some time discussing folktales from their childhood and looking at some sample published stories, learners are encouraged to tell their classmates a familiar folktale. The learners then write their stories down, with support as necessary. Next, the instructor helps the learners edit their stories for clarity, taking care to ensure that learners' voices are maintained.

The next step is making the physical book. This is done out of cardstock, paper, and scrapbooking materials, with yarn or string to bind the book together. The learners design the covers and copy their stories into their own books. Once the books are completed, the instructor can invite another class to visit, so that the learners can share their work. This bookmaking project allows learners to experience the entire writing process: generating ideas, writing, revising, editing, publishing, and finally sharing their stories.

have never analyzed language in this way. LIFE with very low levels of formal education are often unaware that sentences are made up of individual words. As mentioned previously, they see communicative expressions in blocks such as "Howaya?" or "Wadzamatta?" This is one of the reasons why these learners will copy phrases letter by letter without spaces between words. Not only are they totally absorbed with letter formation, but the break between words is insignificant for them. Remember that LIFE have acquired their skills through hands-on training. Don't let difficulties with the mechanics of writing become a barrier to learners composing their own sentences. They can put together words that you have already printed and cut out. Arranging flashcards in pocket charts or on a magnetic white board is ideal. Learners may need a lot of experience manipulating flashcards into sentences before they can go through the process mentally.

Language Experience Stories (LEA) let LIFE create stories without worrying about the mechanics of writing. The learners dictate what they want the instructor to write on a flip chart to create a story. The theory of LEA holds that stories are written down exactly as the learners dictate, grammar mistakes and all, since pure LEA stories are meant to be a tool to teach beginning reading skills, using only the language in the learners' experience. When LEA is used for writing instruction, however, the instructor must decide to what degree grammar mistakes should be corrected. There is a concern that ignoring structural problems reinforces the learners' mistakes, but on the other hand, changing the learners' language frustrates their attempts to author stories. The instructor must balance

adjusting language for teaching purposes with showing great respect for learners' efforts. Corrections should come from the learners in a spirit of collaboration and changes should be approved by the original author.

LIFE construct sentences most effectively by following their own oral patterns, not by applying abstract grammar rules. Unfortunately, they tend to hear only the stressed words in English and often miss the unstressed words. The verb "to be," articles, prepositions, and auxiliary verbs do not usually mean much to them. They don't have the grammar sense that would make them aware that there must be something in the spoken sentence that they aren't hearing clearly. They focus on a sentence as a purely communicative tool rather than as a grammatical entity. Making them hear all the elements in the sentence and getting them to incorporate those elements into the



sound patterns in their heads will prove more productive than pounding grammar rules into their heads.

In order to teach all the elements of the sentence, try teaching pronunciation at the sentence level, making learners aware of the rhythm of the sentence, including stressed and unstressed words. Tapping out a rhythm can be an effective tool. Scrambled sentences on flashcards also make learners deal with all the elements in a grammatical sentence, even the unstressed

prepositions and auxiliary verbs. By physically arranging flashcards into sentences, LIFE can compose, focusing only on meaningful sound patterns without the distracting worry over letter formation and spelling. They can easily experiment with various patterns until they find one that is correct. The flashcards are easily switched around and leave no hardcopy of their failed attempts, so this is a low-risk activity. The learners are encouraged to try.

Punctuation is best explained to literacy learners while a text is read aloud, especially at lower levels. Periods come where the voice drops and stops. Commas come where the voice stops a little bit but doesn't drop. Question marks come when the voice stops and goes up. LIFE generally won't appreciate that a period comes after a complete thought with a subject and a predicate until the later stages of Phase III. Long before then, teach punctuation as a part of pronunciation.

## Writing Topics

What to write about can be as much of a problem as how to write it. It is hard for learners to feel enthusiastic and creative about writing when they have little confidence in their ability. Guided

### Getting Started

A dream...

My favourite place...

My sister/brother...

My first day in Canada...

Someone who taught me something...

The weather...

What I do every day...

My house in my country...

A day when I was happy...

compositions let learners write about themselves without the worry of generating ideas and structuring work.

Give the learners a series of questions, have them answer questions in complete sentences, and then have them organize the sentences into paragraphs. Composition can also be guided by a series of pictures. Have learners take their own series of photographs to inspire a personal story of a party or field trip. The picture sequence takes care of chronological order. Celebrate the learners as authors by collecting their stories into booklets with attractive formats and illustrations. Have learners create simple stories related to their heritage and collect them into booklets for their children or to share with other

classes so their writing has a meaningful purpose.

What not to write can also be a problem for practical tasks. Summarizing is usually associated with note-taking, but the skill is needed for much more basic everyday tasks, such as efficiently writing down the essentials in a phone message. Learners should be able to start with a transcript of a phone message that they boil down to the essential message, taking out the social niceties and extra detail. After that, they can listen to a simulated taped message over and over again to take down an effective message. Making choices about what to put in and what to leave out in brief messages prepares learners to work at sticking to the main idea when they write paragraphs. Many LIFE come from cultures with a strong oral tradition, and staying strictly on topic is not a prized characteristic in their literature. The impersonal logic of English prose is foreign. Lots of discussion before writing and introducing techniques such as idea mapping and brainstorming will help learners to stay on topic.

## Spelling

Like all writers of English, spelling is a problem. Even native English speakers often have difficulties with spelling and regularly use dictionaries or the spell checker on the computer. Encourage learners to check spelling just like everybody else. Start with picture dictionaries and move on to word lists and then learner dictionaries. Be aware that it will take them a long time to write anything if they rely on copying every word from a word list or a picture dictionary. Learners must also be encouraged to take risks and try spelling on their own or use inventive

spelling. Using what phonics they know and spelling syllable by syllable often works. Thinking of a rhyming word they know how to spell and changing the initial consonant is a good strategy. Learners need to acquire a bank of words they can spell and some class time must be devoted to spelling.

There are various techniques for studying spelling; the best technique for each class will depend on the learners' level and preferred learning style. Visual learners will look at the word, putting a photograph of it in their memory, close their eyes and visualize it, and then check to see if they have it correctly in their visual memory. Aural learners will repeatedly spell the word out loud to set the pattern in their aural memory or spell syllable by syllable phonetically. Kinesthetic learners benefit from writing the word over and over again. As learners progress, spelling rules for silent "e," adding endings after long and short vowels and silent "gh" will help. Encourage learners to experiment with various methods until they find one that brings them success.

### *Correcting Writing*

Learners in ESL literacy classes need to have time in class to write as the instructor constantly circulates, giving encouragement, advice, suggestions for revision, and guided support. Correction should be immediate and positive, as opposed to correction in pen handed back days later. Class volunteers give learners more encouragement and individual attention. In the end, there is really only one way to become a good writer and that is to write. To become better writers learners must write, check, revise, rewrite, check, revise, rewrite, and so on and so on.

An excellent tool for learning writing is a dialogue journal. This is a journal that goes back and forth between the learner and the instructor. The topic of the journal varies depending on the learner and the instructor; either one can bring up new topics or ask questions. The focus of the journal is on communication through writing, rather than correct grammar and spelling, so the instructor should model correct usage rather than correct the learner's writing. This is most effective if the learners are often reminded to read their instructor's writing carefully and look for words for spelling or patterns for sentences. In a true dialogue journal, the instructor contributes as much as the learner, choosing how much to reveal to the learner in terms of his or her personal life. As learners develop as writers, however, they are often capable of writing several pages in a sitting in their journals. In this case, the instructor must balance workload and effective responses, choosing how much to reply (Peyton & Reed, 1990).

## *Composing Paragraphs*

LIFE progress from copying to filling in blanks in models to composing sentences to composing paragraphs. The more learners have to write independently, the greater the burden is on the learner. Begin the process of learning to compose paragraphs with discussing topics; in a paragraph, all sentences must be about the main topic. Learners can write beginning paragraphs by answering a series of questions and stringing their answers together to make a paragraph. When they feel comfortable with this, progress to simple paragraphs about highly familiar topics, such as what they do each day, or a description of a member of their family. From there, learners can learn the parts of a paragraph, including the topic sentence, supporting arguments, examples, and the concluding sentence. Models are highly useful in teaching paragraph writing. Show learners as many models as necessary, taking apart the models and examining how each sentence fits into the whole.

## Tips for Use ▼

Title page for a dialogue journal

Helps learners identify expectations

Dialogue journals provide an excellent opportunity for regular fluency writing

## Introduction to a Dialogue Journal

### What is a dialogue journal?

A dialogue journal is a place where you have a conversation in writing. Your teacher will give you time in class to write in your journal. Your teacher will write back to you in your journal. You can then write back to your teacher in your journal, in writing.

This is a chance to practice your writing. You can experiment and try out new words or new forms. If you are learning something in class, you can practice using it in your dialogue journal. Your teacher will not correct your grammar, but will model correct spelling and correct grammar for you. Read your teacher's writing carefully! If you have made a mistake, your teacher might use the word correctly.

### What should I write about?

You can write about anything you like. You can talk about your thoughts, your home country, Canada, a movie you saw, a book you're reading – anything you like! You can share your thoughts with your teacher. You can also ask your teacher questions or tell your teacher about a problem you're having in class. Your teacher will do his or her best to help you.

Your teacher will keep your journal and everything you say confidential. This means that he or she will never tell anyone what you write in your journal, and will never show it to anyone without your permission.

## Conclusions: Writing Instruction

Writing is a life-long process of learning; this is true of all writers, no matter how old they are when they begin to write. There are several overriding factors in teaching LIFE to write. The first is encouragement; learners should be helped to build their self-esteem and the worth of their voices. Celebrate their writing, no matter what level; publish it and encourage them to share it with others. The second is to view writing as communication rather than an academic exercise. Writers will progress faster if they understand that there is a purpose to what they are writing. The third is to teach LIFE to follow a writing process, depending on the level. Encourage learners to get ideas, plan their writing, write a first draft, revise for ideas, edit for language and structure, and then to make a final copy. The final key factor in teaching writing is to give learners time: writing takes time and practice. Let learners do most of their writing in a supported atmosphere in class. Don't assume that they have a quiet place for writing outside of the classroom. Provide lots of time and opportunities to write. LIFE will progress as writers – they simply require an effective environment and time to explore their voices.

## Strategy Instruction

For Learners with Interrupted Formal Education, it is not only content that is missing from their educational experience. Learning strategies and problem-solving, organizational, self-management, and reflection skills are continually revisited in a formal educational setting, but are understandably absent from the experiences of learners who have not been “in class.”

Bridging these gaps, however, is not an insurmountable task. Adult learners appreciate and rightfully demand transparency in their learning. Teaching learners strategies is effectively giving them the tools to become better writers, readers, speakers, and listeners, and at the same time providing them with a behavioural checklist for benchmarking their own learning.

Consider this handbook. Its purpose is to assist in the development of effective curricular programming for LIFE. It will be used as a reference guide in the same way that strategy information will be put into practice



by learners. In teaching strategies explicitly, instructors enable learners to ask and answer the following questions:

- Am I learning well?
- How do I know if I'm learning well?
- How can I learn more successfully?

### *Promising Practices in Teaching Strategies*

**Don't Overload Learners:** Teach strategies one at a time. This gives learners a chance to absorb the strategy into their learning process, so that they are actually using it and benefitting from it.

**Revisit and Recycle Strategies Throughout the Class:** Touching on a strategy once or twice is only empowering if the learner understood and applied the strategy the first and second times it was presented. Continue to explicitly use strategies after they have been taught. Draw learners' attention to when they could use a particular strategy, or to whenever they have used a strategy effectively. Reinforce learning.

**Make Strategies Accessible:** Focus on teaching a strategy and ensure that the introduction is accessible to all LIFE. Make it obvious and transparent. When teaching a reading strategy, for example, choose a text that is relatively easy for the class to understand, so that the focus is on the use of the strategy and not decoding the meaning of the words. For example, when teaching inference, choose a story that the entire cohort will understand, and where the inference is obvious:

*Jack woke up and got dressed. He looked out of the window and sighed.  
He wasn't happy. He put on a sweater and his raincoat. He pulled on his  
rubber boots. He got out his umbrella.*

Instructor: *What is the weather like outside?* Elicit responses.  
*How do you know?* Elicit responses.  
*You just used a strategy that all good readers use.  
It is called inferring.*  
Define and repeat with another text.

Of course, not all LIFE will be able to have this discussion because the range of speaking ability is so diverse. However, there are many ways to introduce strategies, even at lower levels.

Taking five minutes at the start of each session to talk through the timetable for the day, or having learners organize their binders for the last five minutes of every session, are repeated activities that hopefully, through extensive modelling and repetition, become habits. The benefits of these habits should become apparent to learners without having to explain why when the learners don't have the language to be able to enter into that discussion. As learners become increasingly proficient in oral English, they will be able to engage in discussions about strategies.

There are many strategies that are possible to use in reading, writing, and learning throughout the ESL literacy Phases. Practiced readers and writers – people who have had the opportunity to have a formal education – use hundreds of strategies when dealing with text and learning. We have chosen to explore some key strategies for each of these three areas. These lists provide a good starting place for learners and their instructors.

## An Overview of Reading Strategies

Name of Strategy	What Does the Learner Do? What Does the Learner Ask?	Why is the Strategy Effective?
Previewing and Predicting	<i>Before reading a text, look at: pictures, the title, subheadings, captions – what information does this tell us? What could this text be about?</i>	Helps recall information, provide context, and generate vocabulary. Encourages active reading.
Self-Monitoring	<i>Do I understand what I'm reading? What can I do to help my understanding? Go back and re-read; find meaning of some words and then re-read; read on to see if there is more helpful information.</i>	Helps learners identify why they don't understand and encourages them to use the text and context to find clarity.
Visualizing	<i>When I am reading, can I make a movie in my head? What can I see? What are the characters doing?</i>	Helps learners tap into visual experiences and memories to draw parallels, provide context, deduce meanings, and make predictions.
Retelling	<i>What happened at the beginning/middle/end? Who are the characters in the story? What happened in the story? Does this remind me of other stories I have read? Anything in my own life?</i>	Helps learners sequence, prepare for discussion, and evoke personal connections from experience that enable inference.
Scanning	<i>What do I want to find out? What are the key words that will help me find that information? Just look for that word. Am I looking for a date? Read quickly to find numbers – don't read every word.</i>	Helps learners to quickly find specific information in a text.

## An Overview of Writing Strategies

Name of Strategy	What Does the Learner Do? What Does the Learner Ask?	Why is the Strategy Effective?
Copying	<i>Look at the words on the board and the words on my paper. Do they look the same? What is different? Are the words in the same place? Do I need to move the words?</i>	Learners begin to analyze their writing, improve their writing, and self-correct mistakes.
Activating Prior Learning	<i>Before starting to write, look around the room at posters and signs. Can I see anything that is helpful? Can I find anything that I know I need to practice? Is there a picture to help me remember the previous days' learning?</i>	Provides learners with starting points, removes concerns about spelling, and reduces the pressure that learners can put on themselves to remember everything.
Brainstorming	<i>Find pictures, draw images, write words that I think of when I talk about a subject. Ask classmates to explain their choices. Did this give me some new ideas?</i>	Prepares learners for writing by collecting and evaluating all of their ideas about a topic, as well as providing starting points.
Organizing Ideas	<i>Circle the most important information from my brainstorm. What do I want to say first? Why? Will my reader know what I am writing about? What is the next thing that I want to write?</i>	Enables learners to explain and justify their ideas and opinions, and listen and evaluate the opinions of others.
Reading Aloud	<i>Before I start writing, what do I want to write? Say it out loud to a partner. Does my partner understand? Did he or she make some constructive comments? Did what I say have a beginning, a middle, and an end?</i>	Allows learners to practice and repeat, to edit, to listen for mistakes, and to peer edit before writing.

## An Overview of Learning Strategies

Name of Strategy	What Does the Learner Do? What Does the Learner Ask?	Why is the Strategy Effective?
Organizing a Schedule	<i>What is the number of my classroom? What time does class start? What days do we have computer lab? When is the college closed? When is my homework due?</i>	Enables learners to manage their learning and be prepared, as well as transfer these skills into home and community life.
Organizing Binders	<i>Where does this activity go? What kind of work is it? What other work is it similar to? Where can I find my work from last week? Where can I find that sentence that I was proud of?</i>	Learners begin to group, separate, and sort the different streams of their learning.
Asking for Help	<i>Do I understand? Does my partner understand? Is anyone in my group able to explain this to me? Can the instructor help me and explain this information in a different way? How can I let my instructor know that I am confused?</i>	Encourages participation, encourages ownership of their own learning, and ensures that misunderstandings are tackled at the source.
Sharing Understanding with Others	<i>I think this because...this is my opinion because...I agree...I disagree...In my home country...Last week...Did you mean...I think what you mean is...</i>	Enables learners to explain and justify their ideas and opinions, and listen and evaluate the opinions of others.
Reflecting on Work	<i>Select a piece of work from the week – am I proud of it? Why am I proud? What did I do differently? How could I improve this piece of work even more?</i>	Helps learners evaluate their own learning and identify their areas for development, and enables them to celebrate their successes.

### *Conclusions: Strategy Instruction*

Instructors should be prepared for the fact that the importance of strategies may not immediately resonate with learners. It may take a period of learners questioning why they are doing this before they can fully appreciate the purpose and benefits. This approach to learning could be new to many learners. Ensure that you are giving the time and meaningful reasons to use the strategies that you are introducing in class.

Without knowing *how to do*, we cannot *do* to the best of our abilities. Explicit strategy teaching plays an invaluable part in the empowerment of learners. When learners are taught the tools for success, they can then use them to thrive in the classroom and in their communities.

## Reading Strategies: Learner Self-Assessment

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Tips for Use

Student reflection of  
reading strategy useIncreases independence  
and ownership of learning

Check one box for each statement.

My Reading Strategies	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1. I <b>make predictions</b> and read to find out if I was right.			
2. I <b>re-read</b> the sentences before and after a word I do not know.			
3. I <b>look quickly</b> for information without reading everything.			
4. I look for the <b>main idea</b> and try to <b>summarize</b> the main events in my own words.			
5. I try to <b>retell</b> the story in the correct order.			

Which strategies do I want to practice more often?

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## Strategy Outcomes Overview – for Instructors

## Tips for Use

Helps instructors track outcomes and units

Improves planning and accountability

Strategy Outcomes		Units			
		#1	#2	#3	#4
Reading	1. Predicts and checks predictions				
	2. Rereads to increase comprehension				
	3. Scans for information				
	4. Looks for the main idea (and summarizes at adv level)				
	5. Retells a story (in sequence)				
Writing	1. Thinks and talks about topic before writing				
	2. Plans and/or brainstorms ideas				
	3. Puts ideas in order/organizes writing				
	4. Uses topic sentences				
	5. Edits and revises writing				
Language Learning	1. Groups/classifies words according to meaning				
	2. Highlights new vocabulary				
	3. Keeps a record of useful vocabulary				
	4. Asks for help and correction				
	5. Guesses meanings of new words from context (adv only)				
Test-Taking	1. Reviews before the test				
	2. Arrives early and prepared (with pen, pencil, eraser, etc.)				
	3. Looks over whole test before beginning				
	4. Reads instructions carefully				
	5. Checks answers				

## Conclusions

This chapter has given an overview of the core strands in an ESL literacy classroom: oral fluency, foundational literacy, reading, writing, and strategies. It has discussed promising practices in teaching these strands, focusing on what to teach in what order, and tips and techniques for teaching. It is important to remember that not all LIFE are at the same level; ESL literacy covers a broad range of abilities, and learners will bring different strengths and needs with them to the classroom. Although the sections of this chapter have generally presented each strand in the order in which things should be taught, remember that learners will start at different places and will take different amounts of time to master skills and strategies and progress to the next level. For a more detailed discussion of each CLB Phase of ESL literacy, from Foundation Phase to Phase III, please see Section Three of this handbook.

## Chapter 9 Outline

Introduction: Materials in the ESL Literacy Classroom

What Does Effective ESL Literacy Material Look Like?

Scaffolding and the Need for Modifying Materials for ESL Literacy

Modifying Materials: Where to Begin

Using and Adapting Authentic Materials

Using and Adapting Mainstream ESL Materials

Using and Adapting Adult Literacy Materials

Using and Adapting Children's Literacy Materials

Using Instructor-Created Materials

Using Learner-Created Materials

Conclusions



# Choosing, Adapting, and Designing Materials for LIFE

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## Objectives

To recognize the importance of appropriate materials in the ESL literacy classroom

To demonstrate what effective materials for ESL literacy look like

To show the advantages and challenges of modifying different kinds of materials

To show the advantages and challenges of using instructor- and learner-created materials

## Introduction: Materials in the ESL Literacy Classroom

The term *materials* refers to the tools that are used in a classroom to support learning different skills and strategies. This can mean books (probably what most people traditionally think of when they think of learning materials), hand-outs, worksheets or workbooks, and models of writing, but it can also include manipulatives such as vocabulary words on cardstock or flashcards; scissors, paper, and glue; counters for teaching numeracy; and all kinds of realia (objects from real life, including authentic texts such as letters or flyers). One of the great challenges for the ESL literacy instructor is to find materials that are appropriate for the learners. There are three considerations when choosing materials for the ESL literacy classroom. Materials should be appropriate for:

- ESL learners
- adult learners
- LIFE

Instructors can either find, adapt, or design materials for their learners, and most ESL literacy instructors end up doing all three, with an emphasis on the creation of their own materials. This chapter examines the necessity of modifying materials for the ESL literacy classroom, then looks at a number of sources of materials, examining the benefits and challenges of each source.

## What Do Effective ESL Literacy Materials Look Like?

Effective materials for an ESL literacy classroom must take a number of things into consideration in order to provide clear, understandable, level-appropriate supports for learning. ESL literacy materials should:

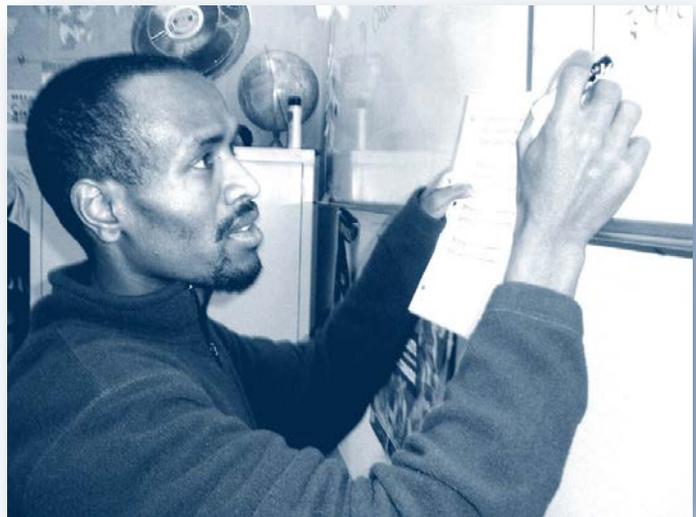
- include clear instructions
- be relevant
- be consistent
- be scaffolded
- recycle and reinforce outcomes and vocabulary
- be built around the strategies used in the classroom environment
- be connected to classroom tasks
- include plenty of white space

- use a large font size, depending on the level of the learners
- in lower levels, use a clear, consistent font, that resembles printing and doesn't have serifs, such as Century Gothic
- be laid out clearly and consistently on the page
- be visual
- use authentic drawings or pictures that are specific and relevant to the topic
- use progressive activities and tasks, building from one competency to the next
- promote access to resources and build independent strategies
- support and develop different strands: listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- be centred on the learners or directed by the learners
- support learner independence as much as possible

## Scaffolding and the Need for Modifying Materials for ESL Literacy

One of the most significant terms used in ESL, but most specifically in ESL literacy learning, is *scaffolding*. Scaffolding is the way in which an instructor approaches, organizes, and delivers a lesson; it also forms the underpinning for the creation and use of any material for the classroom. Scaffolding means exactly what it describes: a series of incremental supports for learning, providing opportunities for learners to move towards independence with greater competence, confidence, and the use of strategies. It means providing a system of support for learners as they develop their skills.

Effectively scaffolded materials allow instructors the opportunity to pinpoint and accurately assess an individual student's learning, as the learner begins to transition from dependent to independent learning tasks. Scaffolding allows instructors to monitor the amount of support a learner requires and flags when the need arises to gently remove these supports, allowing learners to develop increased confidence and competency. Scaffolding is directly related to the modification of materials for the ESL



literacy classroom: material is modified to build support – or to scaffold – learning activities in order to empower the learners and increase learning.

The skills, needs, and background experiences of LIFE are always different. This is true no matter how learners are streamed into levels, and in the context of ESL literacy learning today it is especially true because many programs are only able to provide one or two ESL literacy classes at a time, meaning that the classroom contains several levels. The main avenue an instructor has to connect learners to challenges appropriate to their language level is through the integration of modified material into the program and the scaffolded delivery of tasks.

Materials are never the actual focus of an ESL literacy class. Instead they should be the backdrop, and, as a backdrop, allow the learners to concentrate their full attention on the lesson. The instructor and the learners should not have to spend time on the explanation of unknown ambiguities in the materials. Good material support can expose what the learner hasn't experienced or doesn't know. All of this lessens the distractions, making it easier to follow instructions and stay on task. Organization is integral. You need to have a sense of your own instructional direction. Allow for contingency planning. For the learner, interacting with good materials is the first step towards autonomous learning and is highly motivating.

## Modifying Materials: Where to Begin

With material, there is a difference between development and modification. Modification allows you the opportunity to tailor your material to your learners (their needs and interests) and to the theme or topic in class. Modification also lets you support the content of the class and your teaching objectives. The development of material – in other words, creating materials from scratch – is similar to modification, but it generally requires a larger time commitment. Designing your own materials can take a long time, but it also allows you complete control over the form and content.

Whatever the motivation is to seek out great materials, remember that they are the supportive piece to your teaching, not in place of your teaching. They serve to reinforce or expose your objectives as the driving force behind content. They add to the overall contextual depth to your lessons. For such a subtle job, they can certainly be time-consuming to create.

When you're considering materials, ask yourself a series of questions:

- What is your thematic direction?
- What is your lesson objective?
- Are you focusing on form or function?

- Are you teaching a particular strategy?
- How can you best meet your objectives?

Once you've picked a piece of material that will work with your lesson, your teaching, your topic, and your learners, you will need to figure out what kind of material it is you're modifying:

- Where did you find the resource?
- Where can you find material, visuals, or realia on this topic?
- How can you ensure that visuals are authentic, relevant, and meaningful to your learners?
- How can you make sure they will support your outcomes and build proficiency?

Once you have the blueprint, you can then begin to look at how to build in scaffolding to best direct your learners on their journey towards increased independence. There are various categories of materials to facilitate this journey and an abundance of resources to choose from. The next sections examine these types of resources, their strengths and challenges, and the ways they can be used, explored, and modified.

## Using and Adapting Authentic Materials

What are authentic materials? They are anything that exists in the real world for native speakers of English, including newspapers, flyers, utility bills, letters from the government, or common forms. Depending on the level of the learners, a large amount of modification might be necessary, but the authenticity of the materials should be sustained as much as possible. It is also important to connect this material to a greater theme within the classroom environment. Connecting authentic materials to the theme in the classroom helps learners to make the transition from classroom learning to a wider picture of what they can do outside the class, as they are connected to real experiences relevant to their lives. Once a learner is able to connect in this way, he or she can tackle the more detailed and cognitively demanding processes involved in learning: the development of language, literacy, and learning strategies.

The modification of authentic material for LIFE requires attention to structure, vocabulary, and theme, as well as the division of the material into isolated, scaffolded chunks. Scaffolding the material involves breaking down the bigger picture into manageable, teachable elements that connect to a set of processes and strategies for the learner to re-use throughout the duration of the unit. This material has to be recycled and repeated.

There are many advantages to using authentic materials in the classroom, but they present a number of challenges as well, especially at lower levels of ESL literacy. Even at the lower

levels, however, authentic materials still need to be considered, although they may need to be completely reconstructed to make them accessible for learning.

### **Authentic Materials in the Classroom: A Newspaper Exploration**

As a guided reading element within the classroom, Phase II/III learners explored their local newspaper, which was connected to the overall unit theme, but which was well beyond their independent reading level. However, the activity was intended to support how to look for information and how to read with greater independence (a newspaper being one type of text with specific formatting, therefore needing different strategies to tackle it). The goal was not to read an entire newspaper, but to practice certain reading strategies.

The first task dissected the newspaper into section headings, and the learners then brainstormed and shared background knowledge by guessing what they thought might be found in each of those sections. Cultural comparisons between their countries and Canada were also explored – are sports the same? Is fashion the same? Students learned previewing strategies and the importance of titles, pictures, captions, and text layout in North American newspapers. Lastly, learners chose sections of the newspaper that were most interesting for a closer examination.

In this activity even the smallest tasks need to be made explicit: holding the newspaper the right way, the direction of reading, what to look for, how the text is formatted (columns compared to pages of written text). These series of tasks were broken down into manageable units of learning and then acted as a springboard into a multitude of activities that integrated the use of the original material. All of this language, these strategies, and all of this structured, scaffolded material connected the learners to the task. It provided a means to interact with resources that were meaningful to them as learners as well as residents and citizens. It supported their interests and curiosity in a way that had manageable outcomes for each individual.

### *Strengths of Using Authentic Materials*

Authentic materials reflect real life in the new country. This is a wonderful advantage to bring into your classroom and make accessible to your learners. Learners know when they are being given something that is authentic and respond to it by making an immediate connection between the material used in class and the context of their own challenges in living in a new culture. The real-life context of the materials motivates learners and demonstrates the value of developing literacy. Choosing authentic materials can also work to support learner needs inside the classroom, as long as they are modified to work with the lessons being taught.

Learners often view authentic materials as less “classroom-like,” reporting that these materials help them to adapt to their new country. For some LIFE, this means connecting with a type of material that they were able to function with in their home countries. This is worth noting, as it increases learners’ confidence and their feelings of competence as adults.

Authenticity also enriches the delivery of lessons. This works because learners have seen the material before – a phone bill, for example – but even authentic materials that are new to the learners have an advantage, as they provide an opportunity to create meaningful background experience and develop prior knowledge in the classroom before learners encounter these materials in their everyday lives.

The inclusion of authentic material integrates instruction in language with greater cultural understanding, engaging learners in the learning process, because it builds on their ability to seek out elements of materials that they will understand and invest in. For learners, the outcomes are tangible. It may take a lot of support and time to get them to independence; however, they are the first to realize that success. To be able to do something they couldn’t previously, and to have the underlying strategies to transfer that learning into a different context, is a motivating success.

### *Challenges of Using Authentic Materials*

There are also a number of challenges in using authentic materials for ESL literacy. Authentic materials can be complicated and difficult for learners to tackle in their original format, so they must be broken down into strategic or linguistic segments. Deciding on these segments and the outcomes of learning can be a lot to adapt and account for. Material geared towards an English-speaking audience can also be difficult to break down and scaffold.

### *Tips for Using Authentic Materials*

Almost everything about authentic materials will need to be adapted before using them in the classroom. Often materials must be considered in smaller chunks of learning that, once assembled, involve completion of the entire piece.

From a linguistic perspective, authentic material can be used, but must be thoroughly modified. Keep the materials as authentic as possible, but modify all language content, including vocabulary and structure.

From a strategic perspective, it’s not necessarily about the modification of material as much as the modification of the approach and delivery of the tasks. Use the materials in a way that exposes the strategies needed to accomplish the overall activity. Breaking down an activity into

a series of smaller, interconnected tasks can facilitate the development of process and organization. This means that the instructor will need to:

- provide background information.
- rewrite the material.
- reformat the writing in terms of font style, white space, and font size.
- consider the quantity of material.
- consider the layout on the page.
- consider expectations of tasks.
- be consistent.

### **Authentic Materials in the Classroom: A Visual Map of Downtown**

In a class Foundation Phase learners, one activity involved teaching the learners to get from point A to point B within the downtown core. Maps and explicit sets of written directions were well beyond the reading ability of the learners. So, the instructor supported the map activity, language needs, and learner independence by creating a visual map, with actual photographs of landmarks learners would pass, to reach their destination. Sequential ordering, a checklist, photos, and very basic repeated language cues, as well as practice prior to departure, made it an effective lesson in map reading. The students learned direction vocabulary and had an opportunity to culturally connect with their city.

## **Using and Adapting Mainstream ESL Materials**

Mainstream ESL materials refer to materials that are intended for adult ESL learners with a previous former education: in other words, ESL learners who do not have literacy needs. These materials require that the learners who interact with and use the texts have prior background knowledge and academic skills and strategies. The instructor needs to provide the learners with a bridge in order to be able to effectively interact with these materials. Mainstream ESL materials can be used in higher-level ESL literacy classes, such as Phase III classes, with minor modifications, but when used in lower levels more modifications will be necessary.

### *Strengths of Using Mainstream ESL Materials*

There are some clear advantages to using mainstream ESL materials in an ESL literacy class. A lot of the ESL-specific material already exposes the global challenges of being new to a culture and the experience of integration, which will resonate with LIFE as well. There is a focus on getting to know the culture of the new country and no background knowledge of the new culture is assumed. These texts are also usually organized thematically and often combine language with function and pragmatic pieces for communication.

Modifications still need to be made to mainstream ESL materials because these materials make assumptions about the level of education and learning strategies that learners bring to class. The modifications needed are usually compartmentalized, such as changing the nature of the questions that accompany a reading, or altering the vocabulary in an exercise.

### *Challenges of Using Mainstream ESL Materials*

In using and adapting mainstream ESL materials, try not to reinvent the wheel. If the materials will work, use them, but remember to recycle vocabulary, strategies, and outcomes, so that learners have an opportunity to practice tasks until they master them. The biggest challenge



with mainstream ESL materials is that they are often too complicated or too cluttered (too much on one page, for example), along with issues of font and font size, level of vocabulary, and the content and format of questions. Try revising in terms of format by reducing the clutter, increasing font size, and adding white space. The materials also might not match exactly what you're doing in class; some ideas may have the grammatical element you're looking for but not within the right thematic context, while other times it is the opposite – the topic matches, but the level of grammar or language development doesn't.

One thing to consider is how you want to spend your time in the classroom. Often a great deal of time and a number of questions can be saved by making simple changes in vocabulary. An example of this is an instructor who used a recipe in her class from an American textbook. The recipe called for quarts instead of litres, which led to a long discussion on different measurement systems and a good deal of explanation, all of which could have been avoided with a simple revision.

However, these discussions can provide excellent teaching moments, so it is up to the individual instructor to decide how focused they want the lesson to be.

### *Tips for Using Mainstream ESL Materials*

Mainstream ESL materials generally require less modification than authentic materials, as long as the instructor picks and chooses what to use carefully. The best advice is to select small pieces that work with what you are doing in the classroom, rather than trying to make a pre-packaged unit fit the needs of the learners.

Still, there are some things to keep in mind. When adapting mainstream ESL materials:

- Ensure that the layout is appropriate, including font, font size, and white space.
- Check that the vocabulary matches the level of the learners.
- Break the material into smaller, more manageable pieces.
- Consider using part of an activity: for example a reading text without the accompanying questions, or a vocabulary activity without the attached grammar.

## Using and Adapting Adult Literacy Materials

Adult Literacy materials refer to materials designed for Adult Basic Education (ABE). The difference between ABE and ESL literacy is that ABE is designed for native speakers of English who have literacy issues. In today's society, the reality is that many learners in ABE are ESL learners; however, they have advanced oral fluency in English, and the focus of ABE is the development of literacy, rather than literacy and language. Adult literacy materials need little in terms of modification, as they are broken down and scaffolded as much as they can be. For lower levels of ESL literacy, this material is ideal, because it starts with the fundamentals of learning. The modification of these materials may come more into effect when using them for higher ESL literacy levels, where pieces will need to be adapted so they fit more cohesively into the overall learning plan.

### *Strengths of Using Adult Literacy Materials*

Adult literacy material is already structured for use with different levels of literacy learners. The material is modifiable; however, most often it doesn't need to be. Lesson plans or thematic plans sometimes need to be tweaked to accommodate the inclusion and delivery of material specific to

ESL literacy. This tends to work the opposite as with authentic materials, as much of the material in literacy has already been modified for these learners, so it doesn't require as much adaptation, just tweaking for smoother transitions within class and between activities.

### *Challenges of Using Adult Literacy Materials*

There are very few challenges in using adult literacy materials in an ESL literacy classroom as long as you know what to select. One possible challenge is that adult literacy material is designed for native speakers or for speakers with near-native fluency, so the vocabulary and the approach to building vocabulary is different than in ESL literacy. This challenge is fairly easily met through careful selection of materials and slight adaptations.

Another possible challenge is in the purpose of the materials. Many materials for adult literacy are more learning theory-based than thematic, and so it can be difficult to choose what to focus on and develop within the lessons. However, meeting that challenge lies more in the selection of, rather than the modification of, material. The modifications may have to come from the actual overall lesson plan, rather than the material being considered. For example, if an activity revolves around building certain sight words, then it is often easier to change the focus of the lesson to reflect these words (or to select an activity that better matches the lesson plan) rather than change the words in the activity.

### *Tips for Using Adult Literacy Materials*

The main challenge in using adult literacy materials is in selecting activities and materials that are appropriate to the themes and strategies you are developing in the classroom. However, there are often a few subtle differences between adult literacy materials and ESL literacy materials.

When using adult literacy materials:

- Pay attention to vocabulary and how vocabulary is taught: ESL literacy learners will need to learn all vocabulary orally before encountering it in print and will not be able to rely on pronunciation or oral patterns to know when what they've read "sounds right."
- Consider the sight words and how they fit into the themes you are teaching.
- Consider adapting materials by using manipulatives such as flashcards, realia, etc.
- Expose the strategies that are necessary for using the materials and make these explicit to the learners.

## Using and Adapting Children's Literacy Materials

Children's literacy materials refer to nearly all materials for children, as they are designed for beginning readers, albeit usually native speakers of English. There is mixed feeling among most ESL literacy instructors regarding how appropriate it is to use children's materials in an adult ESL literacy classroom; some feel that including children's material is demeaning to the intelligence and experience of the adult learners, while others feel that there are ways to incorporate children's material effectively with some levels of modification.

### *Strengths of Using Children's Literacy Materials*

There are a number of advantages to using children's material in ESL literacy classes. Children's materials are designed for beginning readers and already take low levels of literacy into consideration. The length, difficulty level, grammatical structures, and strategies supported are conducive to all literacy learners and the material doesn't overwhelm learners. Children's materials also generally already follow the layout principles for supporting literacy: they use a



large, clear font, include lots of white space, and support the text with visuals, so adaptation of the text is minimal.

The materials also break down the fundamentals of literacy as learned from the perspective of native speakers, which adds an element of authenticity in itself with regard to learning. Since authenticity leads to greater learner motivation, this is another clear advantage to these texts. These texts also have the advantage that they can be used authentically in the lives of any

learners who have children; a student who learns to read a children's story can take this story home and read it to his or her children, providing an opportunity for immediate return on the investment of learning and a way to connect literacy with something most learners hold very important – their families. There is an added advantage that encouraging learners to read with their children passes literacy learning on to a further generation; the learners' children will also reap the benefits of increased literacy in their homes.

There is another clear strength to children's materials that is not often found in adult materials, whether they are designed for ESL, literacy, or a combination of the two, and that is the focus on the sound and rhythm of the language. Children's materials often target specifics in language

acquisition, including rhymes, adjectives, simple tenses, and basic vocabulary, and often repeat vocabulary and structures. These materials are usually meant to be read aloud and in this way focus on the way English sounds, including pronunciation, cadence, stress, and intonation. They also promote cultural understanding.

Children's materials do not simply refer to books or stories. There are a lot of tactile products that are accessible and easily modifiable for use within an ESL literacy classroom. These tools and manipulatives include dice, card boxes, charts, games, etc. All of these children's resource materials can be used in creative ways. If you make these visual, tangible, and tactile materials a part of the classroom culture, learners won't feel as sensitive to the nature of the resource. Games are an excellent way to build an understanding of the expectations in western culture regarding fair play, turn taking, and following rules, as well as supporting the development of logic.

### *Challenges of Using Children's Literacy Materials*

Content in an ESL literacy class needs to be age-appropriate, authentic, and relevant. This can be difficult to achieve with adult learners and is one of the main concerns in using children's materials in an adult setting. These materials tend to be of moderate interest and low in content, so when using them with adults, it is important to increase the interest level and make the materials relevant and meaningful to the learners. This is the piece that usually requires modification: the buy-in.

Visuals in children's materials often pose a challenge, since they can be childish and may insult adult learners. However, graphics are always modifiable. Insert authentic pictures, where possible, rather than using the original graphics.

The content level should also match the maturity level of the learners. This means that you will need to carefully select materials. Some topics are highly relevant for adult learners, but others, such as a talking turtle, or rabbits playing peekaboo, can be frustrating or insulting. LIFE have life experiences, they have thoughts, they can make connections, and they understand concepts, so it is important to recognize their maturity and meet their needs in the classroom.

### *Tips for Using Children's Literacy Materials*

Using children's materials in an adult setting is challenging. The key is to find the balance between the benefits and the pitfalls. You will need to carefully select what you use, as clearly

not all materials will be relevant or suitable for adult ESL literacy learners. There are some things to consider:

- Use pieces selectively.
- Choose content to fit context and modify the visuals accordingly.
- Focus on structural specifics, cultural elements, or the musicality of language.
- Keep the learning relevant.
- Explicitly show learners that they can use these materials with their own children.

### **Children's Materials in the Classroom: From Readers to Writers**

A unit on identity was greatly supported with the inclusion of a children's book about Canada (*Miss for Maple*, an alphabet book about Canada and Canadian culture). The expectation of the task was for learners to be able to make cultural comparisons. These were shared in a rotational activity around the class, where learners visited the four corners of the globe to compare and contrast each other's countries with Canada. The learners shared stereotypes, experiences, fond memories, and famous facts.

The next step was for learners to consider the ABC's of their country and create a book similar to what was read, discovered, and discussed in the children's book. The text and language requirements were simple (with one sentence per page), but the connections made and the concepts surrounding the importance of culture were complex and suitable for the learners at this level (including lots of vocabulary to articulate what they truly felt and thought). The children's book offered a tangible avenue to explore culture and create something of their own, as these learners moved from being readers to authors of their own stories.

## Using Instructor-Created Materials

Many ESL literacy instructors spend most of their preparation time creating materials for class. This comes both out of necessity – sometimes it can be extremely difficult to find materials that are suitable and relevant to the needs of the learners – and out of the clear advantages to making something themselves – instructor-created materials are tailor-made to a specific group of learners and can tie in exactly with what has been happening in class, right down to the exact vocabulary and the names of the learners. Often instructors find that modifying materials can take quite a lot of time as well and that it is easier to simply start from scratch.



### *Strengths of Using Instructor-Created Materials*

Instructor-created materials are effective, because they are tailored to the need, level, and thematic context of the classroom. The fact that these materials are made explicitly for a group of learners at a specific time means that they fit seamlessly into the instruction, creating cohesion. They also allow instructors to recycle vocabulary, strategies, and outcomes, and give the instructor a high degree of control over the focus of the lessons.

These materials also often reflect the interest and needs of the learners and can serve as a way of integrating other kinds of materials, which perhaps need significant modification, suggest an idea to develop and deliver, or require further expansion or support. The road to perfect material development never seems to end, but the process itself informs teaching style, affects the underlying rationale behind lessons, and keeps the instructor accountable to objectives set at the beginning of the lesson, class, or semester.

Instructors may have concerns about sharing the materials that they have created with other instructors, but while there are sometimes good reasons to keep materials to oneself, the process of sharing can benefit all involved. We see the ability to share and build on each other's work as a clear strength of instructor-created materials. Instructors have great ideas, and instructor-created material should be shared, presented, and collected whenever possible. Instructors should feel flattered when their material is borrowed and modified to suit a different set of learners in a different classroom environment. When shared, good ideas can often be developed into great ideas, and these benefit all involved: the instructors, who receive professional development and an increased awareness of different approaches; and the learners, who benefit

from material that is constantly being reworked to make it more accessible, interesting, and effective.

### *Challenges of Using Instructor-Created Materials*

The only challenge in creating your own material, is, quite simply, time. Creating material takes a significant amount of time. It can also become infinite. As you teach more and more, you might build up a collection of materials, but often these materials will need to be re-worked for a new set of learners, or else they lose the advantage of being directly relevant to the people in the class and what is being taught. Organizing and filing these masterpieces can also become a bit of a management nightmare. We recommend binders, plastic containers, zip-lock baggies, and lots and lots of paper clips. The question of time is one area where program coordinators can be supportive; in the field of ESL literacy, we are in desperate need of programs that recognize the importance of supporting instructors, in terms of salary, stable work, professional development, and paid time for preparation.

There is some challenge in sharing materials between instructors. One of these challenges is the difficulty of sharing materials with someone who teaches in the level directly before or after yours, and thus someone who has taught or will eventually teach the same group of learners. In this case, modification of the material will be necessary. When modifying someone else's materials, instructors should try to strike a balance between making the appropriate changes and maintaining respect for the original and the original author.

### *Tips for Using Instructor-Created Materials*

The most important considerations in creating your own materials are generating ideas and thinking carefully about what you need to create and why. To get new ideas, keep your eyes and ears open, both inside the classroom and outside of it. Ideas can often come from your everyday life as you encounter different tasks yourself and think about how you might create a similar situation in your classroom. As with any new material, never abandon something if it doesn't work the first time. Revisit it and try again. Critically reflect on what didn't work and try to find a solution. It is important to stay on track: stay current, experiment, be creative, and reflect on the good as well as on the not so good. The outcomes of this reflection should inform approach, organization, preparation, pre-teaching, and the selection of materials for the next go-around.

There are some things to keep in mind when creating your own materials:

- Be consistent with activities, format, and process, so learners can follow expectations and be comfortable with their learning.
- Be open to learner feedback on something that you have developed. Direct feedback and suggestions from learners can be invaluable.
- Remember to recycle and repeat key vocabulary, strategies, and outcomes.
- Make use of the main advantage to instructor-created materials: keep it directly relevant to the learners in the class.
- Remember format, font, font size, white space, and clear visuals.
- Laminate so it can be reused.

### **Instructor-Created Materials in the Classroom: An Effective Novel Study**

At the beginning of a novel study, one Phase III ESL literacy instructor developed a transparent, comprehensive learning package to pre-teach the plot of the overall novel, including the use of lyrics, music, a visual montage, an oral group discussion to activate background knowledge, and a key focus point on different strands (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). It took a lot of work and a lot of time; however, the activities created a virtually seamless transition into the reading of the novel.

## Using Learner-Created Materials

Learner-created materials refer to anything that is created by the learners themselves and then used in further lessons. There are clear advantages to the use of learner-created materials in the classroom, both for the learners and the instructor, but instructors should be forewarned: using learner-created materials in the classroom means that the instructor must be on his or her toes during the lesson, prepared to deal with the unforeseen and make the most of teaching moments. Using learner-created materials is recommended for experienced instructors and instructors who are good at improvising and thinking on their feet.

### *Strengths of Using Learner-Created Materials*

Materials made by learners can be connected, meaningful, and fully integrated into lesson objectives. From a time management perspective, using these materials is probably the most highly efficient, interactive, and effective technique there is. The trick is to be highly creative in terms of expected output from learners and to have the ability to think on your feet, making adjustments to activity expectations if and as they arise. Also, lots of pre-teaching is a good idea, as it can capture and identify the need and interest of the learners and set the stage for an effective lesson.

There are a number of advantages to using learner-created material in the classroom. Having learners participate in the process of creating means that they are already learning, retaining, practicing, and reinforcing the material before they begin to work with it. Learners also experience ownership and accountability for their own resources, notes, and material. When using learner-created materials, encourage learners to refer back to what they have made for follow-up assessment, reinforcing the strategies and skills attached to creating material.

Learner-created material can be connected to the creation of a portfolio. Having learners select pieces for their portfolios at the end of each thematic unit supports decision-making, independence, and self-confidence, through the process of selection, rubric input, self-reflection, and sharing their learning with others. Portfolio assessment using learner-created materials makes the process of assessment more effective, transparent, and inclusive. For a further discussion of portfolios, see Chapter Eleven.

### *Challenges of Using Learner-Created Materials*

Using learner-created materials in the classroom is highly challenging. It can sometimes seem tempting, appearing to be easier than creating materials yourself, but using these materials requires far more work and input from the instructor than working with any other kind of materials.

The greatest challenge in using learner-created materials, however, comes during the creation process itself, and that is dealing with the element of surprise. Learners do not always interpret instructions the way that the instructor intends them to be interpreted. Sometimes this is a wonderful thing; learners can bring an entirely different understanding of the world with them to the classroom, which can spark discussion, comparison, and analysis, as well as a lot of joy and laughter. It does mean that the instructor needs to be open to an entirely different set of outcomes than planned. Using learner-created materials effectively requires the ability to deal with change and quickly adjust plans.

This element of surprise stresses the importance of pre-teaching. Making expectations for outcomes explicit is integral to learner-centred success. Model a sample product. Often the idea of what constitutes good work is nebulous to the learners. Show them a sample of something effective, so they know what to work towards. Using models takes the mystery out of instructor expectations, which are shaped by culture and background. Assumptions – both by the instructor about the learners and by the learners about the instructor – are often misguided. During the process of using learner-created materials, the instructor’s assumptions about what is self-explanatory and how something should be interpreted will be exposed and challenged.

### *Tips for Using Learner-Created Materials*

If you are interested in using learner-created materials in your classroom, begin slowly, both for yourself and for the learners. Start with a small project and reflect on the process, examining what went well and what could be improved. Most of all, stay focused and flexible in the classroom. There are some things to keep in mind:

- Model the task for the learners.
- Show a sample piece in order to clarify your expectations.
- Explain to the learners why they are doing this activity.
- Make the instructions transparent.
- Scaffold the activities, working in small pieces toward a polished final copy.

### **Learner-Created Materials in the Classroom: A Learner Teaches Herself to Remember**

As support for vocabulary development, learners often track and record vocabulary lists, which can be used for spelling tests or as a tool for copying or writing. However in order to retain new vocabulary, learners must find ways of connecting the words to something meaningful and useful in their own lives. One learner created a vocabulary dictionary based on personal relevance and connections to her life, including references she could understand, pictures cut out from magazines, and other things that had value for her. This literature, created for her own use, retention, reference, and learning, was a tribute to the power behind learner-created material.

Ideas for Materials

**Authentic Materials**

grocery store flyers  
phone bills  
newspapers

**Mainstream ESL Materials**

*Word by Word Basic* (Longman)  
*Very Easy True Stories* (Longman)  
*Basic Reading Power* (Longman)

**Instructor-Created Materials**

flashcards  
forms  
learner photo stories

**Children’s Literacy Materials**

*Scholastic First Picture Dictionary*  
(Scholastic)  
*My Red Book* (Osu Children's Library)  
*M is for Maple* (Sleeping Bear)

**Learner-Created Materials**

LEA stories  
spelling dictionaries  
dialogue journals

**Adult Literacy Materials**

*Grass Roots Readers* (Grass Roots)  
*Milestones in Reading* (Curriculum Associates)  
*Kitchen Math* (Grass Roots)

**ESL Literacy Materials**

*First Words in English* (Linmore)  
*ESL Literacy* (Longman)  
*First Class Reader!* (Alta)  
*This Really Works: Survival English* (Tutorial Services of Ontario)  
*This Really Works: Basic Numeracy 2* (Tutorial Services of Ontario)

Suggested Materials for Each ESL Literacy Phase

Foundation Phase	
Instructor-Created/Found	Published/Commercially Available Materials
flashcards and flashcard pocket charts simple forms with first name, last name, telephone number, and address worksheets for copying and for matching capital and small letters word searches and cloze exercises bingo games realia such as flyers, food containers, etc. magazines and poster board to make posters and collages	<i>Very Easy True Stories</i> (Longman) picture dictionary magnetic ABC boards 4 to 9 piece jigsaw puzzles dice, board games (with ABCs or simple pictures) maps
Phase I	
Instructor-Created/Found	Published/Commercially Available Materials
flashcards and flashcard pocket charts stories worksheets simple forms scaffolded writing materials	<i>English Express</i> ( <a href="http://www.englishexpress.ca">www.englishexpress.ca</a> ) <i>Grass Roots Readers</i> (Grass Roots Press, Edmonton Alberta) <i>Gatehouse Books</i> (Gatehouse Media, Manchester, England) <i>The Page Turners Collection</i> (PRACE, Australia) <i>Adult Phonics Stories</i> (Multi-Cultural Educational Services: <a href="http://www.mcedservices.com">www.mcedservices.com</a> ) maps

Phase II	
Instructor-Created/Found	Published/Commercially Available Materials
flashcards and flashcard pocket charts ads, forms, and notices stories simple crossword puzzles games	<i>A Canadian Conversation Book: English in Everyday Life</i> (Prentice Hall) <i>Look again: Pictures for Language Development and Life Skills</i> (Alta) <i>Picture Stories: Language and Literacy Activities for Beginners</i> and <i>More Picture Stories: Language and Problem-Posing Activities for Beginners</i> (Longman) <i>All New Very Easy True Stories, Easy True Stories, and More True Stories</i> (Longman) <i>Amazing Canadian Newspaper Stories</i> (Prentice Hall) maps
Phase III	
Instructor-Created/Found	Published/Commercially Available Materials
sample writing models stories forms crossword puzzles, word searches, and codes	<i>Basic Reading Power, Reading Power, More Reading Power, Advanced Reading Power</i> (Longman) <i>Canadian Concepts 3-5</i> (Prentice Hall) <i>Milestones in Reading B-D</i> (Curriculum Associates) <i>What a Life!</i> and <i>What a World!</i> series (Longman) <i>Penguin Easy Readers, Levels 3-5</i> (Penguin) maps

## Conclusions

Materials provide the backdrop and the backbone to classroom instruction; they are the tools that instructors use for teaching and learners use for learning. It is the instructor's responsibility to find the right tools to make this learning effective and productive, challenging enough to push learners to go further, yet supported enough so that learners can reach their goals, develop increasing confidence and independence, and have an opportunity to learn how to learn.

There are a number of different ways that instructors can find good materials for an ESL literacy classroom. There are some commercially produced ESL literacy materials available, but not many. Most instructors find that they need to assemble a collection of materials themselves, creating some things from scratch and adapting and modifying other things to make them suitable. Instructors might consider using authentic materials, mainstream ESL materials, adult literacy materials, children's literacy materials, instructor-created materials, and learner-created materials. Each of these sources come with advantages and challenges. No matter which kind of materials an instructor chooses (or more likely, which kinds of materials), one thing is certain: effective ESL literacy instructors are masters at creating and adapting materials for their learners.

# Chapter 10 Outline

Introduction: What is Theme Teaching?

Identifying Thematic Units for Study

The Importance of Theme Teaching

Scaffolding

Recycling

Spiralling

Planning for Thematic Teaching

Developing Project-Based Units of Study

Conclusions



# Developing Theme Units and Projects

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## Objectives

To recognize the importance of theme teaching in ESL literacy

To emphasize the need for involving learners in the selection and development of themes

To demonstrate the value of scaffolding, recycling, and spiralling

To show one way of planning a thematic unit

To introduce project-based learning

## Introduction: What is Theme Teaching?

Theme teaching is the organized grouping of materials, learning activities, and vocabulary around a common subject matter. The power of theme teaching lies in its ability to connect learners to their various communities (classroom, home, workplace, place of worship, neighbourhood, or larger cultural community), empower them with the language and skills to be successful within these communities, and ultimately enable them to transform themselves to reach their goals.

The key to connecting, empowering, and transforming learners is the selection of meaningful and relevant thematic units of study, such as going shopping, personal banking, and health (incorporating trips to the family doctor or dentist). Effective educators have long recognized that when learners perceive content as helpful, their interest peaks and they are energized.

It is critical that instructors recognize the talents, experience, and knowledge of all learners, and, while that is not the focus of this chapter, it is worth reinforcing. Instructors need to create different opportunities for learners to contribute (oral, visual, computer-based, or written methods) and also ensure that brainstorming and discussion are part of every session. Instructors will always be surprised to see what learners bring to the table, and must be prepared to tap into that knowledge.

To foster a successful learning environment, learners must feel that they are able to share what they know. Activities that make comparisons between home countries and new communities are rich with opportunities for learners to showcase knowledge. All learners are experts on “home” and all learners have experiences of “new,” so effective instruction should allow for talk about the familiar in preparation to talk, share, and write about the less well-known. As for the unfamiliar, and determining curriculum content, the starting point of this process is to involve learners in shaping the thematic units of study.

## Identifying Thematic Units for Study

ESL literacy instruction empowers learners. All learners arrive in the classroom with personal goals. These goals can range from being able to understand and communicate with people at the supermarket, the bank, the doctors' office, or their child's school, through to being able to complete high school upgrading and move on to career programs or further study. Being able to understand spoken and written language and communicate ideas orally and in writing enables learners to take greater ownership of their current lives and the future they envision for themselves. There is, therefore, an onus on instructors to build real-life content into curriculum.

Groups of learners differ tremendously, even within a single setting over a period of time, and therefore it is difficult for an instructor to accurately predict what will be meaningful to learners before meeting them, although certain thematic units are generally universally relevant, such as money, health, or housing. It is important for instructors to work with learners to identify the pertinent issues of their lives, communities, and workplaces and use these themes as the foundation of curriculum (Auerbach, 1992). There are many ways to facilitate the selection of these themes, from the choosing of drawings or photographs of real life scenarios, through to the discussion of areas where learners would like to expand their vocabulary and improve their skills. Common themes of study include units centered around: employment, health, banking and personal finance, shopping, the environment, and cultural customs. For further information on learner needs assessments, please see Chapter Two.

Remember that theme units are effective because they are relevant to the learners; if the theme is irrelevant, then it loses its key advantage: the ability to motivate learners. In order to create relevant themes, an instructor must be aware of cultural as well as individual differences in the classroom, and pay particular attention to the specific learners sitting in the room. For example, animals may be a highly relevant theme to many LIFE, while pets may not. However, it's important not to get trapped into stereotypes; the best way to avoid stereotypes is to view learners as individuals and listen to their particular needs and interests.

The familiarity and commonality of these themes among the lives of learners encourages participation and provides opportunities for learners to be experts. Participatory curriculum development is an investment at the beginning of a period of study ensures that learners will "buy in," as what they are about to study and learn has value to them. Through participatory curriculum development,

### Themes to Consider

- Shopping
- The Environment
- Money, Banking, or Credit Cards
- Food
- Canadian History
- Other Cultures
- Housing
- Family
- Medical Care
- Children in Canada
- The Law
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Employment

learners are sent a message that is critical to their adaptation to western culture and their development of literacy: their voices, thoughts, opinions, and needs have value. For more information on the participatory approach, please see Chapters Three and Seven.

## The Importance of Theme Teaching

Theme teaching allows learners to develop and build knowledge and understanding and to practice and repeat skills to secure learning. It also provides opportunities to reflect on progress. Theme teaching is important because it provides real-life contexts in which to deliver specific outcomes in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and life skills. By changing thematic units within a period of study, instructors can recycle outcomes in a fresh context. As outcomes are recycled and learners have repeated contact with information and skills, they produce work of greater complexity and accuracy.

Theme teaching allows instructors to use three key strategies: scaffolding, recycling, and spiralling. This book is not suggesting that each is a technique followed in isolation, but rather that all three are necessary to set learners up for success (Leong & Collins, 2007). In the sections that follow, overlaps between the three techniques in daily teaching practice will become apparent.

## Scaffolding

As the name suggests, scaffolding is quite literally giving structure to support knowledge and understanding as it develops. When new information is introduced to learners, they will need instructor support to work with the material to reach an outcome. Over time, the instructor provides fewer scaffolds and the learners produce work that is more involved and do so more independently.

For example, consider that an instructor is beginning a new thematic unit concerning public transportation. Ultimately, the instructor wants learners to write advice for newcomers to the city – helpful things that they should be aware of (that the learners wish someone had told them upon arrival). The final outcome may be writing sentences with imperative verbs, but in order to reach this outcome, the activities need to be scaffolded.

The instructor starts with a brainstorm around a series of images and objects (tickets, timetables, coins) and elicits vocabulary from learners. Depending on the level, this could be English vocabulary, or words in their first language that are phonetically transcribed by the instructor and then translated into English alongside. The instructor asks if the images could be grouped

together or ordered in a sequence. The instructor collects the resulting information for display in the classroom and for use during subsequent teaching and learning sessions. This starting point and information may be referred to by learners throughout the unit as they recycle and use the new language (see “Recycling”).

A series of potential activities to reach this outcome has been suggested in the following table. With each of these successive activities, the instructor is providing the support necessary for learners to take new steps. With scaffolding, understanding is built in supported steps, so that learners have the greatest chance of success and the least chance of feeling panicked or unprepared. As the vocabulary and content of the theme becomes more familiar, learner understanding and confidence grows. The key to building familiarity is recycling.

## Sample Scaffolded Lesson: Public Transportation

**Outcome: Write five pieces of advice on using public transportation.**

### Class 1

- Brainstorm vocabulary (immediately and prominently display for ease of reference).
- Canvass learners for stories of experience (positive and challenging).
- Invite learners to compare transportation here with transportation in learners' home countries.
- Conversation pairs: learners share a transportation experience with one another, using the brainstorm results to recycle new vocabulary. Model with a volunteer.
- Learners copy new vocabulary into a unit dictionary and glue in a corresponding image.

### Class 2

- Vocabulary crossword
- True or false questions using objects and brainstorm results from the previous lesson (e.g. [Hold up a bus ticket] "True or false? I need to give this to the bus driver?")
- Picture stories: distribute photos of people using public transport. Model Q and A: "What is she doing?" "She is paying the driver." Learners orally describe each scenario and take turns asking questions and answering.

### Class 3

- Use pictures from the previous session in cloze sentence exercises. "She has a \_\_\_\_\_ in her hand."
- Vocabulary bingo

### Class 4

- Spelling test
- Distribute the pictures again with a series of questions underneath: "What is he doing?", "What is she looking for?", "Where is she sitting?". Learners write their own sentences using the previous day's cloze exercises as a point of reference.

### Class 5

- Introduce the final product: to write advice for newcomers to the city.
- Distribute a brainstorming template to learners with the word *advice* in the centre.
- Learners record five pieces of information that newcomers should know (in words, in pictures) and are encouraged to refer to their work from previous sessions as a starting point.

## Recycling

The positive benefits of repeated practice (recycling) when learning new information is that learners build familiarity, understanding, and confidence. As such, recycling forms an essential part of theme teaching. Learners require time to practice skills in order to successfully achieve their goals.

In the scaffolded sessions above, the recycling of vocabulary, implicit grammar points, and scenarios occurs in every session. The overriding theme allows learners to use material in similar but slightly different contexts. Brain research demonstrates that repeated contact allows learners many opportunities for their own learning moments – to take new material and use it successfully and, more importantly, with meaning for them (Sousa, 2006).

Recycling alone is not enough to guarantee learning. Formative assessment is crucial if instructors are to establish whether new content is understood or just memorized. For example, asking learners at the bottom of their spelling test to select two vocabulary words and use them in sentences in their own words will quickly demonstrate their level of understanding. To be transformative, content must be understood, not just memorized by rote. Many numeracy learners who learned their times tables by rote may know that  $4 \times 6 = 24$ , but not all will understand that multiplication is a quick way to perform repeated addition, can be done in any order to achieve the same product, or that 4 groups of six equals 24. Just because something is repeated doesn't mean that it is understood.

Having a central theme for the session's activities provides many opportunities to reuse, reinforce, and recycle the previous sessions' learning. In order to avoid over-repetition or reduce learner motivation, with each successive activity the instructor's expectations need to be higher and the challenge for learners increased.

## Spiralling

The name spiralling suggests a cyclic, circular process and to some extent this is true in teaching as well. Imagine a tornado, with the smaller rotations happening at the bottom and the wider rotations or spirals happening at the top. With spiralling, instructors return to content that has already been delivered and understood, but upon each return, more information is included, and the learners are pushed a little bit further so that the extent of their understanding is greater.

While recycling and spiralling may seem to be very similar, a key difference between them is the period of time over which they occur. Spiralling is a longer-term endeavour (over the course of a semester, or over the course of several semesters) where outcomes are revisited. An outcome that reads "Write simple, short texts" cannot be achieved in the space of a week. Instead, it will

come up many times within a theme unit and then appear again in the next theme unit of study. The theme will be different and relevant, so learner motivation should remain high. Additionally, learners will recognize the outcome, will be developing a growing number of strategies to meet the outcome, and will have greater success meeting the outcome with each spiralled re-introduction.

## Planning for Thematic Teaching

Begin planning theme units of study by conducting a needs assessment of your learners and involving them in the curriculum process. Who are they? What are their common needs? What do they need to help them be successful in their various communities? What do they want to learn?

Once the assessments and discussions have taken place, outcomes need to be decided upon. Ask “What do I want the learners to be able to do when the theme is introduced and as the theme is developed, and what should the final outcome or product be?” The outcomes may be specific to the program, or be taken from documents like the CLB Literacy Document, but will be similar across all of the themes that are taught – providing essential opportunities for scaffolding, recycling, and spiralling. At the end of a theme unit, learners should reflect on their work and the progress that they have made since the introduction of the new theme.

### *Sample Theme Unit*

In this theme unit, learners explore cause and effect on the environment, both locally and globally. Learners write sentences and make a presentation on the issue of their choice. The unit concludes with a longer written text about an environmental issue that the learners feel is important.

This unit is appropriate for learners in Phase II Developing. It should take about two weeks of full-time classes to complete the unit. Note the level of scaffolding and recycling in this unit plan.

## Sample Theme Unit Plan: The Environment

### Introducing the Theme: Building Environmental Vocabulary

**Reading & Writing Outcomes:**

- read and respond to short, simple texts
- write sentences to express an opinion

**Speaking & Listening Outcomes:**

- give brief descriptions

**Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes:**

- use the internet to find information

**Numeracy Outcomes:**

- work with positive and negative integers (temperature)

**Brief Lesson Descriptions**

1. Create word wall of vocabulary – add/refer to it throughout unit.
2. Read, discuss, and compare various short texts on the environment.
3. Reuse vocabulary to write sentences about a significant environmental issue.
4. Nature task photo journal: rivers, buildings, dumpsters, etc.

### Developing the Theme: Giving a Short Presentation

**Reading & Writing Outcomes:**

- read simple short articles and identify main ideas
- write and deliver a two-minute presentation

**Speaking & Listening Outcomes:**

- express dissatisfaction

**Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes:**

- create documents on the computer

**Numeracy Outcomes:**

- problem solving with money (recycling, bottle depot, bottle drives to raise charitable funds)

**Brief Lesson Descriptions**

1. Discuss local and global issues: causes and effects.
2. Read and answer questions from articles related to environment.
3. Teach interview language/create interview template.
4. Discuss: Which environmental issue is the most serious? Why? What action can we take?
5. Reuse vocabulary for written text on results of discussion.
6. Create tri-fold board or poster about environmental issue to assist in presentation.
7. Reuse vocabulary for group presentation: Our Environment.

## Final Product: Writing a Simple Short Text

### Reading & Writing Outcomes:

- write simple short texts (descriptions; articles)

### Speaking & Listening Outcomes:

- understand factual detail in oral texts

### Brief Lesson Descriptions

1. Review/practice unit vocabulary and grammar with crosswords, quizzes, etc.
2. Reuse vocabulary to write: \_\_\_\_\_ is an important issue because \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Refer back to previous work to write a personal response/action plan related to a specific environmental issue.

## Tools

### New Vocabulary & Concepts

- environmental vocabulary
- environmental issues
- expressing an opinion
- giving reasons
- capturing ideas with photography: photographing environmental issues
- measuring temperature
- giving a group presentation

### Language Structures

- \_\_\_\_\_ is an important issue because \_\_\_\_\_.

### Resources and Materials

- thermometer
- short appropriate texts on the environment
- internet access
- materials for a presentation: tri-fold or poster board

### Assessment

The learners are assessed throughout the unit in their abilities to meet the outcomes. Where suitable, they can choose one or two tasks to be included in their portfolios. For further information on portfolios, please see Chapter Eleven.

## Developing Project-Based Units of Study

Theme unit teaching also presents fantastic opportunities for collaborative group efforts. While individual skill development is important, it would be unwise to overlook the positive learning and development opportunities afforded by group project-based work. After all, problem solving, debate, and teamwork have a place in all of the communities to which LIFE belong. Project-based learning provides opportunities for learners to develop additional skill sets that will also empower them to make changes.

If the theme being studied is health care, a group project-based activity could centre around a multi-media presentation on how to avoid getting a cold or the flu. At the end of the project, small groups can present a computer-based slideshow to the larger group, detailing important information to consider and be aware of when opening a personal bank account. After the presentation, the group would reflect on successes and opportunities for development.

The project itself could have a number of group work-related outcomes that reflect, or contribute towards, the outcomes of the program.

For example:

- demonstrating active listening skills
- sharing ideas and opinions
- managing time effectively
- working with others
- using technology
- integrating life skills with academic learning



Additionally, and importantly, projects give learners alternative opportunities to showcase skills and knowledge. This is crucial in building self-esteem and encouraging participation towards the program as a whole. One learner may bring a raft of technical expertise while another may have a natural talent for public speaking. Project-based work provides further opportunities to build communities within classrooms.

## Conclusions

Theme-based teaching allows instructors to give meaning and relevance to material taught in the class. Vocabulary becomes not just vocabulary, but the necessary tools to talk about something important; a writing task is not simply an assignment but a skill that can be taken and used in the community. The pay-off for thematic teaching is motivation: learners are hooked into learning because they value what they are being taught. Theme-based teaching also has a number of advantages for the instructor. It allows instructors to scaffold, recycle, and spiral outcomes and vocabulary, giving learners opportunities to develop their skills as they grow increasingly independent.



# Chapter 11 Outline

Introduction: The General Definition of Assessment

Summative Assessment

Formative Assessment

Goal Setting and Self-Assessment

Checklists

Portfolios: Collect, Select, Reflect

Working Portfolios

Showcase Portfolios

Learner-Led Conferences

Strategies for Using Portfolios in the Classroom

Portfolios: Challenges

Portfolios: Tools

Conclusions



# Assessment

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## Objectives

To demonstrate the difference between summative and formative assessment

To recognize the advantages and disadvantages of each form of assessment in the classroom

To show the importance of goal setting and self-assessment for LIFE

To read about checklists and how they clarify expectations

To discuss the use, advantages, and challenges of working and showcase portfolios

## Introduction: The General Definition of Assessment

The meaning of assessment has changed over the years and is now defined in fluid and dynamic ways. According to Tom Angelo (1995), assessment is “an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning.” Assessment or outcomes assessment should allow instructors to evaluate curriculum, and make improvements when necessary, and evaluate effects of changes made. Burt and Keenan (1996) state that assessment in Adult Basic Education and ESL is used “to place learners in appropriate instructional levels, to measure their ongoing progress, to qualify them to enroll in academic or job training programs, to verify program effectiveness and to demonstrate learner gains in order to justify continued funding for a program.” The North Vancouver School District (2004) defines assessment as “the systematic process of gathering information about learners’ learning.” What we can understand from these definitions is that, ideally, all assessment should help us to become better instructors and our learners to become better learners.

## Summative Assessment

Summative assessments are used in classrooms for a number of different reasons. They are given to determine what a learner knows or doesn’t know at a particular point in time. They are also given to report to funders, test effectiveness of programs, figure out gaps in programming, and place learners into programs or levels within programs. They are important in an outcome-based program; many outcome-based programs develop entry and exit tools (a form of summative assessment) for their programs, if not for specific levels or classes. Summative assessments are for the most part standardized, which gives a baseline to be measured against.

According to Wrigley (1992), standardized tests have certain advantages: they are cost-effective, their validity and scoring reliability have been tested, they are accepted by funders in the documentation of learning and program accountability, they provide program comparisons, and they give learners a sense of what they have learned compared with other learners in their program. Advocates of summative assessment argue that standardized tests in literacy and numeracy provide adult learners with a clear and reliable measure of their achievements and skills.

Examples of summative assessments include:

- provincial assessments
- end of unit tests
- end of semester exams
- report card grades

- benchmark assessments
- CLB literacy assessment tools
- program entry/exit tools

However, there are a number of shortcomings in the use of standardized tests in an ESL literacy classroom. As Wrigley (1992, 1998) points out:

- The social contexts of literacy are ignored in standardized tests.
- The focus is on paper and pen, and not on what learners are able to do in real life.
- Language, literacy, and culture are not treated distinctly, and therefore we are not able to understand what part of the question a learner may be having trouble with.
- The tests fail to show the literacy skills that learners have acquired in their mother tongue, treating English as the only language “that counts” (Macias 1990).
- They reduce the complexity of language and literacy learning to a set of skills.
- They don’t discriminate well at the lower end of literacy achievement, failing to reflect experience with environmental print or provide information on the different levels of “initial literacy,” such as being able to write names of one’s children but not those of strangers.

Overall, summative assessment provides information about whether or not programming, curriculum, and classroom instructors teach what is supposed to be taught. It represents a summary of what the learner has learned. Summative assessment does not inform day-to-day teaching but provides a larger snapshot of what happens at a program level.

## Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is part of the instructional process, and formative assessments are conducted throughout the year or period of instruction. Formative assessments are used to monitor learner progress and provide feedback so learners know what steps they need to take to meet the objectives of their studies. This type of assessment updates instructors and learners about what learners understand so that adjustments can be made in the instructional process. Learners are involved in formative assessment, which ensures that assessments are meaningful and effective. An important key in effective formative assessment is that feedback is immediate and descriptive. Learners need to know what their strengths and weaknesses are, and how they can make appropriate changes to meet expectations. It is important for learners and instructors to

know what the learners' next steps are, and what they can do to achieve them. Formative assessment ensures that learners are engaged in the learning process, because it requires self-reflection, collaboration with instructors and peers, and a learner voice in creating classroom community. Black and Williams (1998a) in Harlen (2003) indicate that there are compelling research results stating that using formative assessment may be the most significant single factor in raising the academic achievement of all learners – and especially that of lower-achieving learners (p.7).

There are many different types of formative assessment; two highly effective types of formative assessment in the ESL literacy classroom are portfolios and self-assessment, both of which will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. Examples of formative assessments include:

- surveys
- interviews
- checklists
- observation (of learners by instructors)
- instructor-developed tests
- learner self-assessment
- portfolios
- learner led conferences
- anecdotes
- Q and A sessions
- peer assessment
- goal setting

Immediate feedback is critical in making sure that formative assessment is effective. Feedback from instructors and peers allows learners to understand where the gaps in their learning are. Specific, targeted feedback gives learners a place to start to make adjustments in how or what they learn. It gives them a starting point for immediate and future conversations about their own learning.

## Goal Setting and Self-Assessment

Goal setting and self-assessment are invaluable for Learners with Interrupted Formal Education. Being able to set realistic goals, monitor progress, and celebrate success is vital for learners to be engaged in and focused on their learning. Self-monitoring, reflection, and goal setting provide learners with skills that they can transfer beyond the classroom and into their everyday lives. Goal setting and self-assessment lead to the development of new ideas, new ways of looking at the world, and a better understanding of how an individual works in connection to other things, whether it be ideas, people, institutions, employment, or their own families.

Goal setting with learners can be challenging because sometimes the person's long-term goal is very far away. When a person enters a program with a long-term goal of being, for example, a Health Care Aide, it may take years to achieve the goal. It is not the instructor's role to decide which goals are achievable for which learners, but instructors can be invaluable in helping learners plan the process. In order to help learners understand short- and long-term goals, the

Goal setting and self-assessment lead to the development of new ideas, new ways of looking at the world, and a better understanding of how an individual works in connection to other things, whether it be ideas, people, institutions, employment, or their own families.

Bridge Program at Bow Valley College has created an opportunity for learners to meet with an advisor and instructors to talk about short- and long-term goals. This gives the advisor and the learner a moment to consider ways to achieve the goal.

Visual representations are used so the learner is able to see where the starting and end-point are, and then together the learner and the advisor are able to collaborate to consider some short- and medium-term goals. It has been the experience of

the Bridge Program that learners meet with more success when they focus on short-term goals as a means to achieving the later goal. The Bridge Program sees the value of goal setting, self-assessment, and reflection as a means to internalize the process of learning, and as such, the entire program incorporates goal setting and self-reflection. This explicit practice allows learners to become familiar with expectations and try out self-reflection in different environments. It is important to note that goal setting is a highly supported activity, because learners may need help to understand what short-term goals are and what steps are involved in achieving them. They may need help accessing community or other educational supports. It may take time to conceptualize how to achieve their goals and manage their time well.

While learners can set long-term educational or life goals, they can also set goals about specific areas of their language learning. At the beginning of a semester, it is worthwhile to have learners set language or learning goals. Have them come up with some goals that they can record. If they are unable to do this, you can record their goals for them. Instructors should check in with learners at a mid-point to see how successful the learner has been at moving towards success.

This is a perfect opportunity to have learners reflect on the process of setting and meeting their goals. Self-reflection in the goal setting process is key in moving towards independent learning. When learners are able to articulate what the process has been like for them, whether they have been successful or not in moving towards their goal, they have been successful in talking about their learning. When learners can talk about their learning in a reflective, constructive way, they are learning skills that can be transferred beyond the classroom and can help them be successful in life and learning.

Valdez Pierce (2002) points out that self-assessment is essential in teaching learners how to manage their learning, use learning strategies, and reflect on achieving language and learning goals. The focus of self-assessment is on producing learners who can move from supported learning to independent learning and become lifelong learners. Self-assessment is also key in motivating learners to continue learning and building self-confidence in their ability to learn.

Portfolios and self-assessment may seem particularly challenging at lower levels of ESL literacy; however, they are still possible to do and are still an excellent idea. Teaching learners to self-reflect (and even to understand the concept of assessment) cannot begin too early; learners who are aware of self-reflection at the earliest levels will find it easier to build on these skills as they move through the levels of ESL literacy. How to implement portfolios and self-assessment in the lowest levels therefore becomes the question. The most important thing for the instructor to keep in mind is that the language must be accessible and understandable to the learners. A good example of language that works well with low levels of ESL literacy is “I can” statements. An “I can” statement lists a very specific task or skill, such as “I can copy my name” or “I can say my address.” A learner can (with significant support from the instructor) complete a series of “I can” statements at the beginning of a class, unit, or level, and then again at the end. This will demonstrate to the learners what they have achieved in real terms: it is now possible for them to demonstrate a new skill. A goal setting checklist is a good tool to help learners identify future goals and understand the steps involved in getting there.

## Outcomes Checklist: Phase I Initial Reading and Writing

## Tips for Use

Lower-level learners can also participate in self-reflection

Makes outcomes explicit

Written in language accessible to learners

## Reading

- I can find my name.
- I can find my address.
- I know the letters of the alphabet.
- I can read simple sentences.
- I can read question words.

## Writing

- I can copy my name.
- I can copy from the board.
- I can write my name.
- I can write on the line.
- I can write my telephone number.

Sample Goal Setting Checklist

**Goal: I want to complete the Health Care Aide program at**

Tips for Use

Helps learner see the steps in reaching a long-term goal

Shifts focus from the long-term goal onto the next step

<u>Steps to Goal:</u>	<u>Times:</u>
Think about your career goals. What do you need to do to reach your goal?	All the time
1. Study ESL literacy at Bow Valley College	4 semesters
2. Do Basic Education Levels 4 and 5 at Bow Valley College	3 semesters
3. Complete grade 10 English and grade 10 math	2 semesters
4. Enter Health Care Aide program at Bow Valley College	1 semester

Short Term Goals

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tips for Use

Can be filled in every week

Helps learners set and achieve short-term goals

Focuses on progress

Learning	My Goal
Reading	
Writing	
Strategies	
Life Skills	
Math	

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Self-Evaluation**  
College Readiness

**Tips for Use** ▼  
 Good for learners transitioning to further education  
 Allows self-reflection  
 Makes expectations explicit

<p><b>Respect</b></p> <p>listen carefully to others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• let one person talk at a time</li> <li>• do not disrupt class</li> <li>• keep the classroom tidy</li> <li>• treat everyone with respect</li> </ul>	<p><b>Needs Improvement</b></p>			<p><b>My suggestion for change:</b></p>
<p><b>Responsibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• know my schedule</li> <li>• keep track of my stuff</li> <li>• do my homework</li> <li>• hand in assignments on time</li> <li>• take initiative to get missed work</li> <li>• take initiative to communicate with staff about problems</li> </ul>	<p><b>Needs Improvement</b></p>	<p><b>Satisfactory</b></p>	<p><b>Successful!</b></p>	<p><b>My suggestion for change:</b></p>
<p><b>Participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attend class regularly</li> <li>• am on time for class</li> <li>• am ready to work in class</li> <li>• ask questions</li> <li>• share ideas</li> <li>• listen carefully</li> </ul>	<p><b>Needs Improvement</b></p>	<p><b>Satisfactory</b></p>	<p><b>Successful!</b></p>	<p><b>My suggestion for change:</b></p>

## Checklists and Rubrics

Checklists and rubrics can play an important role in assessment for a number of reasons. As Leong & Collins (2007) point out, informal assessments are often used by instructors to establish whether learners understand what they are learning or if they are challenged enough (p. 144). Burke (2005) refers to observation checklists “as a way to monitor specific skills, behaviours or dispositions of individual learners or all of the learners in the class” (p. 148). Using observation checklists gives instructors an opportunity to evaluate what is happening in the class on an ongoing basis and room to modify instruction when required.

Checklists and rubrics are very similar; checklists are exactly what they sound like, a list of requirements for a task (or class). Rubrics provide several possibilities for each requirement and generally explain the conditions required for achieving full marks on a requirement (for example, in order to get full marks the learner must...).

The use of checklists and rubrics in and for instruction should always be explicit. The instructor should know what a checklist or a rubric is and why it is being used. The language in the checklists and rubrics should be taught to the learners, for example, to “have a positive attitude in the classroom.” All of the examples on the checklists and rubrics should be related to the expectations of the program or classroom that the instructor is in. There is no value in assessing something that the learner isn’t aware of. Additionally, level-appropriate checklists and rubrics are critical in making sure that both instructors and learners get value from the experience. This explicit approach to the sharing of assessment criteria is especially important for LIFE because it gives learners the chance to understand what the expectation is with the aid of visuals (a checklist or previous examples of good work), simplified language, and up-front explanations.

Checklists and rubrics can be used to assess learners’ needs and help them create goals for their own learning as well as to help learners to organize their work, keep track of their learning, and to see what areas they have yet to focus on. Using a checklist or a rubric gives instructors and learners an opportunity to talk about learning. Once an instructor has filled out a checklist or a rubric, he or she then discusses the findings with the learner. This provides an opportunity to talk about learning in the “big picture” while looking at specific areas of learning.

It is important to consider how and what you, as the instructor, will use when you are assessing a learner's work. Guskey (2001) in Burke (2005) believes that instructors need to organize grading criteria into three types: product, process, and progress.

- **Product criteria** describe what learners know and are able to do at a particular point in time. Instructors use product criteria to grade final products such as reports, projects, portfolios, and performances.
- **Process criteria** describe how learners achieved the final product. Instructors consider learner effort, class behaviour, work habits, daily work, regular quizzes, homework, class participation, punctuality of assignments, or attendance.
- **Progress criteria** describe how much the learners actually gain from their learning experiences. This might include learning gain, improvement grading, value-added grading, and educational growth. Progress criteria look at how far the learners have come rather than where learners are, allowing for a very individualized judgment of learners' "learning potential" (p.151).

For each of these criteria, the instructor can create checklists or rubrics to highlight aspects of learning that they want to assess. Using checklists and rubrics allows us to examine content knowledge while gaining a better understanding of how the process of acquiring knowledge is unfolding. As well, checklists and rubrics can be used for peer and self-assessment. For instance, if a group has been working together towards an outcome, they can work on a checklist to examine how well they worked together (process criteria), as well as assessing content outcomes (product criteria). When creating checklists, it is also important to start with what learners know and gradually expand from the starting point. Explicit explanation and instruction are key to learner success, so talking about what participation looks like in your classroom must come before assessing participation in a classroom setting.

Checklists can be designed to look like you want them to look. Depending on the level of the class or learner that the checklist is being created for, there can be varying degrees of white space, icons, words, or graphics. They can be simple checklists or there can be space for additional comments, if appropriate. There are many indicators that an instructor can use to show where a learner is in a particular area of their learning.

Often checklists will include columns with indicators such as:

Examples of Indicators		
No	Sometimes	Yes
Not yet	Some evidence	Yes
Not really	A little	A lot
Needs improvement	Satisfactory	Successful
Not yet observed	Sometimes observed	Frequently observed

Checklists and rubrics can also include dates, comments from instructors, comments from learners, a place to record examples of learner effort or achievement, a place for learners to write what they would like to improve, or any number of other things that capture motivation and learning. In classrooms where there is a high degree of instructor support, learners are guided through a checklist or a rubric, and discuss key elements with the instructor. The instructor then fills out the checklist or the rubric with input from the learner.

## Instructor Assessment of Individual Group Work Skills

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Time Management</b>	Routinely uses time well throughout the project to ensure things get done on time. Group does not have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person.	Usually uses time well throughout the project, but may have procrastinated on one thing. Group does not have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person.	Tends to procrastinate, but usually gets things done by the deadlines. Group does not have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person.	Rarely gets things done by the deadlines AND group has to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person's inadequate time management.
<b>Focus on the task</b>	Consistently stays focused on the task and what needs to be done. Very self-directed.	Focuses on the task and what needs to be done most of the time. Other group members can count on this person.	Focuses on the task and what needs to be done some of the time. Other group members must sometimes remind this person to keep on-task.	Rarely focuses on the task and what needs to be done. Lets others do the work.
<b>Contributions</b>	Routinely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A definite leader who contributes a lot of effort.	Usually provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A strong group member who tries hard	Sometimes provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A satisfactory group member who does what is required.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Often is not a good team player.

<b>Preparedness</b>	Brings needed materials to class and is always ready to work.	Almost always brings needed materials to class and is ready to work.	Almost always brings needed materials but sometimes needs to settle down and get to work.	Often forgets needed materials or is rarely ready to get to work.
<b>Working with Others</b>	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others, but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with, or supports the efforts of others. Often is not a good team player.

Total \_\_\_\_\_ / 20

## Portfolios: Collect, Select, Reflect

Learner portfolios are wonderful and challenging things. This overview will help to give a broad perspective about what portfolios are and why they are great tools to help learners own their learning. Portfolios are used to highlight a learner's experience, achievement, and growth. Learner portfolios include the idea of both product and process learning. According to Shackelford (1996), "a learner portfolio is a purposeful collection of materials capable of communicating learner interests, abilities, progress, and accomplishments in a given areas" (p. 31). One of the greatest benefits of using learner portfolios in the ESL literacy classroom is that the learners are taught to become independent thinkers while becoming familiar with the steps involved in taking charge of their own learning. The State of California Department of Education (2003) points out that it is important that both instructors and learners have a clear vision of the intended learning outcomes that will be captured in the portfolios. They indicate that there are three questions that will make the process of creating portfolios much easier. We can get a sense of direction when using portfolios by asking:

- What is the vision of success for my learners?
- What are the learners' visions of success?
- What are the criteria for documenting success?

## Working Portfolios

Working portfolios collect and demonstrate evidence of the learning process, including rough drafts and works in progress. As Leong & Collins (2007) indicate, using working portfolios is a means of establishing systematic evidence of learning and progress. They state that working portfolios contain selected pieces from class work and set required pieces that reflect the program outcomes. Shackelford (1996) argues that the benefit of the working portfolio is that learners go through a process of collecting work that may be then used to put into a showcase portfolio. An important piece of the working portfolio is that learners are able to meet with their instructors to talk about the pieces they have included. These meetings help to build self-esteem and encourage learners to participate in self-assessment so they can understand their strengths and challenges in the process of their learning. Meetings about working portfolios are valuable because they provide opportunities to talk about learning in the *process* part of portfolio use. Pieces that learners might include in their working portfolio are: rough drafts of written work, spelling tests, math assessments, reading assessments, pieces of work from essential skills classes that they are working on or have completed, instructor feedback, technology pieces, and anything else that they are working on that is related to their learning.

A showcase portfolio is designed to document a learner's highest quality or best work.

Showcase portfolios allow learners to indicate mastery of or readiness in a specific area.

Additionally, showcase portfolios include self-reflections about learning and provide learners with a point of reference when talking about their learning to instructors, peers, academic counselors, or others in the community with whom they want to share their work. When using showcase portfolios, learners should be able to explain why they chose particular pieces and how each piece highlights aspects of their growth. The showcase portfolio starts with an

instructor-generated table of contents. The learner selects a piece that meets the requirements of the outcome listed in the table of contents. A key element in the showcase part of the portfolio process is that learners are able to articulate how the work they have chosen fills the criteria in the table of contents. Work that learners might include in this section are: volunteer work, final copies of written work, written reflections about an aspect of their learning, awards received, important moments in learning, a project, or anything else that highlights that they have met the outcomes.

### The Portfolio Tea Party

In one ESL literacy program, learners have two opportunities each term learners to share their portfolios. In this program, the portfolios contain pieces of work of which the learners are especially proud and have chosen themselves. With the help of the instructor, learners plan a portfolio tea party, where they invite guests such as teachers and friends to their class for cake, tea, and a chance to discuss their work. In this process, students learn how to refer to their portfolios when they describe what they can do and how their language, literacy, numeracy, and life skills have developed since the start of term. This gives them a chance to realize, and to share with others, how much they have learned (and they get to practice being good hosts!).

## Learner-Led Conferences

Learner-led conferences give learners an opportunity to talk about their learning with their instructor and others. A learner-led conference is a meeting between the learner, the instructor, and often other observers. Learners use their portfolios as a way to speak to what and how they have learned over a specific period. This is an ideal opportunity to talk about challenges and successes with specific pieces of work in mind, as well as an opportunity to talk about learning in a greater sense. Teaching explicit language-learning strategies, such as talking about “making a picture in your head” when reading, is a key focus in ESL literacy classrooms. Using portfolios and having learner-led conferences gives learners an opportunity to use the language they have heard in the context of their own learning, thereby helping learners to internalize both the language around strategies and strategy use.

Conferences are important in that they help to build self-esteem, form instructor/learner relationships, and encourage learners to participate in authentic self-assessment and the learning process (Reading/Language, 1990, in Shackelford, 1996). As Burke (2005) so wonderfully states, “Interviews and conferences, therefore, should play an important role in the assessment process in all classrooms – from kindergarten to graduate school” – and from Foundation Phase to wherever our learners go.

## Strategies for Using Portfolios in the Classroom

Using portfolios in the classroom is both challenging and rewarding. The following section includes tips, ideas, and strategies that instructors can use in the classroom to make the process more meaningful and enjoyable for both instructors and learners.

- Appearance of the portfolio is important. The showcase portfolio should be a polished piece (plastic sleeves, nice binders, edited work, dividers, tabs, appropriate graphics).
- Include a table of contents. This will help guide the learner through the learner-led conference. This way, they have a visual reference point to talk about why their work meets the outcome in the table of contents.
- Start the portfolio process slowly and highlight quality, not quantity (even with working portfolios).
- Have explicit conversations about learner expectations. Check in with learners on a fairly regular basis. This will help to keep everyone on the same portfolio page.

- Build in opportunities for learners to share their portfolios with their peers and well as with other instructors or staff. The more they are able to talk about their learning, the more they can be reflective about their strengths and challenges.
- Think of portfolios as a holistic snapshot of the learner. With portfolios, learners include different aspects of their academic and personal lives to present a “whole” picture of who they are.
- Portfolios are successful when learners understand why they are developing and maintaining portfolios. A key piece in the portfolio puzzle is to provide explicit and ongoing instruction and conversation about portfolios.
- When placing work in the working and showcase portfolios, ask what outcome the piece is meeting. In doing this, the learner can begin to think critically about how to meet academic objectives.
- Instructors may want to consider a plan and timeline for entries. This will help to ensure the portfolio process is a smooth one.
- Gottlieb (1995) in Trudell (2002) talks about the CRADLE approach to portfolios. CRADLE stands for developing Collections, encouraging Reflective practices, Assessing the portfolio, Documenting achievement, ensuring Linkages, and Evaluating portfolios.
- Keep in mind that portfolios are a *collaborative* process involving instructors and learners. In ESL literacy programs, instructors should be responsible for guiding the process of portfolio development.
- Schedule weekly class time for updating the portfolio. This will help to keep everyone on task and goal-oriented.



## Portfolios: Challenges

While using portfolios in the ESL literacy classroom is rewarding, challenges certainly arise:

- Portfolios are time-consuming for both instructor and learner. Knowing this can help you plan your preparation time and in-class time accordingly.
- At the beginning, learners may resist portfolios because they are not a traditional form of assessment. Talking about the benefit of portfolios will help to get learners more engaged in the process.
- Objectives need to be clear and explicit. If they are not, you will end up with a bunch of “stuff” that no one can speak to in any meaningful way.
- Because all learner entries for the same outcome will be different, it takes more time to evaluate portfolios. Having evaluation rubrics may help the instructor to evaluate different kinds of work that meet the same objective.
- Instructors need to be sure that learner work meets the outcomes. A table of contents and conversations with learners about the work they have selected help to ensure that outcomes are met.

As Burke (2005) comments, “a portfolio without reflections is really just a notebook of stuff. The power of the portfolio is derived from the descriptions, reactions, processing pieces, and meta-cognitive reflections that help learners achieve their goals” (p. 68).

The tools on the following pages are used in the portfolio process with learners. Learners use these forms to reflect on the work that they have done. They use these as a starting point to talking about their learning in learner-led conferences with their instructors.

### Portfolio Reflection

#### Tips for Use

Encourages self-reflection and considered choices

Highlights strengths

Allows learners to see improvement in their work

#### Why I Chose This Work

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I chose this piece because ...

---

---

---

---

I would like you see that .....

---

---

---

One thing I would improve next time is .....

---

---

---

Tips for Use 

Used to get ready for sharing a portfolio or getting ready for an interview with the instructor

## Preparing for a Conference

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Your instructor will soon have a conference with you about your work this term. Prepare for the conference by discussing these questions.*

1. How has your English improved since the last session?

---

---

2. What can you do now that you could not do before?

---

---

3. How has your reading improved?

---

---

4. What do you like to read? What makes it interesting?

---

5. What are you doing to become a better reader?

---

6. How has your writing improved?

---

---

**My Strengths and Challenges**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal for next week: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tips for Use** ▼

Helps learners identify strengths and challenges

Encourages improvement

Learners focus on short-term, achievable goals

**My Strengths**

Reading Strengths

Writing Strengths

Classroom Readiness Strengths

**My Challenges**

Reading Challenges

Writing Challenges

Classroom Readiness Challenges

**Tips for Use**

Learners use this to prepare for portfolio sharing events. This gives learners language to ask others about work

Instructors who are new to portfolio sharing can use this prompt sheet to guide the process.

**Conversation Prompts for the Portfolio Sharing Event:**

<b>Greetings</b>	
<p>Nice to meet you, my name is...what's your name?</p> <p>Hello. Thank you for coming this morning. My name is...what's your name?</p> <p>Please have a seat.</p> <p>Please join me.</p> <p>I would like to share my portfolio with you.</p> <p>I would like to share my successes from this semester with you.</p> <p>I would like to learn about your successes.</p>	<p>Since January</p> <p>What can you</p> <p>January?</p> <p>How has your</p> <p>What work ar</p> <p>Why are you proud of this work?</p>
<b>During your Conversation</b>	<b>Saying Goodbye</b>
<p>That is really interesting.</p> <p>I like your writing.</p> <p>You are a good...</p> <p>I understand what you are saying.</p> <p>I understand why you are so proud of this work.</p> <p>I am really impressed by...</p> <p>You have obviously worked very hard on...</p>	<p>Thank you for sharing your portfolio with me.</p> <p>Thank you for visiting today and sharing your work.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and for sharing your success this morning.</p> <p>Good luck next semester.</p> <p>Goodbye.</p> <p>I hope to see you again soon.</p>

## Conclusions

Assessment is not simply a measurement of how much learners have learned in a lesson, unit, or class; it can also play a pivotal role in the learning process. Formative assessment, used as part of learning, helps instructors to pinpoint areas where learners are succeeding and areas where they need further development. It leads to the next stage of instruction. What makes formative assessment a valuable part of the classroom, however, is that it is equally meaningful and helpful to learners. Through formative assessment they find out about their strengths and challenges, take ownership of their learning, and learn strategies for learning itself: how to recognize what they have done, how to set goals, and how to measure progress.

There are a number of ways to approach formative assessment in the classroom. In this chapter we discussed goal setting and self-assessment, which provide learners with valuable tools for recognizing progress and determining their path into the future; checklists, which help both instructors and learners to clearly understand the expectations for the classroom and for any task; and two different kinds of portfolios, working portfolios, which demonstrate the learning process; and showcase portfolios, which exhibit the learners' best work.

# Chapter 12 Outline

Introduction: Beyond the Whiteboard

Numeracy

Cognitive Development

Using Technology in the Classroom

Supporting First Language Literacy

Teaching in the Multi-Level Context

Conclusions



# Beyond the Whiteboard

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## Objectives

To highlight the importance of teaching numeracy, cognitive development, and technology

To learn strategies for teaching numeracy, cognitive development, and technology

To appreciate the role that developing first language literacy can play in an ESL literacy classroom

To recognize the multi-level context of most ESL literacy classes

To identify strategies for creating an effective multi-level learning environment

## Introduction: Beyond the Whiteboard

Most educators recognize the core skills that should be taught in an ESL literacy classroom: reading, writing, and language development. We can add to this direct strategy instruction and, in some cases, foundational literacy instruction. However, there are a number of other things that need to be taught in order to help Learners with Interrupted Formal Education develop literacy and language skills and thrive in their new communities, and an effective ESL literacy program seeks to meet more than just the core literacy needs of the learners. These other needs include numeracy, cognitive development, and technology. There are also two considerations that affect many ESL literacy classes: how and whether to support literacy development in the learners' first languages, and how to create an effective multi-level ESL literacy class.

## Numeracy

Enabling learners to become numerate is as crucial as enabling learners to become literate. Instructors of LIFE have a common goal – to empower their learners to make changes in their lives. Literacy instruction is essential in achieving this outcome, but it is only one part of language that learners need to develop. To successfully participate in society, individuals need to be fluent in numbers as well.

Numeracy permeates our lives in all of our communities – at home, at work, and in our free time. Without the skills to read, interpret, and manipulate numbers, learners will not fulfill their potential within their new communities, and will not achieve the goals that they have set for themselves.

Consider the numeracy present in a typical commute to work:

- read the alarm clock
- change channels on the TV to watch the news
- plan what to wear based on the forecast
- amend journey time to allow for a coffee stop
- establish the length of wait until the next bus
- identify the correct bus to catch
- pay the bus driver
- navigate streets and avenues
- press the correct button in the elevator

For most of us, all of this happens before 9:00 a.m. Without numeracy skills, even basic navigation through our cities and through our schedules for the day is very difficult. Consider

also the single greatest impact of a lack of numeracy: without numeracy, the ability to successfully manage finances, and positively affect change, is absent.

### Identifying LIFE with Numeracy Challenges

Assessing a learner’s stage of literacy does not enable instructors to pinpoint a learner’s understanding of numeracy. There is rarely correspondence between the two. Each learner’s understanding is shaped by his or her experience in academic settings, real-life interactions, and game play, as well negotiating and purchasing transactions. The commonality among all LIFE is that they need to develop a mathematical vocabulary in English. Note that an entire range of numeracy understanding is possible in every ESL literacy classroom, no matter what Phase the learners are at in terms of reading and writing.



The following table aims to indicate some essential knowledge traits and knowledge gaps among LIFE numeracy learners, but does not aim to be definitive:

Numeracy Learner Profiles		
	Mathematical Background and Experience	Knowledge Gaps Learners are unlikely able to...
<b>Learner A</b> <b>no background in numeracy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• little or no academic or real life experience with mathematics</li> <li>• may work and contribute to a household but does not manage household finances</li> <li>• limited understanding of money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• count orally forwards and backwards to 100</li> <li>• match numbers with their written equivalents</li> <li>• recognize patterns</li> <li>• add or subtract one- or two- digit numbers</li> <li>• understand fully the concepts of more and less</li> </ul>

<p><b>Learner B</b> some background in numeracy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some mathematical experience in real life or in an academic setting</li> <li>• refers to being taught mathematics “a long time ago”</li> <li>• can add and subtract quite confidently</li> <li>• knows some times tables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unlikely able to articulate mathematical processes</li> <li>• understanding of calculating often muddled –may have learned a process, but doesn’t understand the concepts</li> <li>• struggles with the requirements of word problems in English</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learner C</b> several years’ numeracy education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• several years of schooling in mathematics in their home country, Canada, or both</li> <li>• mental and written calculations are strong</li> <li>• adds, subtracts, multiplies with regrouping, and divides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• various gaps in understanding the four basic operations including: incorrectly memorized times tables; carrying or borrowing incorrectly; errors in long division</li> <li>• struggles with the requirements of word problems in English</li> <li>• difficulty in identifying the steps required to find the solution to a problem</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learner D</b> many years’ numeracy education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• many years of mathematical study either in his or her home country, Canada, or both</li> <li>• confident and competent in the four basic operations</li> <li>• some knowledge in one or more of the following: fractions, percents, ratios, proportions, decimals, geometry, and measurement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lacks conceptual constructs necessary to solve word problems</li> <li>• lacks conceptual constructs necessary to solve word problems</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learner E</b> competent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• competent and confident mathematician who has completed courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lacks conceptual constructs necessary to solve word problems</li> </ul>

## How to Identify Learner Understanding

As the range of learner experience and understanding can be so vast within a given group, it is advisable to undertake a “*Show me what you know*” approach in order to ascertain who your numeracy learners are. Ask learners to copy a single digit from the board onto the middle of a piece of paper, or on an individual whiteboard (a great investment of resources) and ask them to write down anything that they know about that number. Some learners will find copying the digit difficult while others will be able to calculate that  $3^3 = 27$ . Through whatever they are able to do, learners will reveal the extent of their knowledge and understanding.

Additionally, a series of increasingly challenging assessments may be undertaken with learners. Activities could range from counting a number of shapes, through to written geometry problems. Tiered, successive assessments can be used, where one is completed only after successful completion of the previous level. They can be separated along these lines:

Successive Mathematics Assessment	
Assessment 1	Identifying patterns Identifying numbers
Assessment 2	Reading and writing numbers in words and digits Single-digit addition and subtraction (without renaming)
Assessment 3	Two- and three- digit addition and subtraction (with renaming) Simple multiplication and division
Assessment 4	Word problems with the four operations Calculations with money
Assessment 5	Fractions, ratios, and percents

## How to Incorporate Numeracy Instruction

Incorporating a numeracy stream in ESL literacy instruction can be challenging in an already pressured curriculum. Two different approaches have been detailed below.

Ideally, separate numeracy classes are scheduled into the curriculum, where learners are grouped according to need and knowledge gaps. These classes have a strong vocabulary focus and collaborative approach to learning. The content ranges from reading and writing numbers through the basic four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, and beyond.

Where separate numeracy classes cannot be arranged, instructors should look for opportunities to introduce numeracy to compliment the thematic unit of study.

For example:

*Sample theme:*

- public transportation

*Possible numeracy content:*

- reading tables and schedules
- reading analog and digital time (including the 24 hour clock)
- money (making fares with change)
- map reading (including navigation of grid systems and compass directions)



In both cases, however, it is critical to incorporate small group work and partner work in addition to independent skills practice. As adult numeracy learners are so diverse in terms of their experience, small group work allows for collaboration, debate, and explanation – all critical if learners are to understand content and reinforce their own understanding.

It is also recommended that solving real-life problems forms part of instruction, including the explicit teaching of problem-solving strategies. Learners will benefit from being taught how to identify critical information, discount irrelevant information, and undertake one or more calculations to reach an answer, as well as how to decide if that answer is reasonable or not.

## *Promising Practices in Numeracy Instruction*

The following checklist may be used to ensure that numeracy content is targeted, relevant, and helpful, which in turn ensures that learners “buy in.”

- Keep a strong vocabulary focus and ensure that even learners who have mathematical understanding are learning useful information to explain their reasoning and decision-making.
- Keep content grounded in “real life.”
- If possible, tie to the ESL literacy theme being studied.
- Use small group work, partner work, and individual skills practice.
- Include computer-based games and programs for skills practice and vocabulary reinforcement.
- Use manipulatives and realia wherever possible.
- Solve real-life problems.
- Include working with money and budgeting in your instruction.

### **Class Sales**

In this activity, learners from several ESL literacy classes get together and create a store. Instructors can collect gently used goods for sale, or, alternatively, bake cookies or other goodies. The learners are responsible for pricing the goods, selling the stock, and making change. It is an excellent collaborative numeracy activity, with tasks available for every level of numeracy learner. Any proceeds can go toward a class party.

## *Conclusions: Numeracy*

The development of numeracy is as important as the development of literacy for LIFE and should be taught alongside reading and writing skills. Ideally, learners are regrouped for numeracy instruction, as there is no direct correlation between their literacy Phase and their numeracy Phase. Even if this is not possible, numeracy should be part of the curriculum. This means that instructors may also require extra support. Not all ESL literacy instructors will have experience teaching numeracy and many may feel uncomfortable at first. A program can provide support for its instructors in the form of professional development opportunities and assistance in curriculum development and lesson planning.

## Cognitive Development

Few would disagree that young ESL learners in elementary schools require help with cognitive development – as do all other learners their age. However, many ESL instructors assume that adult learners come into literacy classrooms with their cognitive abilities fully formed. After all, these learners are often parents, spouses, employees, business owners, and household managers. They have well-developed skill sets which have served them in all they have done in the past. However, lack of literacy, numeracy, and a formal education affect the cognitive development of adults. This is not a question of intelligence; rather it is a question of building the necessary skills to allow Learners with Interrupted Formal Education to thrive in a print-based society. Cognitive development, therefore, is one of the cornerstones in the foundation of literacy development.

### *What is Cognitive Development?*

Jean Piaget, a Swiss developmental theorist of the past century, believed that cognitive development through education was an essential part of a strong society. He proposed that people develop cognitively in sequential stages. These stages roughly relate to infancy, preschool, elementary school, and adolescence (Boree, 2006). Piaget's contemporary and critic, Lev Vygotsky, suggested that different societies and cultures allow different learning opportunities (Gallagher, 1999). With this view in mind, it is not surprising that LIFE show many aspects of adult reasoning – after all, they have a fully developed adult brain – while not being able to do many of the following tasks:

- sorting objects by one characteristic (These are all made of wood...)
- classifying (These are clothes. These are toys. These are things to clean with.)
- using multiple aspects of a problem to solve it. (This tall thin cup and this short wide cup probably hold the same amount of water.)
- understanding that numbers or objects can change or be regrouped (four blocks and four blocks makes a group of eight. If I take away four blocks, I have four left.)
- following a pattern (circle, circle, square, circle, ?, ?)
- sequencing pictures to tell a story (The woman with a shovel and a seed. The woman putting the seed into the ground. The woman admiring the beautiful flower.)
- putting together a simple puzzle

In learners' personal lives, limited cognitive development may present itself as a lack of anticipation of the consequences of their actions. Money may be available for coffee today, but what about the last week of the month? After money is spent on new winter coats for the family, what will the landlord do when the rent is not paid? What happens when the electricity bill has

been ignored for two months? LIFE who are still working at the concrete operational stage – who are still developing the skills outlined above – may also have difficulty seeing situations from another’s viewpoint. Clearly cognitive development has a strong influence on a person’s ability to thrive in the classroom and in the community.

LIFE will exhibit some formal operational thought, as Piaget would term it, in their home and work lives. However, the above-mentioned concrete operational tasks must become accomplished skills before learners are able to move on to formal operational thinking in the academic sense. Before learners can think abstractly, reason logically, sequence actions within a story, predict, infer, and draw conclusions, they must have mastered concrete operational thinking skills. It is essential that early ESL literacy instructors build the foundational thinking skills that will enable their learners to experience success.

### *Activities for Cognitive Development*

A good start is to use class warm-up time for fun cognitive development tasks. As learners arrive in the class they can be immediately offered “brain-building” activities. Hands-on activities such as puzzles and “Concentration” work well. Learners also enjoy learning how to

#### **Cognitive Development Activities**

Sudoku

Crosswords

Word Searches

Mazes

Memory

Pattern Games

Sequencing Activities

Find the Difference Puzzles

Hang-man

Code Puzzles

Mix and Match Activities

do dot-to-dot activities and mazes of increasing complexity (try puzzlemaker.com). Another excellent activity is “Kidoku”, a simpler version of Sudoku which uses symbols (such as the card symbols) instead of numbers. Hands-on kits can be easily created, allowing learners to begin with a simple four-square. Learners choose four different symbols to put in the square. If some of your learners had their first day of school in your classroom, this task may be quite a challenge. Other learners can quickly move to a card holding two four-squares. Each square must have a different symbol and each row must also have a different symbol. The next step is a card with four four-squares.

Once learners are adept at completing a symbol-based Sudoku, ask the learners to show you that each square and each row has four different symbols. This allows them to develop the skill of analysis and helps them take a deeper and more active role in their learning. Moving to pencil and paper “Kidoku” is a bigger leap than you may expect. Most difficult of all is the leap to pen and paper 6x6 “Kidoku,” using numbers instead of symbols. Learners with more educational background will move through these stages faster, showing that they have greater mastery over concrete operational thought. Using warm-up time for these kinds of activities will also allow

the instructor to easily pinpoint which learners need more help. In this way, learner needs can be accurately targeted, and a strong foundation for literacy can be built.

In planning lessons, it is a good idea to keep the objective of building cognitive development in mind. Learners are taught to name the letters of the alphabet. Can your learners put alphabet cards in order with a model for reference? Can they order the letters without external reference? If you cover a letter on the alphabet, can they guess which letter you are covering? Can they fill in the blanks to show which letters are missing? Ask learners to put pictures in sequence and tell the story before the class writes a Language Experience story together.

Any activities which require learners to dig deeper and reach further will maximize their cognitive development. Frequently asking “Why?” and “What will happen next?” will help learners to develop their ability to think logically and predict future events according to past events. Thinking, remembering, and group problem solving will also contribute to learners’ cognitive development. But what connection does this have to language learning?

### *Cognitive Development and Reading Skills*

Learners with Interrupted Formal Education in their first language may be very talented oral language learners. At higher levels, they may also have developed strong reading skills, being able to quickly and easily find answers to questions where the information is clearly stated in the text in the same wording as the question. However, LIFE stand out clearly in a classroom of learners with stronger educational backgrounds. LIFE, not surprisingly, often lack “high order thinking” (formal operation thought). They lack strategies and study skills as well as the ability to understand what they read on an abstract level. When they are asked why a character did a certain thing, they may want to answer with a sentence plucked directly from the text. If the question is what will happen next, many literacy learners will draw a complete blank. “How can I know that?” they ask, “It doesn’t say.” Cognitive development is critical to progress through Phase III and beyond.

### *Conclusions: Cognitive Development*

A systematic and explicit teaching approach which incorporates cognitive development will help learners to move from concrete to formal operational thinking. Without higher-level thinking skills, a learner’s ability to pursue his or her education will stall well before high school upgrading courses. As ESL literacy instructors, our mandate is to empower our learners to live their best lives. Focusing on cognitive development in the classroom will help learners take charge of their own lives and their learning.

## Using Technology in the Classroom

Best practices in the ESL literacy classroom include encouraging learner motivation, maximizing progress, preparing learners for the real world, and bridging learners into life-long learning. The incorporation of technology into the classroom allows a multi-pronged approach to achieve all of these goals.

The use of technology is considered an essential skill by most colleges today. Even entry-level jobs often require basic computer skills, the ability to handle electronic surveillance equipment, accuracy in using pass codes, and so on. Learners with Interrupted Formal Education have often had little exposure to technology and many have high affective barriers preventing them from even trying to understand the electronic machines that surround them. Their fears and lack of self-confidence sometimes lead them to believe that it is better not to try in case they fail. Safe and supportive technology training can serve as a vehicle to teach learners the importance of accuracy and details. Technology helps learners' hand-eye coordination and presents them with printed information in many different formats. As their skills increase, technology can connect learners to a broader world, providing them with access to information.

### *Technology: More than Computers*

When we think “technology” we immediately think of computers. However, LIFE are surrounded by baffling technology everywhere they go. Buying a transit ticket can involve reading instructions, punching buttons, and inserting the correct amount of change. Learning to handle this kind of task brings LIFE a real sense of empowerment. Microwaves, DVD remotes, and CD players are more examples, as well as technology that many adult, educated native speakers of English find challenging, such as a universal remote control. When seen in this light, it is clear that learning about technology must have a place in the ESL literacy classroom.

While some learners will embrace technology with open arms, some may be more shy. Technology teaching must proceed at the comfort pace of the learners and provide plenty of support. This may require a lot of one-on-one attention and repetition. It may be possible to find some volunteers who are willing to help students learn how to use various machines. A “Technology Day” could be arranged where a number of volunteers instruct small groups in how to use different machines and allow them the hands-on practice they need to be comfortable using them.

Computers are a core component of any technology program. There are many ways to use computers in an ESL literacy class. With the lowest-level ESL literacy learners, a big accomplishment is learning how to use the mouse and becoming comfortable using a computer. Many purchased programs can help learners learn new words and alphabet sounds while allowing them to practice their mouse skills. Keyboarding skills can then be taught using programs such as BBC Computer Tutor. As they are able, learners can branch into word-processing, as well as using the internet and e-mail. Critical thinking skills can be taught as learners access the internet to find information. Concepts such as “key words” are developed as learners work to narrow their web searches. Blogging can be an exciting communication tool that lets learners read each other’s blogs and respond. In addition, computers can provide instructors with a chance to target the needs of different learners. Learners can find helpful websites to practice their areas of weakness: vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension, etc. This empowers them to continue this learning at home, if they have access to a computer, or at the school or public library. Instead of simply giving them information, we teach our learners to find it themselves.

Teaching technology in a computer lab can seem overwhelming to some instructors, especially if the learners have high needs. Volunteers in the computer lab allow learners to have their questions answered quickly: learners feel more supported, and less of their class time is spent waiting for the instructor. In addition, volunteers in the computer lab can provide assisted computer use as learners dictate their own stories (Language Experience stories). In this way, topics can be tailored to the interests and experiences of the learners. A topic like “A Family Treasure” can allow learners to explore important aspects of their first culture. A story such as “How I Came to Canada” validates learners’ experiences as living history. Learners can then be provided with a booklet of stories written by themselves and their classmates (but printed in a large, easily-read font). Learner motivation to read these stories will be high, maximizing their language learning.

## *Computers in the Classroom*

A computer with a large screen in the classroom is an excellent tool for ESL literacy instructors if the resources are available. Youtube, Google Images, and other online reference sites also help instructors to quickly and easily find an illustration for a difficult vocabulary word (bull riding? square dancing? maple syrup?) while modeling one use of the internet. Lessons can be more varied through the use of Powerpoint, internet sites, DVDs, and CDs. In addition, learners can be frequently exposed to language in a wide variety of language modalities with the added benefit of having some control. They can ask the instructor questions, request to see something that was shown before, or practice different forms of language until they feel successful.



## *Conclusions: Using Technology in the Classroom*

Learners' interest in using computers and learning about other technology is consistently high. Most LIFE identify computers and technology as an important part of their new country, and they are motivated to learn skills that will maximize their progress in English. The real world of jobs and daily living requires a certain facility with technology. As learners are empowered to reach these goals through their own effort, they will also be empowered to pursue their learning long after ESL literacy classes are over. For further information and a list of helpful websites, please see the Annotated Bibliography.

## Supporting First Language Literacy

Learners with Interrupted Formal Education, by definition, face literacy challenges when learning English. This is because they do not have completely developed literacy skills in their first language. Some learners have no literacy in any language; others had limited literacy in a first or a second language before learning English, but all LIFE have literacy needs. ESL literacy programs, also by definition, work towards helping learners develop literacy in English, but rarely work with developing literacy in the learners' first languages. This poses an interesting question: should ESL literacy instructors have a role in supporting and enhancing learners' literacy skills in their first languages? Is there any advantage to the learners? Does it help the learners to develop literacy faster in English? Research has provided many compelling reasons to consider first language literacy as an essential component of any ESL literacy program. Literacy instruction in a first language is faster and more effective for a number of reasons. First of all, learners are fully fluent in their first language and this allows them to focus on the



development of reading and writing rather than oral language acquisition. It is extremely difficult to learn to read and write a language that you do not speak – especially if you have no literacy skills in your first language. Secondly, many written codes have a more direct sound-symbol correspondence than English. This allows for easier development of word decoding as well as a swifter progression to fluent reading for comprehension. Finally, learners are already aware of the vocabulary and structure of their first language. This allows them to better anticipate and predict what word comes next in the sentence, and better check to see if what they have read sounds right to their fully fluent ears.

The good news is we only learn to read once. The skills required in reading any language, such as directionality (whatever direction that might be), attention to detail, recognizing letter or word

shapes, understanding that print has meaning, and decoding, can be transferred to a second language. This is why learners who speak a first language with a non-Roman alphabet are not ESL literacy learners, even though they are at first unable to decode English words. They already have a considerable number of reading skills and strategies in place which they can use to learn to read English. For learners who have not acquired literacy in any language, it is easier to acquire them in their first languages and then to transfer the skills into English.

It is important to note, however, that the brain is wired differently for the acquisition of oral and written language. All groups of people in the world have a spoken language. Some of these languages have had a written code for thousands of years, such as Arabic and Chinese; however, many languages have acquired a written code only within the last 200 years (most of these systems supplied by foreign linguists). A good number of languages remain without a written code. So while our brains are hard-wired to speak and listen, reading and writing are more difficult skills that require years of instruction. This should point us to the path of maximum efficiency – literacy development in the learner’s first language when possible.

There are few things more pleasant to an instructor’s ear than the joy of a learner learning to read in his or her first language for the first time. Providing this opportunity shows the learners that you value their first languages and cultures. This can lead to a strong, respectful bond between instructor and learners which lowers affective barriers (the fears and concerns that impede learning) and allows for a swifter and richer learning experience.

### *How to Support First Language Literacy*

There are clear advantages to helping learners become literate in their first languages, but also a number of challenges. How can an ESL literacy instructor incorporate first language literacy instruction in the classroom? In some areas, immigration patterns are quite predictable. For example, there is a large Spanish-speaking immigrant population in the southern United States, so it makes sense for ESL literacy instructors to also work on literacy in Spanish. Not every ESL literacy instructor speaks a second language, however, and for those who do, they often don’t speak the “right” second language, which is to say the language of their learners. What about classes where learners speak a dozen or more first languages? The immigration and refugee patterns in many countries mean that our classrooms are highly diverse.

Even in programs with learners from a diverse range of cultures and language groups, it is still possible to foster first language literacy without requiring the ESL literacy instructor to speak a dozen languages. Many ESL literacy programs are filled with learners from a similar background, or groups of learners with a similar background. It may be fairly easy to find literate people in their community who are willing to work with small groups for a portion of your class time. It is also possible to harness the talents of other learners in your program, and create a learner-mentor program.

## *Learner Mentor Programs*

Canadian immigration patterns provide most instructors with a very diverse group of learners. This makes the solution a little trickier to work out. Once again, most language communities have some members who are more literate. Many of these community members want to have a chance to help their fellow countrymen, and this is a practical way to do it. If your school or college has a wide range of classes including CLB 4 and above, you may also want to consider looking in these classes for volunteers. In fact, developing a learner mentor program is an ideal way to provide a pool of eager first language helpers for your classroom, with clear benefits for both the learners and the mentors.

The benefits of a learner mentor program to LIFE is clear. Any literacy is good literacy. The benefits reach beyond the development of literacy, however. Mentorship programs also give LIFE a chance to talk over problems in their first language. A learner mentor may have better advice to give to the learner than the instructor would, and the learner and the mentor often form a strong and supportive friendship. Learner mentors also act as literacy role models, especially when drawn from higher-level ESL literacy classes. LIFE see that their mentors have walked the same road and have achieved a great deal. They begin to see that they, too, can make the same achievements. At Bow Valley College, there is a well-developed learner mentor program. LIFE in this program have been overheard asking when they might be able to become mentors as well. They saw the work their mentors were doing and wanted to be able to do the same thing, demonstrating the strong motivation inspired by role models.

The mentors also benefit from helping learners develop first language and English literacy.



While they are not trained instructors, they have mastered the basic principles of what they are sharing with their partners. With the ESL literacy instructor on hand to answer questions, both mentors and their partners have a positive learning experience. Mentors also experience a boost in self-confidence. Many see clearly for the first time how much they have learned and how much they have to give to their partners. A letter of acknowledgement for their work as mentors can help them when they apply for jobs.

This sort of mentor work can also lead to a lifetime habit of volunteerism, which is an advantage to the whole community.

The instructor also clearly benefits from having school or community mentors. Having helpers in the classroom provides a mood-lightening change in classroom routine. The learners look forward to seeing their mentors and are motivated to work harder. As well, the instructor can use this opportunity to provide more individualized instruction to single learners or small groups. In this way, instruction becomes more learner-centred and effective.

The ESL literacy program also benefits from a learner mentor program, because learners from different levels get to know each other, changing the atmosphere in the hallways. A learner mentor program allows a program to educate the “whole learner.” As we know, personal problems and affective barriers hold many of our learners back from learning. Providing learners with a first language mentor will go a long way towards tearing down these barriers.

A learner mentor program is not very difficult to develop and run. First of all, program administration must be on board. Coordinators can support the development of a learner mentor program by encouraging instructors to participate, by arranging for a small budget for token mentor gifts at the end of each term, and by providing support staff to help those instructors willing to put time and energy into developing the program. Once the underlying support is in place, the mentors can be recruited, and the program can begin.

### *Challenges in Supporting in First Language Literacy*

The benefits of supporting first language literacy are clear, but there are a number of questions and challenges to be considered. Many literacy learners speak several languages. They may have acquired some literacy in a second language, such as Arabic. Is it worth developing literacy in this language, which is neither the language they speak in their home nor particularly useful in their new country? The short answer is, yes, there is some benefit, as long as the learner speaks this other second language better than English. However, the learner must see this learning as an advantage and be willing to pursue it. If the learner is more fluent in Arabic, for example, than in English, Arabic literacy will proceed more rapidly, and any skills learned in Arabic are transferrable to the learning of English. If the learner is resistant to developing literacy in a second language other than English, a mentor can still provide the learner with individualized support in developing literacy in English, answering questions in this other second language or giving explanations. Understanding directions for an activity, for example, is often harder than the material in the exercise.

What about learners whose language has no written code? Many of these learners will have lived their lives without seeing written language as a useful skill. It may be difficult for them to understand why reading and writing in English is so important. Learners whose first language has no written code will also likely lack many pre-reading skills such as understanding the use of

signs, handling books, and interpreting pictures. These skills are usually passed down from literate parents. It is clearly not possible to support learners in developing first language literacy if their first language has no written code. However, oral first language support from a literate mentor (even if the mentor is literate only in English) will ease a learner's uncertainty and anxiety as he or she receives targeted instruction in English literacy. The mentor can help explain concepts or translate vocabulary for the learner, and, more importantly, can answer the learner's questions and act as a role-model.

Another challenge is if it is not possible to provide a mentor for all learners in the class; if there is no one available who speaks a certain language, some learners may feel left out of the program. If this situation arises, the instructor can decide what to do; one possibility is to provide English-speaking mentors for these learners, a solution which loses the benefit of first language support, but allows the learners access to one-on-one support.

### *Conclusions: Supporting First Language Literacy*

There are many advantages to supporting first language literacy in LIFE wherever possible. First language literacy support is often more effective than English literacy support, in that it allows learners to develop literacy without worrying about learning a language orally. It also shows respect for learners and their culture. In any support of first language literacy, the goal is ultimately to transfer these skills into English, so that learners can thrive in their new homes and reach their goals for education, employment, and settlement. Although making a commitment to supporting our learners' first language literacy requires an initial investment of time as well as ongoing maintenance, the results in the classroom and in the learners are well worth it.

## Teaching in a Multi-Level Context

Ideally, ESL literacy programs are able to run a number of ESL literacy classes and can thereby arrange learners into level groups. Despite the incredible range of diversity within the ESL literacy context, however, multi-level classes are a reality for many programs and instructors. Multi-level classes pose an extra challenge for the ESL literacy instructor. Each level of literacy (each Phase in the CLB Literacy Document) is diverse in itself, and calls upon the instructor to skillfully bring awareness to areas of strength and weakness for each learner in order to plan and provide support accordingly. For classes with more than one Phase of learner, the challenge is increased considerably.

In many ways, however, all ESL literacy classes are multi-level, even if a program is able to offer several different levels of ESL literacy. The level placement of Learners with Interrupted Formal Education is typically dependent on their reading and writing skills. The result is that the listening and speaking benchmarks represented within a class, even within one Phase, usually vary significantly. To illustrate, within a Phase II class, one learner listens and speaks at CLB 4 and can carry on a conversation with native-English speakers quite comfortably. This learner has lived in Canada for some time and is well-adjusted to Canadian living. His classmate, on the other hand, only started learning English one month ago, when she moved to Canada, speaks at a CLB 1, and uses a great deal of energy to communicate with the cashier at the grocery store.

It is also essential to note that reading and writing levels vary within a Phase. To a Phase II Initial learner, finding and copying an appropriate word to the line beneath a picture might be challenge enough, while a Phase II Adequate learner may be able to write several sentences with familiar text and related vocabulary fairly independently. This means that a Phase II class (or any of the Phases) will include learners with a wide range of reading and writing skills. Even if a program has the resources to provide classes for each part of a Phase, such as Phase II Initial, Phase II Developing, and Phase II Adequate, there will be a variety of skill levels.

In addition to the multi-level context inherent in any ESL literacy classroom and even within any

To some degree, all ESL literacy classes are multi-level: learners will never be at exactly the same level in terms of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and numeracy. Even learners who are closely grouped based on literacy skills will have a variety of oral and numeracy abilities, and in practice, will also have a variety of literacy abilities too. Diversity is the nature of education; everyone brings different abilities to the classroom, and everyone learns differently and at a different pace. Use this diversity as a strength rather than a challenge; allow for mentoring and group work, and always foster a classroom environment that is welcoming and safe, where all learners can feel successful.

one Phase, many classes house an even wider diversity. Smaller organizations and community programs may not have the resources to hold multiple ESL literacy classes. Some organizations are only beginning to recognize that the needs of LIFE differ from those with academic backgrounds. In many communities and programs, an individual instructor may have Foundation Phase, Phase I, II, and III learners all in one class. To complicate matters further, sometimes learners with higher levels of education, unsuitable as the ESL literacy environment may be them, for whatever reason don't fit in mainstream ESL programs and find their way into the ESL literacy classroom as well.

The challenges of working in a multi-level setting are many. Instructors find themselves looking for and, more often than not, creating materials that both support and challenge the learners. Because learners come with such varied strengths, one learner might find a vocabulary-matching exercise very simple, while another learner in the same class struggles with the same activity. Given the fact that the very nature of ESL literacy classes is wide-ranging with regards to learners' skills and needs, what approaches can make this challenging situation for instructors also one that is manageable, and even beneficial, for everyone involved?

There are a number of tips for working in a multi-level setting:

**Set the Tone:** From the very beginning of the course, let learners know that the class is multi-level, and that being in a multi-level class means each learner will be good at different things. One person might be able to speak more English, while another might be better at writing sentences or even paragraphs. No matter who they are or what their skills are, every learner is important, and where each individual learner is at, is okay. The instructors and learners in the class all need to respect each other where they are, and every learner has strengths he or she brings to the class, which can be shared with others. This conversation can be repeated throughout the course of the term, in order to validate where each person is in terms of his or her learning.

**Recognize that Success Means Different Things for Different Learners:** In a multi-level class, success for one learner might be copying a sentence on the line, while for another, it might be writing a full paragraph on the same topic.

**Follow a Structured Routine:** Following a structured routine from week to week not only gives learners a sense of predictability, it also simplifies planning. ESL literacy instructors often create a great deal of materials. Having a structure in place cuts back on time and prevents instructors from having to reinvent the wheel for every lesson or theme. As well, it is a good idea to have a list of things learners can do when they are finished tasks ahead of other learners.

**Recycle:** Provide learners with opportunities to use the same language over and over again until they become comfortable with it. For those learners who catch on earlier than others, offer a more difficult task based on the same language points or theme.

**Teach Strategies:** Learning how to learn is as important, if not more important, than learning the content, and enables learners to become more autonomous.

**Scaffold:** Plan lessons that are going to work for the learners with the most basic skills in your class, yet also offer more advanced learners an opportunity to challenge themselves. While this can be a tricky task for instructors, it is possible. Here are a few ways this can work:

- Make oral language development a starting point for your thematic work.
- Use cooperative games and tasks that don't highlight who gets it and who doesn't.
- While everyone practices the same vocabulary orally, provide learners with a spelling list, and support them to choose the right number of words for them. They should select a number of words they believe they can successfully learn. More advanced spellers are requested to select extra words from the challenge section of their spelling list.
- Include a variety of reading materials in your class library, so that everyone has something to read during the extended reading portion of your class.
- Provide learners with writing frames appropriate to their current ability.

**Offer Support:** In addition to scaffolding, see what kind of staff or volunteer support is available to you. The help of an educational assistant or a volunteer assistant provides opportunity for supported small group activities. This can be particularly advantageous in reading and writing, as each group can then work with a reading passage that is at an appropriate level for them, and each group can work on a similar writing activity, but with very different levels of support. For more information on scaffolding, please see Chapter Ten.

**Encourage Learners to Use Whatever Strengths and Strategies They Can:** Learners can use numerous strategies to help them accomplish the same task. There are many good strategies, including: use of first language, picture dictionaries, first language dictionaries, asking others for assistance when they get stuck, and going back in their binders to something they remember from a previous lesson. The important thing is that the learners are experiencing growth and success.

**Encourage Learners to Help Each Other:** Learners can help each other. Provide opportunities for beginning readers to read with the support of someone who is a stronger reader,

for stronger learners to write a simple story that a beginning learner dictates, or for one learner to explain a numeracy concept to another learner in their first language. A highly organized learner can help someone who is unfamiliar with binder organization, and someone who understands class routines can offer support to someone who doesn't understand yet.

**Celebrate Successes:** Help learners see their own language development. Ask them to look at a current writing sample and another from two months ago, and tell you whether their writing is the same or different now. When this kind of self-evaluation is done regularly, competition and comparison with others in the class become less significant.

### *Conclusions: Teaching in a Multi-Level Context*

While working in a multi-level context is certainly challenging, it also creates possibilities for a highly supportive, collaborative learning environment. Furthermore, as learners are provided with strategies for learning and growth, they begin to take greater ownership over their own language and strategy development. The tips and techniques for working in a multi-level environment can also be universally applied to all ESL literacy; not only are all ESL literacy classes multi-level to a certain extent, but these are also good practices for creating supportive, safe classrooms.

## Conclusions

The development of literacy means more than just the ability to read and write. In order to thrive in their new communities and to reach their goals, LIFE will also need to be taught numeracy, which provides them with the skills and strategies for coping with numbers and math; cognitive development, which helps them learn patterns of thinking and reasoning expected in western culture, such as logic, linear reasoning, process of elimination, and recognizing difference; and technology, which includes computers but also all other kinds of machines and electronic devices. These three topics should not be seen as extras or even optional; all three are critically important in the development of literacy and language and will help learners with life in their new countries. Education, as much as we can discuss different subjects, is also highly fluid, and the skills and strategies learned in one area, such as recognizing a pattern of shapes in geometry, can be transferred to another area, such as recognizing patterns of grammatical endings.

There are two other considerations in an ESL literacy classroom that were discussed in this chapter: supporting first language literacy and teaching in a multi-level class. Both of these topics involve drawing on the strengths of the learners in the program to make the most of the learning environment, and working with the resources we have, to not just make do, but to make learning happen.





## Section 3: Levels of ESL Literacy

**Chapter 13:**  
Foundation Phase

**Chapter 14:**  
Phase I

**Chapter 15:**  
Phase II

**Chapter 16:**  
Phase III

# Chapter 13 Outline

The Foundation Phase Learner

The CLB Literacy Phases

Introduction: Foundation Phase

When is a Learner Ready for Foundation Phase?

Foundation Phase Outcomes

Approaches and Activities for Foundation Phase

Materials for Foundation Phase

Classroom Routines for Foundation Phase

Sample Theme Unit for Foundation Phase

Lesson Planning for Foundation Phase

Sample Lesson Plans for Foundation Phase

Conclusions



# Foundation Phase

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## Objectives

**To recognize Foundation Phase learners and their skills and needs**

**To identify the outcomes and expectations for Foundation Phase**

**To share effective practices in the Foundation Phase classroom**

## Learner Profile: Foundation Phase

An at-a-glance profile of adult ESL literacy learners at Foundation Phase  
All skills are measured according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks and the Canadian Language Benchmark Literacy Phases

Years of Formal Education	Reading and Writing Skills	Range of Listening and Speaking	Range of Numeracy
0-2	Foundation Phase	CLB 1-3	Phase I
Typical Age Range		Gender	
adults of all ages, but predominantly either between 18-25 or over 55		usually mostly women	
Common Challenges in the Classroom	Common Strengths in the Classroom	Common Barriers to Learning	
no classroom experience frequent exhaustion few formal learning strategies low oral skills building fine motor skills realizing that print has meaning	taking risks collaborative learning oral repetition prior practical knowledge survival skills	poverty lack of adequate housing lack of childcare lack of transportation lack of ability to access help issues likely to be in crisis before learner receives help	
Typical Social and Political Background		Indicators a Learner is at Foundation Phase	
learner can come from any country in the world usually rural villages usually highly oral societies learner may have spent time in refugee camps or in additional countries before immigrating learner may have experienced war, famine, displacement, poverty, or social or political unrest		learner has a lack of familiarity with classrooms learner cannot identify his or her own nametag learner has difficulty with left-right and top-down directionality learner holds a book upside down or sideways learner is unable to track (follow the text) with his or her eyes	
Typical Educational Background		learner may talk when the instructor is talking, not recognizing that what the instructor is saying is relevant, or even that it is language at all	
0-2 years of formal education formal education has been interrupted or cut short previous formal education may have been in a second language previous educational setting may have lacked resources, facilities, or educated teachers			

## The CLB Literacy Phases

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) has published two documents that provide a set of outcomes for ESL and ESL literacy learners in Canada. The first document, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language for Adults*, divides language learning into twelve different levels, called Benchmarks, in four different skill areas: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This document is NOT intended for use with Learners with Interrupted Formal Education; it assumes a previous formal education, even at the lowest benchmarks. The second CCLB document, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (the CLB Literacy Document), focuses on ESL literacy and LIFE. It sets outcomes for four different levels, called Phases, in three different skill areas: reading, writing, and numeracy. ESL literacy programs who use this document measure their learners' levels by using the Phases for reading, writing, and literacy, and by using the Benchmarks for listening and speaking. Each Phase can further be broken down into Initial, Developing, and Adequate stages, and it is important to note that the difference among the stages is considerable.

At Bow Valley College, we use the CLB Literacy Document and the literacy Phases in our ESL literacy programs. There are two clear advantages to this document: there has been a considerable amount of material produced by the CCLB to support the Benchmarks and the Phases, and this is a national standard, so learners can more easily “transport” their education from one institution to another or from one province to another. We strongly recommend that any Canadian ESL literacy program look into using the CLB Literacy Document in their program. If you are not familiar with the CLB literacy Phases, Section Three of the handbook can still be useful to you; it provides a thorough introduction to ESL literacy at each of the four Phases, which are equally applicable to learners of different levels no matter what the levels are called (Foundation Phase, Phase I, Phase II, Phase III; Beginner, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Advanced; ESL literacy 1,2,3,4, etc.).

## Introduction: Foundation Phase

The Foundation Phase is the first stage on the road to becoming literate. It is also referred to as the foundational or pre-literate stage, as learners have no or almost no familiarity with printed materials. Very few adults are actually at the Foundation Phase. The ones who are at this level may be from oral cultures where the language has no written form, or may be from literate societies but have never needed to read or write before coming to a new country. Although learners from this group often have no spoken English, some may have quite developed speaking and listening skills – as high as CLB 3 in some cases.

Foundation Phase learners typically come from small rural communities and, coming from a strong oral culture, often have well-developed informal learning strategies. Depending on where they are from, they may already have two or more other languages, which makes it easier to acquire English.

When they arrive in their new countries, these non-literate adults are suddenly thrust into a completely foreign situation. They are in school for the first time, struggling to use a pencil while simultaneously learning to speak a new language. Meanwhile, learners often need to deal with everyday challenges of life with often limited ability to access support. Absences and withdrawal from class are frequent.

In the Foundation Phase, learners need to improve their oral English, gain foundational literacy skills in both reading and writing, and learn appropriate classroom behaviour. Attaining a rudimentary knowledge of oral English is essential because without it, learning to read and write is reduced to simply copying. Early reading materials often rely on learners reading their own words, so speaking is critical. Pre-reading skills involve visual discrimination, directionality, sequencing, and learning the names of the letters. Pre-

### **Collaborative Poster-Making**

In this activity, suitable for a Foundation Phase class, learners create a group poster. One easy theme is colour. After learning the different colours, each group picks one colour they want to represent on their poster. Learners flip through magazines to find anything in this colour and then cut it out. When enough pictures are found that are of the particular colour, the learners work together to glue them on the poster board. The result is a colour collage. When they are finished gluing, one student writes the name of the colour onto the poster. The learners copy their names onto the bottom of the poster. These posters can be hung on the walls and used for reference throughout the term. Even learners who have limited experience using scissors and glue sticks can successfully create beautiful collages in this fashion. Through poster making, the students get practice not only with the colour vocabulary but also with using scissors and writing their names. They also get the pride of displaying their work on the classroom walls.

writing skills involve the proper method of holding the pen and copying letters. For more information on foundational literacy, including pre-reading and pre-writing skills, please see Chapter Eight.

The time spent acquiring these skills and concepts depends a great deal on how much English the individual has and on where this individual is starting from. For this reason, the Foundation Phase may vary in duration from one learner to the next. It is not unusual for learners to take more than one session before they are ready to move on to Phase I.

# Nyakat's Story

## **A Foundation Phase learner**

*Nyakat is 25 years old and is from Sudan. She is single, has three small children, and lives with her uncle. As a child in Sudan, she attended school for almost a year until her father died and she was forced to quit. She moved to Egypt as a teenager where she worked in a coffee shop before coming to Canada four months ago.*

*When she begins class, Nyakat has no English. She cannot answer questions about her name or where she is from. She has no reading or writing skills and is unable to pick out her own name card or copy her name onto paper. Initially, the only activity she is able to do with any level of success is using a magnetic board where, given a model, she can organize the first six letters of the alphabet. Much of her time is spent dozing, because being surrounded by a foreign language and sitting in a chair for extended periods of time tire her out.*

*After the first two weeks, Nyakat masters the mechanics of forming letters. It becomes apparent that she enjoys drawing and colouring. One day, during the daily picture bingo games, she and her partner get a bingo and the lights go on for her. She finally understands the meaning of the game and, from that point on, begs to play bingo all the time. She is a quick learner and rapidly catches on to the different activities. Board games, clapping games, and computer games suddenly intrigue her. She plays the same ones over and over, internalizing the patterns. She still sleeps in class occasionally, but more and more she is participating in classroom activities.*

*After a few weeks of silence, Nyakat begins to first understand and then to produce some spoken English. She readily follows along in TPR (Total Physical Response) and plays picture bingo on the computer. Her love of singing gently nudges her out of her silence. By the end of the session, she understands many personal information questions and happily attempts to communicate all sorts of ideas in one and two word sentences.*

*In numeracy, Nyakat is able to count single digit numbers and can use manipulatives to count to ten. However, she has little understanding of money and, on shopping field trips, tries to buy things she cannot afford.*

*Nyakat is doing extremely well in the Foundation Phase class. She is determined to learn, loves playing games, and is beginning to realize that the spoken word can be represented by print. However, she is best served by having one more session at the Foundation Phase level in order to cement both her oral skills and her pre-reading and writing skills, before moving on to a Phase I class.*

## When is a Learner Ready for Foundation Phase?

It is a little misleading to think of when a learner is ready for Foundation Phase because there are no pre-requisites for Foundation Phase. A more pertinent question is when a learner is ready for Phase I, Phase II, or Phase III, in order to distinguish the levels. Any learner who is not yet ready for Phase I belongs in the Foundation Phase.

Foundation Phase learners are small in number and come from a variety of backgrounds and countries. What they have in common is their lack of formal education. They have had no or almost no education and have at most attended school only sporadically for one or two years. They are unfamiliar with classroom learning and are often unaware of the importance placed on the written word in their new country. Although they may have well-developed informal learning strategies to help them acquire spoken English, they have few strategies for learning the written word. They are likely to have little comprehension that words represent real objects and speech.

At this level, some learners will know nothing about the alphabet or have any pre-reading or pre-writing skills; others will have some basic familiarity with the alphabet and may know how to spell their names without a model. At Foundation Phase, learners can read little other than their name or a few simple words by rote. None can write a dictation, except maybe their name; all of this is a puzzle for them to piece together. This level has no prerequisites, so the instructor begins where the learners are, starting with the assumption that the learners have no literacy knowledge whatsoever.

*Atem, a forty-eight year old Dinka speaker from a village, had never been to school before coming to Canada. He is not yet aware that writing is related to speaking, even when the instructor uses learner-produced stories. He remains silent while the other learners “read” the story chorally, for he does not realize that the story and the chanting are connected. He is afraid to speak, for he does not want to lose face by making a mistake, so he is silent.*

## Foundation Phase Outcomes

Outcomes describe what learners will be able to do when they complete a unit, level, or program. The CLB Literacy Document provides a list of outcomes for each Phase, as well as conditions for these outcomes. When working with these outcomes, or basing classroom outcomes on the CLB Literacy Document, it is essential to recognize the conditions as well. The conditions explain in what circumstances a learner will be able to complete an outcome and are just as critical as the outcomes themselves. Conditions may state, for example, how much support is allowed and required from the instructor, how long a reading text should be, or how relevant and

familiar a topic should be for writing. At all literacy Phases, conditions ask for considerable instructor support and familiar circumstances for all reading and writing tasks.

Foundation Phase learners are working on a number of skills as they begin to develop literacy and spoken English and as they get used to the expectations and conventions of the classroom. They are learning pre-reading, pre-writing; classroom behaviour, and life skills for studying and living in their new country; and they are continuing to develop their listening and speaking. Level outcomes should be based on these challenges and the needs of the learners in the class. The focus should be on what is immediately useful and practical to the learners, such as recognizing their names in print or copying their telephone numbers.

The learning requirements for Foundation Phase are a very heavy load, and learning may be a slow process. During the Foundation Phase learners acquire an enormous amount of skills and become a little less passive in their learning. They become adept at forming letters, copying words, and manipulating picture cards. In addition, they come to the realization that the printed word represents the spoken word. They are beginning to follow along in books using left-right, top-down directionality. They become familiar with classroom routines, looking at books, and going on field trips. They are able to find their ID cards, and they are beginning to learn where to copy their information on simple instructor-made forms. They start to be aware of the print around them and use the surrounding environment to help them with their learning by looking at posters and pictures around the room.

*Atem, who has been in a Foundation Phase class for about two weeks, has little previous experience with writing. In a short time, he learns his first sight word, his name, which he diligently writes on every handout. However, he still requires assistance in reciting his address and phone number even after several weeks of regular practice.*

*Atem's basic knowledge of numbers is exhibited through his love of playing dice and of counting markers on board games. When playing games, Atem comes alive in the classroom, interacting and even correcting other learners, and it is during these games that he speaks his first English words.*

In the CLB Literacy Document, there is no numeracy strand in the Foundation Phase; numeracy begins at Phase I, although instructors may choose to introduce some basic numeracy concepts into their Foundation Phase classes. In this case, instructors can focus on the names of numbers and counting up to twenty, providing both the concept of numbers and counting as well as the language to do this in English. Instructors may find that playing games taps into the numeracy skills of the learners.

The Foundation Phase for reading is divided into two distinct stages, Initial and Developing, each with their own set of outcomes. In the Initial stage, pre-reading skills work toward the development of the learner's visual discrimination and introduce the concepts that speech can be represented in words and pictures and that we use directionality when we read. In addition, the concepts of same and different are introduced to promote the visual discrimination necessary to form letters. Letters are introduced through personally relevant material such as the spelling of the learner's name. In the Foundation Developing Phase of reading, learners work on recognizing their own names and addresses in the written form.

Writing in the Foundation Phase is a single level; it is not subdivided into Initial and Developing stages. At this Phase, learners are not able to phonetically encode, but they are learning the mechanics of copying. Writing conventions such as where to write on the page, how to form letters, and the importance of using spaces are introduced. Learners may need to begin with air drawing of pseudo-letters, progress to tracing, and, finally, to copying actual letters. The further the model is from where they are to copy, the more difficult the task. As learners progress, the model is slowly moved further away so that eventually learners can copy from the whiteboard or a flipchart.

The CLB Literacy Document sets outcomes in three areas: reading, writing (including reading and writing strategies), and numeracy. Depending on the program, instructors may choose to set outcomes in other areas as well, including learning strategies, vocabulary, and life skills. In the following chart, there are examples of outcomes in each of these areas. There are hundreds of possible outcomes to set in a program; this chart provides samples to give an idea of what outcomes look like at this level. For more information on setting outcomes, please see Chapter Three.

*Not all learners in a Foundation Phase class are at Foundation Phase in numeracy. Harjot is another learner in Atem's Foundation Phase class. Harjot is from India and has lived in Canada for fifteen years; until recently, he worked in a factory, but a job site injury has landed him in the classroom. Harjot's numeracy skills are much higher than most of the other learners. He is fully familiar with Canadian money, knows how to use six digit numbers, and can even calculate what his wage would be if he were paid double time and a half for overtime.*

*Tiziana is a Farsi speaker with no English or education before arriving in the classroom. When she first arrives in her Foundation Phase class, she chooses the wrong name card, unable to recognize even her own name. She is not aware that print represents spoken words. She does not consistently hold handouts right side up. Within a few weeks, however, she becomes aware of the concept of directionality and takes great pride in organizing letters on a magnetic board, copying a model. Soon, Tiziana is able to copy letters and say their names. Through translation, the instructor learns that Tiziana has embroidered a great deal and the instructor believes the attention to detail necessary in embroidery has been transferred over into letter discrimination.*

## Sample Outcomes for Foundation Phase

Reading	Writing	Vocabulary	Numeracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• point to pictures to match realia</li> <li>• match letters to identical letters (same font, same case)</li> <li>• point to items that are same/different</li> <li>• echo the names of letters and numbers</li> <li>• point to own name in a list of six other personal information words</li> <li>• match upper and lower case familiar words (NAME to name)</li> <li>• spell own name aloud</li> <li>• identify various real life signs such as EXIT or STOP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• air draw lines, circles, and letters following instructor model</li> <li>• use finger to trace large letters</li> <li>• copy letters directly below/beside model on unlined paper</li> <li>• copy letters directly below/beside model on lined paper</li> <li>• copy name from a model</li> <li>• copy address and phone number from a model</li> <li>• fill in missing letters from their personal information using a model</li> <li>• print a letter dictation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• echo new words</li> <li>• clap out syllables in new words</li> <li>• say word to self while copying it</li> <li>• point to a new word on a picture or poster</li> </ul>	<p>According to the CLB Literacy Document, there is no numeracy component for the Foundation Phase; however, some instructors may find that an introduction to numbers is useful at this point.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• choral count to 20</li> <li>• show fingers for numbers 1-10</li> <li>• recognize numbers up to 20</li> <li>• fill in missing numbers 1-10 in a sequence</li> <li>• organize numbers 1-10 sequentially</li> </ul>
Reading Strategy	Writing Strategy	Learning Strategy	Life Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• memorize two or three sentences</li> <li>• use a strip of paper or their finger to help with eye tracking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• copy from another classmate</li> <li>• copy from a model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• indicate with body language or a single word when they need help</li> <li>• bring the necessary learning tools and supplies to every class</li> <li>• ask other learners to explain a task in their own language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• carry a piece of paper with personal information on it</li> <li>• find identification when asked</li> <li>• give family a note from the instructor</li> </ul>

## Approaches and Activities for Foundation Phase

Foundation Phase learners come from a very different world where information is relayed orally and where learning is done through hands-on methods. With their often highly developed oral cultural background, they are typically good oral language learners, although they may arrive in the classroom speaking little to no English. No matter what level of English they have when they begin class, they desperately need to become more proficient in order to function in their new country. Yet they must learn this new language without the literacy skills needed to take notes, review their school work at home, or learn new vocabulary from reading. The instructor's challenge in this class is to keep things easy enough not to overwhelm the learners, varied enough to stimulate their brains, and, most importantly, relevant to their lives, all the while recycling everything so that the learners have many opportunities to learn. It is a challenge for the learners and the instructor alike.

There are a number of approaches and activities that are effective in the Foundation Phase classroom:

**Review:** The instructor must provide many opportunities for classroom review in the form of repetition and recycling of material into new activities.

**Oral Practice:** Because the learners are oral learners, it is most effective if the vocabulary is well-established orally before it is taught in reading and writing; otherwise, the activity becomes an exercise in copying alone. Build in plenty of repetition and recycling of oral vocabulary.

**Chanting:** To build on the learners' strengths, it is important to use teaching methods that, instead of relying on the written word, rely on oral methods like repeating and chanting.

**Clapping and Singing Games:** Simple songs such as "Are you sleeping, Brother John?" and "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" teach vocabulary and provide an opportunity to improve fluency. Clapping is a good way to teach multi-syllable words, with each syllable getting a clap. Also, clapping games can reinforce the new vocabulary. A game can be played where everyone stands in a circle, everyone claps three times, and then one person says a word from the theme. Everyone claps three more times, and the next person says a different word, and on it continues until either the theme vocabulary is exhausted or everyone has had a chance to say a word.

**Whiteboard Work:** A whiteboard can be used for many different things and has the advantage of being erasable so mistakes are readily corrected, leaving no trace. The instructor can write words or sentences on the board, the class can read them chorally, and then individual learners can be asked to circle or underline particular words. Another way to do this is for the instructor to write sentences and read them aloud with the learners a number of times. The instructor then erases a word or two and has the learners chorally read the sentences and supply the missing words. Even simpler is for the instructor to write a few sentences, and then pass out flashcards

with some of the words from the sentences on them. Learners are then able to match the words on the board with their flashcard using magnets or sticky tack.

### **Looking for Signs**

One of the outcomes for learners in Foundation Phase and Phase I Initial is to recognize print and signs in their lives. A walk around the neighbourhood or even the school itself is a great way to look at signs. After reviewing some of the signs in class using either photographs or pictures, the class can go for a walk to find signs. As they are walking around, the instructor helps them notice some of the recurring signs such as *push*, *pull*, *exit*, and so on. After the instructor has pointed out the signs a few times, the teacher can ask the learners to guess what the next one says. There are also often recurring signs around that say the name of the school or the city. The instructor can point to these signs and ask the learners what they think they say. Often, learners are not even aware that the print is there and that it has meaning. This is a great way to get out of the classroom, connect learning with the community, and help learners become aware of the print around them.

### **Walks to Nearby Places:**

Walking around the school or nearby streets is a good way to create an awareness of print. The instructor and learners can point to various signs around them.

**Categorizing:** Beginning with picture flashcards, learners can be taught to divide pictures into categories such as food, transportation, and animals. After the vocabulary for these words has been learned, the instructor can make columns on the board, hand out picture flashcards, and have the learners use magnets or sticky tack to put the flashcards in the correct column. This allows

learners to help each other and also allows for repetition, as the instructor can reshuffle the cards and do it again and again. Once it has been mastered with pictures, word flashcards may be introduced.

**LEA:** Language Experience Stories are useful ways to teach. There are various theories on using them, with the purists advocating using only the learners' language while the non-purists lean more toward the instructor introducing some structure to the sentences. Either way, a story is created by the class with the instructor as the scribe. It is read chorally several times and then used as a source for further activities and worksheets. For more information on LEA (Language Experience Approach), please see Chapter Seven.

**Listen and Point:** This is a simple exercise which does not involve a pencil, so any mistake is easily corrected, and the learner meets success. Learners point to the picture that the instructor says. This is quick exercise to do between other activities.

**Personal Information Practice:** Learners need to be able to locate and state their personal information, so regular practice is necessary. Initially, this should be done orally and, later, written practice can be introduced. Simple drills can be done where the instructor asks the learners their phone number or the spelling of their name. An instructor-made reference card with their personal information can be taped to the inside of their binders. Initially, learners may echo the instructor or simply point to their personal information. Later, as they become more skilled, they will need less help from the instructor. They can have envelopes containing cut up cardstock of their own personal information to be used as a matching exercise on simple instructor-created forms, and, when they are ready, they can copy their personal information onto the forms.

*Although he does not read, somewhere along his life's journey Atem has learned letter formation and directionality. He readily copies – from books, from the board, from posters, and everything around him. Once Atem learns his first sight word, his name, he copies it onto every handout. Soon he can write his name without assistance, and he is very proud of this. With the instructor's guidance, he copies his address and phone number onto simple instructor-made forms.*

**TPR (Total Physical Response):** This technique allows the learners to demonstrate their understanding without risking speaking. The instructor says a word or command; the learners act it out chorally at first, and then, as it is fully understood, individually. For instance the instructor says, "Point to the clock" and all the learners point to it. This is a good exercise to do at the beginning of the day or after a weekend when they have not heard any English for a while. It also gets learners moving, which is very important at this level. It can only be done for a few minutes at a time but is very effective in teaching basic directions, classroom objects, and commands. For more information on TPR, please see Chapter Seven.

**Sitting Game:** Another listening game similar to TPR begins with all the learners standing. Then the instructor tells them to sit if they fit into certain categories. For instance, the instructor may tell them to sit if they speak Farsi or to sit if they have seven children. It continues until all learners are sitting. It is a good way to check for understanding and also to get learners moving.

*Tiziana has learned a few food words. Within a few weeks, with the help of a volunteer, Tiziana can now match half a dozen familiar food picture cards to their corresponding words. Working with the same set repeatedly, she is able to do this on her own over time. This makes her extremely happy.*

**Copying Exercises:** Using instructor-made worksheets, learners can copy the word below the picture. The same set of a dozen or so vocabulary items can be made into several variations of the same exercise to be done over the course of a week or two. If the learners are higher-level, the same set of pictures in a different order and without words can be made into a worksheet,

where the learners use the first worksheet as the model for the second worksheet. This gives additional practice and teaches the strategy of looking back to past work for help with current work.

**Flashcards:** Flashcards can be used to match two identical pictures or to match a picture and a word. They can also be used for playing concentration or simply for oral practice.

**Bingo Games:** Instructor-made bingos of pictures or the alphabet are very useful for vocabulary development. Learners get a chance to hear the vocabulary again and again. Some very simple commercial bingos can be used as well.

**Learner Photo Stories:** The instructor can make booklets using a photograph of each learner individually. Below the photo can be a simple repetitive story stating some basic information about the learner such as his or her name, country of origin, number of children, or favourite food. This story can then be used as text for the next several lessons. Since the story is formulaic, the learners get the opportunity to hear the language repeated many times. Cloze exercises can be made from these stories. Repetitive words can be found and highlighted or circled by the learner. The instructor can do oral yes/no or wh- questions about each learner. In addition, this booklet can be taken home so that the learner's family can see who else is in the class. Learner photo stories are particularly effective because they are about real people familiar to the learners. Foundation Phase learners have difficulty with the abstract and little concept of fictional characters.



Doo is a man.  
He is from Burma.  
He has 8 children.  
He likes bananas.

## Materials for Foundation Phase

Instructors in this level will need to unleash their creativity in order to make materials which are personally relevant to the learners. They will need to create new materials, reusing the same vocabulary and the same activity in new ways so that the learners have many opportunities to see that particular material again. There is a dearth of appropriate commercially-produced materials for Foundation Phase, and what little there is often needs to be reworked with the correct font and limited vocabulary for these particular learners. Finding material that suits adults with very small vocabularies can be challenging, and a great deal of the instructor's time is spent making or modifying materials. Certain commercially-produced computer programs make this easier; there are ones for making word searches, word shape worksheets, and bingos. LIFE are often kinesthetic learners and need to work with manipulatives such as picture and alphabet cards. They need to roll dice and move markers on board games. Keep in mind that the use and organization of these materials will also require time. The instructor needs to spend time putting the sets back in order to be used the next time as learners are often unable to do this. Zip lock baggies and elastic bands work well for keeping small bits of paper in sets.



Appropriate Fonts for  
Foundation Phase:  
Century Gothic 20 pt.  
Comic Sans 20 pt.

Materials at this level must be easy for learners to use; when creating materials, instructors should pay attention to font, font size, and the amount of white space or clutter on a page. At the Foundation Phase, font size should be very large. The CLB Literacy Document recommends as large as 20-point. For more information on adapting and creating materials for the ESL literacy classroom, please see Chapter Nine.

Suggested materials:

- ABC flashcards for teaching letter recognition and directionality
- instructor-made simple forms with first name, last name, telephone number, and address (several different versions with varying order of information)
- picture flashcards and picture/word cards, in varying numbers of pairs
- worksheets to copy words where there are clipart pictures above and vocabulary to copy below
- worksheets for matching capital and small letters, word searches, and cloze exercises
- magnetic ABC boards
- bingo games, either instructor-made or commercially-produced (food, ABC, numbers, animals, etc.)
- picture stories such as *Very Easy True Stories* (Longman)
- realia such as flyers, food containers, etc.
- dice, board games (with ABCs or simple pictures)
- 4 to 9 piece jigsaw puzzles
- picture dictionaries (with few words and lots of clear pictures)
- commercial board games with letters such as *Junior Scrabble* or *Boggle*
- magazines and poster board to make posters and collages
- map of the world; map of Canada; map of the city/neighbourhood

See the following pages for examples of materials suitable for Foundation Phase. These materials are available in “clean” copies for photocopying in the back of the handbook. Please feel free to adapt these materials to suit the needs of a particular group of learners. They are examples only and can be changed depending on level, theme, or program outcome.

Personal Information

Write 

Tips for Use 

Filling out forms and applications is a relevant task

Practices basic information and allows space for writing and large fonts for easy reading

FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

LAST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CALGARY AB

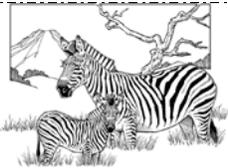
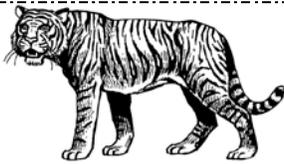
POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Tips for Use

Repeated picture and word recognition builds sight words

Vocabulary specific to theme



giraffe

tiger

zebra

elephant

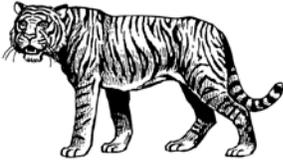
Copy

Tips for Use

Connected to previous template

Complexity level increases slightly to reinforce vocabulary recognition and practice independent writing skills

Widely transferable



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giraffe

elephant

zebra

lion

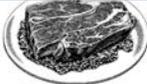
tiger

## Tips for Use

Practices sorting skills

Uses familiar vocabulary

## Categories

 PEN	 PENCIL	 MEAT
 APPLE	SUNDAY	 EGG
FRIDAY	MONDAY	 BOOK

FOOD	CLASSROOM	DAYS

# Transportation



motorcycle	bus	C train	boat
car	airplane	bicycle	walk

## Days of the Week

Put the days of the week in order:

### Tips for Use

Learners practice sequencing and copying

Reinforces vocabulary

Wednesday	Saturday
Tuesday	Friday
Thursday	Monday
Sunday✓	

1. Sunday
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

It is important to remember that Foundation Phase learners do not have much experience with sitting in a classroom, and reading and writing exercises are likely to be exhausting for them. Change activities at least every 20 minutes and intersperse intense written work with activities where they can speak and move around.

Foundation Phase learners are unfamiliar with the classroom and therefore need to be taught specifically what is expected of them. On the one hand, they are collaborative learners and help each other; on the other hand, because they are completely out of their element, they are passive learners who sit patiently doing nothing until the instructor can individually help them. Pen and paper work is exhausting for them, yet they are frustrated if they cannot finish a worksheet. Listening to a foreign language tires them, and, unable to understand it, they may tune out and look disinterested; this is especially true of the learners who start with

neither oral nor writing skills. The following are ideas for classroom routines that work well with this level:

**Create a Routine:** A predictable routine helps the learners know what to expect each day. Since learning in a school environment is new for them, having a routine facilitates learning. Starting each day with a warm-up of predictable oral practice makes it easier for the learners to transition from speaking their own languages to speaking English. Ending the day with a fun wind-down activity gives the learners something to look forward to. This also signals to them that it is nearly time to go home.

**Change Activities Often:** Because of their unfamiliarity with a classroom setting and the concentration required to attain literacy skills, learners need to have a change of activity three or four times an hour. Literacy work is mentally challenging and this type of work must be interspersed with other less demanding activities that allow learners to move around. At this level, activities are best if they don't last too long. For instance, sandwich the difficult task of filling out a personal information form between oral personal information questions and a song or TPR.

*Since Harjot has lived in Canada for fifteen years, he has a more fully developed oral vocabulary than many of the other learners in his class. With access to a relatively rich vocabulary, he is able to grasp sound/letter correspondence for initial sounds and has more than a dozen sight words by the end of the session. He processes strategies such as looking at the model and checking for accuracy, and he patiently assists fellow learners. Perhaps because he has children in the Canadian school system, he knows how a book works. He can find particular pages, hold the book right side up, and open it from front to back.*

**Be Learner-Centred:** The secret to a good class at this level is to make it learner-centred; break tasks into very small steps, and make it short.

**Maintain a Consistent Format:** Using the same format on worksheets helps the learners know what is expected of them. If the worksheets always have a line below the picture to copy, then don't change them by making the line beside the picture.



**Oral Before Written Tasks:** The learners should always know the oral vocabulary before it is introduced in writing. Thus, a great deal of time each class will be spent on practicing oral language. Once the learners have the oral vocabulary, writing can be introduced in a very predictable context. Learners are only beginning to grasp the concept that the written word represents the spoken word and cannot effectively learn new vocabulary through writing.

**Pre-Reading and Pre-Writing Skills:** There are many activities that can be introduced to promote reading readiness. Following a story with one's finger is a listening activity that also teaches eye-tracking. Looking at picture books just to see how they work is another pre-reading skill. Cutting and pasting pictures teach the learner not only fine motor skills, but also sequencing. Board games teach learners some literacy skills while at the same time providing an opportunity for collaboration and fun. Writing the alphabet across the board can provide endless activities that promote phonemic awareness. For instance, learners can each copy their own name below the letter it starts with, or the instructor can act as the scribe with the learners calling out a different word for each letter of the alphabet. Learners can each be given a different word on a flashcard and put it under the letter on the board (*ball* goes under *B*). For further information on pre-reading and pre-writing skills, please see Chapter Eight.

**Recycle Vocabulary and Skills:** The instructor needs to build in countless opportunities for the learner to use these newly honed skills again and again in very similar situations. Learners need to be given many opportunities to recycle the skills and vocabulary they have recently learned.

## Sample Theme Unit for Foundation Phase

A theme unit is a series of connected lessons, taught over a longer period of time, from a week to several weeks. There are many advantages to teaching in theme units; it is an excellent way to introduce vocabulary and concepts, and it means that the instructor can recycle outcomes without the lessons feeling repetitive to the learners. For more information on theme units, see Chapter Ten.

In this sample Foundation Phase theme unit, learners will learn vocabulary about family and continue to work on pre-reading and pre-writing skills. They will be better able to fill out forms and better able to participate in social situations where Canadians ask them about their family. This unit gives learners an opportunity to recycle several reading, writing, speaking, and listening outcomes for the level. There is a high level of instructor support at each stage, and the same vocabulary is repeated throughout the unit.

LIFE are highly self-referenced and family is very important. Learning the words for different family relationships enables them to participate in social situations and aids them in government forms which often ask about family members. Everyone has a family, and this is often a way to connect with the learner who has limited English. A word of caution is needed in dealing with learners who have lost some or all of their family; the instructor must be sensitive to this situation, perhaps talking privately to see how the individual wishes to participate.

This sample theme unit is appropriate for learners in the Foundation Phase. It should take about two weeks of full-time classes to complete and is here as a model to demonstrate what theme units look like at this Phase. Note the level of recycling and repetition between lessons.

## Sample Theme Unit for Foundation Phase: Family

### Introducing the Theme: Family Members

#### Speaking & Listening Outcomes

- respond nonverbally to questions about family

#### Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes

- repeat family words
- identify pictures that correspond to spoken word

#### Numeracy Outcomes

- show fingers for “how many”

#### Brief Lesson Descriptions

1. Introduce family relationship vocabulary with photos of instructor’s family.
2. Solicit learners to bring photos of their families to talk about. Learn and practice oral vocabulary around family. Introduce numbers for counting family members.
3. Look at learners’ family pictures. Playing the sit down game, have learners sit down if they have \_\_\_ number of sisters. Play again with brothers, daughters, and sons. Ask each learner how many brothers he or she has.
4. Listen to and follow along with a listening exercise with pictures of family members. Learners point and repeat.

### Developing the Theme: Reading about Learners’ Families

#### Reading & Writing Outcomes

- echo a two-sentence story written on the whiteboard
- find and read own name
- match upper and lower case words
- find, circle, and copy target family words
- track a two-sentence text using finger

#### Speaking & Listening Outcomes

- answer five family questions verbally or nonverbally

#### Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes

- recognize own written name embedded in text

#### Numeracy Outcomes

- count using fingers

#### Brief Lesson Descriptions

1. Write a formulaic story on the board about each learner and how many siblings or children he or she has. Practice choral reading. Point to the family words. Solicit learners to guess what the word is. Have learners circle target family words on board.
2. Using a handout of the above story, read chorally and have learners circle own name and target family words on handout.
3. Several repetitions of listening to and following along with a listening exercise with pictures of family members as in 4 above. Ask, “How do you spell ‘sister?’”
4. Use a worksheet of a photocopied photograph of each learner’s family. Beside each person, write the family word, leaving space for learner to copy. Each learner then has their own family worksheet to copy family words onto.
5. Worksheets: word searches of family words; matching upper case and lower case family words.

## Final Product: Reading about a Fictional Family

### Reading & Writing Outcomes

- track story with finger
- find and circle target family words
- categorize into two groups with instructor support

### Speaking & Listening Outcomes

- respond to “Who is...” family relationship questions
- use male/female family vocabulary
- respond to vocabulary: circle, point, listen, and repeat

### Numeracy Outcomes

- count with fingers and echo numbers

### Brief Lesson Descriptions

1. Worksheets: sorting family words into male/female categories.
2. Play the family game. To play this game, one learner must choose a spouse. The spouse must choose a daughter. The daughter chooses a brother. Continue building the family with learners. Each time a family member is picked, the instructor asks about the various relationships. For example “Who is Nyadak’s grandmother?” or “Who is Abdul’s sister-in-law?”
3. Using a picture story such as “A Son for Mr. and Mrs. Aversa” in *Very Easy True Stories*, the instructor reads the story and learners follow along with pictures. After several readings, learners find and circle target family words.

## Tools

### New Vocabulary & Concepts

- vocabulary for family members
- vocabulary for female/male
- reinforcement of previously introduced vocabulary: circle, point to, listen, copy
- introduction of concept of categorization (male/female)
- use of numbers or show of fingers to demonstrate understanding of “how many?”
- understanding of “who” questions

### Language Structures

Learners can answer the following:

- Do you have a \_\_\_\_\_?
- How many \_\_\_\_ do you have? (How many sisters?)
- Who is \_\_\_\_\_ sister?
- Circle \_\_\_\_\_.

### Resources and Materials

- a picture story, such as *Very Easy True Stories* (Longman)
- instructor-created worksheets including photocopied photos of learners’ families, word searches, matching upper and lower case family words
- listening exercise of family words, such as Minnesota Links [http://www.mnlincs.org/online\\_audio](http://www.mnlincs.org/online_audio)

**Assessment**

The learners are assessed throughout the unit in their abilities to meet the outcomes. Where suitable, they can choose one or two tasks to be included in their portfolio. For further information on portfolios, please see Chapter Eleven.

## Lesson Planning for Foundation Phase

Lesson planning for Foundation Phase means creating meaningful, effective lessons that help learners meet the outcomes of the class. Lessons are often connected to a wider theme. The first of our sample lesson plans is connected to the sample theme unit; the second is another example of a possible lesson.

In any lesson plan at Foundation Phase, it is important to recycle vocabulary several times and in several different ways, giving learners an opportunity to absorb the new words. Remember that Foundation Phase learners cannot go home and “study” vocabulary; all learning is done in class. The instructor also uses the theme to work towards some of the reading and writing outcomes of the class: increasing sight word vocabulary, strengthening the connection that objects and ideas can be represented by words and symbols, and copying from a model.

There are several key features to an effective Foundation Phase lesson plan:

- No activity takes longer than 20 minutes.
- More intense activities, such as copying, are interspersed with activities that involve talking and movement.
- The lesson begins with oral vocabulary before moving to reading and writing.
- There are directions in the lesson plan for modifying activities for lower- or higher- level learners in the class; not every learner needs to do exactly the same worksheet or answer exactly the same questions.

## Sample Lesson Plan for Foundation Phase: Family

Part of Theme: Introducing the Theme

Level: Foundation Phase

Lesson Objectives:

- introduce family vocabulary
- recognize sight words for personal information
- copy words from a model
- reinforce sequential order of ABCs
- practice understanding yes and no questions

Timing	Activity Description
15 minutes	<b>Warm up:</b> Greetings. Hold up name cards and have class identify whose card it is. Next, ask learners personal information questions such as phone number or language spoken.
10 minutes	<b>ABC Practice:</b> Everyone says, then sings, ABCs. Point to random letters and elicit the letter names. Give each learner a set of ABC flashcards to put in order. Higher-level learners can match capital and lower case letters. Lower-level learners can work from a model, using a magnetic board with only the first third of the alphabet.
20 minutes	<b>Family Vocabulary:</b> Introduce <i>mother, father, sister, brother, husband, wife, son, children, and daughter</i> using overheads of photographs. Show class a photograph of your own family and say, “This is my sister. This is my daughter.” Ask each learner if he or she has a sister or daughter, etc. Ask learners to bring in photos of their family the next day.
15 minutes	<b>Listening:</b> Pass out listening handout from Minnesota Links: Online Audio ( <a href="http://www.mnlincs.org">http://www.mnlincs.org</a> ); have learners point to and repeat each family members as they listen. Do this two or three times.
10 minutes	<b>Listening and Speaking:</b> Ask learners how many children they have. Allow learners to translate if necessary. Tell each learner how many children he/she has: “You have two children.”

5 minutes	<b>Listening Exercise:</b> Everyone stands up and instructor calls out, “Sit down if you have ___ children.” Do two or three times. On the final round, add some other familiar questions such as “Sit down if you are married” or “Sit down if you are from Pakistan.”
15 minutes	<b>Personal Information:</b> Pass out flashcards with <i>name, address</i> , etc. Have learners “read” the cards several times. Place cards on whiteboard in same order as on an instructor-made form and have learners read them again. Ask learners their name, address, etc. and act as scribe. Hand out instructor-made forms and read together again. Each learner fills in form using a model. Lower-level learners use an envelope of cut-outs of their personal information and match it to form.
10 minutes	<b>Yes/No Game:</b> Hand a <i>yes</i> and a <i>no</i> flashcard to each learner. Explain which is which. Ask questions and learners hold up right answer. Examples: <i>Do you live in Calgary? Do you speak Dinka? Do you like school? Do you have six children?</i>
15 minutes	<b>Bingo:</b> In pairs or individually, play ABC bingo.
5 minutes	<b>Wrap Up:</b> Learners line up at the door. Ask each learner how many children he or she has. They answer with a show of fingers. If wrong, they go to the back of the line and try again.

## Sample Lesson Plan for Foundation Phase: Food

Part of Theme: Developing the Theme

Level: Foundation Phase

Lesson Objectives:

- review food vocabulary
- recognize sight words for personal information
- copy words from a model
- reinforce sequential order of ABCs
- practice understanding yes and no questions

Timing	Activity Description
15 minutes	<b>Warm Up:</b> Greetings. Hold up name cards and have class identify whose card it is. Next, ask learners personal information questions such as spelling of their last name or address. For higher oral learners, ask harder questions about their birth date or the spelling of Calgary.
5 minutes	<b>Listening Exercise:</b> Everyone stands up and instructor calls out, “Sit down if...” questions. Do two or three times.
20 minutes	<b>Personal Information:</b> Pass out flashcards with <i>name</i> , <i>address</i> , etc. Have learners “read” the cards several times. Place cards on whiteboard in same order as on an instructor-made form and have learners read again. Ask learners their name, address, etc. and act as scribe. Hand out instructor-made forms and read together again. Each learner fills in the form using a model. Lower-level learners use an envelope of cut-outs of their personal information and match it to the form.
15 minutes	<b>Food Vocabulary:</b> Using realia (pieces of fruit, bag of rice, cans of food, etc.), elicit food vocabulary from learners. Ask each learner to name one food they ate yesterday. In pairs, use picture dictionary to name food items.
15 minutes	<b>Clapping Game:</b> Stand in a circle. Everyone claps three times. One person names a food item. Everyone claps again, and the next person names a food item. Continue until each learner has had two chances to say a food word or until food vocabulary is exhausted.

15 minutes	<b>Copying:</b> On an overhead, go over a worksheet of food vocabulary (sheet has clip art food with a word below and space to copy). Go over it two or three times, first getting learners to say the name of the food and then asking higher learners, “How do you spell ____.” Hand out sheets for learners to copy. Sheet can be modified for lower learners. Have each learner read the sheet to instructor when done.
15 minutes	<b>Reinforce Vocabulary:</b> Ask learners yes/no questions about food they like. “Do you like pizza?” Learners hold up <i>yes</i> or <i>no</i> flashcard. After playing, practice saying, “Do you like ____?” Play “hot seat” where a learner sits at the front of the room and other learners each ask the one at the front, “Do you like ____?”
15 minutes	<b>Bingo:</b> In pairs or individually, play food (picture) bingo.
5 minutes	<b>Wrap Up:</b> Learners line up at the door. The instructor asks each one a food question which he or she must answer correctly before going home. If wrong, he or she goes to the back of the line and tries again.

## Conclusions

Foundation Phase learners are almost always attending school for their very first time. They are entering this Phase without former contact with written language. In order to succeed in this Phase, there are many skills and behaviours they need to develop. First and foremost, they need to develop their oral skills. Learning to speak English is one of the first steps they need to becoming literate, for without at least the rudiments of the oral language, they cannot begin to make the connections between the spoken and written word.

The Foundation Phase is a time for learners to develop and foster the behavioural practices of literate people. It is a time for them to become aware of print, sequencing, and directionality in print. They need to be cognizant of patterns and of the relationship between symbols and the spoken word. This is the pre-reading stage. They also need to become proficient at the basic mechanics of letter formation and the conventions of where to write on a page. This is the pre-writing stage. As well as these skills, the learner acquires the socially-expected behaviours of the classroom, such as the importance of regular attendance and participating in activities. They will be learning different strategies for future learning, such as asking for help and checking for accuracy.

Becoming literate for the first time is indeed hard work, and the acquisition of these skills, concepts, and behaviours may take more than one session. Since the duration of time needed to become literate can vary from person to person, it is not unusual for Foundation Phase learners to repeat this level; the need for more exposure should not be viewed by the funding source, the program, or the learner as a failure, but instead seen as a legitimate opportunity for the learner to become proficient in these pre-reading and -writing skills and concepts. Only when learners have developed and internalized these beginning skills and concepts and have a beginner's knowledge of the English language are they ready to move into the next step of their literacy journey, Phase I.

*Nyakat, Atem, Harjot, and Tiziana each bring their own strengths and struggles to their Foundation Phase class. Many of these challenges are related to reading, writing, and numeracy, such as Atem's difficulty with understanding that text has meaning, while other challenges are in their lives outside of the classroom: Nyakat's struggle to feed, clothe, and house her children; and Harjot's chronic back pain. Some of these learners spend one semester in Foundation Phase and some spend two; however, all of them learn and develop. This growth is the first step on a road to increased literacy, but it also has an immediate impact on their lives: they all have better speaking and listening skills, they all have better understanding of life in Canada, they all begin to realize the importance of reading and writing in Canadian society, and they can recognize now-familiar words in the world around them, including name, address, STOP, and the names of their children or family members.*



# Chapter 14 Outline

The Phase I Learner

The CLB Literacy Phases

Introduction: Phase I

When is a Learner Ready for Phase I?

Phase I Outcomes

Approaches and Activities for Phase I

Materials for Phase I

Classroom Routines for Phase I

Sample Theme Unit for Phase I

Lesson Planning for Phase I

Sample Lesson Plans for Phase I

Conclusions



# Phase I

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## Objectives

To recognize Phase I learners and their skills and needs

To identify the outcomes and expectations for Phase I

To share effective practices in the Phase I classroom

## Learner Profile: Phase I

An at-a-glance profile of adult ESL literacy learners at Phase I  
All skills are measured according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks  
and the Canadian Language Benchmark Literacy Phases

Years of Formal Education	Reading and Writing Skills	Range of Listening and Speaking	Range of Numeracy
1-3 or previous ESL literacy	Phase I	CLB 1-5	Phase I-II
Typical Age Range		Gender	
adults of all ages		usually more women than men	
Common Challenges in the Classroom	Common Strengths in the Classroom	Common Barriers to Learning	
little classroom experience frequent exhaustion few formal learning strategies highly dependent learners developing vocabulary building awareness of print	taking risks collaborative learning oral repetition prior practical knowledge survival skills	poverty lack of adequate housing lack of childcare lack of transportation limited ability to access help issues may be in crisis before learner receives help	
Typical Social and Political Background		Indicators a Learner is Ready for Phase I	
learner can come from any country in the world often rural villages often highly oral societies learner may have spent time in refugee camps or in additional countries before immigrating learner may have experienced war, famine, displacement, poverty, or social or political unrest		learner can read and write the letters of the alphabet and connect most letters to their sounds learner can copy words and short sentences learner can write letters and words on the line, and begin to use spacing between words consistently. learner can read simple sentences learner recognizes a small bank of sight words	
Typical Educational Background		learner recognizes the purpose of different kinds of text, such as letters, stories, signs, or bills learner can fill out a simple form	
1-3 years of formal education formal education has been interrupted or cut short any previous formal education may have been in a second language any previous educational setting may have lacked resources, facilities, or educated teachers			

## The CLB Literacy Phases

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) has published two documents that provide a set of outcomes for ESL and ESL literacy learners in Canada. The first document, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language for Adults*, divides language learning into twelve different levels, called Benchmarks, in four different skill areas: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This document is NOT intended for use with Learners with Interrupted Formal Education; it assumes a previous formal education, even at the lowest benchmarks. The second CCLB document, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (the CLB Literacy Document), focuses on ESL literacy and LIFE. It sets outcomes for four different levels, called Phases, in three different skill areas: reading, writing, and numeracy. ESL literacy programs who use this document measure their learners' levels by using the Phases for reading, writing, and literacy, and by using the Benchmarks for listening and speaking. Each Phase can further be broken down into Initial, Developing, and Adequate stages, and it is important to note that the difference among the stages is considerable.

At Bow Valley College, we use the CLB Literacy Document and the literacy Phases in our ESL literacy programs. There are two clear advantages to this document: there has been a considerable amount of material produced by the CCLB to support the Benchmarks and the Phases, and this is a national standard, so learners can more easily “transport” their education from one institution to another or from one province to another. We strongly recommend that any Canadian ESL literacy program look into using the CLB Literacy Document in their program. If you are not familiar with the CLB literacy Phases, Section Three of the handbook can still be useful to you; it provides a thorough introduction to ESL literacy at each of the four Phases, which are equally applicable to learners of different levels no matter what the levels are called (Foundation Phase, Phase I, Phase II, Phase III; Beginner, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Advanced; ESL literacy 1,2,3,4, etc.).

## Introduction: Phase I

The world of written language is just beginning to open up for Phase I learners. They are already beginning to develop a sense of sound-letter correlation, are aware of some English literacy concepts such as the direction of text, and have developed a small bank of sight words. They are becoming increasingly familiar with the classroom environment and have developed some strategies to support their classroom learning.

Over the course of Phase I, learners build their sight word vocabulary and begin to acquire some decoding skills. They are working at the level of words: they can copy more accurately and are better able to spell and label appropriately. Learners in Phase I tackle reading sentences that are short, familiar, and follow a predictable format. It is important to note that learners in Phase I can have a wide range of oral skills, anywhere from CLB 1 to CLB 5.

Although Phase I learners are better able to remember spelling than Foundation Phase learners, they are still not able to fill in a cloze exercise – a fill in the blanks activity – without a word bank to copy from. Provide Phase I learners with the support they need; make sure every activity has a word bank.

Phase I learners are sometimes mistakenly placed in mainstream ESL classes, particularly when their listening and speaking benchmarks are still low. When a Phase I learner is in a mainstream class, the instructor might notice that the learner frequently places pages upside-down or backwards in the binder, needs more practice to master a skill or concept, or struggles with a simple cloze passage that others in the class complete with little difficulty. When the learner's oral English skills become stronger, an instructor may learn that his or her schooling in the first (or second) language was interrupted, or that the quality of education the learner experienced was different from what we might expect, such as a learner whose only formal educational experience was with 50 other learners in a class in the refugee camp where she lived much of her life.

Phase I learners, like other Learners with Interrupted Formal Education, come to language learning with a variety of barriers, visible or imperceptible to instructors. Their language learning is often affected by stressors outside of the classroom. Learners may struggle with basic settlement issues, healthcare issues, and employment issues. Learners' attendance can be affected by not having enough money to buy a bus pass or by lack of access to or money for childcare. One learner might work all night to make ends meet and come to class first thing in the morning, while another has experienced violence in the past or present that makes focusing on learning a challenge. As a result, ESL literacy instructors need to prioritize creating and maintaining a safe learning environment from the outset of the course.

In addition to having diverse barriers to learning, Phase I learners have many goals and needs. Their reasons for studying might be to gain better employment, communicate with people in their community, or help their children in school. They may already have purchased a house together with relatives, or they may struggle to pay their rent on their minimum wage job while they wait for government subsidized housing.

# Angie's Story

## **A Phase I learner**

*Angie came to Canada three years ago with absolutely no formal education. While her parents are both university-educated, she lost her opportunity to access education in Somalia when war broke out. Angie moved from place to place until she came to Canada. Still a young woman in her early twenties, she is eager to learn to read and write. Her young daughter recently started school as well, and this has fueled Angie's drive.*

*As a Phase I Developing learner, Angie's handwriting is large and not always on the line. While her listening and speaking are at a CLB 3, she struggles to decode even basic words. She has developed a small bank of sight words that has helped her with things like filling out forms. Angie's numeracy skills are very basic. She doesn't know the value of various coins, and while she knew some simple math facts, her problem-solving skills are limited.*

*While Angie is highly motivated, she doesn't feel confident for the first few weeks in class. This results in a slow process of learning to trust herself as she learns to read and write. In time, her bank of sight words increases dramatically, and she takes greater risks with spelling and reading, though she will still defer to the instructor to see if she is right or not. She rereads story books for fifteen minutes before she goes to sleep every night.*

*After a few weeks, Angie begins to set goals for herself and be more independent in the classroom. When learners write stories about their lives, Angie refuses help from the instructor and is determined to find the spelling of words from her sight word cards, the vocabulary section of her binder, and the picture dictionaries at the back of the class. After many hours of work, she writes several lines about her life.*

*Angie has developed her numeracy skills so that she now has a solid basic understanding of number concepts. The two largest areas of growth she describes to her classmates and instructor are with time and money. She says that now when people on the street ask her the time, she can tell them, whereas before she would cover her watch and say it didn't work.*

*Angie makes very good progress in her Phase I class, developing her reading, writing, and numeracy, as well as her oral skills. Perhaps the greatest breakthrough she makes is with her self-confidence, as she moves on to Phase II more willing to take risks and help others.*

## When is a Learner Ready for Phase I?

LIFE who are ready to move into Phase I have developed an awareness of English text. Phase I learners usually recognize the front and back of a book and understand that English text moves from top to bottom and left to right. These learners hold their books right-side-up and start at the front of the book.

Learners who are ready to enter Phase I write words on the line and are able to write legibly, though their writing may still be large, and they still need more time to write words. They are able to copy short amounts of text and are learning to leave space between words.

Phase I learners are capable of reading a small number of sight words. They recognize that letters represent sounds and are able to tell you the sound for most letters. Phase I learners are beginning to be able to hear initial consonant sounds in oral language and use this to help them write words.

Phase I learners come with a diverse set of listening and speaking skills. Those who have lived in an English-speaking environment for several years may have listening and speaking skills up to CLB 5, while others who are new to Canada may initially be assessed at a CLB 1.

Learners who are ready to enter Phase I in numeracy may or may not be Phase I literacy learners. Learners who are ready to enter Phase I in numeracy can count to at least 20 and are able to solve simple addition or subtraction problems based on concrete life scenarios, like numbers of people at home or in the classroom. They are able to relate numbers to manipulatives. They have a few memorized math facts as well and understand the purpose of adding and subtracting.

*Chapal is a young man from Pakistan who has been in Canada for a year and a half. He was too old for high school when he arrived in Canada and spent a year working in a garage before beginning ESL literacy classes. Chapal's reading and writing skills are Phase I Adequate, while his listening and speaking are CLB 3. He struggles a great deal with both reading and writing. His decoding skills are inconsistent, and while he may be able to read a short passage one day, the next day he has difficulty with the same words.*

## Phase I Outcomes

Outcomes describe what learners will be able to do when they complete a unit, level, or program. The CLB Literacy Document provides a list of outcomes for each Phase, as well as conditions for these outcomes. When working with these outcomes, or basing classroom outcomes on the CLB Literacy Document, it is essential to recognize the conditions as well. The conditions describe in what circumstances a learner will be able to complete an outcome and are just as critical as the outcomes themselves. Conditions may state, for example, how much support is

allowed and required from the instructor, how long a reading text should be, or how relevant and familiar a topic should be for writing. At all literacy Phases, conditions ask for considerable instructor support and familiar circumstances for all reading and writing tasks.

Outcomes in Phase I typically begin with developing oral language within any thematic unit and using the vocabulary and structure gained to meet reading and writing outcomes. While each unit theme will vary in its vocabulary and types of text, the outcomes remain consistent throughout. Learners continually develop reading skills using stories, for instance; however, some units lend themselves to other formats as well. For example, an employment unit is conducive to a lesson on reading a schedule and filling out a form; a unit on public transportation is an opportunity to read schedules once again and also to practice reading clocks; and a unit on Canada is an opportunity to use a map.

Outcomes at the Initial, Developing, and Adequate stages of Phase I do not change much; rather, the amount and type of support and scaffolding provided by the instructor change according to the needs of each learner. Phase I learners are still developing the skills needed as learners in a western school system, and as language development is a key component of instruction in Phase I, so are organizational and time management skills. The development of learning strategies is essential for learners to begin to become independent learners.

The CLB Literacy Document sets outcomes in three areas: reading, writing (including reading and writing strategies), and numeracy. Depending on the program, instructors may choose to set outcomes in other areas as well, including learning strategies, vocabulary, and life skills. In the following chart, there are examples of outcomes in each of these areas. There are hundreds of possible outcomes to set in a program; this chart provides samples to give an idea of what outcomes look like at this level. For more information on setting outcomes, please see Chapter Three.

Spelling tests are an excellent activity at this level. They do more than test spelling: they teach learners accuracy, attention to detail, and study and learning skills.

Spelling tests encourage learners to complete homework themselves and make them accountable for their learning.

Spelling tests also help learners to build sight words.

## Sample Outcomes for Phase I

Reading	Writing	Vocabulary	Numeracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate awareness of directionality</li> <li>• recognize and read letters of the alphabet and relate most letters to sounds</li> <li>• recognize and read high frequency sight words</li> <li>• begin to sound out simple words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• copy letters and words and write on the line more frequently</li> <li>• begin to use invented spelling to write simple text</li> <li>• begin to write personal journal entries with support</li> <li>• fill out a very simple form with support</li> <li>• spell familiar words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use familiar thematic vocabulary</li> <li>• match new words with appropriate pictures in group tasks and games</li> <li>• copy new words into appropriate places in writing frames</li> <li>• use new vocabulary to express wants or needs, likes, dislikes, and to ask for help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• count to 100 by 1s, 2s, 5s, and 10s</li> <li>• add and subtract using manipulatives</li> <li>• create and recognize basic patterns</li> <li>• read and record information on a monthly calendar</li> <li>• read a clock to the quarter hour</li> <li>• tell the value of coins and dollar bills</li> <li>• use comparatives to describe value of various measurements</li> </ul>
Reading Strategy	Writing Strategy	Learning Strategy	Life Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use pictures to predict text</li> <li>• use initial consonants and vowels to read text</li> <li>• use background knowledge to bring meaning to text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• find words in a picture dictionary or other supportive materials to assist in writing</li> <li>• hear and record sounds in words, particularly initial and final consonants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask for help when needed</li> <li>• use first language to assist development of English language skills</li> <li>• organize school papers and books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask for help before a problem becomes a crisis</li> <li>• access medical care, legal advice, and financial help when needed</li> <li>• use a calendar to record and keep appointments</li> <li>• understand and talk about money, income, and expenses</li> <li>• talk about successes and challenges set learning goals</li> </ul>

## Approaches and Activities for Phase I

Scaffolding – providing decreasing levels of support as learners develop their skills – and a safe learning environment are essential elements in a Phase I class. Learners at this level may not have experienced success in school in the past, and every opportunity to experience success must be provided to each learner. Approaches and activities should begin with a high level of instructor support. This support should only be decreased when it is appropriate for each learner, as building confidence and experiencing success are more important than working independently at this Phase.

**Keep it Relevant and Authentic:** Introduce topics and themes that are relevant. New vocabulary lists should consist of words learners will find in their day-to-day lives.

**Build Oral Fluency and Learners’ Word Banks:**

Learners need oral language before they begin to read and write. Provide systematic, repetitive vocabulary-building exercises that develop each learner’s bank of words, which he or she can later use to read and write. Introduce new vocabulary using interactive, tactile games, and rehearse through as many means as you can think of every day. Provide handouts with the same vocabulary: provide learners with listening and speaking activities and reading materials that practice the same words you have introduced.

**Use of Learners’ First Language:** Allow and encourage learners to use their first language to help themselves and others understand new language and concepts. Learners who share the same first language may be able to help each other navigate instructions – oral and written – or clarify concepts and vocabulary.

**Patterned Reading:** Reading materials for this level should primarily use words with which learners are familiar. Sentence structures and vocabulary are repeated within the text to give learners the opportunity to predict text and experience success as readers. The instructor should give a great deal of attention to the size and font of the text, and clear images should support textual meaning.

*Chapal is passionate about cars and it doesn’t take long for his instructor to realize that the way to motivate this young learner is through his interests. In a thematic unit of advertising, Chapal chooses to make a poster about cars. During this unit, he shines as a student because he speaks with confidence. It is an opportunity for him to be an expert in the classroom, a feeling that is both compelling and unfamiliar.*

**Supported Writing:** Writing at this level needs to be fully supported, as learners have little exposure to writing and possibly very few strategies of their own to help them. Provide a sample text for learners to copy, and encourage them to change parts of the text so the story becomes about them. Allow learners whatever support they need to feel successful, such as their vocabulary sheets, picture dictionaries, and other simple texts with which they are comfortable. Learners at this level should be given whatever they need in order to feel successful and positive about their learning.

**Read for Pleasure:** While the number of reading materials suitable for adults in Phase I is limited, it is important that learners have access to whatever books there are. Learners at the upper end of Phase I may be able to read up to 15 minutes on their own, while others will need support to read for even a few minutes. Wherever possible, listen to and support one or two learners during each reading period. Learners are encouraged to read familiar texts in pairs if they choose, and in this case, a stronger and weaker reader may read a text aloud together.

**Teach Strategies:** We may take for granted that learners know the ins and outs of learning, but many of these strategies are learned during the first eight years of a formal education, which most Phase I learners are missing. Teach learners reading strategies (eg. what to do when they don't recognize a new word), how to organize a binder, how to think about writing a word they don't know how to spell, how to find information, and so on. Don't assume anything about what learners do or do not know how to do or how to figure out. One highly effective instructor frequently talks about letting learners in on the secrets. A favourite question to ask of the learners is "How do you know?" For more information on teaching strategies, please see Chapter Eight.

**Teach Grammar in Context:** Grammar structure is an important part of language, and Phase I learners are capable of grasping the concepts in a way that is relevant to their use of language. A Phase I learner can, for example, learn about the past tense, and the concept can be introduced and rehearsed in ways that are authentic to language used in the classroom. Ask learners how they talk about yesterday. How is the weather today? It's rainy. How was the weather yesterday? It was sunny and warm. Reuse the structures in oral exercises, in reading materials, and in other discussion during the days and weeks to come.

*Tanisha comes from Tanzania and is in her late 60s. She came to Canada four years ago with her husband, having followed several of her children. Tanisha's writing is at Phase I Developing. She studies hard for her spelling tests and takes time to sound out words. Her writing is currently limited mostly to copying; however, she takes risks to write occasional sentences and she is greatly motivated to learn more. Tanisha's grandchildren in Toronto send her letters and e-mail messages to her husband's account. She tells her instructor she wants her own e-mail account so she can write back to her grandchildren. After opening her account, with support from her instructor, she proudly writes her first e-mail.*

**Make Learning Experiences Varied and Interesting:** Matching picture and word flashcards, and playing *Pictionary* and *Go Fish* (with flashcards) are great ways to vary experiences while rehearsing the same material. Pencil and paper activities such as basic word searches and vocabulary worksheets (eg. writing words under the correct picture) provide opportunities for learners to work more independently. Recognize that learners have different learning styles and preferences, and that language should be practiced in as many ways as possible to provide learners with a successful learning experience. Alternate between group activities and independent paper and pencil activities. Give learners an opportunity to move around the class and interact with each other to build a team atmosphere.

**Accept Learners Where They're At:** Each person in your class comes with different strengths and weaknesses. Talk to the learners about this, and help them to talk about their own strengths and areas for improvement. If instructors can appreciate that every learner comes with different strengths and needs, learners will learn to accept this as well. Comparing themselves to others is not only unnecessary, but unconstructive, as there will always be someone who is better at something than they are.

**Celebrate Success:** In Phase I, a gain that might be almost imperceptible to some, is actually a challenging and large step for another who has had limited success with formal language learning in the past. Acknowledge gains made, small as they may seem. Many learners take enormous risks, putting themselves in a learning environment that is new and maybe intimidating for them. This in itself is no small feat. Encourage and teach learners to recognize their own successes and provide learners a platform to talk about them.



**Teach Categorization:** Help learners to continue to develop their understanding of categorization. This is an important cognitive as well as linguistic skill. Begin with clearly different categories, such as animals and clothes; then work toward sub-categories. Use manipulatives at first, then eventually paper and pen activities.

## Materials for Phase I

Materials for Phase I should adhere to the general good guidelines for materials for ESL Literacy. That is to say that materials must be appropriate in terms of language, both structure and vocabulary, as well as in terms of layout, font, images, and whitespace. Materials should also be effective – they should support the lesson being taught and help guide learners through tasks to reach outcomes. At Phase I, give learners a high level of instructor support no matter the

Materials at this level shouldn't be cluttered: remember to include a large, easily read font (such as Century Gothic in as large as 20 pt.) as well as lots of white space on the page. Visuals should be clear and easily understood. Photographs are often more effective than line drawings.

task. It is best to break larger tasks down into smaller pieces and to scaffold assignments: provide decreasing levels of support or guidance as learners develop their skills and are able to work increasingly independently. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of commercially-produced, ready-to-use materials available for ESL literacy. Most instructors find that they have to adapt or create the bulk of their materials for class. For more information on materials, please see Chapter Nine.

Suggested materials:

- *English Express* ([www.englishexpress.ca](http://www.englishexpress.ca))
- *Grass Roots Readers* (Grass Roots Press, Edmonton, Alberta)
- *Gatehouse Books* (Gatehouse Media, Manchester, England – also available through Grass Roots Press)
- *The Page Turners Collection* (PRACE, Australia – available through Grass Roots Press)
- *Adult Phonics Stories* (Multi-Cultural Educational Services: [www.mcedservices.com](http://www.mcedservices.com))
- instructor-created materials, including reading books, flashcards, worksheets, and scaffolded writing materials

See the following pages for examples of materials suitable for Phase I. These materials are available in “clean” copies for photocopying in the back of the handbook. Please feel free to adapt these materials to suit the needs of a particular group of learners. They are examples only and can be changed depending on level, theme, or program outcome.



### Word Listing

TASK: Put these words in alphabetical order.

#### Tips for Use

Can be modified for any theme or level

Provides practice for spelling or dictionary use

groceries      cash      buy  
purchases      receipt      sale

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

## Story about Me

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

I am \_\_\_\_\_.

I have \_\_\_\_\_ sons.

I have \_\_\_\_\_ daughters.

Copy the story:

---

---

---

---

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### Tips for Use

Provides scaffolding and support for writing a basic paragraph

Can be used as a basis for further reading

Highly adaptable to other themes

## Tips for Use

Reinforces vocabulary while practicing categorization

Encourages learners to focus on meaning of words rather than just copying

## Female or Male?

Read the words. Copy the words in the correct column.

mother                      sister                      grandmother  
 father                      son                      grandfather  
 brother                      daughter                      wife

female	male

Tips for Use 

Learners can answer for themselves or interview others

Can be used for numeracy lesson: *How many learners like fish?*

Practices structure of simple present questions without overtly focusing on grammar

Highly repetitive to reinforce form

## Do You Like...?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Do you like fish?

Yes

Do you like spaghetti?

Yes

Do you like apples?

Yes

Do you like pizza?

Yes

No

Do you like TV?

Yes

No

Do you like Calgary?

Yes

No

Do you like winter?

Yes

No

Do you like snakes?

Yes

No

Do you like school?

Yes

No

## Classroom Routines for Phase I

Phase I learners have generally not spent much time in a classroom setting before beginning ESL literacy. For some, this may be their first experience with formal education, while others may have had up to several years of formal schooling. Regardless, learners will need help with developing an understanding of their new school system and western expectations for the classroom

. A good classroom routine helps learners to build this understanding, but it is also effective in that it creates a productive learning environment. Phase I learners, for example, are not used to sitting for long periods of time working with a pencil or reading a text. This is exhausting work for them and should be interspersed with opportunities to talk and move around.

The following are ideas for classroom routines that work well with this level:

*Tanisha does not complete tasks in the class as quickly as some of the other learners, but she works hard. Sometimes her instructor can tell that she is getting tired; this is a good sign that it's time to do something fun or different.*

*Tanisha enjoys speaking activities; she loves to tell stories about her life and her children, and she loves to give caring advice to the younger people in the classroom, including her instructor. For Tanisha, school is both a place for learning and belonging.*

**Start with the Day's Agenda:** Talk about the day and date and write them on the board. Make sure each learner has a weekly schedule in his or her binder, and have him or her refer to it as you write the day's agenda on the board. Predictability provides learners with a sense of security.

**Change Activities Often:** Gauge learners' attention span and "saturation point." To keep learners engaged and not overwhelmed, change activities every 15 to 20 minutes. Seated exercises can be interspersed with class surveys or other activities where learners need to get up and move around.

**Vary Types of Activities:** Provide opportunities for collaborative and independent learning preferences, as well as kinesthetic, visual, and oral preferences, so that every learner has an opportunity to learn the way that works best for him or her.

Mix it up! Phase I learners are not used to sitting in a classroom focusing on one thing for long stretches of time; remember to vary activities. After an intense reading or writing activity, do something that allows learners to move around. Remember that many LIFE are kinesthetic or aural learners; make sure you include activities that appeal to these learning styles as well.

**Make Reading Part of the Class Culture:** Create a small library in the class and make reading for pleasure part of the class routine. Provide supported reading experiences with the help of an assistant or community volunteer, as well as through classmate reading partners.

## Sample Theme Unit for Phase I

A theme unit is a series of connected lessons, taught over a longer period of time, from a week to several weeks. There are many advantages to teaching in theme units; it is an excellent way to introduce vocabulary and concepts, and it means that the instructor can recycle outcomes without the lessons feeling repetitive to the learners. For more information on theme units, please see Chapter Ten.

In this Phase I theme unit, learners encounter and learn food-related vocabulary, read and follow simple recipes in class, and finally follow a model to write their own favourite recipe, which is displayed on poster board with graphics on the classroom walls.

Food is a universal topic, a consideration especially at the beginning of a new term, when the instructor is getting to know the new learners in class. All learners can relate to and have experience with the topic and are motivated by the opportunity to make food in class. As well, they get to share something low-risk about themselves, a recipe that they use and love. Oral language is informally assessed and developed from the outset of the unit, and new vocabulary development supports reading and writing processes that follow. The same vocabulary is recycled throughout the unit.

This theme unit is appropriate for Phase I Adequate learners, although it can be adjusted to be more or less challenging or more or less supported by the teacher. To illustrate this, the sample lesson plan that follows the theme unit is a little lower, at Phase I Developing. It should take about two to three weeks of full-time class to complete this unit.

## Sample Theme Unit for Phase I: Food

### Introducing the Theme: Food Vocabulary and Reading Recipes

#### Reading & Writing Outcomes

- read and follow a simple recipe, supported with graphics

#### Speaking & Listening Outcomes

- use thematic vocabulary to talk about likes

#### Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes

- use pictures to understand text
- access background knowledge

#### Brief Lesson Descriptions

1. Create two teams to play a game where learners cooperate to match words with pictures of common foods. Use this game to informally assess vocabulary of learners. When learners have matched all of the words they know (as a collective), walk around the class to read the words together, and help them to match the words they don't know.
2. Write an oral prompt on the board: "What is your favourite food?" Write the frame on the board "My favourite food is \_\_\_\_\_." Demonstrate the question and answer orally with volunteers in the class. Ask them to ask this question of three other learners.
3. Give learners a simple recipe in story format that uses the vocabulary they have just practiced and which is heavily supported by clear graphics. Read together as a class and then independently.
4. Lead a class discussion on what kind of food they enjoy and like to make. This can include conversation about traditional foods as well.

### Developing the Theme: Graphing Favourites and Following Recipes

#### Reading & Writing Outcomes

- read aloud a simple story
- read and follow instructor-adapted recipes that include images

#### Speaking & Listening Outcomes

- tell what is their favourite and explain why

#### Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes

- use pictures to understand text
- identify new vocabulary in a text

#### Brief Lesson Descriptions

1. Hand out a short, instructor-adapted story about the history of chocolate with images to support vocabulary. Have learners highlight new words in the text. Ask them to write new words on the board. Practice reading strategies together to read the new words (learners can read parts of a word; perhaps another learner recognizes the word and can explain). At this point draw out prior knowledge from learners about the topic.
2. Read the story together as a class, or ask for volunteers to read short parts of the text.
3. Provide samples of three kinds of chocolate (eg. dark, mint, and milk). Offer learners the option of sampling each kind if they like. Those who sample the chocolate identify their favourite chocolate. Those who do not want to sample the

<p><b>Numeracy Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use a table to organize and report information</li> <li>• display survey results in a bar graph</li> </ul>	<p>chocolate can use the opportunity to express why, for example “I don’t like chocolate because it is sweet.”</p> <p>4. With learner participation, write the results in a table format on the board. Then create a bar graph together and answer questions on it. (“How many students like dark chocolate best?”)</p> <p>5. Bring in instructor-adapted recipes and the ingredients and supplies required to make them (for non-bake foods, a blender can work wonders). Hand out the recipes, and have learners highlight new vocabulary. Work together with the class to split tasks. Make the food.</p>
<p><b>Final Product: Writing a Recipe</b></p>	
<p><b>Reading &amp; Writing Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• write a simple recipe</li> <li>• create a poster, linking graphics with text</li> <li>• read classmates’ recipes and identify key steps</li> </ul> <p><b>Speaking &amp; Listening Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain recipes orally</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use repetition in text to predict</li> <li>• use a writing frame to write a story</li> <li>• use fine motor skills: cutting, pasting, drawing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Brief Lesson Descriptions</b></p> <p>1. Continue to rehearse the vocabulary in varied ways throughout the theme unit.</p> <p>2. Rehearse the initial recipe/story as well, so that learners are comfortable with the new vocabulary.</p> <p>3. Ask each learner to copy the story, adapting it so that the story is about their own favourite food. Learners may copy words from the vocabulary section of their binder, or use a picture dictionary to help, in addition to getting help from other learners who speak the same first/second language. Learners may use pictures from magazines or their own drawings to illustrate. The recipe does not need to include measurements, but should include a list of ingredients.</p> <p>4. Once learners have finished writing their first copy, do a general edit to make sure the stories make sense.</p> <p>5. Provide learners with poster paper. Learners copy their own stories onto their posters, using illustrations or photos from magazines and share.</p>

Tools	
<p><b>New Vocabulary &amp; Concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vocabulary about food and food preparation</li> <li>• following the format of a recipe (imperative sentences with bulleted ingredients)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Language Structure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• simple present statements</li> <li>• simple present questions and answers about preference (What's your favourite...?)</li> <li>• imperative</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resources &amp; Materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flashcards from <a href="http://www.esl-library.com">www.esl-library.com</a></li> <li>• instructor-created vocabulary worksheets</li> <li>• an instructor-created recipe story</li> <li>• instructor-adapted recipes, as well as recipes from <a href="http://www.englishexpress.ca">www.englishexpress.ca</a></li> <li>• a simplified/adapted story about chocolate from <i>Weaving it Together</i> (Heinle and Heinle)</li> <li>• several kinds of chocolate for learners to sample</li> <li>• poster paper, markers, rulers, old magazines, sticky tack</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Assessment</b></p> <p>The learners are assessed throughout the unit in their abilities to meet the outcomes. Where suitable, they can choose one or two tasks to be included in their portfolios. For further information on portfolios, please see Chapter Eleven.</p>	

## Lesson Planning for Phase I

Lesson planning for Phase I means creating meaningful, effective lessons that help learners to meet the outcomes of the class. Lessons are often connected to a wider theme. The first of our sample lesson plans is connected to the sample theme unit; the second is another example of a possible lesson.

In a good Phase I lesson, vocabulary is practiced and put into context. Lessons can also give the class the chance to practice listening and writing (strengthening the idea that they can begin to write words using invented spelling – an important step in developing the self-confidence to write), reading both formatted and unformatted texts, and using computers and the internet. None of these skills will be mastered in one session alone; the instructor recycles the vocabulary throughout the theme and key outcomes throughout the class.

There are several key features to a good Phase I lesson plan:

- No activity takes longer than 20 minutes.
- A variety of activities is used, including speaking, listening, reading, writing, and computer use.
- The lesson begins with oral vocabulary before moving to reading and writing.
- More challenging textual work is broken up with opportunities to talk and move around.

Sample Lesson Plan for Phase I: Writing a Recipe

Part of Theme: Final Product

Level: Phase I Developing

Lesson Objectives:

- practice food vocabulary
- fill in a cloze activity of final consonants
- write an ingredients list and a simplified recipe
- put a story in correct sequence
- write down final sounds from a dictation

Timing	Activity Description
5 minutes	<b>Warm-Up:</b> Greet learners. Ask them to tell you what they ate for breakfast or dinner. Ask them what they brought for a snack.
15 minutes	<b>Review Food Prep Vocabulary:</b> Hand out a cloze worksheet reviewing this week’s food preparation vocabulary ( <i>cut, dice, fry, bake, etc.</i> ). Go over it orally and then have learners fill in the cloze using the word bank. Remind them to cross out the words they have used. Go over it orally when they are all finished.
10 minutes	<b>Group Work:</b> In groups of four, have learners discuss their favourite meal and tell each other in their group how to prepare the meal.
20 minutes	<b>Writing an Ingredients List:</b> Have each learner write a list of ingredients needed for their favourite meal. Allow learners to use the vocabulary sheets in their binder to help them. Once learners are finished their writing their first copy, do a general edit to make sure they have most of the ingredients listed and spelled correctly. Hand out lined paper titled, “My Favourite Meal.” Learners copy their list of ingredients. Then they draw or find pictures from magazines to illustrate two or three items on their list. Share.
10 minutes	<b>Writing a Recipe Together:</b> As a class, ask one learner to describe how to make his or her favourite meal. Write this on the board in recipe format as the learner is speaking. (Chop onions; put onions and chicken in a pan; etc.) Read it back to the learner to make sure it is right. Have class read it chorally. Have learners read it individually, then copy it into their notebooks.

30 minutes	<b>Mr. Bean:</b> Show the part of the episode where Mr. Bean makes a sandwich. Have the learners retell the story. Put story strips in random order in a pocket chart. Read the strips together as a class. Ask each learner to come up and point to specific words such as <i>fish</i> , <i>lettuce</i> , <i>sock</i> , <i>salt</i> , and <i>butter</i> . Hand the strips out and have the learners put them in the pocket chart in the correct sequential order. Read it together. Hand out individual story strips and scissors. Learners cut up the story strips and glue them onto another worksheet in the correct sequential order.
10 minutes	<b>Singing:</b> Sing a food song such as “Oats, Peas, Beans and Barley Grow” or “On Top of Spaghetti.”
10 minutes	<b>Listening and Dictation:</b> Tell the learners you are going to practice reading and writing final sounds. Review some of the final sounds the learners already know. Introduce two new final sounds. Solicit words from the learners that have the target sounds in word-final position and write these on the board. Review them with the class. Hand out a worksheet of 10 three letter words with the final sound missing. Read each word and have learners fill in the missing letter. Go over the exercise with the class.
10 minutes	<b>Portfolio Work:</b> Remind the class about the different worksheets they have done this unit. Hand out three post-it notes to each learner. Have learners reflect on the unit by looking through their binders and putting a post-it note on the three pieces they like best. Then go around to each learner and look at the ones they have chosen. Help them choose one piece for their portfolio.

## Sample Lesson Plan for Phase I: Weather

Part of Theme: Developing the Theme

Level: Phase I Adequate

Lesson Objectives:

- introduce weather vocabulary
- take simple word dictation with short vowel sounds
- introduce the concept of temperature, including highs and lows
- read formatted text and locate information: weather forecasts

Timing	Activity Description
5 minutes	<b>Warm-Up:</b> Greet learners. Ask learners to look at their weekly schedules in the front of their binders, and have them tell you what the class is doing today. Write the agenda on the board, and add any further information about the theme or special events for the day.
20 minutes	<b>Listening and Dictation:</b> Place the individual whiteboards and markers on each table. Review the short vowel (cvc) sounds, referring to the pictures that match each sound (a- apple, e- elephant). Rehearse the sounds together and review the shape of the mouth for each sound.  Read words, one by one, to the learners, giving them plenty of time to write the words on their whiteboards. Repeat each word several times slowly, and encourage learners to think about the shape of their mouth when they say the words. Each time, ask a learner to spell the word for you and write it on the board.
20 minutes	<b>Review Weather Vocabulary:</b> Review this week’s thematic vocabulary, weather, with a game of <i>Pictionary</i> on the class whiteboard. Allow learners to use vocabulary sheets to help them remember or guess the correct word.
20 minutes	<b>Temperature, Highs, and Lows:</b> Introduce the concept of temperature. Referring to an enlarged photocopy of this morning’s paper, talk about the words <i>high</i> and <i>low</i> . Discuss what kinds of temperatures are hot, cold, warm, and cool. Write the next question on the board: “What’s the high for today?” Elicit an appropriate answer, and write it on the board. Practice questioning and answering with a few learners, until they are comfortable using the sentence frames. Do the same for the next question, “What’s the low..?” Have the class practice together.

15 minutes	<b>Thematic Reading:</b> Read a story about the weather as a class, giving each learner an opportunity to read a page (one sentence) aloud to the class. Then have learners read the story again in partners.
10 minutes	<b>Weather Discussion:</b> As a class, discuss the weather in various parts of the world, particularly in the countries the learners come from, as well as the location they live in now. If there is a community volunteer, create two groups of learners for this discussion. Elicit learner knowledge about appropriate clothing for the four seasons in Canada.
15 minutes	<b>Computer Lab Reading:</b> In the computer lab, have learners go to <a href="http://www.englishexpress.ca">www.englishexpress.ca</a> and direct them to one of the stories about weather and seasons.
15 minutes	<b>Computer Lab Checking Weather Forecasts:</b> Still in the computer lab, have learners go to a website such as <a href="http://www.theweathernetwork.com">www.theweathernetwork.com</a> . On the class screen, model how to find the weather for a given location. Then have learners check the weather in various places.

## Conclusions

While Phase I learners may begin to see new possibilities for themselves with language development and the opportunities that can open up in their lives as a result, they still have many barriers to their learning. Phase I learners have developed a small bank of sight words and may identify that for the first time they are beginning to pay attention to English text in their environment, like advertisements on the bus, or are able to recognize some words in a letter they receive in the mail. Their writing/printing is becoming neater as fine motor skills continue to develop, and they are beginning to write text in appropriate places on a page. These areas of growth are exciting and are an occasion for celebration.

The Phase I learner is highly supported, both instructionally and with any other barriers they have to learning. It is essential that both instructors and programs recognize the tension that can be created as a result of the barriers, and offer as much understanding and support to the learners as they are able. As learners move through Phase I, some supports can gradually be removed or lessened, to the extent that this is appropriate for each learner. As they move into Phase II and eventually III, they will have less and less support, and it is important that learners become more independent.

Phase I learners are beginning to take greater ownership over their learning as well, and are learning to identify their strengths and challenges in relation to their English language development. With the support of a learning portfolio, they are able to communicate their growth and areas for improvement to their instructor and classmates. This self-awareness will benefit learners as they move into Phase II and continue to develop life and learning goals for themselves.

*Angie, Chapal, and Tanisha all work hard in their Phase I class. They face different challenges: Angie must develop her self-confidence, Chapal must find ways to motivate himself to learn, and Tanisha struggles with writing. Their instructor helps them accept that this is okay, as they also have different strengths. Angie develops quickly as a reader, Chapal learns to organize his thoughts, and Tanisha brings strong oral skills to the classroom. After working at Phase I for one to two semesters, all three have strengthened their ability to read and built their sight word vocabulary, and can now write a full simple sentence independently. They are ready to move on to Phase II.*

# Chapter 15 Outline

The Phase II Learner

The CLB Literacy Phases

Introduction: Phase II

When is a Learner Ready for Phase II?

Phase II Outcomes

Approaches and Activities for Phase II

Materials for Phase II

Classroom Routines for Phase II

Sample Theme Unit for Phase II

Lesson Planning for Phase II

Sample Lesson Plans for Phase II

Conclusions



# Phase II

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## Objectives

To recognize Phase II learners and their skills and needs

To identify the outcomes and expectations for Phase II

To share effective practices in the Phase II classroom

## Learner Profile: Phase II

An at-a-glance profile of adult ESL literacy learners at Phase II  
 All skills are measured according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks and  
 the Canadian Language Benchmark Literacy Phases

Years of Formal Education	Reading and Writing Skills	Range of Listening and Speaking	Range of Numeracy
3-6 or previous ESL literacy	Phase II	CLB 2-5	Phase I-beyond Phase III
Typical Age Range		Gender	
adults of all ages		usually fairly balanced	
Common Challenges in the Classroom	Common Strengths in the Classroom	Common Barriers to Learning	
some classroom experience some formal learning strategies dependent learners developing vocabulary building an awareness of structure	collaborative learning prior practical knowledge survival skills often highly motivated to learn viewing education as a privilege	poverty lack of adequate housing lack of childcare limited ability to access help issues may be serious before learner receives help	
Typical Social and Political Background		Indicators a Learner is Ready for Phase II	
learner can come from any country in the world rural villages or urban areas oral or literate societies learner may have spent time in refugee camps or in additional countries before immigrating learner may have experienced war, famine, displacement, poverty, or social or political unrest		learner can use a limited sight word bank learner can write legibly learner can copy with fairly consistent accuracy learner can space words acceptably learner can write a few comprehensible sentences on familiar topics learner can read and understand a short simple text	
Typical Educational Background		learner can use initial and final consonant sounds to prompt recall and to discriminate between like words learner can fill in simple forms	
3-6 years of formal education formal education has been interrupted or cut short any previous formal education may have been in a second language any previous educational setting may have lacked resources, facilities, or educated teachers			

## The CLB Literacy Phases

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) has published two documents that provide a set of outcomes for ESL and ESL literacy learners in Canada. The first document, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language for Adults*, divides language learning into twelve different levels, called Benchmarks, in four different skill areas: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This document is NOT intended for use with Learners with Interrupted Formal Education; it assumes a previous formal education, even at the lowest benchmarks. The second CCLB document, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (the CLB Literacy Document), focuses on ESL literacy and LIFE. It sets outcomes for four different levels, called Phases, in three different skill areas: reading, writing, and numeracy. ESL literacy programs who use this document measure their learners' levels by using the Phases for reading, writing, and literacy, and by using the Benchmarks for listening and speaking. Each Phase can further be broken down into Initial, Developing, and Adequate stages, and it is important to note that the difference among the stages is considerable.

At Bow Valley College, we use the CLB Literacy Document and the literacy Phases in our ESL literacy programs. There are two clear advantages to this document: there has been a considerable amount of material produced by the CCLB to support the Benchmarks and the Phases, and this is a national standard, so learners can more easily “transport” their education from one institution to another or from one province to another. We strongly recommend that any Canadian ESL literacy program look into using the CLB Literacy Document in their program. If you are not familiar with the CLB literacy Phases, Section Three of the handbook can still be useful to you; it provides a thorough introduction to ESL literacy at each of the four Phases, which are equally applicable to learners of different levels no matter what the levels are called (Foundation Phase, Phase I, Phase II, Phase III; Beginner, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Advanced; ESL literacy 1,2,3,4, etc.).

## Introduction: Phase II

Phase II learners have reached the point in their literacy development where they are just beginning to use literacy skills in their everyday lives. They have developed a basic sight word bank of familiar words, a limited ability to decode unfamiliar words, and the ability to copy information. It is important to note that Phase II learners, like all Learners with Interrupted Formal Education, have widely varying backgrounds and will approach and complete tasks differently. Phase II learners generally have had fewer than six years of formal education, although these years are often interrupted and not usually the equivalent of a Canadian elementary school education.

Although Phase II learners are far more independent than Phase I learners, they are still not independent learners. They are capable of writing sentences, but usually only with support and in a safe environment, such as a good classroom. They do not yet use their writing skills independently in their lives. Encourage learners to be independent by scaffolding activities, gradually removing supports as they are no longer necessary and as learners experience success.

Phase II learners are beginning to transfer literacy skills from the classroom to their everyday lives. They are usually aware of print in their environment and note warning and direction signs in expected situations. They cannot yet understand the intended purpose of a letter or notice and will need such a

document explained, but print has meaning for them and they can take note of dates, times, cost, and locations. For example, a learner might not understand that he is about to be evicted, but he will understand that something will happen involving the apartment and one thousand dollars on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Phase II learners generally only write to copy names, addresses, dates, and times. They can write simple sentences but usually do so only in class. As Phase II learners often lack confidence in their skills, they will seek a lot of help to complete any important reading or writing task.

As learners move through the Initial, Developing, and Adequate stages of Phase II, they develop from reading words and sentences to paragraphs and simple stories of personal interest. They begin to understand the meaning and intent of straightforward messages. Learners move from composing basic sentences to the ability to express their ideas in notes and simple paragraphs. They understand the numeracy concepts associated with basic daily tasks involving time, money, and measurement. They become better able to take responsibility for their own learning as they acquire increased literacy skills, confidence, life experience in Canada, learning strategies, and insight into their strengths and weaknesses.

# Ali's Story

## **A Phase II learner**

*Ali is a nineteen year old man from rural Pakistan who has been living in Canada for three years. He had four years of education in Pakistan but has minimal literacy in Urdu. What literacy skills he has have been picked up through practical experience working in family businesses both in Pakistan and now in Canada, where he has been working full-time at his cousin's gas station.*

*Ali's practical experience has given him some ability to read and write, and his three years as a teenager in Canada have taught him a number of strategies for functioning in everyday life. He is a personable young man, he is intelligent, and his interactions with Canadians have generally been very positive. He is motivated to integrate into Canadian culture, is quickly increasing his awareness of the Canadian system, and can use prediction strategies to figure out forms, memos, and notices. He is very good at using the information around him to complete tasks; he knows where to find information and uses his ID to complete forms. Since he speaks at a relatively high level, he uses the patterns of his oral English to compose simple sentences. However, his handwriting is difficult to read, and he still has trouble following lines on a page.*

*Ali has more difficulty with reading than with writing. He has a bank of English sight words but sometimes confuses them. He has difficulty with phonetic word attack strategies and lacks an understanding of sound-letter correspondence, which make it very challenging for him to decode new words or spell.*

*In terms of numeracy, Ali is more advanced than many of his classmates. His experience in the gas station has improved his basic arithmetic skills and his interest in music and pop culture has motivated him to learn to use a computer to a basic extent. One of Ali's greatest strengths is his awareness of his weaknesses and willingness to work to improve them. He learns from his mistakes and takes responsibility for his own learning.*

*Ali usually performs well on Phase II tasks. His practical knowledge and good prediction strategies compensate for his weaker reading and writing skills. He is young and intelligent and will make progress at higher levels as long as he stays motivated and willing to work. He must improve his sight word bank, his word attack strategies, and his spelling.*

## When is a Learner Ready for Phase II?

Learners entering Phase II can have diverse skills and strategies, but they must have similar levels of proficiency in reading and writing tasks. Some basic strategies and life skills must be in place as well. Generally speaking, learners ready to enter Phase II can use pictures and formatting to help understand a text, have a limited sight word bank, and can decode to the extent that they can use initial and final letters to help guess a word. They also have legible handwriting, space words acceptably, copy information fairly accurately, and can begin to write simple sentences.

While the literacy Phases do not specifically discuss speaking and listening skills, it is important to note that learners must increase their abilities in oral English as they develop their literacy skills in order to increase their vocabulary and sense of structure. Most learners in Phase II are at CLB 2-5 in listening and speaking.

For any homogeneity in numeracy, learners would have to be regrouped. Learners' numeracy skills often don't correspond to their level of literacy. However, a learner ready to enter Phase II in numeracy can count to one hundred, can add and subtract using manipulatives such as poker chips, can tell digital time, and can identify coins and bills and use the appropriate coins to make up money amounts.

*Aziza is a single mother from Ethiopia. She came to Canada four years ago with her husband and her three young children, but the marriage has since broken up, and she is now raising her children alone. Aziza is a feisty survivor. She has figured out how to navigate the Canadian system; she has learned about school, funding, housing, and medical care. She combines what she knows about the system with prediction strategies to figure out forms, memos, and notices. However, she has a limited sight word bank and often confuses the words she knows. She is slowly developing phonetic word attack strategies, but her performance is quite inconsistent and stress frequently interferes with her learning. This leads to a tendency to guess rather than rely on her skills and strategies when reading.*

## Phase II Outcomes

Outcomes describe what learners will be able to do when they complete a unit, level, or program. The CLB Literacy Document provides a list of outcomes for each Phase, as well as conditions for these outcomes. When working with these outcomes, or basing classroom outcomes on the CLB Literacy Document, it is essential to recognize the conditions as well. The conditions describe in what circumstances a learner will be able to complete an outcome and are just as critical as the outcomes themselves. Conditions may state, for example, how much support is allowed and required from the instructor, how long a reading text should be, or how relevant and

familiar a topic should be for writing. At all literacy Phases, conditions ask for considerable instructor support and familiar circumstances for all reading and writing tasks.

*Husain is a young man from Darfur who has had eight years of education, which is more than the other learners in his class. However, Husain's schooling was in a very traditional system which encouraged memorization and acceptance of truth and did not challenge learners to predict, problem-solve, and apply classroom learning to practical everyday situations. Husain has great difficulty with making mistakes; he does not recognize mistakes as inevitable – and even beneficial – in the learning process, and acts as if his mistakes are shaming. This severely limits his ability to take risks or to attempt tasks independently. Husain's instructor works with him to develop problem-solving skills and learning strategies in addition to increasing his skills in reading and writing. Over the semester, he finds that he is willing to take greater risks with his learning, and with these risks come experiences with success. His confidence grows and Husain does well in his Phase II class.*

Learners acquire the basic mechanics of literacy throughout Phase II. They move from reading and writing simple sentences to reading and writing simple paragraphs. By the end of Phase II Adequate, learners can understand a simple text and are able to look up individual pieces of information. They can complete short practical writing tasks and spell basic vocabulary on their own with fairly consistent accuracy. Basic numeracy concepts for time, money, and measurement are in place and simple learning strategies are part of the learners' learning style. They can deal with some abstract concepts and have learned some basic abstract vocabulary. As well, their daily lives are sufficiently well-ordered so that absences, punctuality, and daycare crises usually don't interfere with school.

The CLB Literacy Document sets outcomes in

three areas: reading, writing (including reading and writing strategies), and numeracy.

Depending on the program, instructors may choose to set outcomes in other areas as well, including learning strategies, vocabulary, and life skills. In the following chart, there are examples of outcomes in each of these areas. There are hundreds of possible outcomes to set in a program; this chart provides samples to give an idea of what outcomes look like at this level. For more information on setting outcomes, please see Chapter Three.

## Sample Outcomes for Phase II

Reading	Writing	Vocabulary	Numeracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read a simple map and identify directions</li> <li>• find and understand information on simple charts, ads, and directories</li> <li>• read a short, simple paragraph and identify main idea and some supporting details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use phonics to improve spelling</li> <li>• accurately copy information from simple charts, ads, and directories</li> <li>• convey a message such as a note of congratulations, thanks, excuse, or request</li> <li>• fill in charts and simple forms</li> <li>• write several simple sentences on a highly familiar topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognize and use adverbs of frequency</li> <li>• recognize and use time references for sequencing</li> <li>• recognize and use some abstract words, such as descriptive words</li> <li>• recognize and use partitives with count and non-count nouns, such as “a jug of milk”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify place value in double digit numbers</li> <li>• add and subtract double-digit numbers</li> <li>• use a simple calculator</li> <li>• measure weight, height, length, width, and temperature</li> <li>• use digital and analogue time</li> <li>• estimate time for daily tasks and cost of monthly expenses</li> </ul>
Reading Strategy	Writing Strategy	Learning Strategy	Life Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use phonics to discriminate between sight words and predict the sound of new words in a text</li> <li>• use familiar format to understand a text</li> <li>• use word families and rhyming words to predict the sound of unfamiliar words</li> <li>• identify what is new in a text</li> <li>• use categories to understand a simple chart</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refer to word banks and spelling lists to spell unfamiliar words</li> <li>• refer to identification and documentation to fill in forms</li> <li>• use writing models to write a text, changing necessary words and phrases</li> <li>• look up new words in a picture dictionary or simple dictionary</li> <li>• revise a text according to the instructor’s corrections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask for help when needed</li> <li>• use patterns to understand sentence structure</li> <li>• take risks in learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be aware of and read most posted notices in the community to avoid serious consequences</li> <li>• follow a schedule and make appropriate arrangements when it is necessary to deviate from the schedule</li> <li>• anticipate problems in finances, daycare, and transportation, and plan ahead</li> <li>• access help agencies, legal advice, and health professionals</li> </ul>

## Approaches and Activities for Phase II

Although Phase II learners generally have neither a western education nor a particularly linear approach to learning, they do have an exceptional learning and cognitive capacity. Many have lived through difficult situations, such as war, genocide, famine, violence, or oppression; many others have experienced or witnessed traumatic events; all have negotiated the immigration/refugee process, moved to another country (often by way of a third or even fourth country), found housing, found schools for their children, and found their way to an ESL literacy classroom. A significant portion of Phase II learners speak three or more languages and many have a variety of practical skills. Nearly all Phase II learners have learned to be flexible and adapt to shifting situations and a lack of control over major forces in their lives. Their learning styles may not fit traditional western concepts, but that makes them no less significant.

A Phase II ESL instructor should act as a guide, bridging the learners from their traditional style of learning to the kinds of approaches favoured in the western educational system. Phase II learners often have prior learning experiences that were collaborative, oral, practical, and hands-on. Approaches that work well with these learners encourage them to work together and help each other. Language should be used orally before it is committed to paper; similarly, learners should become familiar with sentence structure orally before any attempt is made to teach a set of grammar rules. Perhaps the most important approach is to make tasks immediately relevant to the learners' daily lives. This shows the learners the importance of literacy development and motivates them to learn.

*Fareiba, a young woman from Afghanistan, began literacy classes in Canada at square one, with almost no ability to speak or write English. She has made more progress in reading and writing than in listening and speaking, since she has been willing to work very hard on literacy tasks, but she has been reluctant to communicate in English and is very shy about speaking with native speakers. At this point, it is her lack of oral skills that is holding her back. Fareiba performs well on Phase II level tasks when the vocabulary is within her sight word bank. Her excellent work habits will bring success at higher levels if she opens up to Canadian experience and improves her English communication skills.*

There are a number of effective approaches and activities at Phase II:

**Begin with Speaking:** A lot of oral interaction before reading and writing activities plays to the learners' oral strengths. ESL literacy learners are learning to read, not reading to learn. Go over new vocabulary orally before introducing it in writing. Approach all new structures orally before trying them on paper.

**Group Work:** Group work gives appropriate opportunities for peer tutoring. These partnerships can be between two learners with similar skill levels, so that they are collaborating together to

complete a task, or with learners of different skill levels. In this situation, the learner with the lower skill level benefits from peer tutoring, while the learner with the higher skill level has the opportunity to learn through teaching. It is important for an instructor to recognize that many Phase II learners are used to collaborative approaches to work, and will not necessarily know when this is considered inappropriate in a classroom setting; for example, during tests or assessments. Make it clear to learners when they are supposed to work entirely independently, for instance during assessment.

**Use Flashcards to Reinforce Categorization:** Help learners continue to develop abstract concepts of categories by categorizing flashcards in flashcard pocket charts. Using flashcards to teach other concepts is often more effective than having learners write, as Phase II learners will find writing difficult enough on its own. Removing the challenges of writing allows learners to focus on learning the abstract idea.

**Use Flashcards to Teach Grammar:** Manipulating flashcards to order scrambled sentences allows learners to follow oral patterns concretely and prepare to develop abstract concepts of structure. When learners use flashcards to create sentences, there is little risk of failure, since any early attempt can easily be completely obliterated. Flashcards also ensure that all the elements of a structure are included, such as auxiliary verbs. Learners often drop auxiliary verbs in written



English because they are unstressed and difficult to hear in spoken English; flashcards draw attention to all elements of a sentence.

**Create Jigsaw Activities:** Ordering sentences and segments of stories allows learners to organize paragraphs concretely and prepare to develop abstract concepts of structure. Learners should have the opportunity to arrange pre-written sentences or sections of a story before being expected to write sentences of their own in a logical order. Ordering sentences also helps with sequencing and linear progression, which are often used in written English.

**Play Games:** Games give instructors opportunities to guide learners through taking turns and following rules. Games also set up interactive situations; this is beneficial, since many learners in literacy classes have trouble dealing with the hypothetical and have great difficulty with role-play.

*Husain does not like to take risks when he is writing; he also has a tendency to skip unstressed words, such as auxiliary verbs, articles, and prepositions. His instructor gives him all the words for a sentence on individual cards; he must put these words in order before copying them into his notebook. He likes this activity because he can “erase” any early attempts simply by reshuffling the cards, leaving no trace of a mistake. His instructor likes this activity because Husain includes all the elements of a sentence.*

**Practice Prediction as a Class:** Have class discussions about predicting story lines from pictures, titles, and a quick scan of vocabulary. Routinely have learners make predictions about

*Aziza finds writing challenging. She can use the patterns of her oral English to compose simple sentences. She also knows where to find information, but she doesn't always copy it accurately. She gets distracted easily in class, which interrupts her ability to write. Aziza's instructor finds that explicitly teaching Aziza strategies such as prediction helps not only with her reading but also with her writing. Deliberately using these strategies helps Aziza stay focused and on track; she doesn't get as easily distracted because she has a process to follow.*

a text or activity. When they make a prediction, draw attention to this strategy by asking them how they know. When reading a new text, have a look at the title, format, or any pictures; this will help activate prior knowledge of the format or the content, and teach learners to make predictions whenever they read. During reading, check predictions and make new predictions.

**Use Relevant Reading Material:** Reading material should be relevant to the learners' lives and have familiar contexts. This is a question both of fairness and of motivation. Phase II learners, and indeed all LIFE, cannot be expected to understand a text outside of their experiences.

Learners, and especially adult learners, learn best when they can see the relevance of what they are learning. Use relevant material and content as a hook to teach necessary skills and strategies.

**Have Learners Read to Each Other:** Reading aloud is an excellent skill to build (and quite different from silent reading). It is a chance in particular to practice pronunciation, which is very closely tied to phonological sense; rhythm and stress; and chunking, the process of reading in meaningful phrases rather than one word at a time. The teacher can also read aloud to the learners, which models fluent reading and speaking.

**Use Interviews:** Have learners interview each other so that recording information is collaborative and social. This also builds from the learners' strengths, listening and speaking, and allows them to work collaboratively on the skills they find more difficult, such as writing and organizing information.

**Keep Journals:** Have learners keep journals to encourage writing as a method of self expression and to give them time to practice writing.

**Sing Songs:** The rhythm emphasizes the oral pattern of the lyrics and helps with awareness of English sentence structure. Songs are an excellent way of activating memory.

## Materials for Phase II

Learners at Phase II are better able to handle traditional, commercially-available materials than Foundation Phase and Phase I learners; however, materials should still conform to good practices for ESL literacy regarding font, font size, white space, images, and the level of the vocabulary and the language structures used. Texts based on pattern practice are not the best choice because Phase II learners have limited ability to apply abstract patterns.

Phase II learners are better able to deal with a standard font size (such as 11 or 12 point) and fonts with serifs (such as Times New Roman or Calibri). It is still very important to pay attention to the amount of white space on the page – pages should be simply laid out and easy to read rather than “cluttered” – and to the images chosen. Photographs are generally easier for LIFE to handle than drawings, although it is also important to build learners’ visual comprehension so that they can “read” drawings as well.

The key features of effective Phase II materials are the vocabulary and the structures used. Phase II learners, although better able to decode and in possession of a larger sight word bank than Foundation Phase and Phase I learners, are still in the process of learning to read. All words they encounter in print should be familiar to them orally. Many Phase II instructors find that they need to create or adapt a large amount of their materials for class. For further information on adapting and creating materials for the ESL literacy classroom, please see Chapter Nine.

Phase II learners are capable of reading standard fonts (with serifs) at standard sizes (11 or 12 pt.), but materials for this Phase should still include clear visuals and lots of white space. Expose learners to different formats, but try not to challenge them in too many new ways at once. If the format is new (columns in a newspaper, for example), keep the language simple and slightly below their reading level.

Suggested materials:

- flashcards and flashcard pocket charts
- guitar, drums, tambourine, etc.
- instructor-made ads, forms, and notices
- simple crossword puzzles to encourage using clues to figure out an answer, finding errors and changing answers, and accurate copying
- games to set up conversation situations and card games with pairs of pictures similar to *Go Fish* prompt questions
- illustrations for discussion: *A Canadian Conversation Book: English in Everyday Life* (Prentice Hall)
- “spot the difference” pictures to focus on differences and detail: *Look again: Pictures for Language Development and Life Skills* (Alta)
- texts with short stories with a lot of human interest: *People Express* (Oxford UP); *Picture Stories: Language and Literacy Activities for Beginners* (Longman); *More Picture Stories: Language and Problem-Posing Activities for Beginners* (Longman); *All New Very Easy True Stories* (Longman); *Easy True Stories* (Longman); *More True Stories* (Longman); *Amazing Canadian Newspaper Stories* (Prentice Hall)
- workbooks, which encourage independent work, although it is difficult to find ideal workbooks for this level. *Expressways: Activity Workbook 1 and 2* (Longman) are possible choices.

See the following pages for examples of materials suitable for Phase II. These materials are available in “clean” copies for photocopying in the back of the handbook. Please feel free to adapt these materials to suit the needs of a particular group of learners. They are examples only and can be changed depending on level, theme, or program outcome.

## All About Me

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. A hobby: \_\_\_\_\_
2. A favourite restaurant: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Something I'm good at: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Something I'm not good at: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where I grew up: \_\_\_\_\_
6. A favourite colour: \_\_\_\_\_
7. A favourite movie/song: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Something in my house: \_\_\_\_\_
9. A place I want to visit: \_\_\_\_\_
10. My favourite food: \_\_\_\_\_

## Tips for Use ▼

Can be modified for all themes and levels

Provides vocabulary and spelling practice

## Reading a Grocery Receipt

## Tips for Use

Exposes learners to a different format

Uses practical vocabulary to teach numeracy

Focuses on attention to detail and careful reading

**Bob's Supermarket**

1220-16 Ave. NW, Calgary, AB

Mar. 15, 2007

1 liquid honey	5.29
2 mangos	3.50
1 tomatoes (carton)	6.99
1 toilet tissue (8 rolls)	7.95
4 orange juice	12.70
Special 2/6.35	
1 green onion	.63
Special 2/1.25	
5 apples	1.42
@ 1.29 / lb.	
1 dozen eggs	3.19
 Subtotal	 41.67
GST 6%	1.12
Total	42.79
Cash	50.00
Change	7.21

Thank You

Please Come Again

Read the cash register receipt. Write short answer to questions.

1. What date was this receipt for? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is this store in the SE? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who was the cashier? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How much is it for one mango? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How much would 2 bunches of green onions cost? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How much are apples per lb? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is the subtotal? \_\_\_\_\_

## Following Instructions

Read the instructions. Complete the activities in the box below

The activity box contains the following elements:

- A horizontal line at the top for writing.
- A simple drawing of a happy face with two dots for eyes and a curved line for a smile.
- A large empty circle on the right side.
- A list of days of the week: Sun. Mon. Tues. Wed. Thurs. Fri. Sat.
- A rectangular box at the bottom left for drawing.

### Tips for Use

Teaches learners attention to detail

Recycles elements from other lessons, in this case dates and days

1. Circle **Thursday** on the list.
2. Write the word **happy** on the right side of the happy face.
3. Cross out **Friday** on the list.
4. Underline **Monday**.
5. In the box, **draw a happy face**.
6. On the line, write the date of Canada's birthday. Write the **month first** and the **date second** in numbers.
7. In the circle, write your **favourite fruit**.
8. Above the circle, write the **number of children** you have.
9. In the **bottom right corner**, write **your first name**.

## The Right Tools for the Job

outlet	ladder	flashlight
screwdriver	hammer	broom
pliers	scissors	plunger
drill		

## Tips for Use

Focuses on meaning of vocabulary words

Sets vocabulary in context

Highly adaptable to other themes

Fill in the blanks with the right tools for the job.

- I need to hang a picture on the wall. Please give me a \_\_\_\_\_ and some \_\_\_\_\_.
- I need to cut up some wood. Please hand me a \_\_\_\_\_.
- I need to make a hole in the wall. Please give me a \_\_\_\_\_.
- It's dark under the hood of the car. I need a \_\_\_\_\_.
- I need to pull out some nails. Can I have a pair of \_\_\_\_\_.
- I need to sweep up some garbage. I have to use a \_\_\_\_\_.
- I have to change the light bulb on the ceiling, but it's too high. I need a \_\_\_\_\_ to climb on.
- The toilet is plugged up. I need a \_\_\_\_\_ to unplug it.
- I need to tighten the leg on the table. Please pass me a \_\_\_\_\_.
- The light isn't working. I need to change the \_\_\_\_\_.
- I have to cut up some paper. Can I borrow your \_\_\_\_\_?
- I need to plug in my computer. Where is the \_\_\_\_\_?

## Classroom Routines for Phase II

Some LIFE begin ESL literacy in Phase II; others have come up through Foundation Phase and Phase I. These learners will be more familiar with classroom learning and expectations, while new learners will need to be taught. In either case, there are things an instructor can do to create a productive learning environment. Phase II learners are better able to sit still and focus on text than Phase I or Foundation Phase learners, but they will still need opportunities to get up, move around, talk, laugh, and otherwise shift gears. The following ideas work well with Phase II learners:

**Change Activities Frequently:** Learners at the Phase II level are still getting used to their roles as adult learners. The instructor should not assume a concentration span of more than a half an hour until familiar with the learners' ability to focus. There should be opportunities to get up and move around. Activities that need quiet concentration or individual work should be alternated with social, collaborative activities.

**Create Classroom Routines:** Set classroom routines are opportunities to model effective learner behaviour. Scheduling has not been an important part of life for many Phase II learners. Taking attendance at the beginning of class illustrates the importance of showing up for class and being on time. If learners expect a specific activity at the beginning of every class, they further understand the importance of being on time.

Scheduling a set time to correct homework encourages completion of those assignments. Short spelling quizzes at the end of the class train learners to stay involved until the very end of the session. Written activities should end with filing papers in the learners' binders and a discussion of appropriate organization. Instructors in the literacy Phases teach organization by being very organized themselves.

**Be Flexible about Deadlines:** The amount of time learners can take to complete written activities must remain fairly flexible, and firm deadlines are counterproductive. Learners are just learning to plan and work systematically. Pressure to complete work quickly will bring frustration and less efficient use of time. Planning and working systematically should be encouraged over speed. Learners who complete work more efficiently should sometimes be given puzzles and activities for an interesting challenge and

*Fareiba is quite shy about speaking English and especially about speaking English with native speakers. She prefers to stay in areas that she considers "safe;" the classroom, her home, and a very few shops in her neighbourhood. As she and her classmates walk around the college with their instructor, and later around the downtown of her city, she grows more familiar with where she lives, and the area where she feels safe grows larger. Her instructor learns that Fareiba has an appointment in a government building; the instructor takes the class for a walk to the building, and shows them what it looks like and where important offices can be found. A few days later, Fareiba is able to go to her appointment alone, increasing her sense of independence and self-confidence.*

other times encouraged to find a useful activity on their own. The classroom routine must not be regimented.

**Be Clear About Collaboration:** Assessment activities should be set up in such a way that “cheating” from a classmate is difficult. The instructor can’t assume that learners understand when collaboration is appropriate and when it is considered cheating. All learners do not have to do identical tasks for assessment, nor do they all need to do assessments at exactly the same moment.

**Organize Binders Together:** Have a set way for the entire group of learners to organize binders, give the learners identical dividers, and make sure that papers are filed appropriately at the end of each written activity. Dividers should be titled, illustrated, and colorful.

**Get Out of the Classroom:** Walk around and read signs, find addresses, identify public buildings, and label simple maps of an area.

LIFE tend to be collaborative learners; they are used to working together in order to accomplish tasks. Many ESL literacy instructors make use of this by encouraging group work and mentorship. However, learners cannot be expected to know when group work and collaboration is inappropriate, such as in testing and assessment situations. They are not necessarily intentionally “cheating.” Explain to learners when they must work on their own, but also construct assessment so that cheating is difficult. Not every learner needs to complete identical assessment tasks at the same time; an easy way to achieve this is to give them the same questions in a different order.

## Sample Theme Unit for Phase II

A theme unit is a series of connected lessons, taught over a longer period of time, from a week to several weeks. There are many advantages to teaching in theme units; it is an excellent way to introduce vocabulary and concepts, and it means that the instructor can recycle outcomes without the lessons feeling repetitive to the learners. For more information on theme units, see Chapter Ten.

In this unit, learners develop skills and strategies necessary for dealing with the health care system in their new country. They move from learning to describe medical problems to making medical appointments to writing a note to excuse a medical absence, either for themselves or for their children.

This is an excellent theme unit for Phase II; it is highly practical, it is full of opportunities to work on the reading and writing outcomes for the level, and it motivates learners by giving them a skill they can use right away. Learners walk away from this unit with tangible evidence of their new learning. It should take one to two weeks of full-time classes to complete this unit.

## Sample Theme Unit for Phase II: Medical Problems

### Introducing the Theme: Describing Medical Problems

#### Reading & Writing Outcomes

- recognize and use simple words for medical procedures, body parts, and internal organs
- read simple accounts of medical problems, and identify the problem and symptoms

#### Speaking & Listening Outcomes

- describe aches and pains: how they feel and where they are located

#### Brief Lesson Descriptions

1. Expand body part vocabulary with interactive flashcard activities and games with peer tutoring. Complete crosswords and label illustrations of body parts. Identify mimed ailments. Read brief stories about injuries.
2. Expand malady and medical treatment vocabulary with interactive flashcard activities and games with peer tutoring. Complete crosswords and label illustrations of new vocabulary. Read brief stories about illnesses. Talk about what it is like to have a cold, the flu, a stomachache, or a sprain.

### Developing the Theme: Making Medical Appointments

#### Reading & Writing Outcomes

- find information about medical facilities in the phone book
- record medical appointment information accurately
- complete a simplified personal medical information form

#### Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes

- make appropriate choices for medical treatment

#### Numeracy Outcomes

- measure height and weight

#### Brief Lesson Descriptions

1. Read and talk about common medical remedies. Identify appropriate choices for medical treatment. Practice finding phone numbers and addresses of medical facilities. Role-play making medical appointments. Listen to and record appointment information.
2. Complete a simplified personal medical information form. Record height and weight.

Final Product: Writing a Note to Excuse a Medical Absence	
<p><b>Reading &amp; Writing Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• write a note explaining an absence for self or child</li> <li>• write a note requesting time off for a medical reason for self or child</li> </ul> <p><b>Speaking &amp; Listening Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain reasons for a medical absence</li> <li>• request time off for a medical absence</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognize excusable absences</li> <li>• recognize need to report absences, need to give advance notice of medical appointments</li> </ul>	<p><b>Brief Lesson Descriptions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify excusable absence situations. Review date and time phrases. Complete a note explaining an absence for self or a child. Make a neat, well formatted copy of the note.</li> <li>2. Identify appropriate ways to schedule appointments. Review date and time phrases. Complete a note requesting time off for an appointment. Make a neat, well formatted copy of the note.</li> </ol>
Tools	
<p><b>New Vocabulary &amp; Concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vocabulary for internal organs, medical procedures, and medical supplies</li> <li>• finding information in the phone book</li> <li>• measuring height and weight</li> <li>• giving concise reasons for absences</li> <li>• giving advance notice for appointments</li> </ul>	<p><b>Language Structures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appropriate use of “is” and “has” in statements of illness and injury</li> <li>• the verb “feel”</li> <li>• the modal “should”</li> <li>• letter salutations and closings</li> <li>• future tense to discuss intentions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resources &amp; Materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A Canadian Conversation Book: English in Everyday Life (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)</i> (Prentice Hall)</li> <li>• <i>People Express</i> (Oxford UP)</li> <li>• <i>Picture Stories: Language and Literacy Activities for Beginners</i> (Longman)</li> <li>• <i>More Picture Stories: Language and Problem-Posing Activities for Beginners</i> (Longman)</li> <li>• <i>Expressways 1</i> (Longman)</li> <li>• <i>Expressways 2</i> (Longman)</li> </ul>	

- *Side by Side 2 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)* (Longman)
- [www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources)
- Instructor-made flashcards and exercises

### **Assessment**

The learners are assessed throughout the unit in their abilities to meet the outcomes. Where suitable, they can choose one or two tasks to be included in their portfolios. For further information on portfolios, please see Chapter Eleven.

## Lesson Planning for Phase II

Lesson planning at Phase II means creating interesting, effective lessons that will engage Phase II learners and help them achieve the outcomes of the class. Lessons are often connected to a wider theme. The first of our sample lesson plans is connected to the sample theme unit; the second is unconnected and gives variety.

In lesson planning for a Phase II class, it is important to think about outcomes and to motivate the learners. At this stage, learners are most often motivated by learning something useful or practical. They want skills that they can use right away in their lives. Instructors can “hook” learners with interesting themes and use these themes to reach the outcomes of the program.

Scaffolding and recycling are critical in a Phase II plan. Vocabulary and phrases are introduced and practiced orally, then seen in print, and then used in a scaffolded writing task, where learners have the support of a template or a model, before moving to more independent writing.

There are several key features to an effective Phase II lesson plan:

- No activity takes longer than 40 minutes.
- More intense activities involving reading and writing are interspersed with activities that involve talking and movement.
- Activities take into account different reading levels within the class; higher-level learners help lower-level learners.
- All vocabulary and expressions are practiced orally before they are used in writing.
- The activities draw on learners’ previous knowledge and give them highly practical, useful skills.

Sample Lesson Plan for Phase II: Medical Problems

Part of Theme: Introducing the Theme

Level: Phase II Developing

Lesson Objectives:

- recognize and use vocabulary for body parts and basic internal organs
- identify the placement of basic internal organs
- identify the function of basic internal organs
- read a short story about a medical problem and identify main idea and details

Timing	Activity Description
15 minutes	<b>Build Word Wall:</b> Greet learners. Introduce the topic. Brainstorm vocabulary for body parts and internal organs. Create a word wall (preferably that can stay up for the length of the unit). Write vocabulary on pieces of card. As a class, categorize the words into “Body Parts” and “Internal Organs.”
10 minutes	<b>Internal Organs Flashcards:</b> Break learners into small groups. Hand out a set of internal organ flashcards to each group. These should be in the shape of the word and be to scale, i.e. the lungs card should look like lungs, the heart card should look like a real heart, etc. The names of these organs are written on the back of each card. Have learners quiz each other.
15 minutes	<b>Location of Internal Organs:</b> As a class, discuss where these internal organs are in the body. Draw an outline of a person on the board and tape a set of flashcards into the correct locations. Reinforce this with overlapping overheads on the projector (one overhead has an outline of a person, the next adds the heart, the next the kidneys, etc.).
20 minutes	<b>Creating a Model:</b> Learners return to their groups. One learner volunteers to lie down on a large piece of paper. Another learner traces that person to get an outline. Referring to the model on the board, learners tape their flashcards in the correct places in the body. Tape to the wall next to the word wall.

10 minutes	<b>Labeling a Diagram:</b> Hand out a diagram of the human body to each learner. It should match the overhead. Each learner uses their model to label the diagram.
25 minutes	<b>Function of Internal Organs:</b> What does each internal organ do? Discuss as a class. Break into small groups. Hand out sentence chunks on card with subjects and predicates related to organ function, e.g. “My kidneys” and “clean my blood.” Have learners organize these into sentences. Remind learners to use grammatical clues, such as plural subjects must go with plural verbs. Once learners have organized the sentences, hand out a cloze exercise to each learner. They must fill in the correct body part in each sentence.
25 minutes	<b>Reading:</b> Hand out a simple short story about a medical problem. Read together as a class, then individually. In pairs, learners retell the story to each other. Give each learner a highlighter. Have them highlight body parts and internal organs in the text. Discuss the main idea in the story. Ask questions about details.

## Sample Lesson Plan for Phase II: Household Problems

Part of Theme: Developing the Theme

Level: Phase II Developing

Lesson Objectives:

- recognize and use vocabulary for identifying household problems
- read (with support) an unformatted text on a household problem
- write a note to a landlord using a template

Timing	Activity Description
15 minutes	<b>Discuss Household Problems:</b> Greet learners. Introduce the topic. Discuss household problems that the learners have had. Discuss how the problems were resolved. Discuss picture illustrations of common household problems. Elicit appropriate vocabulary from the learners.
15 minutes	<b>Household Problems Reading Match-Up:</b> Divide class into two groups, giving the better readers pictures of household problems and the others flashcards with phrases identifying the problem. The learners find partners so they can match pictures to the appropriate flashcards. The matching pictures and phrases are displayed in a flashcard pocket chart.
25 minutes	<b>Supported Reading:</b> Present a story about someone solving an ongoing household problem by contacting a government agency. Preview difficult vocabulary, discuss the illustration, and predict the events in the story. The learners read the story independently, stopping after each paragraph to discuss what they have understood and if it follows their predictions.
10 minutes	<b>Discussion on Dealing with Landlords:</b> Discuss effective ways to deal with landlords who don't fix problems that are health hazards, with reference to the story they have just read. Discuss the effectiveness of putting the complaint in writing and mention that the next step would be contacting the health authority.
15 minutes	<b>Oral Practice:</b> Learners get into groups to practice stating household problems with a simple "Household Problems" card game.
40 minutes	<b>Writing Letters from a Template:</b> Go over a template for a brief letter to a landlord about an ongoing household complaint that mentions the problem and future recourse to the health authority. Learners choose a problem and complete a letter, referring to the flashcard pocket chart for appropriate phrases. The instructor helps when needed.

## Conclusions

Phase II is a time of great development in the nuts and bolts of ESL literacy. It is during this Phase that learners move from reading and writing words and short sentences to reading and writing simple paragraphs. They develop their reading skills from an awareness of meaning at the level of words to an awareness of meaning across a text, and they gain the skills to apply their new knowledge of English and literacy to their everyday lives: in the home, at school, in the workplace, with their families, and in the community. Learners at the end of Phase II – learners who are ready to transition into Phase III – are considerably more independent than they were when they entered Phase II. They are able to take some responsibility for their own learning and have skills that are directly relevant to their lives.

The best choice for the next step following Phase II is nearly always a Phase III class. A dedicated Phase III class, or a mixed level class with some material specifically targeted to Phase III, allows learners to continue in their development in both literacy and the English language in a supported environment. However, this is not possible in situations where there are no Phase III classes available, or where there is some barrier to the learner entering a Phase III class. Other good solutions for next steps are based on the needs of the learner: for example, some learners may benefit from entering a career- or job-focused program, which provides the skills necessary to work in a specific field. Other learners may be ready to enter mainstream ESL.

*Ali, Aziza, Husain, and Fareiba work hard in their Phase II class, meeting the challenges of the classroom – increasing their sight word vocabulary, learning to decode phonetically, and working towards writing sentences independently – as well as their lives outside of school. Each learner achieves slightly different things during their time in Phase II. Ali works with learning to focus and builds his understanding of sound-letter correspondence, which helps him with both reading and spelling. Aziza does very well when her personal life doesn't interrupt her learning; she is bright and quick and has a good future in ESL literacy. Husain begins to take more risks and through this increases his skills and his independence. Fareiba struggles with speaking but makes great strides forward with reading and writing. After one or two semesters at Phase II, all four learners move on to Phase III.*

# Chapter 16 Outline

The Phase III Learner

The CLB Literacy Phases

Introduction: Phase III

When is a Learner Ready for Phase III?

Phase III Outcomes

Approaches and Activities for Phase III

Materials for Phase III

Classroom Routines for Phase III

Sample Theme Unit for Phase III

Lesson Planning for Phase III

Sample Lesson Plans for Phase III

Conclusions



# Phase III

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## Objectives

**To recognize Phase III learners and their skills and needs**

**To identify the outcomes and expectations for Phase III**

**To share effective practices in the Phase III classroom**

## Learner Profile: Phase III

An at-a-glance profile of adult ESL literacy learners at Phase III  
All skills are measured according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks and  
the Canadian Language Benchmark Literacy Phases

Years of Formal Education	Reading and Writing Skills	Range of Listening and Speaking	Range of Numeracy
6-10 or previous ESL literacy	Phase III	CLB 3-6	Phase I-beyond Phase III
Typical Age Range		Gender	
adults of all ages, but mostly in their 20s and 30s		usually fairly balanced	
Common Challenges in the Classroom	Common Strengths in the Classroom	Common Barriers to Learning	
increasing use of formal learning strategies becoming independent learners developing abstract vocabulary developing accuracy and attention to detail taking responsibility for learning	collaborative learning prior practical knowledge survival skills often highly motivated to learn viewing education as a privilege	poverty lack of adequate housing lack of childcare lack of transportation some ability to access help issues may be serious before learner receives help	
Typical Social and Political Background		Indicators a Learner is Ready for Phase III	
learner can come from any country in the world rural villages or urban areas oral or literate societies learner may have spent time in refugee camps or in additional countries before immigrating learner may have experienced war, famine, displacement, poverty, or social or political unrest		learner can copy accurately learner can read and understand a simple paragraph on a familiar topic learner can find information in a variety of formatted texts learner can recognize a relatively large bank of sight words, 600+	
Typical Educational Background		learner can consistently use capital letters and sentence-end punctuation marks learner can write simple sentences with few errors learner can write a simple paragraph on a familiar topic learner can fill out a form with 10-15 items	
6-10 years of formal education formal education has been interrupted or cut short any previous formal education may have been in a second language any previous educational setting may have lacked resources, facilities, or educated teachers			

## The CLB Literacy Phases

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) has published two documents that provide a set of outcomes for ESL and ESL literacy learners in Canada. The first document, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language for Adults*, divides language learning into twelve different levels, called Benchmarks, in four different skill areas: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This document is NOT intended for use with Learners with Interrupted Formal Education; it assumes a previous formal education, even at the lowest benchmarks. The second CCLB document, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (the CLB Literacy Document), focuses on ESL literacy and LIFE. It sets outcomes for four different levels, called Phases, in three different skill areas: reading, writing, and numeracy. ESL literacy programs who use this document measure their learners' levels by using the Phases for reading, writing, and literacy, and by using the Benchmarks for listening and speaking. Each Phase can further be broken down into Initial, Developing, and Adequate stages, and it is important to note that the difference among the stages is considerable.

At Bow Valley College, we use the CLB Literacy Document and the literacy Phases in our ESL literacy programs. There are two clear advantages to this document: there has been a considerable amount of material produced by the CCLB to support the Benchmarks and the Phases, and this is a national standard, so learners can more easily “transport” their education from one institution to another or from one province to another. We strongly recommend that any Canadian ESL literacy program look into using the CLB Literacy Document in their program. If you are not familiar with the CLB literacy Phases, Section Three of the handbook can still be useful to you; it provides a thorough introduction to ESL literacy at each of the four Phases, which are equally applicable to learners of different levels no matter what the levels are called (Foundation Phase, Phase I, Phase II, Phase III; Beginner, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Advanced; ESL literacy 1,2,3,4, etc.).

## Introduction: Phase III

Phase III is the last of the literacy Phases as defined by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, and Phase III learners have the most advanced literacy skills of all Learners with Interrupted Formal Education. Since they have stronger literacy skills and often speak at a relatively high level, they are also the ESL literacy learners most likely to be overlooked and (mis)placed in either mainstream ESL classes or mainstream Adult Basic Education. However, to place these learners in the mainstream, and particularly without additional literacy and/or ESL support, is to do them a disservice. Many Phase III learners have come up through literacy programs and continue to need to develop their literacy skills; others enter the program at Phase III with a stronger academic background, with generally around eight to ten years of education, but still lack the skills and the strategies necessary to thrive in the mainstream. Mainstream ESL classes tend to move too quickly for most Phase III learners, while mainstream ABE classes do not give them the language support they need. Phase III programs recognize that ESL literacy learners require long-term continued support as they simultaneously develop their literacy skills and their abilities in spoken English.

Phase III learners, indeed like all LIFE, come from extremely diverse backgrounds, and have diverse needs and goals. LIFE in Phase III typically have between six and ten years of education in their native language, although learners who have transitioned from Phase II may have less formal education. In many cases, LIFE have been educated in a second language, not their native language, such as speakers of a number of African languages who receive some education in Arabic. As is the case with all LIFE, this education has often been interrupted or cut short by war, famine, displacement, or changing political climate, and/or characterized by a lack of resources. Phase III learners can have a wide variety of goals, from settlement to employment to further education, and these goals should be kept in mind when developing a course.

Learners enter Phase III with a sight word bank of around 600 words or more, and an ability to read most simple prose, understand a variety of formatted text, and write paragraphs on familiar subjects with basic control over structure and spelling. Over the course of Phase III, learners are moving towards increased use of strategies for learning, reading, and writing; independent study skills and the ability to take responsibility for their own learning; a more abstract understanding of structure; and the development of abstract vocabulary as well as the conceptual knowledge behind that vocabulary. It is still important to note, however, that throughout Phase III, the context for all learning should be personally relevant to the learners, and instructor support and guidance is almost always necessary. The most important things a learner can take away from Phase III are a variety of strategies for reading, writing, and learning, and an increased ability to learn independently.

# Khadir's Story

## **A Phase III learner**

*At first glance, Khadir looks like he is well into his sixties, but he is actually about 45. Originally from Afghanistan, he also lived in Tajikistan and Russia before coming to Canada. Khadir completed high school in Afghanistan; however, he is struggling immensely with learning English and his education has gaps. Khadir has good problem-solving skills, a very intelligent, dry sense of humour, and a particular desire to be treated as an adult.*

*Khadir has a wife and six children. He is on a waiting list for subsidized housing, but because of his large family and subsidized housing regulations, he must wait for one of the very few five-bedroom subsidized homes in the city to become available. In addition, Khadir suffers from recurring nightmares and severe headaches as a result of past trauma. There are days when he tells his instructor that he simply cannot think.*

*Khadir speaks at a CLB 5, although he has many near-fossilized structural errors in his spoken English. One of his greatest issues in learning English is his lack of strategies for approaching words he does not understand. His approach to learning English is to keep very long lists of vocabulary words with their translation into Farsi. He stares at these lists whenever he gets the chance but rarely attempts to use them in speaking or writing.*

*As a reader, Khadir is very slow, and seems to be translating into Farsi as he goes. He works entirely from the bottom-up, trying to assemble all the meaning of the text from the meaning of individual words, and does not use very many top-down reading strategies, such as prediction, the use of format or pictures, or guessing from context. If he comes across a word he does not understand, he tends to lose the meaning of the entire sentence. Khadir has slightly stronger writing skills than reading skills, but the structural errors that are evident in his speech are also present in his writing, and his writing shows evidence of translation from Farsi.*

*During the semester, Khadir makes good progress with Phase III tasks as his instructor gently guides him away from his lists and into more authentic speaking and listening situations. Khadir also learns some strategies for dealing with words he doesn't know. He is surprised and pleased to discover that there are many things he can try before reaching for a dictionary.*

## When is a Learner Ready for Phase III?

In general terms, a learner who is ready to enter Phase III is capable of reading and comprehending most simple, familiar prose; understanding a variety of charts, graphs, forms, and other formatted text; writing simple paragraphs on familiar subjects with basic control of structure and spelling, and with some organization. Phase III learners have some overt strategy use and are becoming increasingly independent, although instructor support is still required in almost all areas.

Learners are ready for Phase III when they can write simple sentences with fairly good control over spelling, punctuation, and structure, and they can string these sentences together into basic paragraphs. Similarly, learners ready to enter Phase III can read and comprehend simple paragraphs on familiar topics.

Although the literacy Phases do not specifically mention listening and speaking skills, these are also critically important to the development of learners' ability in English as well as their development in literacy. Since ESL literacy learners generally move from oral to written ability, their reading and writing are never better than their oral skills. This means that a learner who is ready to enter Phase III must have a wide enough vocabulary and a strong enough sense of the structures of spoken English to support this development. Most learners who enter Phase III are CLB 4-6 in speaking and listening.

It is important to note that while learners might be Phase III in reading and writing, this rarely means that they are Phase III in numeracy. A Phase III learner in reading and writing can be anywhere from Phase I to beyond Phase III in numeracy. However, if learners are ready to enter Phase III in numeracy, they can understand numbers found in texts, perform basic operations with ease, understand money management and banking services, and read and construct charts and graphs.

*Nyanath is a Sudanese woman in her thirties. She came to Canada three years ago with her four children; Canada is their third country since leaving Sudan. She began ESL literacy in Phase II and is now in Phase III Initial. Nyanath sees education as an immense privilege. She completes all her homework and struggles to understand each lesson, although she does not always understand the purpose of what she is learning. She is methodical and conscientious, but if she is faced with a new format or task, she requires extensive support from the instructor. This means that she has difficulty with much of the reading material in the class. She can decode individual words, but has difficulty comprehending the meaning of an entire text. Nyanath is doing very well with her writing; she is a slow, methodical writer who favors short, simple sentences, but she has a good understanding of form and rarely makes structural errors. She seems to write best when she has complete control over content. Nyanath is a clear example of a Phase III Initial learner.*

## Phase III Outcomes

Outcomes describe what learners are able to do when they complete a unit, level, or program. The CLB Literacy Document provides a list of outcomes for each Phase, as well as conditions for these outcomes. When working with these outcomes, or basing classroom outcomes on the CLB Literacy Document, it is essential to recognize the conditions as well. The conditions describe in what circumstances a learner will be able to complete an outcome and are just as critical as the outcomes themselves. Conditions may state, for example, how much support is allowed and required from the instructor, how long a text should be for reading, or how relevant and familiar a topic should be for writing. At all literacy Phases, conditions ask for considerable instructor support and familiar circumstances for all reading and writing tasks.

Specific outcomes for any Phase III class should be in line with the general goals of Phase III. Phase III learners are moving towards increased use of strategies in reading, writing, and learning; an increased understanding of abstract concepts; a sight word bank of 1000 words or more; an ability to write a variety of formatted and unformatted texts; the ability to read and understand most familiar formatted and unformatted texts; and strategies for approaching anything that is unfamiliar. Outcomes do not change significantly across the Initial, Developing, and Adequate stages of Phase III, but the complexity of the language involved and the level of instructor support do, as learners become comfortable with increasingly complicated language and become more independent. Outcomes should also be in line with the direct needs of the learners.

*Amira, a young woman from Ethiopia who now lives with two of her brothers in a basement suite, is an eager and motivated learner and reads extensively in her spare time but has great difficulty with her writing. She tends to use extremely short sentences and sentence fragments. In addition, Amira struggles with spelling, often spelling words in several different ways in the same paragraph. Her instructor finds that a dialogue journal and a spelling dictionary, created by Amira and her instructor, are excellent ways to help with her writing. Amira gets practice in putting her thoughts into writing and gradually builds a feel for a correct English sentence. Her instructor gives the class models to follow when learning to write a paragraph, and Amira is able to meet the outcomes for her class.*

The CLB Literacy Document sets outcomes in three areas: reading, writing (including reading and writing strategies), and numeracy. Depending on the program, instructors may choose to set outcomes in other areas as well, including learning strategies, vocabulary, and life skills. In the following chart, there are examples of outcomes in each of these areas. There are hundreds of possible outcomes to set in a program; this chart provides samples to give an idea of what outcomes look like at this level. For more information on setting outcomes, please see Chapter Three.

## Sample Outcomes for Phase III

Reading	Writing	Vocabulary	Numeracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use knowledge of phonics to decode unfamiliar words</li> <li>• identify the main idea and supporting details of a text</li> <li>• locate a piece of information on a schedule</li> <li>• read and follow directions</li> <li>• find locations on a simple map and follow directions to a specific location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• copy with a high degree of accuracy</li> <li>• convey a message such as a thank you note, invitation, email, birthday card, etc.</li> <li>• fill in a form with up to 25 items</li> <li>• write a paragraph about the past or the future</li> <li>• write a paragraph that expresses an opinion</li> <li>• write a text from a simple dictation</li> <li>• record information on processes or instructions, such as a recipe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognize and comprehend a sight word bank of about 1000 words</li> <li>• recognize and use some abstract vocabulary</li> <li>• alter a familiar root word to fit the structure of a sentence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make change</li> <li>• pronounce large numbers correctly</li> <li>• perform multi-digit operations</li> <li>• use language and numbers to describe time and temperature</li> <li>• compare costs, temperatures, and measurements</li> <li>• create and use a simple budget for a family</li> </ul>
Reading Strategy	Writing Strategy	Learning Strategy	Life Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use pictures and format to understand a text</li> <li>• use prediction to aid comprehension</li> <li>• identify whether a statement is fact or opinion</li> <li>• use context to guess the meaning of new words</li> <li>• identify the author's purpose</li> <li>• identify cause and effect</li> <li>• reach conclusions based on inference</li> <li>• identify organization of a text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use knowledge of oral language to improve writing</li> <li>• alter tone and message depending on the audience</li> <li>• use a methodical writing process to write a text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask for help when needed</li> <li>• plan time effectively to complete tasks in class and meet deadlines for homework</li> <li>• self-correct</li> <li>• organize school papers and books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask for help before a problem becomes a crisis</li> <li>• access medical care, legal advice, and financial help when needed</li> <li>• plan to prevent future problems</li> <li>• avoid unwanted applications and subscriptions</li> <li>• understand credit and manage credit cards</li> </ul>

## Approaches and Activities for Phase III

An ideal Phase III classroom is a very dynamic place, where the instructor responds to the needs and the interests of the learners, and the learners are constantly challenged, while receiving the support they need to meet those challenges. In a Phase III classroom, learners should be encouraged to work and think as independently as possible, to problem-solve, and to take responsibility for their own learning. To encourage this, consider:

**Fluency Writing:** Learners at this level need time to write, preferably uninterrupted time, provided in class. Learning to write well happens with lots and lots of actual writing practice, just like learning to swim happens in the water. Fluency writing is different from the sort of writing that is taken in and corrected; an instructor may respond to fluency writing, but the instructor does not correct grammatical

mistakes or spelling. The point of fluency writing is the practice in forming ideas in words on paper. Some instructors are concerned that this reinforces mistakes, but there is actually very

little evidence that returning work to learners with corrections has an effect on their writing. This is particularly true with LIFE; immediate oral feedback is far more effective than comments made in pen a few days later. One form of fluency writing that is extremely effective at this level is a dialogue journal. For more information on fluency writing, please see Chapter Eight.

Make writing correction effective. Many traditional teaching practices encourage the instructor to correct writing and return it to learners a day or two later. Learners are expected to read the corrections and apply them to future situations. This is not very effective when working with LIFE; instead, choose to focus on one or two kinds of errors for each learner. Highlight these errors and give time in class for editing. Allow learners to draw on any resource they have to fix these errors themselves – the instructor, dictionaries, their notes, or other learners. Learners are far more likely to internalize the correct form this way.

*Ba Htoo is a Karen man from Burma. He has been in Canada for four months with his wife and two pre-school sons. His only formal education was in a refugee camp over the Thai border, but he has progressed very quickly through the levels of ESL literacy and now is in Phase III. Ba Htoo struggles with reading at this level because of his limited vocabulary, but he is better at writing than he is at reading, probably because he can control the topic. He enjoys writing in his journal very much, and mostly chooses to write about his experiences before he came to Canada. He tends to retell the same stories, but he increases detail with each telling. He has less control over structure, especially tenses, but he attempts complex sentence patterns and is very willing to take risks.*

**Have Learners Edit their own Mistakes:** When learners hand in a piece of writing for correction, choose one or two specific kinds of errors to focus on and highlight these rather than correcting every single spelling, punctuation, usage, or structural error. Give the learners a chance in class to correct these errors themselves, drawing on any resource, including the instructor, dictionaries, notes, and each other. This technique dramatically improves learners' ability to identify and correct their own errors, as well as stop making them in the first place.

**Reading for Pleasure:** Whether you build up a classroom or school library or make regular trips to the public library, build reading for pleasure into the course. You might want to choose a series of books intended for adult ESL learners rather than books for children or young adults. These books can be very helpful in practicing reading strategies, learning new vocabulary, increasing reading speed, learning content matter and new concepts, and, above all, allowing learners to follow their interests in reading. The key to this kind of reading is pleasure; discuss the novels, write about the novels, learn from the novels, but avoid tests or other activities that will put pressure on the reading.

**Teach Writing from Models:** Create models of the kind of writing you are teaching your learners. Remember that many LIFE favour concrete examples and learning by doing, rather than listening to an abstract explanation. Begin with a model, then allow the class to write a guided sample together with the instructor acting as scribe, before expecting learners to write something individually.

**Have Learners Copy Notes from the Board to Make their own Textbook:** For LIFE, reading textbooks as a method of learning content is often very ineffective. These learners should be learning to read, not reading to learn. Instead, teach any new material orally. When learners are comfortable with the material, write notes on the whiteboard which the learners can copy into a notebook. In this way, the learners learn the concepts before working with print, get practice in copying, have a much better chance of internalizing the information that is contained in the notes, get involved in creating their own textbook which they can keep and read again, learn organizational strategies, and build self-esteem.

*Amira is a bright young woman typical of a Phase III class. She has had very few opportunities to study formally in her life. She loves attending school, reads voraciously outside of class time, and enjoys puzzles, quizzes, and games – anything her instructor can think of to challenge her active mind. She is curious and seems to absorb information like a sponge.*

**Teach Language Structure and Grammar Effectively:** Keep grammar real. You can overtly teach grammar and sentence structure, especially in Phase III, but do it in a way that keeps learners generating their own sentences using their own vocabulary. Often, traditional grammar textbooks and workbooks use vocabulary or situations with which the learners are unfamiliar. When teaching grammar, limit the lesson to grammar, and allow the learners to generate the

vocabulary and situations. For example, in teaching learners the present continuous, you can ask them to name five things that are happening in the classroom right now, e.g. *Sakina is laughing, the computer screen is blinking, the instructor is scratching her nose, Deng is looking at his cell phone, Anab is writing in her book*, etc. Words written on cards and given to the learner to arrange is a good way of teaching all elements required in a structure, including the often-missed auxiliary verbs.

**Use Word Games and Puzzles:** Simple (and then increasingly difficult) word games and puzzles are excellent ways to practice spelling, accuracy, and using clues to guess meaning, as well as strategies such as process of elimination, logic, and deductive reasoning. Sudoku is a wonderful tool for building logic.

**Set High Expectations and Provide Lots of Support:** Learners in Phase III, like all literacy learners, and perhaps all learners of any kind, need to build their confidence. Do your best to show your learners that they are learning. Choose activities that have high expectations but are also highly supported so that they can achieve success. Break larger tasks into smaller pieces.

**Let Them Learn from their Mistakes:** The end product of teaching is learning, not a final assessment. Let learners learn from their mistakes; encourage them to study tests or assignments to understand what they did well and where they need to improve, then give them the chance to try again if they want (or, if they would rather, try again on the next task). Learners who have the opportunity to learn from mistakes often do considerably better when faced with new tests or tasks.

**Overtly Teach Strategies:** Make the use of strategies transparent and overt. Draw learners' attention to strategies when they are using them or when they could be using them. Choose one or two strategies to focus on at a time and build from there, continuing to draw their attention to the strategies they have already learned. For more information on strategies, please see Chapter Eight.

**Use Creative Repetition, or Spiralic Learning:** Repeat skills and strategies, building on what you have learned before, using a new theme or topic. Be careful, however, that this repetition does not feel boring; keep changing the nature of the task or the topic, so that something is always new and different.

## Materials for Phase III

Learners in Phase III are better able to handle commercially-produced mainstream ESL materials than any of the lower Phases, but selecting, adapting, and using materials in this level still requires extra thought and preparation. Choose reading texts that are interesting, relevant, and that focus on developing reading strategies. Phase III learners are working on several different skills over the Phase, and it is a very good idea to choose materials that target only one of these skills at a time. If you want to work on a specific strategy, such as inference, choose a text with relatively easy vocabulary so that learners aren't distracted by trying to decode. If you want to teach learners to guess from context, choose a text that has several new words, but where the rest of the language is straightforward. It is not possible to guess the meaning of a new word from context unless you know about 90% of the words in a text. When teaching writing, models are highly effective. Most of these will probably need to be instructor-created in order to model exactly what you want to teach.

There is no need to alter the font size or type in Phase III; learners should be able to handle fonts with serifs and can read smaller type. However, it is still a good idea to make instructions for a task very clear, especially if learners are expected to read and understand the instructions without going through them orally. Additionally, try to eliminate too much clutter on a page. Expose learners to various formats, such as the columns in a newspaper, but remember not to expect learners to take in too much new material at once. If the format is new, then keep the language relatively easy and accessible. For more information on creating and adapting materials, please see Chapter Nine.

A spelling dictionary is an excellent resource for Phase III learners. This is a small notebook for each learner with a page for each letter of the alphabet. Learners add words to the notebook that they find difficult to spell and are encouraged to refer to the book as a support for writing. Learners who complete a task quickly can also spend time with their spelling dictionaries, practicing their own challenging words.

Suggested materials:

- *Basic Reading Power, Reading Power, More Reading Power, Advanced Reading Power* (Longman)
- *Canadian Concepts 3-5* (Prentice Hall)
- *Milestones in Reading B-D* (Curriculum Associates)
- *What a Life!* series (Longman)
- *What a World!* series (Longman)

- instructor-created materials, including writing models, worksheets, notes on structure, stories, flashcards, manipulatives, crossword puzzles, word searches, codes, etc.
- *Penguin Easy Readers*, Levels 3-5 (Penguin)

See the following pages for examples of materials suitable for Phase III. These materials are available in “clean” copies for photocopying in the back of the handbook. Please feel free to adapt these materials to suit the needs of a particular group of learners. They are examples only and can be changed depending on level, theme, or program outcome.

Vocabulary: Find and Define

TASK: Use the dictionary to find the meaning of these words. Write a sentence for each word.

**Tips for Use** ▼

- Can be modified for all themes or an increase in complexity
- Provides vocabulary and dictionary use
- Encourages learners to put vocabulary into context

**1. lawyer**

**3. crime**

**4. judge**

**5. illegal**

Here are my sentences:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## My Pleasure Reading Log

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Start page: \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Time: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

End page: \_\_\_\_\_

## Tips for Use ▼

Although pleasure reading should be for *pleasure* only, this gives learners some support and gauges learner response

Guides learners toward reading strategies

## My Reading Response Paragraph...

I'd like to write one paragraph about:

- what I like so far
- what I don't like
- new words I learned and what they mean
- a character that I find interesting (description)
- what is happening in the story (the plot)
- how the story is like something I have experienced
- what I think might happen next

### Model Paragraph: Expressing an Opinion

**Instructions:** Read the paragraph. Underline the topic sentence and the concluding sentence. Write your own paragraph with a topic sentence and a concluding sentence. Use this paragraph as a model.

#### Tips for Use

Paragraph development for higher literacy Phases

Uses vocabulary specific to lesson objectives

### Wonderful Calgary

Calgary is a really nice place to live. There are several reasons for this: the weather is beautiful and sunny, there are lots of jobs, and the mountains are close by. First, the weather in Calgary is beautiful and sunny. Many newcomers to Canada think that Calgary is cold, but at least the sun is shining. Calgary gets more days of sunshine each year than any other city in Canada. Second, there are lots of opportunities in Calgary. Many companies are hiring and it is fairly easy to find a job. If you walk down the street, you will see many places have “hiring” signs in the window. Third, the beautiful Rocky Mountains are less than an hour away from Calgary. You can see the mountains on a clear day from anywhere in the city, and there are lots of fun things to do in the mountains. You can go for a hike, enjoy photography, go mountain biking, or take a ride in the gondola and see the spectacular views. Calgary really is a great place to live.

## Tips for Use ▼

Presenting both sides for opinion practice

Layout models writing expectation for student submissions

## Model Paragraph: Expressing an Opinion

Instructions: Read the paragraph. Underline the topic sentence, concluding sentence. Answer the questions about the paragraph.

### A Big City with Big Problems

Although many people are moving to Calgary from all over Canada, the city has many problems. It is not a nice place to live. There is too much traffic, it is too expensive, and it is getting dangerous. First, there is a real problem with traffic in the city. Calgary has grown quickly in the last ten years, so there are many more cars on the roads. Rush hour lasts longer each day and many people find that they are stuck in traffic for hours. Deerfoot Trail, what is supposed to be a fast route through the city, can be very slow for many hours each day. Second, Calgary is very expensive. The cost of rent has skyrocketed in recent years, in many cases doubling or even tripling. Buying a house is not better; Calgary now has some of the most expensive houses in Canada. Third, as the city grows, crime is growing too. There are more and more murders in Calgary and the chief of police recently warned the city of a possible gang war. Calgary is becoming a big city, and getting big city problems.

1. Does the author like Calgary?

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2. Name two reasons why the author feels this way.

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3. Do you agree with the author? Why or why not?

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## Classroom Routines for Phase III

Phase III learners may have had up to ten years of formal education, although this education has often been interrupted; thus they are usually quite comfortable with the expectations of the classroom. They might not know the specific conventions of education in their new country, but these can generally be cleared up through a class discussion that compares teachers, classrooms, schools, and education systems in different countries. For example, many learners will not be comfortable with the Canadian convention of calling an instructor in an adult education setting (such as ESL literacy) by his or her first name. Conventions such as making space for others in a crowded room, watching the instructor, and facing the board, however, are generally understood and followed. Learners are also likely to bring the necessary materials with them to class, such as pens, binder, books, etc., although some will need to be reminded. It is usually a good idea to overtly teach organization strategies for sorting their handouts and notes in their binders. Routines that are effective at Phase III teach learners to be increasingly independent and to take responsibility for their own learning. The following ideas work well at Phase III:

*Ba Htoo seems to learn best with a pen in his hand; he takes notes when the instructor is speaking (almost unheard of in the rest of the class) and he likes it when the instructor organizes new information in charts or diagrams. He is a very visual learner and his writing is progressing faster than his speaking. Nyanath, on the other hand, finds reading a challenge and needs to hear things in order to remember them. She has learned this way her entire life, listening to her mother, father, and extended family, and watching what they did. Amira is active and learns best by moving and doing; her instructor likes to send her on information hunts around the classroom, where she compares her answers with her classmates in order to find the best response. It is the instructor's challenge to meet the needs of all of these learners.*

**Change Activities Fairly Often:** While Phase III learners are better able to sit for long periods of time and concentrate on one thing than in the other Phases, it is still a good idea to change activities fairly often, interspersing challenging written work with an activity that allows learners to talk and move around. Most Phase III learners should not have to focus on an activity for longer than 30-45 minutes.

**Be Aware of Learning Styles:** Not all learners learn in the same way. Many LIFE are aural learners or kinesthetic learners rather than visual learners. Include activities that appeal to these learning styles as well.

**Keep a File for Missed Handouts:** Encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning. Keep a file box in the classroom with a file for each day of the week. If a learner misses a class, put his or her name on any missed material and put it in the file for the appropriate day. Teach learners it is their responsibility to check for materials they missed.

**Build Time in Class for Reading and Writing:** Don't assume that learners have enough quiet time for reading and writing outside of class, and don't assign the majority of reading and writing to be done as homework. Give learners time in class to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to work on their reading and writing in a quiet, supported environment.

**Homework Should be Review and Practice Only:** Keep homework tasks simple. Learning should be done in the classroom, with considerable instructor support available. Homework tasks should practice things that have already been learned, to reinforce skills and strategies, and to build confidence.

**Set Up Rules, Guidelines, and Routines:** Teach routine by following a routine. Set up and enforce rules (such as mutual respect for the instructor and all learners), guidelines (such as no cell phones), and routines (such as phoning the instructor if you are going to miss class). This helps learners understand the structure and expectations of the Canadian educational system.

Give learners time in class for reading and writing. Learners need support for both of these skills and need a supported environment. Don't assume that they have a quiet place outside of class.

**Help Learners Learn Organization:** Help learners put together binders with dividers to keep their papers organized. After completing a task, as a group file the papers in the appropriate sections.

## Sample Theme Unit for Phase III

A theme unit is a series of connected lessons, taught over a longer period of time, from a week to several weeks. There are many advantages to teaching in theme units; it is an excellent way to introduce vocabulary and concepts, and it means that the instructor can recycle outcomes without the lessons feeling repetitive to the learners. For more information on theme units, see Chapter Ten.

In this unit, learners read short biographies and then produce a biography or autobiography of their own, type it on the computer, publish it in a self-made book, and share it with other classes. The learners move from reading a biography of a historical figure to reading an instructor-made autobiography (as a model) to writing their own autobiographies.

This is an example of an effective unit for a Phase III class because it is a little bit different from the kinds of units that are often taught in lower-level ESL literacy classes, and because it involves a series of projects that are increasingly challenging. Learners are motivated to take part in the unit by a personal desire to discuss their own lives or the lives of people they admire, giving them an opportunity to practice their reading, writing, and strategy use, especially sequencing. Seeing their life stories in print, alongside the biographies of historical figures they have read, increases self-confidence and the sense of worth of their lives and reinforces the value of the written word.

This unit is appropriate for Phase III Developing, although it can be adjusted up or down, and should take at least two weeks of full-time class to complete.

## Sample Theme Unit for Phase III: Life Stories

### Introducing the Theme: Reading and Summarizing Life Stories

#### Reading & Writing Outcomes

- read a simple two-page biography; identify main idea and details
- summarize the biography

#### Speaking & Listening Outcomes

- retell a story orally

#### Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes

- sequence
- predict
- identify main idea
- identify details
- summarize
- recognize life stories as a valid subject for writing

#### Brief Lesson Descriptions

1. Introduce the idea of life stories. Brainstorm whose stories are “worth” telling (historical figures, leaders, etc.) Suggest that everyone’s life is worth recording and has value for someone (grandparents telling their stories to children, etc.) Brainstorm what events should be recorded in a biography.
2. Present a short biography of a historical figure. Predict what will be included. Have a learner read the biography aloud. Give time to read the biography silently. Have learners find and underline sequencing and time words. Brainstorm these words on the board. Have the learners retell the story to each other.
3. Discuss the difference between important ideas and events and less important details. In groups, have the learners brainstorm the main ideas of the biography. Share these as a class and discuss. Put the main events/ideas on the board.
4. Have the learners write a summary of the biography. Share and compare. Revise, edit, and make a good copy.

### Developing the Theme: Creating a Timeline

#### Reading & Writing Outcomes

- read a simple two-page autobiography; identify main idea and details
- create a timeline for the main events of the biography
- create a timeline for the major events in own life

#### Speaking & Listening Outcomes

- tell major experiences in life

#### Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes

- sequence
- predict

#### Numeracy Outcomes

- represent time on a timeline
- order events based on date

#### Brief Lesson Descriptions

1. Hand out an instructor-created model of a biography or an autobiography. Keep it real – this is a model for the learners so that they can create a real autobiography/biography. Have a learner read it aloud. In pairs, have learners retell the story to each other.
2. In pairs, have learners find sequencing and time signals. Draw attention to tense (simple past). Brainstorm what the simple past looks like (positive, negative, interrogative). Practice talking about the past. Have learners find verbs in the simple past in the story.
3. Introduce the idea of a timeline. As a class, brainstorm things that happened that day in class. Record this as a class onto a timeline. In small groups, have learners brainstorm the major events of the model life story. Have the learners create a timeline for the story.
4. Have learners create a timeline for their own lives

Final Product: Writing and Publishing a Life Story	
<p><b>Reading &amp; Writing Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• write a short biography or autobiography</li> <li>• make a book</li> <li>• type the autobiography</li> </ul> <p><b>Speaking &amp; Listening Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• share autobiography orally</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategic/Life Skills Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sequence</li> <li>• organize writing into paragraphs</li> <li>• identify key events in a life</li> <li>• word processing</li> <li>• accurately copy</li> <li>• use fine motor skills: cutting, pasting, drawing, punching holes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Brief Lesson Descriptions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduce the idea of writing a biography or an autobiography. Respect the fact that everyone should be allowed to choose how much they share about their lives. Have learners break into small groups and share their ideas orally.</li> <li>2. Recall sequencing language on the board. Remind learners of tense clues to show time; remind learners orally of how we can tell if something is in the past.</li> <li>3. Have each learner write a biography/autobiography. Share. Revise. Edit.</li> <li>4. Have each learner type their story on the computer. Assist with formatting and anything else required.</li> <li>5. Book-making workshop: begin by examining books as a class. Brainstorm the parts of a book: cover, title page, publishing information, etc. Brainstorm what goes on the cover and title page: title and author's name. Bring in supplies for making books. Show learners how to select a piece of card and several pieces of paper, fold the card and the paper so that it forms a book, punch two holes in the spine, and stitch together using yarn or string. Have the learners create and decorate their own books. When they are finished, have them cut and paste their typed stories into the books.</li> <li>6. Share the stories with each other, with the learners' children and families, or with another class.</li> </ol>
Tools	
<p><b>New Vocabulary &amp; Concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sequencing words</li> <li>• what is included in a biography/autobiography</li> <li>• creating a timeline as a visual representation of events</li> </ul>	<p><b>Language Structures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• simple past</li> <li>• imperative, for giving instructions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resources and Materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a simple biography, such as one from the <i>What a Life!</i> series (Longman)</li> <li>• an instructor-created autobiography</li> <li>• materials for making books: paper, card stock, string or yarn, scissors, glue</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Assessment</b></p> <p>The learners are assessed throughout the unit in their abilities to meet the outcomes. Where suitable, they can choose one or two tasks to be included in their portfolios. For further information on portfolios, please see Chapter Eleven.</p>	

## Lesson Planning for Phase III

Lesson planning for Phase III means creating meaningful, effective lessons that help learners reach the outcomes of the class. Lessons at Phase III should be relevant to the lives of the learners, but depending on the goals and outcomes of the program, may also include more general information in order to prepare learners to transition into further academic programs. As in the other Phases, lesson plans for Phase III are often connected to a wider theme unit. The first of our sample lesson plans is connected to the sample theme unit, while the second is not.

Lesson plans for Phase III should follow the general guidelines for planning for ESL literacy; they should scaffold, recycle, and spiral learning, giving learners an opportunity to take in the lesson, meet the outcomes, and make the skills and information their own. Phase III learners are very capable of meeting challenges and indeed should be challenged in their class, but they should also be given the support to succeed. A good Phase III lesson plan challenges learners, gives them the tools they need to succeed, but also only challenges them in one or two new ways. Don't try to introduce too many new things at once.

There are several key features to an effective Phase III lesson plan:

- No activity takes longer than 30-40 minutes.
- Learners are given a chance to discuss an idea orally before reading and writing about it.
- Strategies are taught overtly and explicitly.
- Reading texts focus on one new skill or one new area of vocabulary.
- Writing techniques are introduced through a model and read several times before learners are expected to write independently.
- Learners compose paragraphs orally and together (with the instructor acting as scribe) before they are expected to write independently.

Sample Lesson Plan for Phase III: Life Stories

Part of Theme: Introducing the Theme

Level: Phase III Developing

Lesson Objectives:

- identify life stories as a valid topic for writing
- predict and check predictions while reading
- read a life story and identify the main ideas
- summarize a life story

Timing	Activity Description
20 minutes	<b>Warm-Up:</b> Greet learners. Introduce idea of life stories and write two words on the board: <i>biography</i> and <i>autobiography</i> . Discuss what they mean. Discuss whose life story is worth telling. Brainstorm historical figures on the board. Ask learners about people in their own lives who have told them stories (parents, grandparents, friends, etc.) Suggest that everyone’s life story is important.
5 minutes	<b>Practicing Prediction:</b> Hand out a short, simple biography. Before reading, look at the title and any images included. Predict what will be in the story (what kind of information is included in a biography?). Make a list of predictions on the board.
30 minutes	<b>Reading a Biography:</b> Read the biography out loud to the learners. Have the learners read it out loud to each other in pairs or small groups. Have the learners read the story silently.
5 minutes	<b>Check Predictions:</b> As a class, check predictions – were you right? Were there any surprises?
30 minutes	<b>Introduce Main Idea vs. Details:</b> Discuss the difference between main ideas and details in a story. Give examples from your own life and elicit examples from learners’ lives, e.g. “Asha lived for six years in Egypt” is a main idea; “Asha spent two days in Toronto before coming to Calgary” is a detail. In small groups, have learners brainstorm the main ideas from the biography. Put these on the board and discuss as a class. Together, choose the most important main ideas.

30 minutes

**Write a Summary:** Explain that a summary tells the main ideas of a story in your own words, just like when we retell the plot of a movie or television show to our friends the next day. Have learners write a summary of the biography, referring to the notes on the board as necessary. Have the learners share the summaries in small groups; notice how everyone's summary is a little different, but all include the most important details. Revise, edit, and make a good copy.

## Sample Lesson Plan for Phase III: Opinion Paragraphs

Part of Theme: Final Product

Level: Phase III Developing

Lesson Objectives:

- read model paragraphs and identify elements of the writing: topic sentence, supporting arguments, and concluding sentence
- practice a several-step writing process: choosing an idea, making an outline, and writing a draft
- write a simple structured paragraph that expresses an opinion and contains a topic sentence, three supporting arguments, and a concluding sentence

Timing	Activity Description
15 minutes	<b>Warm-Up:</b> Greet learners. Discuss why we write; discuss writing in order to argue a point; remind the class of the difference between fact and opinion; brainstorm ways to convince people that you are right.
25 minutes	<b>Present Idea:</b> Introduce the idea of writing a paragraph to express an opinion. Show model (instructor-created, should be relevant to the class), for example: “Calgary is a Great City.” Give a copy to each learner and put a copy on the overhead. Have a learner read it aloud. Give time to read the paragraph quietly. Ask: what is the author saying? What does he or she think of Calgary? How do you know? What are the reasons? As a class, underline the topic sentence, supporting arguments, and the concluding sentence.
20 minutes	<b>Learning from a Writing Model:</b> Hand out a second model (instructor-created, should be relevant to the class): “Calgary: Too Many Problems.” Have a learner read the paragraph aloud. Discuss how this is arguing the opposite idea as the last model. Reinforce the idea that it’s okay to have differing opinions. Assure learners that you don’t care what their opinion is, as long as they can support it. In small groups, have learners underline the topic sentence, supporting arguments, and concluding sentence. Walk around, check, support, and answer questions. Encourage learners to compare and discuss their answers with each other.
30 minutes	<b>Group “Oral” Writing:</b> Bring attention back to the whiteboard. As a class, write an opinion paragraph. Choose a topic which is very easy to argue, such as “Canadian Winters are Hard.” Let the learners decide if they are for or against a topic; they may prefer to argue “Canadian Winters are Not So Bad.” Guide the learners through writing the paragraph, writing down what they say on the whiteboard. Help them to write a good topic sentence, three supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Discuss how they have proven their point. Show them what they did well.

30 minutes

**Independent Writing:** Put three topics on the board. They should all be highly relevant and easy to argue. Reinforce that they are going to write paragraphs that express an opinion. Have the learners each choose a topic and brainstorm their supporting arguments. Circulate as they do this, helping where needed. When learners are ready, they can write their paragraphs.

## Conclusions

Phase III is an exciting time in a learner's development of literacy and the English language. Learners enter Phase III just as they are beginning to be able to string sentences together; by the time they reach Phase III Adequate they are capable of writing paragraphs and a variety of formatted and unformatted texts. As learners reach the end of Phase III, they have the skills and strategies to deal with a wide range of literacy tasks, as well as strategies for dealing with unfamiliar language or formats. Learners are more independent and have learned to take responsibility for their own learning, including setting goals for themselves.

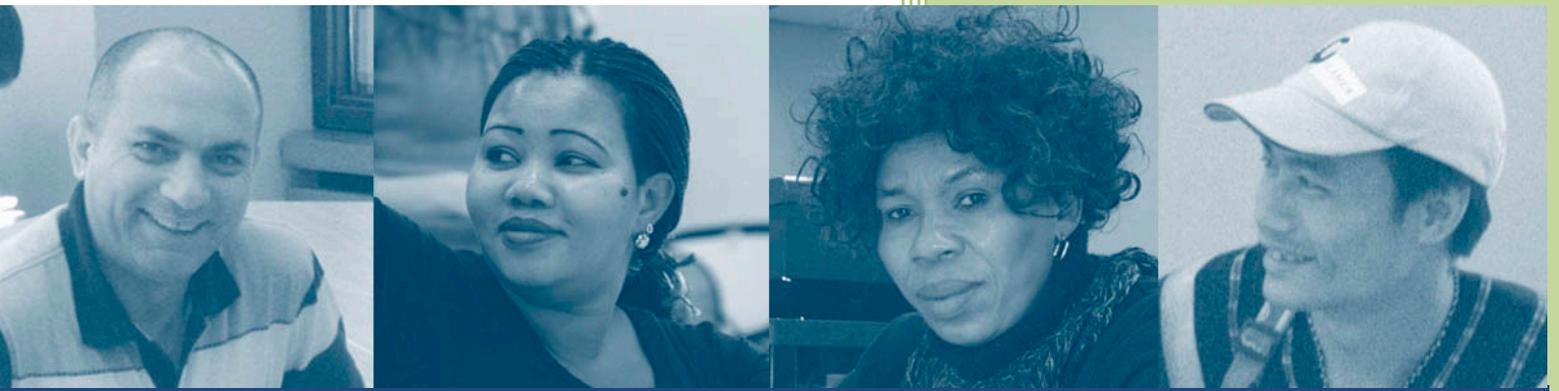
As learners approach the Phase III Adequate stage, both the instructor and the learners should be aware of these goals, and the possibilities once they are finished ESL literacy. Transitioning to the next stage should be on everyone's mind, and the instructor should work with the learners to determine what each learner will do next. Some learners will want to enter (or continue in) the job market; they might also consider entering a trade program or a work-readiness program of some kind to improve their

chances of getting and keeping a job. Other learners will want to transition into Adult Basic Education and possibly go on to complete a high school diploma. Whether or not a learner is ready for ABE is not simply a question of their literacy level, but also of their abilities with English. Learners' chances of achieving success in ABE are directly related to their abilities with language, and generally speaking, the more ESL literacy a learner can take before transitioning to ABE, the better. Learners who are not ready for ABE may wish to move to mainstream ESL first. LIFE face two challenges in living in western society: they have low literacy levels and they are learning a new language. Even after completing Phase III, it is likely that learners will still require extra support, especially in the academic world, and the best programs are programs that recognize and provide this support, meeting the dual needs of these learners.

*Khadir, Nyanath, Amira, and Ba Htoo work hard and enjoy their Phase III class. Khadir works on getting away from his lists and engaging in the class orally, building the understanding that this will support his written language more than anything else. Nyanath begins to develop an understanding of format and learns some strategies for reading comprehension. Amira works on her writing, and while her spelling still isn't great, she is able to write longer, more accurate sentences. Ba Htoo continues to absorb everything around him, wearing a big smile most of the time; he thrives in the Phase III class but is still working on his vocabulary and his speaking. After several semesters in Phase III, all four learners are ready to move on to new challenges. Although they have "graduated" from ESL literacy, they will continue to need some level of ESL literacy support as they move into the workplace or on to further education.*







## Conclusions: Innovative Directions in ESL Literacy



## Introduction: Defining Excellence

ESL literacy is a complicated and growing field, and meeting the needs of Learners with Interrupted Formal Education is both challenging and rewarding for instructors and program coordinators alike. Throughout this handbook we have strived to be informative and most of all useful, providing a balance of theory and tips for the classroom. It is our hope that the handbook will be a practical tool as well as a source of information and ideas from which you can enrich your teaching practices.

The ideas in this handbook are a reflection of years of experience in the classroom combined with our research, feedback from a series of focus groups, and the results from an international survey of ESL literacy providers. Whenever possible, we have included mention of promising practices in ESL literacy, especially in the recognition that different people approach the classroom in different ways, and different learners have different needs. Therefore, a more diverse range of methods and theories will allow instructors to find what works best for them and for their students. We have done our best to be thorough, but it is not possible to contact everyone or to include everything in a handbook. We see this handbook as a resource, and we encourage anyone who is interested in a particular topic to read the annotated bibliography for further sources.

Throughout the research process and from our years in the classroom, we have collected promising practices in ESL literacy, based on what the research supports, what works for instructors, and most importantly, what proves to be effective for our learners. These promising practices are our recommendations to instructors, program coordinators, and all other stakeholders in ESL literacy. We have divided these promising practices into two sections: programs of excellence and classrooms of excellence.

Both of these sections can be taken to describe the ideal situation for ESL literacy instruction; however, we recognize that most programs need to find a balance between the ideal and the realistic. Even if your program does not have the funding or the resources to fully embrace all of these practices, there are still ways to implement these ideas in the classroom. A small program, for example, may find it challenging to create separate classes for each level of ESL literacy; however, it can still recognize the different levels of learners within one classroom and work to meet the needs of each learner based on this recognition. As we work toward implementing – and further developing – promising practices in ESL literacy, we will better meet the needs of this diverse group of learners and experience the gifts that they bring to our countries and our classrooms.

## Our Research Process

The information in this handbook is based on four sources: what we have learned through our teaching at Bow Valley College, in Calgary, Alberta; what we have learned from our students in terms of their lives, needs, expectations, and goals; what we have read in the literature on the subject; and what we have learned from our colleagues both locally and internationally. This research is reflected in the literature review, the annotated bibliography, and the text of the handbook itself.

In the ESL department at Bow Valley College, we believe in intentionally creating and working in communities of practice, based on Wegner's theories (1998). A community of practice recognizes the social aspects of learning and working and seeks to support its members in reaching common goals. These communities occur on a very local level – in our classroom, within our particular level, within ESL literacy, and within the ESL department – as well as on a larger scale with our colleagues from other programs, institutions, provinces, and countries. These communities allow us to work together toward common goals and provide opportunities to share our promising practices and learn from each other's experience. This interaction – the process of supporting and sharing as well as challenging each other's ideas – is a valuable part of the field of ESL literacy, and so in writing this handbook we considered the views of practitioners of ESL literacy across Alberta, Canada, and other English-speaking countries. Through our research, we hoped to create and expand upon these communities of practice on a larger scale.

The first step in this research was therefore to access and develop the communities of practice close at hand; we held a series of focus groups at a local, provincial, and then national level from which we collected information on ESL literacy programming and determined the course of the



handbook. As much as possible, we worked to be inclusive, extending invitations to a wide group of ESL literacy providers in Alberta, as well as at two national conferences. We followed up on the focus groups by extending our contacts to nearly one hundred ESL literacy providers in Canada, the United States, Australia, and the U.K.

Most of the contact in this second stage of research was done through an on-line survey, which attempted to tease apart mainstream ESL from ESL literacy

program delivery and to discover the most effective practices in programming and classroom instruction. The list of organizations which received the survey was assembled by the following process: we began the list with contacts from organizations who attended focus groups held in conjunction with the making of this handbook. From there, we enlisted our colleagues to help identify other organizations. We scoured the literature and the internet, emailing and phoning dozens of organizations. A list of contacts was compiled, and a survey asking about the organizations' ESL literacy practices was sent out. Further organizations were contacted through the provincial assessment centres. We then either phoned or emailed these organizations to talk to them about their ESL literacy classes and programs. The goal of both the survey and the personal contacts was to find out what is happening in ESL literacy program delivery. Although the organizations polled and instructors talked to represent only a small sampling of available programs, they shed light on the issues facing ESL literacy programming and instruction.

In addition to information provided by ESL literacy practitioners, there is a large amount of literature, theory, and research about ESL literacy. The literature suggests common themes of promising practices in ESL literacy, and these themes are echoed in the comments from the survey and the phone calls. We have compiled the most prevalent themes of promising practices below, divided into practices for programs of excellence and for classrooms of excellence.

### **1. ESL literacy is recognized as a distinct stream of classes, separate from mainstream ESL and from mainstream literacy.**

Because Learners with Interrupted Formal Education progress at different rates and have distinct learning needs from mainstream ESL learners, they require a separate stream of classes. Many current programs often offer only a single ESL literacy class, where learners at all ends of the literacy continuum are placed, before they are put into a mainstream CLB 1 or 2 class, regardless of their oral ability. The other common option is to place LIFE into mainstream classes comprised of both academic learners and literacy learners, with no focus on literacy development. Neither of these situations meets the needs of the learners.

A program of excellence, instead, has a designated literacy stream which is formally recognized as a legitimate route to learning English as advocated by Jangles Productions (2006). It has a parallel and concurrent structure to mainstream ESL, and LIFE, having completed the ESL literacy stream, move into mainstream ESL (among other options) at a level appropriate to their new literacy and oral abilities. In a program of excellence, ESL literacy is not seen as a “pre-benchmark” step before learners enter CLB 1. In this way, learners can successfully continue their educational journey instead of being parachuted, after a single literacy class, into mainstream ESL CLB 1 or 2 classes, where their oral skills are too high and their writing is too low for them to function.

Having a separate stream is also much more effective than placing LIFE into Adult Basic Education classes before they have had time to develop literacy and language together. One participant in the survey says that rather than having all learners in the same class, “What teachers and learners need is a class dedicated to functioning listening/speaking who have no reading/writing skills, and another class for true pre-benchmark LINC learners who have adequate education and literacy skills in their first language.” Having a distinct ESL literacy stream allows LIFE to progress through classes where their specific learning needs are addressed, thus facilitating their educational journey rather than allowing them to slip through the cracks in the mainstream.

Many programs contacted are moving towards this vision of a literacy stream and away from placing all literacy learners into an either a CLB 1 class where their oral skills are too high and their written skills are too low, or into an Adult Basic Education program, where they lack language and vocabulary development. Not all programs have the resources, funding, or numbers of learners to provide a full separate stream for ESL literacy, however, but it is still possible to follow this promising practice. Smaller programs are encouraged to create at least one class for ESL literacy learners and to recognize that this class will, by nature, be a multi-level class. Although not ideal, a multi-level class can be effective and rewarding for both the

instructor and the learners. For more information on multi-level classes, please see Chapter Twelve. Another alternative is for several smaller programs to pool resources and learners and work together to create an effective stream for ESL literacy.

## **2. The ESL literacy stream is comprised of a series of classes progressing in small increments along the literacy continuum.**

Ideally, a program of excellence is comprised of a series of ESL literacy classes, progressing in small measurable increments, where each class builds on the skills developed in the previous class, rather than having single multiple-level classes which do little to address the diverse needs of the learners. Learning to read and write for the first time is a slow journey and, without the right measurement tools, progress may seem non-existent. As some theorists argue, placing all LIFE into a multi-level ESL literacy classroom containing learners everywhere along the literacy continuum does little to meet their varying needs (Jangles Productions, 2006; Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2007).

This is not to say that multi-level classes are necessarily ineffective; there are challenges associated with teaching in a multi-level setting, but they can still be a productive learning environment for the students. Programs that do not have the numbers of learners or the resources required to support a series of ESL literacy classes may choose to have one ESL literacy class. While truly multi-level classes, including learners from Foundation Phase to Phase III, for example, are far from ideal, they can still work if the instructor recognizes the multi-level nature of the class and meets each learner where he or she is at. Instructors in multi-level classes are encouraged to follow the same promising practice; recognize the distinct level of each learner, recognize the length of time it takes to progress from one level to another, and celebrate small – and all – successes.



Ideally, where there are resources to support it, there needs to be a series of literacy classes which progress in small increments. Using the CLB Literacy Document as a model, classes in this kind of program are formed for each of the Phases or, better yet, the stages within the Phases. This means that there is a Foundation Phase class, a Phase I Initial class, a Phase I Developing class, and so on. LIFE progress through the distinct classes for each Phase or sub-Phase, acquiring necessary skills and strategies before moving into

the next class, where they encounter more advanced skills and strategies. Progress is readily measured and tracked.

This model requires assessment to evaluate and accurately place each learner; it also requires assessment to move learners from one level to another. There are a number of assessments available. The CLB literacy placement tool is one assessment for placing learners in levels; it extends from Foundation Phase to Phase II. At this point, there is no CLB assessment tool for Phase III. Other placement assessments can also be used. For further information on placing learners in levels and on assessment, please see Chapters Four and Eleven. In order to determine when learners are ready to move to the next level, assessments based on outcomes, such as portfolios or outcomes checklists, can be used. For further information on outcomes and outcome-based assessment, please see Chapters Three and Eleven.

Although progress might not always follow a precise path, where learners advance to the next level each term, progress is still measurable and evident for the learner, the instructor, and the funder. Because it takes a long time to develop literacy and because each Phase encompasses so many strategies and skills, more so than a single CLB, LIFE may need to repeat some classes. This should not be seen as failure by the student, the instructor, or the funder, but rather as an inevitable part of acquiring English and literacy skills.

Several organizations contacted through our research offer three, four, and sometimes even five or six literacy classes divided according to either the CLB Literacy Document or another system of literacy development. Those contacted supported the model of having multiple classes that progress through small increments of the CLB Literacy Document.

### **3. The ESL literacy program offers higher-level ESL literacy classes.**

While it is readily apparent when lower-level ESL learners are in need of specialized literacy classes, it is often less clear when dealing with more advanced LIFE, particularly those in Phase III. These learners have higher literacy skills and often have higher oral skills, and so are most likely to be overlooked and misplaced in the mainstream. If placed in mainstream CLB 4 or 5 classes, LIFE tend to get left behind. Although they have good oral skills and may be able to write adequate sentences, they lack the literacy skills needed to cope with the textual demands of an academic class. They are competent enough with word-level skills, such as spelling and decoding; however, they lack the text-level skills needed to thrive (Indiana Department of Education, n.d.). Their reading comprehension and writing skills are much lower than the average mainstream ESL class requires; thus, they have little chance for success. A respondent from the survey described the learners as having “difficulty with vocabulary, seeing relationships, drawing conclusions, summarizing, sequencing, and visualizing...”

These advanced LIFE still require the scaffolding and explicit strategy instruction found in an ESL literacy class. As well, they lack the word attack skills needed to tackle increasingly

demanding readings. When placed in a mainstream ESL classroom, LIFE fail to thrive. Because Phase III encompasses such a breadth of skills and strategies, one survey respondent's organization has recently divided Phase III into two levels. This way, the class outcomes are more attainable for the learner. Another survey respondent, recognizing the importance of providing advanced ESL literacy classes, stated that they were "hoping to get funding for a third literacy class to accommodate clients at Phases II and III. This is a vital literacy class that is missing..."

A program of excellence recognizes that advanced ESL literacy learners are still in need of literacy support and offers literacy classes up to the end of Phase III. In this way, LIFE continue building up their pool of strategies for inference, identifying main ideas, summarizing, and writing in an ESL literacy-supported environment.

#### **4. The program provides professional development opportunities for instructors.**

Many ESL literacy instructors are self-taught and pick up the necessary skills through a kind of "trial by fire." The Centre for Literacy (2008) reports that many instructors feel they have neither the skills nor qualifications for teaching ESL literacy, even though they are certified ESL instructors: "Receiving ESL certification does not mean that an instructor has had any literacy training" (p. 4). When speaking with several ESL literacy instructors, a common theme of isolation emerged. ESL literacy instructors need more literacy training and opportunities to engage in professional development with other ESL literacy instructors. Many identified the need for more networking with other ESL literacy instructors to share ideas, support each other, and provide mentorship to new instructors in this area. The literature notes the need for both professional development and mentorship (Jangles Productions, 2006; Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2007; Folinsbee, 2007). One survey respondent noted that "Professional development opportunities that focus on ESL literacy are rare...employees must create their own professional development activities through individual reading and research and networking with other ESL literacy instructors where possible."

A program of excellence provides training specific to ESL literacy to all instructors in the literacy stream, including those that substitute teach in the program. This training is given to both experienced and inexperienced ESL instructors who are working with LIFE, so that anyone working with this group is trained in ESL literacy.

In addition to general ESL literacy training, a program of excellence provides regular professional development on topics specific to ESL literacy and a forum for engaging in dialogue with other ESL literacy workers. One survey respondent mentioned that she regularly team-teaches in the literacy classes, thus alleviating some of the feelings of isolation. Another mentioned that the ESL literacy instructors get a half day each month for professional development, and this is a time to share the joys and frustrations of teaching this level. As

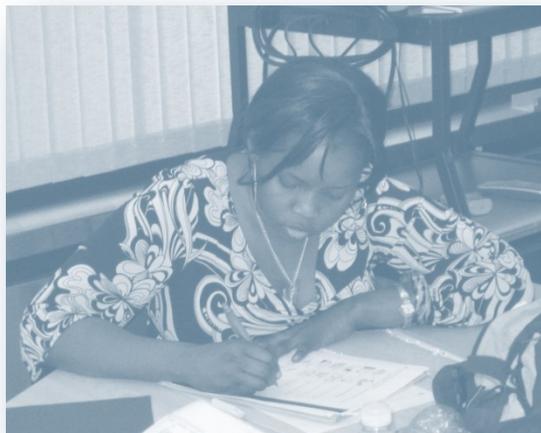
researchers point out, “A healthy, vibrant community would certainly lead to greater exchanges of information, providing some much-needed support to instructors” (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2007).

A program of excellence also recognizes the importance of instructor retention and strives to have committed instructors. Since it takes a specialized set of skills and characteristics to become a competent ESL literacy instructor – a different skill set than the one needed to teach mainstream ESL – a successful program has measures in place to retain these instructors. Having consistent instructors helps create stability and security for learners in their literacy journey (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2007, p. 73). Instead of placing the inexperienced or those lacking seniority into the ESL literacy classroom, a program of excellence places instructors highly trained in ESL literacy into these demanding classrooms.

### **5. Instructors are allotted time to make materials.**

There are a lack of commercially-produced materials available for ESL literacy, especially ones with Canadian content. The materials that do exist often need to be modified for the specific needs of a particular set of LIFE. “As a result, ESL literacy classroom materials tend to be teacher-produced since these must be related directly to the learners’ skills, interests and personal surroundings” (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2007, p. 28). These same materials need to be recreated into several different worksheets, with small variations, so that the learners have opportunities to do the same things many times. The Ontario Literacy Coalition argues that “The volume of material that is required to teach at this level is great” (2007, p. 64). Thus, ESL literacy instructors spend a great deal of time modifying and creating materials for the classroom.

This need to create materials places an increased workload on these instructors; a program of excellence recognizes that additional preparation time is needed for ESL literacy instructors and builds this time into the program. This can be done in a variety of ways so long as there is specific time to accommodate material creation. In some programs, the instructors get a slightly shorter teaching day or are relieved of an administrative duty in order to build in material-creation time. Participants from the survey repeatedly talked about the need to create materials, many unique to the specific class they were teaching.



## **6. There is a program into which learners can transition.**

At the end of the ESL literacy program, learners not directly entering the workforce need somewhere to go. One clear promising practice in ESL literacy is to create options and pathways for LIFE once they have completed ESL literacy programming. These options can include mainstream ESL, mainstream ABE, work-readiness programs, employment, or other forms of further education. At least three organizations in Alberta offer special ESL literacy classes targeted specifically at young adults with interrupted formal education who have gaps in their literacy learning. These learners, who have been exposed to academic skills and technology during their ESL literacy classes, will likely transition into Adult Basic Education programs.

A program of excellence needs to have somewhere for learners to transition into. According to the CLB Literacy Document, at the end of Phase III, those learners with high oral skills may be ready to learn in an Adult Basic Education program, while others with oral skills on par with their literacy skills might be best served by transitioning into a mainstream ESL class. The CCLB roughly equates successful completion of Phase III with CLB 5. However, it should be noted that many further education programs require higher benchmarks for entry. There is a clear need for development in this area.

## **7. There is a numeracy component in the instruction.**

Many LIFE are lacking even the most rudimentary numeracy skills. Since numeracy is as essential to survival as reading and writing, a program of excellence needs to offer a numeracy component within its program. In this numeracy program, it is important to teach both the language of math as well as the concepts. According to research, “In programs for adults learning English as a second language, both the mathematical skills and the language for these skills need to be integrated into the curriculum in order to prepare the learners to be successful.” (Ciancone, 1996).

The CLB Literacy Document divides numeracy skills into three Phases and provides outcomes for each Phase. Since learners’ numeracy skills may be quite different from their literacy skills, one possible model is to offer separate numeracy classes so that learners can be placed in the appropriate numeracy class. Bow Valley College adheres to this model within its full-time ESL literacy programs. Twice each week, learners leave their literacy classes and go to numeracy classes based on their numeracy abilities for a 45-minute session. In this way, Bow Valley College adheres to the practice of placing all literacy learners in a class with others of similar abilities, numeracy included.

## **8. There is support for the program and for the learners.**

To create and maintain an ESL literacy program of excellence, stable program funding must be in place. Such a program needs full administrative support in order to ensure its success. There

must be dedicated funding to maintain specialized ESL literacy instructors, to provide them with appropriate professional development, and to have designated literacy classrooms with low instructor/learner ratios. There must also be a budget for appropriate resources and materials to address the complex needs of these learners.

In addition, there must be dedicated support available to the learner. LIFE need help with an array of day-to-day tasks such as accessing subsidies, filling out funding applications, and finding daycare. They also need guidance for transitioning into other programs or work. A respondent of the survey described the situation by saying “The learners come to school with a variety of issues that make learning difficult for them: trauma, financial hardship...family issues in their country of origin, childcare responsibilities...” Jangles Productions (2006) echoes these findings, citing childcare and transportation funding as barriers to attending classes. Some survey respondents told of various support services that come into the classroom, such as social workers and other community support workers. More than one program offers childcare on-site, some offering a literacy component for the children as well.

Another type of support often mentioned in the literature is access to first language support. Using native language for clarification of instructions is particularly useful to ESL literacy learners (Condelli & Wrigley, 2005; Achren & Williams, 2006). This way, LIFE can concentrate on the literacy task rather than trying to figure out what is wanted of them. First language support can take a number of forms, from direct bilingual instruction, where the instructor is bilingual and all the learners in the class speak the same first language, to a variety of ways, including translation, explanation, or even the development of first language literacy.

Survey respondents have various ways of addressing first language support. One respondent spoke of having a person come in twice a week to translate important concepts and announcements. Several other survey respondents worked in programs with a philosophy of first language instruction. The learners from these programs all come from one language group, however, and this model is challenging to follow in more diverse classrooms. Current Canadian immigration patterns and policies on refugees mean that most Canadian ESL literacy classes have learners from many countries, speaking many different languages. Still, it is possible to provide first language support in even the most diverse classrooms. One Bow Valley College program utilizes an internal model of student mentorship where high level ESL learners volunteer for 45 minutes twice per week in the Foundation Phase and Phase I classrooms. Mainstream ESL learners and even high-level ESL literacy learners are paired up with LIFE who speak the same first language to clarify instructions and announcements. It is a successful endeavour, providing bilingual support for the literacy learners as well as volunteer opportunities for the student mentors.

A program of excellence offers various kinds of support, including funding for the program and learners, counselling support for the learners, and access to bilingual translators. Having these supports in place better enables LIFE to concentrate on their learning.

## What Does a Classroom of Excellence Look Like?

Within a program of excellence, there are a number of features that are specific to the classroom. Rather than being about the program itself, they are about classroom practices and materials. The literature and the survey results suggested the following promising practices for the ESL literacy classroom:

### **1. Learning must be learner-centred, meaning-based, and linked to community.**

A classroom of excellence is learner-centred and connects learning to the day-to-day life of the learner. Although LIFE generally have limited experiences in the classroom, they have a wealth of knowledge and survival skills. As one researcher writes, “Teachers need to provide instruction that acknowledges and addresses these strengths and needs, engages learners in challenging and relevant topics, and provides them with the tools they can use to meet their responsibilities and goals” (Florez, 2003). Connecting literacy to the learners’ lives and experiences is paramount to effective literacy delivery (Wrigley, 1993). Instead of progressing from the alphabet to syllables to words and finally to sentences, a classroom of excellence introduces print in meaningful ways right from the first day.

Using authentic material found in the learners’ lives is one way of making literacy meaningful. The use of realia instead of simple line drawings helps make the connection for the learners. They can see, touch, and manipulate the object, thus invoking multiple learning strategies. Jangles Productions (2006) states that literacy learners need to manipulate physical items such as coins for counting and flashcards for matching. Wrigley (1993) strongly advocates the use of authentic material, such as flyers, photographs, and magazines, in order to connect learning to the real world.

Another way to make learning meaningful is to go outside the classroom and into the community on field trips and walks. Experiential learning and field trips are important for ESL literacy learners. Learner stories are another important way to reach LIFE. The use of personal stories emerging from classroom activities is identified as a promising practice by Jangles Productions (2006). A survey respondent reported, “We do everything we can to help our students learn. We go on local field trips and follow a hands-on approach.”

A classroom of excellence connects the classroom to the real world, through the use of authentic materials, realia, field trips, and learner stories. When teaching LIFE, it is important to think

outside the box to try to connect the learning with the learners' prior learning and the real world (Folinsbee, 2007).

## **2. Learning is repeated and recycled.**

A classroom of excellence recycles the material and concepts each day and over time, thus enabling the learners to fully incorporate this new knowledge and make it their own. LIFE, especially those at Foundation Phase and Phase I, have fewer resources to enable them to learn independently. In addition, they need repeated exposure to learning strategies. The Ontario Literacy Coalition (2007, p. 64) states that, because of the learners' slow acquisition rate, the same lesson needs to be re-taught in a multitude of different ways. The ongoing challenge for the instructor is to come up with different ways to present the same concepts and the same materials without the class becoming mundane and boring. One survey respondent talked about teaching in tiny, baby steps, recycling materials every day.

Holt (1995) suggests designing redundancy into the curriculum. This allows LIFE to encounter the materials multiple times. Andrews (2004) emphasizes the importance of repetition by stating that the instructor is the learners' textbook and study guide as well as their teacher. Since learners cannot review on their own, the instructor must repeat and recycle language and outcomes.

## **3. There is a large dedicated classroom for each ESL literacy class.**

A classroom of excellence is a space dedicated solely to the teaching of ESL literacy, especially at Foundation Phase and Phase I where the learners simply need more room. Because of the nature of ESL literacy, Jangles Productions (2007) recommends large rooms which are not shared spaces. The report further recommends that the room have plenty of wall space in order to create a print-rich environment and have non-fixed seating so that it can be changed to suit the activity. Because of the high concentration of manipulatives and realia needed in teaching Foundation and Phase I literacy, these classrooms need to have enough space to keep it all organized. A bigger room allows for a special area for a listening centre so that learners have the time and guidance to learn to use technology, such as a CD player. A big room also allows the lower level ESL literacy learners to get out of their chairs and do clapping or movement games.

#### 4. Class size is limited.

The literature and the survey are unified in their quest for small classroom numbers for LIFE. One source argues that “such learners require an individualized approach that makes great demands on teacher time and effort inside the class...” and thus recommends a class size of ten learners (McPherson, 2007, p. 4). Jangles Productions (2006) concurs with this recommendation. Bow Valley College finds that ESL literacy instruction is most effective in smaller groups with individualized instruction (2002c). A classroom of excellence needs to be small enough to address the demands of these learners who have limited ability to work independently; large numbers render this impossible.



#### 5. There is specific oral and vocabulary development.

Intuitively, one might think that the sole focus of an ESL literacy class should be reading and writing. However, it is clear that learners also improve their reading skills through their continued oral development. Because LIFE are oral learners, it is important that they have oral control over the material before it is introduced in writing. In order to comprehend a reading, the learner’s oral proficiency has to be at an equal level to the text the learner is expected to read (Holisky, 1985). In a

classroom of excellence, the instructor continues to develop learners’ oral skills using a variety of methods. Learning is done first in the oral before it moves to the written.

LIFE, like all second language learners, have much smaller vocabularies than native speakers. Repeated exposure to new vocabulary assists in retention, so it is imperative that the instructor recycle this vocabulary through explaining, repeating, drawing, and rephrasing it throughout all aspects of instruction (Indiana Department of Education, n.d., p. 7). This will provide the learners with many opportunities to hear, say, read, and write the new vocabulary in different meaningful contexts.

Singing and chanting are also effective ways to improve fluency and increase oral development. Several respondents from the survey discussed their use of song, rhymes, and drama in the classroom to increase oral development. The literature supports this approach: “Learners from highly oral cultures have a set of well-developed strategies for oral learning, so allowing opportunities for clapping, memorization, chanting, story-telling, and repetition will aid in their learning” (Achren & Williams, 2006).

## **6. There is a focus on strategies for reading, writing, and learning.**

In a classroom of excellence, the instructor explicitly teaches strategies for reading, writing, and learning, and spirals them throughout the learning. The strategies vary according to where LIFE are on the literacy continuum, but all classrooms of excellence use the appropriate strategies consciously and continuously, modelling them time and time again until they become habit for the learner. Strategies can range from something as simple as asking the instructor for help when needed to word-attack strategies to brainstorming ideas before writing. Leong and Collins of Bow Valley College argue that “teaching students to use strategies helps them become more effective language users and learners...many learners, especially literacy learners, need help to break down the processes of reading, writing, learning language, and taking tests. Teaching learners to use specific strategies helps them become more successful in each of these areas” (2007, p. 125). Strategies give learners the tools to read, write, and learn effectively.

## Conclusions

This section outlines the most promising practices for ESL literacy that have emerged from experience in the classroom, the literature, the focus groups in Alberta and the rest of Canada, the survey responses from a number of countries, and direct correspondence with various ESL literacy providers. These promising practices can be used to create programs of excellence, which, in turn, support classrooms of excellence. Our research process has shown that many of the survey and focus group respondents mirrored what is being said in much of the literature; many recognized that there is room for development and improvement in their programs, but they are aware of what needs to be changed, and we are all taking small steps towards a common vision. ESL literacy remains a challenging field, but there are clear directions in which we can develop in order to best serve our learners and help them to thrive in school, in employment, and in the community. It is also clear that many programs are already programs of excellence, and many instructors already create classrooms of excellence. We hope to build on this learning and to support the continued development of communities of practice in ESL literacy.







# Appendix 1: ESL Literacy Toolbox

## Introduction: The ESL Literacy Toolbox

The ESL Literacy Toolbox contains ideas that can be used directly in the classroom or adapted to fit other themes, other levels, or the needs of specific learners. Any item in the toolbox may be reproduced for educational purposes only (please see the copyright statement at the beginning of the handbook).

The toolbox is divided into three different areas: planning, practicing, and performance. Items in the toolbox labelled planning are for instructors to get ready for class, or for a learner to get ready to transition to a further step. Items labelled practicing are for the classroom. Items labelled performance are for assessment, either instructor-based or self-reflection and self-assessment. Where applicable, toolbox items are also labelled according to their level, from Foundation Phase to Phase III.

The tools in the toolbox are examples only, to provide ideas for planning, classroom materials, and assessment. The choices of font, font size, white space, vocabulary, and images are all intentional, depending on the intended level. However, all the tools can be adapted and changed, or can be used as inspiration for further development.

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ESL Literacy Assessment Sample

**A. Circle the one that is different:**



2. L      F      F

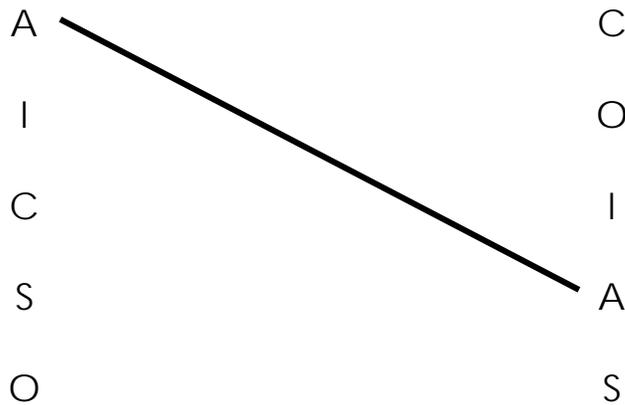
3. 1      7      7

4. E      E      T

5. 2      7      2

6. E      E      B

**B. Match the ones that are the same:**



**C. Copy:**

Ex. S S

V \_\_\_\_\_

P \_\_\_\_\_

5 \_\_\_\_\_

**D. Print the big letters of the alphabet:**

A B C \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**E. Copy:**

I am a student.

\_\_\_\_\_

I live in Canada.

\_\_\_\_\_

## Too Many Parking Tickets? What Next?

Do you have too many parking or speeding tickets? Do you need help to find out what to do?  
When you go to talk to someone, you should be ready to ask questions.

**What do you need to bring?** A pen, paper, and this form

**Write:**

Name of the person you are talking to: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number of the person you are talking to: \_\_\_\_\_

**What questions should you ask?**

I have a parking/speeding ticket. What should I do?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I have to pay a fine?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I have to go to court?

\_\_\_\_\_

Can I get someone who speaks my language to help me?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I need a lawyer?

\_\_\_\_\_

Will a lawyer cost money?

\_\_\_\_\_

What papers do I need to bring with me?

\_\_\_\_\_

What will happen if I don't pay the fine (money)?

\_\_\_\_\_

What do they tell you? If you are nervous and can't write it down, ask **THEM** to write the information here:

---

---

---

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**Words you should know:**

violation	offence	traffic ticket	plead	court	charge
lawyer	sentence	interpreter	fine	guilty	innocent

**Notes:** Write down **OTHER** information that will help you.

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**Contact:** Who else do you need to call?

---

**Follow up:** What are the next steps? What do you need to do now? Is there anyone else you need to call? If you need to pay money, write down what you need to do. Write down important dates and information.

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## Are You Ready for School? Checklist

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Think about the school year.  
Are you ready?

When your life is in order, you can study better.

Look at the checklist.  
Check the boxes to show you are ready.

- I have a place to live
- I have enough money for next month's rent
- My bills are paid (phone, electric, etc.)
- I have a job

My work hours are \_\_\_\_\_ (# of days),  
\_\_\_\_\_ (time) each week

- I have a low-income Calgary transit pass or I have applied for one
- I have an Alberta Health Care card
- I have a Calgary Public Library Card

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Introduction to a Dialogue Journal

### What is a dialogue journal?

A dialogue journal is a place where you have a conversation with your teacher, in writing. Your teacher will give you time in class to write in your journal. Your teacher will then write back to you in your journal. You can then write back to your teacher. It's like a conversation, in writing.

This is a chance to practice your writing. You can experiment and try out new words or new forms. If you are learning something in class, you can practice using it in your dialogue journal. Your teacher will not correct your grammar, but will model correct spelling and correct grammar for you. Read your teacher's writing carefully! If you have made a mistake, your teacher might use the word correctly.

### What should I write about?

You can write about anything you like. You can talk about your thoughts, your home country, Canada, a movie you saw, a book you're reading – anything you like! You can share your thoughts with your teacher. You can also ask your teacher questions or tell your teacher about a problem you're having in class. Your teacher will do his or her best to help you.

Your teacher will keep your journal and everything you say confidential. This means that he or she will never tell anyone what you write in your journal, and will never show it to anyone without your permission.

## Reading Strategies: Learner Self-Assessment

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Check one box for each statement.

My Reading Strategies	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1. I <b>make predictions</b> and read to find out if I was right.			
2. I <b>re-read</b> the sentences before and after a word I do not know.			
3. I <b>look quickly</b> for information without reading everything.			
4. I look for the <b>main idea</b> and try to <b>summarize</b> the main events in my own words.			
5. I try to <b>retell</b> the story in the correct order.			

Which strategies do I want to practice more often?

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## Strategy Outcomes Overview: for Instructors

Directions: Use this chart to keep track of which strategies were covered in which units.

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategy Outcomes		Units			
		#1	#2	#3	#4
Reading	1. Predicts and checks predictions				
	2. Rereads to increase comprehension				
	3. Scans for information				
	4. Looks for the main idea (and summarizes at adv level)				
	5. Retells a story (in sequence)				
Writing	1. Thinks and talks about topic before writing				
	2. Plans and/or brainstorms ideas				
	3. Puts ideas in order/organizes writing				
	4. Uses topic sentences				
	5. Edits and revises writing				
Language Learning	1. Groups/classifies words according to meaning				
	2. Highlights new vocabulary				
	3. Keeps a record of useful vocabulary				
	4. Asks for help and correction				
	5. Guesses meanings of new words from context (adv only)				
Test-Taking	1. Reviews before the test				
	2. Arrives early and prepared (with pen, pencil, eraser, etc.)				
	3. Looks over whole test before beginning				
	4. Reads instructions carefully				
	5. Checks answers				

Ideas for Materials

**Authentic Materials**

grocery store flyers  
 phone bills  
 newspapers

**Mainstream ESL Materials**

*Word by Word Basic* (Longman)  
*Very Easy True Stories* (Longman)  
*Basic Reading Power* (Longman)

**Instructor-Created Materials**

flashcards  
 forms  
 learner photo stories

**Children’s Literacy Materials**

*Scholastic First Picture Dictionary*  
 (Scholastic)  
*My Red Book* (Osu Children's Library)  
*M is for Maple* (Sleeping Bear)

**Learner-Created Materials**

LEA stories  
 spelling dictionaries  
 dialogue journals

**Adult Literacy Materials**

*Grass Roots Readers* (Grass Roots)  
*Milestones in Reading* (Curriculum Associates)  
*Kitchen Math* (Grass Roots)

**ESL Literacy Materials**

*First Words in English* (Linmore)  
*ESL Literacy* (Longman)  
*First Class Reader!* (Alta)  
*This Really Works: Survival English* (Tutorial Services of Ontario)  
*This Really Works: Basic Numeracy 2* (Tutorial Services of Ontario)

Suggested Materials for Each ESL Literacy Phase

Foundation Phase	
Instructor-Created/Found	Published/Commercially Available Materials
flashcards and flashcard pocket charts simple forms with first name, last name, telephone number, and address worksheets for copying and for matching capital and small letters word searches and cloze exercises bingo games realia such as flyers, food containers, etc. magazines and poster board to make posters and collages	<i>Very Easy True Stories</i> (Longman) picture dictionary magnetic ABC boards 4 to 9 piece jigsaw puzzles dice, board games (with ABCs or simple pictures) maps
Phase I	
Instructor-Created/Found	Published/Commercially Available Materials
flashcards and flashcard pocket charts stories worksheets simple forms scaffolded writing materials	<i>English Express</i> ( <a href="http://www.englishexpress.ca">www.englishexpress.ca</a> ) <i>Grass Roots Readers</i> (Grass Roots Press, Edmonton Alberta) <i>Gatehouse Books</i> (Gatehouse Media, Manchester, England) <i>The Page Turners Collection</i> (PRACE, Australia) <i>Adult Phonics Stories</i> (Multi-Cultural Educational Services: <a href="http://www.mcedservices.com">www.mcedservices.com</a> ) maps

Phase II	
Instructor-Created/Found	Published/Commercially Available Materials
flashcards and flashcard pocket charts ads, forms, and notices stories simple crossword puzzles games	<i>A Canadian Conversation Book: English in Everyday Life</i> (Prentice Hall) <i>Look again: Pictures for Language Development and Life Skills</i> (Alta) <i>Picture Stories: Language and Literacy Activities for Beginners</i> and <i>More Picture Stories: Language and Problem-Posing Activities for Beginners</i> (Longman) <i>All New Very Easy True Stories, Easy True Stories, and More True Stories</i> (Longman) <i>Amazing Canadian Newspaper Stories</i> (Prentice Hall) maps
Phase III	
Instructor-Created/Found	Published/Commercially Available Materials
sample writing models stories forms crossword puzzles, word searches, and codes	<i>Basic Reading Power, Reading Power, More Reading Power, Advanced Reading Power</i> (Longman) <i>Canadian Concepts 3-5</i> (Prentice Hall) <i>Milestones in Reading B-D</i> (Curriculum Associates) <i>What a Life!</i> and <i>What a World!</i> series (Longman) <i>Penguin Easy Readers, Levels 3-5</i> (Penguin) maps

## Outcomes Checklist: Phase I Initial Reading and Writing

**Reading**

- I can find my name.
- I can find my address.
- I know the letters of the alphabet.
- I can read simple sentences.
- I can read question words.

**Writing**

- I can copy my name.
- I can copy from the board.
- I can write my name.
- I can write on the line.
- I can write my telephone number.

### Sample Goal Setting Checklist

**Goal: I want to complete the Health Care Aide program at Bow Valley College.**

<u>Steps to Goal:</u>	<u>Times:</u>
Think about your career goals. What do you need to do to reach your goal?	All the time
1. Study ESL literacy at Bow Valley College	4 semesters
2. Do Basic Education Levels 4 and 5 at Bow Valley College	3 semesters
3. Complete grade 10 English and grade 10 math	2 semesters
4. Enter Health Care Aide program at Bow Valley College	1 semester

### Short Term Goals

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Learning	My Goal
Reading	
Writing	
Learning Readiness	
Life Skills	
Math	

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Self-Evaluation****College Readiness**

<p><b>Respect</b></p> <p>listen carefully to others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• let one person talk at a time</li> <li>• do not disrupt class</li> <li>• keep the classroom tidy</li> <li>• treat everyone with respect</li> </ul>	<p><b>Needs Improvement</b></p>	<p><b>Satisfactory</b></p>	<p><b>Successful!</b></p>
<p><b>My suggestion for change:</b></p>			
<p><b>Responsibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• know my schedule</li> <li>• keep track of my stuff</li> <li>• do my homework</li> <li>• hand in assignments on time</li> <li>• take initiative to get missed work</li> <li>• take initiative to communicate with staff about problems</li> </ul>	<p><b>Needs Improvement</b></p>	<p><b>Satisfactory</b></p>	<p><b>Successful!</b></p>
<p><b>My suggestion for change:</b></p>			
<p><b>Participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attend class regularly</li> <li>• am on time for class</li> <li>• am ready to work in class</li> <li>• ask questions</li> <li>• share ideas</li> <li>• listen carefully</li> </ul>	<p><b>Needs Improvement</b></p>	<p><b>Satisfactory</b></p>	<p><b>Successful!</b></p>
<p><b>My suggestion for change:</b></p>			

## Instructor Assessment of Individual Group Work Skills

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Time Management</b>	Routinely uses time well throughout the project to ensure things get done on time. Group does not have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person.	Usually uses time well throughout the project, but may have procrastinated on one thing. Group does not have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person.	Tends to procrastinate, but usually gets things done by the deadlines. Group does not have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person.	Rarely gets things done by the deadlines AND group has to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person's inadequate time management.
<b>Focus on the task</b>	Consistently stays focused on the task and what needs to be done. Very self-directed.	Focuses on the task and what needs to be done most of the time. Other group members can count on this person.	Focuses on the task and what needs to be done some of the time. Other group members must sometimes remind this person to keep on-task.	Rarely focuses on the task and what needs to be done. Lets others do the work.
<b>Contributions</b>	Routinely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A definite leader who contributes a lot of effort.	Usually provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A strong group member who tries hard	Sometimes provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A satisfactory group member who does what is required.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Often is not a good team player.

<b>Preparedness</b>	Brings needed materials to class and is always ready to work.	Almost always brings needed materials to class and is ready to work.	Almost always brings needed materials but sometimes needs to settle down and get to work.	Often forgets needed materials or is rarely ready to get to work.
<b>Working with Others</b>	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others, but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with, or supports the efforts of others. Often is not a good team player.

Total \_\_\_\_\_ / 20

## Portfolio Reflection

### Why I Chose This Work

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I chose this piece because ...

---

---

---

---

I would like you see that .....

---

---

---

One thing I would improve next time is .....

---

---

---

## Preparing for a Conference

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Your instructor will soon have a conference with you about your work this term. Prepare for the conference by discussing these questions.*

1. How has your English improved since the last session?

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---

2. What can you do now that you could not do before?

---

---

3. How has your reading improved?

---

---

4. What do you like to read? What makes it interesting?

---

5. What are you doing to become a better reader?

---

6. How has your writing improved?

---

## My Strengths and Challenges

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal for next week: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>My Strengths</b>
Reading Strengths
Writing Strengths
Classroom Readiness Strengths
<b>My Challenges</b>
Reading Challenges
Writing Challenges
Classroom Readiness Challenges

### Conversation Prompts for the Portfolio Sharing Event:

<b>Greetings</b>	<b>Questions to Ask</b>
<p>Nice to meet you, my name is...what's your name?</p> <p>Hello. Thank you for coming this morning. My name is...what's your name?</p> <p>Please have a seat.</p> <p>Please join me.</p> <p>I would like to share my portfolio with you.</p> <p>I would like to share my successes from this semester with you.</p> <p>I would like to learn about your successes.</p>	<p>Since January, how has your English changed?</p> <p>What can you do now that you couldn't do in January?</p> <p>How has your _____ improved?</p> <p>What work are you very proud of?</p> <p>Why are you proud of this work?</p>
<b>During your Conversation</b>	<b>Saying Goodbye</b>
<p>That is really interesting.</p> <p>I like your writing.</p> <p>You are a good...</p> <p>I understand what you are saying.</p> <p>I understand why you are so proud of this work.</p> <p>I am really impressed by...</p> <p>You have obviously worked very hard on...</p>	<p>Thank you for sharing your portfolio with me.</p> <p>Thank you for visiting today and sharing your work.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and for sharing your success this morning.</p> <p>Good luck next semester.</p> <p>Goodbye.</p> <p>I hope to see you again soon.</p>

## Personal Information

Write



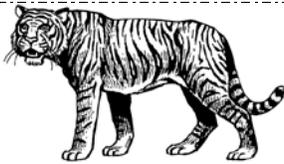
FIRST NAME	_____
LAST NAME	_____
ADDRESS	_____
	CALGARY AB
POSTAL CODE	_____
TELEPHONE	_____



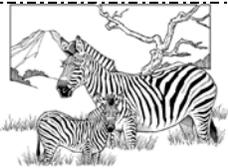
lion



giraffe



tiger



zebra



elephant

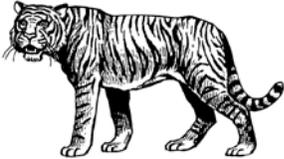
Copy



\_\_\_\_\_



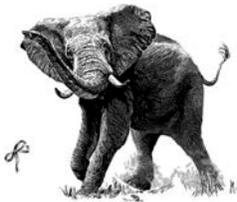
\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

giraffe    elephant    zebra    lion    tiger

## Categories

 PEN	 PENCIL	 MEAT
 APPLE	SUNDAY	 EGG
FRIDAY	MONDAY	 BOOK

FOOD	CLASSROOM	DAYS

# Transportation



motorcycle

bus

C train

boat

car

airplane

bicycle

walk

## Days of the Week

Put the days of the week in order:

Wednesday	Saturday
Tuesday	Friday
Thursday	Monday
Sunday✓	

1. Sunday
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

### Personal Information

Write 

Personal Information		
Name:	_____	
	(Last)	(First)
Address:	_____	
	_____	_____
	(City)	(Province) (Postal Code)
Sex:	Male	Female
Date:	_____	
Signature:	_____	

### Word Listing

TASK: Put these words in alphabetical order.

groceries      cash      buy  
purchases      receipt      sale

---

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---

---

---

---

---

## Story about Me

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

I am \_\_\_\_\_.

I have \_\_\_\_\_ sons.

I have \_\_\_\_\_ daughters.

Copy the story:

---

---

---

---

---

## Female or Male?

Read the words. Copy the words in the correct group.

mother  
father  
brother

sister  
son  
daughter

grandmother  
grandfather  
wife

husband

female	male

## Do You Like...?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Do you like fish?	Yes	No
-------------------	-----	----

Do you like spaghetti?	Yes	No
------------------------	-----	----

Do you like apples?	Yes	No
---------------------	-----	----

Do you like pizza?	Yes	No
--------------------	-----	----

Do you like TV?	Yes	No
-----------------	-----	----

Do you like Calgary?	Yes	No
----------------------	-----	----

Do you like winter?	Yes	No
---------------------	-----	----

Do you like snakes?	Yes	No
---------------------	-----	----

Do you like school?	Yes	No
---------------------	-----	----

### All About Me

Name:

1. A hobby: \_\_\_\_\_
2. A favourite restaurant: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Something I'm good at: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Something I'm not good at: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where I grew up: \_\_\_\_\_
6. A favourite colour: \_\_\_\_\_
7. A favourite movie/song : \_\_\_\_\_
8. Something in my house : \_\_\_\_\_
9. A place I want to visit: \_\_\_\_\_
10. My favourite food: \_\_\_\_\_

## Reading a Grocery Receipt

**Bob's Supermarket**

1220-16 Ave. NW, Calgary, AB

Mar. 15, 2007

Cashier: Jane S.

1 liquid honey	5.29
2 mangos	3.50
1 tomatoes (carton)	6.99
1 toilet tissue (8 rolls)	7.95
4 orange juice	12.70
Special 2/6.35	
1 green onion	.63
Special 2/1.25	
5 apples	1.42
@ 1.29 / lb.	
1 dozen eggs	3.19
Subtotal	41.67
GST 6%	1.12
Total	42.79
Cash	50.00
Change	7.21

Thank You

Please Come Again

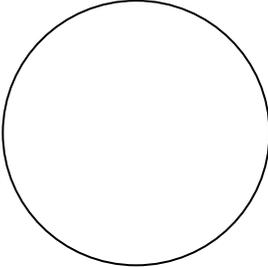
Read the cash register receipt. Write short answer to questions.

1. What date was this receipt for? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is this store in the SE? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who was the cashier? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How much is it for one mango? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How much would 2 bunches of green onions cost? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How much are apples per lb? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is the subtotal? \_\_\_\_\_

## Following Instructions

Read the instructions. Complete the activities in the box below.

\_\_\_\_\_



Sun. Mon. Tues. Wed. Thurs. Fri. Sat.

1. Circle **Thursday** on the list.
2. Write the word **happy** on the right side of the happy face.
3. Cross out **Friday** on the list.
4. Underline **Monday**.
5. In the box, **draw a happy face**.
6. On the line, write the date of Canada's birthday. Write the **month first** and the **date second** in numbers.
7. In the circle, write your **favourite fruit**.
8. Above the circle, write the **number of children** you have.
9. In the **bottom right corner**, write **your first name**.

## The Right Tools for the Job

outlet	ladder	flashlight	saw
screwdriver	hammer	broom	light bulb
pliers	scissors	plunger	nails
drill			

Fill in the blanks with the right tools for the job.

1. I need to hang a picture on the wall. Please give me a \_\_\_\_\_ and some \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I need to cut up some wood. Please hand me a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I need to make a hole in the wall. Please give me a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. It's dark under the hood of the car. I need a \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I need to pull out some nails. Can I have a pair of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. I need to sweep up some garbage. I have to use a \_\_\_\_\_.
7. I have to change the light bulb on the ceiling, but it's too high. I need a \_\_\_\_\_ to climb on.
8. The toilet is plugged up. I need a \_\_\_\_\_ to unplug it.
9. I need to tighten the leg on the table. Please pass me a \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The light isn't working. I need to change the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.
11. I have to cut up some paper. Can I borrow your \_\_\_\_\_?
12. I need to plug in my computer. Where is the \_\_\_\_\_?

Vocabulary: Find and Define

TASK: Use the dictionary to find the meaning of these words. Write **ONE** sentence for **EACH** word.

1. lawyer

2. charge

3. crime

4. judge

5. illegal

Here are my sentences:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

## My Pleasure Reading Log

Date: _____	Title: _____
Author: _____	Start page: _____
Reading Time: _____ minutes	End page: _____

## My Reading Response Paragraph...

I'd like to write one paragraph about:

- what I like so far
- what I don't like
- new words I learned and what they mean
- a character that I find interesting (description)
- what is happening in the story (the plot)
- how the story is like something I have experienced
- what I think might happen next

## Model Paragraph: Expressing an Opinion

**Instructions:** Read the paragraph. Underline the topic sentence, the three main points, and the concluding sentence. Write your own paragraph with a topic sentence, three main points, and a concluding sentence. Use this paragraph as a model.

### Wonderful Calgary

Calgary is a really nice place to live. There are several reasons for this: the weather is beautiful and sunny, there are lots of jobs, and the mountains are close by. First, the weather in Calgary is beautiful and sunny. Many newcomers to Canada think that Calgary is cold, but at least the sun is shining. Calgary gets more days of sunshine each year than any other city in Canada. Second, there are lots of opportunities in Calgary. Many companies are hiring and it is fairly easy to find a job. If you walk down the street, you will see many places have “hiring” signs in the window. Third, the beautiful Rocky Mountains are less than an hour away from Calgary. You can see the mountains on a clear day from anywhere in the city, and there are lots of fun things to do in the mountains. You can go for a hike, enjoy photography, go mountain biking, or take a ride in the gondola and see the spectacular views. Calgary really is a great place to live.

## Model Paragraph: Expressing an Opinion

Instructions: Read the paragraph. Underline the topic sentence, the three main points, and the concluding sentence. Answer the questions about the paragraph.

### A Big City with Big Problems

Although many people are moving to Calgary from all over Canada, the city has many problems. It is not a nice place to live. There is too much traffic, it is too expensive, and it is getting dangerous. First, there is a real problem with traffic in the city. Calgary has grown quickly in the last ten years, so there are many more cars on the roads. Rush hour lasts longer each day and many people find that they are stuck in traffic for hours. Deerfoot Trail, what is supposed to be a fast route through the city, can be very slow for many hours each day. Second, Calgary is very expensive. The cost of rent has skyrocketed in recent years, in many cases doubling or even tripling. Buying a house is not better; Calgary now has some of the most expensive houses in Canada. Third, as the city grows, crime is growing too. There are more and more murders in Calgary and the chief of police recently warned the city of a possible gang war. Calgary is becoming a big city, and getting big city problems.

1. Does the author like Calgary?

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2. Name two reasons why the author feels this way.

---

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3. Do you agree with the author? Why or why not?

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## Appendix 2: Literature Review



## Introduction to the Literature Review

More and more practitioners in the fields of ESL and literacy are accepting ESL literacy as a distinct area of language instruction with unique features separate from both mainstream ESL and first language literacy. With this acceptance, comes a plethora of literature addressing this specific area.

Canada was founded on immigrants and, even today, new immigrants form an integral part of our makeup. For humanitarian reasons, we also open our doors to refugees, some 12,000 in 2005 alone (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2007). In recent years it has become apparent that a small but significant number of these new arrivals are landing in Canada with little or no formal education from their country of origin. In 2004, 1376 of these new arrivals came to Alberta with 0-9 years of education (Alberta Human Resources and Employment, 2005). They are not literate in their native language and we can reasonably assume that the majority of them are English language learners as well.

These new immigrants and refugees are finding themselves in adult ESL classes without the necessary reading and writing skills needed to succeed. Some have never gone to school at all and speak a language for which there is no written code. Others have had their education interrupted because of war, poverty, or displacement. Now they are in Canada, a country which relies extensively on the printed word. To further complicate the matter, not only are they unable to use the print around them, but they also are unable to speak the language with any level of proficiency. Suddenly, they are expected to concurrently acquire oral, reading, and writing skills amid this highly literate society in which they are resettling (Craats, Kurvers, & Young-Scholten, 2005, p. 8).

The focus of this review is on these adult immigrants and refugees who are in need of both English language instruction and literacy instruction. The intersection of literacy needs and ESL needs will be explored by examining the various definitions of ESL literacy, different types of ESL literacy learners, and promising practices in ESL literacy programming. Next it will look at teaching strategies and, finally, it will identify some of the gaps in the literature.

The content of this literature review has been drawn from a variety of sources. These sources include current academic publications and websites related to adult ESL literacy, adult ESL instruction, national and international conference proceedings, and provincial studies. Generally, the issue of ESL literacy learners within Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs outside the scope of this review. Instead the review focuses on ESL literacy learners within ESL programs, with a particular focus on programs in Canada.

In order to define ESL literacy one must first look to literacy because ESL literacy is the meeting point of two separate fields, ESL and literacy. Definitions of literacy abound, but the one that is commonly accepted in Canada is the one used by both the International Adult Literacy Surveys and the Human Resources and Development Canada (Quigley, Folinsbee, & Kraglund-Gauthier, 2006). This definition is also accepted by the Movement for Canadian Literacy. According to this definition, literacy is “the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities at home, at work and in the community – to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” (Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, 2003, p. 2).

ESL literacy learners, then, are adults who are learning to speak English at the same time as they are learning to read and write. Scanning the literature it becomes apparent that there is no single definition of ESL literacy that is unanimously accepted. The literature reflects some controversy over who our ESL literacy learners are.

One area under discussion is whether or not to include in the definition those learners who are literate in their first language but use a non-Roman alphabet. Bell and Burnaby (1984) acknowledge that learners who use a non-Roman alphabet “will have special difficulties in learning literacy in English no matter how competent their native-language may be” (p. 6). They clarify that such learners may or may not also have low literacy skills in their native language, and those “with literacy skills in their native language find it easy to transfer those skills to a second language” (p. 3). In other words, they may need to practice their English alphabet but may not be in need of literacy support. Others, however, have not interpreted it this way. *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (CLB Literacy Document) (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000) also includes learners who use non-Roman alphabets in their definition of ESL literacy.

Wrigley (2008), however, argues that “you only learn to read once” (p. 3) and then, after that, the knowledge that oral language can be represented in print is simply transferred to the new language. For evidence, she points to the fact that ESL learners with education in their native language transfer to English the underlying concepts of how print works, and their English reading skills “often develop quite rapidly after an initial learning period, although spelling problems may remain” (p. 3). Literacy learners, on the other hand, have not yet fully acquired these reading and writing skills in any language, thus they are unable to gain meaning from written text. They need specific instruction and practice that is geared to learning these literacy skills.

There are many other definitions of ESL literacy learners which all revolve around the central idea of learning English without the benefit of a formal education. The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (2005) defines ESL literacy learners as people who have difficulty

in the basics of reading and writing in their native languages: “They have had limited access to education in their home or residing countries. These learners, while learning a new language also have difficulty transferring skills from the first to second language” (p. 37). Achren and Williams (2006) define ESL literacy learners as those immigrants who have “little or no oracy in English and little to no formal education” (p. 1). Craats, Kurvers, and Young-Scholten (2005) describe ESL literacy learners by illuminating the difficulties faced: “While children develop literacy only after they have acquired much of their first language, non-literate adults often face the challenge of learning to read in a second language with little proficiency in that language and no familiarity with literacy” (p. 16). Instead of defining ESL literacy learners, Wrigley and Guth (1992) provide a definition of the teaching:

While there is no one accepted definition of ESL literacy, ESL literacy *teaching* could be defined as supporting adults with little English and little formal education in their efforts to understand and use English in its many forms (oral and written, including prose, document, and quantitative literacy), in a variety of contexts (family, community, school, work), so that they can reach their fullest potential and achieve their own goals, whether these be personal, professional or academic (p. 14).

Although there is no single universally accepted definition of ESL literacy, there is a general agreement that it refers to those adults who are in need of some literacy support while they learn English. The difficulties in defining ESL literacy arise from the fact that learners in need of ESL literacy instruction are not a homogenous group. Instead they are a very diverse population and have a full spectrum of literacy and language needs. Nor is this population static. The demographics change with the world events and Canada’s immigration policy.

When one first thinks of ESL literacy, the picture that might come to mind is that of individuals who have never held a pen and cannot understand the simplest English questions. While these truly are ESL literacy learners, they are not a realistic representation of what a typical ESL learner looks like. The CLB Literacy Document (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000) confirms that these learners are “a small minority of beginning ESL Literacy second language learners who need to develop and practice the specific visual and motor/mechanical skills that are needed in the pre-reading and pre-writing literacy processes” (p. 2).

Many more learners operate at a much higher level of literacy but are unable to function fully in a mainstream ESL classroom. Holisky (1985) states that in a regular, beginning ESL class “it is assumed that the student can already read in some language” (p. 1) and the teacher does not have to “incorporate the literacy skills needed to interpret the textbook” (p. 1). Wrigley (2008) explains that in a mainstream ESL classroom, the learner is expected to “pick up written English as they learn oral English” (p. 2), where the teacher presents the new vocabulary or ideas orally and then

quickly moves to the textbook or worksheet to reinforce the new material. These learners often lack basic academic concepts and need to be exposed to what is generally thought of as common knowledge, such as planets revolving around the sun or matter having three states, solid, liquid, and gas. Literacy ESL learners are often left behind, not having the basic concepts, being unable to use reading to learn, and instead struggling to learn to read. They also struggle with the material in mainstream classes, as it is generally far above their reading level.

Some literacy learners may function at a fairly high level and initially appear literate, but they still need literacy support. It is these learners who are often overlooked and placed into a mainstream ESL classroom where they fall behind. Because of interrupted schooling, they have not had a chance to firmly establish academic skills in their own languages, and, therefore, are not able to transfer these skills into English. Blanton (1990) explains that some learners can read and write but “their literacy is very limited, for their schooling in any language was not sustained long enough for them to develop the deep literacy that can evolve only from sustained interaction with written text” (p. 1). Learners who have been exposed to some formal education and have well-developed oral skills may still be in need of literacy support due to structural differences found in an oral culture. Burgoyne and Hull (2007) argue that learners from a highly oral culture may transfer some of these oral traits into their writing: “their written texts often exhibit features of oral cultural texts (for example, digression, repetition)” (p. 15). The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000) and Wrigley and Guth (1992) refer to literacy as a continuum along which a learner grows, “rather than as a dichotomy or ‘great divide’ between literate and illiterate” (Wrigley & Guth, 1992, p. 16). Gunn (2003) concurs, stating that the dividing line between literate and preliterate is indefinable: “Consequently, the state of literacy is temporary; its duration is variable but participation in a range of definable activities should result in most learners developing a qualitative change in their capacity to read and write” (p. 46). Therefore, ESL literacy includes a wide spectrum of learners, included higher-level ESL literacy learners.

Because ESL literacy learners are such a diverse population, they are difficult to define. They come from a variety of countries, have a huge range in their reading abilities, and have different needs and goals. We need to get to know our literacy learners individually and not make assumptions about what they know or don’t know or what they need to learn. Instead, as we get to know them, we can find out their strengths and help them reach their literacy goals.

## Promising Practices in ESL Literacy Program Design

There are many promising practices supported by the literature that contribute to programs of excellence in ESL literacy. One underlying premise of a promising practice in programming is that of a distinct ESL literacy stream parallel to and concurrent with the mainstream ESL program. This premise of an ESL literacy stream is composed of two parts, that ESL literacy learners are in separate classes from mainstream ESL learners and that there are a series of ESL literacy classes, with progressively more complex literacy outcomes, rather than a solitary ESL literacy class where learners anywhere along the continuum are placed into a one-size-fits-all model.

The first premise, that literacy learners are in designated classrooms distinct from mainstream ESL classes, is mentioned throughout the literature. In a report by the Ontario Literacy Coalition (2007), instructors identify the need for dedicated ESL literacy classes, rather than classes containing both literacy and mainstream ESL learners. ESL literacy learners progress at a different pace than mainstream ESL learners, picking up the oral language more readily than the written language. This uneven skill base makes it difficult for them to fit well in a mainstream ESL classroom where much of the learning is text-based. As Bell and Burnaby (1984) point out, placing these literacy learners in a mainstream ESL class for beginners does not work because their oral skills are too high for the speaking activities, yet their written skills are too low. There is a general recognition that ESL literacy learners do not belong in mainstream ESL classes. Gunn (2003, p. 39) states that when learners who are literate in their native language and learners who are not literate in any language are combined into a single class, it usually results in the non-literate learners being left behind. Wrigley (2008) also argues that the practice of placing all learners new to English in the same class, regardless of whether they are literate or not, generally results in the learners who are not yet literate losing out.

Some researchers, such as Folinsbee (2007) and Jangles Productions (2006), claim that there is often not enough specialized programming for ESL literacy and these learners are instead put into mainstream ESL classrooms where they often do not succeed. Brod (1999) supports this and attributes the high dropout rate of ESL literacy learners at least partially to a lack of designated ESL literacy classes. Jangles Productions (Jangles Productions, 2006) contains a quote from a teacher who proclaims that “Literacy classes need to be separate from the regular stream. We must teach them how to learn before they can learn themselves” (p. 23). Indeed, DelliCarpini and Englemann (2007) indicate that the instructional strategies that lead to success for ESL literacy learners are different from those used for ESL learners with high levels of literacy in their own language (p. 7). Thus a general agreement in the literature is that separate classes for ESL literacy learners is fundamental.

The second premise of a distinct ESL literacy stream is the existence of a series of ESL literacy classes that progress in moderate increments. Some institutions, recognizing the need for ESL literacy classes, place all literacy students of varying abilities in a single literacy class where they remain until they are pushed on to a CLB 1 or 2 class, which is unable to address their literacy needs. Because literacy is a continuum, this single “one-size-fits-all” classroom approach is not the best solution for ESL literacy learners as it does not recognize their complex learning needs and does not lead to success for the learner. Croydon (2005) states that “There is no middle ground in a multi-level class” (p. 78) and argues that the key instead is to provide instruction and materials for each learners’ literacy level, even within the same classroom.

Instead of a single class for ESL literacy learners, the literature makes reference to having a series of ESL literacy classes, with several distinct levels each in their own class, much like CLB 1 classes are distinct from CLB 5 classes. Holisky (1985) also supports ESL literacy as a series of levels which she labels pre-literacy to level 3, each with an increasingly more complex array of outcomes. The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000) divides ESL literacy into four distinct phases which are used to describe learners’ reading and writing abilities, and these phases range from learning to hold a pencil in the Foundation Phase to learning to connect ideas in paragraphs in Phase III. They are a progression of reading, writing and numeracy skills for ESL literacy learners, describing what the learners can do at each Phase. A promising practice is to have each of these Phases be a separate class or, even better, each subdivision of each Phase, a separate classroom. For instance, there would be a Phase I initial class, a Phase I developing class, a Phase I adequate class, and so on.

In reality, however, for a variety of reasons, many programs are unable to have separate classes for each level. Instead they have only one or perhaps two literacy classes. If this is the case, instead of having a “one-size-fits-all” type classroom where the instructor teaches a pre-conceived curriculum regardless of the various levels of the learners, a better solution is to have a multi-level ESL literacy class where the learners are grouped according to their various literacy needs and strengths. The literature provides a variety of teaching techniques to deal with the reality of a multi-level ESL literacy classroom (Croydon, 2005; Bow Valley College, 2007; Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2007; Massaro, 2004; Wrigley, 1992). In the case where the program has two literacy classes, it is best to provide as homogeneous a class as possible so that there is a beginning literacy class and a more advanced literacy class. The literature (Jangles Productions, 2006; Brod, 1999; Folinsbee, 2007; DelliCarpini & Engelmann, 2007) affirms that it is of paramount importance that the multi-level class be a multi-level ESL literacy class rather than a multi-level mainstream and literacy class in order to best meet the literacy learners’ needs. Although not perfect, having a multi-level ESL literacy class is a vast improvement over the mixed ESL and literacy class, and can create a successful learning environment for the ESL literacy learner.

The concept of a separate specialized ESL literacy stream comprised of a continuum of increasingly more complex classes which are separate from and parallel to mainstream ESL emerges repeatedly in the literature. TESL Ontario (2004), in its position paper on adult education, recommends that ESL literacy be recognized as a program distinct from mainstream ESL programs and from adult basic education. Jangles Productions (Jangles Productions, 2006, p. 22) examining ESL literacy in Ontario also recommends that there be a separate, formally recognized literacy stream so that adequate resources and effort can be allotted, instead of combining ESL literacy learners with mainstream ESL learners in multi-level classes. They indicate that, while the federal government has provided a framework for the four phases of ESL literacy, these phases have not been fully implemented into the Ontario programs reviewed in their report: “Only a few sites participating in the study were in the process of or had implemented the four phases of literacy development” (p. 16). Instead, ESL literacy learners are placed in mainstream ESL classes in many programs, making it challenging for them to meet success in their learning.

Not only does the literature recommend that ESL literacy be a separate stream from the mainstream ESL classes, but inherent within that stream, it also supports the continuation of ESL literacy classes to a high literacy level. Blanton (1990) argues for the existence of higher ESL literacy classes for learners who have had “no chance to establish a strong academic base in their own language” (p. 1). Although they may be nearly fluent in informal English, she argues that they need specialized literacy instruction to help them develop the deep literacy base necessary for academic reading and writing. The CLB Literacy Document (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000) recommends that specialized ESL literacy development continue until the end of Phase III and states that, “students with higher oral/aural levels may be ready to enter an ABE program. Others, whose oral/aural level is closer to their literacy level, would probably benefit from participating in a regular adult ESL” (p. V). The CLB Literacy Document also notes that learners may move in and out of the ESL literacy stream and may have interruptions in their learning.

Much of the literature supports the preference of small classes for ESL literacy learners. Because they have less academic resources to draw on, these learners are in greater need of individual support. Jangles Productions (Jangles Productions, 2006) recommends that literacy class sizes be limited to ten learners so that instructors are able to provide learners with “the time they needed on foundation reading, writing, and numeracy skills as well as the development of oral/aural English” (p. 40). McPherson (2007) and Bow Valley College (2002c) further support ESL literacy classes being small. Achren and Williams (2006) advocate for small classes based on “the intensity of literacy work, the demands of the students unused to a formal learning environment, and the requirements of individuals that cannot be adequately met in a ‘normal’-sized class” (p. 6).

Another promising practice within ESL literacy programs is the existence of professional development for the practitioners. Teaching ESL literacy is a specialized area and, as such, requires different skills than those needed in mainstream ESL. Since most ESL certification involves little or no course work aimed at teaching the specific needs of the adult ESL literacy learner, many instructors feel inadequately prepared to work with this group. The instructors are not confident that what they are doing in the classroom is, indeed, the “right” way to approach ESL literacy. Folinsbee (2007) states that many ESL literacy instructors don’t feel equipped to teach this specialized population. She claims that they “emphasized that there is little formal ESL literacy training when obtaining their ESL certification and few opportunities for professional development afterwards” (p. 40). The literature reflects the ESL literacy instructors’ plea for specialized professional development aimed at teaching this population (Millar 1997; Auerbach 1992). The Centre for Literacy (2008) points out that “There is little formal acknowledgement that ESL literacy is a separate field or that teachers need specific training to do their job” (p. 8), and there is little specific ESL literacy training available. Jangles Productions (2006) recommends that there be regularly scheduled professional development on topics specific to ESL literacy in addition to providing a forum for these instructors to get together to exchange ideas with each other. Further, they recommended that “best practice” ESL literacy training workshops be developed and delivered to fill the existing void. (Jangles Productions, 2006, p. 28) The Ontario Literacy Coalition (2007) affirms this lack of opportunities for professional development. Moreover, they indicate that, because ESL literacy is so different from teaching mainstream ESL, many ESL literacy instructors feel professionally isolated and unqualified. The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (2005) also declares that, in order to meet the learners’ needs, ESL literacy training has to be made a priority. Thus, the literature affirms the need and desire for specialized ESL literacy professional development. Yates (2008) states it succinctly when she proclaims that “good teachers are good learners, and effective teachers continue learning throughout their careers” (p. 1).

Another best practice in ESL literacy involves supporting the ESL literacy learner in a holistic manner. The need to support learners outside of the classroom appears throughout the literature. This support is for a myriad of obstacles which impede the learner, such as daycare, transportation, and counselling. In order to help learners overcome barriers to learning, Leong and Collins (2007) argue that ESL literacy “programs need to incorporate a social support component” (p. 18). In addition to simply being sensitive to these barriers that face the learner, programs “need to understand how critical such support is for learner participation and success”. (Leong & Collins, 2007, p. 74). Moreover, these programs need to be diligent in their commitment to delivering that support. Auerbach (1992), however, cautions in the delivery method of such supports because “the way services are presented can foster either reliance on others for assistance or self-reliance” (p. 35). She also warns against instructors acting as social workers, thus undermining the learners’ abilities to problem-solve. Although she advocates treating the learner in a holistic fashion, she deems the “students must be involved in a

participatory, problem-posing way” (p. 35). In other words, they need to be taught and supported in their efforts to solve their own problems.

Often, the goals for ESL literacy learners are more complex than simply improving their reading and writing skills. Many wish to become more independent within their community, to become less dependent on their family and friends for translation and reading, to get a better job, or to successfully navigate government agencies (Wrigley & Guth, 1992, p. 27). Folinsbee (2007, p. 19) sees something of a conflict in this area, stating that while government agencies focus on the ESL literacy learner getting a job, the learner is often more interested in improving their ability to deal with everyday practical considerations. Furthermore, Folinsbee (2007) notes that what she calls “multiple external barriers” (p. 31) must be removed if the ESL literacy learner is to experience success. She argues that the program needs to be flexible enough to accommodate various schedules and have financial help in place to assist in daycare and transportation. The living circumstances of these learners must be taken into consideration, according to Williams and Nicholas (2005) who give the example of young learners with huge family responsibilities. In order to become effective, we must think about the learner as an individual with needs that extend beyond the classroom.

A perusal of the literature suggests that, although there is not yet a consensus of an exact definition of ESL literacy, there is general agreement on several factors that are part of good programming in ESL literacy. These include the premise that ESL literacy exists as a separate stream from mainstream ESL and that professional development be available for practitioners in order to better support the learners. Finally the literature points to the need to support the learner in non-academic ways and to do so in small classes. With these practices in place, the ESL literacy program is off to a good start and instructors can focus on the task of teaching the learners to read and write.

## Classroom Instruction for ESL Literacy Learners

Theories of ESL literacy instruction abound. Two methodologies that dominate the ESL literacy literature are the participatory method and the competency-based method. The participatory method involves learners and the instructor working together to determine outcomes and curriculum for the class. The competency-based method uses a pre-existing set of outcomes for each level, based on a variety of possible sources, such as a needs assessment, or the Canadian Literacy Document. Auerbach (1992) is a proponent of the participatory method, stating that the “most effective curricula are those tailored to and developed with participating learners” (p. 1). Luft (2005) describes the Pebbles in the Sand project, which is modelled on the participatory method, as a way to empower female ESL literacy learners. In this project, the organizers believe that the participatory method will “actively work to empower them in overcoming the

barriers they faced, while still allowing women an opportunity to learn the fundamentals of English language and literacy” (p. 6). This method is also called the Freirean approach, named after the work of Paulo Freire (1985).

The other methodology often cited is the competency- or performance-based method. It is described in Peyton and Crandall (1995) as a model based on outcomes. It uses statements such as “students will be able to...” (p. 3). Brod (1999) asserts that the competency list keeps the instructor on topic and allows the learners to know when they have succeeded in each competency. This approach is also the underlying philosophy of the CLB Literacy Document (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000) which measures literacy outcomes and, as such, is a competency-based method.

In addition to the methodologies, the literature also refers to various approaches for use in the ESL literacy classroom. One such approach is the total physical response (TPR). TPR, developed by Asher and presented on his website (1995), works particularly well with learners with low oral skills. Brod (1999) claims that “‘hands-on learning’, the most neglected modality for adults, can be accommodated through such activities as TPR ... where movement is combined with directions and vocabulary” (p. 4). Bell and Burnaby (1984) advocate for its use in the literacy classroom as well, because it allows the learner with low oral skills to demonstrate their comprehension. However, they do warn of the limitations of TPR as it “does not always involve the vocabulary items which are normally considered the most immediately useful” (p. 56). Massaro (2004) also suggests using TPR as an initial method for teaching classroom language to ESL literacy learners.

Another approach that is referred to throughout the literature is the language experience approach (LEA). The LEA is described by Bell and Burnaby (1984) as an oral discussion that is eventually written down by the teacher using the learners’ own words. It is then used as text to be read in unison and then, perhaps, individually. Auerbach (1992) claims that this approach empowers the ESL literacy learners: “Seeing their own words written, photocopied, and presented as reading material gives the students a real sense of the importance of their ideas... For many students, it is the first time they have had the experience of seeing their own words in writing” (p. 72). Massaro (2004) presents the LEA as a way to encourage participation in the classroom while Croydon (2005) emphasizes its creative, communicative, and personalized qualities.

Even though ESL literacy learners need to learn reading and writing skills, the literature overwhelmingly indicates that they also need to develop their oral fluency, increase their vocabulary and expand their academic concepts. A report by the Indiana Department of Education (n.d.) emphasizes the importance of oral language development: “Phonics and phonemic skills, though important..., do not facilitate reading comprehension if students’ oral language proficiency is not developed to the level of the texts they are expected to read” (p. 7). In fact, the report argues that everything that the instructor does should revolve around

increasing the learners' vocabulary. Thus, the instructor should be "explaining, demonstrating, drawing, rephrasing, reading, writing and manipulating the words throughout every aspect of instruction" (p. 7) in an effort to improve the learners' oral skills. It is apparent that ESL literacy learners need to be continuously exposed to new vocabulary in order to improve their writing. They have not yet developed the skills to learn from reading so they need to understand the new vocabulary before they are exposed to it in print. This leaves them free to focus on the difficult task of reading. Because ESL literacy learners typically have strong oral strategies, Burgoyne and Hull (2007) propose that instructors "develop a repertoire of oral language teaching techniques which do not rely on written English" (p. 31) and in this way tap into the learners' oral strengths.

It is important for that learning first take place in the oral realm before moving to the written. Holisky (1985) is emphatic that oral language must be taught first: "Always be sure that the students have oral/aural control over the material before introducing the literacy objective... Do not attempt to teach oral and written meanings at the same time" (p. 11). A study into effective reading practices conducted by Trupke-Bastidas and Poulos (2007) supports this. They find that ESL literacy learners with strong oral skills make greater improvements in their reading scores than those with low oral skills. They speculate that the learners who have stronger oral skills are better able to improve their reading scores because "they already knew many of the words and were then able to apply the letter-sound instruction to the words they already had in their vocabulary" (p. 13). Wrigley (2008) supports oral development before written as well: "Expecting students to deal with the dual challenges of learning the meaning of new words and phrases at the same time as trying to understand the relationship between the sounds of a new language and the symbols on the page can be too much of a challenge even for those highly motivated" (p. 3). Throughout the lesson plans Massaro (2004) has developed for ESL literacy learners, she incorporates the teaching of the oral before the written. Vocabulary development is also highlighted in the literature. Burt, Peyton and Adams (2003) suggest that there be explicit and direct vocabulary instruction before learners are expected to read: "When readers struggle with the meanings of individual vocabulary words, they will have difficulties connecting the meanings of words in a sentence or passage" (p. 26). The literature focusing on low level learners emphasizes the importance of oral practice in the form of chanting and singing as a way to both tap into strategies familiar to the learner and increase vocabulary (McPherson, 2007; Achren and Williams, 2006).

Because ESL literacy learners have had limited or interrupted formal education, they may lack many concepts that western society deems to be common knowledge. The Indiana Department of Education (n.d.) state that ESL literacy learners may "lack the background knowledge necessary for understanding texts" (p. 7) so it is important to specifically teach these concepts in the classroom. Background knowledge and concepts can include geography, such as the location of countries in the world; basic science, such as the ability to classify bears as mammals or

recognize that the earth revolves around the sun; world history; and many other areas. Furthermore, they recommend having key concepts on display at all times and “using drawings, diagrams, graphs and other visual aids to help the students to develop concepts and understanding” (p. 8).

Moreover, the literature emphasizes the importance of specifically teaching reading and writing skills to ESL literacy learners. While there is lively debate over the exact method of teaching reading to ESL literacy learners, there is general agreement that the material must be relevant to the learners’ lives and the focus must be on comprehension, or making meaning, rather than on decoding. Although phonics is an important skill that must be taught, current thought agrees that comprehension should be the main focus initially. Wrigley and Guth (1992) state that there is “growing consensus that ‘real life’ reading should be the starting point rather than the ending point of teaching initial literacy and that skills such as phonics should be used as a tool in helping learners understand the ‘print’ they see around them” (p. 10). Bell and Burnaby (1984) also support the importance of meaning-based reading: “What is important is that the student begin with a meaningful text which can later be used for decoding exercises, rather than beginning with individual sounds and later building up to complete sentences” (p. 44). Vinogradov (2008) outlines reading instruction as first finding a meaningful topic to engage the learner, next focusing on the sounds and words, and then going back to the larger text. This is called the whole-part-whole method: “Building reading in emergent readers requires instruction that is both top-down and bottom-up. We cannot expect foundational students to learn within a vacuum of a de-contextualized lesson, nor can we expect these students to acquire alphabetic knowledge by osmosis, without deliberate attention paid to symbols and sounds” (p. 3). Croydon (2005) compares reading to a puzzle where no part has meaning unless it is connected to another part; thus, she believes in using a meaning-based approach with phonics incorporated into it.

The literature approaches learning to write in a similar vein with a general consensus that writing must be personally relevant to the learners and be taught with a drive for meaning. Wrigley and Guth (1992) claim that writing does not have to “wait until a person has mastered the entire alphabet or internalized the writing system...literacy learners are able to write down ideas using their own approximation of letters and words” (p. 10). Bell and Burnaby (1984) explain that writing is made up of several pieces such as format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation and letter formation, and learners are unable to focus on all these simultaneously. Instead, they recommend structuring the writing so that the instructor controls most of these pieces and the learner only has to focus on one or two aspects of the process, such as in a cloze exercise.

Threaded through the literature are many references to the explicit instruction of learning strategies. Because ESL literacy learners have interrupted formal education, they need to be taught to use the strategies that literate learners use automatically. An effective ESL literacy curriculum should include strategy instruction in order to develop reading, writing and metacognition. The CLB Literacy Document (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks,

2000) claims that poor readers are less likely to use reading strategies to enhance their understanding even if they are capable of using them, so the instructor needs to “monitor learners as they use the strategies to ensure they are able to employ them independently” (p. XI). It asserts that learning to use strategies “gives learners a sense of control and independence in their learning” (p. XIII). Further support in the use of strategies is provided by the Indiana Department of Education (n.d.) . They state the importance of explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies and the importance of doing so at the learner’s reading level in order to meet success. Otherwise, they argue, “if students don’t experience successful application of comprehension strategies, they won’t even try to use them with other texts” (p. 8). Leong and Collins (2007) claim that strategies help learners “become more successful in the reading, writing, language learning, and test taking. They help learners become more effective language users and learners both inside and outside the classroom” (p. 125). Leong and Collins (2007) also provide a model of strategy instruction, outlining the steps to explicit strategy instruction. They conclude that in order to be successful, strategy use must be explicitly taught and practiced in the classroom. Another strategy that must be systematically taught is organizing their learning materials. Burgoyne and Hull (2007) note the importance, especially at the higher literacy levels, of instructors devoting “regular class time to teaching learners strategies for organising their learning materials” (p. 30). Bow Valley College (2003) indicates that ESL literacy learners need to develop the skills necessary to learn effectively” (p. 66). The literature strongly supports overt strategy instruction as a fundamental part of reaching this population.

The unique needs of foundational, or pre-literate, learners are the focus of several articles. These are ESL literacy learners who have had no development of literacy whatsoever. Before these learners can begin the onerous task of learning to read and write, they need an opportunity to gain pre-reading and pre-writing skills and concepts. Moore (2007) states that this includes developing “skills for ‘learning how to learn’ and how to build on their knowledge base” (p. 28). Because these learners have never before been to school, some may be totally unfamiliar with the use of line drawings and the mechanics of holding a pencil. To further complicate the learning process, foundational learners often have very limited spoken English. They are indeed a special group of learners and working with them requires a gentle approach and reduced set of expectations. Burgoyne and Hull (2007) stress that they have “very limited spoken English, very little experience in literacy in any language, and very little experience of formal education” (p. 10). With this in mind, they note the importance of predictable routines, a calm and welcoming classroom, and the use of songs and movement for foundational learners. Keeping class size small at this level is crucial (Burgoyne and Hull, 2007; Muir, 2003; Auerbach, 1992; Achren & Williams, 2006). McPherson (2007) argues that the small class size is necessary because in “the initial learning phase these learners need high levels of individualised teacher attention and intervention in order to develop a foundation of learning skills to support formal language learning strategies and to develop foundational literacy skills. Such learning can appear to be slow and painstaking in the early stages” (p. 3).

When working with foundational learners, McPherson (2007) further promotes teaching schedules that intersperse intense periods of literacy work with periods of less intense movement and oral development. Achren and Williams (2006) lament that foundational learners, in particular, lack confidence in a formal classroom learning environment and assert that these learners need “A supportive, appropriately paced learning environment that incorporates strategies for learning in a formal classroom environment” (p. 2). They recommend using teaching methods that establish routines, help them organize their work, and offer scaffolded exercises so that learners can experience success. Since these learners usually have very limited oral English, they further emphasize the importance of oral language development and promote theme teaching that remains on a single theme for an extended period of time, recycling the learning repeatedly.

When teaching ESL literacy learners, there are a variety of approaches and teaching methods examined in the literature including the participatory approach and competency-based method. The LEA assists learners in connecting print with meaning and TPR helps learners in their oral comprehension. Much of the literature points to the importance of the ongoing development of vocabulary, oral fluency, concepts, and strategy development. Finally, the literature addresses the special needs of foundational learners in their quest to gain the background concepts and mechanical skills needed to begin to read and write. As our learners become more proficient in their reading, writing and classroom learning, we need to be able to measure this learning and to teach them to measure it as well.

Assessment is an important component of learning. There are many different types of assessment. Although everyone seems to agree that it is a vital component of any ESL literacy program, there are many ideas about how assessment should be done. Some advocate for rubrics, others self-reflection, and still others portfolio. Wrigley and Guth (1992) note that it is important that “no single measure should serve as the basis for assessing and evaluating all aspects of student ability and learner growth” (p. 126) because sometimes assessment only demonstrates what learners cannot do, rather than what they can do. Leong and Collins (2007) outline the importance of linking assessment directly to instruction and that this linkage be transparent. Foundation Phase to Phase III, as outlined in the CLB Literacy Document (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000), are outcome-based with specific indicators to “help the instructor decide if the learner is able to achieve the outcome” (p. IX). The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (2000) stresses the importance of teaching learners to monitor their own learning: “We also need to encourage learners to think about how they learn” (p. XII).

Portfolio assessment is currently popular as a method of self-reflection and, using the CLB framework, Manitoba Labour and Immigration (2004) has developed guidelines on portfolio assessment. While they outline the benefits of using portfolios as assessment tools, they also admit the challenges facing ESL literacy learners who are attempting to use portfolio assessment. Even though portfolio assessment is somewhat teacher-driven initially, they advocate its use because it “is a means through which learners can compile examples of language tasks and document their language learning progress” (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, 2004, p. 1). Massaro (2004) also advocates the use of both portfolios and checklists to demonstrate learner progress. She states that “by making the review process part of the class routine, the learners learn to understand and appreciate the process” (p. 51).

Florez (1998) advocates for the use of authentic assessment which includes performance-based assessment, learner self-assessment, and portfolios. She argues that these types of assessment are relevant to real life contexts. In addition, authentic assessment provides “a venue to develop self-reflection and self-evaluation skills” (Florez & Terrill, 2003, p. 4). Leong and Collins (2007) cite the use of learner portfolios in the Bridge program at Bow Valley College. This program emphasizes portfolio use and incorporates it into its curriculum: “portfolios are an excellent way for learners to demonstrate progress within the program, show commitment to their studies, and build the confidence necessary to take control of their own learning” (p. 147).

Research by Moore (2007) outlines some of the difficulties associated with assessing foundational learners. One of the difficulties outlined is that the learners feel that assessment is a teacher issue and that it has nothing to do with them. Moore argues that foundational learners are not yet able to use self-reflection for their own learning and instead recommends using a grid

or checklist. Brod (1999) too advocates the use of checklists for literacy learners. She recommends the checklist be “small, explicit, and achievable” (p. 10). Florez and Terrill (2003) capture the essence of assessment, stating that “Learner assessment keeps both the teacher and learners informed of what has been achieved and what still needs work” (p. 5). Ultimately, there are many shapes that assessment can take, but it is imperative that it be directly related to the learning.

## Numeracy

In recent years, numeracy has emerged as an essential component of ESL literacy. Bow Valley College (2002) recommends the inclusion of numeracy in ESL literacy “because without basic number and math skills, individuals with literacy difficulties would find themselves at a disadvantage in many areas of daily life” (p. 18). Kerka (1996) states that numeracy is needed “in many everyday situations—cooking, shopping, crafts, financial transactions, traveling, using VCRs and microwave ovens, interpreting information in the media, taking medications” (p. 1). The CLB Literacy Document (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000) incorporates it into all of the literacy Phases except the Foundation Phase. Both the CLB Literacy Document (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000) and Kerka (1996) believe that numeracy is best understood if it is learned in familiar contexts, encouraging the instructor to integrate numeracy directly into the relevant curriculum. Bow Valley College (2002) and the Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association (n.d.) both model the incorporation of numeracy into their themes within the curriculum. Ciancone (1996) emphasizes the importance of incorporating “both the mathematical skills and the language for these skills...into the curriculum in order to prepare the learners to be successful” (p. 4). The Indiana Department of Education (n.d.) also indicates the importance of teaching the specific math vocabulary alongside the math concepts, suggesting various strategies for doing so. As vital as numeracy is to the ESL literacy classroom, there is a very limited amount of literature written on it at this point in time.

## Supporting First Language Literacy

While there are many advocates of developing first language literacy programs, this model is not reflective of the Canadian ESL literacy scene where the typical class includes a diverse group of learners from many countries, all speaking different first languages. Literature on the topic of first language literacy is prolific and the Ontario Literacy Coalition (2007) does a thorough job of providing a literature review this issue. Therefore, because first language literacy as a predominant method of instruction is not a viable option in Canada, this review will focus instead on discussions around the use of periodic first language support, such as that used for

occasional translation or explanation rather than on bilingual ESL literacy instruction as a methodology where much of the literacy learning is done in the learner's first language.

Many studies indicate the importance of having some form of bilingual support within the ESL literacy classroom when direct bilingual instruction is not possible. This bilingual support varies greatly across programs, from having none at all to having access to a bilingual translator once or twice per week. Some classes make use of those learners with higher oral skills to help translate for those with lower oral skills. In research conducted into the use of native language in ESL classes in Australia, Wigglesworth (2005) points out that even when instructors discourage its use, "learners often use their first language actively to help other learners in their classroom" (p. 3) and argues that it allows learners to access different cognitive strategies. Rivera (1990) states that some ESL literacy program have access to bilingual personnel who may be able to "help ESL teachers in and out of the classroom as translators, tutors... and sources of cultural information for teachers to incorporate into ESL literacy lessons" (p. 2). There seems to be a general agreement in the literature that having occasional bilingual support is beneficial to foundational learners. The CLB Literacy Document (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000) also acknowledges the role that first language support can play in conceptual development. In Gunn's (2003) work with foundational learners, she suggests having bilingual support for an hour or two each week, in order to provide learners with clarification and encouragement. Although bilingual literacy instruction as a methodology is not a good fit in the typically diverse Canadian ESL classroom, there is a support for having access to occasional bilingual support in the ESL literacy classroom

## Issues and Gaps

In recent years there has been a growing mass of literature written on various aspects of ESL literacy. There are still, however, gaps in the literature. One major gap is the existence of research on becoming literate for the first time in a second language. Most of the research on learning to read in English has been conducted on literate ESL learners, on low literate English speaking adults learning to read in English, or on children learning to read in their first language. Craats, Kurvers and Young-Scholten (2005) argue that "very little is known about non-literate adults who learn to read and write in a second language" (p. 15) and Burt, Peyton and Schaezel (2008) agree that more "Research is needed to better understand how adult English language learners with limited literacy skills in their native language and little education acquire literacy skills in English" (p. 7). Condelli and Wrigley (2005) also advise that further research be done to find out which specific instructional practices cause ESL literacy learners to improve their reading skills. In the Canadian context, Folinsbee (2007) proclaims that there is "no Canadian research found that shows particular strategies for ESL literacy learning and instruction that lead

to progress and positive outcomes” (p. 25). The Ontario Literacy Coalition (2007) indicates that there are “few longitudinal studies on ESL literacy learners, their classrooms, and their successes/failures” (p. 38). This indicates that more research needs to be done on precisely how ESL literacy learners develop literacy.

A further gap in the literature is the lack of a single, established definition of the ESL literacy learner. Part of this issue is whether or not to include in the definition of ESL literacy the non-Roman alphabet learners who are literate in their first language. This is a grey area in the literature; some researches argue that non-Roman alphabet learners who are literate in their first language can more easily transfer their literacy skills (Wrigley, 2008) while others include non-Roman alphabet learners, literate or not, in a broader definition of ESL literacy (Bell & Burnaby, 1984; Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000). A larger issue, though, is that we need to have a firm grasp on who ESL literacy learners really are. The Centre for Literacy (2008) explains that “Identifying who makes up the ESL Literacy population and how best to teach them are key issues” (p. 10). Folinsbee (2007) stresses that in Canada we do not have a common understanding of who our ESL literacy learners are, nor what skills and knowledge they bring with them. Without a common understanding of who are learners are, it is difficult to meet their needs.

Another gap in the research is identifying to a greater degree of certainty the point at which ESL literacy learners can successfully be integrated into mainstream ESL classes or ABE classes. In other words, how proficient do ESL literacy learners need to be before they can experience success in a mainstream class? The CLB Literacy Document (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000) suggests that the end of Phase III is a time of transition and that this is approximately equal to CLB 5. Yet, learners who have completed Phase III are not always ready to fully participate in a CLB 5 class as they do not necessarily have all the background concepts, strategies, and academic skills necessary to thrive in this mainstream ESL class. A related issue is that many programs require entry benchmarks of CLB 6 or 7, which then prevents the ESL literacy learner who has completed Phase III from being admitted. The research on when an ESL literacy learner is ready for other programming is scant, leaving practitioners unsure at what point the ESL literacy learner becomes a mainstream ESL learner.

There is little published research into how best to teach numeracy in an ESL literacy program, so this is yet another area which needs further exploration. Very little of the current literature deals explicitly with the practical nature of how to teach numeracy in the classroom so this is an further area to be developed in the future.

Thus it is apparent that further research in several areas of ESL literacy could add to our growing knowledge of this area. Research examining precisely how ESL literacy learners first gain literacy skills will enable us to better teach these learners. An established definition of ESL literacy, greater knowledge on when these learners can successfully transition into mainstream

programs, and more on how to best teach numeracy to ESL literacy learners are all areas in need of further exploration in the future.

## Conclusions

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of literature on ESL literacy. This is indicative of the realities of the typical adult Canadian ESL classroom. There have been a growing number of learners in need of ESL literacy support, and the literature reflects this. This review has examined various aspects of this field, beginning with an overview of the many definitions of ESL literacy learners. The review reflects on promising practices in programming, including the importance of having a distinct ESL literacy stream which is apart from the mainstream ESL classes, providing professional development opportunities for the instructors, striving for small classes, and supporting the ESL literacy learner holistically. The literature discusses the importance of continuing to teach vocabulary development, oral fluency, and concept development, while at the same time helping learners develop strategies for reading, writing, and learning. This review also looks at how the literature addresses on-going assessment, foundational learners as a unique group, the role of first language support, and numeracy in the ESL literacy classroom. Finally, the review notes the gaps in the literature, where future research might be directed so that we are better able to serve our growing population of learners with literacy needs.

ESL literacy is an emerging field, and, even though there is a collection of literature already in existence, it is apparent that is an area ripe for future research. As Gunderson (2008) states “there is a need for deep ESL literacy expertise” (p. 250). It is promising to see the recent explosion of ESL literacy research out there.





## Appendix 3: Annotated Bibliography



**Alexander, C. (2008).** *Literacy matters: A call for action*. Retrieved Sept. 11, 2008, from [www.nald.ca/library/research/litmat/litmat.pdf](http://www.nald.ca/library/research/litmat/litmat.pdf)

This article, written by Toronto Dominion's Deputy Chief Economist, makes the point that, beyond the economic gains of improved literacy rates, there are a number of benefits for individuals, communities, and society at large. The paper includes a definition of literacy, information and statistics about literacy rates in Canada, the economic and social costs of low literacy and the role of public policy and private sector initiatives to improve literacy. This article examines youth literacy and adult literacy separately and includes statistics about each of these groups. The author also includes information about immigrants to Canada and briefly addresses first language literacy.

**Andrews, H. (2005).** *Tips for teaching ESL beginners and pre-literate adults*. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 10. Retrieved Nov. 27, 2008, from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Andrews-Beginners.htm>

This article provides a number of tips and strategies to make teaching in an ESL literacy classroom more rewarding for both teacher and learner. Some tips include avoiding using books that are too childish, creating authentic materials, having snacks in the classroom, constantly reviewing, and trying not to make assumptions about what the learners are learning or are not learning. The author indicates that using role-play, being animated, and speaking clearly and directly make a difference in how or what a learner may learn.

**Anderson, L., & Seabrook de Vargas, D. (2003)** *ESL resource package for Alberta communities*. Calgary, AB: Bow Valley College.

This resource package, which is referenced to the Canadian Language Benchmarks, provides support to teachers in ESL and ESL literacy. It includes information about ESL programs and classrooms, sample assessment tools, strategies for developing unit and lesson plans, activity ideas, scoring guides, and placement tools. It also has CLB 1-8 learner profiles and provides a sequence and grammar for each of the benchmarks.

**Auerbach, E. R. (1997).** *Making meaning, making change: Participatory curriculum development for adult ESL literacy*. McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics.

This is a guide to implementing a participatory curriculum in the adult ESL literacy classroom. It documents a project conducted by the University of Massachusetts (the UMass Family Literacy Project) and uses the findings to recommend how similar processes can be followed in order to develop a participatory curriculum for individual groups of ESL literacy learners. The

structure of the book mirrors the curriculum development process, addressing topics such as structuring the program, identifying learner themes, developing a curriculum around these themes, using literacy to make change, and using evaluation techniques. The book is intended as an interactive resource for program administrators and instructors alike, to support and inform curriculum development by integrating research findings, classroom experiences, theoretical developments, and practical issues.

**Auerbach, E., Barahona, B., Midy, J., Vaquerano F., Zambrano, A., & Arnaud, J. (1996).** *Adult ESL/literacy from the community to the community: A guidebook for participatory literacy training.* Philadelphia, PA: Lawrence Erlbaum.

This informative ESL literacy resource contains five chapters covering different aspects of ESL literacy and how they can be addressed in education, community, home, and the workplace. This book provides a model for training literate ESL learners to support their communities and create change for non-literate members of their own linguistic communities. The focus is on community leadership development, using a participatory approach to both literacy instruction and teacher training. It also includes information on native language adult literacy instruction and collaboration. It describes a community-university collaborative project that trained mentors within three different communities to provide initial literacy instruction to other members of their communities.

**Bell, J., & Burnaby, B. (1984).** *A handbook for ESL literacy.* Toronto, ON: OISE Press.

This book takes a comprehensive look at the needs of ESL literacy learners at various stages of literacy. A section on literacy theory gives context for instructors to position ESL literacy learners within the rest of the ESL population. The book also includes a section on the specific needs of adult learners. Whole chapters focus on the content of ESL literacy lessons and how to teach reading, writing, and multi-level classrooms. Additionally, there are chapters on assessment and ESL literacy activities.

**Bloom, M., Campbell, A., & Gagnon, N. (2001).** *Breaching the barriers to workplace literacy: Phase 1 report. Overcoming barriers: Effective strategies for enhancing employee literacy and learning in the workplace.* Ottawa, ON: Conference Board of Canada.

This research report explores the question of how to overcome the principle barriers to increasing employee literacy and learning in Canadian workplaces. It includes findings from a review of literature on the costs, benefits, and impediments related to literacy, and the qualities of successful workplace programs. It addresses the issues of why workplace literacy and learning matter. It identifies the benefits to employers and employees, the barriers to employee literacy,

ways to build a foundation for learning, solutions to overcome barriers, and steps to take to build corporate literacy.

**Bow Valley College. (2000). *Demographics, needs and programming for ESL literacy learners*. Calgary, AB: Author.**

This paper captures a discussion of ESL literacy needs in Alberta and focuses on the findings of research conducted by Jennifer Acevedo and Diane Hardy at Bow Valley College in 2000. Included is a definition of ESL literacy as defined by the CLB Literacy Document. The first section provides information about the needs of literacy learners and how to best meet these needs. It includes topics such as motivation, funding, other language literacy, youth ESL literacy, and personal issues affecting learners. It also includes an overview of learning in traditional and technological societies. The second section addresses strategies, methodologies, and technologies that will best meet the needs of ESL literacy learners. It also includes a list of best practices. Alternate ways of assessment and programming are addressed. Finally, there is a section on the proposed next steps in ESL literacy in Alberta.

**Bow Valley College. (2002). *The ABCs of practical literacy*. Calgary, AB: Author.**

This manual provides practical activities for the ESL literacy classroom. It is based on the CLB Literacy Phases and contains reproducible worksheets and flashcards. The content in the manual focuses on three themes: economic literacy, employment literacy, and personal management literacy. For each theme there are a variety of suggested activities with detailed instructions and material suggestions.

**Bow Valley College. (2002). *Content-based literacy instruction program*. Calgary, AB: Author.**

The document is a framework for a theme-based ESL literacy program. It adheres to the CLB Literacy Phases and has a basic program outline for the literacy Phases from Foundation Phase to Phase III Adequate. The document outlines three themes: economic content, employment, and personal management. For each level of literacy there is an overview and checklist of outcomes for each of these three themes. The overview includes a list of possible activities, suggested resources, writing skills, reading skills, and numeracy skills.

**Bow Valley College. (2003). *Effective post high school programming: Evaluating the needs of immigrant youth with literacy issues*. Calgary, AB: Author**

This document comes out of research conducted in Calgary, Alberta to understand the barriers, literacy needs, and educational interests of young adults with ESL literacy needs who have met the age cap for high school but need further education to get their diplomas. The document includes background information, details of the study, and key findings and recommendations.

**Bow Valley College (n.d). *Pilot project: Individualized literacy instruction: Instructor's orientation manual*. Calgary, AB: Author.**

This manual was designed to support an individualized literacy instruction program at Bow Valley College in Calgary, AB. Included in the contents are a learning disabilities checklist, tips for working with ESL literacy learners, a description of types of literacy learners, approaches to teaching ESL literacy, and the five stages of ESL literacy development as described in the Draft Literacy Component for Draft Curriculum Guidelines CIC (1994). It includes suggested resources for working with ESL literacy learners and tips for working with learning disabled students.

**Bow Valley College. (n.d.). *Bridge program student survival guide: Making connections*. Calgary, AB: Author.**

This guide was created to support both instructors and learners in literacy classrooms when making connections to community supports in Calgary, Alberta. The main goal of the guide is to help learners transition from accessing the community in a supported way to their eventual independence. The guide contains fact forms that student can use, which include guiding questions, vocabulary, important phone numbers, and tips for follow-up with community supports. Additionally, there is a resource list of phone numbers and addresses of community supports in Calgary that the teachers can use when guiding students through the process of accessing help. Some of the topic areas are pregnancy, dentists, doctors, eyeglasses, parking tickets, and banking.

**Brod, S. (1999). *What non-readers or beginning readers need to know: Performance-based ESL adult literacy*. Retrieved Jul. 17, 2008, from <http://www.springinstitute.org/Files/whatnonreaders2.pdf>**

This booklet is divided into two sections: adult ESL learners and performance-based instruction. The section on adult ESL learners includes factors affecting learning such as health and age, expectations and motivation, learning styles and modes, and educational background. It also describes the distinctions between literate and non-literate learners and provides strategies to use in the classroom. The second section offers a rationale for performance-based instruction and

refers to whole language, sight words, phonics, document literacy, numeracy, and employment-related content for beginning readers. The appendices include additional resources and brief reviews of four competency-based literacy texts.

**Burt, M., Peyton, J. K., & Schaetzel, K. (2008).** *Working with adult English language learners with limited literacy: Research, practice, and professional development.* Retrieved Dec. 2, 2008 from [http://www.cal.org/caelanetwork/pd\\_resources/index.html](http://www.cal.org/caelanetwork/pd_resources/index.html)

This brief focuses on the needs of pre-literate, non-literate, and semi-literate learners. Teachers, education researchers, program administrators, and policy makers can benefit from this document as it provides information that will help them to meet the needs of their literacy learners. Areas for discussion in the paper include knowledge and needs of the learners, instructional strategies for learners, and professional development for instructors of learners with limited literacy.

**Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association (n.d.)** *Knowing your literacy students project: Curriculum guidelines and cultural manual.* Calgary, AB: Author.

This resource manual was developed to help women from all backgrounds who have had very little or no education in their countries of origin increase their literacy skills and integrate in to Canadian life. The manual consists of two main sections; culture and its influence on the literacy process for learners, and curriculum guidelines. Included are definitions of pre-literate literacy learners, non-literate learners, semi-literate learners, and non-Roman alphabet learners. The manual includes activities in reading, writing, speaking, listening and numeracy. There are eight units, and each has an “at-a-glance” plan, as well as in depth explanations and descriptions of the lesson. Lesson plan handouts are also included. The appendices include fact sheets about where students in literacy classrooms may come from, a world map, useful resources, pre- and post-assessment statistics of students in the pilot study, and conclusions drawn from the study.

**California Department of Education. (2003).** *Using portfolio assessment in EL civics classes in California.* *California Adult Education Research Digest, 1.* Retrieved May 28, 2008, from <https://www.casas.org/home/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.showContent&MapID=1332>

This article offers a definition of portfolios and discusses how portfolios can contribute to assessment, instruction, and learning. The article describes purposes for using portfolios, types of portfolios, appropriate content, desired outcomes, and guidelines for instructors and learners. It outlines steps involved in developing and implementing a standardized portfolio assessment system and provides links to other portfolio literature.

**Campbell, P. M. (2004). *Canadian adult reading assessment: Student's assessment booklet*.  
Edmonton, AB: Grass Roots Press.**

This is the booklet given to students writing the Canadian Adult Reading Assessment. It includes word lists and several passages for nine levels of readings. Each level contains a minimum of four passages.

**Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (2000). *Canadian language benchmarks 2000: ESL for literacy learners*. Ottawa: National Literacy Secretariat at Human Resources Development Canada.**

This document includes a definition of an ESL literacy learner, comprehensive information about ESL literacy learners in a classroom, and the value of teaching numeracy in ESL literacy classes. Sections in this document cover language competencies, literacy competencies, and conditions for reading, writing, and numeracy for the Foundation Phase and each of the other phases of ESL literacy according to Canadian language Benchmarks. Each section also includes an overview of what a learner at each level is either able to do or is beginning to do.

**Centre for Literacy. (2008). *ESL and literacy: Finding common ground, serving learners' needs*. Montreal, PQ: Author.**

This literature review looks at the immigrant population in Canada who are not literate in their native language. It examines what it means to be an ESL literacy learner and includes discussions and definitions of literacy and ESL literacy. It also examines the role of placement and assessment tools, professional development for instructors, and instructional strategies for the ESL literacy classroom. Policy issues in Canada are also addressed.

**Chandler, C. E. (1990). *Using newspapers in the ESL literacy classroom*. ERIC Digest.  
Washington, DC: Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education for Limited-  
English-Proficient Adults (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 321619).  
Retrieved from ERIC database.**

This article identifies the benefits of using newspapers in the ESL literacy classroom. It includes practical tips and strategies for implementing newspaper readings at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. Additionally, the article highlights what the newspaper industry in the United States does to promote literacy and use among ESL learners.

**Ciancone, T. (1996). *Numeracy in the adult ESL classroom*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education. (ERIC Document Reproductive Service No. ED392316). Retrieved from ERIC database.**

This article examines numeracy for ESL learners with a focus on teaching numeracy to learners with low literacy skills. It includes assessing learners' numeracy needs and offers suggestions for curriculum ideas and resources for the classroom. Sections include tips for teachers, classroom numeracy activities and recommendations for adult numeracy/literacy learners.

**Condelli, L., & Wrigley, H. S. (2006). Instruction, language and literacy: What works study for adult ESL literacy students. In I. van de Craats, J. Kurvers, & M. Young-Scholten (Eds.), *Low-educated second language and literacy acquisition: Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium Tilburg University, August 2005* (pp.111-134). Utrecht, Netherlands: LOT.**

This article is one of several produced following an international workshop in the Netherlands in 2005 which discusses second language acquisition and literacy development of adults with little or no native language schooling. The article details a study conducted into the ways in which instructors can provide effective instruction to improve the English language and literacy skills of adult ESL literacy learners. It presents a number of recommendations for successful instruction in the ESL literacy classroom, including using authentic materials, using native language for clarification, creating a safe learning environment, and teaching critical thinking skills.

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

This book discusses the theoretical underpinnings associated with practical approaches to adult ESL literacy. The content of the text is based in adult learning theory and discusses five approaches to adult ESL literacy teaching and learning. These approaches are competency-based instruction, whole language, language experience, writing and publishing (student experience stories), and a Freirian/participatory approach. Included in certain chapters are classroom activities, lesson plan ideas, and additional resources.

**Croydan, A. (2005). *Making it real: Teaching pre-literate adult refugee students*. Retrieved May 11, 2008, from <http://literacynow.info/PDF/prelit.pdf>**

This book focuses on teaching pre-literate ESL learners at the beginning stages of their literacy development. It includes practical tips, techniques, games, activities, and strategies for teaching speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It advocates a meaning-based approach to teaching and learning, teacher developed materials, and checklists of competencies in speaking, listening, reading, writing, strategies/skills, and numeracy. The book also contains learner profiles representing a cross-section of adult pre-literate refugees.

**Cummings, J., Jacot, M., and Parau, A. (2006). *An investigation of best practices in the instruction and assessment of LINC literacy learners in Ontario*. Toronto, ON: Jangles Productions.**

This study reviews a number of sites in Ontario that offer ESL literacy and makes recommendations for best practices in instruction and assessment. Its recommendations are in compliance with the CLB Literacy Phases. It also identifies two models for ESL literacy programs which it identifies as best practices.

**Fenwick, T., & Parsons, J. (1999). A note on using portfolios to assess learning. *Canadian Social Studies*, 33(3), 90-92.**

This paper provides practical descriptions, examples, and step-by-step guidelines for using portfolio assessment within a social studies classroom. While the focus of this paper is on the social studies classroom, much of what the author writes can be generalized to all classroom situations. It includes a sample format for holistic grading of a portfolio. The paper addresses potential concerns with portfolios as assessment tools but indicates that the benefits of portfolios outweigh the challenges associated with their implementation.

**Folinsbee, S. (2007). *Linkages: Connecting literacy and English as a second language*. Ottawa, ON: Movement for Canadian Literacy.**

This discussion paper reviews the literature on ESL literacy and identifies some best practices in ESL literacy. It gives an in-depth summary of current Canadian research into ESL literacy, reviews Canadian policies on literacy, and has a look at Canadian ESL programs. The paper connects ESL and literacy and looks at work with groups across Canada. It examines what works and guiding principles in ESL literacy, and proposes strategies to address gaps.

**Gaer, S. (1998). Less teaching and more learning. *NCSALL Focus on Basics*, 2. Retrieved Sept. 18, 2008, from <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=385>**

This paper examines the shift from a more traditional grammar-based approach to a project-based approach in the adult ESL classroom in order to empower students and engage them in their own learning. Gaer includes three elements that are crucial to the success of project-based learning (PBL): the project must be geared towards the students in the classroom, the students need to see the value of the project they are undertaking, and there has to be a realistic timeline. The author states that a PBL approach in the classroom creates a greater sense of community among classmates.

**Gomez, E. (2000). Assessment portfolios: Including English language learners in large-scale assessments. Retrieved Jul. 3, 2008, from <http://www.cal.org/resources/Digest/0010assessment.html>**

This article defines assessment portfolio and explains some of the benefits of using assessment portfolios with ESL learners. Some of the listed benefits include a shared vision of student goals and standards, an authentic picture of learning, improved teaching and student learning, and learner reflection. The article also notes some of the challenges associated with using portfolios in ESL including difficulties in scoring and standardizing the process.

**Gunderson, L. (2008). *ESL (ELL) literacy instruction: A guidebook to theory and practice*. New York: Routledge.**

This recently published book focuses on reading instruction in the ESL classroom and contains both research-based discussions and practical teaching suggestions. It begins with a brief history of reading instruction and then addresses reading-related topics such as selecting appropriate reading programs, teaching young ESL learners to read, teaching older ESL learners to read, and teaching academic reading. It also includes discussions on the importance of culture in second-language literacy contexts, phonemic awareness training, and developments related to new technologies, and it provides information on how published resources can be accessed on the internet.

**Gunn, M. (2003). Opportunity for literacy? Preliterate learners in the AMEP. *Prospect 18* (2), 35-53.**

This article is a study on pre-literate or foundational learners in ESL literacy classes in Australia. The author discusses various approaches to learning that work well with this group, including using their oral skills. The author identifies the unique needs of foundational learners and encourages teaching methods which address these needs. The article discusses teaching learners the use of strategies and classroom routines.

**Guth, G. J. A., & Wrigley, H. S. (1992). *Adult ESL literacy programs and practices: A report on a national research study*. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED348895). Retrieved from ERIC database.**

This article highlights the findings of an American study which describes some of the promising practices in the field of ESL literacy. The practices include the concept of making meaning through the learners' life experiences, looking at language and learning in context, and ensuring that learning is meaningful and relevant. The article describes such practices as providing a social context for literacy education, learning through hands-on experience, using learner-generated materials, linking competence and language awareness, and using technology in an

ESL literacy environment. This article helps the reader to gain a better understanding of the specific practices highlighted.

**Hawley, L. (2002).** *Needs assessment and learner goal for literacy/low beginning ESL classes.* Oceanside, CA: Miracosta College.

This compilation of assessments is used to inform lesson planning, to provide ongoing assessment, and to assess language-learning skills after the completion of a unit. Each activity includes a worksheet to use in the classroom. All assessments can be used as-is or modified to use in low-level literacy classrooms. Each activity in the workbook includes assessments, purpose, timeframe, and procedures.

**Holt, G. M. (1995).** *Teaching low-level adult ESL learners.* Washington, D.C: National Publishing House for ESL Literacy Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED379965). Retrieved from ERIC database.

This digest provides information about identifying and assessing low-level adult ESL literacy learners, as well as information about instructional techniques, classroom materials, and sample procedures for instruction. Each section of the digest is divided into reference sections with a brief summary and checklist of tips, strategies, and other things to look for in learners or in the classroom. All of the information in the digest provides an easy to read, quickly accessible list of tips and resources to make ESL literacy instruction meaningful to learners.

**Indiana Department of Education (n.d.).** *Effective programs for English language learners (ELL) with interrupted formal education.* Retrieved Dec. 2, 2008, from [http://www.doe.in.gov/lmmp/pdf/effective\\_programs\\_ell.pdf](http://www.doe.in.gov/lmmp/pdf/effective_programs_ell.pdf)

This article, posted under the “Instructional Strategies” section of the Office of English Language Learning and Migrant Education’s website, gives an overview of effective teaching approaches for ESL literacy learners and includes a section for references and resources. Some of the models for instruction include the pull-out model, the push-in model, and after school or Saturday programs. While this article focuses on instruction for K-12 learners, much of what is included can apply to adults ESL learners as well. There are also sections on best practices for learners with interrupted formal education (content-based ESL and sheltered instruction to name a few), a checklist for what works in teaching ESL literacy students, and sections on teaching literacy and math to ESL learners.

**Kerka, S. (1995). *Not just a number: Critical numeracy for adults*. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career and Vocational Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED385780). Retrieved from ERIC database.**

This digest examines emerging perspectives on numeracy and their social, cultural, and political implications as a way to reconsider how we teach numeracy. The article gives a definition of numeracy and addresses philosophical questions that arise around the concepts of math and numeracy. The author explains that, like language, numeracy is culturally biased and socially constructed. The article includes sections that address the notion that math suggests a particular way of thinking, that numeracy reflects cultural values, that math evolves and changes, and that numeracy is practical and can include different ways of solving problems. Kerka believes that literacy and numeracy should be linked and contextualized and promotes the idea of keeping math journals to connect numeracy and language.

**Leary, N. (2006). *Portfolio evaluation: How does it work in adult literacy? Fieldnotes for ABE Administrators*. Retrieved Jul. 2, 2008, from <http://www.able.state.pa.us/able/lib/able/fieldnotes06/fn06portfolio.pdf>**

This article, published on the Adult Basic Education and Literacy website, focuses on the use of portfolios to enhance the learning experience for adult basic education and literacy learners. Leary highlights the idea that portfolios are a tool to maximize learner reflection and ownership of learning. The article includes the concepts of teacher-learner collaboration, process and product portfolios, student-teacher conferences, and reflection for ABE, GED, and ESL.

**Leong, M., & Collins, L. (2007). *Bridging the gap: A framework for teaching and transitioning low literacy immigrant youth*. Calgary, AB: Bow Valley College.**

This document is a framework for teaching and transitioning immigrant youth who have low literacy skills. The provided framework can be broadly applied to first language literacy programs, general literacy programs, and aboriginal programs. The document includes a literature review of literacy issues across North America in reference to young adult ESL literacy instruction and transitioning learners. The framework addresses identifying and recruiting learners, supporting and retaining learners, and teaching and transitioning learners. It also includes the use of portfolio for assessment and evaluation, project-based learning, self-reflection, and goal setting.

**Literacy Alberta. (2006). *Literacy – for a life of learning: A collaborative process toward a proposed literacy policy for all Albertans*. Retrieved Nov. 20, 2008, from <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/lifelern/lifelern.pdf>**

This document includes a broad definition of what literacy means in Alberta. It includes statistics specific to Alberta about literacy and a framework for literacy policy in Alberta. It outlines five broad goals to increase both literacy and literacy awareness, with strategies for implementing each of these goals.

**Luft, C. (2005). *Pebbles in the sand: A program for immigrant women*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB.**

This thesis is an ethnographic examination of Pebbles in the Sand, a literacy program offered through the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association in Calgary, Alberta. The program is offered to immigrant women with little or no education in their countries of origin. The paper addresses adult literacy, adult learning, and ESL literacy in general terms and then focuses specifically on Pebbles in the Sand. The program, developed in 1999, is based on the education methodology supported by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. The thesis describes the author's experience as a volunteer in a ten-week class and offers a detailed description of the day to day classroom activities in the program. Luft writes from her own experience about the facilitators, volunteers, and participants of the program.

**Manitoba Labour and Immigration. (2004). *Collaborative language portfolio assessment: Manitoba best practices guide*. Winnipeg, MB: Author.**

This is a teachers' guide on making collaborative portfolios and using them as assessment in the ESL classroom. It adheres to the CLB and the CLB Literacy Phases and has sections that discuss the challenges and use at different levels of ESL. It also provides some sample material that can be used in portfolios.

**Massaro, J. (2004). *Adult ESL literacy resource survival guide for instructors*. Vancouver, BC: ELSA Net.**

This is a guide to support classroom teachers of ESL literacy learners. It provides practical tips about what to do in specific classroom situations. Some examples of classroom situations include creating community from day one versus continuous intake, teaching reading and writing in multi-level classes, and promoting self-esteem. This guide also includes a section on adapting commercial materials and creating appropriate materials for adult ESL literacy learners. The author includes a chapter on how to use the CLB Literacy Document to guide formative assessment. The bibliography contains a list of top ten resources for ESL literacy instructors, an annotated bibliography of relevant resources, publisher information, and online literacy resources.

**Meltzer, J., & Hamann, E. T. (2004). *Meeting the literacy development needs of adolescent English language learners through content area learning. Part one: Focus on motivation and engagement.* Providence, RI: The Education Alliance at Brown University.**

This is the first part of a two-part publication and examines the instructional principles connecting learner motivation with engagement and literacy development. It is the product of two overlapping research reviews: one on academic literacy development of adolescents and the other on educational experiences and learning needs of adolescent English language learners. The paper focuses on three “promising practices:” making connections to the lives of learners; creating safe and responsive classrooms; and engaging learners to interact with each other and the text.

**Meltzer, J., & Hamann, E. T. (2004). *Meeting the literacy development needs of adolescent English language learners through content area learning. Part two: Focus on classroom teaching and learning strategies.* Providence, RI: The Education Alliance at Brown University.**

This is the second part of a two-part publication and focuses on specific literacy support strategies that promote academic literacy development at the secondary level. It discusses various classroom approaches, such as giving specific attention to reading comprehension, spending more time reading and writing, having more speaking and listening activities related to texts, developing critical thinking skills, creating flexible groupings, and responding to learner needs.

**Millar, D. (1997). *Second language students in Canadian literacy programs: Current issues and concerns.* Retrieved Nov. 20, 2008, from <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/slsinclp/cover.htm>**

This document outlines research conducted at Red River College in Winnipeg, MB to examine the current situation of ESL learners entering literacy programs in Canada. The document includes research questions posed, a literature review, statistics concerning ESL students moving into literacy programs in Canada, and recommendations.

**North Vancouver School District (2004). *Reading 44: A core reading framework*. North Vancouver: Author.**

This framework was developed to ensure that teachers have access to and knowledge about the complex way that people learn. As well, it discusses materials to support learners in the classroom. Included in the document are sections on scaffolding instructions; reading components; instructional activities; graphic organizers; a continuum of skills; assessment and evaluation; the unbroken circle (a section devoted to the reading needs of First Nations children); and reading research. While the framework was developed for children, many of the components in the document can be modified for use with adult ESL literacy learners.

**Ontario Literacy Coalition. (2007). *Creating a bridge: A snapshot of ESL literacy in Ontario*. Toronto, ON: Author.**

This report examines ESL literacy programs in Ontario and identifies barriers to learning at the level of the program and the classroom. It makes recommendations in program development, instructor professional development, policy changes and areas for further research. Its recommendations are in compliance with the CLB Literacy Phases.

**Peyton, J., & Crandall, J. (1995). *Philosophies and approaches in adult ESL instruction*. Retrieved Jun. 5, 2008, from [http://www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/digests/PEYTON.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/PEYTON.html)**

This article provides an overview of five approaches currently used in adult ESL literacy instruction: participatory, or Freirean, education; the whole language approach; the language experience approach; learner writing and publishing; and competency-based instruction.

**Price-Hosie, S. (2005). *All about literacy: A how to book for classroom teachers of literacy level adult ESL*. Vancouver, BC: Trafford.**

This book is written for ESL literacy classroom teachers. It is based on Vancouver Community College's TESOL program which has a teaching literacy module in the Teaching Writing Course TESOL program, taught by the author. In addition to strategies and exercises, the book maintains that understanding the learner is essential.

**Rivera, K. M. (1999). *Native language literacy and adult ESL education*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED439628). Retrieved from ERIC database.**

This digest addresses the role that native language literacy plays in both oral and written English acquisition and literacy. The digest includes research around the topic of the impact of native

language literacy and describes program types and instructional practices that incorporate first language in classroom instruction.

**Shackelford, R.L. (1996). Student portfolios: A process/product learning and assessment strategy. *The Technology Teacher*, 55(8), 31-36.**

This article gives an overview of what a portfolio is in general terms, covers the concept of product versus process, and then goes to explain different portfolio characteristics and types. The article includes showcase, descriptive, evaluative, and composite portfolios. The author includes ideas about what to include in portfolios as well student input and involvement in the process. The author also includes suggestions for format and additional points to consider when using student portfolios in the classroom.

**Spiegel, M., & Sunderland, H. (2006). *Teaching basic literacy to ESOL learners*. London: South Bank University, LLU+.**

This book, with a foreword by Elsa Auerbach, takes a comprehensive look at ESL literacy and how to approach it. Each chapter includes a theoretical discussion of the topic and practical application. The book includes case studies, activities, visuals to accompany text, different coloured font to differentiate ideas, and clear chapter summaries. In short, this guide models effective literacy practices and provides a wealth of knowledge and resources for ESL literacy instructors.

**Templin-Imel, G. (1996). *The basic Oxford picture dictionary literacy program*. New York: Oxford University Press.**

This is a complete curriculum for ESL literacy learners and is to be used in conjunction with The Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary. It addresses pre-literacy, how to teach strategies and general literacy teaching practices. In addition, it has reproducible worksheets and flashcards.

**Terdy, D., & Bercovitz, L. (1989) *Home English literacy for parents: An ESL family literacy curriculum*. Des Plaines, IL: Northwest Educational Cooperative. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED332560). Retrieved from ERIC database.**

This curriculum document describes a family literacy program developed and implemented in the Chicago area. It includes an overview of the H.E.L.P. (Home English Literacy for Parents) program with descriptions of student instructional levels, as well as teaching techniques and lesson plans for each of the levels. It also describes instruction around English-survival and school-related competencies. Each unit includes a competency, the instructional level, vocabulary, grammar, cultural components, and parenting issues that may arise.

**Trudell, S. (2002). *Portfolios in the ESL classroom: A critical review of the literature.* *LORE: Rhetoric, Culture and Writing*, 2(1), 9-15.**

This review examines five articles about portfolio use within the ESL classroom. The author reviews the literature, critiques what she has read, and provides a succinct summary about the findings of all of the articles. The articles cover topics dealing with portfolio implementation plans, challenges and successes involved in using portfolios in the classroom, time considerations, assessment, the reflective nature of the portfolio process, and the holistic component of portfolio use when working with the unique needs of ESL learners.

**Valdez Pierce, L. (2002). *Performance based assessment: Promoting achievement for English language learners.* Retrieved Feb. 2, 2009, from [http://www.cal.org/resources/archive/news/2002fall/CLLNewsBulletin\\_Fa02c.pdf](http://www.cal.org/resources/archive/news/2002fall/CLLNewsBulletin_Fa02c.pdf)**

This article addresses the challenges of assessing ESL learners within the No Child Left Behind Act that came into place in the United States in 2001. The article talks about the definition of the ultimate goal of schooling, introduces classroom-based assessment, and refers to performance-based assessment to promote ongoing learning that transfers beyond the classroom. The author highlights the value of performance-based assessment as a way to capture a more authentic picture of what an ESL learner is able to do within a classroom setting. The author concludes by indicating that more work is needed to help teachers to better assess ESL learners.

**Walqui, A. (2000). *Access and engagement: program design and institutional approaches for immigrant students in secondary schools.* McHenry, IL and Washington, DC: Delta Systems and Center for Applied Linguistics.**

This digest discusses ten principles for developing effective teaching and learning contexts for immigrant youth and profiles one program in Calexico, California that has been successful in promoting the academic success of its students. This digest highlights that students learn best when education is meaningful, relevant, and engaging. Supported, scaffolded learning with support from the community is also necessary in ensuring the success of these learners.

**Wilson, C. (2007). *Skills for jobs: Job numeracy.* Edmonton, AB: Norquest College.**

This is a manual produced for Norquest College's tutor program in their adult literacy program. It is based on workplace essential skills for various entry level jobs. This numeracy manual includes very detailed descriptions of each encounter with the learner. It moves quickly from counting to mathematical operations.

**Wilson, C. (2008). *Skills for jobs: Job literacy*. Edmonton, AB: Norquest College.**

This is a manual produced for Norquest College's tutor program in their adult literacy program. It is based on workplace essential skills and has a very detailed description of each encounter with the learner. It moves quickly from alphabet practice to abbreviations for reading job lists.

**Wrigley, H. S. (1992). *Q&A: Learner assessment in adult ESL literacy*. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International.**

This paper captures a conversation about learner assessment within the area of ESL literacy. Wrigley speaks to standardized ESL literacy testing in order to more accurately reflect what ESL literacy learners are able to do. Wrigley points out some of the advantages and disadvantages of using standardized testing with ESL literacy learners. She also defines alternative assessment and gives examples of some promising alternative approaches for adult ESL literacy programs. Some of these include learner-teacher conferences, reading and writing profiles, reading files and free reading logs, portfolios, and learner evaluation grids or charts.

**Wrigley, H. S. (1993). *Innovative programs and promising practices in adult ESL literacy*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED358748). Retrieved from ERIC database.**

This article examines adult ESL literacy from the viewpoints of applied linguistics, anthropology, and cognitive science and recognizes an emphasis on making meaning within language and literacy acquisition. Included are the findings of an American study funded under the National English Literacy Demonstration Program for Adults of Limited English Proficiency. Sections in the article describe innovative ways to bring literacy to life within the classroom by providing a social context for literacy education, learning through hands-on experience, using learner-generated materials, using native language as a bridge to English, linking communicative competence and language awareness, and using technology.

**Wrigley, H. S. (1998). *Knowledge in action: The promise of project-based learning*. NCSALL Focus on Basics, 2. Retrieved Jun. 25, 2008, from <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=384>**

This article discusses why project-based learning should be considered a viable approach to adult literacy instruction. It looks at the place of project-based learning in history, highlighting links to the Vygotskian perspective, participatory education, and Freirean philosophy. It also looks at various practical aspects, such as how to get a project started, the variety of projects possible, the role of the instructor, the benefits and skill gains, and how project-based learning relates to second language acquisition and preparation for the world of work.

**Wrigley, H. S., & Guth, G. J. A. (1992). *Bringing literacy to life: Issues and options in adult ESL literacy*. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 348896). Retrieved from ERIC database.**

This handbook was created following a two-year research study to identify effective and innovative instructional approaches, methods, and technologies used in literacy instruction for adult ESL literacy students. It is a blend of theory and practice. Its intended use is a practical resource for programs and individual instructors. It covers a range of relevant topics, such as approaches and materials, teaching ESL literacy in a multi-level classroom, using computer and video technology, native language literacy, assessment, curriculum development, and staff development. It also includes ten curriculum modules created by instructors in the field.

**Yap, K. O. (1993). *Integrating assessment with instruction in ABE/ESL programs*. *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. Atlanta, Georgia.**

This paper focuses on developing an assessment system that could be used with ABE and ESL programs to satisfy accountability requirements and to provide assessment information useful for classroom assessment. The findings of research indicate three models of assessment that would likely enhance the efficiency of ABE/ESL instruction while addressing accountability. The three identified models are writing assessment, portfolio assessment, and classroom assessment.

### **[www.mes-english.com](http://www.mes-english.com)**

This website has free flashcards on various themes, as well as worksheets based on the same vocabulary and images. The worksheets are best suited for low-level literacy. There are also slideshow versions of flashcards available on the site for use in the classroom. While the flashcards are created with children in mind, they are suitable for an adult classroom. Bingo cards accompany every theme.

### **[www.esl-library.com/](http://www.esl-library.com/)**

This website has flashcards and lesson plans for different themes. While the focus is not on literacy, they have a number of flashcard themes available that would be suitable for an ESL literacy classroom. You need a membership to access the entire site. Free sample downloads are available.

### **[www.rainforestmaths.com](http://www.rainforestmaths.com)**

This site is full of multi-leveled online numeracy activities. The activities are self-explanatory for higher level but will need to be supported for lower levels. The topics range from simple counting and place value to more complex math like probability, frequency, statistics, and co-ordinates. The site is very interactive and useful for both literacy and non-literacy ESL students.

### **<http://hcmc.uvic.ca/clipart/>**

This website has extensive lists of flashcards that can be used as long as you add an acknowledgement to the University of Victoria Humanities Computing and Media Centre and Half-Baked Software somewhere on your site. The images attempt to be culturally neutral. Topics can be searched by keywords.

### **[www.geocities.com/cynthia\\_ingersoll/ESLlinks.html](http://www.geocities.com/cynthia_ingersoll/ESLlinks.html)**

This website has an extensive list of links for learners to follow for practice in skill areas such as reading, writing, listening, vocabulary, and activities for very low level literacy learners.

### **[www.reepworld.org/englishpractice/index.htm](http://www.reepworld.org/englishpractice/index.htm)**

This website has been established by the Arlington Education and Employment Program to provide low-proficiency, low-literacy adult ESL learners with web-based activities that target specific life skill areas.

**[www.manythings.org](http://www.manythings.org)**

This website has a variety of language learning activities, such as quizzes, word games, word puzzles, proverbs, slang expressions, anagrams, and a random sentence generator. There are a variety of activities for low level literacy learners such as matching pictures.

**[www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise](http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise)**

This website has been established by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in London, England. It has a variety of reading, writing, listening, vocabulary, grammar, and numeracy activities. It also has resources to help learners understand mathematical concepts and includes an area where learner stories are published.

**[www.bbc.co.uk/computertutor](http://www.bbc.co.uk/computertutor)**

This website, also established by the BBC, is designed to teach students basic computer skills relating to the use of a keyboard, mouse, and computer screen. Students are guided by an on-line tutor who gives verbal instructions. The site includes a variety of visual effects.

**[www.tcet.com/eaonline/index.html](http://www.tcet.com/eaonline/index.html)**

This website has been established by the Centre for Education and Training (CET) and offers an extensive range of learning activities. It includes instruction on the use of a mouse, a variety of Canadian- and American-themed stories with comprehension questions, a wide range of grammar and other language-learning activities, and an online version of the Canadian Citizenship Test.

**<http://www2.college-em.qc.ca/prof/epritchard>**

This website is designed for learners at around the intermediate level. It includes an extensive selection of grammar activities, some grammar instruction with animation, and an area where common grammar errors are explained.

**<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone>**

This website was created by the University of Victoria for their English Language Centre students. It offers grammar, reading, and vocabulary activities, as well help with basic writing skills. It has activities at five levels, from upper beginner through to advanced. It also offers free lessons from some of the online courses run by the university.

**<http://perso.wanadoo.es/autoenglish/freeexercises.htm>**

This website contains a variety of grammar activities that can be completed online or printed from the screen and used as handouts. The site also includes a self-study page offering online practice in listening, reading, grammar, and vocabulary.

**[www.autoenglish.org](http://www.autoenglish.org)**

This website offers a variety of grammar, vocabulary and writing activities which can be completed either online or printed as handouts. The site also offers lessons via MP3 players and video links.

**<http://a4esl.org>**

This website has a range of grammar and vocabulary quizzes, crossword puzzles, and podcasts. It also offers bilingual vocabulary quizzes in forty-two languages.

**[www.eslus.com/eslcenter.htm](http://www.eslus.com/eslcenter.htm)**

This website has been established by the Encyclopedia Britannica and offers a range of activities in reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, idioms, spelling, pronunciation, and listening. The site also has a daily multi-media English lesson, consisting of a dialogue with a related discussion and quiz to follow. There are also links for both teachers and students to other useful websites.

**[www.literacycenter.net/](http://www.literacycenter.net/)**

This website has been established by the Literacy Center Education Network of the USA. It teaches basic literacy skills, such as upper and lower case letter formation, as well as vocabulary and pronunciation of numbers, colors, and shapes, and some simple numeracy.

**<http://languageguide.org>**

This website supports vocabulary development through the use of audio and visuals. The content is offered in eleven languages, allowing students to choose to have a first language (if offered) translation of vocabulary being studied as they move their mouse over English words or graphics.

**[http://wordfamily.themlc.urbanplanet.com/sites/ab43e5d6-c582-482f-9cd8-dafe8633ea33/uploads/word%20family/word%20families/story\\_home.htm](http://wordfamily.themlc.urbanplanet.com/sites/ab43e5d6-c582-482f-9cd8-dafe8633ea33/uploads/word%20family/word%20families/story_home.htm)**

This website has a selection of short, simple stories that provide reading practice using word families. Each story has pre-reading questions and vocabulary, audio of the story with pictures and text, audio of the story with text, and comprehension questions.

**[www.mcedservices.com/phonics/phonics.html](http://www.mcedservices.com/phonics/phonics.html)**

This website is designed to support phonics learning through the use of stories presented with audio and pictures. It is particularly helpful for teachers of pre-literate or foundational students who have no reading or writing in their first language. There are links to online materials, health, citizenship, ESL materials, textbooks, and childcare materials. There are a number of flashcard exercises with easy instructions.

**[www.cdlponline.org](http://www.cdlponline.org)**

This website is part of the California Distance Learning Project. It contains short stories on a number of topics related to life skills, the workplace, the community, science and technology, and nature. The readings include audio (some with video), vocabulary practice, and comprehension questions.

**<http://tech.worlded.org/docs/clothing>**

This website introduces lower level learners to vocabulary related to colors, clothing and color patterns. It features pictures, vocabulary, and related quizzes.

**[http://marshalladulthoodeducation.org/student\\_lessons1.htm](http://marshalladulthoodeducation.org/student_lessons1.htm)**

This website has a variety of activities with audio for vocabulary building, numeracy, grammar, and spelling practice.

**<http://forms.themlc.org>**

This website contains a wide range of blank forms related to education, health, housing, and employment which students can practice filling out online. The forms progress from one or two items to several items.

**<http://ell-level0.themlc.org>**

This website offers a variety of grammar and vocabulary activities in a number of categories such as the alphabet, numbers, colors, shopping, food, and clothes.

**[www.aplusmath.com/Games/index.html](http://www.aplusmath.com/Games/index.html)**

This website contains a variety of math-related activities designed to help learners build their basic math skills.

**[www.teachingtreasures.com.au/maths](http://www.teachingtreasures.com.au/maths)**

This website contains a variety of math-related activities at various levels of difficulty.

**<http://teachingtreasures.com.au/k-3only/alphabet>**

This website is useful for supported use in the classroom. Low-level literacy classes can benefit from the on-line activities involving letter recognition, simple reading, counting, shapes, colours, and a number of other activities. Some topics include worksheets. There are also links to other on-line resources from this site.

**[www.southfieldchristian.org/elem/learninglinks/html/linksmath.html](http://www.southfieldchristian.org/elem/learninglinks/html/linksmath.html)**

This website has many links to math and numeracy sites and includes not only regular math practice but also numeracy activities related to money and time, as well as Sudoku puzzles.

**[www.internet4classrooms.com/skills\\_1st.htm](http://www.internet4classrooms.com/skills_1st.htm)**

This website offers a wide range of activities for learners to practice math, grammar, vocabulary, phonics, spelling, and reading.

**[http://www.mnlincs.org/online\\_audio](http://www.mnlincs.org/online_audio)**

This website has material that is suitable for pre-literate or foundational learners. It has MP3 recordings with accompanying worksheets that can be used in the classroom. The listening and worksheets cover simple vocabulary based on themes such as family, prepositions, food, daily activities and numbers. Each unit is presented in a very simple manner and teaches the learner directionality and vocabulary at the single word level.

**[http://www.mnlincs.org/online\\_audio](http://www.mnlincs.org/online_audio)**

This easy to use website is good for learning vocabulary. The vocabulary is arranged by themes. Each theme has a point and click audio component and then there are various exercises which are simple enough for Phase I learners to use. Included on the site are printable crossword puzzles using the same vocabulary.

**<http://www.starfall.com/>**

Although this website is geared to children, many pre-literate or Foundation Phase learners enjoy it as well. There is a section called ABCs that teaches the names of the letters and some of the sounds associated with each letter. The Learn to Read section is good for reinforcing first sound phonics while the All About Me section has some housing vocabulary where learners match the word shapes to different vocabulary items.

### **[www.abc-canada.org/](http://www.abc-canada.org/)**

This foundation is Canada's private-sector voice championing adult literacy. ABC Canada was launched in 1990 and advocates for awareness of literacy and numeracy issues in Canada. This site has sections on adult literacy, family literacy, and workplace literacy, as well as an up-to-date directory of local literacy programs. The Media Room link is a place to access current literacy topics in the Canadian media. Each link on the page provides information about resources, facts, partners, materials, and additional links.

### **[www.able.state.pa.us/fieldnotes06](http://www.able.state.pa.us/fieldnotes06)**

This website provides information about adult literacy, ESL literacy, and family literacy. The website provides links to relevant articles about literacy, and has separate sections for K-12 and adult education. The site speaks specifically to education in Pennsylvania although much of the information can be generalized to the larger population. The field notes section of the website has links to PDF files of informative articles.

### **[www.atesl.ca/cmsms/funded-innovative-projects/](http://www.atesl.ca/cmsms/funded-innovative-projects/)**

This website provides links to reports that are the products of various innovative projects funded by the government and others. All reports have an Alberta focus and deal with a variety of special topics within ESL.

### **[www.clese.org/brightideas.htm](http://www.clese.org/brightideas.htm)**

This website provides information about the Coalition of Limited English Speaking Elderly (CLESE). The ESL program for seniors is called Bright ideas-ESL for Elders and the website has a link for the curriculum for this program. Included are 16 thematic units based on conversations with learners, focus groups, and needs assessment. While the focus is on seniors, the curriculum can be used with a broader audience. The products and papers link includes titles such as *Basic Principles for Adult Learners*, *Bright Ideas ESL-Civics Curriculum for Very Beginning Learners*, *10 Steps to Success in the Bright Ideas Classroom*, *Knowledge in Action: The Promise of Project-Based Learning*, and *Assessment and Accountability: A Modest Proposal*.

### **[www.cal.org/](http://www.cal.org/)**

The Center for Applied Linguistics is an extensive site which includes educational and cultural resources. Articles related to immigrant education, literacy, refugee concerns, and workplace

literacy can all be accessed from this site. There are links to ERIC and CAELA (Center for Adult English Language Acquisition).

**<http://eff.cls.utk.edu/>**

This website provides a wealth of information on adult basic education and English language learning. It has links to five separate subject areas and each section has theory, activities and assessment. The website includes activities that relate to the learner as a citizen, worker, and family member. The activities also make connections to broad essential skills and outcomes. The EFF Standards Wheel has four broad expectations with sixteen specific outcomes within the broader wheel.

**[www.literacyconnections.com](http://www.literacyconnections.com)**

This website is devoted to promoting literacy skills and developing a love of reading. It is geared towards teachers, volunteers, and directors of literacy programs. Topics include the language experience approach, phonics, and word study. There are links to resources for literacy programs, second language literacy, Spanish literacy, adult literacy, and using music to build literacy skills.

**[www.literacyservices.com/ABOUT\\_US.HTM](http://www.literacyservices.com/ABOUT_US.HTM)**

This link will connect you to the homepage of Grass Roots Press, a publishing company that publishes and distributes adult literacy resources. The shopping link provides a list of materials in different areas of literacy, including topics such as ESL, family literacy, numeracy, science, and assessment to list a few. In each section, there are links to texts which include a description and a price list.

**[www.lacnyc.org/resources/adult/printresources.htm](http://www.lacnyc.org/resources/adult/printresources.htm)**

The Literacy Assistance Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting and promoting the expansion of quality literacy services in New York. While the focus is on programs in New York State, this website has links to a number of other useful sites dealing with adult literacy, ESL, ABE, and family literacy. There are also links to other publications, curricula and lesson plans, and professional development ideas and opportunities.

**[www.lbspractitionertraining.com/prac\\_training/prac\\_training\\_main.htm](http://www.lbspractitionertraining.com/prac_training/prac_training_main.htm)**

This website was developed by the Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA) and is funded by the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities. There are links to a number of programs including Practitioner Training, which is a series of free courses that encompass a broad range of topics within literacy. Modules include

Literacy and Basic Skills 101, Approaches to Adult Learners, Learning Disabilities, Planning the LBS Program, Program Delivery, Professional Issues, Developing Adult Numeracy, Train Ontario, and Employment Related Goal Requirements.

**[www.peppercornbooks.com/catalog/pdf/cat\\_2\\_Assessment.pdf](http://www.peppercornbooks.com/catalog/pdf/cat_2_Assessment.pdf)**

This is a link to a page of texts that deal with assessment in areas of portfolio assessment, adult literacy and numeracy assessment, whole language assessment, initial learner assessment, and initial reading assessment. Prices, ISBN numbers, and number of pages are included in the descriptions.

**<http://www.tpr-world.com/>**

This website has been developed by James Asher. It provides information on using total physical response (TPR) in the language classroom. It has links to various articles and books relating to TPR.

**[www.tutorialservices.ca/ESL\\_books.cfm](http://www.tutorialservices.ca/ESL_books.cfm)**

This website has CLB benchmarked materials available for purchase on topics such as reading, numeracy, CLB-based literacy readers, phonics, and survival English. The series is called “This Really Works: Adult ESL Literacy Series.” Each book has samples to look at before purchase.

**[www.youthliteracy.ca](http://www.youthliteracy.ca)**

This website, based on a project funded by Literacy BC, is a comprehensive site that speaks to literacy and issues surrounding youth literacy. The New School Canada is the basis for the development of the website. Each section contains a wealth of knowledge about youth literacy. The section on promising practices has a list of nineteen key strategies that made the program successful. If you click on a strategy, a definition and rationale of the key strategy will pop up.

**[www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/resources/esl\\_websites](http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/resources/esl_websites)**

This website comes from Macquarie University in Australia. It is the homepage of the AMEP (Adult Migrant English Program) Research Centre. It contains links for current research in the field of ESL, assessment, and professional development resources. There is also a link for ESL websites, which is very comprehensive and lists websites by topic as well as alphabetically.







## Appendix 4: Works Cited



## Works Cited

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