NCLEnotes

Vol. 9, No. 2 • Winter 2000/2001

NATIONAL CENTER FOR ESL LITERACY EDUCATION

www.cal.org/ncle

Civics for Adult Immigrants

Teaching about U.S. history and government and preparing immigrants to pass the U.S. citizenship test have been part of adult immigrant education for more than a century. Now, designated monies are being provided to states and individual programs for English Literacy/Civics Education. Because nearly 50% of all adults enrolled in U.S. Department of Education funded education courses are English language learners, this program will have a significant national impact.

What is civics education?

Civics education is a broad term that includes instruction to help immigrants gain citizenship; to teach U.S. history and culture, including lessons on diversity and multiculturalism; and to facilitate adult learners' active participation in their communities.

Bringing civics into the classroom

Adult immigrants often express interest in American culture, government, and history. While the complexity of the English language used in instruction varies from level to level, significant content can be imparted at all levels as learners are acquiring English.

Beginning levels

Practitioners can help literacy learners understand basic concepts about community, government, and history while doing hands-on activities, prereading activities, and activities that help them develop fine motor skills needed for writing. Learners can make collages representing their community with pictures cut from magazines, alphabetize state names or label maps, practice sight word recognition of high office holders or community institutions such as *library*

Continued on page 6

David Red, Coordinator of Adult ESL Instruction

His NCLE's Worth

In this issue of NCLEnotes, *we speak with David Red, Coordinator of Adult ESL Instruction, Fairfax County, Virginia.*

Miriam Burt: David, how did you get started in adult ESL instruction?

David Red: I starting teaching adult learners in 1978 in Kathmandu, Nepal, working at the English Language Institute of the U.S. Information Service. I stayed there until 1983 when I came back to the United States to pursue graduate work at the University of Texas at Austin.

Continued on page 8

inside

News Notes ____ 2
Resource Updates ____ 4
The Book Shelf ____ 5
NCLE Publications ____ 7

From the Director...

We are pleased to announce that NCLE will now be the National **Center** for ESL Literacy Education. This change in name from *Clearinghouse* to *Center* better reflects our work and the range of services that we provide. These include technical assistance to programs; professional development of program staff; the writing and producing of books, reports, and papers; and the development of online resource collections on a number of key topics. We will continue to engage in information analysis and synthesis, question answering, and collection of documents related to adult ESL for the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database.

Over the last 11 years, NCLE has become the national center for ESL literacy education, but we will always be NCLE—knowledgeable, friendly, and ready to help.

All of us at NCLE wish you the very best for a productive and enjoyable 2001.

Joy Kreeft Peyton
Director

News Notes

BEST Gets *Computerized*

Adult ESL practitioners from across the country and staff at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) have recently been busy developing test items for C-BEST, a new computer-assisted oral assessment. C-BEST is based on the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) oral interview, developed during the early 1980s to meet the need in adult education programs for a reliable assessment of adult English learners' oral proficiency and literacy skills. In the late 1990s, CAL was awarded a contract by the U.S. Department of Education to create a computer-assisted version of the test.

C-BEST will allow learners to show what they can do in English in a shorter time frame than the original BEST oral assessment. It will still be administered as a face-to-face oral interview, but the test administrator will enter scores into a computer. The computer will select test questions and adapt the difficulty level of the questions as the scores are entered. C-BEST will be able to distinguish performance levels over the full range of English proficiency levels.

This spring, CAL will begin field testing the C-BEST items. During the next year and a half, reliability and validity studies will be performed, and a new print version of the test will be piloted and field tested.

C-BEST is expected to be available on CD-ROM in the fall of 2002 and will include training materials for test administrators. More information on the BEST and updates on the test development process are posted on the project Web page at http://www.cal.org/best/.

The 2001 Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) convention will take place in St. Louis, Missouri, February 27 – March 3. NCLE staff will be giving a number of presentations on issues in adult ESL.

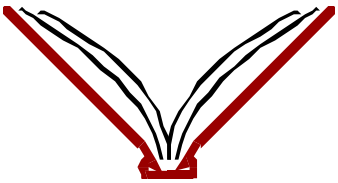
- ❑ ESL in Adult Education: Developing Professionals
- ❑ Learning to Keep on Learning
- ❑ Empowering Children and Parents in Family Literacy
- ❑ Research on Adult ESOL Practice
- ❑ Facilitating Progress in Adults with Learning Disabilities
- ❑ Adult English Learners and the National Literacy Summit
- ❑ Professional Development Resources for Adult ESL Practitioners
- ❑ Low Proficiency Adults' Language Learning Strategies
- ❑ Development of the Adaptive Computer-Assisted Oral Interview

NCLE staff will be available at the CAL booth in the Exhibit Hall. For descriptions and times of NCLE presentations, see NCLE's Web site: www.cal.org/ncle/tesol.htm. We look forward to seeing you at TESOL 2001!

Adult Literacy Action Agenda Is Launched

The National Coalition for Literacy released *From the Margins to the Mainstream* on September 8, 2000, International Literacy Day. The publication, an action agenda for adult education, grew out of the National Literacy Summit, held in February 2000 and organized by a committee of members from the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, National Council of State Directors for Adult Education, National Institute for Literacy, and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The Summit was an effort to develop a vision and action agenda for adult language and literacy programming and instruction in the United States. (See *NCLEnotes* Summer 2000 for more information about the Summit.)

After the Summit, NCLE staff worked with members of the Adult Education Interest Section (AEIS) of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) to write a paper articulating a vision and action agenda for adult English language learners. NCLE Director Joy Peyton and AEIS leaders will hold a discussion at the annual TESOL convention (February 27–March 3) that will focus on the goals and action steps delineated in the paper and identify key policy issues and the next steps for the field.



Connect and Get Answers—on NIFL-ESL

Have you ever had a question about teaching or resources and wondered what it would be like to have access to over 800 adult ESL practitioners for answers? You can find out when you subscribe to NIFL-ESL, an online discussion list sponsored by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and facilitated by NCLE. Following is an excerpt from a recent discussion.

Does anyone have information about the benefits or rationale for reading aloud to adult learners? We are implementing "read aloud" reading ... with the adult learners at my center. I have read about the benefits for children but haven't been able to find information for adults.

Andrea O'Brien
Lawrence Adult Learning Center
Lawrence, MA

[My father] read aloud to us—in a number of languages. I learned a great deal about the process and joy of reading by being read to as a child. I learned lots of language and many nuances of speech. I recommend reading aloud to adults in every session. Students should have copies of the articles as you read. It trains the ear to listen to English phonemics and to the rhythm of the language—its prosody. It creates a bond between teacher and student. It also gives a great deal of information to students.

Sherry Migdail
Educational Consultant
Chevy Chase, MD

Reading aloud to students material [that is] meant to be read aloud, such as books for young children, greeting cards, and plays, is enjoyable and provides an opportunity to hear the language in a natural way as well as participate in following an idea or story. Before students read aloud, they should practice to reach fluency. Students enjoy learning to read books and stories and then taking them home to read to their children. This is an authentic literacy experience.

Myra K. Baum
Coordinator of Professional Development
New York City Board of Education

My [beginning level] adults greatly enjoy both my reading to them and their read-aloud activities ... I also read short children's books to them, [which generate] good listening, discussion, and informal pronunciation exercises, as well as giving students wider exposure to the language. It's fun, too.

Dottie Shattuck
Central Piedmont Community College
Charlotte, NC

You can subscribe to the NIFL-ESL discussion list or peruse some of the past discussions at

www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/nifl-esl/english_second_language.html

Sign Up for NCLE News!

Do you want to stay current on all the latest at NCLE? We will email you and let you know about new publications, upcoming activities, and the latest Web features. But we won't be a nuisance! We'll send you a message every three months—no more!

To sign up, send a blank e-mail message to

join-nclenews@caltalk.cal.org

NCLE staff

Joy Kreeft Peyton
Director

Miriam Burt
Associate Director

MaryAnn Florez
Assistant Director & Web Site Coordinator

Carol Van Duzer
Adult ESL Services Coordinator

Dora Johnson
Research & Program Associate

Lynda Terrill
Acquisitions Coordinator

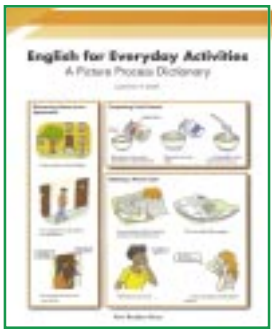
Lynn Fischer
Editorial Assistant

Dawn Flanagan
Program Secretary

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.
Please address comments, suggestions, or material for consideration to
Miriam Burt, Editor
miriam@cal.org –or–
Lynn Fischer, Assistant Editor
lynnf@cal.org
NCLEnotes
Center for Applied Linguistics
4646 40th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016-1859

Resource Updates

English for Everyday Activities: A Picture Process Dictionary



Lawrence J. Zwier, New Readers Press, 1999 (800-448-8878 www.newreaderspress.com)

This innovative picture dictionary offers vocabulary, phrases, and sentences in the context of everyday activities, such as using a telephone answering machine, making dinner, renting and watching a video, using an ATM, taking a car for repairs, and shopping for groceries. Key vocabulary, idioms, and concepts are identified for each activity. The series focuses on verbs as the main building block for communication, and verbs in simple present, past, and future tenses are used.

While the vocabulary and structures are more appropriate for intermediate level learners, the clarity and practicality of the pictures and topics make the series applicable—with some adaptation—for beginning levels. Components include a student book (available in both English and English/Spanish); a student book and cassette or CD, which provides spoken forms in English of all captions and dialogues; a workbook; a teacher's guide; and a listening activity book with cassette/CD. (Each component can be purchased separately.)

New Immigrants in the United States: Background for Second Language Educators

Edited by Sandra Lee McKay and Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong, Cambridge Language Teaching Library, Cambridge University Press, 2000 (800-872-7423)

This book offers a social and educational perspective on language diversity in the United States by looking at linguistic, political, economic, social, and cultural aspects of various immigrant groups. An overview of both the historical and contemporary experiences of immigrants in the United States is presented, and current demographics on English language learners is provided. Adult ESL teachers will benefit from this valuable resource.

Learning Computers, Speaking English

Steve Quann and Diana Satin, University of Michigan Press, 2000 (www.press.umich.edu/esl/)

This textbook, which targets intermediate-level English language learners, combines grammar presentation and basic computer instruction. In eight units, language objectives—commands and requests, present perfect verbs, comparative and superlative adjectives, and conditionals—are taught along side computer basics, such as computer hardware, basic commands, keyboarding, and formatting. Each unit includes activities that support both the language and computer objectives.

An introductory section for teachers offers suggestions for adapting the lessons for higher or lower proficiency levels. A computer disk of learner activities accompanies the book. (Lessons are based on Microsoft WordPad, which is available in Windows 95 or higher.)

Do My ESOL Students Have Learning Disabilities?

Dianne F. Shewcraft and Eileen L. Witkop, 1998 (Available from the Western MA YALD Project, 269 First Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201; 413-499-9531. Also available from the ERIC database later this year.)

Adult ESL teachers and tutors are often frustrated when they are unable to help a student make expected progress in learning English. Reasons that learners don't make progress vary and may include lack of education in the learner's native country, current or past trauma, or work and family problems. Sometimes, however, a learner doesn't make progress because of a learning disability (LD). This manual, produced by the Young Adults with Learning Disabilities (YALD) Project, offers practical advice for ESL practitioners who are concerned that a student may have a learning disability. The manual defines learning disabilities and describes specific types, lists characteristics that may indicate a learning disability, discusses how to approach the LD learner, provides ways of screening for learning disabilities (a screening kit is included), and recommends specific classroom strategies.

The Book Shelf

Grandfather's Journey (1993), *Tea with Milk* (1999), and *Tree of Cranes* (1991)

Written and Illustrated by Allen Say
Published by Houghton Mifflin

Reviewed by Miriam Burt

Many people feel that the Hispanic immigrants entering the United States today are unique in that they come and go frequently, if not freely, across the border from their countries to the United States.

These immigrants are compared unfavorably to immigrants of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who, it is believed, came here and stayed here, rooting themselves firmly and finally in the soil of the new country. This is not true, however.

In *Literacy and Language Diversity in the United States* (1996), Terry Wiley points out that the door, if not revolving, has always swung both ways. Many of the immigrants who came to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, later immigrated back to their home countries. Some of them returned to the United States, and some did not.

Reading some children's literature about Japanese immigrants at the turn of the 20th century brought this home to me. Allen Say writes from his own experience as the child of a Japanese mother and a Chinese father. It is the Japanese connection that he focuses on in his books: *Grandfather's Journey, Tea with Milk,* and *Tree of Cranes. Grandfather's Journey* is the story of Say's grandfather in America in the early 1900s, his return to Japan to marry a Japanese woman, his subsequent return to the United States, and his final return to Japan. World War II prevents Say's grandfather from going back to the United States again. Whenever Grandfather is in one country, Say writes, he is homesick for the other country. Say feels the same way, having also lived in both Japan and the United States.

Tea with Milk tells of May's (Say's mother) experience in coming to Japan as a young girl, because her parents (the grandparents from the first book) were homesick for Japan and had returned. May had been born in California and experienced extreme difficulties in fitting in to her parent's land of birth. In the *Tree of Cranes*, also set in Japan, the young Say himself sees his mother's enduring homesickness for the United States when she uproots a small tree in their back yard, pots it, and then decorates it with folded paper cranes and lighted candles—to celebrate Christmas.

Say's ancestors were in the United States by choice and not through a catastrophe or hardship situation. Yet, even though they were able to return to their own countries after having immigrated to this country, they were still "homesick" for one country while they were in the other.

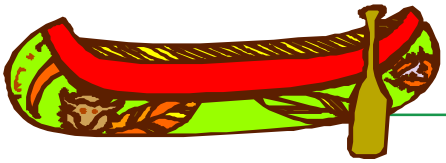
If I were teaching a class of adult English language learners, I would use these books and would combine language learning with U.S. cultural content. We would discuss the pictures. For example, we would talk about the picture in *Tea with Milk* where the westernized May is having lunch at a restaurant with her future husband and how their clothes, facial expressions, and body language contrast with that of the traditional couple in the foreground of the picture. We would discuss the vocabulary. I might share my family's immigration stories with the learners. If comfortable, they would share theirs orally or in writing. If they weren't comfortable with this, they could talk or write about Say's characters. Learners might want to talk or write about what is different in this country—what they like about these differences, and what they don't like. I would use the books with intermediate level, perhaps even with high beginning learners.

Whether or not you plan to use these books with adult English language learners, I recommend that you read them. The prose is direct and clear, the pictures are beautiful and evocative, and the themes presented are timeless and universal. And who knows? Reading the books may spur you to look into your own family's immigration history, and you might find a pattern of coming and going that surprises you. That's what happened to me.▼

Civics from page 1

The First Thanksgiving

The teacher writes two paragraphs about the first Thanksgiving, controlling the vocabulary, structure, and content of each paragraph to address the English level of each learner. Partner A reads the first paragraph to Partner B. Partner B has the same text minus certain words or phrases. (The teacher has deleted certain structural words such as conjunctions, adverbs, or auxiliary verbs; or content words such as pilgrims, Massasoit, and Plymouth.) Partner B listens, perhaps asking for clarification, and writes the missing words. Then Partner B reads the second paragraph to Partner A who must listen, understand, and write a different set of words or phrases. Learners absorb the civics content and practice language skills as they read silently and aloud, listen, write, and later compare notes.



and *INS*, and match pictures of institutions or people with their names or titles.

Intermediate levels

Teachers can devise information-gap activities about American culture and history, such as "The First Thanksgiving" (see sidebar).

Using the World Wide Web, learners—alone, in pairs, or in small groups—can research different aspects of the local government and conduct a debate or give a short oral presentation to the class. Topics on a local government Web site might include the fall leaf collection schedule, bicycle safety rules, or an explanation of the local government system. Learners can choose issues that are important to them, access the information, hone technology skills, and be active participants in their community while they improve their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.

Advanced levels

Advanced English language learners are usually concerned about using language in complex or academic contexts. Attending school board meetings, inviting local officials to speak to the class, and volunteering in community organizations are ways learners can participate in the community while using and improving their communication skills. Writing letters to the editor, e-mailing members of Congress or the President, and researching and writing an essay about an aspect of American history or culture are ways to expand literacy skills.▼

This article is excerpted from Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners, *by Lynda Terrill, National Center for ESL Literacy Education.*

For further information on civics education for adult immigrant learners or to access a civics education resource list, visit NCLE's Web site at www.cal.org/ncle.

Integrating Content with Language

One activity that integrates cultural information with language development is a simple matching exercise, where famous Americans are matched with their descriptions. Learners can create their own matching exercises and exchange them with other learners in their class or program to complete.

How much do you know about us? Draw a line to connect the names with the descriptions. (Answers will be given in the next issue of *NCLEnotes* and on the NCLE Web site at www.cal.org/ncle/about.htm.)

NCLE Staff Match

Joy Peyton	She lived in England and now coordinates a volunteer ESL program at her church.
Miriam Burt	She tutored adult English learners with AmeriCorps and taught computer classes to teen parents.
MaryAnn Florez	She has lived, worked, and taught English in Europe and Asia; her adoptive daughter was born in Russia.
Carol Van Duzer	She speaks fluent Spanish and did seminal work on dialogue journals and English language learners.
Lynda Terrill	She has lived abroad and speaks fluent French; her family often hosts internationals working in Washington, DC, on professional internships.
Dora Johnson	A naturalized U.S. citizen, she speaks five languages—including English like a native speaker, although she didn't come to the United States until she was an adult.
Lynn Fischer	Her first work with nonnative speakers of English was a teaching job near the Navajo Reservation in Arizona.
Dawn Flanagan	She likes to put an artistic touch on NCLE publications and has taught adult ESL in the New York area.

Publications Order Form

New ERIC Digests from NCLE

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 it will generate? This Q&A answers these questions and offers suggestions for interactive writing in the adult ESL classroom.

Online Professional Development for Adult ESL Educators

by William B. Hawk

Professional growth is important to most educators. This Q&A discusses the benefits and challenges of online professional development, surveys the range of options available to adult ESL teachers and tutors, and provides guidance in exploring and evaluating these options.

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 your search has 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.

So, What Do You Think?

The NCLE Web site continues to grow and change. It now offers full-text documents (ERIC Digests, Q&As, *Research Agenda for Adult ESL*), Frequently Asked Questions, NCLE Resource Collections, bibliographies, annotated links, and an annotated list of ESL publishers. Our goal is to provide you with a resource-rich site that is responsive to your needs as an adult ESL professional.

To do this better, we need your opinions. Visit the NCLE site at **www.cal.org/ncle**, click on **Share Your Comments**, and let us know what you think!

Recent ERIC Digests and Q&As (Free)

- ❑ **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)
- ❑ **Multiple Intelligences: Theory and Practice in Adult ESL** (Dec 1999)
- ❑ **Critical Literacy for Adult English Language Learners** (Dec 1999)
- ❑ **Poetry in the Adult ESL Classroom** (Dec 1999)

Send this form to:

Product Orders, NCLE/CAL, 4646 40th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859

Name _____

Organization _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

Country _____

❑ **Please check here and enclose old mailing label to revise or correct information.**

NCLE www.cal.org/ncle
National Center for ESL Literacy Education
Center for Applied Linguistics
4646 40th Street NW
Washington DC 20016-1859

Nonprofit Org
U.S. Postage
P A I D
Permit #1400
Silver Spring, MD

Forwarding Service Requested

His NCLE's Worth from page 1

MB: When you received your PhD, did you come to DC?

DR: Yes. In 1989, I came to Washington, DC, to work at the Foreign Service Institute as language training supervisor for South Asian languages.

MB: What did you do in this position?

DR: Besides having responsibility for the curriculum and teacher training, I worked with instructors to develop reading materials for Americans learning to read Urdu, Nepali, and Hindi texts.

MB: Did you stay involved with adult ESL instruction during this time?

DR: Yes, I have volunteered at the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia since I first came to Washington. First I tutored adult students, then I became a member of the group that provides training for tutors five times a year. Now I am the training director there.

MB: And you have also recently become the Coordinator of Adult ESL Instruction for Fairfax County, Virginia.

DR: Very recently! I began the job in January 2001.

MB: What are you looking forward to in this new job?

DR: I'm eager to work with an already outstanding program. We currently serve large populations from Central America. It will be interesting as we work to meet the demands of new immigrant populations from Europe, Asia, and Africa. I hope to explore ways that Fairfax County can use technology wisely to assist adults learning English. Finally, I want to concentrate on literacy development and to make that a primary focus. Learners need to have strong reading and writing skills as well as listening and speaking fluency in order to be successful in today's society.

MB: Speaking of today's society, what changes have you seen in the field since you began working with adult ESL?

DR: I've seen two major changes. The first is in curriculum. When I started teaching in 1978, it was the tail end of the audio-lingual approach. We teachers struggled to make our instruction meaningful for learners and to take them beyond the grammar drills that dominated the textbooks we were saddled with. Then in the 1980s, functional notional approaches and the task-based approach arrived on the scene. After this we saw a shift to learner-centered instruction and even instruction that focused solely on communication, to the exclusion of form.

MB: So where are we now?

DR: Now I think we're in a balance. Communication is important, but there is a healthy balance between form and content.

MB: What is the other change you've noticed?

DR: There is much more professionalism in the field. When I started in the late '70s, you could walk off the street and get a job in adult ESL instruction without any training or preparation. Now there is much more of a focus on training. It is less likely that all you need to teach English is to be a native speaker.

MB: David, do you have any final words for *NCLEnotes*?

DR: There needs to be more research that directly involves teachers—classroom-based practitioner research, action research that focuses on the literacy process and on how adults learn to read English as a second language. There are some things we know and much more we don't. Teacher research can and should be used to inform the field.▼