NCLEnotes

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NATIONAL CENTER FOR ESL LITERACY EDUCATION

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Trauma and Adult Learners

English as a second language (ESL) practitioners are familiar with adult learners' stories of disruption, political trauma, and mental upheaval. Until recently, however, little attention has been paid to personal trauma and domestic abuse.

Acknowledgment of the prevalence of violence experienced by those in the adult ESL and literacy community is critical to the development of instructional approaches that make classrooms safer and learning more possible for adult immigrant learners.

While most domestic violence is inflicted by men against women, it is also perpetrated by women against men, within same-sex relationships, and intergenerationally. Because language learning demands control, connection, and meaning, adults experiencing effects of past or current trauma are particularly challenged in learning a new language. They may show symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, clinical depression, or emotional distress. They may also experience concentration and memory loss. Regardless of an individual's experience with violence, torture, or abuse, being an adult learner can often be intimidating.

Challenges

Batterers strive to isolate their victims. For immigrant or refugee women, this isolation is exacerbated by language and culture differences that make finding safe options daunting. Loss of immigration status and of custody of children are threats often used by batterers.

Although every culture accepts violence to some degree, in every culture people are beginning to realize that violence is no longer acceptable. Thinking that cultural groups must be left alone to sort out their own differences only supports the violators. On the other hand, imposing behaviors or beliefs on others does not necessarily change attitudes or behaviors. Adult ESL practitioners are urged to learn about U.S. laws concerning violence against children, adults, and the elderly; about domestic

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How are we doing?

This issue of *NCLEnotes* includes our 2001 User Survey. To ensure that we continue to provide adult ESL practitioners with services and publications that are relevant to their professions, we ask that you take a few minutes and answer these questions. Results will be published in the next issue of the newsletter. Thank you!

In this issue of NCLEnotes, *we talk with Tom Mueller, ESL Coordinator, Laubach Literacy Action, and NCLE board member.*

His NCLE's Worth

Miriam Burt: How did you get started in adult ESL instruction, Tom?

Tom Mueller: All my life I've been enamored with other cultures. My BA was in German, and I traveled and worked in Germany one summer. Then I got my MA in Speech and Hearing and worked briefly as an audiologist. But it seemed I'd been a student all my life, and I wanted to do something else. I wanted to get away from the grind, to see how other cultures live. The next few years I traveled around the world, more than once.

MB: More than once?

TM: Yes, and I also traveled around the United States. I did odd jobs and saw

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News Notes

EL/Civics Grants Update

For 2001, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) is awarding $70 million to support state English Literacy/Civics Education programs (nearly three times the funding for 2000). Every state will receive a minimum of $60,000 in new funding for EL/Civics. Above that, 65% of the funding will go to states with the largest numbers of immigrants and 35% to states with the largest recent increases in their immigrant populations.

The 2001 allotments can be used by states to fund second year activities connected to last year's multiyear EL/civics grants (OVAE, *Thursday Notes*, 2001, July 5). The balance of funds remaining after funding the ongoing projects will be distributed to eligible providers in a new, open competition.

For more information, see the EL/Civics page on the OVAE Web site at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/ELCIVICS/.

Perfect for Adult ESL Staff Development!

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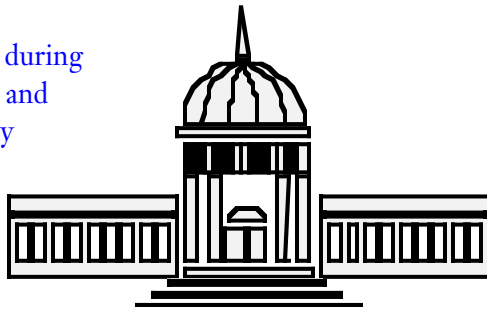
ERIC Digests about Adult ESL are available in full text on NCLE's Website.

www.cal.org/ncle

National Symposium for Adult ESL Practitioners

A 3-day National Symposium on Research and Practice for Adult ESL Practitioners will be held September 5 – 7, 2001, at the Smithsonian Institution's Ripley Center in Washington, DC. The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) of the U.S. Department of Education is sponsoring the event. The symposium will feature panel presentations and discussions on the *What Works* study, the National Reporting System, immigration trends and their implications, assessment, reading research, distance education, learners with special needs, classroom education, and challenges to effective practice and how they are being met. Teachers and administrators from all 50 states will attend the symposium. NCLE is working with OVAE to plan and facilitate the event.

Because the symposium is being held during International Literacy Day (September 7) and the National Book Festival sponsored by the First Lady and the Library of Congress (September 8), attendees will also have the opportunity to participate in these events.



Online Directory of ESL Resources

An extensive online directory of ESL resources is currently being prepared by the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE) and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics (ERIC/CLL), with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA).

The directory includes contact information for

- national and state ESL associations
- state literacy resource centers
- state education agencies
- state and regional TESOL affiliates
- regional labs
- technical assistance centers
- professional organizations
- publishers
- clearinghouses
- Web sites, online publications, and listservs

The Online Directory of ESL Resources' target audience covers the range from ESL students to teachers and program administrators to policy makers and funders. The Directory cites resources that are appropriate for learners of all ages—preK through adult, college students, and low literacy learners. Most sites are based in the United States and offer English as a second or other language resources for those living in this country.

The Online Directory is expected to be on the Web by September—just in time for fall classes! http://www.cal.org/ericcll/ncbe/esldirectory/

Answers to NCLE Staff Match

In the last issue of NCLEnotes *(Winter 2000/2001), we gave you the opportunity, through an example of a civics/ESL activity, to "match up" NCLE staff with their descriptions. How did you do? Here are the answers!*

Joy Peyton speaks fluent Spanish and has done seminal work on dialogue journals and interactive writing on computers with English language learners. As well as director of NCLE, she is vice president of CAL and director of NCLE's "parent" clearinghouse, ERIC Clearinghouse for Languages and Linguistics.

Miriam Burt lived, worked, and taught English in Europe and Asia and worked in the Philippines at a camp for Southeast Asian refugees in the early 1980s. Her adoptive daughter was born in Russia. She is NCLE's workplace ESL specialist.

MaryAnn Florez lived in England and now coordinates a volunteer ESL program at her church, where she uses her Spanish language skills to find out what's really on the learners' minds! At NCLE, she moderates the NIFL-ESL listserv and coordinates our Web work.

Carol Van Duzer has lived abroad and speaks fluent French; her family often hosts internationals working in Washington, DC, on professional internships. She is NCLE's adult ESL assessment specialist.

Lynda Terrill's first work with nonnative speakers of English was a teaching job on the Navajo Reservation in Arizona. Since then she's taught both ABE and ESL classes. She is now NCLE's resident EL/Civics expert.

A naturalized U.S. citizen, **Dora Johnson** speaks five languages, including English like a native speaker, even though she came to the United States as an adult. She's worked at CAL for over 35 years and provides our institutional memory.

Lynn Fischer likes to put an artistic touch on NCLE publications and has taught adult ESL in the New York area. She is NCLE's publications assistant and does editing for other CAL projects.

Dawn Flanagan tutored adult English learners with AmeriCorps and taught computer classes to teen parents. Her calm presence and organizational skills are highly valued by NCLE staff.

NCLEstaff

Joy Kreeft Peyton
Director

Miriam Burt
Associate Director

MaryAnn Florez
Assistant Director & Web Site Coordinator

Carol Van Duzer
Adult ESL Services Coordinator

Lynda Terrill
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Lynn Fischer
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Dawn Flanagan
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NCLE*notes* is published twice yearly by the National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) and is distributed free to individuals and organizations on NCLE's mailing list. *NCLEnotes* is also published on NCLE's Web site at www.cal.org/ncle.

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Resource Updates

Naturalization is a complex and often confusing process for immigrants, particularly for refugee elders. In ***Citizenship for Refugee Elders: Issues and Options in Test Preparation***, citizenship expert and immigrant advocate Aliza Becker and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) offer a comprehensive and informative guide about the issues that affect refugee elders preparing for citizenship. The book outlines the naturalization process; gives an overview of refugees in the United States; and discusses social, learning, and health needs of elderly refugees. It also provides in-depth information on designing a program, creating a curriculum and lesson plans, and obtaining materials and resources.

Citizenship for Refugee Elders *(2000) is available for $19 from Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., 415 Michigan Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20017. (Tel: 202/635-2556; Fax: 202/635-2649; Email: clinic@aol.com; Web: www.cliniclegal.org).*

Do you wonder about your own family's immigration to America? Now you can return to Ellis Island through the **American Family Immigration History Center Web site** (http://www.ellisislandrecords.org). Visitors to the site can learn about the 22 million+ people who entered the United States through Ellis Island and the Port of New York between 1892 and 1924. You can search passenger records and ships' manifests by name and gender to find an immigrant's date of arrival, ethnicity, ship of travel, marital status, and age. Files can be created to hold copies of documents viewed. "The Immigrant Experience" section has immigrant stories and a timeline and narrative of U.S. immigration and the forces shaping it from pre-1790 to the present.

In the introduction to ***Listening Up: Reinventing Ourselves as Teachers and Students***, Rachel Martin lays out a great many topics that she discusses in the book: connections between theory and practice in teaching, implications of poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theories, the evolution of critical pedagogy, concepts of radical change, and self-definition and self-determination. It sounds overwhelming. However, what she accomplishes is an engaging, lucid communication of the insights and benefits that ongoing self-examination and reflection have brought to her, her practice, and the learners with whom she interacts. The comments, stories, and concrete examples that she shares from her years as an adult literacy teacher rooted in critical perspectives not only create a narrative of her own professional and personal growth, but also stimulate readers to consider their own.

Listening Up *(2001) is available from Boynton/Cook Publishers, 361 Hanover Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801 (Tel: 800/793-2154; Web: www.boyntoncook.com).*

Newcomers and the Environment (Intermediate and Advanced) provides a timely example of how naturally and practically civics content can be integrated into adult English language learning. The environment is an important social and political issue in this country as well as globally. Each of the 10 topics covered (such as recycling, secondhand smoke, and the safe use of chemicals in farming) is introduced by a story about an environmental expert who is also an immigrant to the United States. Following each story are exercises for reading comprehension, text editing, and some on vocabulary and conversation. Key vocabulary words are translated into Bosnian, Hmong, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Newcomers and the Environment, by Charles and Pamela LaRue (2001) is available from Multi-Cultural Educational Services, 832 104th Lane NW, Coon Rapids, MN 55433 (Tel: 763/767-7786; Web: www.mcedservices.com).

The Book Shelf

Coming Home Crazy: An Alphabet of China Essays
By Bill Holm
(2000, Milkweed Editions, ISBN 1-57131-250-1)

Reviewed by Miriam Burt

In 1986, Bill Holm, a college teacher and writer from southwestern Minnesota, taught American literature at a university in Xi'an, China. In *Coming Home Crazy*, Holm tells us about his experiences there.

Early in Holm's year in China he complained to an anthropologist that it was "discomfiting … being enveloped in a culture which neither knew, valued or seemed to have any apparent use for Bach, Whitman, Samuel Johnson, Blake, Plato, Freud, Homer, Gustav Mahler, even Jesus."

The anthropologist, a fellow Minnesotan, informed him that in China he would either "lose [his] inner moorings, start to sink, go some kind of crazy, and just let it happen, or [he] would leave sooner than [he] expected not having learned anything."

Holm did not leave sooner than he had expected. He survived his year in China and learned a lot. When he returned to Minnesota, he observed that "after surviving a plunge into Chinese Craziness, your mind opens in a different way to your own country, and having 'seen' China, you are able to see what is in your own house or your own everyday life with new 'crazied' eyes."

The book is written from the perspective of these crazied eyes. The China Holm describes is one where transactions are conducted through *zou houmen*—literally, "go through the back door." *Zou houmen* is used to attain both bread and circus. Holm passes Marlboros under counters to get butter, taxis, and opera tickets. He avoids trouble with the police by knowing someone who knows someone in the department. In short, he counters the ubiquitous *mei you* (don't have) through connections: knowing the right people and using the back door.

Upon his return to the United States, Holm expects to be rid of the need for *zou houmen*. But, as he reports, "We borrowed bureaucracy from the Chinese, and it arrived with a back door. Out of one eye, a self-congratulatory American denies its existence; our of the other, he sees Vice President Quayle motoring off to National Guard meetings during the Tet offensive. Did we fail to elect him because he was a well-connected rich boy who flagrantly marched through the back door? We behave exactly as the Chinese do."

The China of Holm's essays is one of poverty and severe conditions. Heat is rarely turned on in winter, so people layer underwear and clothes to keep out the chill. Food is sparse; hot water, nonexistent; and crowding, everywhere. Yet, in spite of this, Holm's China is also one where the people *participate*. They delight in watching Mickey Mouse (*Mi Lao Shu*) cartoons on television every Sunday night. At the Chinese opera—in a scene reminiscent of Elizabethan spectators at the theatre—they sit on the floor, laugh, cheer, and chew peanuts, spitting out the shells. In Holm's English class, the students thrill to the romance and sensuality of D.H. Lawrence's short story, "The Horse Dealer's Daughter."

Bill Holm's book was published just after the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989. This brings a special poignancy to his essays. Indeed, in the introduction, Holm tells us he hopes that readers will "love the Chinese human beings, too" and be moved to work to "remove the nailed boot from their necks once and for all." He echoes this in the last essay of the book when he says, "We are connected to the rest of humanity and to their infinitely sadder, longer histories. We gain nothing by playing ostrich except conceivably, our own extinction. Either we remember, and make conscious connection to the moral and physical lives of others, or we die."

Read *Coming Home Crazy*. Whether or not we have worked and traveled in China—or anywhere outside of the United States—or whether or not we look at our country and the world with crazy eyes, the book speaks to us as adult ESL professionals. For, as we seek to make conscious connection to the lives of our students, we find that in doing so, like Holm in China, we learn at least as much from them as they do from us.

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how people from around the world lived. I learned from everyone and from all my experiences: from sleeping in a tent in North Africa to walking through villages in Bali to selling flowers on the street corners in Texas.

MB: When did you stop traveling?

TM: In the late '70s I came to rest in Austin, eventually enrolling at the University of Texas. I got my MA in ESL while teaching and tutoring adult English language learners there.

MB: So when did you start working at Laubach?

TM: In 1985. At TESOL New York I interviewed for the Laubach position in Syracuse and got it. As a native of Buffalo, I was anxious to get back to New York. Although I had barely heard of Laubach at the time, I have always volunteered for all sorts of community projects. It seemed like a good fit for me. It also seemed to be a chance to make a contribution beyond the classroom, to have a national impact. I've been here ever since.

MB: Tell us about some of the changes you've seen at Laubach in the 16 years you've been there.

TM: Especially in the last 10 years, there have been changes in the instructional materials we create, in how we train tutors, and in the national certification of volunteer trainers. We used to have just one basal text for our literacy learners and one for our ESL learners. We now have an array of materials to offer in contexts such as ESL, family literacy, and workplace classes. In our training of tutors we have diversified as well. Up until the mid '90s we had standardized training, which was geared to one set of materials.

MB: So, a tutor in Omaha, working with three Iranian computer specialists would

have received the same training as a tutor in the San Fernando Valley working with an Hispanic housewife who had never been to school?

TM: Essentially, yes. So, in the mid '90s we developed the *Training by Design* materials (print plus video) to use in training tutors. It was a flexible system and could be adapted to the needs of the learners, the tutors, and the setting. We carried this flexibility into our certification for tutor trainers. We no longer use a one-size-fits-all approach with them either. Our "Guidelines for Effective Trainers" (in *Training by Design*) stresses elements of good practice and the necessity of meeting learners' needs.

MB: And now, with the upcoming merger of Laubach and Literacy Volunteers of America, there are other changes in store for Laubach…

> ***"In the field ... I'm immediately reminded about what a difference each of us can make."***

TM: Right! The obvious change is that we will suddenly be a much larger organization. The new "we" will have almost 50% more local programs affiliated with it. Regionally, "we" in the Northeast will finally have lots and lots of affiliated programs.

MB: And nationally?

TM: The new organization will have a larger and stronger voice to advocate on behalf of literacy, volunteers in literacy, and adult education. We will be able to work as one organization, and we won't be competing with each other for funds on the national level. The U.S. programming staff of Laubach have already started working with our counterparts at LVA. We're having informal discussions about our approaches to volunteer program management, training, instruction, and how we relate to the field. It's a very exciting time for us.

MB: How will individual programs be affected?

TM: The impact will be different from program to program. Certainly there are issues like accreditation of programs and trainer certification to be worked out. But local program staff will still make their own choices about materials selection, training approaches, assessment, and issues around how to start and run their programs.

MB: Is there anything else you'd like to say to the readers of *NCLEnotes?*

TM: How fortunate I am to work in the field of adult ESL, which I love, and to work for a volunteer-based organization. Laubach is a wonderful place, and the staff are like family. Some days, though, I wonder what I'm doing, as day after day the work never seems to end. Then I get a chance to head out in the field and work for 3 or 4 days with folks in a community-based program, and I'm immediately reminded about what a difference each of us can make.

For more information on ESL volunteers, see NCLE Digests, English as a Second Language in Volunteer-Based Programs *by P. Schlusberg and T. Mueller and* Using Volunteers as Aides in the Adult ESL Classroom *by C.W. Arnade. Both digests are available on NCLE's Web site.*

Publications Order Form

New ERIC Digests from NCLE

Reflective Teaching Practice in Adult ESL Settings

by MaryAnn Cunningham Florez

In reflective practice, with the goal of improving their teaching, practitioners engage in self-observation and self-evaluation to understand their own actions and the reactions they prompt in their learners. This digest discusses this process for adult ESL teachers.

Dialogue Journals: Interactive Writing to Develop Language and Literacy

by Joy Kreeft Peyton

What are the benefits of using dialogue journal writing with adult English language learners? What are the challenges? How can I manage the time and paperwork? This Q&A answers these questions and offers suggestions for interactive writing in the adult ESL classroom.

Finding and Evaluating Adult ESL Resources on the World Wide Web

by MaryAnn Cunningham Florez

Looking for a more efficient way to find resources on the Web? This Q&A examines the functions of various search tools, explains how to create and execute search strategies, and shows how to evaluate the resources yielded.

Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners

by Lynda Terrill

English language learning and civics education have been paired for more than a century. This Q&A discusses the events that have shaped civics education, defines key terms, and describes approaches and activities that integrate language learning with civics content.

Trauma and the Adult English Language Learner

by Janet Isserlis

This digest reviews key findings on the impact of trauma on behavior and how it effects learning. Ways in which practitioners can respond appropriately and assist victims of trauma in the adult ESL classroom are presented.

ERIC Digests (Free)*

- ❑ **Reflective Teaching Practice in Adult ESL Settings** (March 2001)
- ❑ **Dialogue Journals: Interactive Writing to Develop Language and Literacy** (Dec 2000)
- ❑ **Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners** (Nov 2000)
- ❑ **Finding and Evaluating Adult ESL Resources on the World Wide Web** (Oct 2000)
- ❑ **Online Professional Development for Adult ESL Educators** (Sept 2000)
- ❑ **Trauma and the Adult English Language Learner** (July 2000)
- ❑ **ESL Instruction and Adults with Learning Disabilities** (June 2000)
- ❑ **Mental Health and the Adult Refugee: The Role of the ESL Teacher** (Dec 1999)
- ❑ **Critical Literacy for Adult English Language Learners** (Dec 1999)
- ❑ **Poetry in the Adult ESL Classroom** (Dec 1999)

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Trauma *from page 1*

violence assistance options in their communities; and about culturally appropriate ways of dealing with the issue of violence and learners.

Implications for Practice

The following are suggestions for making the classroom a safer environment for adult immigrant learners:

- Listen to learners and allow their concerns about violence to surface in one form or another. A class in which a learner-centered approach is used enables community to develop among the learners.
- Offer content and activities that allow learners to share as much or as little information about themselves as they want, particularly when they are just beginning to study together.
- Allow learners to choose their own level of participation in classroom activities. Discuss with learners what it means to be present in the class and give them permission to be less than totally involved in all class activities. Consider setting up a "quiet corner" for learners who feel unable to take part in particular classroom activities.
- Find out about community resources and about what happens when one calls an emergency hotline. What information will be asked for? What language assistance is available? What assurances of confidentiality exist? If appropriate, create a class activity using the language and communication skills needed to call a hotline and ask for assistance.
- Do not assume that all immigrant learners have experienced trauma. Neither do teachers necessarily need to know who among their learners has experienced abuse. However, be aware that certain topics generally discussed in adult ESL classes (e.g., family and health) can cause learner discomfort because of past and present abuse.

Next Steps

Work remains to be done in the areas of teacher education, policy, and increased awareness among learners and practitioners in ESL programs. State plans for adult education might support development of ancillary services for learners attending classes for whom violence is a factor in learning. This should help to make the classroom a safe place and learning more possible for adult language learners.

This article is excerpted from Trauma and the Adult English Language Learner *by Janet Isserlis. Read the entire article on NCLE's Web site at www.cal.org/ncle/digests/trauma2.htm or contact NCLE for a copy (ncle@cal.org).*

Janet Isserlis has a Web site devoted to the issue of women and violence. Entitled *On the Screen*, it contains information on agencies and on print, video, and online resources for victims of abuse and those who work with them. *On the Screen* is located at www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/women.html.

For more articles on the effects of violence on adult learning and for the opportunity to give feedback on the topic, click on Jenny Horsman's Web site at www.Jennyhorsman.com/creatingchange.html.