

# The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners™ Adult Literacy and Workforce Development

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## Chapter 1

# Teaching Adults Language and Literacy with The 6 Principles

*Morgan points to the board to present today's content and language objectives for her Level 3 English language class: "Our content objective is to compare standards for food safety. We all work with food. We work with different foods. We cook for different people. We must keep foods safe. Our language objective is to discuss and write rules for food safety." She also writes several key vocabulary items on the board and prompts her students to be on the lookout for these words and keep using them throughout the lesson. For key vocabulary she chose words that have useful parts that can help produce other words: safer, safety, safely, and keep safe.*

*Morgan shows four photographs that depict people handling food safely in various situations: the kitchen of a child care facility, a food stand at a festival, a restaurant, and a home cook: "Which picture is important to you?" She prompts learners to join one of four groups based on the image that depicts a situation relevant for them.*

*Each group begins work with members choosing a team role. These roles are facilitator, recorder, researcher, and presenter. The function of each role is posted on the wall with an illustration of the tasks. The learners are already familiar with this type of collaborative group work because Morgan conducts most of her lessons in small collaborative groups.*

*Each team works with foods relevant to the chosen situation. They have a set of steps to follow to complete their project: name the foods or select them from a picture dictionary, group foods by type, create a table to organize the information by type of food, list safety methods for each type of food, research details on the safety methods, and summarize findings in a list of rules to post for the cooks. The researchers have portable electronic devices to locate information about food safety methods on the web and read them to the group.*

*Morgan circulates to assist each team and to remind learners to gather the information from the texts they are reading. She tells the learners that they should build on what they already know, but they need specifics from the texts. She also recommends websites, where quality information on food safety is available on the researchers' reading level as well as in other languages. Although Morgan encourages learners to work mainly in English, she also supports learners' using all of their resources, including multilingual websites and electronic translations. She reminds the researchers to read carefully, select relevant pieces of information, and dictate slowly for the team recorder. The recorder asks for the correct spelling of words. The facilitator keeps checking that the information is transferred correctly from the websites to the group's food safety table of information. Only after the information is organized, should they begin to create their set of rules. The group members carefully craft each rule together, critique and approve each sentence.*

*The group work results in three products. One is a table in which information is organized by type of food, safety methods, and specifics on each safety method. The second is a list of sentences that summarize the rules of keeping foods safe. The third is a quick presentation of the table of information and the rules the group created for their situation. Based on the information each work team gathers, the learners compare standards of food safety for different situations and explore the main questions of the day: How do standards of food safety differ? Why?*

*During the conversation, Morgan acts as an active listener and note taker. She repeats and captures the main ideas of the speakers on the board. When needed, she reformulates learner responses and models accurate English. To sum up the discussion, she groups, connects, and organizes the ideas visually on a sheet of poster paper. She does this to make the thinking process visible.*

*Morgan ends her lesson by asking each team to discuss what they have learned about today's content and language objectives. She also reminds learners to record two things in their journals: the learning strategies they applied that were helpful to them and the new words or concepts they used, which they would like to take away from the lesson.*

## **Rigor in Adult English Language Education**

We write this book to share TESOL's vision for exemplary teaching of adult English learners who are preparing for work and career pathways. Career and educational opportunities today require English language and literacy in many countries.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace requires of employees complex language skills, clear and articulate speaking, higher reading levels, digital literacy, problem solving and collaboration skills. Job tasks change quickly, and employees need to rapidly adjust to ever changing job demands, follow written directions, participate in discussions, produce written reports, or conduct electronic research to solve problems. English language and literacy instruction for adults should align with the demands of today's workplace. It is important that we position English instruction in a way to serve adult learners' long-term goals and help them access education and training in English beyond learning basic communication and life skills (Parrish, 2015). Many adults pursue learning English as a stepping stone to better paying jobs and economic self-sufficiency.

Learning English is an important part of the acculturation process for immigrants and refugees in English-speaking countries, like the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Australia, or New Zealand. In addition, countless workplaces worldwide use English for business, from trade and tourism to manufacturing and the service industry (British Council, 2013).

In English-speaking countries, including the U.S., Canada, and Australia, there is a consensus for a pressing need to up the rigor in all adult education programs in order to assist adults' transitioning to secondary or post-secondary education and professional training programs that are available in English. In these countries, a large segment of adult education program participants are immigrants and refugees who do not speak English as their primary language and who vary a great deal in their prior education and literacy.

For example, raising the rigor in adult English language acquisition programs has been codified by recent legislation in the United States, where the law defines English language acquisition programs that are publicly funded as a program which helps English learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language and which leads to the attainment of a secondary school diploma, its equivalent, post-secondary education, or employment (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014). To further this goal, the new English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) detail the English language skills adult learners need to successfully access college and career-ready academic instruction. Likewise, the Canadian Language Benchmarks, which guide the instruction of adult English learners in Canada (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012) also set demanding end goals for proficiency, which include being able to comprehend and produce complex texts and complex spoken communication fluently.

The 6 principles we present here are applicable to all contexts for teaching adult English learners. In this volume we focus on adult literacy programs and workforce preparation programs where participants are developing literacy and relevant content knowledge at the same time that they are learning to communicate in English. The vignettes we include describe a range of adult

education programs: adult basic education, low-level literacy classes, workplace education, family literacy, integrated English and civics, and integrated English and career training.

The opening vignette in this chapter captured in a snapshot what we mean by rigorous English language instruction for adults with the 6 principles. The teacher, Morgan, organized her lesson to focus on challenging content and language objectives. All of the lesson activities directly served the lesson objectives, as well as the personal goals of each adult learner in her class. The activities required team collaboration, problem solving, and higher order thinking. They produced frequent and authentic language use through discussion, reading, and writing. The learners were able to build on their prior knowledge and their full repertoire of language skills, including the strategic use of their home language where that supported their ability to solve problems and build content knowledge. They engaged meaningfully with a variety of text types and formats to develop their informational literacy in conjunction with their English language skills. They were able to hone language learning strategies, which will allow them to become independent language learners outside the classroom. The complex interactions in Morgan's class resembled the demands of today's work environment where adult learners strive to succeed.

### **Diversity of Adult ELs**

Any adult in the world might choose to learn English, and in that sense adult English learners are as diverse as the world's adult population taken together. Although, not every ethnic and socioeconomic group in the world has equal access to English language instruction. A rapidly growing segment of the world desires to learn English to improve employment prospects either in professional fields or in those industries where English is gaining as the medium for conducting business. Among these are tourism, hospitality, military, and now also the full range of service providers in health care, retail, transportation, and call centers.

Adult English learners in English-speaking countries, although heterogeneous, are less representative of worldwide diversity. Immigrants, asylum seekers, migrants, and refugees, who make up the majority of adult English learners, come in waves primarily from a handful of sending countries. Specific humanitarian efforts and international agreements govern the intake of refugees; as a result, only a limited number of nationalities qualify each year. For example, in the U.S. in 2017, 94 percent of refugees represented just 15 nationalities (Refugee Processing Center, 2018). In Canada in 2016, 62 percent of refugees came from a single country, Syria (Hussen, 2017), and 52 percent of all new-arrival individuals were from only five sending countries (the Philippines, India, Syria, China, and Pakistan).

Of the new-arrival immigrants, an increasingly large segment is both highly educated and English-proficient. About half of the recent immigrants to the U.S. were college educated and one-third were bilingual (Batalova & Fix, 2017), much higher than in previous decades. On the other hand, 57 percent of recent immigrants had limited English skills or none at all, and the numbers of those who had limited formal education in their home countries have also grown (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2010).

English learners are a steadily growing subgroup of the workforce in the U.S. and Canada. In 2016, Canada admitted its highest number of permanent residents in part to fill the growing labor market needs (Hussen, 2017). In 2016, one in six U.S. workers was born in a foreign country (Gryn & Walker, 2018), half of whom spoke English less than very well (Gambino, Acosta, & Grieco, 2014). English skills impact employment opportunity and earnings (NASEM, 2015). Individuals with limited English skills are far overrepresented among low-skilled workers (29%) (Bergson-Shilcock, 2017).

## Profiles of Adult Language and Literacy Learners

Mahmoud (58) is a father of five from Syria. He fled the country after their neighborhood was destroyed. Mahmoud's family lived under traumatic conditions for two years before they received approval to settle in Canada. He feels relieved that his children are growing up in safety. He is adjusting to the new life, although he often feels overwhelmed with worry for the family members who are still under constant threat for their survival. After a year in Canada with daily English classes, Mahmoud can now communicate in basic English, and he is able to read short texts. He is interested in his children's education and would like to help them achieve their best.

Min (35) grew up in China where she knew hard work from childhood. In her early twenties, she moved to Saipan, where she labored in the garment industry. After arriving in the U.S., she became a restaurant worker and assisted in people's homes, interacting mainly within the Chinese community. She often works long hours and several jobs to help her brother with the care of their aging parents in China. Min would like to learn English so she can become certified as a home care aide, although she has very little time or support to pursue studies.

Acindina (25) is a young mother of a 3-year-old, who relocated to the U.S. mainland from Puerto Rico. She has been trying to regain a sense of normalcy after a distressing experience of losing her home. Although she was a clerk before, now she works through a temporary employment agency in warehouse and assembly jobs. Acindina recognizes the importance of developing her English skills to find stable employment to raise her child and move to an apartment of her own.

Diba (41) is a widowed mother of six. She fled the Democratic Republic of Congo for Rwanda. Diba witnessed extreme atrocities while she was in hiding for months. She and her children spent miserable years in a Rwandan refugee camp before they could resettle in Australia. Diba speaks Tshiluba and Swahili. Prior to starting in English classes, she did not have any formal education, and she could not read in any language.

Tareq (26) is a guest worker in the United Arab Emirates from Bangladesh. He works as a mason. He has enrolled in English classes because he is interested in further training to become a maintenance or engineering technician for a hotel chain. He is excited about the opportunities that English skills may open up for him.

We write this book to support the English language and literacy education of those adults who are resettling in a new country or who pursue language courses in order to improve their life conditions and employment opportunities. We define adult learners as persons 18 years or older, who are not participating in secondary education or university courses. English learners are those who speak a language other than English as their home language, have needs to use English either socially or for work, but who have not yet developed the level of proficiency to be able to fully function with both spoken and written English.

These learners vary in their prior schooling. Like Diba, some have little to no formal education and they are learning to read and write for the first time in their life in English. Others participated in K-12 education without attaining advanced proficiency in English, as for example Acindina. Some had a few years of schooling but did not complete high school, like Min and Tareq. Still others are highly literate in their native language but arrived with a low-level proficiency in English, as did Mahmoud.

## Types of Programs

A broad range of agencies deliver English language and literacy classes for adults. Local education agencies (e.g., school districts) frequently have Adult ESL classes as part of their adult education programs. Many community agencies serve English learners with the help of public funding and private sponsorship. Other programs are for-profit proprietary language schools. Table 1.1 provides an inventory of available adult English language and literacy programs along with the list of agencies that usually offer them. Because public funding for the various types of programs depends on specific legislation, as the laws and regulations change so do the types of programs that are more broadly available. For example, in the U.S., program offerings are in a large part a function of each state’s WIOA plan, which has resulted in more funding for one-stop career training programs than, for example, funding for adult ESL classes and family literacy, a dramatic change from the recent past.

Even as the distribution of the different program types changes and not all kinds of programs are available in every region, the table is a good directory for the different ways in which various agencies have successfully offered English language and literacy training. Our hope is that each agency involved in English language education will consider the possible options for instructing adult English learners and choose to offer the kinds of programs that best fit the specific adult learners they intend to serve.

Table 1.1 Types of adult English language and literacy programs

Type of program	Where to find them
Public adult basic education programs	School districts Adult learning centers, usually at community colleges Refugee serving agencies Regional career and technical education centers
Workplace ESL programs	Places of employment, usually delivered in partnership with an educational agency
Family literacy programs	Public schools Publicly funded child development centers and preschool programs Libraries
Integrated English and civics programs	Social service agencies Libraries Community and civic organizations
English literacy programs for institutionalized adults	Prisons Youth rehabilitative institutions Dedicated education facilities for institutionalized adults
Out-of-school programs	Homeless serving facilities

	Youth centers
Drop-in English language programs	Libraries Faith-based organizations Community centers Community schools Refugee camps
Career education programs	Job centers/employment service agencies Regional career and technical education centers
Fee-based ESOL classes	Privately owned language centers Online education providers

**The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners**

The 6 Principles put forth in this book are not revolutionary or groundbreaking concepts in language learning. They are well-established guidelines drawn from decades of research in language pedagogy and language acquisition theory. The 6 Principles bring to life TESOL’s core values. We present them in seemingly simple statements, yet they carry substantial weight because how well they are implemented can make a difference for learner success. The 6 Principles must be taken together, as a cohesive whole. One cannot know one’s learners, for example, and then not act on that knowledge when planning lessons.

Figure 1.1 provides a brief explanation of each principle, and later chapters show teachers of adult English learners how they can actualize the 6 Principles in their instruction.

Figure 1.1 The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners

<b>The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners</b>
<b>Exemplary teaching of English learners rests on the following 6 Principles:</b>
<b>1. <i>Know your learners.</i> Teachers learn basic information about their students’ families, languages, cultures, and educational backgrounds to engage them in the classrooms and prepare and deliver lessons more effectively.</b>
<b>2. <i>Create conditions for language learning.</i> Teachers create a classroom culture that will ensure that students feel comfortable in the class. They make decisions regarding the physical environment, the materials, and the social integration of students to promote language learning.</b>
<b>3. <i>Design high-quality lessons for language development.</i> Teachers plan lessons that are meaningful for students and promote language learning, and help them develop learning strategies and critical thinking skills. These lessons evolve from the learning objectives.</b>
<b>4. <i>Adapt lesson delivery as needed.</i> Teachers continually assess as they teach—observing and reflecting on learners’ responses to determine whether the students are reaching the learning objectives. If students struggle or are not challenged</b>

enough, teachers consider the possible reasons and adjust their lessons.

**5. *Monitor and assess student language development.* Language learners learn at different rates, so teachers regularly monitor and assess their language development in order to advance their learning efficiently. Teachers also gather data to measure student language growth.**

**6. *Engage and collaborate within a community of practice.* Teachers collaborate with others in the profession to provide the best support for their learners with respect to programming, instruction, and advocacy. They also continue their own professional learning.**

### **A Look Back and a Look Ahead**

The number of adults who are learning English increases every day. Teacher professional learning plays a critical role in advancing the outcomes of adult English language instruction. This book lays a foundation for the efforts to professionalize English language education for adults, provides shared language for instructional practices, and aims to improve career and education options for adult learners of English as a new language.

In this chapter, we have

- explained TESOL’s rationale for identifying core principles for exemplary teaching of English learners and the pressing need for their implementation in adult literacy and workforce development contexts;
- showed an example of a rigorous English language lesson that serves 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace skills;
- emphasized inherent challenges in instructing diverse learners who vary widely in their academic preparation and what they wish to gain from English classes;
- outlined the types of English language programs various agencies make available, and
- introduced the 6 Principles, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 3. These principles help teachers create conditions in the classroom that promote language learning and plan and deliver lessons that keep learners’ backgrounds, goals, and needs in mind.

Teachers of English learners need to understand that language development in adulthood is complex and not always guaranteed to lead to full proficiency within a particular time frame that is available for instruction. Instructed language learning may be just one—albeit critical—segment of the journey toward proficiency in a new language. Language instruction is formative for eventual attainment of advanced proficiency when it provides learners with skills and strategies they need to continue their learning outside the classroom with strong motivation and self-direction.

Additional resources for this chapter are available at [www.the6principles.org/adult](http://www.the6principles.org/adult)  
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#### **Common Acronyms Associated with English Learning**

EFL	English as a foreign language
EL/ELL	English learner/English language learner
ELA	English language acquisition (in K12 this refers to English language arts)



ELP	English language proficiency
ENL	English as a new language
ESL	English as a second language
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
L1	first language (or home language)
L2	second language (or new language)
LESLLA	literacy education and second language learning for adults (previously, low-educated second language and literacy for adults)
SLA	second language acquisition

#### Common Acronyms Associated with Adult Education Programs

ABE	Adult basic education
ACSF	Australian Core Skills Framework
ELL-U	A professional learning network for adult ESOL practitioners
ESL Pro	Resource collection for the instruction of adult English language learners
LINC	Language Instruction to Newcomers to Canada
LINCS	U.S. national leadership initiative to support adult educators
CLB	Canadian Language Benchmarks
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014

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## Chapter 2

# What Teachers Should Know About English Language and Literacy Development to Plan Instruction for Adult Learners

*“All around my new life is plenty of English words. There are many ways that my everyday life is immersed in English: shopping, business, and trips. I have American friends and I want to know more about them, and, of course, the only way is to listen and learn with them. My daughters are also a good influence too because they are learning English quicker than me in elementary school. They have good teachers who are interested in my daughters’ education. My daughters and I exchange a lot of information about our new knowledge and about what we are learning. We read a lot of new books that we have located in libraries or purchased in stores.” - Ignacio Morrondo (MCL, 2017)*

*“I was born in Burma in a small village. When I was ten years old I moved to a Thailand refugee camp with my parents. I went to school in the refugee camp a few years and then I got married early when I was in middle school. (. . .) My family had the opportunity to move to the United States. (. . .) Everything was new for my family, and it was difficult to do anything. I was very upset and wanted to move back to Thailand. One month later, I started going to school four hours a day, five days a week. Childcare took care of my kids every day when I was in school. At that time I studied hard and went to school every day to improve my English, how to speak, read, write, and listen in English. I had a problem memorizing the English I was learning during class. I wanted to speak English fluently and help my family and my neighbors by translating the English to the Karen language.” - Elizabeth Htoo (MCL, 2017)*

This chapter will address key knowledge teachers should have about adult language learning, second language acquisition, and literacy development in English. Chapter 3 will explain the 6 Principles and help you apply this knowledge as you design lessons to teach adult English learners.

Knowing how the language acquisition process works can guide teachers with their instructional decisions, both in their planning of a lesson and in their delivery of it. For example, if a learner makes an error in English, a teacher’s response should be based on whether the error is normal for the learner’s functioning level or whether it indicates that the learner did not understand instruction or has acquired incorrect language forms based on mishearing or a misapplied analogy. Effective teachers hold reasonable expectations for English learners because they are aware of the time, effort, and practice that it takes to learn a new language.

In this chapter, we provide foundational knowledge for language and literacy instruction. First, we look at some distinguishing characteristics of adult learners, and specifically, why and how adults learn differently from children. Next, we examine the essential conditions for language learning and discuss factors that may help or hinder progress. When teachers know which of these factors they can control, they can boost language learning. For example, when teachers know that language develops through use and interaction, they can plan lessons that have students use language actively and negotiate meaning with conversation partners. When teachers are aware how learners’ home language literacy can serve as a resource for literacy in English, they can introduce strategies and learning materials that best suit their students. Finally, we explain that advanced proficiency in English depends on the development of literacy, what literacy development in English entails precisely, and what components of literacy tend to challenge learners the most.

## Why Learn English?

Adult learners pursue educational opportunities for reasons that are integral to their everyday lives and personal goals. They don't come to the learning process waiting to be filled with subject knowledge per se. They come from vastly different life circumstances and a broad range of prior knowledge. They have had diverse formal education experiences. Some have adequate resources for learning, while others have struggled all their lives with profound disadvantages.

However different in their background and preparation, adult English learners are like-minded in that they perceive opportunity in learning English. They don't usually (or initially) pursue learning English as an academic subject; rather, they see English as a practical tool to move toward a life goal. English can be a key to access additional training, become self-sufficient, advance in a career, improve themselves, or it is the code to expand their social networks and to integrate as members into a new community. When asked "why learn English?", most adults cite economic and self-esteem goals, such as "I need to take care of my kids", or "I need English for a better job"; "I'm tired and exhausted of the work I do now. With education, I could do better"; "I came to this country with a dream to be someone and to help my family. I can do that if I know English."

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"Adult English learners don't usually pursue learning English as an academic subject; rather, they see English as a practical tool to move toward a life goal."

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This means that teachers should become aware of learners' goals for pursuing language learning and explicitly connect instruction to learners' rationale for wanting to be proficient in English. The starting point for instruction is to recognize what tangible benefits learners are expecting to gain from knowing the language because "knowing English" is likely a shorthand for working toward a goal that is beyond the acquisition of language skills. It means access to those areas of life – jobs, further training, and education – that require career-ready communication skills and literacy in English. Consequently, instruction that they receive must be the kind that is truly useful for converting opportunity into reality for learners.

## What Adults Bring to Learning

When designing instruction for adult English learners, we should start with what we know about teaching adults.

### Every adult English learner is unique.

Our adult learners represent over one hundred ethnicities with dozens of different home languages; they differ on the quality and years of formal education they received. Some are better educated than their English-speaking peers, and others never attended school. They are accustomed to different traditions, cultural norms, religions, and ideologies. Some are still adolescents; others have already reached retirement age. Many have suffered trauma, which may have left them with physical and/or psychological scarring. They also have many varied responsibilities; schooling comes on top of them. Each learner brings a unique set of strengths and challenges, which are important for educators to know.

### Adult learners have social capital.

Adult learners can derive resources from their immediate and extended family, as well as from their larger social networks. The utility of their social capital differs by the resources available to

their community and by the values and behaviors practiced within their network. Their social capital may hinder or facilitate their educational goals (Zhou & Kim, 2006). How their network orients towards the use of English in everyday life and the pursuit of education to integrate into English-speaking social networks bears on learners' motivation and on what resources they can generate to help them capture those goals. When teachers are aware of each learner's social capital, they can encourage students to draw on these resources, or they can explore with students the difficulties which may require supports from mentors in a new social network.

### **Adult learners set their own goals.**

Adults have their own reasons for what and why they want to learn. They tend to weigh the value of participation in terms of “costs” (effort, time, self-esteem, and resources) versus “benefits” (Patterson, 2018). They usually frame their goals as social or economic benefits (Appleby, 2010). Their cost-benefit judgements are ongoing, and if they experience diminishing returns, slow progress toward their goals, or if they perceive the costs to be too high, they drop their studies. If learners are to stay in programs long enough to master the skills they need, they must experience direct connection between what they are learning and their personal reasons for pursuing the program.

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“If learners are to stay in programs long enough to master the skills they need, they must experience direct connection between what they are learning and their personal reasons for pursuing the program.”

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### **Adults are autonomous learners.**

Adults are self-directing in major areas of their lives; they expect this to apply in the area of education as well. Therefore, the atmosphere of the classroom should emanate mutual respect, trust, and collaboration. Educators should welcome adult learners to give their input about the course plan, the teaching approaches, and the evaluation of their own learning. Although self-directed learning is developmentally desirable for most adults, not all adults possess the know-how for directing their own learning. The ways to support adults who are inexperienced learners are through modeling, coaching, and explicit strategy instruction. (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015; Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

### **Adult learners have valuable life experiences and “funds of knowledge” to draw on.**

Adults are able to draw on their accumulated life experiences to support their learning. For the most part, prior experiences provide a rich resource for mastering new skills and content; however, prior experiences can also frame and limit how adults approach new learning. Because adults often define themselves by their prior experiences, teachers should neither ignore nor devalue these, but rather try to understand and build on them (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015; Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

One type of knowledge diverse adults can draw on is historically and culturally accumulated knowledge that is essential for the functioning of their communities. This knowledge stems from traditional ways of life: farming, ranching, gardening, mining, manufacturing and marketing goods, constructing homes, practicing crafts, managing the household and cottage industries, or applying indigenous medicine. These funds of knowledge constitute cultural and cognitive

resources, which can facilitate new learning for adults and which teachers can blend into instruction (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

### **Adult English learners have linguistic capital.**

When adults learn a new language, they bring with them fully developed oral language ability in at least one language, or sometimes several languages. They have well-established neural pathways that make it possible for them to process that language automatically. Besides automatic language processing, they may also have conscious awareness of language structures in their previously learned languages. They can name thousands of concepts, carry out communicative functions with language, and use language to support a broad range of cognitive tasks. However, they vary in how much of their linguistic capital they can transfer to their new language. This depends on how much their other languages overlap with English in terms of the sound system, vocabulary, linguistic structures, and the writing system (National Research Council, 2012).

### **Adult learners are resourceful with language usage.**

Adult learners are resourceful with how they apply their knowledge of languages. They are often able to switch dynamically between their languages in purposeful ways that reflect their awareness of another speaker's language repertoire as well as the full communicative context. This type of language behavior among bilinguals — known as translanguaging — serves as an expression of identity and group solidarity. Translanguaging can also be a very practical solution when individuals who are learning each other's languages try to communicate. For these reasons, translanguaging can play an instructional role when teachers encourage learners to convey meaning using the new language where they can and switching to another language in order to fill gaps (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017). For example, in the following vignette a Spanish-speaker adult, who is a beginner English learner, is communicating with an English teacher, who has some basic language skills in Spanish.

- T: Tell me about your job.  
S: My job. Drive truck. Mi colega y yo entregamos muebles.  
T: Muebles? Furniture truck? I get it. Furniture delivery.  
S: Yes, furniture delivery. Entregamos muebles que la gente pide en línea.  
T: Okay, en línea. Online orders.  
S: Yes, online they buy it. We put together. Los muebles vienen en cajas grandes. Nosotros los armamos. Se llama white glove delivery.  
T: Aha, you assemble the furniture.  
S: Yes. We assemble it. Desk, bed, archiveros, libreros. Everything. Tenemos que leer la instrucciones y seguir los dibujos. A veces es muy difícil. Tiene que ser todo perfecto. No podemos equivocarnos. Can't make mistakes.  
T: This job requires many skills.

The episode reflects solidarity between the two speakers and confident bilingual behavior from the learner, regardless of the imbalance in language proficiencies. By giving way to adult learners to apply all of their language resources to communicate their meaning, they gain self-efficacy, courage to use the new language, and the ability to convey meaning beyond their current level of proficiency in the target language.

## **How Adults Learn Best**

What adults bring to new learning changes how to best instruct them. And because adults only sustain learning that gives them a sense of growth and accomplishment (NASSEM, 2018), designing the right kind of learning experiences and building on their preferences are essential to keep them going. Instructional time in the classroom is usually very limited relative to the learning goals most adults identify, which makes spending it wisely critical.

Adults learn best when their learning is relevant to their immediate needs, and includes the problem solving and critical thinking that are part of adult functioning. For adults, learning happens outside of the classroom as well as inside the classroom. Adults who are not used to formal classroom learning benefit from the guidance of a lifelong learning support system.

### **Adults learn best when they experience a pressing “need to know”.**

Children, for the most part, learn a variety of subjects in school. They do not prepare for specific immediate tasks and roles. Adults, however, have pressing “need to know” as they ready themselves to take on new roles and assignments (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). For example, seeking a new job, getting a job transfer, learning to drive, becoming a parent, buying a home, preparing taxes, applying for citizenship, and starting a business all create situations where the adult has an urgent need to learn quickly in order to apply knowledge right away. These changing roles and life tasks create authentic and compelling contexts for adult learning.

### **Problem-solving and critical thinking are at the core of all adult learning.**

Adults value troubleshooting and problem-solving skills. They want to make solid decisions based on understanding, questioning, making inferences, and evaluating information from various sources. Adults make important decisions daily for themselves and for others. The quality of their lives depends on having strong skills to support their decision making. We serve our learners best with language and literacy instruction that also includes critical thinking and problem-solving tasks on every proficiency level (Parrish & Johnson, 2010).

### **For many adults, learning informally can be as productive as classroom instruction.**

Much of what adults learn is not in classroom settings. Some adult learners have access to individual tutoring, online learning opportunities, and on-the-job apprenticing. Widening access to such options is important because these may fit the busy lifestyle of adults. Learning in non-classroom contexts can be more immediately applicable, which supports both motivation and the retention of new skills. Learning language is especially difficult without extending learning outside the classroom because classroom practice is usually limited to just a few hours per week. Therefore, helping adults access non-formal learning opportunities and teaching them strategies for extending their learning outside the classroom are vital components of educating them.

## **Conditions for Second Language Learning**

We would all like to know the best way to teach a new language to any learner. However, although an entire field of research – second language acquisition – is dedicated to examining this topic, we do not yet have a definitive answer. A dozen theories focus on the neurological, psychological, cognitive, and/or linguistic processes by which people learn languages other than their mother tongue. Yet these theories have not necessarily focused on the ideals of instruction of a particular variety of a particular language in a particular context (for example, survival

English or English for a specific occupation) (Lightbown & Spada, 2014; VanPatten & Williams, 2014; Valdés, Kibler, & Walqui, 2014; Williams, Mercer, & Ryan, 2015).

We have learned from decades of research findings that there are both essential conditions and beneficial conditions for second language acquisition. A set of individual variables plays a role, too.

### Essential Conditions

Essential conditions are those that must be present for second language acquisition to occur. Teachers can play a role in promoting some of these.

1. **Neurophysiological capacity.** Language is a complex neurophysiological function. It can be thought of as software that runs on the hardware of the brain (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2002). Second language acquisition is facilitated by the software of the first language. In other words, a learner's acquisition of his or her home language established neurophysiological processing that plays a key role in how he or she handles input in a new language. Normal first language development indicates that all is well with the learner's neurophysiology for acquiring additional languages. Given this, teachers should view rich home language development as a strong foundation for learning new languages (Baker, 2014; Kohnert, 2013).
2. **Motivation.** Motivation is the force that prompts individuals to pursue and sustain an effort toward a goal. Avoiding pain is a human tendency, but language learning requires a lot of effort over a period of many years. In general, activities that lead to language learning must be inherently pleasurable or the eventual goals so positive that they are worth the struggle. Note that motivation cannot be successfully sustained externally, even with threats and rewards. Teachers should work with each learner to understand and optimize internal sources of motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).
3. **Facilitative emotional conditions.** Learning cannot succeed if students are anxious, worried, or feel threatened or overwhelmed. Under negative emotional conditions, the learner shuts down and is unable to take risks with language or attend to language forms. In contrast, a welcoming, safe, and relaxed environment is indispensable for language learning. Managing emotions in the classroom and supporting each learner to overcome his or her anxiety or negative emotions are essential teaching responsibilities (Williams, Mercer, & Ryan, 2015).
4. **Usable input and feedback.** Input can refer to how teachers present information. The term is related to *comprehensible input*, which denotes language that is only slightly above the language that the learner already knows (Krashen, 1985). Input beyond a learner's comprehension can become usable when a teacher supports meaning through other means, such as by giving context, by simplifying, or by elaborating (as shown in Chapter 3, Practice 3B).

Another form of input that is key to acquisition is feedback. Without feedback, learners cannot be certain that the language they produce is understandable in its meaning, form, or pronunciation. A large body of research exists on the many useful varieties and relative efficacy of different types of feedback (Ellis, 2017; Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017). Some examples are clarification requests, explicit correction, reformulations, metalinguistic signals, and recasts (explained in Chapter 3, Practice 5B). Prompting speakers to repair their own speech, also called elicitation of self-repair, is the most productive form of feedback.

5. **Deliberate practice.** Practice is the collective name of activities whose goal is to systematically develop second language skills (DeKeyser, 2007, 2010). These activities are not drills that demand imitation and repetition; rather, practice is a much broader range of activities that lead to fluency, accuracy, and automaticity of specific subskills. Knowing language rules cognitively is not the same as applying them in real time, fluently, consistently, and without conscious awareness. Language proficiency involves moving focused attention on basic skills into accurately executed, automatic processes. Mastering a second language requires a complex skill set, which takes thousands of hours of systematic, deliberate practice to develop (DeKeyser, 2007, 2010).

The foundation of effective instruction is monitoring and ensuring that all of the essential conditions of second language acquisition are met and sustained for every learner.

### Beneficial Conditions

Beneficial conditions are those conditions that contribute to second language learning and work to the advantage learners who have access to them. Some beneficial conditions depend on the context of language learning. Some can be enhanced by instructional practices.

1. **Relatedness of home and new language.** When we say that the home language is closer to the new language—in this case English—we mean that the home language and the new language have similar speech sounds and phonological features, have many cognates (words that have similar form and meaning), have the same basic word order, and use the same writing system. In such cases, learning the new language is significantly easier. Learning a new language that is quite different from the home language, such as learning Swahili when the home language is Bengali, is harder and typically takes longer.
2. **First language oracy and literacy skills.** Many first language skills are transferrable to the second language, including a large conceptual vocabulary (August & Shanahan, 2006). Although the names of concepts and related terms are different in the second language, understanding the concepts themselves can scaffold word learning in the new language. Other areas of language transfer include phonological awareness,



understanding the meaningfulness of print, and use of cognitive and metacognitive skills. When learners have these skills in their home language, learning a new language is easier.

3. **Avid reading.** Being a motivated, avid reader in the first language helps in acquiring a second language. Practiced readers decode words automatically. They are able to hold their focus on texts for long periods of time. These skills are preliminary for being able to allocate working memory to the task of word learning by not struggling with the decoding task. Avid readers also read more, which means that they encounter more words and meet each word more frequently, which can result in a larger vocabulary and deeper word knowledge. Skilled readers may have mastered transferrable reading comprehension strategies in the first language, such as inferring the meaning of new words from context or quickly identifying main ideas and supporting details (Grabe, 2009).
4. **Prior foreign language learning.** If a student has experience learning a foreign language or is bilingual, learning English will be easier for him or her. Bilingual students bring to the learning process prior experiences, self-efficacy, and strategies that helped them succeed (De Angelis, 2007; Ó Laoire & Singleton, 2009). They are able to draw on the language that they consider to be closer to the target language. They do not necessarily “understand” the differences between the language (or languages) that they speak and the new language, but they draw effectively on their intuition and they are ready to “give it a go” (Rutgers & Evans, 2015).
5. **Cultural knowledge and the ability to read social situations.** Language and culture are intricately bound together; communication depends on gleaning meaning from contexts and assumptions and on being attuned to nonverbal cues. Being able to process situations, gestures, or unarticulated intentions correctly is important for inferring the real meaning of messages (Lynch, 2011). Adult learners who already understand the culture or have teachers who serve the role of culture facilitator are at an advantage.
6. **Personality factors.** Research has identified a number of personality factors as facilitative for language learning, such as courage (shaking off fear, being willing to take risks), positivity (reacting with positive emotional responses to experiences), tolerance for ambiguity (experiencing partial understandings as “the glass half full”), and willingness to communicate in specific situations (Brown & Larson-Hall, 2012; MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010; Williams, Mercer, & Ryan, 2015). Although teachers have no control over a learner’s personality, they can be aware of it when making instructional decisions about lesson activities; they can also model and reinforce actions that benefit learning.

7. **Regular access to competent speakers of the new language.** Although all types of interaction are useful for language learning, students gain more from interacting with teachers and proficient peers (Sato & Ballinger, 2016). Sometimes teachers assume that learners have access to interaction with native speakers if they live in an English-speaking country; however, this is not always the case. Each learner's circumstances are different, and making broad generalizations regarding individual learners' actual access to competent speakers of the new language is not advisable.
8. **Having purposes and frequent opportunities to use the new language.** Having reasons and occasions to use the new language is closely related to the previous condition of having access to competent speakers of the language. But this condition matters even more for language learning. It is an achievable condition within most instructional contexts with careful lesson planning. Collaborative learning tasks such as pair work, small group work, and one-on-one coaching benefit most students.
9. **Integrative motivation in the speech community.** This is one type of motivation that deserves separate mention from motivation for language learning in general (Gardner, 1985). Students who identify with a speech community will work harder because of their desire to be a member in it (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). This condition is powerfully supported by active measures to make adult English learners and their families feel included and integrated in the English-speaking learning community.
10. **High-quality instruction.** Effective instruction includes all of the necessary conditions of second language acquisition, leverages beneficial conditions, and mitigates the challenging factors for language learning (NASEM, 2017). Adult learners benefit from direct instruction that helps them focus on language forms and develops language learning strategies (DeKeyser, 2018). Chapter 3 offers a wealth of ideas for providing quality instruction that facilitates learning English in adult education settings.

### Additional Factors

Most of the conditions that we have discussed so far are within a teacher's or learner's control and can enhance language learning. Several additional factors merit special consideration. These factors potentially hinder second language learning, so teachers should recognize them and try to reduce their impact with specialized instruction and suitable interventions.

1. **Older learners.** The age at which a learner's exposure to the new language begins matters for the eventual outcome of language learning. Age effects have been the subject of much research since the 1960s. Ample evidence suggests that there are some limits on late-onset learners' development of native-like proficiency, particularly regarding pronunciation and the automatic production of errorless grammatical forms, but that type of proficiency is not the educational goal for most adult language

learners in literacy and workforce settings. Learners who begin to acquire English as adults have less time and much more to learn if they desire to attain the level of their fully proficient peers. Nonetheless, dynamic bilingualism — the ability to function with several languages skillfully — is achievable even for adult learners (Birdsong, 2016; DeKeyser, 2013; Muñoz, 2011).

2. **Socioemotional factors and special needs.** The challenges that socioemotional factors and special needs present to second language learning can manifest themselves in many forms including trauma, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, or learning disabilities. Effective teachers of adult learners are informed about the indicators of special needs, and they actively monitor their students. They consult with individuals discreetly about their needs for support. Where specialists are available to support learners with disabilities, teachers collaborate with them to design an inclusive learning environment where learners receive accommodations as part of the regular classroom routine (Delaney, 2016). Most importantly, they have a keen ability to recognize and validate learners' assets and to act from a strength-based approach (Zacarian, Alvarez-Ortiz, & Haynes, 2017).
3. **Long-term beginner status.** Many adult English learners fail to achieve language proficiency necessary for success in the skilled workforce even after they have participated in instruction. Becoming a long-term beginner can be the result of many factors, such as incoherent or insufficient instruction, transiency, or the challenges of adjustment to the new language and culture. This also occurs because many years of instruction is necessary but not all adults can devote that amount of time. Not all adults can maintain the language skills they previously developed, especially when they do not regularly use the new language. Teachers should be aware of the consequential negative effects when learners experience difficulties with initial adjustment, have problem with attendance, or cannot access the supports they need to make significant progress (NASEM, 2017).
4. **Low literacy.** Adults with low education levels and a low level of literacy in their home language are at a disadvantage (NRC, 2012). Although they can develop oral language skills and “survival English”, it is more difficult for them to compensate for age-related memory decline with strategies that literate adult language learners rely on (NASEM, 2018), such as note taking, re-reading, using dictionaries, or consulting texts. A lack of background knowledge and low literacy make many language teaching materials and tools inaccessible or overwhelming for these learners. They require a variety of accommodations within the language classroom, as well as supplemental instruction with adaptive tutorial programs that can address the full range of their needs (NRC, 2012; NASEM, 2018).

When teachers pair their understanding of the conditions for second language learning with knowledge of each of their adult English learners' background, educational history, and personal

characteristics, they can maximize conditions which they control or shape. Chapter 3 explains in detail the process of designing instruction to optimize essential and beneficial conditions of second language acquisition and to accommodate the challenging factors to the extent possible within a specific teaching context.

[Activity box] Review the list of essential and beneficial conditions as well as additional factors that may affect second language learning. Which do you consider when you are planning instruction? What could you do to give your learners more of an advantage in language development? [end box]

### Language Develops Through Use and Interaction

Effective teachers understand that language development is active learning. Students construct language; they learn to use language in the way that it is used when others communicate with them. Watching or overhearing speakers are not effective ways to learn language. Rather, through conversation, speakers establish joint attention with partners; they co-construct meaning, check their understanding, and ask for clarification. They can test their hypotheses about language forms and receive valuable, just-in-time feedback so they can make adjustments or learn something new (Mackey, Abbuhl, & Gass, 2012; Rex & Green, 2008; Swain & Suzuki, 2008).

Language competence is not an abstract skill or stored knowledge that may be useful some day in the future. This is particularly true for adult learners in literacy and workforce programs. Language competence is functionality—the tool for shared cognition, shared understanding, and cooperation. An individual’s language competence is the accumulation of all previous language uses. The more frequent and varied opportunities learners have for language use, the more functional, complex, and flexible their language ability becomes. This means that effective teachers prompt students to interact frequently and they provide regular opportunities for learner to use language in varied modalities (listening, speaking, reading, writing). They also encourage students to utilize and build on all of their language resources, including relevant and strategic use of their home languages (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2017; Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Johnson, 1995).

Specific examples of how teachers promote language use in the classroom include the following:

- Creating simulations and role plays that mirror actual situations adults encounter on the job or through their many life roles.
- Encouraging pair work and small group activities.
- Prompting learners to annotate texts with their own explanations and responses.
- Asking learners to notice language forms in texts and to make use of them in their responses.
- Assigning quick-writes to stimulate language use and to promote writing fluency.
- Reminding learners to discuss ideas and plans before they start a writing task.

In short, effective teachers multiply opportunities for learners' active engagement with the material through frequent language use, speaking, writing, and active reading (Baker et al., 2014; Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2010; Gibbons, 2015; Short & Echevarría, 2016; Zwiers, 2014).

### Literacy Expands Language Development

Full competence in English includes reading and writing skills. As teachers help develop the literacy skills of their adult English learners, they need to be aware of possible challenges to the process, such as an unfamiliar writing system, confusing and inconsistent spelling rules, a need for oral language connections, a lack of vocabulary knowledge, a low motivation to read, or a lack of background knowledge. These challenges merit individual attention:

- **Working with an unfamiliar writing system.** English learners vary in their knowledge of the English writing system, particularly if their native language uses an entirely different form of writing. Writing systems vary in the linguistic features of the language that they mark, such as vowel or consonant sounds, sound length, tone, or stress. Writing scripts vary from alphabetic (such as English, Russian, Greek, Korean) to consonants only (Arabic, Hebrew) to syllabic (Bengali, Gujarati, Thai) and to logographic (Mandarin). Harder than mastering the script itself is learning the specific language features that a writing system encodes. The English writing system, for example, demands attention to both consonant and vowel sounds but not to word stress, consonant length, or tone (Weingarten, 2013; Borgwaldt & Joyce, 2013).
- **Dealing with confusing spelling rules.** Because pronunciation often does not match spelling in English, students may struggle when learning to read. Consider the spelling variations for sounds that are the same (*you, do, threw, through, shoe, ewe, queue, flu, true*). Although English has many dialects in which pronunciation is systematically different, the spelling of words remains the same regardless. Consequently, recognizing letters of the alphabet is a very small part of learning to read in English in contrast to the much larger part that it plays in those languages where the sound-letter correspondence is more predictable. To read in English, learners need much practice in hearing and segmenting sounds (phonological awareness), mapping sound patterns to spelling patterns (phonics), and memorizing sight words. Teachers can provide better help to learners when they familiarize themselves with the phonemes and syllable types in their students' home languages and become aware of the phonological features of English that are likely to be unfamiliar or troublesome to them.
- **Building oral language to support reading comprehension.** Oral language serves as a scaffold for reading. If learners understand a text when listening to it, they will find it much easier to comprehend the text when reading it again on their own. However, if the text they are reading is beyond their oral language abilities, reading comprehension becomes an extreme challenge even when they can decode the words with apparent

fluency. Therefore, it is essential that teachers talk with learners about the content of texts before and after reading. In addition, by doing so, they will ensure that oral language and reading comprehension will develop simultaneously (Baker et al., 2014; Calderón & Slakk, 2018; Herrera, Perez, & Escamilla, 2014; Saunders & O'Brien, 2006).

- **Coping with unknown words.** An important element in the readability of texts and second language literacy development overall is the vocabulary coverage—that is, the number of different words in a text. Research indicates that comprehension of text read independently depends in large part on how many words a reader knows in the text (Nagy & Scott, 2000). For example, knowing 80 percent of words in a text might seem reasonable; yet, reading comprehension is virtually impossible at 80 percent of vocabulary coverage. For minimal reading comprehension, a reader should know 90 percent of the words, and for adequate comprehension, 95 percent. To be able to learn vocabulary or content information from a text, the typical reader needs to understand 95 percent of the words. For unassisted reading for pleasure—the most sustainable and rewarding reading activity—most readers should have 98 percent vocabulary coverage (Nation & Webb, 2011). These facts have important implications for teachers of English learners:
  - To learn *language* through reading, adults need texts in which they know almost all words, with very few exceptions. Their language development is best served when they read books with few unknown words per paragraph or a single word on every third line. To achieve this high level of vocabulary coverage, teachers need to make available for adult learners modified texts that are suitable for their age and interest but are not overwhelming in the number of unknown words (Jeon & Day, 2016; Nakanishi, 2015; Nation & Webb, 2011; Schmitt, Jiang, & Grabe, 2011).
    - When assessing the percentage of unknown words in a text, it is important to recognize that English learners are often able to sound out words fluently without knowing the meaning of those words. For language learners, being able to decode—that is, sound out—text is distinctly different from comprehending it. Some teachers have students read aloud, but a better way to gauge their vocabulary coverage is to ask them to read shorter passages in the beginning section of the text—say, 100 words—and have them mark unfamiliar words. If more than ten different words are unfamiliar, alternative texts or additional supports are needed. Teaching students to preview texts to identify and gauge the ratio of unknown words when they select books for independent reading is also useful.

[Start textbox]

What to Do If There Are Too Many Unfamiliar Words in a Text

Ask a learner to read a short passage of about 100 words at the beginning of a text and to mark any unfamiliar words. If the number exceeds 10, consider doing the following:

- Mark the key passages for the learner to focus on rather than the whole text.
- Find alternative readers with controlled vocabulary.
- Supply bilingual editions, and mark strategically the sections to read in either language.
- Elaborate texts by inserting brief, comprehensible explanations of unknown words.
- Simplify texts by replacing some of the unknown words and sentence structures.
- Provide a bookmark that glosses the target vocabulary in the text.

[End textbox]

- **Managing texts that are too difficult.** Some readings adults have to manage are too difficult for their English language and literacy levels, yet they need ways to make sense of them. Texts that fall into this category are documents for various business purposes, a contract or lease, various application forms, medical, safety- or compliance-related information. An important component of bilingual literacy is to be able to assess when translations are needed, to be able to generate rough translations with software, such as Google translate, and to know how to obtain translation services through qualified providers.
- **Kindling the motivation to read.** Teachers should provide adult learners with a diverse selection of quality reading materials, including bilingual texts, and teach them strategies to select books according to their interests and vocabulary knowledge. Students should learn to become strategic about the choice of language, the fit of the texts for their background knowledge, and their own purposes for reading. Sparking adult learners' motivation to read and kindling their self-efficacy in reading widely are among the most important contributions that teachers can make to language development (Hadaway & Young, 2010; Grabe, 2009; Herrera, Perez, & Escamilla, 2016; Turkan, Bicknell, & Croft, 2012). The Center for Study of Adult Literacy offers a large collection of web-based texts on lower reading levels about topics that most adults find useful and interesting (<http://csal.gsu.edu>).
- **Building on existing background knowledge.** Background knowledge refers to the information and conceptual understandings or schemas that readers bring to their comprehension of texts. Studies have shown that second language learners' content familiarity can compensate for linguistic knowledge at most proficiency levels. Conversely, lack of schema and relevant background knowledge will impede reading comprehension even for advanced language learners or for seemingly fluent readers. Readers can boost their reading comprehension by being allowed to select texts about topics they care about because of prior experiences and existing background information. When teachers know what learners are knowledgeable and passionate about, they can match them with texts where their existing knowledge supports reading comprehension

and bootstraps language learning. Knowing learners better will also help teachers recognize when students are not be able to manage texts on their own or without additional support before, during, and after reading (Grabe, 2009; Herrera, Perez, & Escamilla, 2014; Krekeler, 2006; Lesaux, Koda, Siegel, & Shanahan, 2006; Lin, 2002).

### What Level of English is Needed

The English language proficiency or functioning level adults need depends on their goals and on the timeframe they have available for language learning. Various standards documents exist that define functioning levels with English language skills and serve as the development framework for large-scale proficiency tests. The results of these tests are useful to educators for placing learners in course sections and for documenting learning outcomes at the end of instructional cycles. These large-scale tests that aim to capture learners’ English language functioning levels—albeit in a standardized, general way—may be more important as an accountability measure of publicly funded programs and for designing a coherent multi-year curriculum than for informing adult learners of their true progress or providing them with a credential of their language achievement.

Table 2.1 shows the standards documents that define English language functioning levels for adult learners in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and the European Union. Teachers can refer to the document which is applicable to their context to obtain detailed descriptions about the learners’ expected performance at each level. These performance descriptors are also useful for creating lesson objectives for high-quality lessons (as shown in Practice 3A in Chapter 3). In Chapter 5, we demonstrate the use of three different frameworks for English language proficiency that instructors use in the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

Table 2.1 English language functioning levels and the documents that define them

<b>Standards document</b>	<b>Levels</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Educational Functioning Level (U.S.)	6 levels: Beginning ESL Literacy, Low Beginning ESL, High Beginning ESL, Low Intermediate ESL, High Intermediate ESL, Advanced ESL	Division of Adult Education and Literacy, 2017
English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education (U.S.)	5 levels: ELP Levels 1-5	U.S. Department of Education, 2016
Canadian Language Benchmarks	12 levels: Stage I CLB 1-4, Stage II CLB 5-8, Stage III CLB 9-12	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012
Australian Core Skills Framework	5 levels: ACSF Levels 1-5	Department of Education and Training, 2015



Common European Framework of Reference	6 levels: Basic User A1-A2, Independent User B1-B2, Proficient User C1-C2	Council of Europe, 2001
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### **An Important Caveat**

Research shows significant lifelong benefits for those adults who participate in 100 hours of instruction or more (Reder, 2012). However, the caveat with adult learners is that they are unaware how long it takes to develop English language and literacy on the level that they can function on a par with proficient English-speaking peers. They don't expect to participate in an English language acquisition program for many years. And this mismatch of expectations and reality can lead to tension and disappointment.

Adults come to programs to get what they need. The resources required for participation are high, and they cannot sustain years of attendance. The best approach is to inform them about the time needed for advanced language learning but offer them as quickly as possible the language skills they can put to immediate use and equip them with useful tools and strategies, so they can continue their learning independently outside the classroom.

## Chapter 3

### Teaching with The 6 Principles

This chapter focuses on the 6 Principles for teaching adult English language learners. We define each principle and present practices that put the principles into action. We elaborate each practice with several examples. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive; rather, they serve to show the kinds of steps teachers can take to implement these best practices and recommendations drawn on expert opinion and well-established research findings.

We provide many classroom vignettes to show how teachers design and implement high-quality lessons for adult learners in different types of programs. We highlight teachers' experiences with adult learners, who are on various English language functioning levels. The learners in the vignettes represent the broad range of adult learners in English language programs in terms of their home languages, prior education, and their goals for learning. Instructional suggestions are abundant throughout in the forms of handy charts and practical lists.

Although the chapter on the whole serves to paint a full picture of the scope of practices exemplary teachers engage in, the best use of this text is not to read through it quickly. The 6 Principles taken together capture an instructional process: from getting to know learners to creating lessons that serve their learning goals to evaluating their progress. In fact, this process is recurrent and dynamic, requiring the teacher to revisit each step constantly.

In that same spirit, we hope that you keep coming back to each principle to gain more from the practices as you engage in reflecting and improving instruction. We also hope that you find the framework of the 6 Principles to be a useful schema for new practices you encounter in your professional learning. Although we could not include every form of useful practice, likely, you already have some—for example—ways in which you assess the needs of learners, ways in which you structure lessons, ways in which you give useful feedback, and so on. The framework of the 6 Principles has a fitting place for those practices that you already use successfully, and it does not require that you change them. What the framework offers is a way to pinpoint where your own instruction may need additional practices and fresh ideas to improve learners' outcomes. The 6 Principles is an open, live framework for continuous professional improvement.

## The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners and Recommended Practices

- 1. Know your learners.**
  - 1a. Teachers gain information about their learners.
  - 1b. Teachers embrace and leverage the resources that learners bring to the classroom to enhance learning.
- 2. Create conditions for language learning.**
  - 2a. Teachers promote a supportive learning environment, with attention to reducing learners' anxiety and developing trust.
  - 2b. Teachers demonstrate expectations of success for all learners.
  - 2c. Teachers plan instruction to enhance and sustain learners' motivation for language learning.
- 3. Design high-quality lessons for language development.**
  - 3a. Teachers prepare lessons with clear outcomes and convey them to their learners.
  - 3b. Teachers provide and enhance input through varied approaches, techniques, and modalities.
  - 3c. Teachers engage learners in authentic language use and practice.
  - 3d. Teachers design lessons so that learners engage with relevant content.
  - 3e. Teachers plan differentiated instruction to match their learners' English language proficiency levels, literacy levels, needs, and goals.
  - 3f. Teachers promote the use of learning strategies, problem solving, and critical thinking.
  - 3g. Teachers promote self-directed learning.
- 4. Adapt lesson delivery as needed.**
  - 4a. Teachers check comprehension frequently and adjust instruction according to learner responses.
  - 4b. Teachers adjust their talk, the task, or the materials according to learner responses.
  - 4c. Teachers incorporate learners' shared experiences and interests into the lesson.
- 5. Monitor and assess learners' language development.**
  - 5a. Teachers monitor language errors.
  - 5b. Teachers provide ongoing feedback on language output strategically.
  - 5c. Teachers use effective formative assessment strategies.
  - 5d. Teachers give learners choices to demonstrate their achievement and progress toward learning goals in multiple ways.
- 6. Engage and collaborate within a community of practice.**
  - 6a. Teachers are engaged in their profession.
  - 6b. Teachers coordinate and collaborate with colleagues and service providers.
  - 6c. Teachers utilize publicly available instructional resources for adult English learners.
  - 6d. Teachers participate in community partnerships.

## Principle 1. Know Your Learners

*Normally, I start by asking my learners to write two paragraphs, one in English about what they would like to achieve in class and another in their home language about themselves and their life goals. The paragraph in English helps me gauge their English language and literacy level, and the one in the home language shows me how literate and educated they are. Even if I don't understand the language, I can see how much and how fast they wrote. Their handwriting usually indicates whether they are fluent, practiced writers. I also have other information to go by, the results of the placement test and an intake interview, which our program gives at the point of registration, when we arrange to have interpreters present at least in the home languages of learners we typically have, Spanish, Arabic, and Nepali.*

*Recently, though, we have had many learners who have not yet developed literacy in any language (Literacy Education and Second Language Learning Adults). We cannot ask them to complete questionnaires, write paragraphs, or to rate the importance of topics they want to study in class. They don't have school related experiences; they don't know what they can expect from their instructor. Most are not ready for formal tests and even interviewing them is challenging. They just say "I need English. I need to learn." They don't think of English skills analytically. They don't say "I need to read these types of documents", or "I need to write in such and such situations". I cannot even give them symbols to point at to represent communication contexts they might want to learn about because they are not familiar with the modern visuals for health center, public transit, or immigration court, for example. We tend to compartmentalize our activities in terms of abstract concepts (health, law, transportation), which is not how they perceive their own lives.*

*For these reasons, we have created a needs assessment tool for our LESLLA learners, which contains actual photographs - rather than symbols - of some concrete situations that they can recognize, such as "read a bus schedule", "talk to my child's teacher", "write a rent check". I display the clear, labeled photos on the wall, and have learners put their name on a Post-It note next to the picture of the skill that they want to study. I let students discuss the skills with each other in their native language, so they have a better understanding what these mean and how they are useful. Then, I create a chart with all learners' choices on a poster. Each day, learners check off the skills they have completed, and they can move through the different skills at their own pace. The learners who have achieved certain skills can be peer tutors for those who have not yet studied that, which gives them self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment. (Based in part on Aberdeen & Johnson, 2015)*

Unlike children, adults are not "the captive audience" in school. When they pursue education, they do so for reasons of their own. They take classes as they wish. They usually overcome challenges to be able to attend school; they could be working or tending to other important tasks in their lives. Getting to know them personally and what they expect to gain from instruction is essential for their participation.

Basic information to gather about learners includes the correct pronunciation and spelling of their name, preferred contact information, the home language and culture, language skills in any language, educational history, educational levels and trainings completed, occupational history, special needs and circumstances that they wish to share, life goals, and of course, what they expect to achieve in the course. Although lots of other facts may be useful for educators, we should always exercise care with collecting any potentially sensitive information. Adult learners should be able to withhold anything they consider private. It is important to be aware that adult

learners’ rights to privacy and to the confidentiality of their personal data outweigh the educational benefits of sharing particulars about themselves. Therefore, teacher must exercise caution with any questions that may be perceived as sensitive, such as immigration, residency, or refugee status, country of origin, disabilities, or traumatic experiences. It is possible to get to know learners on a personal level without documenting sensitive information about them.

The way to gain useful information about adult learners is by asking the types of questions that are fitting for job interviews:

- Tell me about your education.
- What would you like me to know about you?
- Are you able to attend classes regularly? What could be a problem?
- What was the most important job you’ve had?
- What languages do you speak/read/write?
- How have you learned these languages?
- Tell me about a big challenge in your life.
- Name some things you love to do.
- What would you like to be doing in five years?
- Why is learning English important to you?

Learning about students’ cultures and home languages is a wise next step for every teacher. Fortunately, many excellent sources are available for this purpose. For example, the Cultural Orientation Center website (<http://www.culturalorientation.net>) provides in-depth introductions to major refugee groups in the United States in the form of briefs, videos, and image libraries. The Government of Canada also maintains an archive for researching every ethno-cultural immigrant group in the country (<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/Pages/introduction.aspx>).

Figure 3.1 Characteristics to know about adult English learners

What teachers may find relevant to know about their learners’ background and resources	
Home country	Digital literacy and access to technology
Home language	Access to resources, esp. social supports
Linguistic features of the home language	Cultural knowledge
Cultural background	Interests, gifts, talents
Home language literacy level	Job skills and employment experiences
Educational background	Technical and career training
Skills in additional languages	Sociopolitical context of home country
English language proficiency in the four domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing)	Cultural adaptation experience
Purposes for learning English	Special needs (physical and mental health, disabilities)
Literacy practices	Situational challenges (basic needs, transportation, work obligations, child care)
Personal goals	Dispositional challenges (behavior, anxiety, time, value on education)
Life experiences, possibly including trauma	
Learning preferences	

## Practice 1A Teachers gain information about their learners.

Teachers collect information about their learners' lives, home cultures, languages, and academic preparation. They engage learners in exploring the uses they have for English, the opportunities that are already available to them, or ones they may create to practice their English skills. They inventory and analyze tasks that learners need to perform in English. Teachers gauge the challenges to learners' attendance, continued participation in classes, personal hardships, and disabilities, which may require supports and proactive measures.

### Examples of Practice 1a

**Teachers follow an intake protocol.** Many programs have a protocol in place to collect information from learners who are applying and registering for classes. They may employ several different data collection methods, from filling out forms to interviewing learners either in English or in their home languages. They may administer several quick placement tests as part of the intake process. Teachers can collaborate with administrators to assure that the data collected capture what is useful to know about learners for keeping them in the program and helping them succeed. They can also create procedures for disseminating these data to teachers in a form that they can easily use them for instructional planning.

**Teachers conduct a needs assessment.** Different programs are able to address different needs. For example, a workplace ESOL program typically addresses a combination of employer needs and participant needs. An integrated civics and ESOL class addresses governmental requirements for citizenship and the personal learning needs of those participating in the class. When they know learners well enough, effective teachers create a bridge from what individual participants need to what other stakeholders (employers or program funders) expect them to gain from the program.

A needs assessment typically involves multiple sources of information and multiple methods (Long, 2005). Data collection methods can include:

- observations (for example, the learner engaged in tasks or peers performing tasks)
- interviews
- checklists and inventories
- questionnaires
- tests
- diagnostic analysis of learners' writing and oral reading

Sources of information may be:

- learners
- peers of the learner with more advanced English language skills, co-workers
- supervisors, human resources staff
- photographs and videos (of work places and contexts in which the learners use English)
- audio recordings (messages, phone calls, interactions)
- documents (collections of learner writings, job descriptions, forms, schedules, memos, manuals)

*Rebeca had two goals for the needs assessment for her class of housekeepers at a hotel chain in Waikiki. She wanted to have a clear understanding of what language the housekeepers needed to be able to perform their tasks, and she wanted to know the needs and wants of both the*

housekeepers and the hotel representatives. She was able to participate in the meetings of a task force that advised the English language program. Various hotel staff served on the task force and assisted Rebeca.

Rebeca conducted observations of the hotel housekeepers on three different shifts. She had unstructured interviews with several housekeepers, who were her main informants. While observing, she took notes of the types of conversations that occurred between housekeepers, their supervisors, and hotel guests. She recorded briefings – the daily meetings between housekeepers and their supervisors -, which were linguistically the most challenging for English learners. She followed these up by collecting guest complaints, which were the usual subjects of the briefings. She collected sample phone calls and text messages after she learned that housekeepers found these difficult to comprehend and follow.

When Rebeca assembled the findings of her needs assessment, she sought feedback from members of the task force and her learners. She wanted to check that she captured their meanings correctly, and that she did not miss anything important. This process really helped Rebeca understand both her learners and the expectations of the workplace. Rebeca was able to articulate what she could teach, which was helpful for shaping everyone's expectations for the class. (Based on Jasso-Aguilar, 2005)

**Teachers take interest and background inventories.** With adult learners, it is necessary to balance the class learning goals with the personal interests and background of the learners. After all, adult learners spend many hours working, and they do not appreciate when English classes feel like uncompensated overtime on the job. Anything that makes learning enjoyable and entertaining is preferable. Any lesson can at least briefly address specific interests learners have. Teachers have many creative tools to learn what these are:

- funds of knowledge surveys
- board games in which learners answer questions about skills, hobbies, and experiences
- autobiography projects
- life story anthologies
- preference surveys of what topics should be taught
- inventory of learners' literacy practices
- inventory of learners' experiences with learning technologies and current access to electronic learning tools

**Teachers monitor learners for challenges.** Most students experience difficulties from time to time; however, a large segment of adult learners who participate in adult literacy education and workforce development experience difficulties that are more persistent and burdensome than expected. It matters how intense these problems are and whether learners have struggled with them over time. Identifying these early and addressing them proactively are key to being able to retain these learners. Unfortunately, many adult education programs lack the resources to serve learners with trauma, behavior and disposition issues, mental health problems, and various disabilities. In Chapter 4, we discuss the signals that indicate challenges and present proactive steps for serving these learners successfully. We recommend using observation checklists and having discussions with individual learners in private settings in order to gain insight into the nature of the difficulty and the desired supports (Delaney, 2016).

## **Practice 1B Teachers embrace and leverage the resources that learners bring to the classroom to enhance learning.**

Students bring their existing resources to the learning process. Learning has to make sense from the students' point of view. Much of what learners bring with them are positive; they have life experiences to contribute, cultural knowledge, passions, work ethic, and values to share. Their take on what should happen in the classroom matters for what they are able to gain. Be aware, however, that some adult learners may have unsuccessful educational histories, which may have turned them into hesitant students, who are less than confident with what they have to offer. Part of our teaching has to be positioning our learners in ways that they can embrace their strengths and contribute their cache of expertise to the workings of the classroom.

### **Examples of Practice 1b**

**Teachers learn about learners' home culture and languages.** Culture is a lens through which we view the world. We take what we see for granted, not noticing that a lens, which is invisible to our view, defines our perception, the what and how we are able to see. It helps to engage our learners in sharing their beliefs, values, norms, and attitudes. It helps to discern what we share in common, as well as where and how we might differ. It helps to reflect on critical scenarios from the perspective of our own culture and from the perspectives of our learners' home cultures. These types of understandings reveal how we can help our learners form associations between the familiar and the unfamiliar. (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016)

The more we know about our learners' home languages, the more insight we can have into the linguistic features that they need to acquire and the linguistic features that overlap between their languages and English. At the least, it is helpful to learn a few words and expressions in the home languages of our students and use these periodically to delight them. A key way to show respect is to learn to pronounce the name of every learner correctly and practice until we get them right.

**Teachers learn about the educational system of learners' home countries.** Adult English learners often enter our language classroom with nervous anticipation. Nothing in their educational experiences may resemble the interactive, collaborative, and learner-focused classroom environment that exemplary language teachers facilitate. In turn, teachers do need to begin where learners are by understanding their educational background, what they have and have not learned – as far as content, skills, learning strategies, and dispositions. A variety of sources of information are available, from the web sites of schools and ministries of education to classroom videos on the internet, and of course, the learners themselves. Flaitz (2006) provides a useful guide for the kinds of information about schooling around the world that teachers find especially educative. She presents synopses about many countries where refugee and immigrant students have been coming from.

**Teachers educate themselves about cross-cultural issues, including literacy practices.** The language classroom is a natural setting for gaining understandings about cross-cultural issues. We can encourage our students to open up about cultural differences and conflicts across cultures. We can model curiosity, appreciation, respect, and productive conflict resolution. We can help our learners hone positive cross-cultural negotiation skills and teach them how they can recognize and overcome prejudice and stereotyping. We can guide our learners to seek common ground and to value collaboration and mutual awareness over



indifference or conflict. Cross-cultural communication scenarios provide excellent prompts for language practice through group discussions, written commentary, role plays, and problem-solving activities.

## Principle 2. Create Conditions for Language Learning

*“My heart does hurt because I don’t understand anything. I do feel lonely. No, I don’t feel anything, but I can’t go anywhere. I can’t do anything.” - Durga Bahadur Adhikari (CAL, 2012)*

*“I remember my first time at school. I was nervous because I didn’t understand what they wanted from me. When someone said to me, ‘You will be testing,’ my heart began to beat faster and my hands started to shake, this is the first time in the U.S. I was testing [...].” - Vitalii Fartushnyi (MCL, 2017)*

*“I am going through a lot of things in my life. I have three jobs and I also come to school for English classes.” - Avimael Clara Molina (MLC, 2016)*

*“It makes me feel excited and motivated to wake up early in the morning, take a fresh shower, and get ready for school. Another good reason [to come to class] would be to meet the classmates and also the teacher, who is very nice with all of us. I feel really happy enjoying those couple of hours with them in class. It is like being in a small party for me. I have too much fun during the class time, so it does not stress me at all.” - Miguel Chavez (MLC, 2017)*

*“I like this class because it gets me interacting with other people and gets me out of the house. In class we wrote our personal learning goals so that we can strive towards getting them accomplished and to have a reminder.” - Klava Foreman (MLC, 2017)*

Many new language and literacy learners describe their initial experiences back in school as adults with shaky nervousness. They fear failure, losing face in public. They fear they may not be good enough to learn. They feel insecure because they have not had much education. They feel old for school. They worry that the opportunity which they were presented may go to waste because they are too overwhelmed to take advantage of it.

Mastering a new language is demanding enough for the young, for the academically experienced, and for those who are already fully literate in one or more languages. The chances of success diminish for the overwhelmed adult learner who is academically inexperienced, wary of interaction, and faces a number of obstacles apart from language learning.

Effective teachers are aware of these very understandable anxieties and create an environment where students feel welcome and safe to interact with one another, taking risks to grow their skills and being open about their needs.

### **Practice 2A Teachers promote a supportive learning environment, with attention to reducing learner anxiety and developing trust.**

Teachers apply their knowledge of optimal conditions that promote language learning as they make decisions regarding the physical environment and the social climate of the classroom.

#### **Examples of Practice 2a**

**Teachers welcome everyone and show respect to every learner.** Showing respect to adults from diverse backgrounds may mean more than welcoming gestures and smiling. Cultures vary in terms of preference for physical proximity, eye contact, body language, conversational overlap, the timing of conversational turn-taking, and the topic of conversations. Some cultures have strict rules about the interaction between men and women, elders and younger persons, supervisors and subordinates. Learners and their peers may serve

as cultural informants for teachers about ways that people from their background perceive and demonstrate respect. Some cross-cultural basics are:

- Address learners in their preferred way.
- Learn about their lives.
- Focus on their strengths.
- Be sensitive to their feelings and concerns.
- Be mindful of cultural differences that can lead to misunderstandings.
- Value learners' contributions and expertise.
- Involve everyone.

**Teachers conduct team building tasks.** Collaborative group tasks provide authentic opportunities for interaction and language practice. Group activities are much more productive when group members are caring and supportive of one another. To promote community, make sure learners have opportunities to get to know each other and to be involved in making decisions. Everyone should have a role in which they can successfully contribute. Hold team meetings, debrief group activities, celebrate achievements, and acknowledge contributions to constructive team work.

[Sidebar]

For team building games for the adult language classroom, visit our website ([www.the6principles.org/...](http://www.the6principles.org/...)).

**Teachers invite learners' home languages and cultures into the classroom.** They encourage learners to build on their entire language repertoire, switch between their languages to best express themselves. They provide cross-linguistic references and explanations. They make available bilingual texts, glossaries, translated texts, and other teaching tools.

[Start textbox]

- T: Esperanza, what a pretty shirt you are wearing!*  
*S: Thank you. It is from home, my town.*  
*T: I like the flowers!*  
*S: They are 'flores huastecas.' I am from the Huasteca region in Mexico.*  
*T: I like the geometric shapes.*  
*S: The shapes of the flower are 'los cuatro puntos cardinales.'*  
*T: The cardinal points? Oh, the four directions. Right?*  
*S: Yes, 'norte, sur, este y oeste.' 'Los puntos cardinales' they mean something.*  
*T: What does the 'north' mean?*  
*S: 'El norte' shows to the gods.*  
*T: What about the south?*  
*S: 'El sur' means Mother. Babies come from. Plants grow. Fertilidad.*  
*T: Sure. South is down. The soil is down. The soil stands for fertility. What does the east mean?*  
*S: 'El este es el origen del fuego.'*  
*T: Oh, fuego, fire. Fire-sunrise. It makes sense. The sun is the origin of the fire, and east is where the sun rises. What about the west?*  
*S: 'El oeste es el origen del dinero.'*  
*T: Money? Where it gets dark? I would not have guessed that. Esperanza, your shirt is not only pretty, it speaks to us of your culture.*

[End textbox]

**Teachers create the physical environment for collaboration and interaction.** Make full use of the classroom environment. Movable tables are ideal to accommodate active interaction among learners. Pull them together to form groups of various sizes, to create a larger conference table, or to set up stations with different tasks. They allow the teacher to move around the room to engage individual learners and small groups in order to differentiate instruction. Use the walls for displaying visual aids, such as posters, word walls, concept maps, and sentence starters. Bulletin boards are helpful for posting task explanations, passwords, as well as for documenting the products of learning. Have a designated display area for the following: lesson objectives, key vocabulary for the lesson, daily agenda, and a “parking lot” for learners to post their questions. Have a dedicated area for role-plays and improvisations to inspire lively performances, especially if props and backdrops are also available.

**Teachers provide orientation to new learners.** Knowing what to expect and how to do well in a program can lower anxiety quickly. With most adult literacy programs having open entry and open exit policies, it is essential to be ready to provide orientation upon entry and have procedures in place to ensure that everyone feels welcome regardless of the timing of their arrival.

**Teachers maintain a line of communication with individual learners.** Adult learners have many legitimate reasons for missing class. Without a line of communication between the teacher and learners, it is difficult to return to class after a period of absence. A channel for private communication allows learners to share concerns about the class while the teacher is in a position to provide a remedy. Many teachers have been successful with hard copy dialog journals passed back and forth with learners. More recently, however, class social media sites and messaging applications have served this purpose of relationship building as well. An additional benefit to staying in touch is the authentic opportunity to practice reading and writing frequently, in small bursts.

### **Practice 2B Teachers demonstrate expectations of success for all learners.**

Teacher expectations can affect how learners achieve. Teachers are often unaware of behaviors that reflect low-expectancy, which may be as subtle as ignoring some learners, responding in a patronizing way, or interpreting students’ actions in a negative light. Unfortunately, many low-literacy adult learners from diverse ethnic backgrounds are accustomed to experiencing low-expectancy treatment and may have internalized it. They often hold negative assumptions about their abilities to learn at their age. To convey high expectations for your learners may be a radically new experience for them and perhaps the source of inspiration and empowerment they had been needing to thrive. No one wants to disappoint a teacher who dreams big for every learner, who has a radar for picking up the signs of progress in everyone, and who keeps an eye on opportunities for every person to succeed.

### **Examples of Practice 2b**

**Teachers use a variety of approaches to appeal to diverse learners.** When teachers create conditions for learning, they consider learner preferences and best practice based on language learning and literacy research. For this reason, they may choose from various group configurations or individualized approaches. They break down more complex tasks to step-

by-step procedures. They select from learners' own topics of interest or allow learners to choose their own. They let learners work in alternative formats, for example video, simulation, demonstration, interview, poster, scrapbook, apps, web-based collection, or exhibit. In part these choices serve learners' language learning needs, but also tap into how individual learners perceive the usefulness of the task, how much enjoyment they may gain, how engaged they are, and how likely they are to succeed with it.

**Teachers teach learners strategies to help them gain more from instruction.** Many of our learners are new to interactive and collaborative instructional formats, which means that they need our support for gaining the most from activities. It is not always easy to remember what happened in class from one week to the next. They may need structured time in class to journal their learning, create records, review handouts, or to get started with homework while the teacher is available to answer their questions.

**Teachers teach learners strategies to practice and extend learning outside the classroom.** The amount of time adult learners spend in the classroom is a small fraction of the hours of practice necessary to develop proficiency in a new language. The only way to reach the thousands of hours of deliberate practice needed for mastery is to continue learning between and beyond classes. The lives of adult learners vary in how much language and literacy practice they can engage in outside the classroom, but teachers are in a good position to help learners see and create possibilities for more verbal interaction in English and for more regular opportunities to read and write.

**Teachers help learners set challenging but achievable learning goals.** When learners define their goals, they tend to use goalposts recognized in our society: "I want to get my GED"; "I want to get a degree"; "I want to know English". Even more often, they think of 'goals' as a synonym for hopes and dreams, an idea not needing a clear definition (for example, MCL, 2016, 2017). For them, 'goals' are what one holds in the heart.

Goals that are achievable with classroom instruction, however, are much more narrowly defined and based on the analysis of communicative skills and situations. Part of a teacher's contribution is to help learners plan a series of personally meaningful action steps that they can follow. For example, for a student who is also a parent, the steps that lead to 'knowing English' may include sending emails to his/her child's teacher, reading to the child at home, being able to help the child with homework, and volunteering at school events. These are challenging but achievable goals, which parents can experience as success. These goals entail English language skills, which can be taught in the classroom and practiced in real life. They can be ranked and ordered to form a developmental path to personally meaningful English proficiency.

Because it is difficult for learners to identify specific language goals that are within their reach, teachers can offer questionnaires and checklists to facilitate goal-setting. An example is available on the website ([www.the6principles.org/...](http://www.the6principles.org/...)).

## Practice 2C Teachers plan instruction to enhance and sustain learners' motivation for language learning.

As the research presented in Chapter 2 makes clear, motivation is one of the essential ingredients of language learning. It takes a very long time to achieve advanced proficiency in a language during which learners must maintain both motivation and practice. The role of teachers is to kindle and sustain these, and to equip learners with the motivational tools they need to succeed on their own.

### Examples of Practice 2c

**Teachers help learners form a self-image as a capable multilingual.** The best tool research has to offer for motivation building is to guide learners to construct a clear and vivid image of their future selves as high-functioning English-speakers (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). They should be made aware of the positive affect of guiding their daily actions by a strongly-held vision in which they act as individuals who are proficient in English. The product of guided visualization can take shape as a narrative or a collage, which learners can share with one another. An important part of the visualization is to explore how each learner's particular mental imagery can direct learning. Guided imagery can also be the foundation for learners' goal-setting.

[Start textbox]

Script for guided visualization

Close your eyes. ... Get comfortable. ... Breathe in deeply. ... Imagine yourself in the future. ... You have studied English. You have practiced English. Now you can speak it well. ... See your future self. ... How old are you? ... What do you look like? ... Where do you live? ... What makes you happy in life? ... What do you love doing? ... What job are you doing? ... What does your workplace look like? ... Who are you talking to? ... What languages are you speaking?... How do people respond to you? ... What kinds of things are you saying? ... How are you using English? ... How do you feel? ... What makes you feel this way?

Consider how these guided visions may generate motivated behavior for language learning.

Subira

A young Ethiopian woman is considering her passions. She loves baking cakes and decorating them for special occasions. She pictures herself speaking to customers in English. She is taking orders for cakes. She can see herself telling them about the kinds of cakes she can make. She shows them her cake catalog. The guests at weddings and parties are delighted with her playful, scrumptious creations. She keeps a display of the photos her customers send her of their weddings and anniversaries. She has a cake shop with employees and takes care of the business responsibilities on her own, reading, writing, and doing the math in English skillfully. Her relatives respect her because she can support herself with what she loves doing and makes so many people happy.

Ezequiel

Ezequiel, a father of three from Mexico, pictures himself as a supervisor at the school furniture manufacturing plant, where he has been working for years. As a supervisor, he reads manuals, writes reports, and completes many documents. He checks on the production line and talks to workers in English and in Spanish about solving problems. He participates in company meetings and speaks in front of managers. They plan training workshops together and discuss actions to

improve safety. He can afford to buy a home for his family and takes his children to visit their grandparents in his native country.

[End textbox]

**Teachers make learning tasks relevant to participants' learning goals.** Once interest inventories, goal-setting, and motivation-building guided visualizations are completed, it follows that learning tasks should relate to learners' defined purposes. Not only should they be related from the teacher's perspective, but the connections should be clear to the learners themselves. To this effect, teachers can convey their rationale for the learning activities and explicitly state how the tasks serve learners' visions and goals, as well as how the skills can be applied outside the classroom.

**Teachers help learners overcome obstacles to learning.** The gap between individuals' ideal future selves as proficient multilinguals and their current abilities may be too wide to close within the very limited instructional time available. Nevertheless, it is possible to lay down a long-term action plan for every learner to advise them on how they might be able to move forward into the right direction with reasonable expectations for the time and effort it can take. In Chapter 4, we detail actionable solutions for some of the most common challenges adult learners face.

**Teachers make language and literacy learning enjoyable.** We began the discussion of Principle 2 with learner voices. Miguel's statement was a reminder that the journey to proficiency can be filled with fun. It is easier to pursue years of language learning when the classroom feels like our community and when learning is experienced as a pleasurable activity worth pursuing for its own sake. One way to boost the pleasure of learning is to set aside time for spontaneous conversations where learners share their recent experiences, news, anecdotes, or life stories (for example, Cooke & Roberts, 2007). When teachers build instruction on these genuine conversations, learning can feel more relevant and natural.

Laughter is another way to boost shared enjoyment. Good humor and playfulness enhance retention. The use of positive humor has been associated with a more relaxed learning environment, higher perceived motivation to learn, and greater enjoyment (Banas et al., 2011).

Teachers continually add to their repertoire of new teaching ideas that appeal to their students and select them strategically to inspire learning. Some examples include game-like activities, cooperative games, friendly competition, simulations, experiential activities, storytelling, riddles, chants, rehearsed performances, and online learning games.

### Principle 3. Design High-Quality Lessons for Language Development

*I teach a low literacy class and I am not even always sure who is going to be present on any given day. It doesn't make sense to use a sequential syllabus because my learners progress at different rates, and most are not in class every day. Instead, I structure my classes around a set of learning activities that can be used with any topic the learners choose.*

*I have a large library of photographs that depict people in various communicative and problem situations. I use these to teach vocabulary, language forms, language use in specific situations, problem solving, and basic literacy. Each day, I offer 4-5 relevant photos to select from, and either I have learners break into groups based on the situation they want to study, or I lead the whole class in the study of one topic if everyone agrees.*

*I always start with activating background knowledge and prior learning. I hold up the picture and have learners look at it for about ten seconds. Then, I have them recall what they saw, name the objects, actions, emotions, descriptive adjectives, that is, everything that they can say about the photo. After they have a minute to recall everything about the photo, I have them exchange what they can remember with a partner. While they do this, I circulate and listen to what the partners say, which gives me an idea what each person already knows about the topic. After this, we describe the picture as a class, adding in everyone's ideas and building on each other's language. Some will offer words, some phrases, and some full sentences. I have learners select a few useful key vocabulary words that they would like to practice during the lesson. Everyone's words are a little different; they don't all need to learn the same words. I just check to see that the words they picked represent frequent vocabulary that is useful across a broad range of topics.*

*I integrate choice with technology also. Learners can take their preferred device to type word lists, translate with Google, or compose their texts. We have several computer stations and a number of tablets, which they can use for this purpose.*

*I work with what the students offered up about the picture and with the target words they identified, to create a paragraph-length text about the photo. I may also sneak in a target language structure. This will produce a brief descriptive paragraph, the text we will use for reading and writing practice, which they do in pairs. Each pair also writes a title for the paragraph that summarizes the main idea.*

*In the next step, we create a dialog between the people depicted in the picture. Sometimes it is a social language dialog ("What's new with you?" or "How was your weekend?"), but other times it is more concrete and technical ("We have a problem. What is it? How can we solve it?"). We read and write the dialogs, practice them and perform them multiple times. We may even expand this into a full-on role play or improvisational theater for some fun. For example, we hold up cue cards, and the speaker has to use the word or phrase on the cue card in his next turn. This provides opportunities to work with the target vocabulary and language structures in specific situations that the learners themselves have selected.*

High-quality lessons are those that lead learners to advance toward curricular goals as well as personal learning goals. They build on learners' existing knowledge and skills, stimulate internal cognitive-linguistic processes through learners' active engagement, and produce observable learner outcomes, which allow the teacher to make inferences about how the learners processed input and constructed new skills or knowledge (Mayer, 1992).

From the definition it follows that high-quality lessons are carefully planned to meet certain criteria:

- Have clearly defined lesson objectives;



- Have a mechanism to activate learners’ prior knowledge and existing skills;
- Provide learners with inputs that they can comprehend;
- Engage learners actively in knowledge construction and skills practice;
- Include focus on learning strategies and higher-order thinking skills, and
- Have a mechanism to make the learning outcomes observable.

### **Practice 3A Teachers prepare lessons with clear objectives and convey them to their learners.**

For teachers, lesson objectives serve to assure that the lesson contributes meaningfully to a longer-term learning plan. For learners, the objectives serve several purposes: (1) to “buy-in” to the instruction by recognizing the significance of the activities that are about to happen, and (2) to selectively focus attention on what really matters. Without focusing on the relevant information, it would be impossible to organize that information in working memory to create and retain a coherent whole (Mayer, 1992).

Learning a new language is much more than information processing; it is the acquisition of a large set of skills, which require regular practicing over a long time (DeKeyser, 2007). Lesson objectives can serve as a means of cognitive coaching by drawing learners’ attention to the skills or sub-skills they will be honing through deliberate practice.

Many teachers have lesson plans that contain objectives, but they do not share these with learners because they consider them purely administrative, a technical element of instruction. Unstated objectives cannot serve learners’ purposes; they will not help learners focus their attention or invest their effort into the lesson activities. The learner-friendly approach to lesson objectives is to present them in the form of “I can” statements and to have learners elaborate what the statement means and how it is useful to them.

[Start textbox]

*Consider how sharing the lesson objective may serve instruction.*

*Teacher: Today, we’ll be working on discussing our employment histories. Look at the lesson objective on the board: “I can answer questions about my employment history”. How is this objective useful to you?*

*Ayan: I think when I go to immigration interview.*

*Zaira: Maybe I can get a job.*

*Hao: When I rent apartment. They ask me that.*

*Narek: I think it’s good to learn this. I know it, but I cannot say it.*

*Hiep: I don’t know “employment history”. What is “employment history”?*

[End textbox]

### **Examples of Practice 3a**

**Teachers use standards for curricular planning (where available).** We are not implying that high-quality lessons are standards-based lessons are synonymous. In some adult education contexts, programs follow published standards for instruction. For example, in the United States, publicly funded adult basic education programs may follow the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (Pimentel, 2013) and the English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The purpose of using these standards to guide instruction is to create a pathway for adult learners to access secondary school equivalency and post-secondary training opportunities. Other programs follow standards that align with the English language proficiency exams their

completers take. Where programs have endorsed standards, lesson objectives should align with them; however, high-quality lessons are not necessarily standards-based. Objectives can come from learners’ personal goals or from program curricula that serve specific purposes, as for example in workplace education, family literacy, or civic education classes.

**Teachers determine objectives based on the standards.** Standards are the blueprint to guide instruction toward a defined level of performance. They break down an end-goal to a specific set of observable performance levels. In programs that have adopted specific standards for instruction, placement tests serve to measure where participants’ skills are in relation to the performance levels described in the standards. Teachers in these programs then draw their lesson objectives from the performance descriptors that are at or only slightly above their students’ current level of performance.

You can organize standards-based lessons around learner-friendly objectives by following this process:

1. Select a particular standard the lesson will address. (Example: “Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings.” Pimentel, 2013, p. 26)
2. Write a series of ‘I can’ statements based on the standard. Include only one learning target in each statement. (Examples: “I can write about an event in the past tense.” “I can describe a character’s actions.” “I can use different verbs to introduce what a character said.” “I can use signal words to indicate the order of events.”)
3. Select the statement that best suits the lesson. Use language that is comprehensible to learners at their English language functioning level.
4. Display the ‘I can’ statement at the start of the lesson. Ask learners to explain in their own words what it means to them.
5. Allow time at the end of the lesson to revisit the ‘I can’ statement. Have students comment on what they have learned. They can make a record of how they achieved the objective in their learning journal or portfolio.

**Teachers contextualize learning objectives.** Lesson objectives are more meaningful to learners when they are embedded in contexts that are relevant to them. In addition, connecting lesson objectives to specific contexts can reduce the learning load because the vocabulary needed to complete activities or readings may already be largely familiar. Table 3.1 shows how the same objectives may look like in two different contexts, in an ESOL class for parents in a community school and in a workplace ESL program.

Table 3.1 Pairing standards-based lesson objectives with specific contexts.

Standards-based objective	Sample contexts for objective
I can identify the main topic in oral presentations...	<b>Parent engagement in school</b> when I listen to the principal’s phone messages <b>Workplace education</b> when I watch training videos
I can give a reason to support a claim...	<b>Parent engagement in school</b> when I speak to a teacher about a problem

	<b>Workplace education</b> when I speak to my supervisor about a problem
I can introduce a topic...	<b>Parent engagement in school</b> when I talk with other parent volunteers <b>Workplace education</b> when we have a team meeting at work

**Teachers integrate language and content objectives for their lessons.** English learners are capable of learning content in English at the same time that they are acquiring language and literacy skills. This is not to say that English may be the best medium for all content learning, only to suggest that learning content in English does not have to wait until after learners have achieved the upper levels English proficiency. Learning content and language simultaneously is one way to accelerate English learners’ transition to other types of training available in English-medium programs.

Content-based language instruction is a well-established learning design. Here we illustrate how exemplary teachers design high-quality lessons by matching language and content objectives.

Let’s assume that a large franchise would like to train bilingual employees for front desk attendant duties. They already have a manual for such duties and would like the English classes to use this manual as the content of language instruction. In this situation, the teacher would draw a set of content objectives from the training manual and a set of language objectives from the diagnostic tests and observations collected during the needs assessment (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Matching language and content objectives.

<b>Sample content objectives</b>	<b>Sample language objectives</b>
I can use the phone protocol for Front Desk Staff.	I can read the phone scripts fluently. I can say two phone scripts from memory. I can pronounce the phrases clearly. I can provide a proper response quickly. I can ask for help when I cannot answer a question. I can ask the customer politely to repeat information. I can take a message.
I can handle transactions with money.	I can say aloud the amount of money the customer is giving me. I can count the change back to the customer. I can write a receipt. I can read a registration form. I can scan a registration form for missing information. I can ask the customer politely to provide the missing information. I can fill out the “Office section” of the registration form.

[Start textbox]

*We have organized an ESOL class around parenting topics for the parents of children at our preschool. We started by identifying key parenting topics for the course, such as positive disciplining, physical safety, healthy daily routines, nutrition, home learning, supporting children's language development, and raising children to be bilingual.*

*Then, we looked over the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (Pimentel, 2013) to identify a few key standards that would work well for our course. We decided on the following:*

- 1. Cite textual evidence when speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.*
- 2. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly.*
- 3. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in the text.*
- 4. Analyze how two or more texts address similar topics.*
- 5. Conduct short research projects based on focused questions using the internet.*

*Next, we looked to the English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) to see how working toward standards would look like on different English language proficiency levels. We realized that we did not have English language proficiency levels on the parents, and we would not be able to have this information for our course. However, the standards gave us the idea that we needed anchor texts on the topics that we had identified, and these texts needed to be written on different English language proficiency levels. We knew that if we had these texts available, parents could choose the ones that best suited them.*

*A big part of our lesson preparation was selecting and modifying texts on the topics. We chose two articles on each topic and created modified texts with them. For lower level readers: we had lists, simplified paragraph-length texts, images with captions, and slide presentations. For developing readers, we had several paragraphs and added explanations for more difficult words, and presentation outlines. For advanced readers, we could use full articles, but we made sure that the articles were clearly organized, readable, and they had visuals to support the content. We also knew that additional texts would be coming from internet sources that the parents can select using their own electronic devices.*

*We wrote a series of questions to guide the learners through the study of each parenting topic. The questions served different purposes:*

- Question 1 (To activate prior knowledge): How do I ....? (discipline my child / keep my child safe / feed my child)*
- Question 2 (To cite evidence): What do experts say about ...? (disciplining children / keeping children safe / feeding children)*
- Question 3 (To interpret word or phrases in text): What does the author mean by ...? (positive discipline / childproofing / processed foods)*
- Question 4 (To draw conclusions): What does the author recommend doing?*
- Question 5 (To apply knowledge): What can I do for my child? How?*
- Question 6 (To analyze): What do I need to be able to follow this recommendation?*
- Question 7 (To review): What are the most important ideas I should take away from the texts and the discussion?*

*This lesson structure was helpful to us for combining the teaching of language and content, and organizing our instruction around the adult education standards. As the learners became comfortable with the lesson structure, they started to show more independence with finding texts to read and discussing information from different texts. We were also able to show that this*

*approach is good for studying just about any topic, and that information they can use is available to them at their fingertips.*

[End textbox]

**Teachers allow learners to select the topic/content they want to learn.** Another way to integrate language and content objectives is to allow the learners to select the content/topics for their language learning. In this way, the teacher contributes the language objectives and the learners exercise a degree of control over the content.

Sometimes this can be a utilitarian choice, especially in situations where attendance is not predictable or where classes are multilevel.

[Start textbox]

*The learners in my classes have different education levels. Five are on the grades 7-8 level, eight are on grades 9-12, and three have some post-secondary training. This is fairly typical among incarcerated adults. They all have prison jobs, but their jobs do not require much in terms of literacy. At the most, they occasionally read instructions, a reference manual, a diagram, or a memo. These jobs offer little in terms of motivation to improve their reading and writing skills in English, which is unfortunate. Most come to class for the change of scenery and not necessarily to achieve any learning. (For more on this population, see Rampey et al., 2016.)*

*I have found that there are two ways to fuel the desire for continuing their education while incarcerated: one is to follow their personal interests and make the learning experience inherently rewarding for them. The other is help them envision themselves in new lives beyond their time in prison, to see themselves do well with productive jobs where they can perform successfully in English. Both of these ways require that they should be able to select topics and tasks for learning. Having choices is not something they experience in prison, so that is a perk of itself. Having choices of learning tasks also helps mitigate some of the learning disability issues that tend to be common as well. Much of my task as a teacher is to identify the subjects that they are interested in and the learning tasks that they enjoy, and to create a menu of assignments and assessments that they can complete individually or with a select group of peers. This allows me to conference with individuals and have in-depth interactions with groups of learners.*

[End textbox]

### **Practice 3B Teachers provide and enhance input through varied approaches, techniques, and modalities.**

A fundamental task of the language teacher is to provide usable input, which we discussed in Chapter 2 as one of the essential conditions for second language acquisition. High-quality lessons are carefully planned for ways to make input usable. Comprehensible input occurs by design when teachers ask themselves questions regarding the implementation of the lesson: *How will I convey the information to my students? Will they listen to it, read about it, research it, or discover it through an inquiry task? How can I support their comprehension with contextual clues and scaffolding? How can I build input to match the language that the learners can produce at this time? How will I know that they comprehend the input they are getting from me?*

Table 3.3 Techniques for planning comprehensible input for talk, text, and content learning.

Ways to make talk comprehensible	Ways to make text comprehensible	Ways to make content learning comprehensible
<b>CONTEXT</b>		
<p>Use <b>context</b> to a high degree with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pointing</li> <li>• Gesturing</li> <li>• Facial expressions</li> <li>• Demonstrating</li> <li>• Acting out</li> <li>• Drawing</li> <li>• Showing illustrations</li> <li>• Physical objects</li> <li>• Props</li> </ul>	<p>Use <b>context</b> to a high degree with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photos</li> <li>• Illustrations</li> <li>• Diagrams</li> <li>• Infographics</li> <li>• Picture books</li> <li>• Maps</li> <li>• Short videos</li> <li>• Bilingual texts</li> <li>• Translated texts</li> </ul>	<p>Use <b>context</b> to a high degree with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrations</li> <li>• Experiments</li> <li>• Observing</li> <li>• Imitating</li> <li>• Experiential activities</li> <li>• Simulations</li> <li>• Images</li> <li>• Videos</li> <li>• Drawing on personal experiences</li> </ul>
<b>SIMPLIFICATION</b>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Simplify</b> talk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use short utterances that are grammatically well-formed</li> <li>• Repeat often</li> <li>• Build on the learner’s talk</li> <li>• Emphasize key words and key language forms</li> <li>• Limit vocabulary to high-frequency words</li> <li>• Avoid idioms</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Simplify</b> texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorten readings</li> <li>• Captions, headlines</li> <li>• Table of contents</li> <li>• Glossaries</li> <li>• Outlines</li> <li>• Lists</li> <li>• Topic sentences</li> <li>• Shorter sentences</li> <li>• Few unknown words</li> <li>• Omit extraneous information</li> <li>• Use readers with controlled vocabulary</li> <li>• Use leveled readers</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Simplify</b> content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic examples</li> <li>• Stories</li> <li>• Explainer videos</li> <li>• Infographics</li> <li>• Spark notes</li> <li>• Handouts</li> <li>• Step-by-step instructions</li> <li>• Posters</li> <li>• Images with descriptive labels</li> <li>• Slide presentations</li> <li>• Remove unfamiliar references</li> </ul>
<b>EASE OF PROCESSING</b>		
<p>Make talk <b>easier to process</b> with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear articulation</li> <li>• Slower rate</li> <li>• Pauses to allow think time</li> <li>• Pronounce words that are normally unstressed or contracted (‘the’, ‘a/an’,</li> </ul>	<p>Make texts <b>easier to process</b> with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larger print size</li> <li>• More white space</li> <li>• Key information highlighted</li> <li>• Bolded text</li> <li>• Bullets</li> </ul>	<p>Make content knowledge <b>easier to process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiar topics</li> <li>• Remarkable content</li> <li>• Clearly marked organization</li> <li>• Brief presentations</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘is/are’, ‘not’, ‘do’, ‘have/had’)</li> <li>• Use a few easy filler expressions to slow talk (<i>‘you know’, ‘the thing is that’</i>)</li> <li>• Subtitles</li> <li>• Transcripts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hyperlinked translations</li> <li>• Guiding questions</li> <li>• Activating background knowledge</li> <li>• Pre-teaching key vocabulary</li> <li>• Chapter summaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for immediate application</li> <li>• Clear task explanations</li> <li>• Gamelike drills</li> <li>• Periodic reviews</li> <li>• Distributed practice</li> <li>• Content presented in native language</li> </ul>
<b>ELABORATION</b>		
<p><b>Elaborate</b> meaning with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding explanations</li> <li>• Giving examples</li> <li>• Conveying the same meaning in different ways</li> <li>• Making explicit what is normally assumed or implied</li> <li>• Using signal words frequently</li> <li>• Contrasting different words and forms</li> <li>• Writing down key information</li> </ul>	<p><b>Elaborate</b> texts with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedded explanations</li> <li>• Embedded definitions</li> <li>• Marginal notes</li> <li>• Examples</li> <li>• Redundancy</li> <li>• Explicitness</li> </ul>	<p><b>Elaborate</b> content with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple modalities</li> <li>• Group processing</li> <li>• Debriefings</li> <li>• Coaching</li> <li>• Peer tutoring</li> <li>• Re-teaching</li> </ul>
<b>COMPREHENSION CHECKS</b>		
<p><b>Check for comprehension</b> with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring listeners’ facial expressions</li> <li>• Noting the appropriateness of verbal or physical responses</li> <li>• Asking the listener to elaborate on responses</li> <li>• Asking the listener to restate or summarize</li> <li>• Asking the listener to rate comprehension with gesture</li> </ul>	<p>Embed <b>comprehension checks</b> with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt for reader to evaluate readability</li> <li>• Comprehension questions on the margins</li> <li>• Mini quizzes throughout</li> <li>• Prompts that reference the reading process</li> <li>• Prompts for partner discussion and partner reading</li> </ul>	<p>Provide <b>formative assessment</b> with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on practice</li> <li>• Feedback on performance</li> <li>• Error correction</li> <li>• Self-checking</li> </ul>

### Examples of Practice 3b

Teachers plan ways to make their input to learners comprehensible. Comprehensible input has primary role in language development. Many people associate comprehensible

input with oral communication, but the concept also applies to other modalities of input that learners receive. Teachers scaffold language input in their speech, in the texts they use to promote language and literacy development, and in the teaching of content. There are five sets of techniques that are particularly useful:

- techniques that convey meaning by providing context;
- techniques that simplify the input;
- techniques that make it easier to process the input by allowing longer processing time, directing the learner's focus, making it easier to pay attention and to notice important features;
- techniques that elaborate the input by adding in simplifications without removing the more challenging parts, and
- techniques that help with checking the learner's understanding.

We use these techniques in various combinations. For example, in oral communication, we may point to an object (context) and supply a simplified phrase, like "*Ah! Rain boots*" (simplification). Then we wait to give the learner a little think time to process "rain boots" (ease of processing). If the learner then repeats "*rain boots*", we may respond by elaborating on the learner's output saying "*They are colorful. Nice rain boots*" (elaboration). Then we might glance to see if the learner has a smile, which we interpret as a confirmation that she understood our input (comprehension check).

As Table 3.3 shows, common ways we provide context for oral input are gesturing, drawing, or acting out. We simplify input by using frequent words, keeping our phrases short, and repeating ourselves. We make processing the input easier by slowing down, articulating carefully, and stopping more frequently than we normally would. We elaborate by giving examples and explanations, and we monitor learners' responses to check their comprehension.

We make texts comprehensible with techniques that look different but serve the same purposes (context, simplification, ease of processing, elaboration, and comprehension checks). For example, texts that have a rich context are easier to read; think of illustrations, photos, or side-by-side translations. To simplify a text, we might just limit the reading to the first paragraph, a few highlighted topic sentences, the pull quotes, and the captions next to the photos. We may pick texts that have bulleted lists and lots of white space to make the processing easier on our learners. Or we may decide to elaborate their text by writing explanations on the margins to make sure they focus on the main ideas. To make sure they comprehended what was the most important, we add a few comprehension questions at the end.

Likewise, we can teach the same content to English learners that, for example, other employees are learning if we can design that content to be comprehensible. Instead of reading the company manual, we can create critical scenarios where knowing what is in the manual is relevant (context). We can present the employee manual content in the form of commentary on the critical scenarios using learner-friendly language (simplification). Then we can have students discuss the critical scenarios in small groups (comprehension checks, elaboration). Students can further elaborate their understanding by presenting their own role-plays and commentary, or by creating their own user-friendly handbook or poster.



**Teachers use multiple modalities and sources of input.** Another way to approach the planning for comprehensibility is to reduce relying on teacher talk as the primary means of teaching and communicating information. Learners engaging with other types of input and using language to accomplish tasks are more conducive to their language and literacy development. Minimize teacher presentations in favor of learner actions:

- paired talk and partner reading;
- small group discussions;
- peer tutoring;
- learners using technology to research information, and
- learner-led discussions and presentations using multi-media.

In addition, it is perfectly reasonable to switch modalities to serve learner strengths or preferences. Rather than reading independently, learners may prefer to use audio books, taped texts, videos, or text-to-voice protocol on their electronic devices.

**Teachers prepare clear instructions and task explanations.** Much time is wasted in class, when learners are not sure what to do. A planned activity may not achieve its goals if learners are not following the directions. What could be an exciting, novel activity may turn to frustrated head holding when everyone does not know their role. Lesson planning also entails managing the activities. We can reduce the need for task explanations by having instructional routines that we introduce and practice early on. For example, the introduction of learning objectives and the review of objectives may be such a routine. Collaborative learning groups with assigned roles (for example, facilitator, note taker, questioner, surveyor, encourager, presenter, quality controller) may be another classroom staple. A posted agenda that learners can reference any time also cuts down on the need for directions.

For all activities that are not routine, language learners need both oral and written instructions. Written directions eliminate the effort to have to remember procedural information that is not essential for language learning. It is helpful to break down more complex tasks into shorter steps or to model each step by showing learners what is expected.

### **Practice 3C Teachers engage learners in authentic language use and practice.**

We cannot overemphasize the role of language use and interaction for language instruction. We expect adult learners to be talking, reading, writing, and problem solving in their language courses in ways that they can apply the English skills they are growing in their lives outside the classroom. Contrived pedagogical exercises seldom result in skills that are useful for participating in genuine discourse in the community. Authentic practice means that learners are building skills that allow them to convey real messages and perform actual tasks in real communicative situations (for example, Ellis & Shintani, 2014).

[Textbox]

*Evan is always on the hunt for real-life problems for his classes. He likes his students to practice language in authentic problem-based situations. He encourages his friends and colleagues to share problems with him that his students could help solve.*

*The program coordinator is writing a grant, which requires descriptive demographics about the students in the program. Evan recognizes that collecting and organizing these data is the kind of task that could have his students practicing language in authentic ways. They could write*

questions and conduct real interviews. They would also learn problem solving and academic language.

Evan presents the problem to his Level 4 class. The grant writer would like to have the following types of information: the age of the students, their country of origin, the languages they speak, their length of time in the country, the age of starting English classes, length of time in the English program, years of education prior to arrival in the country, occupation prior to arrival, current employment status, current job title, and the number of children at home.

In order to collect these data, students first construct a questionnaire. They formulate and write grammatically well-formed questions. They pilot the questionnaire and practice by interviewing each other in the class. They revise the tool and decide how they are going to organize the information they are about to collect. Students form pairs to conduct a census in every ESOL classroom. Each pair interviews several students. One partner asks the questions, and the other records the answers. After the interviews, they transfer the data from the paper questionnaires onto Google sheets, and print tables and graphs with the results. They analyze the results and each pair writes sentences to summarize 2-3 items. At the end, they join their sentences into a paragraph, and send the full descriptive paragraph to the program coordinator to include in the grant proposal.

To scaffold the project, Evan provides students with the following:

- A written description of the problem.
- The recommended steps to carry out the project.
- A list of words that may come in handy (for example, questionnaire, item, survey, analyze, graph, pie chart, average, percent)
- Directions for using Google sheets.
- A sample pie chart.
- A checklist for self-assessment to keep track of the tasks.

Evan debriefs the group each day they work on the project by discussing the challenges and what students are gaining from the process. They review the key vocabulary they are learning and explore how they might be able to use this process for other problems at home and at work. (Based on Cardin, 2015)

### Examples of Practice 3c

**Teachers elicit output from students.** Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are interrelated processes that develop in a dynamic relationship. For example, listening to oral language input is a receptive process, as is reading. Both processes require an active and engaged mind to construct meaning from speech or the text. Speaking and writing, however, are productive processes. Speaking helps English learners develop the ability to write in the target language.

Speaking a new language requires a high level of focus on grammar forms, vocabulary selection, and fluency in order to make the message understandable to the listener. Speaking helps learners notice a mismatch between what they *want* to say and what they *can* say. The learner adopts a “syntactic processing mode” as a result and modifies output to make meaning clear to the listener (Swain & Lapkin, 1995). To encourage learners to notice their obstacles to speaking – and increase their ability to speak – teachers find multiple ways to elicit output from their students.

**Teachers create opportunities for active engagement with language tasks.** Language is best thought of as a verb rather than a noun (Levine & McCloskey, 2013). As such, it is best learned while *doing* something with it – by being actively engaged with it as a listener, speaker, reader, and writer.

Some forms of classroom talk are more suitable for learning and practicing authentic discourse. *Accountable talk* is a type of classroom interaction that promotes active listening and genuine interaction among learners (Michaels, O’Connor, Williams Hall, & Resnick, 2013). Learners are asked to exert effort to understand what everyone is saying and to build on the output of others in constructive ways. Using accountable talk moves the whole class can build shared understandings, process learning, and solve challenging problems as a team.

Teachers can assist in productive classroom talk by introducing learners to talk moves such as the following:

- “*Say more on that.*”
- “*So, you are saying ...*”
- “*Do you agree or disagree with that? Why?*”
- “*Why do you think that?*”
- “*Who can add on?*”
- “*Who has another perspective on this?*”
- “*What other ideas should we consider?*”
- “*What have we learned from this?*”

Think back to the discussion of dynamic bilingualism and translanguaging in Chapter 2. Encouraging learners to share their knowledge and ideas in their other languages lets them use that language as a resource for learning English. If they do not know the words yet in English but can convey meaning in their other languages, they are not excluded from participating in discussions and problem solving. They can share their ideas while also being introduced to the English words or forms that they do not yet know, in a teachable moment.

As mentioned before and shown in several classroom examples, establishing collaborative grouping is another way to multiply opportunities for all learners to engage in conversation. Groups that are carefully constructed, with attention to gender, personality, language skills, and knowledge levels, can promote productive classroom talk. Some examples of tasks used in collaborative groups include (Finn Miller, 2010):

- solving real, open-ended problems;
- discussing (an ad, article, book, movie, news clip, job description, email);
- preparing for a debate or a panel discussion;
- collaborating on a plan (for a goal, process, procedure, event, application);
- developing a product (a presentation, report, memo, video, ad, catalog, web page, business proposal, brochure, business card, logo, flyer, greeting card);
- creating something new (a jingle, tag line, poem, story, skit, play, book, concept);
- designing and carrying out a survey (to poll program participants or members of the community);
- producing a performance (a book reading, play, job interview, business negotiation, pitch, live reporting, news program, talk show), and
- learners generating their own questions about a topic (Rothstein & Santana, 2011).

Elements that lead to successful group work (Gibbons, 2014) include:

- providing clear expectations;
- establishing and modeling a clear outcome;
- providing appropriate content;
- requiring talk;
- teaching group procedures and participation etiquette, and
- involving all learners.

**Teachers embed language practice into learning content.** Many techniques assist teachers in providing variety to lessons and encouraging productive classroom conversation (Zwiers, 2014; Vogt, Echevarría, & Washam, 2015; Vogt & Echevarría, 2008; Kagan & Kagan, 2009). Different techniques are useful at various stages of the lesson as illustrated in the examples in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Language practice techniques through the lesson (Zwiers, 2014; Vogt, Echevarría, & Washam, 2015; Vogt & Echevarría, 2008; Kagan & Kagan, 2009).

Language practice techniques throughout the lesson	
Starting instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipation chats</li> <li>• Journal jumpstarts</li> <li>• The insert method</li> <li>• KWL chart</li> <li>• Word splash posters</li> </ul>
Building instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formula 5-2-1</li> <li>• Framed outlines</li> <li>• SQP2RS (“Squeepers”)</li> <li>• Research and share</li> <li>• Expert groups</li> </ul>
Application of instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study buddy teaming</li> <li>• Jigsaw what you know</li> <li>• Chart and share</li> <li>• Gallery walk</li> <li>• Sentence analysis</li> </ul>
Concluding instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student-created cloze sentences</li> <li>• Quiz-quiz-trade</li> <li>• Learning journals for review</li> <li>• Rubrics for self-assessment</li> <li>• Updating your status</li> </ul>

### **Practice 3D Teachers design lessons so that learners engage with relevant content.**

Just as learning tasks should relate to learners' goals, so should the content of the lesson reflect what is relevant to their life experiences. On the one hand, adults' life experiences are a rich resource for their learning. Relating to the experiences they encounter in their lives allows them to tap into this resource. They can see the relationship of what they are learning and their everyday lives. On the other hand, teaching them skills with materials that contain irrelevant content is both confusing and off-putting. It is worth investing the effort into adapting materials on high-interest content than to disappoint with unappealing materials intended for young readers. Relevant content kindles learners' "need-to-know" as they undertake new duties in their lives, for example seek employment, take on new job responsibilities, become a caregiver, start a business, or participate in the community.

### **Examples of Practice 3d**

**Teachers collect resources that are relevant and meaningful to the learners.** It is more feasible to offer choices about topics and content when we have a collection of suitable materials on hand from which our learners can select. These do not have to be in the form of worksheets and textbooks. The best materials lend themselves to open-ended tasks that prompt genuine discussions and problem solving. Consider building a materials library with some of the following:

- photos of people in a wide range of communicative and problem situations;
- problem solving prompts;
- critical incident scenarios, including cross-cultural issues;
- picture dictionaries;
- teacher- or student-made picture dictionaries of actual workplaces;
- high-interest texts on different reading levels for self-selected reading;
- graphic organizers;
- infographics on a variety of topics;
- bilingual books;
- collections of life experience stories written by adult learners, and
- brief videos that simplify explanations and show practical examples.

**Teachers use information they collected during needs assessment to identify what is relevant.** The findings of needs assessments and the themes collected from learner interviews can guide lesson planning. For example, if learners have migrated from other countries, then learning to discuss the geography of those regions may provide context for language practice. If they did a lot of cooking growing up and learned about the preparation of traditional dishes, then they might value writing and publishing of a cookbook as engaging content for learning. If they experienced oppression and violence first hand, then they may find it empowering to develop their reading and writing around the theme of "How do we deal with oppression and violence in our society?" (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002).

**Teachers integrate use of technology.** Adult literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century includes digital literacy, so infusing technology is another aspect of making learning relevant. Adults need digital literacy to be able to communicate with their children's teachers, get a job or a promotion, participate in education or training. As technologies evolve, adults need a flexible mindset to be able to solve problems in digital environments.

Some learners will have strong digital literacy skills in their non-English languages, while other learners may see technology as a barrier to their participation. Many elements of digital literacy we tend to take for granted which may be entirely new to them, such as how to

- locate, download, save, and edit documents;
- use features like copy-paste, spell check, text-to-voice, scan-to-translate;
- locate and follow tutorials;
- create, edit, and publish videos or multimedia presentations;
- make purchases or pay bills online;
- participate in social media;
- evaluate the credibility of online sources, and
- stay safe on the internet.

Digital skills are best taught in the context in which they are used, such as filling out an online form for medical appointment, finding and evaluating information for a research project, sending a text or email message to a teacher, or using a mapping program in a unit on transportation. As our learners develop digital literacy, opportunities to extend their learning outside the classroom will multiply for them (Harris, 2015).

### **Practice 3E Teachers plan differentiated instruction to match their learners' English language functioning levels, literacy level, needs, and goals.**

Differentiated instruction (DI) is an instructional model that provides multiple pathways to learning and offers differing challenges to a diverse learner population. Adult English learners' needs vary by all the characteristics we detailed in Figure 3.1; however, this does not mean that serving them in the same class is impossible. Teachers who differentiate instruction are mindful of the ways that individual learners are the same or different, and create flexible assignments, adapted texts, and dynamic groupings to allow every learner to participate meaningfully on the level of their current abilities. DI requires that teachers scaffold instruction for student success rather than hold some learners to lower expectations or reduce their learning goals (Tomlinson, 2014).

#### **Examples of Practice 3e**

**Teachers offer a menu of reading assignments and allow learners choices of texts.** The readability of texts depends on three groups of factors:

1. features of the text itself (quantifiable and qualitative text features);
2. the preparedness of the reader;
3. the way the reader needs to use the text (the reading task).

Texts are easier to read when they are shorter, have less complex phrase structure, fewer unknown words, more text cohesion, familiar subject matter, clear organization, and lots of context (as detailed in Table 3.3). Reading tasks are easier to when they make lower cognitive demand, for example, locating information versus analyzing it. Learners are better prepared when they are highly motivated to read, interested in the content, familiar with the topic and the genre, know all but a few words in the text, and the sentences are comparable to the sentences they can produce themselves. (For example, Pimentel et al., 2011; Mesmer, 2008).

To differentiate readings, teachers can offer texts of different length and complexity for learners to select from. Learners can complete different tasks with the texts they read, for example, answer different questions. They can have social supports to complete the tasks, such as a more competent peer for a reading partner. They can learn the same information in a different format, like video, recorded text, or slide presentation.

**Teachers allow learners to work in expert groups and complete jigsaw tasks.** Jigsaw activities refer to a collaborative structure in which learners divide a more complex assignment into manageable pieces to match each team member’s abilities. After each learner completes the assigned part, they synthesize the information to enable them to wrap up the whole assignment as a team. The complex task that the whole team completes can vary from solving problems, reading a longer text in smaller chunks, or researching a topic. The goal is to ensure that regardless of abilities, each team member can play a vital role in providing at least one piece of the puzzle.

In one variant of jigsaw tasks, learners move between two types of groups during the lesson: their ‘base group’, which is a mixed ability group, and an ‘expert group’, which is a group with members on the same skill level, either by reading level, by English language functioning level, or by content knowledge. Learners begin the assignment in their base group where they can discuss what they already know, what they expect as an outcome, and what each member will contribute. Then, team members regroup to meet with their expert group to develop their expertise by reading or researching together. They then reunite with their base group, where they share out the information everybody gathered in their expert group, and finally solve their problem, create their presentation, or complete a data table they started when they began the assignment. This type of task organization allows differentiation to become a classroom routine. (Walqui & van Lier, 2010)

Table 3.5 Differentiation in a multi-level classroom with the jigsaw lesson plan (Walqui & van Lier, 2010).

Differentiation with the jigsaw lesson	
Starting instruction in base groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners receive the assignment.</li> <li>• They complete an anticipation guide.</li> <li>• They discuss background knowledge.</li> <li>• They assign tasks/sections to each team member.</li> </ul>
Building instruction in expert groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners read text or research on their skill and knowledge level.</li> <li>• They collaborate to complete answers/notes.</li> <li>• Teacher checks product and provides feedback.</li> </ul>
Application of instruction in base groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners take turns sharing their answers/notes from their expert groups.</li> <li>• Learners record answers/notes based on everyone’s presentations.</li> <li>• They compare and contrast information based on what everyone shared. They summarize findings, draw conclusions.</li> <li>• They revisit the anticipation guide and record responses.</li> </ul>

### Practice 3F Teachers promote the use of learning strategies, problem solving, and critical thinking.

Honing the ability for sustainable learning outside the classroom requires explicit teaching of learning strategies, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. These are tools adult learners need to manage on their own, to control and direct their own learning. Research bears out the role of learning strategies for success in second language learning (Oxford, 2017; August & Shanahan, 2006; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990); these components are indispensable for high-quality lesson plans.

#### Examples of Practice 3f

**Teachers introduce and practice learning strategies.** Over time, teachers introduce learners to a range of learning strategies that they can apply as needed when they are trying to figure out meaning, complete an assignment, or review material. Language learning strategies are classified by domain:

- **Cognitive strategies** help construct our thoughts. They help us keep information in working memory and connect it in meaningful ways. Examples of cognitive strategies are using our senses to remember, activating prior knowledge, making connections between ideas, connecting details into a storyline, or predicting what comes next. (Oxford, 2017)
- **Metacognitive strategies** regulate our thinking processes. They help us direct how we approach our thought construction. Examples of metacognitive strategies are paying attention to our actions, details, or to others' points of view, prioritizing tasks, organizing our learning space, seeking our practice opportunities, or setting up a study plan. (Oxford, 2017)
- **Motivational strategies** regulate our motivation to accomplish a goal or task. Examples of motivational strategies are giving ourselves consequences or rewards for achievement, practicing positive self-talk ("I can do this". "This is important".), turning learning into a game, attributing success to what we can control (for example, effort or perseverance rather than innate talent). (Oxford, 2017)
- **Metamotivational strategies** help consider, evaluate, and change our motivation. Examples are imagining our ideal future multilingual self, planning for ways to get ourselves motivated, monitoring our motivation level, reducing distractions and off-task behaviors. (Oxford, 2017)
- **Affective strategies** help learners regulate their emotions. Examples include taking actions to make us feel smart and confident, like going to the library or meeting with a study group, doing breathing exercises to calm our nervousness, interpreting situations with positive emotions, talking and tweeting about beautiful things we enjoy and appreciate. (Oxford, 2017)
- **Social strategies** direct us to behaviors that support our learning, such as cooperation, respect, empathy, and exploration. Examples are seeking out a mentor and conversation partners, engaging with friends on social media, taking turns in conversations, showing interest in the lives and cultures of others. (Oxford, 2017)



- **Language** learning strategies are specific to developing language skills. Table 3.6 provides a sampling of these. (Oxford, 2017; Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2017; Nation & Webb, 2011).

Table 3.6 Language learning strategies (Oxford, 2017; Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2017; Nation & Webb, 2011).

Listening strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading the whole situation</li> <li>• Noticing cues</li> <li>• Listening selectively for key words and chunks of language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentrating</li> <li>• Redirecting attention</li> <li>• Note taking</li> <li>• Asking clarification questions</li> </ul>
Speaking strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Rehearsing and self-talk</li> <li>• Using notes</li> <li>• Self-monitoring</li> <li>• Using formulaic expressions and filler phrases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repairing communication breakdowns</li> <li>• Seeking out conversation partners</li> <li>• Engaging in activities that require speaking</li> </ul>
Reading strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selecting “just-right” texts</li> <li>• Activating background knowledge</li> <li>• Using common text features</li> <li>• Skimming for main ideas</li> <li>• Identifying relevant details</li> <li>• Asking questions about the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checking comprehension</li> <li>• Summarizing with graphic organizers</li> <li>• Annotating</li> <li>• Using context cues to guess meaning</li> </ul>
Writing strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorming</li> <li>• Analyzing and following models</li> <li>• Using sentence starters</li> <li>• Outlining</li> <li>• Reading aloud</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking feedback on draft</li> <li>• Learning from teacher commentary</li> <li>• Checking grammar and spelling</li> </ul>
Vocabulary strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key word method (“sounds like”)</li> <li>• Analyzing word parts</li> <li>• Note card method</li> <li>• Noticing the parts of speech</li> <li>• Using dictionaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocabulary notebook</li> <li>• Building word families</li> <li>• Creating word maps</li> <li>• Guess and replace</li> <li>• Using word lists, glossaries</li> </ul>

**Teachers organize language tasks around problem solving.** Employers indicate that the two skills they need the most from their employees are critical thinking and problem solving (AACU, 2013). These are immediately followed by oral and written communication. It is feasible to build language skills around problem solving tasks. Problems solving tasks are useful for any phase of a lesson (starting instruction, building instruction, or application) (Table 3.4). They can also extend over an entire lesson, and they fit well with collaborative jigsaw tasks (Table 3.5). Teachers can present virtually any discussion prompt framed as a problem-solving scenario. Consider these examples:

- It's raining hard. Water starts dripping on the floor from the roof.
- You walk into a restaurant to apply for a job. The manager gives you an application. He wants to interview you right away.
- Your supervisor asks you to stay for three extra hours. He will pay overtime. You need to pick up your children from school. You may be able to work longer if you can find a solution.
- You ask your co-worker to do things. He always says, "Sure. No problem". Sometimes he does the work. Often, he says "sure", but he does not do the work. He does not tell you about it. This can get you into trouble. You want to change this situation.

To infuse problem solving into language practice, learners can follow these steps (Adelson-Goldstein, 2015):

1. Describe the situation in your own words. Give all the important details.
2. State the problem.
3. Brainstorm possible solutions.
4. Evaluate each solution for difficulties and consequences.
5. Decide the solution you would choose. Explain the reasons why that is the best solution for you.
6. Apply the solution. Evaluate the outcome.

**Teachers use techniques to make thinking visible.** What makes it challenging to teach thinking skills is that we cannot directly observe the thought processes in learners' head. Our learners have the added difficulty in that they struggle to say in English what they think, and much of their thinking is facilitated by their inner speech in another language. They rely on concepts that may only partially overlap with concepts conveyed by English words. It helps to capture thinking processes by recording them in some form either in images or in words, and then imposing some form of organization with a chart, concept map, or graphic organizer.

T-charts lend themselves to capturing several thinking processes, for example:

- Observing closely: It looks like – It sounds like;
- Asking questions: What I know – What I am wondering about;
- Considering different viewpoints: What I see – What my partner sees;
- Making connections: Causes – Effects, What I thought before – What I think now.

Venn-diagrams are especially suitable for

- Uncovering complexity: Unique qualities – Shared qualities.

Tables are a tool for

- Analyzing multiple cases: Relevant features – Features of Case A, B, C, D;
- Noticing the gaps in the information we have available to us.

Concept maps help with:

- Generating ideas;
- Making detailed observations;
- Elaborating with examples and supports;
- Connecting and categorizing features.

**Teachers ask questions that prompt critical and analytical thinking.** Many questions teachers ask are rhetorical and display questions. Many more are yes/no and or-choice questions. They do not require substantive thinking or elaborated responses which evidence that students are analyzing and examining their ideas closely. Productive questions prompt learners to go deeper, to provide justifications for their opinions and to support their ideas with evidence. They encourage learners to examine the ideas of others and to critique both evidence and reasoning. Good thinking questions start with *how, how come, why, what else, what about, or what if*.

Researchers found that answering questions like these grow learners as thinkers (Ritchhart, Church, & Morrison, 2011):

- What makes you say that?
- What evidence can you provide for that?
- What are you basing this on?
- What does that tell you then?
- Why do you think it happened that way?
- What else could it be?
- What might another person think/know/notice about that?
- What makes you doubt that claim?
- How does this change your interpretation?
- What conclusions/predications can be drawn?
- How could you best represent the essence of that idea as an image/symbol/headline?

### **Practice 3G Teachers promote self-directed learning.**

Adults are self-directing in other areas of their lives, and it follows that they should be self-directing in their language learning. Adults accomplish a great many tasks on their own by finding resources and figuring things out for themselves. There are several obstacles to achieving advanced proficiency in a new language independently. One is the length of time it takes. To sustain motivation and effort over many years, conceivably over a decade or even longer, is far more demanding than learning a less complex skill. Most are neither prepared nor aware of how long it takes to be fully proficient. Second, adults who do not interact with proficient speakers regularly, neither read nor write in English on a daily basis do not have the required practice conditions to achieve advanced literacy.

Ingredients of self-directed learning are similar across all content (Andrade & Evans, 2013), including a new language: these are setting goals, regulating motivation, managing time and the learning environment, practicing good study habits, giving self-instructions, applying learning strategies, keeping a learning journal, monitoring learning, and using what was learned. However, advanced language proficiency through self-directed learning has its own additional requirements, which are:

- reading widely across a broad range of topics;
- paying attention to and collecting new words all the time;
- writing regularly and receiving feedback on writing, and
- engaging in interaction with proficient speakers frequently.

### Examples of Practice 3g

**Teachers foster in learners a habit and passion for reading self-selected texts.** In order to read broadly, one has to become a curious, passionate reader. Rather than a skill, reading has to become a habit. Habits take much longer to establish than a few lessons. They require persistence and nurturing over time. To take root, our learners need texts that turn them on to reading and allow them to experience pleasure and joy in the activity. This requires a fresh approach with each developing reader. Miller (2009) made a passionate case for how adults might find their inner reader, and suggested the following action plan:

- Set aside a little time and commit to reading every day.
- Choose books on topics that interest you.
- Read more books for children to experience the happiness of child readers.
- Take recommendations from your colleagues and children.
- Investigate the books recommended for you by the book industry.
- Keep your own record of what you have read in a notebook.
- Reflect on your reading, and talk to others about your favorite reads.

**Teachers kindle in learners a curiosity and love for collecting vocabulary.** The vocabulary size needed for independent reading of fiction and newspapers is around 9,000 word families. Movies require around 7,000 word families, and television interviews 3-6,000. (Nation, 2006). Although it is never too late to learn new words at any age (Hellman, 2011), the scope of word learning is an enormous challenge for the adult English learner. To ease this, adults need word lists that help them determine the relative frequency of words they encounter, to judge whether or not a word is worth memorizing. They may also need lists of technical words that are useful in their areas of interest and employment. They should be using vocabulary learning strategies (Table 3.6) and various techniques to aid their memory: word journals, vocabulary cards, sticky notes, and photos they take (Hellman, 2018a, 2018b). Teachers can model their passion for words, but keep in mind that words English teachers are curious about are seldom on the lists of practically useful words for learners.

**Teachers support writing outside the classroom.** For developing literacy learners writing outside the classroom is the most difficult to support (Salva & Matis, 2017), and that is why exploring with students opportunities for writing is so vital. One form of meaningful written communication is journaling about new words, books read, and other learning that occurred through daily interactions. Learners can reflect on questions, like “How do I learn best?” “How do I enjoy learning? What have I done to manage a situation?” Participation in social media is another good option. On many social media sites translanguageing is a preferred form of communication among bilingual friends, which can be energizing to developing writers. It would be ideal for developing writers to correspond with a mentor, who can validate their learning and support them with constructive feedback. Community volunteers and faith-based groups are in good position to serve learners in that role.

## Principle 4. Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed

*Seth teaches adult citizenship education for high-beginner ESL students. He follows the lesson plans available from the Citizenship Resource Center ([uscis.gov/citizenship](http://uscis.gov/citizenship)). Although his students are on the same English language functioning level, they are profoundly different in their background experiences and content knowledge. A third of his students have no experience with some basic concepts, like governments, constitution, elections, or civil rights. The others do not need elaborate explanations of the fundamentals; they are ready for the specifics and for learning the English labels for concepts they already understand.*

*To teach the basics, Seth has collected supplementary materials: a set of infographics, which are easy-to-remember visual explainers. Whenever students need pre-teaching of main concepts, he already has well-designed, ready-to-use explanations.*

*Seth begins every topic with activating his students' background knowledge with some type of brainstorming activity. During this time, he carefully observes to identify who might need pre-teaching of key ideas. At times, he pulls learners aside for pre-teaching in a small group, and sometimes he assigns peer tutors to go over a main concept using an infographic from his collection. The brief peer-tutoring sessions benefit both partners because they provide one-on-one interaction and authentic language practice. Although they derail the lesson somewhat, the modifications are worth it for both language and content learning.*

The success of instruction depends on more than a carefully crafted lesson plan. When we interact with our learners at the beginning of our lesson, we often encounter a number of obstacles. Our learners might lack knowledge we had assumed they had. They might show staggering differences in content knowledge or in language skills. They may lack key vocabulary, or the lesson may be too easy for them. They may not be progressing with the material at a similar pace. Often the decision to adapt the lesson has to be made within seconds. There are solid ways to be prepared.

### Practice 4A Teachers check comprehension frequently and adjust instruction according to learner responses.

Checking whether learners have understood instruction cannot wait until the end of class. Teachers need to know in real time that they are being understood and that every learner is mentally engaged in relevant tasks. They need to detect misunderstandings promptly and help learners get right back on track.

### Examples of Practice 4a

**Teachers use techniques that allow learners to comprehend auditory input.** Processing spoken language is a demanding activity for language learners. Everyone varies in how long they can pay attention to speech that is only partially comprehensible. We even vary in how much tolerance we have for what we do not understand. Listeners get anxious by partial comprehension and lose interest rapidly. To avoid this, teachers can prompt learners to quickly debrief after every few minutes of instruction and actively monitor them while they are engaging in this:

- Jot down notes in their learning journal;
- Talk with a partner about what they understand;
- Teach a partner what they have just learned;

- Write a clarification question on an index card or on a personal wipe-erase board;
- Send a text message to the teacher;
- Leave a comment on a class response board (hard copy or electronic), or
- Rate their level of comprehension with a hand signal.

**Teachers re-teach in small focus groups.** Based on the results of comprehension checks, teachers can gather small groups to revisit lesson concepts or to slow the pace of instruction for some learners. This activity does not have to take instructional time from other learners, who can proceed in the meantime with lesson activities. During these re-teachings, teachers can employ comprehensible input techniques, concentrate on what is the most important, spend extra time in practice activities, or add in just-in-time teaching of concepts that they previously did not make explicit.

**Teachers make use of instructional routines.** A practical way to improve comprehension is to establish routines in the classroom. The processing load is lower when learners are already clear on how to complete tasks, what their roles are, and what is expected of them. Here are a few examples that indicate instructional routines:

- Posted daily schedule;
- Posted lesson objectives;
- Timeline for projects with checkpoints and deadlines;
- Menu of choice activities;
- Poster showing roles for collaborative learning groups;
- Poster showing academic discussion moves (See Table 3.7.);
- Step-by-step task explanations for common learning activities;
- Displays of the stages of the writing process;
- Task explanations for apps and software;
- Posted log-in information and password reminders, and
- To-do lists and checklists of tasks/skills.

#### **Practice 4B Teachers adjust their talk, the task, or the materials according to learner responses.**

Teachers employ many techniques to modify the level of difficulty of tasks and materials on the go. When seeing confused faces, teachers turn to the board to show what they mean with a quick sketch. They may simplify and limit the information to a few main points. They may interject a quick translation, or they may elaborate by giving concrete examples. They may assign a partner or a classroom volunteer. They may provide a think-aloud to model how they might go about completing a task. They may cut longer readings to a single paragraph or let learners utilize an electronic translation. It is helpful to apply available modifications in a systematic way.

#### **Examples of Practice 4b**

**Teachers use various forms of scaffolding.** Scaffolding is a temporary support that enables the learner to perform a task with help. When learners can perform a task with some form of scaffolding, they are progressing toward mastery but they are not yet independent with that task. The two main types of scaffolding are social supports and materials supports. Social supports involve assistance from a peer or someone more capable. Material supports provide help with visuals, abstracts, outlines, or home language explanations. Additional examples of

these supports appear in Table 3.8. It is important to recognize the stopgap nature of scaffolding and gradually remove these supports to ensure that learners do eventually achieve independent mastery.

**Teachers adapt the task to learners' functioning levels.** The way to adapt tasks to learners' functioning level on the go is to know what their functioning level is in the various skills and to have working knowledge of the descriptors of functioning levels. It does not hurt to have a reminder of the functioning level descriptors displayed in the classroom for quick reference. Different adult education programs utilize different functioning level descriptors, usually based on the standards or the assessments they use.

When adapting a task, we can change the length of the response we expect from learners: a word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, a multi-paragraph composition, or a two-minute speech. We can adjust expectations for variety in vocabulary or phrase patterns. We might shorten or lengthen readings. We might add or reduce scaffolding. Additionally, we might change the product of learning so that learners can demonstrate what they know, for example, through an oral presentation rather than a paper, or through a project rather than a test.

**Teachers take cues from their learners' output to adjust their language.** In classrooms where teachers do most of the talking and students respond with a single brief turn, teachers do not match their language to their learners' functioning level. The following classroom examples illustrate the difference between a classroom dominated by teacher talk and a classroom where the teacher builds on cues from the learners and matches her output to their level.

#### Classroom 1

*Teacher:* Last week, we discussed using the past tense for telling events that happened in the past. Like yesterday or last week or years ago. And we read a story that had a number of verbs in the past tense. Some of the past tense words ended in '-ed', but some of the past tense words did not. Do you remember what we called past tense verbs that ended in '-ed'? Omar?

*Omar:* Wanted.

*Teachers:* Yes. 'Wanted' is a good example of a past tense verb that ends in '-ed'. But how do we call verbs in general that form the past tense with the '-ed' ending? Margret?

*Margret:* Waited.

*Teacher:* Yes. 'Waited' is another example of this type of verb. We call these regular verbs. We form the past tense of regular verbs with '-ed'. Like 'want-wanted', 'wait-waited', 'cry-cried', 'dance-danced'. So what are regular verbs, Fartun?

*Fartun:* Danced? No danced.

*Teacher:* Yes, 'danced' is a regular verb. It is a regular verb because we spell it with an '-ed' in the past tense. It doesn't sound like '-ed' when we say it. It sounds like 't'. The '-ed' can sound differently when we say it. It can sound like 'd', or 't', or '-ed'. It's a regular verb if we spell it with '-ed' regardless of how it sounds when we say it.

#### Classroom 2

*Teacher:* Here is our story. We wrote this story last week. Let's read the story again.

*Students (read with a partner):*

*We lived in Pakistan. We wanted to come to Australia. We waited for a visa. We received our visa after five years. We celebrated with our family. I cried because I was happy. I danced because I was happy. I wanted to come right away. We took a plane. We arrived in Australia last year.*

*Teacher: Read the story again. Find the verbs in the story. Make a list with the verbs.*

*Partners reread the story aloud and list verbs. The teacher listens in on the pair work to assess how they are doing and engages them in pronouncing the final sound clearly in each verb. The teacher is careful to speak in short, simple sentences. She uses the same sentence multiple times: “Where is the verb in this sentence?” “Say the verb slowly.” “What does it sound like?” “What is the last sound?” “Do you hear ‘d’, ‘t’, or ‘ed’?” She asks one question at a time, then allows wait time for the learners to respond. She provides feedback on what they say.*

In the second classroom example, you see that the teacher used short, well-formed, simple sentences with controlled vocabulary, and maintained a balance between her turns and the turns of her students. This style of interaction is much more suitable for her beginning ESOL learners than the first classroom.

**Teachers model and scaffold academic language use.** Although teacher talk should not dominate the language classroom, teachers are an essential source of language models. Many adult learners do not have access to comprehensible input that uses a formal register, which makes it difficult – if not impossible – for them to acquire it. Without academic language, learners cannot develop advanced proficiency in English.

When teachers notice students using everyday language instead of academic language, they may call attention to pre-constructed phrases, which are associated with various rhetorical moves. They may point to charts displaying these formulas in the form of sentence frames to remind students how they can express various cognitive-academic functions. Table 3.7 shows an example of a classroom poster that models academic language for beginner to intermediate English learners. Teachers can grow this repertoire to include additional cognitive functions such as inferring, comparing, contrasting, deducing, and evaluating. (Fisher, Frey, & Rothenberg, 2008)

**Teachers make learners aware of suitable learning strategies.** During instruction, we can draw our students’ attention to learning strategies that may help them succeed. Look back to Practice 3f for the types of strategies to bring into focus. Interjecting just-in-time teaching of specific strategies can be more effective than teaching them explicitly in an isolated way. We can also highlight when we notice some learners using a strategy productively, and have them share a quick reflection on how the strategy has worked for them.



Table 3.7 Academic language poster for beginner to intermediate adult learners

<b>Function</b>	<b>What am I thinking?</b>	<b>How can I say it?</b>
Agreeing	I think the same.	I agree that .... You are right about ...
Adding	I have more information.	I would like to add to that. Here is another example for that.
Clarifying	I don't understand well.	Do I understand you correctly? Are you saying that ... Can you tell me more about that? Would you mind explaining that idea differently?
Asking for feedback	I want to know what you think.	What is your perspective on this? What feedback can you give me?
Affirming	I like this.	I appreciate your input. Thanks for raising that point. That's an excellent suggestion.
Disagreeing	I think differently.	I disagree with ... because ... My thinking on this is different in that ...
Explaining	I want you to understand me.	What I mean by this is that ... Here is an example that will show you what I mean.
Justifying	I know why I think this.	The reason for this is that ... The evidence for this comes from ...
Analyzing	This has parts.	This consists of ... The most important element of this is ... There are ... parts to this. One is ... The second is ...
Sequencing	This needs steps.	Please follow this process. The first step is to ... The second step is to ...
Summarizing	This is what I take away.	Here is the gist of what we decided. These were the main points of our discussion. The text was mainly about ...

Table 3.8 Scaffolding types: Material supports and social supports

<b>Scaffolding types</b>		
<b>Social supports</b>	One-on-one with teacher Teacher-led small group Partner work Home language partner Peer-tutor Classroom volunteer/tutor Self-selected study group	Small group with equally skilled members Small group with mixed ability members Collaborative group with assigned roles Interpreter
<b>Material supports</b>	Illustrations Graphic organizers Infographics Tables and charts	Glossaries Home language texts Dual-language texts Picture dictionaries

	Outlines Forms Sentence frames Models of completed assignments	Simplified texts Texts elaborated with explanations and hyperlinks Readers with controlled vocabulary
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## Principle 5. Monitor and Assess Student Language Development

*My learners have interrupted formal education. I teach a low literacy class. Part of what I teach is how to make the most of learning in schools. We use a portfolio to learn to reflect on what we have studied, what we can do, and what we need to tackle next. We work on our portfolios as a group. What we are trying to do is to learn about the value of review, self-assessment, and reflection.*

*We begin each unit with a theme and a big question. For example, one of our units is “Community”. The big question is: How can we find services in our community? In this unit we learn about the location of services, how to write addresses, and how to locate places using an address with a paper map and an online search tool. We visit several service locations and write a simple story about each: the library, City Hall, a bank, and a community center. We use a bulletin board to document our learning throughout the unit. The bulletin board has our big question and our key vocabulary. We create a display about each place with photos, realia, and the stories we write.*

*At the end of the unit, we reflect about each display by writing ‘I can’ statements. For example, “I can find the children’s room in the library”, or “I can write an address”. We also write statements about what we want to learn. We share our ‘I can’ statements with each other, and we display them on the bulletin board. At the end, I take photos of the displays, and we collect these into our portfolios. By the end of the year, learners have a complete book to show what they have achieved. They can review the big questions, all the key vocabulary, the stories, and the ‘I can’ statements. We present these portfolio photos as part of the slideshow at the end-of-year celebration, and they are always a source of accomplishment and delight for our learners and their guests.*

Adult English learners who participate in basic education, literacy learning, and workforce development are often less sure of themselves. They tend to expect much faster progress and may not anticipate the years of preparation it takes to achieve advanced proficiency in English and to be fully literate. They make progress in varied ways and at differing rates. For these reasons, the role of assessment in adult education is different than the role of assessment in K-12 education.

Teachers conduct assessments to answer critical questions in a systematic way: Are my learners progressing toward their learning goals? To what extent have they achieved the objectives? Are they ready to move to the next level? Are there weak spots in their performance that we should work on? However, with adult learners some other questions may be equally important in terms of their eventual attainment in English. For example, are they motivated to continue? Do they have the skills to continue learning independently? Are they likely to be able to maintain and improve their English skills on their own? It makes sense to approach assessment with adult learners with the main aims of keeping them motivated, building their self-confidence, and helping them experience the results of their effort.

### **Practice 5A Teachers monitor language errors.**

An important way to assess our learners is to interact with them in English. We acquire a great deal of information about them both when they produce language freely and when they produce language in controlled ways (for example, respond to prompts). Learner output is a key aspect of learning. The more language students produce and the more varied language tasks they practice, the faster they learn. The types of errors learner make in their output can indicate their current understanding of language forms and vocabulary. While it is informative to monitor errors, we should be thoughtful with how we respond to them.

#### **Examples of Practice 5a**

**Teachers note errors and decide how to best respond to them.** Errors in our learners' output are normal. Gone are the days when language teachers thought of foreign language learning as conditioning learners into correct behaviors and correcting their errors early and often. Errors are much more complex. They can be due to memory limitations during language processing; they can be developmental, indicative of temporary understandings. They can reflect forms in the learner's previously learned languages. They can be the effect of mishearing phrases, or they can reflect that the learner tested an analogy where the analogy did not apply. In contrast, learners who do not make errors may not be at an advantage. They could be avoiding forms that they are uncertain about. The errors worth attending to are those that interfere with meaning-making and those that are persistent but not too far beyond the learner's current level of understanding of language forms. In the case of adult learners, troublesome, persistent errors usually require more than error correction. These features can be addressed through form-focused instruction followed by extensive practice (Ellis & Shintani, 2014).

**Teachers respond proactively when they detect incorrect understandings.** While most language errors are a normal part of language acquisition, incorrect understandings of content can be the effect of instruction. We can address these with reteaching and additional practice. At times the whole class may need a mini-lesson on what was misunderstood, or it may be better to gather with a small group of learners who need more support.

### **Practice 5B Teachers provide ongoing feedback on language output strategically.**

Feedback is one of the important tools of language teachers. A large body of research exists on what makes feedback effective for second language acquisition (for example, Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017). The tone and delivery of feedback matter for how learners receive it. The best way to determine what type of feedback may be viewed by learners as supportive and useful is to observe how they respond to various forms of feedback and notice whether they apply the corrections they received and whether they are motivated to speak and write more in response to the feedback. Also, teachers can explicitly instruct learners on how they can respond to corrective feedback on their output. They can also survey them on their preferences for the type of feedback they would like from their teacher.

#### **Examples of Practice 5b**

**Teachers use a repertoire of oral feedback strategies.** Without doubt, the most common feedback move of teachers in English-speaking classrooms is to respond with "good job". This is a positive, generic form of feedback that most learners expect as the default teacher

response. Learners are so accustomed to hearing the ‘good job’ affirmation that when it is withheld, they will interpret this as there is something wrong with their answer. Yet, the ‘good job’ response lacks the specificity for helping learners improve either the content or the form of their answer.

A more useful form of affirmative feedback is to revoice the learner response. To revoice means to broadcast an individual learner’s response to the whole class. The intended message is that “I have heard you. I would like the whole class to hear what you have just shared.”

A slightly more corrective version of this is known as the recast. A recast is when the teacher repeats the learner response with some changes to make it well-formed, but without giving any other indication – either with tone or expression - that there was anything wrong with the answer. The message conveyed is “Yes, I accept your answer. This is my way of saying the same thing.” The recast is the most basic feedback tool of language teachers because it is unobtrusive, does not have a negative charge, and yet it provides a model for the learners, which can be seen in contrast with the language form that they have used. Many learners can in fact notice the contrast between the teacher form and their own; still, they find the teacher offering useful and do not feel corrected before the class.

There is a full repertoire of feedback moves for corrective responses. Each interrupts the flow of communication to a different degree. The most effective are those that require learners to make the mental effort to produce a self-correction as opposed to the ones where it is the teacher who supplies the ready correct version (Lyster & Saito, 2010). Explanations of oral feedback strategies are included in Figure 3.2.

We may also consider the long-term effect of feedback. In the short-term, explicit correction of learner errors is more effective (Li, 2010). However, adult learners rarely have access to explicit correction outside the classroom. They do benefit from learning to utilize implicit correction and modeling by their conversation partners because these types of feedback are more readily available to them in their everyday communication.

Finally, not all error types can be treated with oral feedback. ‘Local errors’ are more suitable for error correction than ‘global errors’. For example, it is easier to correct the ending on a noun from singular to plural in a single instance (a local error) than it is prompt the learner to recognize that there is a class of nouns that are non-count, which cannot be used with the indefinite article - for example, ‘a rice’, ‘an information’ (a global error). Global errors lend themselves to explicit instruction.

Figure 3.2 Types of oral feedback

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Revoice.</b> The teacher repeats a learner’s response for the whole class without corrections. <i>T: What can you do when your child is absent?</i> <i>S: I call the school. I call the office.</i> <i>T: Estela says, “I call the school. I call the office”.</i></li><li><b>2. Recast.</b> The teacher repeats a learner’s response but reformulates some part to make it better formed, grammatically correct, or correctly pronounced. <i>T: What can you do when your child is absent?</i> <i>S: I call sku office.</i> <i>T: Right. You call the school office.</i></li><li><b>3. Explicit correction.</b> The teacher indicates to the learner that an error occurred, and the teacher supplies the correct form. <i>S: I call sku office.</i> <i>T: We say, “I call the school office”. Remember to use ‘the’. <u>The</u> school office.</i></li></ol>
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4. **Prompts for self-repair** are various signals to learners to alert them that an error occurred, which they should try to correct.
- a. **Repetition.** The teacher repeats the learner utterance with a question intonation.  
*S: I call sku office.*  
*T: I call sku office?*
  - b. **Nonverbal clues.** The teacher makes a facial expression to indicate that something is wrong, and some form of repair of communication is in order.  
*S: I call sku office.*  
*T: ? (T shows puzzled look.)*
  - c. **Clarification request.** The teacher responds with a phrase that indicates that the message was unclear.  
*S: I call sku office.*  
*T: Say again, please?*
  - d. **Metalinguistic clues.** The teacher responds with a gesture or expression, which references an error type.  
*S: I call sku office.*  
*T: Remember? The article 'the'? Say it again.*
  - e. **Elicitation.** The teacher repeats the learner response up to the point where the error occurred, which the teacher would like the learner to correct. This is the oral equivalent of a 'fill in the blank' task.  
*S: I call sku office.*  
*T: Again. I call (lengthens word 'call' and pauses mid-sentence) \_\_\_\_.*
  - f. **Open-ended questions.** The teacher asks a question to prompt the learner's focus on a language form.  
*S: I call sku office.*  
*T: How can we say this more clearly?*

**Teachers align their feedback strategy to learners' functioning level and individual preferences.** Although feedback is an important tool of language teachers and research supports its use, it only makes sense for adults in the form that they like to receive it and can make use of it. This applies to both oral and written feedback. Some teachers come from a tradition where they do not think they have completed their job until they have thoroughly proofread and marked up every error in students' written work. Not only is this wasted effort, it can be demoralizing to learners, who are developing their ability to express their ideas in a new language. Asking adults what goals they are working on and what specifically they would like feedback on is a more sensible approach. Finding time to meet with students one-on-one to help them clarify the ideas they would like to express can be much more beneficial than giving them corrections on their sentences.

**Teachers educate students about the use of commentary on their writing.** Experienced teachers usually have a set approach for responding to their students' writing. However, their commenting approach may be problematic for adult learners from diverse schooling backgrounds, where they may not have had many formal writing assignments or where teachers evaluated them differently. So, first, reflect on your approach to commentary. Clarify what you do and what you would like your commentary to achieve, and then bring it in line with your learners' goals. Second, record your approach in a way that learners can comprehend it. Your goal should be to have a system for commentary that is both educative and teachable. Teaching your system to learners explicitly, practicing with them how to

apply commentary, and reflecting on the usefulness of the feedback system form the full cycle of a sound approach (Goldstein, 2005).

### **Practice 5C Teachers use effective formative assessment strategies.**

Continuous interaction with learners about the learning process is essential to making headway. Both the teacher and the learner need to know whether their actions are bringing them closer to their learning goals. Information gained from formative assessments can help steer them in the right direction. This process also helps learners develop understandings of their learning, which benefits them beyond the classroom by building their capacity for self-regulation and independence.

Formative assessment is ongoing and occurs as teachers gather information about student learning during the instructional process. Its purpose is to make instructional decisions. Most formative assessments are informal and occur on the spot (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2017). Other formative assessments are conducted to evaluate lesson objectives or performance on assignments. They may be graded, marked on a checklist, written as anecdotal notes, recorded as voice notes, or collected through short quizzes, writing tasks, and presentations.

### **Examples of Practice 5c**

**Teachers dialogue with learners about the usefulness of particular learning tasks and assignments.** Giving students opportunities to discuss which activities are working is a way to share ownership for learning. The responsibility of learners' knowledge and skills does not rest solely on the teacher when learners have control over how they practice. This dialogue can occur in a more formal way with a teacher-made survey and a discussion around focus questions, or it can be more open-ended and exploratory. Learners can identify instances where they felt they were really learning and explore why the task, activity, or teacher feedback was especially helpful.

**Teachers employ self- and peer-assessment activities.** Self-assessment is a life skill that can be taught in the classroom. Teachers can ask students to examine their own performance in relation to models and criteria. Students can describe the qualities of their work and the changes they notice from one assignment to the next. They can take inventory of skills that they have developed and skills they need to keep working on. They can explore opportunities that can help them close the gap between their current performance and the model they would like to reach.

**Teachers give specific, actionable, just-in-time feedback on assignments.** Evaluative comments that students receive long after they submitted assignments can rarely be constructive. Learners find feedback much more valuable while they are actively working on the task, especially when the feedback is encouraging and specific to aspects of the work they can understand and still change. Rather than delaying feedback until the product is finished, teachers can embed checkpoints into assignments when learners are highly motivated to attend to guidance and to act on the teacher's recommendations.

**Teachers use rubrics to align assignment expectations with their feedback.** Particularly useful tools for formative assessment are analytical rubrics. Analytical rubrics separate relevant components of an assignment and describe each component with performance

levels. Because each component is detailed separately, the rubric provides guidance for completing the assignment. Learners know what matters, what to pay attention to. They are able to focus on one component at a time. They can compare their work to the level descriptors and see how close or far they are from the criteria that describe good performance. An analytical rubric can double as a diagnostic tool and shows learners the steps toward success (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996).

### **Practice 5D Teachers involve learners in decisions and reflections about summative assessments.**

Summative assessment, in contrast to formative assessment, is usually conducted at the end of a longer period of learning (a semester or year) and is more formal in tone. Standardized testing and program-wide tests are examples of summative assessment. Publicly funded adult education programs use such assessments to report on their participants' progress, mainly in order to provide funders with a measure of program performance. Programs may also use tests to present students with proof of English language proficiency at a specific level of performance or with a recognized credential earned through their coursework.

Regardless of use, standardized tests do not provide a full profile of the learning that individual students accomplish. Neither are standardized tests rewarding for students. While testing may be necessary for program accountability, teachers should consider other forms of summative assessments, which are better suited for the purpose of evaluating the outcomes of learning. Adult learners are not only capable of taking part in the decision making about the types of formative assessments they would like to participate in, they benefit from having control over the products that they create to show what they have gained from instruction. In turn, these products of learning also provide teachers with valuable information for improving their teaching of their next group of learners.

### **Examples of Practice 5d**

**Teachers give learners choices to demonstrate their achievements of learning goals in multiple ways and engage them in reflection.** There is no limit to creativity as to what artifacts may serve as evidence of learning. Learners can construct a story of their learning in any number of ways. When given a choice, it is unlikely that most individuals would tell that story by showing quiz grades or standardized test scores. The construction of a personal learning story takes searching and reflection. "What have I written, and what is my writing mainly about?" "What can I read?" "How did I feel about having conversations at work when I started this class, and how do I feel now?" "What was my journey from not comprehending a word of television and radio programs to being able to understand TED talks?" "How did I go from reading wordless books with my child to reading chapter books with her?" "What were those learning activities that really grew my vocabulary, and what is the size of my vocabulary now?" These are the authentic questions that alternative summative assessments can help learners answer. The questions are worth contemplating because they can motivate continued learning.

There is no reason why adults should not be allowed to define their own preferences for the assessments that are meant to evidence their learning. After all, the journey is supposed to be lifelong, and they will need self-assessment skills to guide them. Table 3.6 lists alternative assessments that learners can select from to present their learning narratives.



**Teachers help learners share the products of their learning in meaningful ways.** What may seem like a small victory is sweeter when savored and acknowledged. Adults do not want grades, but they value when their stories are read, when their compositions appear in anthologies, and when their blogs or video channels have subscribers.

Being involved in the community is especially meaningful. Adult learners can be invited speakers at community events, or they can organize and create their own program for a speaker series. They can produce handbooks for future participants based on what they would have liked to know from the start. Adult immigrants can add their life stories to historical archives and digital collections (for example, the Minnesota’s Immigrants collection), which validates the importance of their lived experiences. Inviting the community to recognize these achievements serves to motivate learners to continue their education.

**Teachers use feedback from learners to make improvements to their instruction.** One of the main questions that assessments should answer is to what extent the learning needs of individuals are being met through the activities in the course, whether in or outside the classroom. We can probe this question informally through dialog with learners, and we can collect this information systematically through surveys and open-ended reflection prompts. Surveys are convenient in that even low-literate students can rate their perceptions of various class and home learning activities. Teachers can also study learners’ artifacts to decide whether or not particular tasks were productive. Learners’ preference to include certain artifacts in their portfolio may also be a good indication of the value they attribute to those learning products.

Effective teachers respond to feedback they receive from learners through surveys and summative assessments by adjusting their instruction in ways to better engage learners on the level where they are, to provide them with opportunities that are meaningful to them, to help them make deeper investments in the learning process, and to guide them to overcome barriers.

Table 3.6 Alternative summative assessments that can reveal learning

Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of audiobooks finished</li> <li>• Sample of radio broadcasts/talks listened to</li> <li>• Recordings of online discussions (for example, Zoom or Voice Thread)</li> <li>• Dictations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response log of listening activities</li> <li>• Collections (YouTube videos)</li> <li>• Outlines or notes taken of talks/recordings</li> <li>• Favorite song lyrics</li> <li>• Anecdotal records</li> <li>• Information gap tasks</li> </ul>
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework videos over time</li> <li>• Recorded presentations</li> <li>• Recorded role plays, discussions</li> <li>• Recorded storytelling</li> <li>• Voice notes, videos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live presentation</li> <li>• Extemporaneous talk</li> <li>• Rubrics of speaking observations</li> <li>• Evaluations of speaking assignments</li> </ul>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of ‘can-read’ texts</li> <li>• Log of readings completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of books read with children</li> <li>• Oral review of favorite reads</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading response journal</li> <li>• Summaries, outlines, graphic organizers of texts</li> <li>• Display of favorite books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graph of pages read</li> <li>• Chart of reading improvement</li> <li>• Record of benchmark assessments</li> <li>• Live reading of self-selected text</li> </ul>
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selected writing assignments</li> <li>• Evaluations of writing assignments</li> <li>• Multiple drafts and rewrites</li> <li>• Dialogs written</li> <li>• Journal entries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emails, personal and formal letters</li> <li>• Text messages, comments, notes</li> <li>• Blogs, social media pages</li> <li>• Photos of completed forms</li> <li>• Presentation of best sentences</li> <li>• Portfolio and reflection</li> </ul>
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal word lists</li> <li>• Words mastered from high frequency word lists and the academic word list</li> <li>• Inventory of word parts known</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labeled diagrams and pictures</li> <li>• Learner-made picture dictionary</li> <li>• Vocabulary notebook</li> <li>• Glossaries</li> <li>• Results of vocabulary size tests</li> </ul>

## Principle 6. Engage and Collaborate within a Community of Practice

*Teacher: In class we have been practicing a strategy that helps with being able to assess the readability of a text. This is important for choosing texts that a reader can manage. The gist of it is that the reader previews the text for background knowledge and interest, and then examines paragraph-length selections for the ratio of unknown words and for sentence length. I think that the students understand the strategy. I would like to know if they find it useful and whether it actually works for them. Is this something you could work with during tutoring?*

*Tutor: Maybe I can help with that, although I don't know much about readability. Can you share with me what you taught in class?*

*Teacher: Of course. I have a handout, and we created a poster that shows the steps. They select several paragraphs randomly, each about 100 words in length, and either they highlight or they make a list of the words that are unfamiliar. More than five different unknown words per paragraph indicates that the text may be too difficult to read without needing to consult a dictionary constantly, which is very disruptive to reading comprehension and to the pleasure of reading.*

*Tutor: I think I get it. So how do you want me to find out if the strategy is working for them?*

*Teacher: First, see if they understand it. Have them tell you the strategy.*

*Tutor: Okay, so I will say, "Show me how you select a good book for you. Show me your strategy."*

*Teacher: Exactly. So, you note whether they know how to use the strategy. They may have a completely different way.*

*Tutor: Okay, next, I think I should have them use the strategy to select a just-right text. I will say, "Select from these books the best one for you". I will give them some time to apply the strategy and to choose the best book from the pile.*

*Teacher: That's good. When they have made their choice, you ask them how they made the choice and why this is the best book for them.*

*Tutor: I'm writing these questions down. "How did you choose this book?" "Why is this the best book for you?" Next, I should give them some time to read the book. On their own.*

*Teacher: Yes, allow them five or ten minutes of reading on their own. You can pick up a book yourself and read along. Then, after some reading, you ask: "How is your book?"*

*“Did you choose the right book?” “Why or why not?” “How did the strategy work?” “Do you think the strategy needs change?”*

*Tutor: Okay. I have a lot of questions on my list now. And they require more than a ‘yes’ or ‘no’. They need to elaborate and justify their answers. Maybe it would be good for me to create a questionnaire, so I can record their responses. That will help you answer your question, which was “Is the text-selection strategy working for the students?”.*

*Teacher: You are right. That would be a systematic way to collect the data. I think that we will learn a lot from that. You know, if this works out, we may go a step further. I really want to find out whether my students could use this strategy, or some modified version of it, to find themselves just-right books on Amazon.*

*Tutor: I think that they would get excited about reading when they see how many good books are out there for them.*

*Teacher: Browsing on Amazon should be a good way to build skimming and scanning skills. And practice selecting just-right books.*

*Tutor: But wouldn’t it be much too expensive for our learners?*

*Teacher: I’ve thought about that. We need a grant that will let us purchase the books they choose for our classroom library.*

*Tutor: I’d like to help you with that. But first, let’s find the answer to your first question. I’ll get the questionnaire ready and a nice pile of books to choose from.*

The success of adult learners who are developing literacy and workforce skills at the same time that they are learning English as a new language depends on more than a single teacher can provide. Collaboration within a community of practice can enhance a teacher’s expertise, multiply the productivity of a single educator’s effort, and contribute to the sustainability of high-impact adult education programs. Collaborators vary by program type. For example, teachers in workplace education programs typically collaborate with company representatives, supervisors, and specialists on writing curriculum, obtaining resources, and evaluating outcomes. Teachers in multi-level adult basic education programs work as a team on the continuous improvement of key elements of their program. In community-based language programs, teachers engage with volunteers, who serve in various roles.

Professional organizations are another source of communities of practice for adult educators. Through them, teachers can join online study groups or carry out joint projects. Members can exchange materials and serve as mentors for one another.

### **Practice 6A Teachers are engaged in their profession.**

Although all teachers would like to feel fully prepared for the profession on the first day of their teaching careers, few of us really believe that we are. The more time teachers spend actively engaging with their students, the more they feel the need to develop and grow to help them achieve their goals and overcome unique challenges.

### **Examples of Practice 6a**

**Teachers engage in reflective practice to grow professionally.** Dewey (1933) discussed reflective practice in his exploration of experience, interaction, and reflection and later, Schon (1990) enlarged on the notion by defining reflective practice as that process where professionals learn from their experiences and gain insights into themselves and their practice. Schon differentiated between reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action occurs when teachers reflect on a teaching or learning behavior as it occurs. Reflection on action involves reflecting after the event: reviewing, analyzing, and

evaluating the situation.

Reflection in action asks for self-observation as we teach, monitoring of the choices we make, and then writing down notes upon completion of the lesson. This is the skill of critical inquiry. Some teachers use a journal for daily reflections. Others write anecdotally with the idea of sharing the experience with a peer.

Reflection on action requires that teachers have solitary time to think about the lesson and to reflect on what occurred, why it happened, how the teaching behavior related to theory or background knowledge, and what ideas it might suggest for future teaching situations. This is the skill of self-reflection. During this time, we examine our assumptions of everyday practice and evaluate them. The process can be distilled into three essential questions:

- What did I do?
- How did it go?
- What did I learn?

Reflective practice, sometimes called critical reflection, can lead to positive professional growth: “Unless teachers develop the practice of critical reflection, they stay trapped in unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions, and expectations. Approaching teaching as a reflective practitioner involves fusing personal beliefs and values into a professional identity” (Larrivee, 2000, p. 293). Teachers who engage in cyclical critical reflection become teachers who constantly tests hypotheses about teaching and learning and experiment with these hypotheses in light of the context of the learning and the students who are affected. In this way, teachers are constantly renewed and steadily increase their professional competencies.

### **Teachers participate in continuous learning and on-going professional development.**

The changes in the population of our learners and the quest for new learning outcomes, which reflect the demands of our society, press upon us to keep step with our profession. Our response to these challenges is to be continually working toward professional involvement and lifelong learning. Initially, individual interest will guide our engagement in professional learning – our passion for theater or languages, our need to know more about literacy learning activities, an interest in particular cultural groups, or our felt difficulty to manage a multi-level classroom.

Through personal learning networks, developed among teachers, administrators, grant implementers, specialists, and tutors in our programs, we can question, exchange experiences, share materials, design workshops, develop study groups, pursue online training, write curriculum units, and discuss our classes: *What I did today, and what I learned as a result*. These conversations are too rare in our over-scheduled days, when we shuffle from one responsibility to the next. But they lead to the reflection and development that are so necessary to well-being in our teaching lives.

By participating in professional development associations, we can stay abreast of best practices. We can join a professional English teaching organization, like TESOL International Association, its regional affiliates, the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), or TESL Canada. We might engage in organizations that focus on specific learner populations, such as the Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults (LESLLA) and the Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE). Those who work in special contexts, such as the military, correctional institutions, or workforce education may connect with a special interest group within the American Association for

Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE). We can attend and present at local, state, or national conferences or sponsored academies and symposia. We can also read and write for the publications of these organizations to get new insights and exchange ideas. Volunteering for these groups is the most rewarding way to form deeper bonds with our professional colleagues.

In addition, we can pursue learning options in specific skill areas related to teaching – technology, curriculum development, or assessment, for example. We can complete online courses and seminars, or apply for a grant, fellowship, or award to enhance our teaching or to pursue graduate education. The opportunities are almost endless; however, they require an investment of our time, and often our money. In exchange, we reap rewards not only in our own professional accomplishments, but also in the assurances that we have improved our learners’ lives by helping them move toward their desired version of themselves.

### **Practice 6B Teachers coordinate and collaborate with colleagues and service providers.**

When teachers practice in isolation - show up to deliver classes, plan on their own, hold the required office hours, and then leave -, many opportunities are missed, and each person must reinvent solutions that another colleague has already vetted (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010). Adult educators often complain of the lack of resources to support their work, yet they forego the benefits that their immediate professional community can provide for them. From the perspective of administrators, teacher collaboration is a performance indicator of program quality. It signals that teachers share pedagogical resources and implement a shared vision with the intent to create improved conditions (U.S. Department of Education, OCTAE, 2015). Collaboration is also a necessity for program sustainability, especially where programs are implementing rigorous, standards-based curricula which must have continuity over several years (U.S. Department of Education, OCTAE, 2016).

#### **Examples of Practice 6b**

**Teachers meet with colleagues to develop curriculum and to co-plan.** Teachers’ schedules rarely permit lengthy meetings about curriculum planning unless they are specialists with designated time, or they are serving in a formal role on a curriculum implementation team. However, it is possible for two or three teachers who share the same schedule to find time for brief, informal discussions where they can compare notes on instructional objectives, swap lesson plans, or exchange ideas for an interesting unit. With administrative support, teachers who are productive collaborators already are in a good position to assume leadership for more comprehensive curricular planning.

**Teachers share assessment results and make collective decisions about the placement and learning goals of individual students.** There are three points in time where a meeting to discuss assessment data is the most consequential:

- when placement decisions are being made based on the results of intake assessments;
- midway through the semester to review how learners are progressing towards the desired course outcomes and what additional supports may be necessary to boost their performance, and
- upon the completion of the course to evaluate whether the results of the summative assessments support that learners have met the course expectations and their personal

learning goals. This is the right time to decide what adjustments may be needed to the coursework to advance the outcomes in future semesters.

In these conversations about assessments, we can serve each other as critical friends. Critical friends are in a trusted position to ask provocative questions, which let us take a step back to examine our data in earnest (Costa & Kallick, 1993). Critical friends know our context, our learners, the constraints, and the outcomes we wish to achieve; we can depend on them to be advocates for our work as well as for our students.

**Teachers guide and apprentice tutors.** Volunteers and instructional support staff can enhance our work with their invaluable services if we are able to invest effort into training them and coordinating with them. In the episode at the start of this section, the teacher and the tutor engaged spontaneously in an inquiry cycle together to investigate the teacher's concern about the usefulness of a learning strategy, on which she spent valuable instructional time. The episode suggests that even within brief conversations the tutor was able to gain many insights into the curriculum, the desired learner outcomes, and the specific techniques used to achieve them. In turn, the tutor was able to extend the teacher's work and integrate the tutoring sessions well with teacher's efforts in the classroom.

### **Practice 6C Teachers utilize publicly available instructional resources for adult English learners.**

Relative to other types of education, the per student spending on adult language and literacy education is a small fraction. The cost of commercially available quality materials is relatively high, particularly in relation to the available funding. Various agencies that support adult basic education have tried to ease this burden by making available free materials both for English language teaching and for teacher professional development. For example, in the U.S. the LINCS resource collection is a major free online library of works commissioned through federal government funding. Here adult educators can access online professional development, as well as instructional toolkits and lesson plans. In Canada, the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks provides a large selection of free downloadable materials for students on every level. In Australia, the Adult Migrant English Program of the Department of Education and Training publishes free English teaching materials for volunteer tutors. An important knowledge base of adult English language teachers is being able to guide learners to access free resources available to them via their government's initiatives to support the education of immigrant, migrant, and refugee populations.

### **Examples of Practice 6c**

**Teachers are familiar and make use of free resources whenever available.** Teachers who are mindful of adult learners' limited resources are careful about requiring the purchase of texts or apps, particularly when these are duplicative of alternatives which are available for their program to use without new costs. They demonstrate and disseminate such resources via their learning networks. They involve learners in discussions about the pros and cons of open source v. fee-based, subsidized v. commercial materials, using these choices as teachable moments in problem solving. We include on our website links to lesson materials that are open educational resources ([www.the6principles.org/...](http://www.the6principles.org/)).

**Teachers keep abreast of new technologies for language learning.** In our technology-driven world, the needs of learners are best served by teachers who can model for them the technologies they are expected to utilize for work, for communication and information gathering, as well as for lifelong learning. Our ability to do this depends on continually honing our own digital literacy. We also need hands-on practice with the learning management systems and the language learning technology tools which we expect students to use. One especially problematic aspect of technology use for today's English language teachers is the successful integration of proprietary language teaching software within effective classroom instruction (Rosen & Stewart, 2015). Rather than to allow a useful piece of technology to diminish our sway, we should approach such new advances as potential tools, which if our learners can wield to their advantage, can enhance both their efficacy with learning and the effectiveness of our teaching.

### **Practice 6D Teachers participate in community partnerships.**

There are innumerable ways in which partnerships can enhance the education of adult English learners. For example, many adult English language programs share space with agencies that provide services to the same population. Language programs may partner with refugee services, faith-based organizations, early childhood programs, community centers, libraries, and workplaces. Language programs may be just one part of one-stop service centers that provide comprehensive employment services. Adult literacy programs can be placed within other educational institutions, which can help learners move through developmental coursework toward more advanced training in a streamlined fashion. Partnerships are more productive when stakeholder engage purposively to achieve clearly articulated goals (Eddy & Amey, 2011). Teachers and learners gain more from the partnership when they are aware of possibilities and when they are represented in the decision-making activities.

### **Examples of Practice 6d**

**Teachers advocate for students and program funding.** The availability and quality of programs depend on the ebb and flow of funding in adult education. Resources are rarely commensurate with the demand for rigor and outcomes set by agencies that allocate budgets (for example, Morgan, Waite, & Diecuch, 2017). Refugee and immigrant education in particular is subject to politics-driven decision-making, and budget cuts hurt those in our communities who are among the most vulnerable and who lack access to advocate for themselves. Thus, advocacy for program resources falls on our shoulders. We are the ones who can help our learners tell their powerful stories, which communicate their hardships and personal victories. We are the witnesses who can provide our testimony that the transformation through adult literacy education is real and a superior return on our community's investment.

**Teachers represent the interests of adult English learners in policy and decision making.** In addition to empowering our students through literacy and helping them lift their own voices, we can also work to ensure that laws and policies in our communities are favorable for our learners. We can express our concern where we notice discrimination or bigotry toward immigrants and refugees. We can promote cultural sensitivity and spread our passion for all cultures and languages. We can contact lawmakers about specific actions that they can take

in support of our learners and their families. We can represent them on advisory boards or bring them with us to public forums where policies are being debated. We can join campaigns and take part in advocacy events.

## A Look Back and a Look Ahead

The 6 Principles that Chapter 3 describes are the basic tenets that guide our profession. Some of these principles may overlap with the guidelines for other professionals in the adult basic education and adult foreign language teaching contexts. They concisely state what exemplary teaching of English learners requires teachers to do:

**Principle 1. *Know Your Learners.*** Teachers gather information about each learner’s background, particularly those aspects that are consequential for instruction and their success. These include learners’ home languages and cultures, their English language and literacy functioning level, and all the factors that can support or hinder their language and literacy development in English.

**Principle 2. *Create Conditions for Language Learning.*** Teachers make their classes into spaces where students kindle their motivation to learn, practice, and take risks with language. Teachers work to secure all the essential conditions of second language acquisition, draw on beneficial conditions, and set high expectations for their learners.

**Principle 3. *Design High Quality Lessons for Language Development.*** Teachers know what learners can do at their current level of functioning in English and what they need to learn next. Then teachers determine lesson objectives, plan how they will facilitate comprehensible input, promote rich classroom conversations, decide on tasks that are relevant to learner’s goals and encourage authentic language practice, and explicitly teach learning strategies, problem solving, and critical thinking skills.

**Principle 4. *Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed.*** Teachers monitor their learners’ comprehension, adjusting teacher talk or materials, differentiating instruction, and scaffolding tasks according to learners’ English language and literacy functioning levels. In short, effective teaching of English learners requires decision-making during the lesson delivery on the basis of learner responses and actions, and a solid understanding of the second language development process.

**Principle 5. *Monitor and Assess Student Language Development.*** Teachers gauge how well learners are making progress, note and evaluate the types of errors that students make, offer strategic feedback, and use a variety of assessment types to have learners demonstrate achievement.

**Principle 6. *Engage and Collaborate within a Community of Practice.*** Teachers understand that they can serve English learners better when they work with professional colleagues. Teaching English learners requires that teachers be part of a community of practice within their program and the broader educator community that affords them access to ongoing professional development.

Each of the 6 Principles calls for teachers of English learners to develop professionally. Appendix B provides a self-assessment checklist for teachers to evaluate their own implementation of these principles and supporting practices. Chapter 4 builds on the 6 Principles



described here, but provides additional examples of practice, which serve to accommodate learners who face specific types of challenges to their engagement and learning success.

## Chapter 4

# Addressing the Challenges with Adult English Learners

*“Inclusive, good-quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies.” Desmond Tutu*

As teachers, we want to reach every adult learner who would benefit from English language instruction and build his or her capacity and engagement within our classrooms and communities. We also recognize that building inclusive learning benefits everyone. We see the value and contributions that all people can make in our community if they are included rather than isolated.

Many adult English learners encounter intense, persistent challenges which are not possible to overcome without educators’ and program administrators’ active support. Unless educators and administrators can find meaningful ways to include these learners, they are unlikely to succeed on their own. Some of these barriers to learning are poverty, cultural adaptation concerns, discrimination, gender disparity, precarious immigration status, mental health issues, disability and impairment, and literacy challenges. Although this list is not complete, it highlights some of the main difficulties that learners face in their language learning journey. These barriers to learning pose tangible challenges to what it means to be an exemplary teacher to adult language learners. Teachers see how these issues are interconnected and manifest in the classrooms every day.

This chapter addresses some of the challenges and issues that educators of diverse adult English learners most often encounter. The particular topics reflect concerns the authors have faced in the role of teacher, trainer, community developer and manager working in many different types of programs and workplaces. Of these, the more persistent and intense challenges are cultural adaptation, literacy issues, disability and impairment, mental health issues (particularly trauma), the concerns of special populations and teaching in complex times. The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners can provide a framework for considering inclusion and proactive measures to accommodate learners with such challenges.

## Participation and Non-participation of Adults in ESOL Classes

*By the sixth week of the term in your literacy class, one of your learners, Minh, has only attended about half of the classes, and last week he missed every session. You hear from other learners that he started working in construction to support his family and can no longer attend school.*

Arguably, the greatest challenge we face in our language classes is the lack of participation of learners who would benefit from English language instruction as well as from the social connections and community that ESOL classes provide. Recent research indicates how broad the scope of this concern may be. For example, in the U.S., Patterson (2018; Patterson & Song, 2018) estimated that 90 percent of adults who could potentially benefit from adult education programs do not participate in any, while an “estimated seven million cannot read English well or at all”. In English-speaking countries, adults need English language and literacy skills to work, parent, participate and engage in the community and in civic affairs.

Factors that deter participation fall into three types: situational, dispositional, and institutional (Quigley, 2006). Situational deterrents arise from an individual’s life circumstances,

from the many roles, responsibilities and identities learners have in their lives. Dispositional deterrents refer to barriers that individuals have internalized about themselves; these are related to their self-perceptions and perspectives. Institutional deterrents are educational policies, procedures, and practices that hinder participation in programs (Patterson, 2018).

Table 4.1 highlights some of the deterrents and the actionable solutions for engaging English learners in adult education. By examining deterrents systematically, programs can design solutions that make participation more likely. These can include locating programs near other services where a supportive infrastructure already exists and publicizing the ways in which programs are equipped to help participants overcome their obstacles. To help programs create systemic solutions, teachers should communicate their learners’ difficulties to decision makers and advocate for proactive measures for boosting participation and attendance.

Table 4.1 Deterrents and actionable solutions for boosting participation in adult education (Based in part on Patterson & Song, 2018)

<b>Deterrents to Participation</b>	<b>Actionable Solutions to Improve Participation</b>
<p><b>Life Circumstances</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of transportation</li> <li>• Family care responsibilities</li> <li>• Work obligations</li> <li>• Lack of money</li> <li>• Lack of a personal support system</li> <li>• Lack of life skills to access services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate program with other services that have an existing infrastructure (schools, churches, community centers, early childhood programs, libraries, shopping centers, and social service providers)</li> <li>• Deliver programs where adults are located (workplaces, institutions, housing complexes, neighborhoods, shelters)</li> <li>• Make instruction available via personal electronic devices</li> <li>• Publish infomercials and infographics that teach life skills needed to access services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Individual Dispositions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health concerns</li> <li>• Disabilities</li> <li>• Behavior struggles</li> <li>• Lack of time</li> <li>• Lack of motivation</li> <li>• Low value on education</li> <li>• Loss of self-confidence</li> <li>• Anxiety or fear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct active outreach to enroll learners</li> <li>• Engage graduates of adult education programs as motivational speakers and role models to share their strategies for overcoming barriers</li> <li>• Create a network of sponsors or mentors</li> <li>• Engage peer-educators and tutors, who can serve learners at alternative locations (their home, health center, or local library)</li> <li>• Organize support groups that focus on dispositional issues holistically</li> <li>• Partner with the leaders of learners’ home culture community</li> <li>• Provide program orientation that is responsive to learners’ concerns</li> <li>• Follow up promptly with students who are absent or stop out</li> </ul>

<p><b>Institutional Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program costs</li> <li>• Lack of suitable programs</li> <li>• Lack of available seats in programs</li> <li>• Students have no knowledge of programs</li> <li>• Requirements for participation</li> <li>• Services not designed for those with limited English proficiency</li> <li>• Services not designed for those seeking academic skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek input on location, program design, and language supports needed from prospective participants</li> <li>• Identify sponsors and funders to make programs available free of charge or at reduced cost</li> <li>• Partner with employers, community agencies, and faith-based organizations</li> <li>• Make the program linguistically accessible for prospective participants</li> <li>• Publicize program information broadly</li> <li>• Hire translators, interpreters, and multilingual staff</li> <li>• Evaluate requirements for participation</li> <li>• Align program content with learners' wants and goals</li> <li>• Engage and train tutors to help teachers differentiate and customize instruction and supports for individual learner needs</li> <li>• Offer tutoring, access to computer lab, and self-paced content-complete online instruction for learners on a waiting list</li> </ul>
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## Adaptation Struggles

*You are working with Ingrid, who has completed an intake interview with you. She has shared her feelings about living in Canada and the struggle she is having adapting. Her daughter is already proficient in English while Ingrid is struggling to communicate. Although you've prepared a lesson on banking and budgeting for the class, she wants to be able to talk with her daughter's teacher and find out how her daughter is doing in school. Ingrid says she feels very nervous speaking to her daughter's teacher.*

*You work with Ingrid to build her language skills to talk to her daughter's teacher in the next parent-teacher meeting. You create a role play and practice this dialog with her.*

*Ingrid: It's nice to meet you.*

*Teacher: I'm glad we're meeting today. Thank you.*

*Ingrid: You're welcome.*

*Teacher: I would like to talk to you about your daughter.*

*Ingrid: Is there a problem?*

*Teacher: No, your daughter is doing well.*

*Ingrid: That's great news.*

*Teacher: She is a wonderful student.*

*Ingrid: I'm so happy to hear that.*

*The next session when you meet Ingrid, she tells you that she was able to talk to the teacher. She also learned about a parenting group in her neighborhood.*

Newcomers face struggles adapting to their new country including their learning environment. The transition to a new life, in a new country, in a new language is rarely easy for anyone. The process of cultural adaptation can take a long time, and the road can be bumpy. However, some of our learners experience acute difficulties with adjustment. Their living conditions, social and work circumstances, and experiences (both prior to arrival and post arrival) influence how well and how quickly they are able to adapt.

The process of cultural adaptation can be framed in different ways. There is no single model or framework in which to view the process of adaptation and integration. However, one approach is to view cultural adaptation as a three-stage process (Holder, 1991):

- Stage I is settlement: establish oneself in the new home and learn how to access basic necessities.
- Stage II is adaptation: engage with the new culture and adapt to the environment, while seeking to keep some of one's own cultural identity.
- Stage III is the integration of biculturalism: become fully functioning members of the broader society through civic engagement, social connections, social bonds, safety and stability (Ager, A., & Strang, A., 2008). Integration is a two-way process, where both the newcomer and the receiving community are affected and enriched by each other's culture.

### **Principle 1. Know Your Learners**

**Monitor how learners are adapting.** To engage with learners and build their capacity to move through the stages of cultural adaptation is one of our roles as teachers. When we are getting to know learners, we can inquire about their level of optimism about their new life, what they may find troublesome, and how they feel about their new circumstances. We can try to gauge their social engagement and explore whether the new connections they are making are serving to buffer the stresses of change. We can provide support and encouragement to help them reach out and not become isolated.

**Become educated about cross-cultural issues.** In Chapter 3, we discussed the importance of exploring cross-cultural issues with learners to understand where their difficulties lie with crossing linguistic, ethnic, and cultural boundaries. When these conversations about cross-cultural issues are open and genuine, they can provide insights into learners' struggles with adaptation. Taking note of specific issues can define the direction for finding resources that are helpful. When you see a student in the classroom, who may be struggling with understanding the new cultural norms or practices, you might consider asking a linguistic support worker to join you to meet with the student and to see if you can learn more about the situation from the student's perspective.

*Nelson holds a student-teacher conference with a high-level learner. The student is a refugee from Sri Lanka and is the only Tamil speaker in the class. She tells the teacher that she feels very lonely. She thinks the other learners are not nice and feels she has nothing in common with them. She says she feels angry and complains about living in Sydney. She was expecting life in her new country to be easier.*

In the above vignette, by having a one-on-one conversation, the teacher gains insight into the student's life experience and challenges. Although it is difficult to know each student personally,

not knowing about key aspects of students' experience that might impact learning can make teaching more challenging. Any understanding we gain of possible obstacles to learning that learners bring to the classroom can help us develop informed learning strategies. This approach leads to more productive and more inclusive classes.

## Principle 2. Create Conditions for Language Learning

*Lila had a Burmese student in her class, Hayma, who was usually very quiet. When Lila planned a lesson about food, she purposely included in the lesson plan a Burmese fried rice recipe. Her Burmese student did indeed become very engaged that day. Hayma started talking about Burmese food and traditions, and she was using vocabulary that Lila did not know she knew in English. The other learners asked Hayma lots of questions and shared their own rice recipes. The class decided to have a potluck on the last day of the semester to share food from their home countries. Several students partnered to cook their dish together for the whole class.*

**Promote a culturally responsive classroom.** Lila, the teacher in the vignette, promotes engagement through encouraging learners to find commonality in their experiences and aiding learners to build relationships outside the class. Forming friendships in a highly diverse class can be difficult for some learners and conflicts can arise. Here are some other suggestions to create a culturally responsive classroom:

- Include stories that represent the experiences of individuals and groups from a variety of backgrounds. For example, share accounts of the migration journeys of people from different ethnicities and circumstances; discuss the dreams immigrants and refugees have of a new life in a new land. Excellent resources are available from Passages Canada (<http://passagestocanada.com/>) and Immigration History Research Center (<https://cla.umn.edu/ihrc/immigrant-stories>).
- Listen actively and try not to judge if you feel learners are making assumptions. Be aware of your own biases and assumptions and how they may impact your interactions with your students.

## Build an appreciation of and intercultural sensitivity for other cultures

*Last week, Pierre taught a beginner class where he had the learners work in pairs. He grouped Maher and Laila together because he knew that both spoke Arabic, were both from Syria and had recently arrived in Canada. While he was working with another pair, he noticed that Maher and Laila were not working together on the assignment. When he checked in with them, Maher said he would feel more comfortable working with another student.*

*At the end of the class, he asked Maher to stay in the classroom, so he could figure out what had just happened. He learned from Maher that he didn't feel comfortable working with Laila because she was a single woman. He did not want to make her feel uncomfortable. Pierre listened to Maher's concerns and acknowledged them.*

*Later that day, he spoke to Rasha, the Arabic-speaking support at his organization. She said that Maher came from a very conservative family, and it was not unusual for him to feel uncomfortable working with a woman. Pierre realized he had never really considered gender and cultural expectations when putting students into pairs. He was glad that Maher shared his concerns with him. During the next class, Pierre moved the two students so that they were able to work with other*

*learners. Pierre also decided to do some reading about gender relations in different parts of the world and to try and incorporate a lesson on gender issues in his upcoming unit on family and relationships.*

Building diverse classrooms is ongoing work as it involves creating lessons that explore and build intercultural sensitivity. Exploring cultural differences between homelands and the country of settlement is a place to start. The above vignette showed how students' values can impact interactions in the class. Therefore, teachers can engage learners in exploring different perspectives on issues, problems, and assumptions. We can teach learners about cultural practices, norms, and values in the new country and how these play out both inside and outside the classroom.

This is critically important when conflict and misunderstanding are part of the experience of students who are struggling to make a place for themselves in their new country. To mitigate problems of communication, we can learn about different communication norms of the learners' cultures and engage authentically with them. As we know, tensions can flare up between learners who have different values or have come from cultural groups that are in conflict with each other. We also need to recognize that some of these intercultural or interethnic conflicts have long histories, and we as teachers can't and shouldn't expect these tensions to just disappear. We can respond to tense interactions with understanding and respectful dialogue.

Teachers need to build relationships with interpreters, settlement and outreach workers, cultural brokers and leaders within the community. These support people can help you better understand your learners' experience and the adversity that they may be experiencing.

**Create a classroom agreement.** Teachers can compose classroom agreements to mitigate some of the conflicts that may arise. These agreements can be created at the beginning of term and can help to build classroom connections. It also helps with a group of learners with diverse needs and backgrounds to create a respectful environment. Here are some suggestions to help you in creating a respectful environment in your classroom:

- You can create an agreement together with lower level learners. The class can come up with six ideas for the classroom experience that would allow them to feel secure and willing and free to participate.
- Higher level learners can create an agreement in small groups and then bring it back to the entire class. You can write their ideas on the whiteboard and with the class build a whole-class agreement.
- Once the agreement is complete you can post it on the wall in the classroom.
- If learners are not meeting the terms of the agreement you can always go back to the agreement and create a learning opportunity that helps learners better understand the classroom practices and expectations.

Each of us might need to think about what is vital to us as a teacher and propose and negotiate these points with the group, and then add some points for the class to consider about how consensus will be reached. We should anticipate how we will manage disagreements and include the preferred approach in the classroom agreement (Ishiyama & Westwood, 2011).

## Limited Literacy Issues

*Anosha comes from Afghanistan. She grew up under the Taliban. She entered an arranged marriage at the age of 16. Her husband was killed by a bomb in Afghanistan. She then fled to Russia after the war started. She has 5 children. This is Anosha's second year in ESL literacy classes. When she began, she was a true beginner in English and lacked the skills to read and write in any language.*

*Anosha is motivated to learn and attends classes regularly. She has expressed a desire to get a job in the future. Now, she speaks well and has already learned to write her address in the correct order. She really enjoys connecting with the other learners in the class. She needs a little more time in class to complete her work than the other learners. She writes very slowly and expands a lot of effort on trying to avoid mistakes.*

*The teacher understands that Anosha's low literacy creates challenges for finding work. The teacher spends time taking small steps with Anosha and works with her on phonics and sight words. She points out the parts of the words that she spells correctly and isolates the problem letter-sounds in misspelled words. The teacher keeps the list of spelling words short – only about 5 words at a time. Using the Add-a-Word method, words are added as others on the list are learned. A word is considered “learned” when it is spelled correctly three times consecutively (i.e., if it is spelled correctly on two occasions, and then incorrectly, it would still have to be spelled three times in a row correctly before being dropped from the list and only being periodically reviewed). The teacher regularly talks to Anosha about all the new words she has learned and how much she appreciates Anosha trying to come to class regularly.*

Newcomers, like Anosha, arrive in countries to contribute to their new country and to build a new life. A large segment of newcomers (particularly refugees) lack formal education, having limited or interrupted schooling. This can be a result of war, lack of access to education, gender disparity or various other factors. Depending on how much education they have received, learners may be pre-literate, non-literate, or semi-literate. It is important to identify these learners and support them in different ways than other adult English language learners.

These adults have many challenges that we do not see in other groups of adult learners. They may not know how to hold a pencil or recognize common pictorial representations. These learners rely on memory and do not have the benefit of taking notes. They are unfamiliar with many concepts that most learners tend to take for granted. They need to develop background knowledge and learning strategies. Often, they have strong verbal skills, which can hinder teachers' gauging of their struggles with reading, writing and digital literacy.

The curriculum and materials can add to the challenges of low-literacy English learners. We can make learning materials accessible by choosing familiar fonts, enlarging texts and reducing visual clutter. Adding more white space to the page can help new readers focus. These learners prefer experiential learning to text-based learning, which requires adding new kinds of learning tasks as well as social supports. The choice of texts is critical for novice readers because it is



tremendously difficult to focus on decoding and comprehension simultaneously. Familiar vocabulary and content facilitate decoding making a difficult task more manageable.

The issues of low-literacy learners tend to cluster. These learners are more likely to be impacted by trauma and to have health issues. Chapter 3 highlighted a number of proactive measures that can engage learners with low literacy. These include enhanced input through varied approaches, techniques, and modalities. These practices are critical for supporting learners with limited literacy skills like Anosha.

### **Principle 1. Know Your Learners**

**Understand how low-literacy impacts learners' lives.** As teachers, we can start by developing a more complete understanding of how low literacy can shape learners' behaviors and circumstances. In Anosha's situation, low literacy not only impacts her participation in class but also her ability to find work. Low literacy usually affects many aspects of functioning:

- **Financial:** Literacy can have negative impact on employability, income and financial security.
- **Poverty:** Many learners with low literacy levels and their families live in a cycle of poverty.
- **Children:** Parents with low literacy tend not to read to their children or model reading and writing for them, and this can impact the children's own literacy and schooling.
- **Exclusion and Participation:** People with low literacy skills are often marginalized and vulnerable because they are not able take part in many aspects of daily life. This can include civic engagement, volunteering or community involvement. They can become isolated, which can in turn impact their health and well-being. (Frontier College, 2017)
- **Health, Well-being and Safety:** Low literacy is a serious issue in areas of health, well-being and safety, both at home and at work.

### **Principle 2. Create Conditions for Language Learning**

**Find areas of strength and build on them.** Students with low literacy may feel inadequate and carry a lot of negative feelings. Teachers need to be generous with encouragement and consistently offer positive feedback to these students. Recognizing and incorporating into lessons learners' background experiences and "funds of knowledge" help build their confidence and self-esteem. We need to believe in students' capacity to learn, help them set goals, and show interest in them as individuals.

### **Principle 3. Design High-Quality Lessons for Language Development**

**Start with working on oral language skills.** Oral language usually has the most immediate effect on learners' ability to settle in as it allows them to communicate with the people around them, access services, build community and advocate for themselves and their families. Oral language is also a necessary skill for the development of literacy (Bow Valley, 2018, p.172).

There are ways we can help our students develop their oral skills. We can use Total Physical Response (TPI) introduced by James Asher (1969). TPI is a great method of teaching oral language skills or vocabulary concepts by using physical movement to perform verbal input. For example, if you are teaching physical directions get the learners to move right, left, forward or

backwards. Then you can have the students give each other directions. Songs, dialogues and interviews can all help in the development of oral language as well. (Bow Valley, 2018, p. 61).

**Use a task-based language approach.** Teachers can use a task-based language approach for literacy learners. There are many reasons this approach is helpful in developing language with ESL literacy learners. It emphasizes communication and using the language in a whole and relevant way. It also focuses on authentic learning and on real world tasks. It is also ideally connected to true need in learners' lives (Bow Valley, 2018). Below is an example based on working with a group of learners on social assistance who have identified wanting to access the food bank as a need.

[start text box]

**Task : Going to the food bank**

**Introducing the task:** Today we are going to talk about going to the food bank. In a group, think of questions you might ask at the food bank.

**Clarifying the task:** Let's think about the questions together. Who can think of a question you might ask someone at the food bank? (Say the answer is, 'Do you have Halal food here?' Point out the grammar, and vocabulary of the offered question.)

**Completing the task:** In small groups, students work together to create a list of questions. (They will use the handout created from the generated list as a guide when you go to the foodbank.)

**Wrapping up the task:** Transition group into the next part of the task by asking students to share several of their questions. Guide group to see and understand the strategies they use (e.g., questions, asking for more information) and reinforce that they can use these to speak to the foodbank when the class visits there the next week.

[end text box]

**Build phonemic awareness.** Research (Vinogradov, 2010) tells us that explicit phonics instruction for emergent readers is important. Literacy learners need phonological awareness and teachers can build this into their lessons in systematic and thoughtful way. We can do this by incorporating letter/sound systems into their teaching. You can have learners do the following:

- practice recognizing the letter or letters that represent the sound;
- practice hearing the sound and distinguishing it from other letter sounds; and
- practice saying the sound while printing the letter(s).

**Use learner-generated text.** Learner-generated texts immediately provide relevant, meaningful, level and age-appropriate reading material (Vinogradov, 2010). The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is a useful tool for building learner generated text. Teachers using LEA can start by asking learners to tell a story perhaps about how they arrived at place where the class is or maybe what they did over the weekend. Learners recall their stories or accounts to a teacher or another scribe who writes down their words. It is important to write (print) everything word for word. Teachers can say each word as they print it. It is important to keep the story short for lower level literacy learners so not to overwhelm them. The teacher reads the story to the learner without correcting the grammar or word choice, instead asking the learner if they would like to make any changes or additions. These words are then used as a reading text (Vinogradov, p,6, 2010). Here is an example of how it can work:

*Judy has been tutoring Pedro for one month. After their 6<sup>th</sup> tutorial session they started to work on their third language experience story. Judy had asked Pedro to tell her a bit about his work. As he spoke she wrote everything down. They read it together several times. Pedro was still in the beginning stages of reading so she read parts of it. She then asked him to circle the words he knew how to read. She then read the story again and asked him to identify the words beginning with /r/, /s/, /t/ and /v/ the consonants they had worked on the last session. At the end of the session, they read the story one more time.*

#### **Principle 4. Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed**

When working with literacy learners, teachers need to remember to:

- Be flexible
- Take things slowly
- Break instruction into small segments
- Allow adequate time for practice activities

**Offer alternative modes of learning.** Teachers can take a more holistic approach to lesson delivery. We can engage the body and the mind through kinesthetic activities. We can offer learners art and project-based activities, which afford them creative and alternative ways for expressing themselves. We can bring emotion into learning by engaging learners in authentic conversations and recognizing the value of their stories (Gardner, 2017).

#### **Principle 6. Engage and Collaborate Within a Community of Practice**

**Recognize your own limitations.** Teachers can seek out resources and resource persons to help and support them in their teaching of low literacy English language learners. Educator groups exist that explore this area of teaching. For example, Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults (<https://www.leslla.org/>) and Bow Valley College (<https://globalaccess.bowvalleycollege.ca/resource-finder/esl-literacy-network-resource-finder>) have some great resources. Through these and similar resources you can learn more about how to support your learners at low literacy levels.

### **Disability and Impairment**

*Allam is a 28-year-old Kurdish man from Iraq with no formal education. During the war, he was a victim of a bomb blast. As a result, he suffered traumatic brain injury and injury to his eyes. He also has ringing in his ears. In spite of all this, he attends class every day and demonstrates a great eagerness to learn. He does have very high oral skills. He likes working one-on-one with a teacher or in small groups. In a large class situation, he has trouble with background noise. He is also very sensitive to light. He says he often gets headaches when writing and reading. He always sits beside the teacher at the front of the class. His favorite part of the class is when he goes to the Digital Café, a computer lab. In the Digital Café he is able to control the background noise and light in the lab to better suit his needs. He likes to wear headphones and listen to the tasks the teacher has assigned him.*

In the US nearly 20 percent of the people have some form of disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Refugees often have higher rates, like Allam, because of injuries from wars and lack of access to healthcare and medical support. It is possible that many of the adult learners who are

viewed as poor language learners are struggling because they have an impairment that impacts their learning. In many countries, disabilities are not recognized, and in some cultures those with disabilities are stigmatized.

The term “disability” encompasses many different conditions, including physical and developmental disabilities, mental health issues and chronic diseases. These can include:

- pain-related conditions
- mobility problems<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- mental illness
- hearing loss<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- vision impairment
- learning disability
- memory loss

There is a wide range of indicators that define disability. We as teachers don’t necessarily know if a student has a disability, particularly an invisible one. We may perceive a problem as a behavioral issue or a lack of interest, but the problem we perceive could be indicative of a disability. Some occurrences or behaviors (Schwarz & Terrill, 2000; Root, 1994) you may see that could indicate disability include:

- Missing class frequently for health appointments
- Struggling to stay awake or difficulty following instruction
- Inability to focus or to remember
- Performing inconsistently on learning tasks
- Lack of practice outside the classroom
- Avoiding certain tasks
- Exhibiting low self-esteem or a lack of self-confidence.

There are many proactive measures we can take to support learners we know have a disability or believe may have a disability. Applying the following principles can help us create an environment where learners with disabilities are welcome and supported.

### **Principle 1. Know Your Learners**

Knowing the learner is absolutely essential if a teacher suspects there is a disability or related concern. We can engage family members and other important people in the learners’ lives to help us understand what might be happening for the student, remembering that we need to ensure we have the student’s permission to do so. We can assess further by using this checklist developed by Marie Delaney (Delaney, p. 23, 2016). The following is an abbreviated version.

- Does the problem occur in every class and throughout the day or just in certain situations?
- Can they interact and work well with other learners?
- Can the student remember and follow instructions? Are they easily distracted?
- Can the student work independently for long periods of time?
- Where does the student usually sit? Can they hear and see properly from that position?
- What types of tasks is the student good at and which do they actively enjoy?
- Does the student find activities too easy or too difficult? How do you know?
- Is the student able to ask for and accept help?

- Is there a noticeable difference between the student's spoken and written ability?

## **Principle 2. Create Conditions for Language Learning**

**Optimize the physical environment of the classroom.** Many teachers already think about the physical environment of our classroom. When we are thinking about space we might consider finding ways to reduce background noise and removing distracting visual clutter. We should think carefully about lighting in the classroom and where we place ourselves in the room, so the learners can see our facial expressions. We might also consider the seating of learners so the learners who may have hearing and vision impairments are closer to us.

**Facilitate a positive emotional climate.** Chapter 3 mentioned the importance of drawing on learners' strengths, recognizing contributions and acknowledging successes, and this is key when we work with people who may have a disability and may have experienced discrimination and exclusion. Having a positive attitude towards all learners makes them feel valued and encourages them to learn (Delaney, 2016).

**Make time for one-on-one support.** On the first day, we can inform the class that any one of them can meet with us privately if they need to talk about needs that they might have for learning. We should let the students know when we are available for meeting with them to discuss their concerns. Administrative support may be necessary to ensure that teachers have paid office hours so they can meet with learners. Another solution may be to end classes early once a month so teachers can have one-on-one conferences with learners.

### **Have open conversations about abilities while respecting individuals' privacy.**

Unfortunately, individuals with disabilities are often stigmatized and face discrimination. They may face stereotypes about their disabilities held by others and even by themselves. This can be a more complex experience for learners from places in the world where disability is stigmatized to a greater extent than in their new country. Having a classroom agreement and fostering acceptance of difference are important elements of creating inclusive classrooms. As teachers, we can create circumstances for one-to-one meetings and ask questions like, "How do you learn best? What do I need to know to help you learn best?" Teachers need to adhere to policies around disclosure; the disclosure of a disability is always the adult learners' choice.

**Differentiate learning with stations.** Teachers can build lessons with individual learners in mind. Most of our classes are mixed ability, and learners with disabilities in multi-level classes can often feel overwhelmed with the pace. We might need to modify certain aspects of our teaching. We can modify our teaching within our classrooms and support learners with disabilities (Delaney, 2016). Using learning stations is one approach. Learning stations allow students to start with simpler tasks and content and build on their skills as they move to more complex tasks. Students work at their own pace and their confidence grows as they progress. Teachers can ask all students to begin by choosing a station and then advise them that they can move to another station when they feel ready. As they work, teachers can assist them individually. This allows teachers to give extra time to those with impairments or other challenges.

Learning stations are useful not only for students with disabilities but also for those with literacy issues. The learning station model allows students to work at (Bow Valley, 2018, p.167):

- the same task at different levels
- the same task with different levels of scaffolding
- different tasks working toward the same skill
- different tasks working with the same vocabulary
- different stages of the same task
- focusing on areas of need
- catching up on different work

Here is an example of how a teacher has used learning stations in her classroom to support a student who has disability.

*Diana sets up differentiated learning stations to engage learners by accommodating each of their different learning styles and levels. She believes this activity helps students build confidence, which is a key for Jamal, who Diana thinks possibly has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). For a lesson on transportation, Diana sets up learning stations in four areas of the room. She encourages the learners to choose a station. Her student Jamal starts with the first station as he feels confident about the first task of labelling the parts of a bus and he likes the kinesthetic nature of the activity. He then moves to an exercise on community using 3-dimensional cardboard parts. Jamal works with another student on this interactive hands-on activity.. Finally, Jamal, feeling more confident, moves to the station on reading a bus schedule. Diana takes from her observation information for an anecdotal assessment of Jamal.*

### **Principle 3. Design High-Quality Lessons for Language Development**

**Keep lessons well-structured and highly organized.** The following are some ways to structure the learning experience in order to pace teaching to meet learning capacities, make use of multi-sensory approach and materials, reinforce the learning as the new is introduced, and instill organizational skills that assist learning.

- Have a weekly or daily agenda posted
- Teach small amounts of information in a developmental sequence
- Break up information
- Use authentic or real-world material
- Build on learners' prior knowledge and strengths
- Repeat, repeat and repeat
- Teach ways to organize information (tables, graphic organizers, outlines)
- Support oral language input with nonverbal means (gestures, facial expressions, visuals, and demonstrations)

**Use assistive technology.** Teachers can use technology as an aid when teaching people with an impairment but make sure this in tandem with the in-class instruction. There are a number of assistive technology tools that provide support in the classroom if teachers are able to access them. Technology can also play a role in breaking isolation and allowing students (because a doctor’s appointment, illness or therapy session) who can’t attend a class to keep connected and continue to learn at their own pace. Teachers need to feel comfortable with the technology themselves, so start with something simple.

### **Principle 5. Monitor and Assess Student Language Development**

**Be flexible in monitoring and carrying out assessments.** Teachers can deploy alternatives to standard assessment options to demonstrate learning. Individual portfolios (Schwarz & Terrill, 2000) can be helpful assessment tools as they allow teachers to collect students’ work regularly and so assess how persistent the individual student’s challenges are and evaluate which accommodations or techniques have assisted the learning. Portfolios can provide teachers with a selection of a student’s work so that discussion of the work is enabled and shows what has been learned and allows for setting of goals for the way forward (Ripley, 2013).

### **Mental Health Issues**

According to the United Nations High Council for Refugees (2017), “The forcibly displaced population increased in 2017 by 2.9 million worldwide.” Every day, we meet learners who come to our countries and classes and who are part of this growing number of displaced people. Many of these learners arrive having experienced trauma through war, persecution, violence, torture or other horrendous experiences. The effects of trauma often cause ongoing and even lifelong psychological challenges. Even immigrants and refugees who have not been traumatized in their country of origin may experience trauma through the process of upheaval in their lives that is migration and/or through trials of living in a new country (Wilbur, 2017).

Many of the learners we welcome every day into our classes have experienced at least stress connected with immigration and resettlement. This may put them at higher risk for mental health issues including anxiety and depression. Refugees and those with precarious immigration status are even more likely to have experienced trauma and to develop depression or anxiety.

A lot of research (Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005) investigated the prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in refugees who resettled in western countries. According to Clayton (2015), “Trauma has been shown to be a significant risk factor for resettlement success, with trauma ‘load’ as well as the trauma ‘type,’ particularly confinement, isolation, torture and rape, increasing the likelihood of PTSD.”

Refugees did not choose to leave their homes but were forced to; they might have lost or been separated from family, children and friends, they may have suffered torture and persecution and as well experienced immense loss. They have unique needs and will need special attention as they adapt to their new lives. (Jeffries & Wilbur, 2016).

### **Principle 1. Know Your Learners**

*A group of Yazidi women were accepted as refugees in Sara’s community. Her workplace offered a professional development on working with the Yazidi community. She learned about some of their experiences in Syria and the trauma they experienced during the war. Sara found attending this workshop was helpful because when the women arrived she had a better understanding of their*

*physical, emotional and mental health issues. She also understood some of the cultural norms and values they brought with them. She learned about the kidnapping and sexual violence they had experienced. The facilitator of the workshop talked about some of the challenges and opportunities that might come up in a classroom environment for the Yazidi women. The facilitator spoke of the resilience of these women. Sara felt more prepared to support the new students. She recognized the level of compassion or care that could then be set in place before the students arrived in her class. She also learned about some of concrete things she could do in her classroom to make the students feel more comfortable.*

**Recognize the signs of trauma.** Teachers want to know and understand how trauma impacts our learners and what we can do to support these learners in our classrooms. Trauma and mental health issues have some tangible signs and it is important to recognize what the signs can be. The following are possible indicators of a trauma disorder or other mental health issue:

- Irritability and anger
- Sadness (quick to cry)
- Hyper-vigilance (easily startled by loud noises or voices)
- Memory gaps
- Difficulty focusing
- Demand for the instructor's undivided attention
- Difficulty with planning and staying organized
- Physical health issues
- Substance abuse
- Exhaustion
- Lack of trust (with peers and instructor)
- Periods of absence from class.

### **Know about the sociopolitical situations of learners.**

We will never know everything about the situations where learners have come from, but we can find ways, formal and informal, to learn more about their cultures to inform our teaching. We can try to gain some awareness of experiences and political situations that have led to the trauma of many learners too. We don't want to risk triggering people's memories, but we can ask well-considered questions to better understand our learners and what they may have gone through on their journey. Insight into their traumatic experiences and knowledge of how trauma affects learning can help us shape how we work with individual learners and allows us to create classrooms that feel safe for the learners, fostering trust. (Jeffries & Wilbur, 2016).

## **Principle 2. Create Conditions for Language Learning**

**Create a calming physical environment.** A positive environment is one key piece to supporting people who have experienced trauma. Strategies to reduce anxiety are as follows:

- Reduce environmental stress and stimuli;
- Keep windows and doors open, if possible, to minimize any feelings of detention (Clayton, 2015);
- Seek input from learners on how they would like the space organized;
- Build roles and responsibilities for learners in the classroom (e.g. making tea);
- Provide a quiet space in your classroom or in your school so learners can take a break;



- Have the learners who have experienced trauma sit near the door or window, so they know they can leave the classroom at any time; and
- Inform learners that they are free to step outside at any time and take a break.

### **Maintain an open disposition toward trauma and other mental health issues.**

Teachers can be compassionate when we suspect one of our students has experienced trauma. We need to be discreet when asking about personal histories and exercise caution when designing lessons around talking or writing about the self. We can respect learners' right to non-participation by offering alternative assignments such as journaling and having an area of the classroom where a student can work alone if s/he needs to. As we need to be prepared to deal with controversial or problematic subjects when they arise (Clayton, 2015), we must learn strategies to support learners who may be triggered by events or contents of resources during class, and becoming agitated or angry.

### **Gain awareness of the triggering of memories.**

*Pari's school requires her to follow a specific curriculum on the topic of policing and other emergency services. She invites a police officer to her class. The officer arrives in uniform and carrying a gun. One of the Burmese learners runs out of the class. Pari follows him, and he tells her he is afraid of the police. He was imprisoned in Burma. He no longer wants to participate in the class. Pari sits and listen to him share his story with her. She then asks him to rejoin when he feels comfortable. He comes back to class after the police officer has left. The next time the police officer is to visit the class Pari asks her to come in her civilian clothes and without a weapon. The officer is quite happy to do this and the Burmese student stays in the class this time.*

Certain triggers can bring on symptoms of PTSD. The triggers — certain sounds, visuals, smells — may bring back strong memories and even flashbacks. Learners may feel they are living the trauma at that moment all over again. Some triggers are obvious, and we can avoid them, by, for instance, not asking learners to talk about their pasts until you learn that it is safe to do so and, as in the vignette, not bringing police or people in uniforms as resource persons to the classroom. We can still help the learners who have trauma issues develop language even though you need to refrain from asking them to talk about their own experiences.

Be sensitive to story sharing. Tensions may arise when students feel secure enough that they decide to share their stories, but their teachers and classmates are unprepared to hear them (Waterhouse, p.28, 2017). In our classes, teachers ask learners to share an enormous amount of personal information which sometimes includes stories of trauma. As teachers, we want our classrooms to be safe places for our learners. This, however, is not always possible, and Waterhouse (p.28, 2017) cautions teachers: "...against asking for the telling of personal stories of violence as a teaching strategy" We don't want to discourage our learners, but we also need to recognize the impact the story may have on the student telling the story, the learners hearing the story, and also on ourselves.

### **Principle 3. Design High-Quality Lessons for Language Development**

*Indi teaches a class on feelings for beginner ESL students. She wants to provide students with the language to identify, understand, and articulate feelings. Indi learned in a workshop she attended the*

*first step in managing and building a sense of control for students who have experienced trauma, is being able to name and identify feelings. She also is aware that this might be helpful for students therapeutically if they have the accurate names for their feelings.*

*She identifies the vocabulary for 8 feelings (e.g. sad, happy, tired, angry, afraid, worried, calm and surprised). She starts the lesson by introducing the new vocabulary. She does this by herself miming the facial expressions associated with the words. She then draws 8 faces with the 8 feelings on the whiteboard and elicits the language. Next, she gives out a handout she has drawn with blank faces and has the students read the feeling word below each face and draw the expression that represents the word.*

**Include the topics that are relevant to learners' well-being.** As teachers we have an opportunity to provide real-world tools for our learners to create a better sense of well-being. Here are a few ways we can do this:

- Teaching and identifying feelings to promote mental well-being (Jeffries & Wilbur, 2016).
- Teach that the health system includes mental health services.
- Talk about mental health, find ways to destigmatize it, and use examples of well-known people who have met the challenge (Jeffries & Wilbur, 2016).
- Teach help-seeking behaviors and communication skills for asking for help.
- Talk about self-care.
- Invite a guest speaker with 'lived experience' of mental illness.
- Introduce readings about mental health issues.

### **Principle 6. Engage and Collaborate Within a Community of Practice**

*Belar in your class has a severely autistic son. She, along with her son and older daughter, came to Canada as Government Assisted Refugees. She said she spent 8 years trying to get to here. She spent 5 years in Turkey where life was very hard for her with two very young children. She has a lot of stress as a single parent with all the obstacles of the language barrier and caring for her children on her own. She often comes late or has to leave early because of her son. She often cries in the classroom because she misses her husband, who was killed in the war, and she says she feels overwhelmed.*

*Belar needs more support. The teacher meets with the settlement worker and Belar after class one day. They create a plan. The settlement worker makes a connection with Belar's son's school as well as an after-school program in the community for autistic children that her son can attend. There is also a Kurdish speaking counselor for her to meet with regularly to help deal with her experiences of trauma.*

We need to create community and relationship in the classroom, these are key pieces to supporting learners who have experienced trauma. We can build relationships with counselors, settlement workers, outreach workers and other resource people in order to develop links with

various services outside the classroom to support us with our work and our capacity to support our learners like Belar. We can't do it alone.

**Build an environment of self-care.** Teaching learners who are suffering from trauma or other mental health issues can be challenging. Teachers can end up becoming counselors to their learners, yet we are not trained to do so. Taking on the role of counselor can create tension and contradiction for us as we try to create a space for learning and a space of support. We often take on this role because we are the first point of connection to the new community and the first relationship our learners enter into in their new country. If we do take on this role, we may find we experience burnout, compassion fatigue and even vicarious trauma. We need to build self-care into our work. We can do this by:

- Recognizing our limits
- Talking to someone
- Taking a break (e.g., making sure you take your lunch break)
- Reflecting on our work
- Finding time for ourselves

We discuss this further later in the chapter.

## Special Populations

This section focuses on a few subpopulations of our learners that have particular needs or challenges. They make up a significant or increasing number of our learners.

*Pema, a student in George's class, left her 2, 4 and 6-year-old at home while she attended her language class. George learned that the children were home alone when Pema told George she might have to leave a bit early that day because her children were sick. When George expressed concern, Pema said she didn't want to miss the class because she was afraid she would be kicked out of the program. She had already had 6 absences that month. George told her she needed to go home and be with her children. She agreed only because she received assurance from the school that she would still be able to continue her classes. George decides to meet with Pema the following day. George has asked his administrator to help Pema find some extra childcare support. He also learns about a new class starting up at his agency for women only. The class provides childcare, transportation and food. It also more flexible with attendance.*

## Women

Refugee and immigrant women like Pema often have unique challenges in participating in language learning and employment training programs. Women are often the primary caregivers within families and have much responsibility. They may have to put their language learning on hold, or they may have to struggle with strict policies around attendance and punctuality in language programs in order to be learners.

Attendance expectations of language class providers aside, many refugee and immigrant women can't attend language classes because they don't have adequate childcare. Childcare fees are expensive, even for mid-income families, and are usually not an option, particularly not for refugee families. Many women remain in isolation for years without learning English or being able to contribute their skills to the workforce.

Having little or no competence in English inhibits the ability of a refugee or immigrant woman "to communicate with her children's teachers, take an active role in her child's education, make friends, and integrate socially, culturally, and economically into Canadian

society.” (Gender and Migration, 2017). In many cases, mothers become dependent on their children or husbands for translation and economic security, leading to long-term impact on their lives stemming from a lack of integration.

## Youth

Younger learners are increasing in number in adult education. The term “youth” though is quite ambiguous; its definition can depend on a variety of factors including laws, policies, community values, or even family or personal values. Newcomer youth experience an enormous change when moving to a new country at a very formative period of their lives. They may experience family separation, intergenerational conflict, increased family responsibility or even interrupted schooling.

In the US and Canada, adolescents should be in high school (typically up to age 18, some states/provinces higher). However, there are many young people who fall into the cracks, particularly between the ages of 18 and 25. As teachers we want to encourage these youth to work towards their high school completion and content-based instruction in traditional school subjects.

## Undocumented and Precarious Immigration Status

*Pedro keeps arriving late or not attending class at all. His teacher, Ming, asks him to stay after class so as to find out what is happening. Pedro seems quite nervous and scared. He tells Ming that he has a refugee hearing coming up and has had to meet with his lawyer regularly. His wife is pregnant and is having trouble accessing health care. He doesn't want the rest of his class to know his situation. Ming realizes that she will have to reorganize her next class because she had planned to talk about health care for people with status. She now realizes she will have to develop the lesson to reflect her understanding that some learners can't access the regular health care system. She works with her manager to find out what is available for Pedro. She locates a clinic that will accept refugee claimants.*

Migration movement is being transformed by globalization, and the number of people who are undocumented or arrive with a precarious status is growing in Canada, in European countries and in many other countries. There are multiple challenges for people with precarious status such as the lack of access to social services including health care and to education and employment. Access to these things is crucial to people's well-being and to their inclusion.

In Canada, for example, newcomer adults with precarious status aren't entitled to federally-funded language programs. Community organizations, faith-based groups and local governments have stepped in to offer language classes. However, many potential learners may not seek enrollment because of fear of deportation or being stigmatized. They may also lack transportation and other resources that would enable them to access language classes.

Luis Javier Pentón Herrera (2017) discusses some of the factors that impact the lives of this group of students, listing them as:

- a) immigration status
- b) politics
- c) problems in the household/income
- d) uncertainty about their future

- e) lack of opportunities for further education
- f) society
- g) individuals within their school system

Although each of these special populations is unique, there are many commonalities in how teachers can support them.

## **Principle 2. Create Conditions for Language Learning**

*The Family Literacy Outreach (FLO) program services immigrant and refugee families with young children (age 0-5 years old) by bringing a learning environment into the home where mothers and their children learn together with a trained volunteer tutor. FLO focuses on mothers who are homebound because they live in poverty or have childcare needs, or they have health or transportation or other barriers. The participants in this program often fall below the radar of any other learning or education services. Tutors and families meet weekly for 2-hour sessions.*

*Tutors in the FLO program are encouraged to ask questions of their learners, determine needs and co-create with their learners sessions that are interactive and fun. The tutors follow guidelines, such as listen to the learner and ask yourself what they need, and then start with where the learner is. Be flexible and open to making changes to the session based on what you hear. In other words, bake the cake, don't just talk about it. Other guidelines are to go outside and take field trips. In this way, each learner leads the curriculum.*

**Make programs and topics relevant to unique challenges of these learners.** There are many ways we can tailor our programs and build content to meet the needs of specific groups. Morie highlights some of these important considerations in her description. Teachers need to start by asking questions, working together to determine the learning needs, and being flexible. We also might need to go beyond the regular program structure, material, curriculum and resources. Teachers can address specific issues or concerns when working with special populations. Here are some examples:

- If you are teaching immigrant and refugee women, consider running your program in an elementary school and creating a reading lesson on women's health;
- If you are teaching youth, consider developing a listening activity using hip hop, and
- If your learners have immigration worries, they may benefit from learning vocabulary on the topic of sanctuary cities.

**Be mindful and protective of the issues of these groups.** We can often take citizenship for granted and the access that this provides us. If we are working with people of precarious immigration status or with undocumented students, they may not have access to recreational programs, libraries, child care, emergency shelters, public health, food banks, transportation, and police services. Teachers don't want to put students at risk, so we may not be able to ask our students to disclose much personal information, we may not be able to invite the local police officer to come to be a guest speaker, or we may not be able to take our students on the field trip on the bus.

## Principle 6. Engage and Collaborate Within a Community of Practice

**Advocate for program policies and decisions that specifically support the needs of these learners.** We can ensure the learners have:

- Solutions for child-care and transportation,
- Connections with social service providers,
- Food,
- Flexibility (in terms of classes, i.e. in attendance and time of class),
- Trained staff who understand the needs of the specific group,
- Classes available where they live, and
- Other support services, as needed.

## Special Concerns: Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers of English Learners

*In Carla's job as an instructor, she heard stories of violence, loss, and isolation. She piloted a class for women who had experienced or were experiencing trauma. She did this because she knew that many of these women would not be able to attend a regular language class but Carla wanted to ensure they had the opportunity to learn.*

*Carla felt deeply impacted by the stories that these women shared. This started to impact her feelings of safety for her own family and her ability to watch or even listen to the news. She often felt drained and tired. She noticed these feelings and sought out help. She joined BC TEAL (a professional organization in Canada). She made connections with other instructors. She started walking every day at lunch with a colleague. She also started meeting a counselor once a month.*

Teachers have shared concerns and want to do what is best for our students. Unfortunately, we often work in precarious work situations. The policies in place are increasingly concerned with teachers and learners performing to higher standards, but these policies do not build capacity; teachers are being asked to do more with less. We also know that the education of adult English learners is underfunded. Teacher training and professional development often do not address how to support learners with challenges and are more concerned with accountability and measurement. Best practices and current research are not shared with teachers on the ground. Classroom materials and instructional aides are not available to support learners with special needs. The infrastructure necessary for accessing classes is not available (child care, transportation).

All of this means that we don't always have time to support learners in the way they should be supported. We may feel frustrated by learners' lack of progress or feel discouraged and not know how to help them. Teachers may lack the skills and preparation to support marginalized and vulnerable learners and feel helpless as a result of these failings (Wilbur, 2017).

**Understand burnout, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.** As we engage with students who have endured difficult experiences and struggles we cannot but help but be affected. Teachers can become burnt out, suffer compassion fatigue or vicarious trauma. It is important for us to recognize what burn out, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma are and how they might impact us so that we can build our resilience.

Burnout is a state of chronic stress and exhaustion. Compassion fatigue is described as the cost of caring for others (Figley, 1982). Vicarious trauma (Horsman, 1999) occurs as a result of being exposed to learners' traumatic experiences. Vicarious traumas is described as the personal

transformation we undergo as a result of engaging empathetically with our students' traumatic experiences and we can begin to view and experience people, the world and ourselves differently.

The signs for burnout, for compassion fatigue and for vicarious trauma can and do differ but also overlap. It is important to recognize the signs associated with them and get help if you need it. Some of the signs are:

- exhaustion
- increased susceptibility to illness
- anger and irritability
- avoidance of learners
- distancing, as in avoiding friends and family, not spending time with colleagues in a social setting
- reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy
- hypersensitivity or insensitivity to emotionally charged stimuli
- loss of hope

### **Principle 6. Engage and Collaborate Within a Community of Practice**

#### **Teachers and administrators can create caring workplaces.**

There are many strategies and approaches to prevent or mitigate burnout, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma. We have highlighted some self-care strategies earlier in this chapter. Teachers also need flexibility and they need supportive managers who are open to looking at their workload and their job expectations. Teachers need to create links with settlement workers, outreach workers and support workers to foster a supportive environment for our students and ourselves.

Teachers can attend and advocate for ongoing professional development and build strong support networks within workplaces and communities. Administrators can offer professional development on topics related to trauma-informed care, cultural competencies and skill-building strategies. We can talk about our struggles and concerns with our family, friends and colleagues. We can talk to supportive and thoughtful managers and create good links with settlement workers, outreach workers and support workers.

#### **Teachers and administrators advocate for learners and for programs.**

Teachers need to advocate for students and program funding and represent the interests of adult English learners (particularly those who often do not have a voice) in policy and decision making. Teachers also need to advocate for better teaching conditions, policies and opportunities that give us the time to spend with our students and the resources we need to help them learn. Teachers might consider joining the local, regional, national or international professional organizations and bringing forth the challenges learners face such as mental health issues or the repercussions of disability. Teachers might consider other forms of civic engagement (op-eds, writing a position statement or joining a policy committee on the needs of special populations), and they might engage in research in the areas needing further investigation such as trauma and learning or supporting language learners with disabilities.

### **A Look Back and a Look Ahead**

Learners come to our classes with their own stories, experiences and migration journeys. It is critically important that we feel prepared to assist these learners and that we are supported in our

work. In this chapter, we have examined a number of the challenges that teachers of English learners may encounter when working and teaching learners in programs, challenges situational, institutional and dispositional.

Some of these challenges are ongoing and some more profound than others. We have introduced and explored the impact of some of the most significant issues including cultural adaptation, literacy issues, disability and impairment vulnerabilities, mental health issues (particularly trauma), and the concerns of special populations. We have looked at how the 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners can provide us with proactive measures to accommodate learners with such challenges. The principles can help us build our capacity to create inclusive learning situations. As detailed in this chapter, these proactive measures can range from understanding why students don't participate in classes to promoting a culturally responsive classroom, understanding how low literacy impacts our students' lives, addressing stigma, recognizing the signs of trauma or even reaching for help when we are feeling burnt out or suffering from compassion fatigue.

These principles allow us to better understand how to support, promote and advocate even in times of great change. We are hopeful that these principles will assist us in working to support learners in meaningful and effective ways.

Chapter 5 explores the ways the 6 Principles play out in practice in classrooms and programs, and helps us understand how these principles can be implemented in our classrooms.



## Chapter 5

### The 6 Principles in Different Program Contexts

Exemplary English language instruction occurs in many different types of programs and with many types of students. Earlier chapters have talked about student characteristics and classroom practices. Chapter 5 describes how the 6 Principles of exemplary teaching can be applied in English classes in four different types of programs.

Program differences influence the instructional decisions that teachers make and the outcomes of student learning (Condelli & Wrigley, 2006). Some programs have a focus on content in addition to language learning, such as a focus on food safety, information required for citizenship exams, or specific job skills. Many programs follow standards and/or have required assessments that inform instruction. While there are programs with set curricula, others allow the teacher to develop the curriculum. The resources available differ widely across programs as well. For example, some use textbooks while others do not, and the internet and digital devices are easily available in some programs while others have partial access or none at all. Programs also vary in the amount of training required of teachers and tutors. In addition, class time can be organized in a variety of different ways: some programs meet every day for 4-5 hours, while others meet one or two times per week for one or two hours each.

The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners apply to all types of learners in all types of programs. They are a framework for designing instruction or improving instruction regardless of the setting. However, the application of principles varies by program type and the principles will have different degrees of emphasis in each.

In this chapter we describe English language classes in four different settings:

- A workplace in the U.S.
- An employment preparation program for women in Canada
- An employment preparation program in Australia
- An affordable housing organization in the U.S.

Each of the classes is based on a real English language class in a real program although some details have been changed (e.g., teachers' names, information about students, course specifics). You are invited to read through all of them to see what the principles look like in each, and zoom in on the one that is most similar to your own.

#### Learning at Work in the U.S.

Emery Gaines teaches English in a workplace environment in a small city in the western U.S. The workplace manufactures clothing with many employees who are native Spanish speakers and English language learners, so the employer asked a local literacy organization to provide English classes. Emery's class consists of ten women, who all work in the sewing department. The students work four ten-hour days each week, Monday through Thursday. The class meets at the end of the ten-hour shift for 90 minutes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, organized into 12-week terms. The employer pays the workers for 45 minutes of their time in English class, as long as they stay for the full 90 minutes. Attendance at the classes is very good. The literacy organization selects the textbook, which focuses on integrating English listening, speaking, reading, and writing for real-life needs.

The employer wants the employees to be able to use English on the job, including speaking with supervisors and people in the human resources department. Currently most of the

supervisors are bilingual in English and Spanish and the employer would like to be able to hire supervisors who don't necessarily speak Spanish.

The students in Emery's program take the CASAS reading test and place into one of four levels of English classes at the workplace. Emery teaches the second of four levels. The students' English level is between 185 and 200 in the CASAS reading scale scores. Each student in this score range can be described with student performance level 2 or 3. Table 5.1 shows the descriptors Emery uses for planning.

Table 5.1 Performance descriptors for low beginning ESL and high beginning ESL learners (Division of Adult Education and Literacy, 2017)

<u>Low Beginning ELL (Student performance level 2)</u>
<b>Listening and Speaking:</b> Can understand simple questions related to personal information, spoken slowly and with repetition. Can respond with simple learned phrases to some common questions related to routine survival situations.
<b>Reading and Writing:</b> Can read numbers and letters and some common sight words. Can read and write some familiar words. Can write basic personal information like own name and address.
<b>Functional and Workplace skills:</b> Can handle routine entry-level jobs that require simple written or oral English communication and in which job tasks can be demonstrated (Division of Adult Education and Literacy, 2017).
<u>High Beginning ELL (Student performance level 3)</u>
<b>Listening and Speaking:</b> Can understand common words, simple phrases, and sentences containing familiar vocabulary, spoken slowly with some repetition. Can respond to simple questions about personal everyday activities, and can express immediate needs.
<b>Reading and Writing:</b> Can read most sight words, and many common words. Can read familiar phrases and simple sentences. Can write some simple sentences with limited vocabulary. Writing shows very little control of basic grammar, capitalization and punctuation.
<b>Functional and Workplace Skills:</b> Can handle routine entry level jobs requiring basic written or oral English communication and in which job tasks can be demonstrated (Division of Adult Education and Literacy, 2017).

### Principle 6. Engage and Collaborate Within a Community of Practice

Emery is aware that the success of the program depends on whether she can unite the goals of all stakeholders. First, she meets with the employers to learn about their expectations and the parameters for the class. As the lead teacher in the program, Emery coordinates with the other teachers on things such as:

- student placement,
- workplace topics to add to the textbook topics
- learning objectives
- tracking student progress in each level
- reporting test scores to the employer

All of the instructors have been through the training provided by the literacy organization and specific workplace English training created by Emery. They meet bi-weekly to discuss issues that have arisen, student progress, what has worked, what has not worked, and ideas for classroom activities to work toward meeting both the students' learning goals and the employers' goals.

### Principle 1. Know Your Learners

The students placed in Emery's class all completed at least 6 years of education in their native country of Mexico, are native Spanish speakers, and have basic literacy in Spanish. Members of the class have been in the U.S. for an average of 15 years. They have a variety of comfort levels with technology; all of the students have cell phones, including several with smartphones who use them to play Duolingo, a free language learning app.

When Emery first talked with the students about their goals with English, they told her that they wanted to be able to use English with people at their children's school, with their doctors, and while shopping. They reported that they don't talk while they are working because they want to sew as much as possible. In addition, all of the supervisors are bilingual in both English and Spanish so that work-related needs can be met in Spanish. The students also reported that when they needed something from the human resources department, they asked for the Spanish-speaking member of the department.

Emery designed a compromise between the employer's goals and the students' goals that guided her selection of topics for the curriculum. She planned units based on topics requested by the students and also integrated employment topics. For example, in a unit on family Emery added workplace topics such as filling out health insurance forms, talking about the jobs held by students' family members, and answering questions about who the employer should contact in case of an emergency, a form required by the human resources department (and also the school district). See sidebar 1.

Sidebar 1: sample workplace topics

Textbook topic	Associated workplace topics
Daily activities	Work schedule Being on time to work Paid holidays, vacation time
Transportation	Types of transportation to get to work Directions at work Nearby services (ATM, gas station, hospital)
Health	Calling in sick Accident at work Family leave Parts of the body that are used at work (for example preventing carpal tunnel)
Grocery shopping and money	Hourly wages or salary Reading pay stubs Depositing paychecks

## Principle 2. Create Conditions for Language Learning

Because the students are tired after a ten-hour day, Emery works to make the class fun, engaging, and motivating. Each class period the students take turns bringing food, and Emery and the class members spend their break eating together, making the group feel like a community. Emery also spends at least some time during each class getting the class up and moving around. For example, Emery moves the chairs and tables around to simulate an environment such as a grocery store or the human resources department for role-play activities. When the students are particularly tired toward the end of class, Emery has the class play vocabulary games such as BINGO and letter/word guessing games.

In order to make the classroom a safe space to share their concerns, Emery is careful about what she shares with the employer. Information about things like health, family situations, and transportation problems always remain confidential. Emery shares information about attendance and language assessment scores with the employer, with the students' knowledge.

Emery is careful to use real-life scenarios to provide contexts that are meaningful and motivating to the learners. For example, the learners need to be able to communicate with people in the human resources office at their workplace, so Emery designs activities in which students practice asking questions and giving information from interactions with individuals in the human resources department. Emery helps the learners see that instead of waiting to talk to the one Spanish-speaking person in the human resources department, they will be able to communicate with anyone in that department. This helps the learners to picture a future in which they will be successful using English in situations where they currently use only Spanish.

## Principle 3. Design High-Quality Lessons for Language Development

Emery designs lessons that integrate both the topics that students want for their daily lives and the language that they need to succeed in the workplace. Table 5.2 illustrates how lesson or unit objectives can relate both to the needs of the workplace and the goals and interests of the students.

Table 5.2 Illustrative objectives

Workplace use	Daily life use
I can ask my <b>supervisor</b> for time off orally or by email*	I can ask a <b>child's teacher</b> for a meeting orally or by email*
I can read and fill out basic <b>human resources' forms</b> with personal information, both on paper and digitally*	I can read and fill out basic <b>health or education forms</b> with personal information, both on paper and digitally*
I can orally <b>report a problem to a supervisor</b> on the telephone or in person	I can orally <b>report a problem to a landlord</b> on the telephone or in person

\*When using digital devices, Emery makes sure that students use the workplace wireless network so that they do not use their own data plan.

Consistent routines help learners know what to expect and what to do so that they can focus on new material. Emery has an established routine that she uses each class, and the students know the pattern (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Emery’s class routine

Classroom Daily Routine	
Review	The teacher starts the class with a review by asking the same question that ended the previous class. For example, in a unit on family Emery orally models by asking two different students, “Are you married? What is your husband’s name?” or “How many children do you have?”
Review	<b>Sentence Strips</b> The teacher hands out a sentence strip with the same questions that she modeled written on it to all learners, who walk around and ask each other the review questions.
Homework	The students get out their books and Emery leads them to go over the homework from the previous lesson in the textbook
Textbook lesson introduction	The teacher introduces the lesson objective for the class. For example, one day it is to be able to fill out a real emergency contact form to give to the human resources department. Emery draws the parallel to the other kinds of forms that are part of daily life. As a pre-reading warm up, Emery and the students discuss the kinds of emergencies that can happen at work and what to do when there is an emergency.
Reading passage	The routine for a new lesson always starts with a reading passage. The reading in the textbook for this lesson is related to forms but Emery wants to talk about forms specific to the workplace so she has written a short paragraph about a person who has a small accident at work and the employer wants to call an emergency contact to come and pick her up.  As is their routine, Emery first reads the passage aloud, second all of the students read chorally, third, students read aloud to each other in pairs. Reading the passage three times gives all of the learners time to comprehend the reading, as well as to both practice saying and hearing the passage. It also avoids creating the anxiety that reading aloud in front of a group can cause.
Comprehension questions in writing	Working collaboratively, pairs of students discuss and answer comprehension questions about the passage, writing their answers. The students fill out an emergency contact form for the person in the reading passage. The whole class goes over the information in the emergency contact form.
Break	The class eats together.
Role play	The students perform a short role play that mirrors the reading passage. Students are randomly assigned roles and groups rehearse the dialog, which each group performs for the class. Rehearsal builds fluency while creating the opportunity to practice in a low-anxiety way, in an activity that is more fun than a drill, and creates the opportunity to improvise and use props.

Vocabulary game	They play a game to practice the lesson vocabulary. Sometimes this is BINGO, sometimes guess the letters and word (like build a snowman), or other familiar vocabulary games.
Homework	The teacher assigns homework, such as completing the workplace emergency contact form.
Exit ticket	Emery asks a question from the day’s lesson such as “Who is your emergency contact?” Each student has to answer the question orally before leaving. This question serves as the review question for the next class.  To support students who want to study more, Emery creates digital flashcards so that students can study their vocabulary independently on their digital devices.

**Principle 4. Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed, and  
Principle 5. Monitor and Assess Student Language Development**

Emery builds in daily formative assessment to gauge learners’ progress. During the review question at the beginning of class Emery circulates among the students to listen to their question and answers, allowing her to hear each student’s question production as well as their answers to their partner’s question. Emery’s strategy for giving feedback is to repeat the sentence containing the error, emphasizing the correction. Usually the student will repeat the correct answer.

The formative assessment helps Emery to know if the class should revisit the lesson from the previous class or if they are ready to move on to the next lesson. If students need more review and scaffolding, Emery can provide more vocabulary practice opportunities, break the task into smaller parts, or give the students a fictional person to use for the emergency contact form. Emery knows that some students prefer not to talk about themselves. Emery does not expect every student to demonstrate mastery of all of the material every time; she knows that errors are a necessary part of learning, but she gets a sense how well students are working with the new material.

Emery also uses an oral exit ticket to gauge how well the students understand the new language from that day. She knows that the language is still new and doesn’t expect that students will be completely comfortable using it, but she can see and hear if their learning is in progress. As an oral exit ticket, Emery individually asks each student to answer a question from the class that day. For example, “Who is your emergency contact?” If Emery feels that the students are ready, she could also ask for the completed emergency contact form as a written exit ticket.

**Preparing for Entry Level Careers in Canada**

The entry level careers for women (ELCW) is a 12-week program in which students learn workplace skills and gain Canadian work experience. Run collaboratively by a community college and a non-profit community-based organization, ELCW offers the opportunity for immigrant women to learn safe food handling, cleaning, and hospitality skills to prepare them for

entry-level work in the hotel, restaurant, and senior care home industries. Students attend classes Monday-Friday, from 10am-1pm for ten weeks and then experience two weeks of a practicum work experience. While in the program students earn an industry-recognized food handling certificate.

The program operates in a cohort model that integrates English language instruction with occupational skills that are specific to the hotel, restaurant and senior home care industries, as well as the soft skills required for work in the Canadian context. The purpose of the program is to help students build a foundation for entry-level work with a potential for higher level training in the future. Pamela Reyes teaches each cohort, along with the practicum coordinator Niu Zhou. Experts from various fields come in to teach specific subjects, such as food safety, cleaning and sanitizing.

A variety of agencies in the Canadian west that serve immigrant and refugee communities recruit students. In order to be eligible, students need to be at least a 4 or 5 on the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) in listening and speaking, and at least a CLB 2 in reading and writing, as described in Table 5.4 (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012).

Table 5.4 Sample performance descriptors based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012)

Listening	CLB 4	The listener can understand, with considerable effort, simple formal and informal communication on topics of personal relevance.
	CLB 5	The listener can understand, with some effort, the gist of moderately complex, concrete formal and informal communication
Speaking	CLB 4	The speaker can communicate information about common everyday activities, experiences, wants and needs.
	CLB 5	The speaker can communicate with some effort in short, routine social situations, and present concrete information about needs and familiar topics of personal relevance.
Reading	CLB 2	The reader can understand individual words, simple learned phrases and some very short, simple sentences related to immediate needs.
Writing	CLB 2	The writer can write basic personal identification information, words, simple phrases, and a few simple sentences about highly familiar information related to immediate needs.

### Principle 1. Know Your Learners

At an initial information and intake session students complete a questionnaire and have an interview with program staff. The instructor and practicum coordinator work together to collect information on students:

- Educational experience

- Work experience
- Interests
- Childcare needs
- English language level

The teacher, practicum coordinator and program administrators use the information to help the learners have a good sense of what to expect in the program, to plan instruction that fits the needs of the learners, and to start working on appropriate practicum placement. After the initial information and intake session, the students start the course as a cohort.

One of the main goals for the first week is to build rapport within the cohort of learners. The cohort is very important, as it builds a system of support for the learners. Many have complex lives caring for children and other family members, attending multiple medical appointments, involvement in the search for permanent housing, and/or legal processes related to immigration. The ELCW program gives learners the opportunity to meet with other women who are in similar situations in a supportive environment. To accomplish this, Pamela conducts team building tasks in which the students learn and remember each other's names, greet each other by name each day, and engage in social talk.

These activities serve another purpose in addition to mutual support. As part of the program design, the class activities model workplace soft skills. For example, when students learn each other's names and use them in daily greetings, and participate in "small talk," it models appropriate workplace communication, a soft skill that is required in Canadian work environments.

Workplace communication is also a course topic on its own. The teachers create activities on the topic of respectful communication. They discuss what respectful communication looks like (for example, eye contact, interruptions, and forms of address) and compare and contrast the definition of respectful communication in Canada with their countries of origin. This helps the teacher to know the students as well as to create conditions for language learning by inviting learners' home languages and cultures into the classroom.

### **Principle 2. Create Conditions for Language Learning**

While it is important for the learners to learn the protocols for respectful workplace communication in Canadian workplaces, it is also important to respect the communication practices that learners are familiar with in their own families and cultures. In the class, Pamela does not frame communication practices as right or wrong, but like a coat that is put on for a certain situation. For example, one puts on a lab coat when working in medical settings and a "mom coat" when in a mother role. While they are different coats, both are useful and valuable in their context. This way of talking about language skills helps learners to imagine themselves as capable multilinguals who can use their different languages in different settings.

The learners provide considerable support to each other as each person faces her own challenges. The fact that others in the cohort group have faced similar issues can be its own support. To help reduce anxiety and develop trust, each class starts with a daily check-in. During this activity



Pamela asks each student, “How are you doing? How are you feeling?” and the students can choose to name their emotions and cohort members offer support.

While providing support, the program and teacher also demonstrate expectations of success for all learners. For example, like a workplace, Pamela expects the students to arrive on time and ready to work. However, when that does not happen, Pamela works with the student to understand the causes and to develop a solution.

One of the goals of the ELCW program is to build employability and Pamela weaves activities with this theme throughout the curriculum. Some of the learners have work histories, others have no work history and others have work histories that are interrupted or problematic. An employment theme in the program is the concept of core values. Activities start with learners exploring their strengths using statements starting with “I have,” “I am,” and “I can.” Learners use these sentence starters as they explore their own core values, leading them towards confidence in talking about themselves. Being able to talk about one’s strengths and core values is important in the interview process but talking positively about oneself can be difficult for learners in this program. The next activity in this theme is to explore the core values of various Canadian companies, including those who participate in the program’s practicum experience. Both sets of values are seen as important, but perhaps different. After learners gain confidence in talking about themselves, Niu conducts mock interview activities to give students practice that is very similar to a real interview.

### **Principle 3. Design High-Quality Lessons for Language Development**

Instruction in ELCW integrates English language instruction with instruction in workplace concepts related to safe food handling, sanitation practices in kitchens, safe handling of workplace hazardous materials, and principles of customer service. The syllabus is challenging/full for a 12-week course. Each day Pamela starts the class by telling the students the language and content goals for the day. Announcing the daily goal helps the students to know where they are in the class schedule of course topics.

During week one, at the same time that learners are learning and practicing workplace communication skills, the teacher begins to introduce language and concepts related to the FOODSAFE program (<http://www.foodsafe.ca/index.html>), training that the government of British Columbia recommends for anyone working in the food service industry. It includes topics like:

- The causes of food-borne illnesses
- How to safely receive, store, prepare, and serve food
- How to clean and sanitize food preparation surfaces, tools, and dishware

A day in Pamela’s class: Pamela starts the unit with activities that determine what students already know about the topic. She asks students to think about what causes people to get sick from food. Working together, the students generate 20-30 questions about concepts and vocabulary related to food borne illnesses which they put on poster paper around the room.

The focus of the day today is on the pathogens in food that can cause people to get sick. In the previous class the students had learned about some of the pathogens. Today Pamela puts 2-3

questions on the whiteboard for review, such as “describe five pathogens in food that can make people sick.” Students work in small groups with the same first languages to provide answers to the questions on the whiteboard. In general, Pamela asks students who share the same first language to sit together when the focus of the activity is on important concepts. The students are free to work in any language. When the focus is on social language and workplace communication that is likely to occur in multilingual or English settings, Pamela mixes the students into mixed-language groupings and asks them to communicate using English.

After the review, the class focuses on new concepts and vocabulary. To determine the vocabulary that students already know, Pamela puts the new vocabulary on the whiteboard and students work together to define the words that they know and erase those, leaving only the new vocabulary. For the new words, Pamela breaks the words into component parts, many of which the students are already familiar with, such as those below. Pamela and the students use online resources to define the word parts and the new words. Students create vocabulary cards with the new words, adding information about the word parts, the word meaning, a translation, and a visual representation of the meaning (Adelson-Goldstein, 2015). In this activity, learners not only learn the meaning of these specific words, they also learn vocabulary learning strategies.

- safe
- un-safe
- im-proper
- proper
- appropriate
- in-appropriate
- micro – bio-logy

The next part of the class focuses on new concepts. Pamela uses multimedia as much as possible, including video, pictures, as well as lecture to bring in information on the concepts in a way that students can comprehend. Pamela introduces the concept of the day today with an animated video on microorganisms. After the video, the students ask questions to help them comprehend the video, after which Pamela and the students discuss the information in the video, breaking it down into parts. Then they work with the questions on the wall around the room to determine how the new information answers some of the questions. Pamela uses questioning strategies to elicit student output so that students have language practice with the new content in English. Students can then put the jointly constructed answers in their notes, which they will use to study for the FOODSAFE exam that they will take in several weeks.

When they are finished working through the information from the video, the students take a break. The program provides healthy snacks and tea. The break offers the opportunity to have social time to talk and build further bonds of mutual support.

Pamela devotes the last part of the class to finishing any work undone from earlier and activities to get ready for the two-week practicum at the end of the course. The class finishes with announcements of upcoming events, such as guest speakers. As in a workplace, students are learning how to keep track of the class schedule, including changes to it.

#### **Principle 4. Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed**

Pamela uses a variety of techniques to ensure that students comprehend the language that they hear. By having students reformulate the new information into answers to questions that they have asked, students have time to consider what they heard and discuss it, collaboratively making sense of it. In seeing and hearing those discussions and reformulations, Pamela gets information about which students are struggling and she takes steps to revisit the information with small groups of students who need it.

Pamela is intentional about modeling learning strategies that students use in the class, and can use in their learning beyond the classroom, after the course has ended. For example, the students take notes and ask comprehension questions as listening strategies and use formulaic expressions in their social language/workplace communication activities.

#### **Principle 5. Monitor and Assess Student Language Development**

Pamela monitors and assesses in a variety of ways, depending on the type of activity. For example, she monitors students' understanding of the concepts in the daily review activities, and she adjusts her daily plan to include additional work on the concepts when needed. In the activities in which the students are using the social language needed for appropriate workplace communication, Pamela gives oral feedback directly, through recasts or explicit correction, while supporting the students' continued communication. Pamela understands that it is important to match the type of feedback to the goals of the activity.

#### **Principle 6. Engage and Collaborate Within a Community of Practice**

Pamela and Niu work closely together throughout the course. They discuss the students' progress, identify which students need more support in the class and which students may need more support in the practicum work experience. Both also work closely with each guest expert to make the new concepts comprehensible to the students, and to scaffold the students' learning of the new concepts.

Pamela also participates in a community of practice on the subject of contextualized instruction, which is defined as “a process of providing language and literacy services contextualized to the skill demands of work or career and technical training [in which] instruction is offered in a supportive environment and uses authentic materials gathered from workplace and technical training” (Wrigley, 2015). Talking with other teachers who are using and developing teaching strategies to learn both content and language at the same time helps Pamela with her own learning. In particular, the emphasis on authentic materials from the workplace has influenced Pamela to regularly reach out to workplaces to stay current on the skills that they require and the materials that they use so that her course continues to be relevant to Canadian workplaces.

### **Preparing for Work in Australia**

Paul McGowan teaches in the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program (<https://www.education.gov.au/skills-education-and-employment>) in a large city in Australia. The SEE program is funded by the Australian government for people who are unemployed, looking for work, and have registered with the government for financial support. The program provides “language, literacy and numeracy training to eligible job seekers, with the expectation

that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force” (Skills for Education and Employment, 2018).

Students participate in up to 650 hours of free training, based on an individual plan. Participation in assigned courses is mandatory. Full-time students attend class four days per week, for five hours each day.

The curriculum is quite broad, with many opportunities to customize for local community needs and students’ needs. Each 10-week course is organized into five themes, each lasting for two weeks. Each level must include at least two or three themes related to job seeking. Themes include living in the community, developing job skills, job application skills, etc. Each class includes 18-25 students. Throughout each term students leave as they complete their required hours and new students are assigned as space allows.

The Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) guides the curriculum (<https://www.education.gov.au/australian-core-skills-framework>). The students in Paul’s program are in low level 1, level 1, and level 2. Paul teaches the low level 1 (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 ACSF performance indicators for level 1 learners (Department of Education and Training, 2015)

Level 1 Performance Indicators (Department of Education and Training, 2015)	
Oral communication	Gives or elicits basic information in a short, simple spoken context
	Listens for basic information in short, simple oral texts
Reading	Identifies personally relevant information and ideas from texts on highly familiar topics
	Uses a limited range of strategies to locate specific information and construct meaning from explicit and highly familiar texts
Writing	Conveys a simple idea, opinion, factual information or message in writing
	Displays limited vocabulary, grammatical accuracy and understanding of conventions of written text
Learning	Demonstrates some awareness of self as a learner
	Takes first steps towards developing explicit learning strategies

### Principle 1. Know Your Learners

Paul describes his students as being one of four general types of students:

- Learners who have completed an English program for new immigrants but who may have started with less educational experience or no L1 literacy. Their English literacy is quite low. Their learning may have been influenced by negative forces such as trauma, illness, etc.
- Learners who have been in Australia for 3-4 years but who had to go to work in non-English speaking environments immediately after immigration.
- Younger women (ages 30-45) with children in primary or high school. Their children are often doing really well as school. Until now their focus has been on their children’s

education rather than their own. Their English skills are not sufficient for work but they now want or need to work. Many of these students are developing cottage industries such as in making clothing, cake decorating, or cooking, often sold through websites.

- English learners whose developing English skills are strong enough in some areas to proceed to the next level, but not strong enough in all of the skills. For example, listening and speaking in level 2 but reading and writing in level 1. Their language profile is said to have a spiky pattern.

### **Principle 2. Create Conditions for Language Learning**

In the SEE program participation in assigned classes is required and so learners are not necessarily highly interested in the class. One of the teacher's tasks is to create classes that are relevant and at least somewhat fun in order to support learner motivation.

Paul schedules class time in a way that supports student motivation. He starts with lighter activities, moves to the more intensive and demanding activities, and then he ends with activities that are more fun. He also supports motivation for learning by talking about lifelong learning as a complement to students' many life accomplishments so far.

The program also supports student motivation by selecting themes each 10-week term that are relevant and interesting to the students. In Paul's course this term, one of the themes is living in the community, specifically housing in the community. Housing is currently an important issue in the students' communities.

### **Principle 3. Design High-Quality Lessons for Language Development**

The goal for this day is to describe the types of housing that are available in the community. Paul selected this goal for several reasons. First, housing is relevant and interesting to the students and second, it works toward one of the assessments, which is to write as much as possible describing a selected picture. Today, the students are working on language to describe the housing in which they live. In the previous class Paul and the students discussed the relevance and importance of being able to describe things in English, specifically things related to housing. Paul helped the students to imagine being able to describe their housing to English speakers in their communities, in English. So far in this theme students have learned a variety of nouns related to housing, such as house, kitchen, garden, etc.

A day in Pauls' class: Paul breaks the five-hour class into three blocks of instructional time:

#### **Block 1 - Warm up and review (1.5 hours)**

Paul's goal during block 1 is to have a light warm up and review while the students arrive and get settled. He designs an informal review of previously learned language by using the same language in a new format. For example, today he gives the students the choice of a word search, a crossword, or a word game that all use the vocabulary from the previous class. Students are invited to help each other during this activity and students who finish one can move on to another. While the students are doing the activities, Paul tries to have at least one short impromptu conversation with each of his students. Impromptu conversation is an important skill but his students have few opportunities to have them in English.

**Block 2** – Main focus of the lesson (1.5-2 hours)

During the second block of time Paul designs activities that are more intensive and are more explicitly on a pathway toward the specific assessment ask. The activities in the second block typically target features of a type of text. Today, the activities focus on the features of descriptions.

Paul is keenly aware that there are a variety of levels within his low level 1 class. He mentally categorizes the students into three rough groups and prepares class activities that will challenge all of the learners, but not so much that they will be overwhelmed.

In the theme of housing Paul prepares three activities for class. For the lowest level, he prepares a list of five adjectives. He guesses that the students know these words in their first languages, which serves as important prior knowledge. For their task, Paul asks the students to use their smartphones (all of the students know how to get on to the program’s free wireless internet) to translate the words and write down definitions in any language.

For the middle group Paul prepares a longer list of adjectives and several activities to interact with the meaning of the adjectives, including looking up the meaning using their smartphone, an opposites-matching activity and an activity that asks learners to pair an adjective with one of the nouns that they have been learning, such as “old house,” “modern kitchen,” and “beautiful garden.”

Paul gives the higher level group the same list of adjectives but their task is more complex. Their task is to learn the adjectives and then form questions to ask their classmates. The higher level group works cooperatively to form their questions and create a kind of informal survey with questions such as “Do you live in an old house?”

In the last part of the second block, just before the lunch break, the students walk around and either ask or answer questions in the informal survey. In this activity all of the students have the opportunity to practice their listening and speaking skills. The last thing that the students do is to compile their results to find out how many students live in each type of housing, and make a graph. Paul has prepared results from another Australian city and in a whole class discussion the students compare results from the two cities. The activities in block 2 are quite intensive for the students and they are ready for a break when lunchtime arrives.

**Block 3** – Lighter activities including pronunciation (1 hour)

After the lunch break Paul schedules pronunciation and vocabulary practice guided by tutorial videos like those made by Mark Kulek, freely available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9VWYyvdF-91McG6kt27MeKA>), that use animation and visuals to demonstrate vocabulary and pronunciation, which is a nice change of pace from the cognitively demanding listening and speaking activities from earlier in the class. Paul also uses a whole class digital quiz using Kahoot (Kahoot.com) or similar online quiz tool. Both activities use vocabulary that is related to the theme and engage students actively. Paul ends the class on a positive note by revisiting the day’s goal of describing the place where students live.

In this level homework is not required, but Paul prepares some homework for each lesson and students who want to learn more can take a packet of homework to do.

#### **Principle 4. Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed**

Not only does Paul provide feedback to students during the course of the class, he also adapts his instruction based on what he learns. For example, when Paul sees that a student or small group of students is struggling with one of the new vocabulary items during block 1, he works with that group to demonstrate the meaning through pictures and drawing. When Paul sees that the group working on questions is struggling, he works with that group to create several sentence frames that the students can use to make questions for the class survey.

#### **Principle 5. Monitor and Assess Student Language Development**

Paul regularly monitors student production through various assessment strategies and gives feedback. His feedback varies based on the type of activity. During the activities in block 1 Paul uses a feedback strategy in which he models the corrected language in his reply, but he keeps the focus on communication and does not interrupt the flow of conversation. Paul has found that students like direct correction on their pronunciation and so, in the third block of time, Paul walks around the class and provides direct and explicit correction to pronunciation during pronunciation and vocabulary practice.

For feedback on written assignments, Paul is careful to provide feedback only on the language elements that are the current focus of instruction in the early drafts. For example, he focuses on giving feedback on the present verb tense in a sentence describing an apartment, or an adjective that comes after a noun rather than being in front of it. The reason is that he wants to help the students improve in their ability to meet the demands of the assessment, but he understands that too much correction is hard on student motivation and does not contribute to additional learning. In future drafts, Paul will provide feedback other things, such as on capital letters and spelling.

### **Learning in Affordable Housing in the U.S.**

Katie Hinton teaches English language to adults in a mid-sized city in the Midwest of the United States. The ESOL class takes place in a housing complex that is subsidized by the city to make rents affordable. The housing organization has a common area that includes a room containing a whiteboard, movable tables and chairs, wireless internet, and a set of tablets. Tutors use the room to work with children doing their homework after school. The housing organization encourages partnerships with local organizations that provide opportunities for residents to build their skills in all areas of life, including employment skills. Since digital literacy is an important employment skill, course instructors are encouraged to include digital literacy in their instruction. The long-term goal is for the residents to be able to pay the full amount of rent, without subsidy.

The only ESL class meets two times per week, from 9:30am-11:00 am, a time selected because school aged children are in school. Any resident who wants to can enroll in the class. The schedule mirrors the school calendar in the area and runs when school is in session. The housing organization does not dictate a curriculum nor require reporting of outcomes; the teacher develops the curriculum based on the goals and interests of the students.

### **Principle 1. Know Your Learners**

Sixteen students are in this class, coming from a variety of language and education backgrounds. Four of the students have very low levels of literacy in their other language(s) and report that they didn't get to go to school. The rest of the students have six or more years of education and have at least moderate literacy in their language(s). The students range in age from 25 to 60. Most have smartphones that they use for telephone calls and texting in their L1 or with limited English phrases. All are beginning English language learners.

A needs assessment: In order to determine the curriculum for the course, Katie conducted a needs assessment during the first week of class. She selected pictures on the topics that low level ESL students most often request, including:

- Children's education
- Health/medical
- Job skills and careers
- Transportation
- Money and banking

Katie represents each topic with a page containing a variety of topically related images. As a class, using the multiple languages spoken by the students, Katie and the students discuss each theme, and the different things that students need to do in English in each one. For example, using their various languages and Google translate, students talk about needing to read notes and emails from their children's schools, reading the online school calendar, and talking with the teachers at school conferences. The discussion serves to give Katie information about the students' oral English abilities and the non-English linguistic resources they bring to the classroom. It also helps the students to begin to imagine themselves as users of English in the different settings. After a robust (and chaotic) discussion, each student votes by putting two sticky dots on the themes of most interest to him/her. Katie and the students then work together to put the pages in the order of the most to least sticky dots, selecting the themes for the course.

### **Principle 2. Create Conditions for Language Learning**

There are additional benefits to having the students help select the curriculum in this kind of activity. Since many adult ESL students do not have positive school experiences, they can be nervous in class. Having an activity in which students are asked to use their linguistic resources, thereby demonstrating one of their strengths, as well as having a voice in their own learning goes a long way to reducing learner anxiety and creating a positive learning environment.

The students in this class are reluctant to talk about their own situations, especially regarding how long they have been in the U.S., details about their educational experiences, and specifics about their family situations beyond how many children they have. Knowing that it is important to respect students' desire for privacy, Katie creates activities that feature fictional characters instead of the usual practice of having students talk about themselves. For example, in a unit on the theme of talking with the doctor, Katie creates fictional people using a page containing a name, an image, and a set of symptoms. Katie is careful to use names that come from the cultures and languages of her students.



### **Principle 3. Design High-Quality Lessons for Language Development**

A day in Katie's class: The lesson for the day today is related to answering questions about symptoms at a medical appointment. In the needs assessment students had indicated they wanted to learn about health and medicine and to be able to talk with the doctor.

[Start textbox]

While talking with medical providers is a real-life language need, it is also important to be sure that students know how to ask for a translator in medical settings.

[End textbox]

In the past several classes the students had learned vocabulary related to symptoms. To select authentic vocabulary, Katie had spoken to her own doctor about the questions that patients were likely to be asked about symptoms. As a result, the thematic vocabulary included items such as shortness of breath, chest pain, nausea, diarrhea, chills, etc. The students had done multiple oral and written activities with the new vocabulary prior to this class. The students have also studied the question form "Do you have \_\_\_?" and practiced with oral activities.

Every class follows the same pattern of activities; Katie knows that having a consistent routine helps students know what to expect, which puts less pressure on the students to understand instructions and leaves more attention to devote to the new language.

Katie starts by talking about the goal for the day, which is to be able to answer questions about symptoms. Katie continues with activities that review the symptom vocabulary, first in oral form, then in written form, in a familiar pattern. First, she projects images of each word on the screen and asks the students to say the words. If there are questions about meaning, Katie switches the computer to Google translate and the class looks on while they translate the word in all of the students' languages. Then students break into pairs and use flashcards to match the written English word with the image. Then the students quiz each other, showing the image and asking for their partner to say the word. The images help students to comprehend the vocabulary, while the activity provides an opportunity to practice the new words.

The next activity asks the students to orally produce the language in a role play. To prepare, Katie has created a set of fictional patient identity cards each with a name, birthdate, and four images that represent symptoms. She has also created strips of paper, each with a question that asks about a symptom, such as "Do you have chest pain?" Half of the students get a fictional patient identity and half are given a question. Students move around the room, with half asking and half answering "yes I do" or "No I don't" according to their fictional identity. This activity allows students to actively engaged in skills practice in a low-stress way, scaffolded by images and text.

Katie invites student pairs volunteer to perform the whole role play. The student in the role of doctor gets a full set of question strips, puts on a lab coat and asks the questions to the student in the role of patient. The partner answers the questions in character. A lot of laughter accompanies this activity as students are dramatic in their role as a fictional person or stern doctor. By the end of the activity all of the students have volunteered at least once, many more than once. A role

play activity is one way to make learning outcomes observable; both the teacher and the students can see that they have achieved the learning goal for the day which is to be able to answer questions about symptoms at a medical appointment.

After a break the next activity uses the same language but the activity is for the written modality. Katie has prepared a questionnaire that asks for the patient's name and date of birth. Then the questionnaire gives a list of symptoms and asks the patient to put a mark next to the symptoms that s/he is experiencing. Katie knows that it is important that the language used is exactly the same as had been practiced in the oral activities so that only the written modality is new. The class does one questionnaire together and then all of the students complete a questionnaire using their fictional patient identity.

The last activity is working at learning centers, tables where related activities are set up for students to work on their own or in small groups. As part of the classroom routine, students rotate through a set of centers to practice with the language of the day, or to review language from previous classes. At one center is a set of tablets, at another is vocabulary activities, at another center is writing and spelling activities and Katie sits at the fourth center to work with small groups of students. Using centers allows students to focus on one area and work in small groups or independently. Having a variety of activities in the classroom allows students to work on their preferred activities at least some of the time.

[Start textbox]

While it is important to be able to answer questions orally or in writing about symptoms like chest pain and chills, these are not vocabulary items that students need to be able to write at this level. In the center activities students are working with vocabulary about body parts and question words from a previous class, still related to the theme.

[End textbox]

Working with tablets is part of the daily routine and by now learners know how to turn on the tablet and click on an icon to get to the class home screen. Katie has prepared a simple website for the class with three different tabs. Each tab contains images linking to activities aimed at different levels, all within a low level. The students are free to choose any of the tabs and any of the activities there and each typically selects the tab that is at their level. The main activity for the day at the center is to complete the online form that is exactly the same as the paper form that students completed in the earlier activity, and only the modality is new.

In her design of the curriculum Katie wants to integrate digital literacy activities into the class. She decides to use an online form for each of the themes because online forms are a common literacy practice outside of the classroom. See Table X for the forms that correspond to each theme. By having a single type of digital activity that is done in all of the themes, over time the students become better and better at using the tablets to complete online forms. In preparing the forms Katie learned that making online forms is very easy and only takes about 10 minutes.

Table 5.6 Forms that correspond to each theme

Theme	Paper and digital form
Children’s education	Personal information form
Health/medical	Health information form
Job skills and careers	Job application form
Money and banking	Credit application form

#### **Principle 4. Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed**

One of the benefits of center activities is that students get to work at their preferred level. To set up the centers, Katie prepares a set of activities for each center at different levels. For example, one activity is to use body part vocabulary cards to play the game of concentration, matching the image with the written word. Another activity shows a word and the learner copies it on a handwriting sheet, while another asks students to arrange letter cards to match a written vocabulary word. Another activity asks pairs of students to take turns giving each other spelling tests. On the tablets one of the tabs contains a link to an online book that was used in a previous class and that students like to read again (<https://globalaccess.bowvalleycollege.ca/esl-readers/amir-gets-sick/>) as well as spelling activities with the vocabulary and typing practice. Katie provides some guidance to students about what activities might suit them best, but Katie also knows that selecting their own learning activities helps the students to gain confidence in their ability to learn, promoting self-directed learning.

One of the centers is working with Katie. This allows her to work with small groups and revisit the language that students are struggling with. Katie can plan activities or decide on the spot based on her observations of the class that day. Working with small groups also allows Katie to work with a single language group and leverage their linguistic resources so students can collaborate to solve a problem or work together in more depth on a concept.

#### **Principle 5. Monitor and Assess Student Language Development**

The role play activity serves as a performance task that gives Katie information about each learner’s learning progress. Katie also uses the information in a formative way and she adjusts the lesson plan for the next class as well as center activities to target language that needs more work.

Katie is very careful about providing oral feedback to learners during their oral interactions. This group of students lacks confidence in their English language abilities and Katie has learned that they very quickly stop talking when she provides direct oral feedback. As a result, in oral interactions Katie focuses her feedback only on meaning, and not on form. She primarily uses clarification requests such as “Do you mean shortness of breath?” or requests for repetition such as “Can you say that again?”

To provide the opportunity for students to get feedback, Katie tries to create center activities that have built-in feedback mechanisms such as games, self-checking on spelling tests or letter matching where students compare their answer to a model.

## Principle 6. Engage and Collaborate Within a Community of Practice

As the sole English teacher at the site, Katie does not have direct access to other English teachers but she wants to continue to learn how to best serve her learners. She has joined an online discussion group for teacher of English language acquisition (<https://community.lincs.ed.gov/>) where she enjoys reading what other teachers are doing and she sometimes poses a question to get ideas about something that she is dealing with in her class.

## A Look Back and Final Observations

Chapter 5 describes four different English language classes. For each class the chapter describes the programmatic context of the class and what each principle of exemplary teaching looks like in that class. In looking at the principles in each of the classes, chapter 5 highlights the following ideas:

- Effective instruction takes advantage of what students already know as competent adults who are experienced in the world.
- The students' other languages are an important resource for the classroom. Using non-English languages in the classroom in intentional ways can support English language learning.
- The ways to create conditions for language learning depend in large part on the needs of the students. For example, students who have had negative formal learning experiences need safe spaces while learners tired from work need an active pace.
- Learners are motivated when they have a voice in the instruction. For example, learners can help select the themes in the class or select the activities that best suit their learning.
- Learners are also motivated when the topics and language in their classes are related to the real-life needs outside of class. Using authentic materials from students' real-life needs helps to keep language activities relevant to learners' lives.
- Many English language classes are mixed level, whether or not they are labeled as such. Not only are the classes mixed with respect to level, they are also mixed with respect to the challenges faced by the learners. There are a variety of ways to design effective instruction so that learners are learning appropriately.
- High-quality instruction maximizes language comprehension and production by building on the language that students already know, by giving feedback in a variety of ways, and by scaffolding learner comprehension with multimodal input.
- Teachers can assess student learning in many different ways that provides information to guide instruction as well as to direct student learning.
- Technologies can create opportunities for differentiated instruction as well as for independent learning.

Exemplary English language instruction is not one-size-fits-all. We have seen how the 6 Principles work in different contexts as a framework for high-quality instruction. In every case, teachers begin their planning with the individual learners in mind. They are knowledgeable about stakeholders' desires for the program through careful needs assessment. They connect their instruction directly to learners' goals. They are aware of the standards for English language development that apply to their context and use the standards to guide instruction. These teachers use multiple strategies so that instruction is relevant to the learners in ways that learners can be

actively engaged in using their new language and see themselves as legitimate users of English. These teachers provide feedback in ways that support learners' motivation as well as their learning. These teachers encourage learners to use learning strategies in and out of the classroom, and to be lifelong learners. Themselves lifelong learners, these teachers engage in communities of practice to continue to develop their knowledge and skills through collaboration with others in the field. English language teachers continue to learn because they know that high quality instruction truly matters in the lives of the adult students served in adult literacy and workforce preparation programs.

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