

# NCLE notes

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## Software Choices for ESL Teaching

by Susan Gaer, Santa Ana College, School of Continuing Education

*A very small percentage of the educational software on the market is geared for adult literacy or adult ESL learners. Thus, the adult educator's dilemma is frequently to find a way to adapt materials that have been developed with much younger learners in mind. Susan Gaer, an enthusiastic backer of using technology in the adult ESL classroom, has recently written a 4-page ERIC Q&A for NCLE. What follows in an excerpt.*

Some educational software, including that developed by ESL publishers, is designed specifically for ESL learners. Publisher software such as *Oxford Picture Dictionary CD-ROM* and *Azar Interactive* accompanies a textbook. While this type of software is relatively easy to integrate with classroom objectives, quite often much of it is no different from the book it supplements, and does not take advantage of the simultaneous sound, video, and text accessories that are available with computers.

Courseware such as *Invest Destinations* on the other hand, is designed to be used as a course rather than to supplement a text. It uses many of the features available with computers, however, most courseware is expensive and allows for little variety in the curriculum.

Some software programs such as the *Living Books* series and *Spell it Deluxe* are designed for use with K-12 school children but are also appropriate for adult ESL learners. Others, such as *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, are designed for general use.

As with any ESL materials, before using a software program in the

***Those who work with adult learners report that they do not seem to have a fear of computers nor do they need to be convinced of the importance and value of technology in the classroom.***

classroom, it is essential to evaluate its potential usefulness for a particular class. For example, in a family literacy class, *Living Books* might be appropriate even though it is designed for children. In other situations, a selection of children's stories could be demeaning. Further, many software packages designed for K-12 schools utilize a large vocabulary and require a high reading ability and familiarity with concepts that are appropriate for middle school students but not for adult learners. However, just as authentic text is valuable in an ESL classroom, authentic software, such as word-

*continued on p. 5*

## Our Readers Are Taking to E-mail

Thanks to all of you who took the time to respond to the survey in our last issue. The results gave us some valuable data about you, our readers. One hundred and ten people sent back completed surveys and, although the group is not, strictly speaking, a representative one, we have some statistics we'd like to share.

The largest difference we noted since we last surveyed our users in 1993—when the now commonplace term “World Wide Web” was not even part of our vocabulary—was the huge increase in e-mail use. In early 1998, 73% of respondents have Internet e-mail and Web access. In Fall 1993, only 12% of respondents had any Internet access (probably e-mail only). From our regular record keeping, we've noticed that e-mail requests now make up one third of our total requests for publications and information (up from 20% in 1996). More and more, it's the preferred means of communication. As e-mail requests have grown, our phone requests have declined slightly as a percentage of the total and the regular (snail) mail requests have kept steady.

Most respondents (77%) have ordered NCLE publications and many (60%) have contacted the clearinghouse for information (other than NCLE publications). Not quite so

*continued on p. 5*

## RESOURCE UPDATE

**Adult Participation in English as a Second Language (ESL) Classes** (May 1998) is a new issue brief from the National Center for Education Statistics at the US Department of Education. It is based on a 1997 study that cited lack of information about classes as a large barrier to accessing ESL services. Also, the study found that younger adults, more recent immigrants, and those with at least a high school diploma were the most likely to participate in ESL classes. For a copy of the brief, look on the Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/98036.html> or call (800) 424-1616 and ask for NCES-98-036.

Once enrolled, adult ESL learners tend to stay in class longer than other adult learners. "Where Attendance Is Not a Problem" by Moira Lucey (**Focus on Basics**, Volume 2, Issue A, March 1998) looks at why ESL students persist. For one thing, "unlike many of the students enrolled in ABE or GED classes, ESOL students have not necessarily" [experienced failure in school], Lucey writes. **Focus on Basics**, published quarterly by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, is on the Web at <http://hugse1.harvard.edu/~ncsall> or available by \$8.00 subscription from World Education, 44 Farnsworth St., Boston, MA 02110-1211. To get an international perspective, **Where Next? Drop Out and Progression from ESOL** (ISBN 1 85990 050) looks at these issues in England and Wales. Available from The Basic Skills Agency, Commonwealth House, 1-19 New Oxford St., London WC1A 1NU, Fax: 0171-404-5038.

The National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) and the **Western/Pacific Literacy Network** have joined forces this summer to create an **ESL Special Collection** for the National Institute for Literacy's LINC system. The collection will feature full-text resources, ERIC searches about adult ESL, and links to ESL curricular material on the Web. View the initial version of the special collection at <http://literacynet.org/esl>. The Western/Pacific Literacy Network, has funding from NIFL to serve the Western states and Micronesia as a technology hub. For more information about NIFL LINC hubs, visit the NIFL website at <http://www.nifl.gov>.

**Rosalie's Neighborhood** is a series of three brief classroom readers for adult learners about children's essential health care. The books feature a sustained storyline, strong role models, and a grandparent as a valued teacher. Limited supplies of the readers (written at a fourth grade level) and a facilitator's guide are available free from NIFL literacy hotline at (800) 228-8813 or by mail from CEGA Services, Attn: Lisa, 3900 Industrial Avenue, Lincoln, NE 68504. **Rosalie's Neighborhood** was written by Barbara Van Horn and Priscilla Carman and published by the National Health and Education Consortium with a grant from the Metropolitan Life Foundation. Also available from the NIFL hotline is a new report with a long name: **Empowerment Health Education in Adult Literacy: A Guide for Public Health and Adult Literacy Practitioners, Policymakers and Funders**.

To read postings from a listserv dedicated to the topics of health and literacy and to learn how to subscribe, go to [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov), look under Literacy Forums and Listservs, and then choose **NIFL-Health**.

**Perfect for adult ESL staff development!**

★★★★

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ERIC Digests about Adult ESL are now available in full text on NCLE's website!

<http://www.cal.org/ncle>

**NCLEnotes** is published twice yearly by the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) and distributed free to individuals and organizations on NCLE's mailing list. As of Vol. 7, No. 1, *NCLE notes* is also published on NCLE's website at [www.cal.org/ncle](http://www.cal.org/ncle).

Please address comments, suggestions, or material for consideration as of **September 1998** to:

Fran Keenan, Editor  
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4646 40th St., NW  
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# NEWS IN BRIEF

## CAL and NCLE to Settle in New Office Space

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) will soon move from 22nd St. NW. Because its current building has been sold and is slated for demolition, CAL, which operates NCLE, will relocate to newly renovated offices at 4646 40th St., NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859 in early September. Phone and fax numbers will change; however, the new numbers are not yet available. The CAL and NCLE websites will stay exactly where they are at [www.cal.org](http://www.cal.org) and [www.cal.org/ncl](http://www.cal.org/ncl) respectively. Check the websites for additional details.

## Congress Moves on Reauthorization...

The Adult Education Act, overdue for reauthorization, has now become the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act in its journey through Congress. At press time, early August, the bill is expected to be signed into law by President Clinton any day. As part of a larger bill, the Workforce Investment Act, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act consolidates existing adult education and literacy programs into one flexible block grant to the states. Most of the funding authorized by this legislation will go to local providers of adult education and literacy services, including workplace literacy instruction, family literacy instruction and English literacy instruction.

The bill also requires states to adopt performance measures and continues authorization for the National Institute for Literacy.



NCLE advisory board members Tom Mueller of Laubach Literacy Action and Anna Silliman, publisher of Hands-On English, enjoying their time at TESOL's 1998 Convention in Seattle, Washington. It was Anna's idea that we publish more photos in NCLE notes.

## and FY 99 Appropriations...

In July, a House appropriations subcommittee voted on education funding for Fiscal 1999, which begins in October 1998. It recommended a 5.7 percent increase (+\$20 million) for adult education, \$4 million more than the Administration's request of \$361 million. The Senate committee will not vote on appropriations until after the Labor Day recess.

For updates on any of this legislation, check the policy updates on the NIFL website at [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov) or on the Thomas service at [www.thomas.loc.gov](http://www.thomas.loc.gov) or the website of the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium at [www.naepdc.org](http://www.naepdc.org).

## National Coalition for Literacy Launches Website

The National Coalition for Literacy, which counts among its member organizations the American Library Association, Literacy Volunteers of America, Laubach Literacy, the National Alliance of Urban Literacy Coalitions, and the Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education, has a new website at [www.nifl.gov/Coalition/nclhome.htm](http://www.nifl.gov/Coalition/nclhome.htm). The site includes background information about the Coalition and links to member groups.



L-R, NCLE's MaryAnn Florez and Fran Keenan at our booth in the TESOL Convention exhibition hall. We gave away almost 9,000 copies of NCLE publications at this busy event.

## Workplace Project Wraps Up Work: Pubs on the Web

The Project on Adult and Immigrant Education (PAIE) at CAL, which published *The Connector* newsletter and funded a series of Digests, bibliographies, and issue papers about workplace ESL education, ended this spring. The last issue of *The Connector* appeared Fall 1997 (No. 9). Back issues will soon be available on the Web. All of the Digests are on NCLE's website. Other PAIE publications can be ordered from the clearinghouse. Write an e-mail to [ncl@cal.org](mailto:ncl@cal.org) and include your regular mail address for a copy of our publications list.

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## Publication Order Form

### New ERIC Digests

#### **Trends in Staff Development for Adult ESL Instructors**

by Miriam Burt and Fran Keenan

This Digest discusses the training that ESL instructors need and national and state efforts to address this need. It also describes factors that make good staff development difficult and promising practices that respond to these challenges.

#### **Family and Intergenerational Literacy in Multilingual Communities**

by Gail Weinstein

This Q&A reviews research, current policies, goals and models for program design, and curriculum approaches in intergenerational literacy instruction for multilingual communities. It updates NCLE's popular 1992 Digest by the same author.

#### **Adult ESL Learners with Special Needs: An Australian Perspective**

by Susan Chou Allender

Since 1945, 5.5 million settlers from 160 different countries have emigrated to Australia. This Q&A summarizes how Australia identifies adult immigrant

learners with special needs and the learning barriers they face and gives examples of curriculum strategies, classroom practices, and policy initiatives.

#### **Using Software in the Adult ESL Classroom**

by Susan Gaer

This Digest is an overview of ESL and other educational software with guidelines for its appropriate use in the adult ESL classroom.

#### **Using Volunteers as Aides in the Adult ESL Classroom**

by Celia Wiehe Arnade

This Digest focuses on using volunteers as teacher aides, explains the rationale for involving volunteers, and discusses issues of volunteer management.

#### **The Adult ESL Teaching Profession**

by MaryAnn Florez

Approximately two thirds of adult education programs provide instructional services for English language learners. This Digest examines the profession of teaching ESL and offers tips for beginning a career in this field and for continuing to grow as a professional.

#### Recent ERIC Digests (Free)\*

- \_\_\_ Trends in Staff Development for Adult ESL Instructors (July 1998)
- \_\_\_ Family and Intergenerational Literacy (July 1998)
- \_\_\_ Adult ESL Learners with Special Needs: Australia (July 1998)
- \_\_\_ Using Software in the Adult ESL Classroom (March 1998)
- \_\_\_ Using Volunteers as Aides in the Adult ESL Classroom (November 1997)
- \_\_\_ The Adult ESL Teaching Profession (October 1997)
- \_\_\_ Social Identity and the Adult ESL Classroom (October 1997)

**\*All of NCLE's ERIC Digests  
are on the Web at [www.cal.org/ncle](http://www.cal.org/ncle) !**

#### Issue Papers

(Orders must be prepaid. Make checks payable to CAL.)

- \_\_\_ Workplace ESL Instruction: Interviews from the Field (1997) (56 pp./\$7)
- \_\_\_ Learning to Work in a New Land (1997) (165 pp./\$10)
- \_\_\_ The Vocational Classroom (1996) (31 pp./\$7)

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#### Examples of software now used in adult ESL instruction

- drill and practice programs such as the *Oxford Picture Dictionary*;
- tutorials such as *Typing Tutor*;
- simulations and games such as *Triple Play Plus*;
- problem-solving programs such as *A Day in the Life*;
- courseware (software that is developed as an entire course with accompanying print materials and assessment tools) such as *ELLIS*; and
- tools such as word processing programs, databases, spreadsheets, graphics, and desktop publishing programs.

processing programs, which are designed for general rather than educational use, can also be used to teach vocabulary and provide content material in a high-interest format.

Some general educational software packages, such as encyclopedias (Britannica, Comptons, *Microsoft Encarta*, and World Book), health CDs such as *Bodyworks 6.0*, and travel CDs such as *National Geographic*, can be extremely valuable in an ESL classroom with content preparation. For example, when using *Microsoft Encarta* with a unit on Martin Luther King, Jr., the instructor could prepare students with a vocabulary development worksheet including such terms as “racism” and “equal rights” or copy photographs from the CD to elicit vocabulary or experiences from the students.

#### What do learners need to know about computers?

Those who work with adult learners report that they do not seem to have a fear of computers nor do they need to be convinced of the importance and value of technology in the classroom. According to Susan K. O'Connor, Literacy Program Manager of The Learning Centers at the Brooklyn Public Library, it is often the “educators who themselves doubt their own capabilities in technology...Students have almost been uniformly positive about technology” (Techno-Talk, 1998, p.6).

In fact, students need to know very little about computers to use computer software. As far the keyboard is concerned, knowing how to use the enter (return) key, the shift key, the space bar, and the tab key will enable them to get started. Students do not need to know how to type to use a computer. Just as students can learn grammar in context, they can learn to type by using the computer.

Students who are unfamiliar with using a mouse will need to be shown how to maneuver the mouse correctly including how to push down on the mouse to hold it steady and how the cursor moves along with the mouse on the screen. Students also should understand how to click on the menu bar to start, quit, and exit programs.

#### Summary

As Mark Warschauer (1996) has pointed out, “As with the audio language lab ‘revolution’ of 40 years ago, those who expect to get magnificent results simply from the purchase of expensive and elaborate software systems will likely be disappointed. But those who put computer software to use in the service of good pedagogy will undoubtedly find ways to enrich their educational program and the learning opportunities of their students” (p. 11).

many (43%) have visited NCLE's website or printed out NCLE publications from the Web (40%); however, of those who have visited [www.cal.org/ncle](http://www.cal.org/ncle), most deem it worthy of a return visit. Seventy-seven percent have bookmarked the site.

Our readers wear many hats. Twenty-eight percent of respondents identify themselves as adult ESL instructors; 39% as program administrators; 19% as “other education professionals,” including family literacy specialists and researchers; 16% as college instructors; 8% as library/resource specialists; 6% as students; 6% as other; 3% as policymakers (respondents could choose more than one category).

We discovered a correlation between being in the ESL field for a long time and a willingness to fill out surveys. Seventy-two percent of respondents have been involved with ESL for more than 5 years, and...72% of this group have been involved with ESL for more than 10 years!



#### References

- Techno-talk. (1998, January). *Literacy Update*, 4, 6.
- Warschauer, M. (1996). Computer assisted language learning: An introduction. In S. Fotos (Ed.), *Multimedia language teaching* (pp. 3-20). Tokyo: Logos International.

**This article is excerpted from *Using Software in the Adult ESL Classroom* by Susan Gaer, an ERIC Digest published in March 1998 by NCLE and available on our website at [www.cal.org/ncle](http://www.cal.org/ncle) or by mail from the clearinghouse before September 1, 1998 at 1118 22nd St., NW, Washington, DC 20037 or after September 1, 1998 at 4646 40th St., NW, Washington, 20016-1859.**

Throughout NCLE's move, our e-mail address will remain [ncle@cal.org](mailto:ncle@cal.org).

# NCLE

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## NCLE To Publish Research Agenda

Since December 1996, NCLE has been working with the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) to develop a research agenda for adult ESL instruction that is part of a larger collaborative effort among NCSALL, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). With additional sponsorship and support from Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL), NCLE is publishing the final agenda this summer.

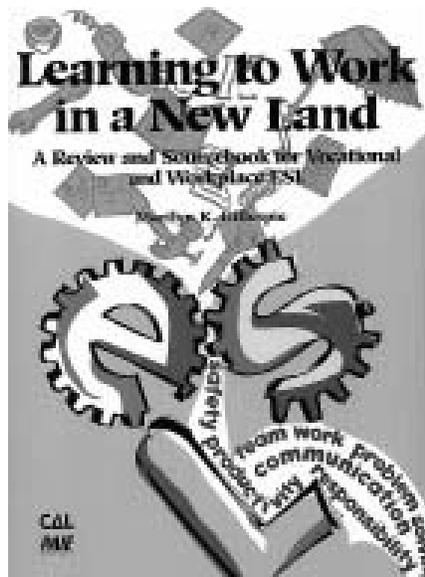
*A Research Agenda for Adult ESL* incorporates feedback from learners, instructors, program administrators, policymakers, and researchers. It discusses adult ESL learners, program design and instruction, teacher preparation and staff development, assessment and outcomes, and policy. To receive your free copy, send an e-mail message with your regular mailing address to [ncle@cal.org](mailto:ncle@cal.org) with the words "research agenda" in the subject line. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. It will also be published on NCLE's website this fall.



*Toya Lynch, NCLE publications assistant, with a handful of NCLE publications orders. Last year, Toya filled almost 2,000 orders.*

## NCLE is moving in September!

After September 1st,  
our new home will be:  
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## Great Bargain! 162-page resource guide for only \$10 postage paid!

We ordered too many copies of *Learning to Work in a New Land: A Review and Sourcebook for Vocational and Workplace ESL* and would love to sell a few more before we move so we've kept the price very reasonable! You need this comprehensive publication in your resource collection—place your order today!

See the order form on p. 4