Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition

Proceedings of the Third Annual Forum

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INTRODUCTION

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Low-educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition (http://www.leslla.org) was established in 2005 to provide a unique forum for discussing and adding to what continues to be a meagre body of research on the subset of 800 million non-literate adults worldwide (UNESCO 2004) who migrate to countries where they need to become literate for the first time, but in a new language. 'Low-educated' refers to the background of those adults who are beyond the age of compulsory schooling upon immigration, not to their eventual attainment; the focus of LESLLA is not on basic or beginning literacy *per se* but rather on the individuals who build up oral competence in a second, third or nth language while working on becoming literate for the first time in a language in which this oral competence may not yet be well established. Those who fit into the LESLLA category may be found learning the alphabet in UK pre-entry level classrooms or negotiating traffic as shuttle van drivers at US airports.

One of the central goals of the LESLLA forum has been to recruit participants from as many countries as low- and uneducated adult immigrants settle in and are expected to become literate in a new language. The proceedings of the first two LESLLA forum meetings (van de Craats, Kurvers and Young-Scholten, 2006; Faux 2007) cover LESLLA issues in the USA, the UK as well as in several additional European countries.[1] The present volume represents the welcome expansion of the forum in its inclusion for the first time of researchers from Germany and Australia, and the 2007 LESLLA colloquium additionally included talks on LESLLA issues in Bangladesh and South Africa.

The LESLLA forum has operated from its inception in a firmly bi-directional manner. In one direction, participants share relevant research with practitioners and policy makers. When moving from theory to practice and policy, the LESLLA proceedings provide a window on the motivation behind the forum: where there are common challenges faced by those who work with low-and uneducated adults, there is much to be gained by discussing the approaches taken in different contexts. Resettlement of those who comprise a good portion of the LESLLA population – refugees - begins at a supra-national level, but is then subject to national policies, a comparison of which offers fresh insights. In the reverse direction, LESLLA participants convey to the wider second language acquisition (SLA) and applied linguistics community research findings on a population relatively understudied and as a consequence, poorly understood (see e.g. Tarone et al. 2007). In the present proceedings, researchers contribute to current mainstream SLA/applied linguistics by addressing factors such as working memory, treating phenomena such as deixis in written discourse, referring to issues such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level progression, and applying research tools such as Conversational Analysis. One sign of a promising research agenda is debate. Do adult first-time L2 readers learn to read fluently? Do they reach near-native linguistic competence in their L2? Kurvers and van de Craats describe in one of their chapters the difficulty of locating successful LESLLA adults, and they conclude that mastery of reading and attainment of high levels of oral proficiency may be extremely rare. Similarly Juffs and Rodríguez propose in their chapter, as did Tarone et al. (2007), that literacy confers a marked advantage in processing. L2 input. If it is correct that adult L2 learners cannot reach high levels of spoken language without literacy, this means that the many adults in non-literate societies worldwide who presumably acquire new

[1]Martha Bigelow, Larry Condelli, Nancy Faux, Tina Fry, Kit Hansen, Randal Holme, Joy Kreeft Peyton, Thorsten Piske and Robin Schwartz generously shared their expertise as chapter reviewers.

languages attain only low levels of proficiency. However, we can only assume this is the case, given the current dearth of empirical studies of non-literate adult learners in the developing world.

In the four years since its inception, the LESLLA forum has begun to add to that small body of research, and it is worth noting how well the contributions made by the 12 chapters in this volume address the list of recommendations made at the close of the 2006 forum in Richmond, Virginia. Compiled by forum participants, these recommendations (paraphrased here; see Faux:, 2007: 243-244) begin with a call for research using a range of methodologies/designs (ethnographic, longitudinal, cross-sectional, case studies), from a variety of perspectives (e.g. linguistic, anthropologic, social, educational, neurological) to be carried out by researchers, practitioners and students on

- ✓ Culture specific oracies or literacies among the target population and on the process of L2 acquisition by low and non-literate adults in their own cultures;
- ✓ The role individual cognitive and/or socio-cultural differences in disparities in success rates in learning to read;
- ✓ The processing of print and approaches to text by low and non-literate adults;
- ✓ The oral competence level in the L2 required to support L2 decoding/ phonemic awareness;
- ✓ The threshold of native language literacy required for L2 skills transfer;
- ✓ The processing of oral input by low and non-literate adults;
- ✓ The role of specific approaches and instructional strategies.

LESLLA participants noted that whenever feasible, research should be translated into implications for the training and professional development of practitioners, and that relevant research findings should be shared with national and international agencies. All those who are involved in LESLLA, whether through attending a forum, reading the proceedings or visiting the website, are aware that primary schooling is still unavailable to a distressingly high number of humans on this planet. When circumstances – natural or manmade – render regions of the world unfit for basic survival, inhabitants of those regions where basic education is one of many casualties will continue to migrate to safer havens. History will be the judge of whether the current economic crisis weakens the literacy initiatives launched to improve low and uneducated individuals' lives when coffers were brimming.

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THE CASE OF GERMANY: LITERACY INSTRUCTION FOR ADULT IMMIGRANTS

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1 Introduction

Since the end of the 1970s immigrants in Germany have been taught how to read and write. These were the days where consciousness began to grow that many of the immigrants that so far had been referred to as *Gastarbeiter* 'guest-workers',[1] would not be returning to their home countries as expected (see Sollors, 2005). After Germany was in ruins in the years following Second World War, by the 1960s industry had begun to recover, revealing a lack of workers. The government then started to 'invite' foreign workers from different European countries who were implicitly expected to leave after several years. Even despite the subsequent immigration of family members and the birth of a whole generation of guest-worker children, the government repeatedly kept claiming that Germany was not an immigration country (see Sprenger & Yaşaner, 2007). Nevertheless, by the end of the 1970s, the first courses for immigrants had already been organized and funded by the government. Throughout the 1980s, 1990s and part of the new millennium a federal organisation (*Sprachverband*) was the major funding source for courses for immigrants. Most of these were regular courses for German as a second language.[2]

In the year 2000 signs of the inevitable turnaround became clear. The government finally understood that Germany had been an immigration country for decades and that during this period of time many errors had been made. The results of the PISA surveys particularly provided evidence of a serious disadvantage of children and adolescents with migration history (Baumert *et al.*, 2001; see further http://www.pisa.oecd.org). The survey clearly shows that being a (young) immigrant in Germany increases a child's chance of disadvantage with all its following educational, employment and social drawbacks.

Fortunately during the past two years some major changes have become apparent. They rest basically upon the Immigration Act,[3] which came into force on 1 January 2005 (also see footnote 7). Concepts and curricula[4] have now been published for language and literacy courses and for the first time there is a curricular framework (e.g. the Austrian concept Fritz *et al.*, 2006). With federal funding there have also been some important changes in the area of qualification: The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has published a curriculum which lays the basis for train-the-trainer-programmes for teachers involved in *language* courses. Based on this groundwork a number of train-the-trainer-courses are offered in many places. The costs of these courses are born by the government. Furthermore the Federal Office has published a 'concept' which will lay the basis for training-courses for teachers involved in *literacy* training. Parallel to this development in the last 18 months the *Bielefelder Lehrgang*,[5] a one-year course developed in Bielefeld with the goal of qualifying literacy-

[1] Guest workers came from Greece, Italy, former Yugoslavia, Spain and Turkey (see chapter IV in Herbert, 2001).

[2] In the following simply referred as language courses or language classes as opposed to Literacy Courses in German as a Second Language referred as literacy courses or literacy classes.

[3] See: http://www.zuwanderung.de/cln_115/nn_1068550/EN/ImmigrationToday/TheImmigrationAct/theImmigrationAct__node.html?__nnn=true

[4] In this article a differentiation between 'concept' and 'curriculum' is made. While a concept is mainly understood as a description of goals and teaching-methods without giving specific information about the time needed to reach these goals, a curriculum is understood as containing detailed information about a time schedule. While the concept for German as Second Language and Literacy from Vienna is a good example of concept (see Fritz et al., 2006), since it does not refer to a time schedule, the concept for Germany is an example of curriculum (see Feldmeier, 2007).

[5] See http://www.bielefelder-alphalehrgang.de

trainers, has finally matured and has started, with federal funding, on November 2007. In addition, prompted by the results of an evaluation survey, there has been a nation-wide discussion about the necessity for a better funding for L2-literacy teaching, which has finally led to a rise in the total number of units being paid by the government. For literacy-learners there is funding provided for 1200 units (45 minutes per unit). Altogether, there seems to be a turn for the better.

2 More than two Decades of Literacy Instruction

The first literacy instruction classes for immigrants were run in the beginning of the 1980s. The starting phase of this literacy work coincided with the beginning of the literacy instruction of *functionally illiterate Germans*. These people had attended school for some years (some dropped out, while others did finish school) and yet were not able to read and write to the extent society expects. Unlike the related general field of literacy instruction, L2-literacy instruction had existed for more than two decades without being able to foster professionalization, although the government did fund literacy courses.[6] The governmental organisation in charge of funding language and literacy courses for immigrants was the *Sprachverband* (created in 1986), which was provisionally displaced in 2004 by the *Bundesamt für die Anerkennung ausländischer Flüchtlinge* (BAFl) 'Federal Office for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees'. This was finally replaced in 2005 by the *Federal Office for Migration and Refugees* (BAMF), which is now in charge of funding language and literacy courses for immigrants.[7]

One might ask how it was possible that, given more than 20 years of L2-literacy instruction in Germany, it took so long for the fundamental changes of the past two years to occur. Surely, one of the causes has been the governmental view of immigrants in Germany, which has, however, recently undergone an important change with the coming into force of the Immigration Act on 1 January 2005 (the Act will be described in greater depth in the next section). Other reasons might be that, in comparison to countries like USA or UK, there are basically no publication organs; no journals reflect the work done in the field. Established professional journals, for example in the field of (applied) linguistics, will not publish articles by practitioners if their work does not meet their scientific criteria. Thus the link between practitioners in the field and researchers at universities is non-existent. Most of the 'experience-based' concepts for running literacy instruction, curricular frameworks or instruction materials which are developed in centres for adult education are unknown to the rest of the field. In reality is it unclear if lack of communication between practitioners is due to the lack of publication organs; this may instead be the result of practitioners involved in the developing of concepts, curricula and materials appearing to protect their work rather than sharing it with other centres of adult education. This in turn may be due to a lack of possibilities for publication or conference presentation leading to limited opportunities to share one's own (unpaid and demanding) work. The idea that a 'mere practitioner' can become a professional expert in literacy instruction has never been fostered.

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[6] In the field of literacy instruction for German illiterates the grade of professionalisation is higher due to the excellent work done by the „*Bundesverband Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung* 'German Association of Literacy Instruction and elementary Education'. This association, formed in 1984, issues a journal and since 2003 holds an annual conference for literacy instruction. Furthermore its public relation work done in and for the field (for instance TV spots announcing literacy courses) is remarkable. For further information see http://www.alphabetisierung.de

[7] Of course there has been and still are other possibilities for funding literacy instruction. While the Federal Office supplies funding for all of Germany, there are also local funding sources in the different federal states. An example of this kind of communal, municipal or local funding is courses organized by employment agencies. For such courses there is still neither teaching concepts nor curricula nor qualifying courses for trainers, so that the grade of professionalisation in comparison to the federal-level courses is quite low. Theoretically there is a possibility (and in fact this is not an uncommon practice in some cities) to draw on these two (or even more) different types of funding for some learners), thereby boosting the total amount of teaching units available for some courses.

Another important point that might explain why the field of literacy instruction for immigrants has experienced little change over the past two decades could be the role of communities and neighbourhoods in the field of literacy work: in Germany the (migrant) community or the (migrant) neighbourhood rarely serve as a source of volunteers who might get involved in the assistance of literacy instructors. For the same reason the link between centres for adult education and (migrant) communities is not very pronounced.

Finally, attention should be drawn to the fact that there has been constant and easily accessible governmental funding for literacy work. This funding was and is of course very welcome, but it could have paradoxically hindered professionalisation, since there has been no need for the centres involved in adult education to compete for a better position within the field.

3 The Immigration Act, the Standard Integration Course and the Specific Target Groups

As noted before, on 1 January 2005, the Immigration Act came into force, which '[...] for the first time provides a legislative framework for controlling and restricting immigration as a whole. The new law also contains measures to promote the integration of legal immigrants in Germany.'[8] The basic idea of this act is the wish to facilitate the integration process of immigrants into German society. This goal is approached in different ways:

- integration through naturalisation;
- integration through language;
- integration through education;
- integration through professional training and employment and
- social integration through projects.

Although all aspects of this goal are of interest, in the following I focus on 'integration through language', since the consideration of all other points are beyond the scope of this chapter.

The goals set by the Federal Office of Immigration and Refugees (in the following referred to as Federal Office) in the Concept for a Nation-Wide Integration Course are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The main goal - to take an initial step towards integration and towards mastery of German - is seen as the most vital step: 'Language skills are the key to and thus the essential prerequisite for successful integration.' (Integration in Germany, 6).

Integration Course System

Orientation Course (30 units)				
standard course (fast pace/500 units/B1)	standard course (normal pace/600 units/B1)	standard course (low pace/600 units/A2)	youth-course (600 units/B1)	course for women & parents (600 units/B1)

Table 1

The core of this course-system is the Standard Integration Course and its respective Nation-wide Concept, which aims at the B1-Level (CEFR) in 600 units (every unit has 45 minutes). Originally three different paces[9] for reaching the Threshold-Level were settled on: a low pace, which after 600 units leads to the A2-Level, a normal pace which after 600 units leads to the B1-Level and a fast pace which takes 500 units to result in the B1-Level. Based on these three paces, the funding system is apparent: The Federal Office pays for every learner to reach the B1-Level in not more than 600 units. If, for instance, in the placement test a

[8] http://www.zuwanderung.de/EN/Home/home__node.html?__nnn=true

[9] The different paces were set by the Federal Office based on first hand reports of practitioners.

learner turns out to have reached the B1-level, s/he will not receive any funding. After having reached B1-level or having completed 600 to 900 units (even without reaching B1) the learner has to attend an 'orientation course' (45 units) which aims at communicating important facts about German society (see Table 1; see further *Integrationskursverordnung*, 2004).

After the findings of the Evaluation Survey of the Integration Course System were published in 2006, the government made some adaptations regarding the course system. The survey revealed that for illiterates, 600 units were clearly insufficient for reaching B1. It was further suggested that a system which differentiates various paces but does not so with respect to the curriculum is not appropriate.[10] Thus one major change in the course system is that the three different paces originally established have been discarded and the number of units for some courses has been increased to 900, resulting in the following:

1. Intensive Course with 400 units for the B1-level
2. Standard Course with 600-900 units for the B1-level.

In order to take into account the different types of learner histories and their social situations in Germany the Federal Office additionally developed three more courses for specific target groups: a Youth Integration Course, a Course for Women and Parents and a Literacy-Course. There is a teaching concept for every one of these three courses (Hoffmann, 2007; Feldmeier, 2007; Reimann, 2007; Concept for a Nationwide Integration Course, 2007), and the original funding for 600 units has been raised to 900 units. Moreover, a forth specific target group has been settled on which addresses those learners with a special need for coaching (e.g. learners with presumed fossilized knowledge of German). For this forth special course the teaching concept is still under development.

Altogether the course system includes four additional courses for special target groups, which are based on specific curricula (see Table 2; see *Integrationskursverordnung*, 2007):

"Adapted" Integration Course System

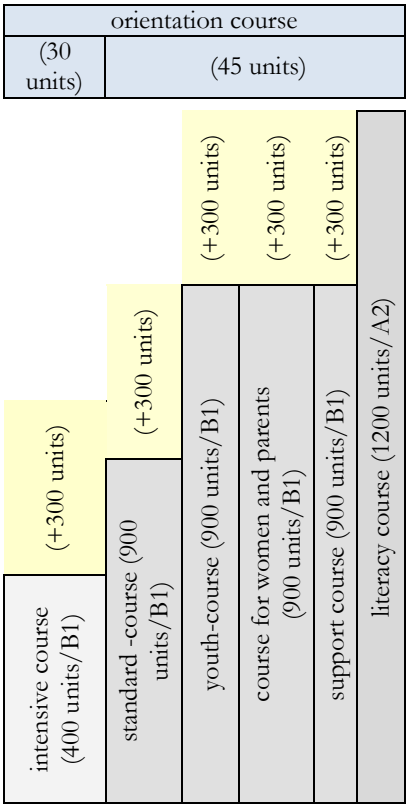

Table 2

3. Youth Course with 900-1200 units for the B1-Level
4. Course for Women and Parents with 900-1200 units for the B1-Level
5. Support Course (curriculum is still to come) with 900-1200 units for the B1-Level.
6. Literacy Course with 900-1200 units for the A2-Level.

The outcome of the classes is measured with a final test (A2/B1-Test). Learners in the intensive courses take the test after 400 units and learners of the standard Integration course after 600 units. The rest of the learners in the special target groups take the test after 900 units. Those who fail the B1-Test have the possibility to take 300 more course units. The prerequisite for this is that they attend the classes regularly (70% attendance)

[10] Although the survey evaluates the Integration Course System as a whole, literacy classes were insufficiently focussed on. Thus data about the languages or home countries, and the outcomes of literacy classes are still missing. A new special survey on literacy course is planned by the Federal Office for 2009.

and that they complete the Orientation Course. The objective in the Orientation Course (originally 30 units, now 45) is not to teach German or literacy, but to give information about the German society and laws. While it is not expected that the target groups 3-5 will need more than 900 units to reach the B1-level, there seems to be a consensus about the abilities of literacy learners: most of them will not reach B1 in 900 units and will therefore need the additional 300 units.

3.1 The Literacy Course

As already mentioned, the literacy-course is based on a special concept and on the CEFR. Today the practitioners are still working with the "Provisional Concept for a Literacy-Integration-Course"[11], which has been adjusted to a total amount of 600 units

Provisional Concept for a nation-wide Literacy-Integration-Course (still in use)		**Concept for a nation-wide Literacy-Integration-Course (in work)**	
		(compulsory) test (A2/B1)	
		literacy course D	additional module (100 teaching units)
			additional module (100 teaching units)
			additional module (100 teaching units)
		(compulsory) test (A2/B1)	
		orientation course (with 45 units) or simplified literacy-orientation course (with 45 units)	
voluntary test (A2/B1)		literacy course C	module 9 (100 teaching units)
orientation course (30 units) or simplified literacy-orientation course (30 units)			module 8 (100 teaching units)
			module 7 (100 teaching units)
follow-up literacy course	module 6 (100 teaching units)	literacy course B	module 6 (100 teaching units)
	module 5 (100 teaching units)		module 5 (100 teaching units)
	module 4 (100 teaching units)		module 4 (100 teaching units)
basic literacy course	module 3 (100 teaching units)	literacy course A	module 3 (100 teaching units)
	module 2 (100 teaching units)		module 2 (100 teaching units)
	module 1 (100 teaching units)		module 1 (100 teaching units)

Table 3

[11]The Concept for Literacy-Courses was published in July 2007, while an evaluation survey of the whole Integration Course System was running. Since there was the conviction that after the evaluation there would be some changes necessary, the attribute "provisional" was added, which will expire after the adaptation to the new funding frame.

plus 30 units for the Orientation Course. Since the funding situation has improved and the total amount of teaching units has been raised to a maximum of 1200 units it will be necessary to adapt the concept for the Literacy Course to the new number of teaching units. Table 3 shows the structure of the "provisional concept" (now in use) and the structure of the "coming" concept (still in progress) conforming to the different total number of teaching units. An important point to be referred to is the permeability of the literacy-course in relation to all other courses described in table 2: there is a possibility of changing the course type. Those learners, who can meet the oral and writing demands of the other course-types, can leave the literacy classes and attend a Youth-Course for example, which might be better adapted to the learners needs (e.g. technical language for specific jobs).

3.1.1 Goals of the Literacy Course

Among other things, the provisional concept describes goals, topics and to some extent methods for the teaching of literacy classes. Since for any learner there is no way to learn to write and read in German as a second language without understanding German itself, the concept takes into account the necessity of teaching oral German and literacy at the same time. In order to understand the tenets of the concept, literacy classes should instead be thought of as "German classes with literacy" and not the other way around. Thus, learning the second language and learning to write and read constitute two main lines of progression of the concept. A third line of progression is made up of aspects that can be described as "learning to learn". Within this progression line the goal is to make the learning process transparent and offer the learners tools for setting, planning, conducting and evaluating their own learning. Further goals of the course are, among others, to introduce learners to working with computers, the internet and learning software. Another important aspect of the concept is that it addresses all the different groups of illiterates. Organizing and teaching literacy courses thus means working with pre- and non-literates, functional illiterates and those learners who already have learned to write and read a different script (non-Roman alphabet literates and non- alphabet literates; see Burt, Peyton & Adams, 2003). Of course learners in literacy classes also show much variation in their oral competence in German, ranging from absolute beginners to presumably fossilised[12] learners with a large vocabulary and good communicative competence,[13] (about A1 or even higher with respect to the CEFR in oral production and reception). Furthermore learners usually show a range of competencies in working with media (e.g. computer and internet), of knowledge of learning strategies or of living situations.[14]

4 The Qualification of the Teachers

While in the first two decades of literacy teaching in Germany there were no official guidelines concerning the qualification of literacy instructors, there are now some apparent changes in this respect. The Provisional Concept for a Nationwide Integration Literacy Course of the Federal Office points out the importance of qualified staff (see Feldmeier, 2007: 52) and gives four specific minimal criteria concerning the qualification of literacy instructors:

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[12] The term "fossilized" is not defined here. The concept for the new Support Course (see Table 2) is still to be published. General information about this new type of course is that it will specifically address fossilized learners, and the definition of this term will be given, based on various factors. One of these seems to be a length of residence of between three and five years. Another is likely to be the ability to communicate at a level of A1 or A2, but with very low grammatical competence (often referred as speaking broken German). Detailed information about this new type of course is not yet available.

[13] The term "communicative competence" is not meant in the strict sense of the CEFR (see CEFR, p. 101 et seq.). Here it indicates a person who speaks in broken German.

[14] The factors related to living situation do not deal with residence permit status since only "settled foreigners", "recently immigrated foreigners" and "resettlers" from former German areas in Eastern Europe are allowed to attend classes, while asylum seekers are not.

- Literacy instructors should have completed the course of German as a Foreign Language or German as a Second Language (*Magister*[15], Bachelor or Master).
    - If literacy instructors do not fulfil this requirement, they should have completed the course for Supplementary Qualification for German as a Second Language (either the short course with 70 units (45 minutes per unit) or the long course with 140 units (45 minutes per unit)).
    - Without a Bachelor/Master in German as a Foreign/Second Language or the certification of the Supplementary Qualification for German as Second Language literacy instructors have to apply for an exemption from the Federal Office. Exemptions will be granted only until 31 December 2009.
- Literacy instructors should have experience in the teaching of German as a Second Language. In particular, they should have teaching experience in beginning classes (at A1 level or below) and should know about the written and oral problems that learners will encounter (in class and in the textbooks, workbooks and other teaching materials) in the Basic Language Course (the first 300 units) of the Standard Integration Course.
- Literacy instructors can – in an ideal case – have recognized certifications of attendance of workshops, courses, congresses on literacy and so on. Some knowledge in learner-languages is beneficial.
- Literacy instructors who wish to offer contrastive literacy classes (L1 and L2)[16] should have an additional qualification in contrastive literacy instruction and should have a basic knowledge of the specific learner languages involved.[17]

It should be noted that although these criteria can be read in the official Provisional Concept of the Federal Office, there is a conscious use of modal verbs. Being aware that the majority of all teaching staff would not meet the minimal criteria, the Federal Office has emphasized the need for a continuous qualification process without specifying "must-have" criteria.

As mentioned above after 31 December 2009 only qualified teachers with a *Magister*, Bachelor, Master in German as a Foreign/Second Language or the certificate of attendance of the Supplementary Qualification will be allowed to teach in the Integration Course System. Such a deadline for qualification in the field of literacy instruction has not been set by the Federal Office (and it seems that if a deadline for qualification is set, its date will not be earlier 31 December 2009, since there is wish to avoid every additional hurdle to qualification). Nevertheless the (future) line to follow

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[15] The *Magister* in Germany has been replaced in the last several years by the Bachelor and Master degrees. In terms of time needed, the *Magister* was comparable to the Bachelor plus Master degree. For the *Magister* in "German as a Foreign/Second Language" about four to five years were expected. For the Bachelor and the Master five years are involved (three and two years respectively).

[16] Unlike bilingual literacy classes whose goal is to foster literacy in both the L1 and L2 (see for example Verhoeven, 1987), contrastive literacy classes are held completely in German as a Second Language and seek a gradual integration of the L1 (see Feldmeier, 2005; Craats & Feldmeier, 2008). The inclusion of a L1/L2 contrastive approach in literacy classes is a direct consequence of the Common European Framework, which describes mediation (interpreting and translating) as one language activity (see CEFL, p. 14).

[17] In the evaluation survey of the Integration Course System data about the languages of the course-participants were not collected. Only data about the nationalities of the course-participants are available. This allows only an imprecise insight into the possible L1s in the Integration Course System. According to the evaluation results 23.1% of the participants are Turkish, 16.1% are from the Russian Federation, 6.7% are Ukrainian, 6.7% are from Kazakhstan, 3.3% are from Albania, 2.6% are from Iraq, 2.5% from Serbia/Montenegro, 2.2% from Thailand, 2% form Iran and 2% are Vietnamese. 38.2% are from other countries (see the *Evaluation der Integrationskurse*, 2006: 35). Based on these data there is – for instance – no way to figure out how many of the Turkish participants have Kurdish as L1 or are bilingual in Turkish and Kurdish. Nor is it possible to find out which dialect the participants may speak; this is of special interest because it is – based on experiences and on first hand reports – widely assumed that among the Kurdish participants, those with Kurmanji dialect as L1 constitute one of the largest groups in literacy classes(see Thackston (undated) for a description of the Kurmanji-dialect). Newer but unpublished data especially concerning the literacy classes suggest that the most spoken L1s in literacy classes are Turkish, Arabic, Russian, Kurdish, Albanian, Thai, Persian, Polish, Serbian and Vietnamese.

seems to be clear: Literacy instructors will – at some specific date in the future – have to earn a qualification in Second Language Instruction and Literacy Instruction. This makes sense, since literacy instruction in the second language will always have to include language teaching. And in fact there is funding for a qualification course German as a Second Language (70 or 140 units) and since November 2007 also for an 80 unit qualification course Literacy Instruction in German as a Second Language.

4.1 The Qualification Course Literacy Training in German as a Second Language

As noted before, teachers working in the Integration Course System need a qualification in teaching German as a Second Language. For those who do not have a Bachelor/Master in German as a Foreign/Second Language there is the possibility of acquiring a qualification by attending a qualifying course. This course is funded by the government with a maximum of 650 Euro (70 units for the course) or 1300 Euro (140 units for the course), respectively, for every participant approved (the terms of approval are not discussed here).
Throughout 2006 and 2007 a group of practitioners and theorists worked out a course for the qualification of literacy-teachers. The Bielefeld Course for Literacy Teaching in German as a Second Language (*Bielefelder Lehrgang zur Alphabetisierung in der Zweitsprache Deutsch*) was originally designed as a 120 unit course with about 120 units of homework phases. It covered four important fields (four modules with 30 units each) of literacy work, moving from theory to practice.

- In the first module theoretical fundamentals such as literacy acquisition models are discussed.
- The themes covered lead to a theory-based module which focuses on *concrete* aspects of literacy work (e. g. use of visuals in literacy courses or inclusion of the learner's first languages).
- The third module leaves the theory behind and primarily deals with practical problems including the conceptualisation and production of teaching resources like games, exercise sheets, etc. or the use of computers in literacy work. A second goal of these 30 units is to prepare participants for the practical module to come.
- This last practical module provides an opportunity to visit and observe literacy classes, to work out one's own teaching sequence and to field test it. Instruments for planning, carrying out and evaluating the participants (own) teaching sequences are discussed.

In November 2007 the *Bielefelder Lehrgang* started with 16 participants and finished July 2008. Based on this train-the-trainer-program the Federal Office developed its own concept for train-the-trainer courses that is yet to be published. Unlike the *Bielefelder Lehrgang* the Federal Office has designed a concept for an 80 unit course. The reduction of units in the Federal Concept is principally due to the absence of a practical module. Based upon this governmental concept, centres all around Germany will be able to design a train-the-trainer course which can be paid for by the government (about 700 Euro per participant).

5 Conclusion

Since the beginning of literacy work practitioners in Germany have been teaching without an official concept.[18] The Immigration Act established in January 2005 for the first time the right of immigrants to funding to attend a German course. Based on this, different types of concepts were developed. After an initial period of two years, an evaluation of the course system led to an improvement: the total amount of teaching units has been increased to a maximum of 1200 units. Necessary adaptations are yet to

[18] See for other newly published concepts Sprenger & Rieker, 2006; Sprenger, 2006; Fritz *et al.*, 2006.

come. Another important change is that there is funding for a qualification course for teachers: Literacy Training in German as a Second Language. Despite all the positive changes in the course system, there is still one flaw: most literacy learners will not be able to reach even the B1-level in 1200 units. A further improvement of the system may be necessary, since the B1-level is a prerequisite for naturalization.

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LITERACY AND SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

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1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to give a brief and concise overview of the position of the illiterate and low-literate second language (L2) learner who, as an immigrant, comes or has come to the Netherlands or to Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. Although these two countries share a language and both have a great number of immigrants with a low level of education that have to learn this language, they do not share policies and practices, which has specific unintended consequences.

First, some background information will be given on the diversity of the population of immigrants. Since nearly all illiterates and low-educated learners are subject to integration policies, ample attention will be given to governmental policy on admission, integration and citizenship, and the relevant terms will be carefully defined to avoid misunderstandings. In the next section, we will go more deeply into the situation of low-literate immigrants with regard to the increasing demands imposed on them by the two respective governments in the form of a series of tests of their proficiency of Dutch and knowledge of Dutch/Belgium society. Lastly, the focus will be on the content of DL2 (Dutch as an L2) programmes: aims and frameworks used in L2 literacy courses or standard L2 courses, course materials, teacher training and teacher qualifications. The Netherlands and Flanders will be presented comparatively; whenever the situation in Flanders differs from that in the Netherlands, this will be described separately.

Dutch is the national language of the Netherlands, with a population of 16 million, and is one of the official languages of Belgium.[2] The largest minority groups in the Netherlands come (in this order) from Turkey, Morocco (labour migrants), Surinam (former colony), Antilles, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and from several African countries (refugees and asylum seekers). The main ethnic minority groups in Flanders come from Morocco, the largest group, and from Turkey. Another large group comes from the former colony of Belgium, the Congo in Central Africa, the majority of whom speaks French. Moreover, there is a group of former mineworkers of Italian origin. The more recent immigrants come from several East European countries, (north) African and Asian countries and from some countries in the Middle East.

2 Integration and Citizenship

2.1 Legislation

After centuries during which labour migrants, refugees and asylum seekers entered the Low Countries (an alternative term for Belgium and the Netherlands) with few impediments, this changed at the end of the 20th century when the number of non-indigenous people increased at a time when unemployment of this group rose sharply and there was great commotion in Dutch society after the murder of Pim Fortuyn

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[2] Dutch is spoken in the north-western part of Belgium by six million people and also by the population of a small part of northern France. In addition, Dutch is the official language of Surinam, a former Dutch colony, and of the Dutch Caribbean Islands.

(2002) and Theo van Gogh (2004)[3] a major portion of the population wanted not only a restrictive but even a repressive policy on the admission of new arrivals (newcomers) and extensive attention to civic integration, or *inburgering* (the process of becoming a *burger* = citizen, not to be confused with the process of naturalization). This resulted in a series of regulations, acts and laws aimed at non-nationals serving to regulate, consecutively, their admission to the Netherlands (Act on Settlement), their integration (Integration Act) and their citizenship or naturalization (Citizenship Act).[4] The most recent act dates from 2007, and was adapted in 2008.

As for Flanders, there is a federal act for non-nationals for Belgium, but there is an Integration Act specifically for Flanders which dates from 2006 and can be seen as a form of policy on settling. This is meant to provide non-nationals with an orientation to the new society and has nothing to do with naturalization.

2.2 Integration Programme

In the Netherlands, the integration programme is not only mandatory for new arrivals, but also for groups of low-educated long-term residents without Dutch citizenship. The integration programme consists of two parts. The first part is focused on knowledge of Dutch society. Main topics are history, politics, geography, health, education and the job market. For new arrivals, the language part of the programme is aimed at proficiency level A2 (Waystage) of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF). For long-term residents who are most often low-educated and low-literate or illiterate caretakers or workers the target level is A1 for written skills (reading and writing) and A2 for oral skills. Moreover, the programme focuses on practicing functional competence of Dutch so that new arrivals can deal with the most essential situations and activities and so that long-term residents can function better in their interaction with local and national authorities, health service, education, and so on. Examples of these survival situations and activities (named: *cruciale praktijksituaties* 'crucial practical situations') are how to rent an apartment and how to communicate with the housing association. The first course materials based on this functional approach have since been published, including materials for low-educated immigrants.
As in the Netherlands, the introduction programme for new arrivals and long-term residents in Flanders consists of two parts. The primary programme consists of Dutch as a second language to the first level, A1 or Breakthrough of the Common European Framework, and knowledge of Belgian society with the same themes as in the Netherlands. In addition, there is an individual coaching and orientation programme at professional, educational and social levels. In the secondary programme, the newcomer receives vocational training from the employment organisation.

2.3 Certification

Three different certificates play a role. They are related to the point at which new arrivals are tested on their knowledge of Dutch society and skills in Dutch. These points are admission, integration and citizenship/naturalization.

2.3.1 Admission

The first certificate is required for admission to the Netherlands for migrants from non-European and non-western countries (note that U.S., Australia as well as Japan are

[3] Pim Fortuyn was a controversial politician due to his views on immigrants and Islam. He called Islam "a backward culture" and said that if it were legally possible he would close the borders to Muslim immigrants. Theo van Gogh was a film and television producer and publicist and a friend of Fortuyn. He felt strongly that political Islam was an increasing threat to liberal western societies, and said that with an often aggressive tone. After his movie *Submission* he received death threats.

[4] It should also be emphasized, however, that in Dutch society much protest has been raised against this integration policy, e.g. by a group of concerned citizens in the national media in 2004.

seen as western) who want to settle in the Netherlands. The majority of these immigrants consists of the (future) partners of immigrants already living in the Netherlands. The exam is taken at the Dutch embassy or consulate in the country of origin of the candidate. The candidate has to pass this exam to get an entry-visa for the Netherlands. First s/he has to pass a test of knowledge of Dutch society before taking a test of the Dutch language. This test is a computerized phone test of oral skills with four types of tasks: sentence imitation, answering short questions, giving lexical opposites and retelling a very short story (the latter is only meant to validate the test). The required proficiency level is lower than CEF level A1, referred to as A1- (minus). An example of each type is given in (1).

(1) Sentence imitation: *Ik heb twee koffers.* 'I have two suitcases.'
Short question: *Wat is langer, een arm of een been?*
'Which is longer, an arm or a leg'
Contrasts: *Vader* ……. 'father'
Laatste ……. 'last'

For most low-educated candidates it is not easy to learn Dutch prior to emigration. In countries like Morocco and Turkey, private language institutes offer Dutch language courses tailored to future emigrants who possess a higher level of education. Some individuals even travel to the Netherlands to take a language course and return home when they have reached the requisite level, then taking the phone exam at their Dutch embassy or consulate. This, however, is not a realistic option for illiterate adults. For them it is hard to pass the first exam, particularly because there is no contact possible with the target language, they cannot use written information, they have not developed metalinguistic skills and they lack learning experience in the context of school. So in practice, most illiterates do not succeed; the screening procedure seems to be intended to keep out those who are less literate.

The first half of 2008, however, saw an important change when a judicial verdict pronounced that those who enter the Netherlands for family reunion cannot be obliged to pass an exam outside the country. Meanwhile legal proceedings have begun regarding the practice of preparing for and taking an exam in the immigrant's country of origin, where this may contravene European Union legislation.

In Belgium, emigrants do not have to take an exam to be admitted and get a permit of residence.

2.3.2 Integration

The *Inburgeringsexamen* 'integration exam' consists of a centrally administered part and a practice exam. This exam consists of three parts: (i) Knowledge of Dutch society, which is tested through computerized multiple-choice questions and has to be passed before the language test is taken; (ii) A computer-based test in which oral and written functional Dutch is tested related to either work or OGO/*Onderwijs Gezondheid Opvoeding* 'education, health and child raising'; (iii) the phone-based test for oral Dutch for which a higher level (CEF A2) is required. Part (ii) consists of either making a portfolio, a representative selection of proof of acquired skills and/or results of practice assessments given by certified assessors (required language proficiency level: A2). Immigrants must pass this exam in order to get a permanent residence permit. Immigrants who can show that they have already attained the required level through another exam, such as the National Exam Dutch as a Second Language (CEF level B1 or B2), are exempt. For low-educated long-term residents the level of A1 for written skills is required. In practice, only a low number of true illiterates can attain the A1 level for written skills, and even a lower number reach the A2 level. Reaching A2 for oral skills is also difficult (see Kurvers & Van de Craats elsewhere in this volume). As of this writing, no one had been deported and the deadline for passing the integration exam has been postponed until 2010.

In Flanders although taking courses is now required, exams testing Dutch language proficiency or knowledge of society are not compulsory. Instead, the Centre for Civic Integration grants a certificate to immigrants who have attended the lessons frequently.

2.3.3 Citizenship

Until 2007, there was a separate citizenship test in the Netherlands. On 1 April 2007, however, the test was replaced by the *Inburgerings* ('integration') Test. This meant that the granting of citizenship had become the end point of a completed integration process. Since 2008, those who either had no education or did not finish primary school in their country of origin have been categorized as illiterates on this basis receive dispensation for the written part of the test provided they can demonstrate on the one hand that they have made a considerable effort and on the other that they would not expected to attain the required level within five years. However, they still have to pass the test for oral skills, which is not easy for this group.

Flanders does not have such a series of tests for those who apply for citizenship.

2.3.4 Funding

In the Netherlands, in principle, new arrivals finance their own integration course[5] unless they belong to a special group such as caretakers and unemployed adults for whom local authorities organize courses tailored to their specific needs. At the beginning of 2008, the newly appointed Minister of Integration, Housing and Communities announced an important reduction in new arrivals' own contribution. Local authorities are now responsible for the courses for illiterates, which are financed under the Education and Labour Act.

In Flanders, the Ministry of Education and Labour funds the integration programme for Dutch language lessons and for orientation to the labour market. The Ministry of Civic Integration finances social integration, individual coaching and orientation to educational and society. Attendance is compulsory for newly arrived immigrants, but the lessons are free.

3 Literacy and Dutch as L2

3.1 Participants

In both the Netherlands and Flanders, the participants of the literacy classes come mainly from Morocco[6] – many of them speak a Berber language along with some Moroccan Arabic – but some also come from Afghanistan, Iraq, Thailand, several African countries such as Somalia, Ghana, Sierra Leone and (mainly in Flanders) the Congo and Burundi.

3.2 Frameworks, aims and targets

In the Netherlands, a national framework DL2 (Dutch as second language) has been set up based on the CEF (Council of Europe, 2001) with an accompanying Portfolio in which various 'can do' statements are included. Since the CEF adopts the end of primary school as its baseline, it does not cover basic skills such as reading and writing. In order to adapt this framework for use in L2 literacy classes, an additional framework (*Raamwerk Alfabetisering*) for Literacy in DL2 has been developed, i.e. three literacy levels have been added below the lowest existing level of the CEF. For reading and writing,

[5] Such courses may cost 2000 euros but the cost varies. In principle, every immigrant can freely choose a course but the immigrant her/himself is responsible for obtaining the integration certificate.
[6] The estimated percentage of Moroccans in literacy courses is 50%.

these levels are literacy level A, B and C, where level C indicates the level referred to in CEF level A1 (Breakthrough). At all three levels, technical and functional reading and writing skills are integrated in such a way that literacy learners are constantly working on functional literacy skills, initially with some help, and subsequently, when the functional level is much higher than the technical skills already acquired, gradually practicing independent functional literacy tasks. For oral Dutch (listening and speaking) the CEF up to level A1 is used (see Stockmann, 2006 for more information). The Portfolio is not only a personal dossier in which evidence of already acquired skills is collected, but also a diagnostic tool for teachers and an opportunity for DL2 literacy learners to control and evaluate their own learning process.

The L2 literacy lessons in Flanders can be positioned in a framework DL2 that is based on the levels A1 and A2 of the CEF. The framework has been developed into a centrally - for all of Flanders - designed curriculum of ten modules of 60 hours each up to level A1, five modules for oral skills in DL2 and five modules for written skills. This division creates the possibility for illiterate migrants with some proficiency in oral Dutch to enter the basic module for written skills while at the same time attending a higher-level module for oral Dutch. Another six modules of 60 hours each are designed for the second stage, from Breakthrough (A1) to Waystage (A2). In addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing, attention is given to key skills in participating in society, to social and cultural attitudes and to the development of learning and communication strategies.

3.3 Intake

In the Netherlands, an intake interview is done by the municipality or another organization. For the purpose of integration courses, a special test battery has been set up which is tailored to illiterates and low-educated immigrants. On the basis of these test results the newcomer will be placed in a stream related either to work or to *OGO* (education, health and raising children).

In Flanders, a similar intake interview for all immigrants is organized by the so-called Houses of Dutch. Here, a cognitive intake test is administered to literate L2 learners. On the basis of this test the immigrant is referred to a school that suits him or her best. At this school or adult education centre there will be another interview with the immigrant about his or her expectations, wishes, aims and obligations. Subsequently, another intake test takes place, dependent on the school or centre that s/he will attend.

3.4 Content and course materials

In both the Netherlands and Flanders, the contents of DL2 literacy courses can be characterized as focusing first and foremost on the functional oral and written skills in Dutch that immigrants need in their social and work-related contacts, social environment and personal family situation.

In the Netherlands the official legislation distinguishes two perspectives: work and OGO in which the educational track and the social track are more or less combined. In addition to the functional skills (such as vocabulary and speech acts for oral Dutch and reading messages from children's schools or filling in forms) in both the Netherlands and Flanders, special attention is given to learning to read and write. For decoding the written language, a phonics approach is used in which phonemes are related to graphemes or letters (a sight word method is not common in adult L2 literacy classes since Dutch has a relatively transparent orthography). Generally, some key words are first presented as sight words in the context of a meaningful text and these words are then used to teach students the alphabetical principle, i.e. learning phoneme-grapheme correspondences by analyzing the written words, sounding out phonemes and combining them into the spoken word. This process is automatized during the course until a certain level of fluency is attained. Functional written language is used as well

from the very beginning, although the students are not required to read independently. In Flanders, students can more or less choose between three tracks: a work-related track for those who work or who must apply for a job and who want to proceed to further (vocational) education, an education-related track for students taking DL2 courses at university and a social track for those (housewives for example) for whom work or further education is not an option.

Both countries also combine ready-made programmes for DL2 literacy learning, including computer-assisted materials, with self-made materials in which teachers try to adapt their teaching to students' social context and their needs. Teachers use all sorts of authentic documents from community (ranging from electricity bills to birth notification, advertisements and vacancies) and stories told by students that are rewritten into reading materials. The ready-made programmes are mainly designed for basic reading and writing skills (phonics) in combination with reading comprehension and functional reading and writing skills on the one hand, or basic oral skills such as vocabulary, verbal routines and functional speech acts on the other. Many of the ready-made literacy materials used are similar in the Netherlands and Flanders, with on-the-spot alterations in Flanders to adapt the language to those situations in which Flemish Dutch differs from Netherlands Dutch.

4 Teacher qualifications

In the Netherlands, as in Flanders, there is no specific teacher qualification for second language teaching. Many teachers working with adult second language literacy learners have either a qualification to teach primary school or to teach a foreign language in secondary school. As in Flanders, all those who had no specific teaching qualification but had been working in adult second language education for some years have had to attend special teacher training courses to receive a basic education certificate.

In Flanders, where there is no teacher qualification for second language and literacy teaching, until 2007, a specific training programme existed that all basic education teachers were required to attend. This programme has paid attention to - in addition to general topics related to teaching low-educated adults - second language learning and second language literacy. This certificate was compulsory for teachers without any teaching diploma, such as teachers who were employed in basic education on the basis of a specific professional background in social or cultural work. Many other teachers have completed tertiary or university education and are qualified teachers, of for example, a foreign language. The post-academic training "Didactics Dutch as a second language" at Antwerp University is now the only option for teachers who want to take courses on this subject.

In both the Netherlands and Flanders, regular in-service training is offered for those who want to refresh or update their knowledge or who are just entering the field. The professional association of adult second language teachers has recently been engaged in the developing a specific second language certificate which individuals and institutions can use as a hallmark for quality control.

5 Conclusions

Above, it is shown how two neighbouring countries in western Europe which share one language differ in policy regarding the currently great influx of immigrants and asylum seekers. The Netherlands has been much stricter in its admission, integration and naturalization policies. As we have seen, in comparing the Dutch context to the one in Flanders, the climate in the Netherlands has become much more restrictive than in Flanders. Although in the Netherlands it is not claimed that illiterates and low-literates are not welcome, the reality is that it is almost impossible for this group of

adults to pass the testing regime that the government has erected for both new arrivals and long-term residents. One of the responses has been - especially by low-educated individuals – that they first move to Belgium, follow a course there, get a certificate (based on attendance and not on proficiency), obtain a residence permit and move to the Netherlands where they are then allowed to stay because the permit is valid for all of Europe. Although the policies and testing regimes in the two countries differ, the ways in which adult second language and literacy teachers coach new arrivals in acquiring basic skills in both language and literacy and in assisting them with relevant social and labour market needs are roughly similar.

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ADULT ESOL IN THE UK: PERSPECTIVES ON POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

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1 Introduction

Adult migrants who are speakers of languages other than the dominant one of their new country do not exist in a social, cultural or political vacuum. Their literacy learning is inextricably linked to issues of power, politics and decisions made at global and local levels. However, there exists a disjuncture between policy, practice and research, whose respective concerns have tended to lie in separate spheres.

For some, the clearest focus for research into literacy acquisition for adults is cognitive: What are the distinctive mental processes at play when adults are learning to read and write for the first time, and in a new language (Kurvers 2007, Van de Craats et al 2006)? Yet the need to situate adult L2 literacy research within its contexts of practice has not always been well recognised. There are recent moves, associated with the social turn in second language acquisition research more generally (Block 2003), to address this need, and to connect linguistic and applied linguistic research to broader matters. In the UK, this means engaging with the field of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in policy and in practice. This chapter comprises two short papers by the members of the UK panel at the third annual LESLLA conference which took place in Newcastle, England, in autumn 2007. The aim of the chapter is to contribute to a holistic understanding of ESOL literacy learning, including an appreciation of policy and pedagogy.

British Government policies which impinge on students who are adult learners of ESOL are riddled with confusion. Since the beginning of the decade, ESOL in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has been under centralised control, and together with literacy and numeracy is part of *Skills for Life*, the national strategy to reduce the number of adults with low levels of basic skills, literacy and numeracy. Scotland has a separate policy, the 2007 *ESOL Strategy for Scotland*. In many government reports, and in much political and media discourse on migration, a great deal of attention is paid to English and to the perceived need for everyone to be able to speak it to integrate fully in their communities. The contradictions in policy are evident, however. As Helen Sunderland describes in the first paper of this chapter, the same government that has stressed the importance of English for integration is simultaneously responsible for cutting funding for the very ESOL classes that would enable the poorest and most marginalised migrants to meet this requirement.

A major concern for the current government is how English language education can contribute to the economy of the country. The idea of functional literacy, a restricted, unquestioning literacy, is powerfully evident in the discourse of educational policy, as is the positioning of ESOL students as subservient to the needs of business and industry (Cooke and Simpson 2008; forthcoming). In educational policy, the 'function' of literacy, as with learning in general, is often economic. Literacy is widely assumed to have an economic impact, as part of a 'knowledge economy', where knowledge itself can be sold or exchanged. In a knowledge economy, the over-riding purpose of literacy education is to make students more economically productive. Paradoxically, however, as Melanie Cooke shows in the second paper, policy and broader social and cultural changes risk excluding lower level students of ESOL and literacy from the employment that they so badly need.

The two papers together present a snapshot of ESOL in Britain towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

ESOL FOR VULNERABLE LEARNERS: POLICY AND PRACTICE

Helen Sunderland

In October 2006, the British government, *via* its major funding body for post-16 education, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), announced that from September 2007 ESOL classes would be free only for a targeted set of people, those who are 'unemployed or receiving income-based benefits' (LSC 2006: 5). Justifying the introduction of fees for ESOL, Bill Rammell, Minister for Lifelong Learning, made the following statement in July 2007:

> *Our priority focus is to move forward with the ESOL measures ... if they are to make an impact in reaching those learners most in need of public help and support.*

It was not the first time he had spoken up for vulnerable ESOL learners. In a letter to *The Guardian* newspaper in January 2007, he said:

> *I want to ensure those in the greatest need continue to get full support … we must also address the needs of those settled in the UK who have been disadvantaged through poor skills for too long and who will remain a cost to the economy without the means to progress.*

The government has signaled support for ESOL learners on numerous occasions, starting with the *Skills for Life* strategy (DfES 2001). The *Skills for Life* strategy, launched in 2001, is a major initiative which aims to 'deliver radical improvements in standards and achievements' in adult literacy and numeracy. As part of this strategy, the government has invested heavily in curricula, resources, workforce development and increasing both provision and achievement.

The strategy document (DfES 2001) asserts:

> *It is essential that the specific literacy and/or numeracy needs of these (ESOL) learners are not seen as secondary to the needs of English-speaking adults.*

More than a Language (NIACE 2006), reporting after a national enquiry into ESOL in 2006, spoke up strongly for vulnerable learners in ESOL:

> *There is also the risk that some members of the resident communities who have had few educational opportunities and may have no or limited written literacy skills (particularly women) become reluctant to join classes where provision designed to meet their specific needs is not available.*

This report was warmly welcomed by Bill Rammell, who promised action on most of the recommendations.

So there is no doubt that the government is supportive of the idea of immigrants and refugees learning English, and that Bill Rammell has been particularly supportive of those with greatest needs. In fact, if it were not for the evidence of ESOL learners queuing round the block to sign up for courses, one would be forgiven for thinking that the government is even keener than potential learners to champion the cause of English classes. Here is Prime Minister Gordon Brown, speaking in February 2007:

> *There is now agreement with the proposition I made some time ago that for new citizens, learning English should be a requirement.*

And Jim Murphy, Employment Minister, suggested in *The Guardian* in February 2007 that the money currently spent on in-house translators within Job Centres[1] could be better spent on educating individuals to speak better English.

> *We must utilise the resources we have to redress the balance, to put the emphasis not just on translating language to claim a benefit, but to teaching language to get a job.*

These are the policy statements coming from government sources. So why is the reality in further education colleges (for non-advanced post-16 education) and adult education centres around the country so different? From evidence from ESOL teachers and programme managers, it would seem that a series of recent measures have combined to restrict opportunities for the most vulnerable ESOL learners. These measures are as follows:

- The government has prioritised provision for 14 to 19 year olds and achievement of Level 2 qualifications (the 'standard' qualification for 16 year olds), as highlighted in the LSC's priorities from September 2006 (LSC 2005); and this has led to further education colleges cutting down on their adult and lower level provision. (ESOL in *Skills for Life* is divided into five levels, running from Entry Level 1 (beginner) through Entry Levels 2 and 3, Level 1 and Level 2. These levels are roughly equivalent to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels A1 to C1.)
- The government has set *Skills for Life* targets at Entry Level 3, Level 1 and Level 2, meaning that what has been termed "residual provision" i.e. provision that does not lead directly to target qualifications, has been cut.
- The LSC funding requires providers to run 80% of their courses as leading to *Skills for Life* qualifications, a problem for learners with very basic literacy levels who could take some years to achieve Entry Level 1, the lowest level of qualification, in all modes of assessment (speaking and listening, reading and writing).
- Fees for ESOL have been introduced for asylum seekers (refugees who are awaiting a decision from the Home Office) and learners not on benefits. These fees vary from organisation to organisation; at the time of writing providers have no way of knowing how much difference this will make to recruitment.

Taken together, these measures have led to overall cuts in ESOL provision (one college in the south-east of England has cut its ESOL staff by 60%) and they impact particularly strongly on the most vulnerable and needy learners:

- women who are not on benefit but have no income of their own, and who make up the bulk of learners in the mixed level, community sites that are being cut;
- learners at low entry levels who do not read and write much in any language; and
- asylum seekers.

This is what ESOL teachers and managers' report is happening in colleges:

> *At w College in 2005-2006 we had 1,200 ESOL learners. This year, in spite of long waiting lists, we've only been allowed to enrol 700. Our target for 2007-8 is the same as it was for this year: 700 students. All enrolments need to be on accredited courses.* (March 2007)

[1]These are government run centres which provide "help and advice on jobs and training for people who can work and financial help for those who cannot." http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/index.html

> *ESOL at x College is being cut by 20%. This is a result of the 6.6% adult cut and the cut in 'residual provision'. The cuts will be concentrated in 'residual provision' i.e. E1 & E2.* (March 2007)

> *£1.5 million (cuts) at y college. £0.4 of it is to fund required full level 2 increases. Cut coming from various sources: £1.1 to be found from residual across college but the bulk is in Lifelong Learning and ESOL is the largest part of that so will take the brunt of it.* (March 2007)

> *Basic literacy courses here at z college are slowly being eroded … employment related courses are growing, yet we are finding it hard to find students for some of these (while we have plenty of demand for E1) ... On top of this the introduction of fees this term means that even though students have enrolled for many of our courses, most haven't paid their fees yet and we are not sure that they will actually be able to pay and return to college.* (September 2007)

And from the website of NATECLA, the National Association for teaching English and other Community[2] Languages to Adults:

> *We note that many of NATECLA's surveys show that at least 40% of learners will be adversely affected by the introduction of fees.* (September 2007)

So why is the situation on the ground so different from the government's stated intentions? Whether one believes this is a conspiracy or just a lack of joined-up thinking, it is clear that the consequences of LSC policies are having a detrimental effect on those learners most in need of support.

Postscript February 2008

Since this presentation was given at the LESLLA conference in September 2007, there have been some developments. The government has announced its intention to provide free ESOL provision to certain groups in the interests of social cohesion and is holding a public consultation on the best way of managing this. Interested readers can visit the consultation website http://www.esolconsultation.org.uk

ESOL, LITERACY AND EMPLOYABILITY

Melanie Cooke

There is a growing move in the UK to encourage employers to fund the basic skills training – which include ESOL – of their employees. Although at the present time employers are asked to do this on a voluntary basis, by 2012 they will be under a statutory obligation to do so. This paper discusses these changes in policy and, through a short case study of an Afghani migrant, suggests some potential consequences for ESOL individuals, especially those with low levels of literacy.

Recent years have seen an increasing private sector involvement in ESOL. This tendency is associated with a strengthening of links in policy between learning in the adult education sector and business. Further education colleges are increasingly expected to market themselves and teach their courses in workplaces. ESOL departments in colleges are expected to provide work-related courses and to cooperate closely with local employers. This, coupled with government initiatives which are

[2] 'Community' languages here are known as 'heritage' languages in some countries. The term generally distinguishes these languages from the mainly European languages (known as 'modern' languages) taught in schools, and refers to languages spoken or written in bi- and multilingual communities.

encouraging employers to fund their workforce's literacy, numeracy and ESOL studies has led some to believe that adult education is in fact undergoing a slow wholesale privatisation. Private sector investment in the education and training of adults, be it in infrastructure, in materials and methods, or in direct funding of courses, brings with it an obligation, implicit or explicit, to orient learning and teaching towards work and employment.

However, in many contexts, employment-focused courses provide only the most generic, decontextualised focus on the skills of employability such as writing letters of application and CVs, and preparing for interviews. This is reflected in the growing number of ESOL courses and qualifications which concentrate on ESOL for work. These courses can be contentious amongst teachers, who are resistant to teaching them because of their narrow generic focus and because of the associated shift of responsibility for funding adult ESOL courses away from colleges and towards employers (Cooke and Simpson 2008). One ESOL manager, interviewed by the author about her college's new ESOL for work programmes, observed the following problem for many ESOL teachers in the new turn towards the generic workplace:

> *We came into the public sector and we could all be earning more money if we were doing other things, but we had a belief in education, in colleges, in students or the politics of asylum or whatever it was, but this new agenda has nothing to do with that, it is all about being business focussed, and we're not business focussed people, that's why we're here* (from unpublished interview data Quality Improvement Agency 2008).

Another reason teacher and others in the ESOL sector are resistant to the shifting of funding to the business sector is their awareness of the complex long-term needs of their students, especially those with literacy needs. Literacy is becoming more and more important for work, even if the job does not, on the face of it, require high levels of literacy skills in English. Literacy acts as a gatekeeper in employment contexts as never before. However, the association between functional literacy and work is a complex one, and one that can be explored through the example of an individual case, that of Abbas.

Abbas is originally from Afghanistan and is a speaker of Dari. He was interviewed for a project which was attempting to identify what helps adult basic skills learners to 'persist, progress and achieve' (Quality Improvement Agency 2008). At the time he was on an ESOL course at a private training provider in London whilst in the middle of a difficult period of unemployment. In Afghanistan his education had been interrupted at the age of twelve because of the civil war and the activities of the Taliban regime. He has acquired a high level of fluent spoken English, as the unedited excerpts presented here testify, but reports serious problems with English literacy, particularly writing.

The story of how he came to the UK is complicated and traumatic. He fled Afghanistan as an unaccompanied minor at the age of 15 or 16, becoming a displaced refugee in Tajikistan and then Pakistan. In Pakistan he was unable to make a living because there were so many refugees trying to do the same, so he paid a large sum of money to get out of Pakistan, arriving in England some time later after an arduous journey. He was dispersed to several different English towns in succession and waited two years for the authorities to make a decision about his claim for asylum. During this time his family had no idea where he was and he had no contact with them until the Taliban were ousted in 2001.

Abbas has worked in many jobs since he was given permission to work. He was determined to work at any cost in order 'to survive'. He has a long work record, having had jobs in warehouses, factories and shops. He began as a cleaner in a warehouse ('I was happy to do it') and while there informally learned the trade of some of the other workers, such as fork-lift truck driving. He has found work through several employment agencies, some of which are less scrupulous than others. The inefficiency of agencies has meant that he has lost jobs on occasion and has had to spend time with no work and no money. Recently he has had a spate of bad luck and has been unable to

get work either through the Job Centre or through agencies, so has been going around employers on foot and trying to get work through his contacts and word of mouth. He is currently doing *ad hoc* pizza delivery work.

One of the problems facing Abbas is that recently he has found that his low level of literacy is a barrier to employment. In attempt to get a steady job he applied for training as a bus driver, a job which in England has severe recruitment problems which companies are addressing by recruiting in new EU countries such as Poland.

> *The last job I applied was for bus driver I've still got the letter from them. They called me to the Job Centre in Finchley, one person from the bus company was there and he was checking how we write and speak. So when I went he gave me a piece of paper and said OK you have to write something and I said oh my God this is the worst thing for me. I asked them why, to drive a bus? They say that this is a new rule, sometimes if you have an accident or some passengers have a fight inside the bus if the police are involved you need to describe to the police what happened and you need to write a report to the company as well. So this is the new rule, you must be able to understand English but you must be able to write as well. They said I had to improve my writing. They said 'once you can write, call us again.'*

More seriously, Abbas is also finding that jobs he could easily get previously are becoming less and less open to him because of the literacy demands of even menial jobs.

> *Most of the companies now they are saying you must have reading and writing English so you need to know about safety and so on … most of the warehouses they are saying you must have basic writing because they are saying sometimes we will give you the basic paperwork we don't have time so you have to write the reports. For example, where I used to work, when you are handling the goods for the customers, if the box is damaged they don't accept it they ask why it is damaged so they say they want [compensation] so now they say you should write a report, what are the damages, what happened and what the customer is saying, what compensation he wants, so this is the kind of thing they want in all the warehouses. Writing is the most important thing now, it's everywhere. The first question when you apply for a job is this.*

This case study throws up several questions, about literacy, about 'employability' and about funding of adult education and 'skills'. Abbas is a hard worker, prepared to do almost anything to get by. He has a young family to support and is very frightened by the thought of unemployment. Getting a job is proving increasingly difficult for him because it is very competitive (he says 'every job is a war') and because he is being asked more and more frequently for a level of literacy he does not have. Aware of this, he is doing his best to learn what he can at the training centre and to study at home. As he says, though, acquiring literacy is a slow process:

> *My writing is getting better now. I think I can see the difference … it is not getting lots better but I feel better anyway. I know it is quite hard and it takes time.*

Abbas faces several problems, some of which may prove intractable and which may mean that he never gets the ESOL literacy education he needs. Firstly, he has to find a class which can provide the intensive, sustained instruction he needs to improve his literacy, which would involve consistent support and detailed feedback. This is not available to him at the training centre he attends because the tuition there is funded only for six months and because his tutor, although well qualified in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), has no experience of teaching people with neither low literacy, nor the training in how to support them. Aware of this, Abbas has made several attempts to get a place at the local college, where literacy expertise is available, but each time has been placed on a long waiting list without success.

Even more serious is what might happen to Abbas in the future. The model of funding for basic adult education in England is changing fast. Responsibility for who

pays for training for adults is being transferred gradually from colleges onto the shoulders of employers, who are being encouraged to identify which skills they, as businesses, require their workforce to acquire, and train them accordingly. Companies tend to invest in narrow skills training which is tailored to their needs as employers; they are less likely to invest in the long term, broader language and literacy as well as general adult education needed by workers such as Abbas. In fact, Abbas is finding it difficult to get into any workplace at all; if he does find a job it is likely to be in a firm which is either too small to be able to invest in training or too concerned with profit to care. Stories of extreme exploitation by companies of foreign workers are hitting the news every day and give little cause for optimism. The deputy general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, Frances O'Grady, pointed out in 2006:

> *The migrant worker horror stories are sadly all too familiar, but that doesn't make them any less shocking. Like the two Filipino women being paid £75 for an 80-hour week at a Norfolk care home. The Portuguese man and his pregnant wife working on a farm in Lancashire, sharing a house with 17 others, and left with just £6 a week to live on after deductions. This is not some Dickensian nightmare - this is happening here and now, in Britain, in 2006.* (http://www.tuc.org.uk/international)

It can only remain an outside chance those employers who are unwilling even to ensure basic rights for their workers will be likely to invest in training of any kind, let alone in what Abbas needs.

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SOME NOTES ON WORKING MEMORY IN COLLEGE-EDUCATED AND LOW-EDUCATED LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE UNITED STATES.[1]

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1 Introduction

This paper reports on some exploratory work that was carried out with educated and less-educated Spanish-speaking learners of English as a second language in western Pennsylvania and Ohio in 2006. The original intent was to compare working memory scores, proficiency, and sentence processing (especially of long-distance dependencies in relative clauses) among educated and less-educated learners. We intended to target speakers who had not attended university and those that had attended university. In hindsight, this project may have been overly ambitious in its conception, since we did not know the available pool of potential participants in the 'less-educated' category. This lack of knowledge turned out to be a major problem. However, we think that a brief report of our findings is worthwhile given the growing interest in this topic (Juffs, 2006; Tarone and Bigelow, 2005; and papers in van de Craats, Kurvers, and Young-Scholten, 2006). We therefore consider this paper to be 'some notes' that may assist others in future work, rather than a paper that presents reliable findings.

This report is structured as follows. First, we briefly review some definitions concerning levels of literacy. We then review Baddeley's model of working memory and briefly mention Just and Carpenter's (1996) constrained capacity reader model. We discuss how these models are operationalized in the second language (L2) literature, and raise some questions about such tests based on recent publications in neuropsychological assessment. We next sketch an original work plan and follow up with a description of two samples from typical populations from Spanish-speaking countries in the western mid-Atlantic region of the United States. We then report on our results. We conclude with some reflections on problems with carrying out working memory research with less-educated populations in our region of the United States.

2 Less-educated learners: a typology

The acquisition of second languages by less-educated learners has begun to attract increasing attention of scholars in both Europe and North America in recent years. This attention has arisen because less-educated migrants are affecting social and educational services in the destination countries (see Tarone & Bigelow, 2005 for some statistics and discussion of illiteracy). This population must be better understood if individuals are to be accommodated effectively in their new society. An effort is being made to pool knowledge about such learners through scholarly meetings and on line resources, see http://www.lessla.org. Knowledge of this population will also be

[1] We would like to thank Dr. Steven Brown of Youngstown State University and Maeve Eberhardt of the University of Pittsburgh for assistance with data collection.
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important in developing a more comprehensive theory of second language acquisition (SLA), and may shed light on such controversial topics as the so-called 'critical period'.

Participants at LESSLA symposia have suggested that less-educated learners are not a homogeneous group. Van de Craats et al. (2006) proposed a three-way split in less-educated learners to assist in thinking about this issue. The first group is totally illiterate, they have never attended school, and cannot read or write in *any* language. The second group, being low-literates, have attended some school and have a reading level below average primary school level in their first language (L1). The third subgroup are the 'low-educated', who have at most ten years of education in their home country and have also received a primary education in their L1. It was this last group that we sought to investigate, and to compare with highly literate university-educated learners.

The reason for investigating this latter group was to explore some of the cognitive, rather than cultural, reasons for their difficulties in achieving L2 oral proficiency. Such learners struggle to learn the L2 even when they receive instruction, and even when they are living in country. As is well-known, living in a country need not entail social 'immersion'; see Schumann (1990). Moreover, they appear to learn more slowly than other adult learners and are more prone to 'fossilization' (Selinker, 1972) or getting stuck at a non-native-like plateau. Young-Scholten and Strom (2006) have suggested that phonemic awareness before formal instruction is not available to these learners in a way that is similar to L1 literacy development. In other words, although unschooled adult L2 learners may have a sense of word and syllable structure, they lack the ability to process at the level of the segment. This fact leads us to the question of whether individuals in this group who succeed have a greater ability to detect the segment and whether this is related to their phonological working memory.

The reason phonemic awareness may be related to phonological working memory is that individuals who have a greater working memory (WM) capacity may be able to hold words in memory longer for analysis of their phonological structure. Such an analysis facilitates the development of phonemic contrasts, which is necessary for developing vocabulary. In order to acquire new words, learners have to compare strings of sounds and distinguish which string matches which concept or concepts (e.g. Kroll and Sunderman, 2003). It is possible that the limitation on their WM never allows them to analyse the internal structure of a word; as a result, the word is lost from WM and never makes it into the long-term memory store to be compared with other similar strings and assigned as a label to the correct concept.

Our question, then, was whether phonological working memory is related to an individual's potential to learn in instructed and uninstructed language learning contexts. This is certainly the claim in the L2 literature, (e.g. Ellis, 1996; 2001; Harrington and Sawyer, 1992), although results do not always support this strong conclusion (e.g. Juffs, 2004, 2005). The field has suffered from some confusion about the nature of the construct working memory and how it is operationalized and tested. Before turning to the empirical study and data that we were able to collect, we first summarize the models of working memory that we are assuming.

3 Models of working memory

3.1 Phonological short-term memory

Currently, working memory research in L2 distinguishes two kinds of 'working memory'. However, the operationalization of working memory in the mainstream L2 literature does not always reflect advances in memory tests described in neuro-psychological assessment manuals, e.g. Lezak et al. (2004). The type of test familiar to most L2 researchers is phonological short-term memory (PSM). PSM research is primarily associated with the British psychologist Alan Baddeley and his colleagues (Baddeley, 1999; Baddeley et al. 1998), who claim that variation in memory ability in PSM tests relate to language learning in children and adults. The capacity for short-term

memory has been operationalized in two different ways. The first test is of the ability to repeat nonsense words of different syllable lengths (e.g. 'landiplation', 'geplore') *accurately*; in some cases, syllable length can be up to nine syllables (Pappagno and Vallar, 1995; Gathercole, 2006). The nonsense words include sounds that are not in the first language of the child or adult learner. The version of the test with pseudo-words (i.e., non-words that contain unfamiliar sounds) is used to assess the ability to encode new phonological sequences; using non-words or unfamiliar strings of sounds prevents the participant from using stored knowledge to remember the list. Gathercole (2006) and the commentaries on her article reveal some significant disagreements with the model proposed to account for individual differences in the ability to repeat non-words and the relationship of these differences in word learning in children with specific language impairment (SLI). At issue is the positive effect of familiarity with substrings of phonemes in non-words that are similar to existing words. Overall, it seems that non-word repetition explains variation in early L1 and L2 learning, but that this 'primitive' learning mechanism is superceded by other factors such as auditory processes, phonological development, and output processes.

The second way phonological short-term memory is tested is by the ability to reliably remember lists of unrelated words in the same order as they were presented (Harrington and Sawyer, 1992; Just et al., 1996; Cheung, 1996). This measure involves the word *span* or digit *span* test. The presentation of the words can be either in written or aural mode. Variations exist on this model, but the basic idea is that individuals vary in their ability to remember lists of items in the same order as they are presented. There has been some confusion between the repetition *accuracy* task and the simple span task (Ben-Yehudah and Fiez, 2007). Differences in the method used to measure PSM may explain some discrepancies in how useful the tests are in predicting vocabulary size and language development (Cheung, 1996, p. 872), although some researchers report results that suggest that *both* measures tap the same underlying construct, namely PSM (Pappagno and Vallar, 1995, p. 104). In spite of these claims, some word span and digit span tests that require serial recollection in the same order are now considered to be tests of attention rather than working memory. Jefferies et al (2004) note that immediate serial recall tasks (ISR) are now considered to draw on many levels of representation and show effects of frequency, image ability and so on. In addition, digit span and word span appear to be preserved in different ways in semantic dementia, with digit recall being preserved where non-number words were not preserved. Moreover, depth of knowledge of the non-number words in the list assists in recall, showing that conceptual representation is important in recalling strings of words, with non-number words of high image ability, helping patients with semantic dementia in recall (c.f. De Groot and Poot (1997) on adult word recognition studies). Simple span tasks are thus not considered tests of memory unless a distracter task is used, such as in the Brown Peterson technique, described in Lesnik et al. (2004, pp. 416-419).

The construct of PSM is related to a larger model of memory, which is described and summarized in detail in Baddeley (2000). The model is provided in Figure 1. PSM is a measure of the phonological loop in Figure 1. The model contains other components that are related to PSM. The Central Executive directs attention – obviously one cannot remember something one has not paid attention to. This claim does not rule out 'subliminal noticing'; see Schmidt (1990). The visuo-spatial sketchpad relates to visual memory. An interesting more recent development is the addition of the 'episodic buffer' to the model. Although the construct 'episodic memory' is not new (see papers in Baddeley et al., 2002), the reason for this modification is that the episodic buffer may explain the behavior of individuals who have phonological loop deficits. These individuals fail or do very poorly on the tests that measure PSM and have difficulty with new memory/learning, but they can recall narratives and even groups of playing cards that have already passed in games such as contract bridge.

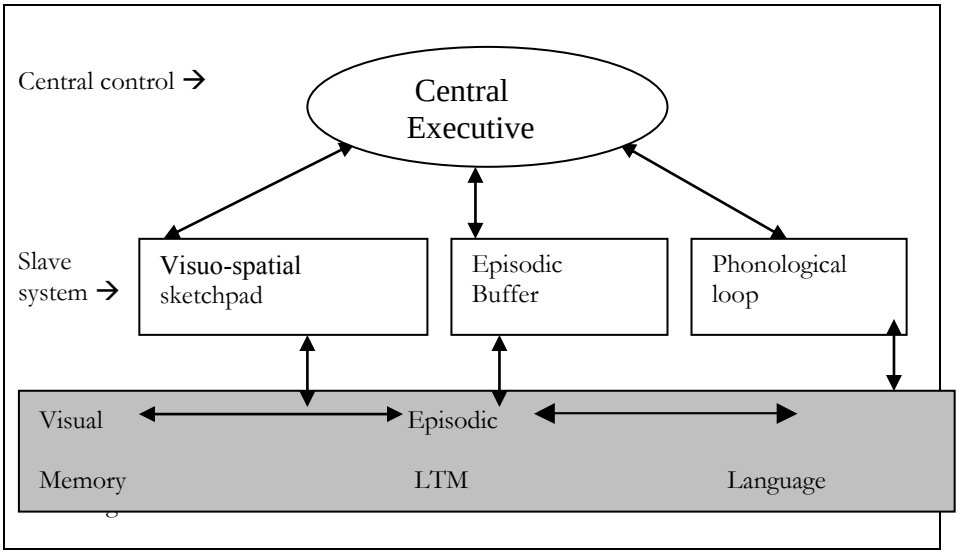

Figure 1. Development of the Working Memory Model, Baddeley (2000).

The body of research that claims to support the role of the phonological loop in language learning is extensive (e.g. Baddeley et al., 1998; Ben-Yahaduh and Fiez, 2007; Ellis, 2001). The phonological loop has been implicated in the acquisition of *new* words in *children*, and does not reflect the knowledge that a child already has. Baddeley et al. (1998, p. 159, Table 1) report that in partial correlations for 3 year-olds, non-word repetition is more strongly correlated with vocabulary measures than digit span (r=0.31 vs. r=0.16 (ns), whereas for 8 year-olds neither span correlates (r=0.22 (ns) vs. r=0.23 (ns)). In the data they report on for 13 year olds, simple digit span is related to vocabulary measures (r= .46, p = .05). One point to make here is that the values of r are not very high, e.g. r=0.46, which means that the memory test explains only a limited amount of the variance. (Of course, no matter what the value of r is, the test has to be statistically significant.) In addition, these 'now you see it, now you don't' effects of different measures of PSM in L1 learning are, for some reason unclear to us, have *not* been given enough attention in L2 reviews of this literature until recently (but see Cheung, 1996; Gathercole, 2006; and Pappagno and Vallar, 1995). Baddeley et al. (1998, p. 167; Baddeley, 1999) also discuss research on *adults* which supports a role for the phonological loop in learning new words; however, this construct has not been implicated in studies of sentence processing or in the acquisition of complex morpho-syntax. Indeed, in the literature on specific language impairment (SLI), even the role of phonological storage as measured by non-word repetition has been called into question. Many of the same issues arise when considering individual differences in L2 development and should be considered in future work. (See commentaries on Gathercole (2006) that follow the lead article.) Before going into the role of PSM in L2 learning further, we turn briefly to reading span and working memory.

3.2 Reading Span and Working Memory

The Daneman and Carpenter (1980) working memory measure (RSM) is the foundation of a large literature in the research into the psychology of reading and comprehension for adults (see Conway et al. 2005). As far as we are aware, RSM measures have not been used to track first language *development* in children, probably because the task would be far too demanding, and because very young children cannot read (Ben-Yehudah and Fiez, 2007). Since the introduction of the test in 1980, Just, Carpenter and colleagues (Just et al., 1996) have developed the Constrained Capacity Model to explain individual differences in reading comprehension, speed and accuracy in resolving

ambiguous sentences (King and Just, 1991; MacDonald et al., 1992). The model also relates to differences in scores on standardized tests such as the American Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The SAT is a test in the United States that assesses academic preparedness for university study (e.g. Daneman and Hannon, 2001). Their findings suggest that the higher one's RSM the better the scores on these tests. Since non-literate and low-literate learners obviously cannot deal with such tests, we do not discuss them further here.

4 Method

We originally planned a variety of tasks for the highly educated and less educated learners. However, the only data we were able to collect allow us to make some comparisons on individual differences in the non-word repetition task and proficiency in English as a second language. We therefore report only on those items for which we have data.

4.1 Participants

Participants were paid $40 to participate in two sessions of about one hour. We tested 20 native speakers of Spanish who were in advanced degree programs or had completed at least a bachelor's level education. The educated learners were recruited from graduate students studying at the universities in Pittsburgh, were relatively easy to contact and were willing complete all parts of the study. Their biographical data are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. More Educated Participants, n=20

Participant #	Origin	Age	L1	Degree
1	Peru	30	Spanish	MA
2	Peru	52	Spanish	BA
3	Chile	28	Spanish	BA
4	Colombia	27	Spanish	PHD
5	Colombia	40	Spanish	MA
6	Honduras	46	Spanish	PHD
7	Peru	44	Spanish	MBA
8	Colombia	28	Spanish	PHD
9	Colombia	57	Spanish	MA
10	Colombia	67	Spanish	BA
11	Peru	31	Spanish	MA
31	Colombia	37	Spanish	BA
32	Chile	26	Spanish	BA
33	Venezuala	28	Spanish	MA
34	Colombia	28	Spanish	PHD
35	Venezuela	34	Spanish	MA
36	Honduras	38	Spanish	MA
37	Colombia	27	Spanish	MA
38	Venezuela	35	Spanish	MA
39	Colombia	30	Spanish	BA
Mean		36.65		
STD		11.37		

Attempts to recruit less-educated participants were more complex than simple recruiting on campus. The less-educated participants were sought out initially through personal contacts and through flyers distributed in restaurants in the city of Pittsburgh. In spite of numerous meetings, arrangements to meet, and phone calls, these attempts

were not successful, due in part to a crack down on undocumented immigrants in Pennsylvania. This fact is important for researchers to know when planning research with this population. We therefore turned to rural Ohio, where the possibility of recruiting informants was brought to our attention. A total of 16 participants agreed to participate in the study. Based on our screening criteria, including the requirement of some schooling in the home country, we eliminated two participants. Another two participants did not come to the second session owing to changes in work schedules. Their biographical data are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Less-educated Participants, n= 12 (out of 16 contacted).

Participant #	Origin	Age	Literacy In Spanish	School	L1	Years in USA
62	Mexico	40	Yes +	9	Spanish	16
63	Mexico	37	Yes -	7?	Spanish	25
65	Guatemala	24	No	5?	Dialect	1
66	Guatemala	31	Yes -	NA	Kanjobal	5
67	Guatemala	18	Yes -	2	Akateko	0+
68	Mexico	42	Yes +	9	Spanish	5
93	Guatemala	31	Yes +	4	Spanish	5
94	Guatemala	46	No	1	Kanjobal	1
95	Guatemala	NA	No	-	Kanjobal	3
96	Guatemala	23	Yes -	7	Ixil	0+
97	Guatemala	44	No	-	Ixil	1
98	Ecuador	41	Yes +	6	Spanish	4
Mean		**34.2**				
STD		**9.47**				

The most disconcerting 'discovery', as can be immediately observed from Table 2, was that not all the participants were, in fact, L1 Spanish speakers. Several of the participants spoke languages indigenous to Mexico and Guatemala in addition to some limited Spanish.

4.2 Measures

The participants completed the following tests and questionnaires.

4.2.1 Working memory test

The test of phonological short-term memory was part of the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) (Wagner et al., 1999). This test has been normed over 1600 individuals from ages 5-24 in 30 US states, and has a test-re-test reliability of over 0.80. The CTOPP is designed to measure the capacity to store segments and their phonological detail; it predicts the ability to acquire new words. The phonological memory part of the battery contains three practice items, and 18 non-words from 1-6 syllables. Notice that the number of segments to be remembered is somewhat similar to a lexical list task. Example words to be repeated, transliterated here, are 'jup', 'bajli**doudge**', 'wu**lan**awup' (bold face marks stress). The non-words are spoken by a female speaker. It is a non-word span task, which for the Spanish-speaking participants also contains segments such as the voiced palatal affricate that do not occur in Spanish. Participants listen to a recording of the 'words' and are asked to repeat them during a five second interval that occurs between each trial. Participants' data were recorded on a DAT recorder and graded by three separate graders.

The CTOPP manual instructs raters to score the test as follows: 0 is given for any repetition that contained a segment that was either omitted, added, scrambled, or if the syllable stress was changed. Therefore, in the first instance, the original scoring

schema, based only on omission, substitution or switching, was used. However, if one applies 'strict' criteria to the repetition, such as if the segments were voiced or not, or whether the manner of articulation correct or not, e.g. /r/ vs. /l/, a different accuracy score is reached.

4.2.2 Proficiency tests

The proficiency test that was used was an old version of the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (Corrigan et al., 1978). This test is publicly available and reliable. Both groups were given the vocabulary, grammar, and reading sections, slightly edited for length and to remove some archaic vocabulary. The total possible score was 78. Obviously, it was also anticipated that this test would be comprehensible by both groups.

4.2.3 Native language literacy

Tarone and colleagues have reported on the role of literacy in oral proficiency development in a series of papers (Bigelow et al. 2006; Tarone and Bigelow, 2005). Briefly, they find that literacy increases uptake in oral recast tasks and conclude that literacy may facilitate L2 acquisition. Following their advice, for the less-educated learners we used a native language literacy screening device. We adapted the original Spanish language version of the University of the State of New York and New York State Education Department questionnaire. In this screening, participants answer the first three pages of questions by themselves (or with assistance if they cannot). Then they read short texts, and finally, for the participants who were able to answer the questionnaire on their own, they are asked to write a text similar to the ones that they read in a sort of 'parallel writing' task.

5 Results

5.1 Participant recruitment

As our less-educated learners came from all three categories mentioned at the start of this chapter (illiterate, low literate and less-educated) no measures that required full literacy in the L2 were possible. We were only able to collect data on the CTOPP and the Michigan proficiency instrument and some L1 literacy data.

5.2 Results of working memory and proficiency tests.

Descriptive statistics of the two groups' scores on the CTOPP and the Michigan are provided in Table 3. Scores from the two closest raters of the three were selected, with inter-rater reliability being r=0.89 for those two raters only. Since the highly educated learners were rated first, and we found a reliable correlation between proficiency and the strict score on the CTOPP, we only used the standard scoring for CTOPP for the less educated learners. This is because we were interested principally in the memory aspect, and not in sub-segmental features (voicing, manner of articulation) of phonemes.

Table 3. Michigan Scores and CTOPP scores.

Group	N	Michigan Mean(SD)	Mich. Range	CTOPP Original Mean(SD)	CTOPP Range	CTOPP strict Mean(SD)	CTOPP strict Range
Highly Educated	20	67.75 (9.24)	36 (41-77)	13.93 (2.15)	8.5 (9-17.5)	7.5 (3.03)	11.5 (2-13.5)
Less Educated	12	15.5 (8.42)	26 (6-32)	9.79 (1.41)	4 (8-12)	----------	---------

For the less-educated group, 8 out of 12 learners scored 9 points or above on the CTOPP, whereas the educated group differed with only 4 out of 20 scoring below 12. The relationship between the Michigan scores and the CTOPP was explored through correlation. These correlations are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. Highly Educated Learners: Correlations between Michigan Scores and CTOPP

	Michigan	CTOPP Original	CTOPP Strict
Michigan Placement	---		
CTOPP Orginal	0.26 p=.27	-----	
CTOPP Strict	0.60 p=.005	0.74 p=.0001	-----

Table 5. Less-educated Learners: Correlations between Michigan Scores and CTOPP

	Michigan	CTOPP Original
Michigan Placement	---	
CTOPP Orginal	.27 p=.39	-----

Statistically, within the two groups, the relationship of scores on the CTOPP Original scoring to Michigan proficiency was weak and unreliable. Specifically, for the highly educated learners, the CTOPP original score's correlation with proficiency was weak and not significant, r=0.26, p=0.27. That is, if the scoring is based only on omission, substitution or switching. However, if one applies 'strict' criteria to the repetition, such as whether the segments were voiced or not, or whether the manner of articulation was correct, e.g. /r/ vs. /l/, then the correlation of CTOPP and proficiency for the advanced learners is moderately strong and reliable, r=.0.60, p≤.005. For the less-educated learners, the correlation was r=0.27, and not significant p= 0.39. We therefore kept to the original scoring method for our next exploration of the data.

A reliable difference exists between the scores on the CTOPP by the less-educated group and the highly educated group, t(1,30) = 5.93, p ≤. 0001. Naturally, the proficiency is also different, because the less-educated learners performed at floor and many did not even come close to finishing the test. (Obviously, a better test of proficiency for the low level learners needs to be found.) As a *purely speculative* move, given the reliable difference in the CTOPP results, we combined the two group's scores correlated performance on the CTOPP with ESL proficiency, using the ESL proficiency scores as a 'surrogate' measure for literacy as the 'predictor' variable. We found a positive correlation, correlation, r=0.75, (df, 32), p= 0.0001. This relationship is linear, as illustrated in Figure 2, but as pointed out by an outside reviewer, it is possible that there are two data clouds that make this correlation spurious. We discuss this result further in section 6.

Erratum

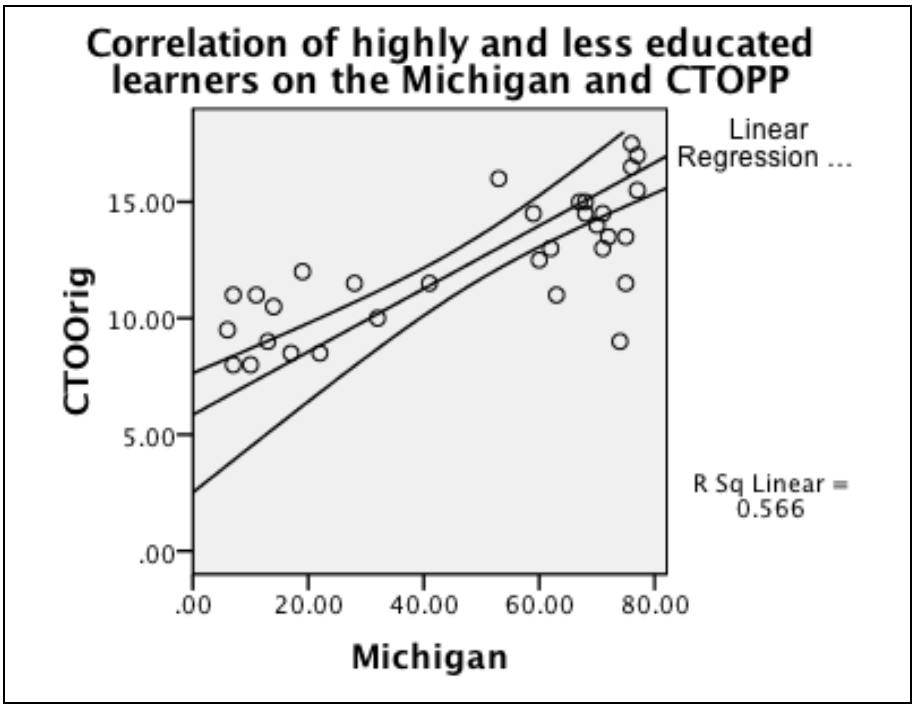

Figure 2. Scatter plot of Michigan and CTOPP scores.

5.3 Literacy screening assessment

Figures 3 through 5 show some writing samples collected as part of this screening. Recall that the task was to write a text parallel to one they had read. The errors made are high lighted by circles and a rectangle. It is not clear how these samples might differ from samples from other, but similar, socio-economic status individuals in their countries of origin. More data need to be collected for comparison purposes.

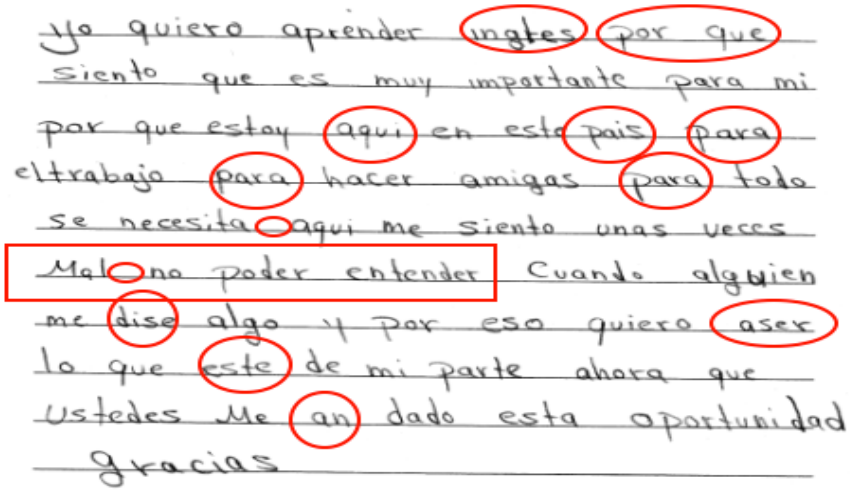

Figure 3. Participant 62, CTOPP Score 13, Proficiency score 13, L1 Spanish, residing in the USA for 16 years.

Participant 62's errors are remarkable in that this person was among the most active in the group, could drive a car, and had been in the US for a long time. It is possible that the errors derive from lack of print exposure, due possibly to a low level of literacy. If you cannot read well, you will not be heavily exposed to print. The evidence for this is

the lack of accent marks in very high frequency words: país 'country', aquí 'here', ingles 'English', esté 'be' -preterite verb. Many words are misspelled, e.g., *dise* for correct "dice" 'say', *aser* for "hacer" 'make', *an* for "han" 'have'-aux. There is also a lack of punctuation, e.g. *se necesita. Aquí me siento* ....'. In addition, grammatically, this person has problems with the arguments of prepositions: ' ... *en este país para el trabajo* ....' 'in this country in order to work', instead of the correct infinitival complement, which is required by the preposition 'para': *en este país para trabajar*'.

From a formal writing point of view, this sample contains a run-on sentence, and around the 3rd line, it starts to get difficult to follow. The translation of the following segment would be broken up into 2 sentences in literate speech, but it is hard to tell exactly where, and even so is lacking somewhat in cohesion:

> *estoy en este pais (*I am in this country*) para el trabajo (*for work*) para hacer amigas (*to make friends*) para todo se necesita aqui (*for everything you need here*) me siento unas veces mal (*I feel sometimes bad*) no poder entender (*not being able to understand*) cuando alguien me dise algo (*when someone says something to me*).*

The writing of participant 63 in Figure 4 comes from a person who has resided in the USA for 25 years. In spite of this time, the level of English is very low. It is also clear from the L1 writing sample that Spanish also poses problems.

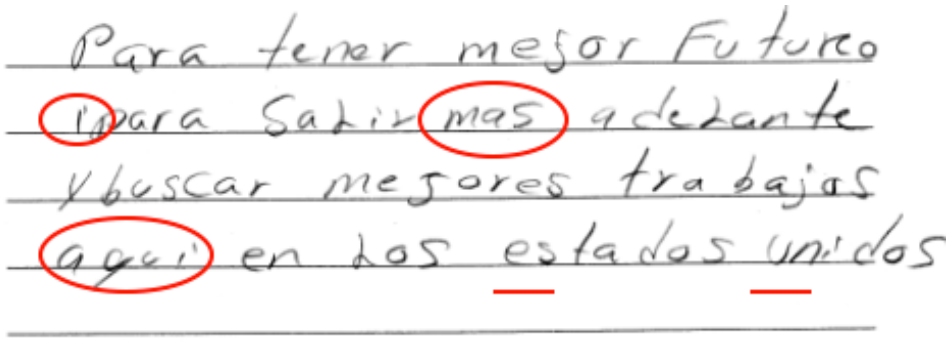

Figure 4. Participant 63, CTOPP score 8, Proficiency score 10, L1 Spanish

Errors that may derive from a lack of print exposure include the conjunction "y" as "i" 'and'. In addition, it has been attached to the preposition *para* 'for' to form a single grapheme "ipara" when they should be separated as in "y para". There is also a lack of accent marks: *mas* instead of the correct *más* 'more', *aqui* instead of *aquí* 'here' which are both extremely frequent lexical items. Another interesting feature is the expression *salir adelante* 'go out', which is a formulaic expression that does not take an intensifier. Hence, it is odd to say *salir más adelante*. (One possibility that we cannot exclude for participants 62 and 63 is that they are not, in fact, *native* speakers of Spanish, even though they said they were.)

Figure 5 contains data from participant 66. There are orthographic mistakes in high frequency verbs like *hablar* 'to speak', without the "h" which is silent in Spanish.

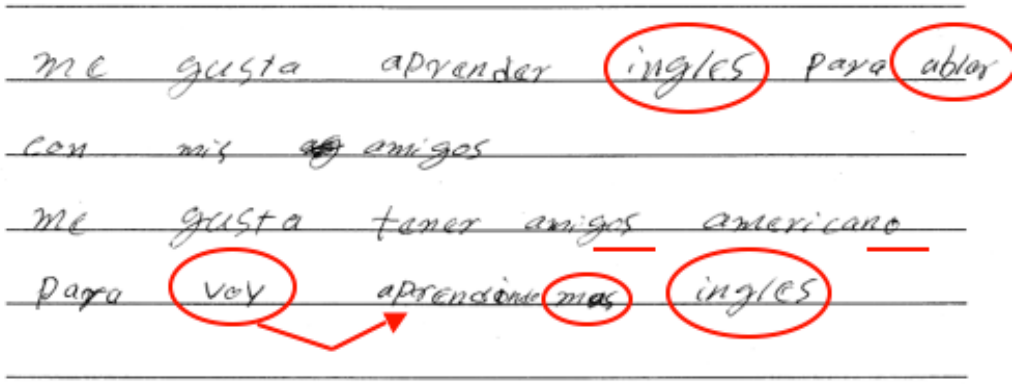

Figure 5. Participant 66. CTOPP Score 10, Proficiency 32, L1 Kanjobal, length of residence 5 years

Second, agreement errors between noun and adjectives are evident: amigos americano_ (missing plural inflection on the adjective). There is also a lack of accent marks in words such as inglés 'English' and más 'more', but such errors may be common even among higher level SES speakers. Other grammatical errors include those in the verb conjugation paradigm, e.g., aprendindo instead of the correct aprendiendo 'learn'. Finally, there is an ungrammatical periphrastic construction with the verb ir 'to go': voy aprendindo instead of ir aprendiendo. The infinitive should be used instead.

To sum up, no matter the length of residence in the US or the L1, the writing samples from the less-educated group reveal the following characteristics. First, possibly due to lack of print exposure, there are no accent marks, no punctuation and there are frequent misspellings. Moreover, even among the Spanish L1 participants 62 and 63, we find perseveration, lack of embedding (recursion), presumably fossilized forms, and ungrammatical forms that show lack of control of agreement. The point is that the L1 literacy skills of the learners is low, and is reflected in their ability to write in that language, and possibly their ability to perform the non-word repetition task. Given these characteristics of L1 literacy achievement, it is not surprising that L2 proficiency is hard to attain.

6 Discussion

6.1 Participant recruitment

Participant recruitment was a major challenge for this study, and was not anticipated at the outset. The original goal was to recruit participants who had had some primary to secondary education and compare them to highly literate learners. Such a population is very hard to find in western Pennsylvania. It is possible that researchers may have more success in other areas of the USA where there are higher numbers of immigrants.

One of the issues that we encountered in rural Ohio was that the native language of the participants was not in fact the Spanish we had anticipated. It was probably due to our own ignorance of this labor pool that led to this surprise, and is certainly a cautionary tale. Table 6 provides some background on these languages, which have significant numbers of speakers and are morpho-syntactically very different from Spanish. Thus, for (naïve) US researchers, it is a reminder that an immigrant is from Latin America does not guarantee that that person knows Spanish (or Portuguese) or are literate in their L1.

Table 6. Profile of Indigenous Languages (All Mayan).[3]

Language	Speakers	Literacy
Akateko VOS Word order	48,500 speakers in Guatemala 10,100 in Mexico, many refugees.	5-10% of the population 20% literate in Spanish
Kanjobal (Q'anjob'al) VSO Word Order	77,700 speakers in Guatemala	5-10% of the population 26% literate in Spanish
Ixil VOS word order	35,000 of Nebal dialect 18,000 of Chajul dialect Guatemala	10-30% of the population 10-30% literate in Spanish

On a social note, the numbers of Guatemalan indigenous people in the USA is due in part to civil violence in that country; 10,000 Akateko speakers (also known as 'western Kanjobal') are refugees in Mexico. The issue of 'Mexican' immigrants in the US media does not report on the characteristics of these migrant workers, nor do the media consider individuals' reasons for so-called 'economic' migration. In eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania, it does appear that illiterate and low-literate migrants from Latin America are the norm. Perhaps low-educated people are more likely to survive in their home country or gravitate to larger urban centers in the US, where they can find better paying jobs. However, these comments are pure speculation at this point.

It is hard to say how many of the estimated twelve million undocumented immigrants currently in the USA are, in fact, members of indigenous groups in their home countries who are illiterate in their first language and only barely competent in their second language, Spanish. Citing census data, Tarone and Bigelow (2005) suggest that one third of 15-17 year old US immigrants are not literate in Spanish, so the levels among adults can only be guessed at. However, we can tentatively say that without (L1) literacy, oral proficiency in the L2 will be difficult to achieve because learners lack the ability to segment the new language and thus learn it. It would therefore seem imperative to address literacy in immigrant populations as early as possible if individuals are going to be able to crack the segmental code of the new language.

6.2 Non-word repetition and Michigan proficiency

We found that the method of scoring made an important difference with the CTOPP. The instructions for scoring this test make no reference to sub-phonemic features, but other work in SLA does, in fact, appear to score on phonological features. If a strict method is used for then the advanced learners, scores and proficiency correlate. However, it seems to us that this method of scoring transforms the CTOPP from a test of correct and full *order* of item/segments into a proficiency test of pronunciation. Given exposure to an L2, the advanced group can be more phonetically accurate. However, the test should reflect items' storage capacity and not sub-segmental phonological features. We do not know how many of the correlations that have been found with non-word repetition are of this nature, i.e. based on strict scoring of voicing and manner of articulation. If this is to be done, then researchers will need to be precise about how tests are scored and which phonetic features count as errors. For example, with /p, t, k/ in English, will scores that do not have [+SG] (aspiration) in syllable initial position be scored as wrong? It is not clear to us that requiring accuracy in phonological features is part of a memory test if, as Pappagno and Vallar (1995) suggest, all PSM tests, whether word, or digit, or non-word, assess the same underlying construct. (However, see Jefferies et al. 2004 and Lezak et al. 2004 for other opinions.)

[3] Source: http://www.ethnologue.com/ Retrieved July 21, 2008.

Clearly, if less-educated learners have a lower level of phonemic awareness because of their low level of literacy, they will do less well on tests such as CTOPP because they cannot track and store segments in PSM. It may be that literacy enables the high level learners to do the test better. Hence, it may be that literacy is related to ability on the phonological working memory test in ways that have not been suggested in earlier literature. In other words, frequency and intensity of exposure to text may enhance phonological STM. (See also Gathercole, 2006 and commentaries on that paper.) This is exactly opposite of the directionality of influence which is assumed in much of the SLA literature. This is a suggestion only, and it may not, in fact, be supported with more careful research because the data display in Figure 2 suggest two separate populations, rather than a gradual increase in literacy and working memory. It should also be noted of course that correlations are not an indicator of prediction or directionality of causation.

However, this result *does* recall work cited in Juffs (2006) and Tarone and Bigelow (2005), e.g. Petersson et al. (2000) and Kosmiris et al. (2004). It confirms some general conclusions noted by Tarone and Bigelow (2005, p. 84) on the role of literacy: "the acquisition of grapheme-phoneme correspondences in learning to read an alphabetic script, and also the acquisition of the abstract concept 'word' acquired in the process of learning to read, both provide important cognitive tools for the processing of oral language." Our data hint at the fact that *low* levels of literacy, and not just *no* literacy at all, will also affect the ability to carry out a cognitive task at the level of the segment, and thus the ability to learn a second language. These data are also consistent with remarks in Bigelow et al. (2006).

To sum up, the CTOPP does not seem to be explaining variability *within* the less-educated or the highly educated learners, but it is possible that literacy of the higher group (as measured by their ESL scores) seems to be related performance on the PSM test, which requires an ability to recognize segments.

6.3 General discussion

The attempt to carry out some working memory research with less-educated learners in our region of the USA can not be described as successful. However, some hints that literacy provides access to segmental analysis comes through in the data, where we find that the highly literate learners do better on the PSM test, even though within the groups it is not related to L2 proficiency unless scored at a very fine grain of phonetic detail. A more important question concerns the direction of the relationship between working memory and literacy. Given that illiterates are obviously able to learn their first language, it cannot be that they lack the PSM to segment their L1 as young children. Hence, one might speculate that failure on a test of PSM by an adult would suggest that a neural change occurs which knocks out the ability to segment among illiterates and leads to failure in SLA. The advantage that literacy provides in SLA is that it overcomes a possible loss of ability in adulthood to parse the soundstream at the phonological level of segment, thus providing access to phonemic parsing necessary for language acquisition. Obviously, literacy is a conscious process. These results echo some comments made by DeKeyser (2000), who suggests that it is implicit learning ability that disappears with the critical period. We might speculate further here and suggest more specifically that the ability to process implicitly at the level of the phonological segment is what is lost. Hence, we agree with Tarone and Bigelow (2005) that the data from low literate learners are key for a fully developed theory of second language acquisition.

We also saw that low proficiency in English L2 was reflected in the low level of literacy in the L1. Participants 62 and 63, who had both been in the US over ten years at the time of testing, struggled to spell and write Spanish. They had also failed to learn English despite their participation in organized religion and ability to use some set

phrases. Comparative data from speakers in the home countries of the participants also needs to be collected.

7 Conclusion

This report constitutes some notes and speculative ideas based on a limited set of data and the existing literature. At best, it is a pilot study. Overall, we found that carrying out research on less-educated speakers in our region of the United States presents several challenges. It should be acknowledged that some of these challenges are due to our own lack of knowledge of this population, but their immigration status also presents severe problems for sampling and acquiring such knowledge without a long-term ethnographic study. With very good reason, potential participants are afraid of any official contact that could lead to deportation and the resultant break-up of families.

Second, differences in phonological working memory (measured as capacity to store segments) are not related to proficiency for the advanced speakers. (However, see Juffs and Rodríguez (2006) for discussion of Reading Span and proficiency.) This may be because the PSM tests phonological segmentation ability and language growth at very early stages. The advanced learners have passed beyond this stage. However, the non-word task was not related to the Michigan scores, possibly due to a restricted range of their scores in this test.

As noted, the less-educated speakers' scores do not reflect the amount of L2 exposure, and hence non-word repetition could be a reliable guide to language-independent (phonological) working memory in these populations. However, low-educated/illiterate learners performed poorly in the non-word repetition task when compared to highly educated learners. Although they are able to perform the task, the interaction with the 'testing' event and the equipment almost certainly means that the results would need to be normed for this population separately.

We feel that claims about the predictive nature of non-word repetition tasks for successful second language acquisition in general must treated with caution due to problems with the stimuli and the scoring procedures used in most studies. Recall that the scoring may be based on the number of segments remembered, i.e. it is a string memory test and not necessary a true span test given the important recent reviews of Lezak et al. (2004). Second language researchers need to distinguish clearly between a memory test and a test of phonological accuracy in voicing, place and manner of articulation, which is a proficiency test to some extent. SLA researchers in general should reconsider these issues and revisit some of the early literature on PSM to check how the non-word repetition tasks are being scored. As Gathercole (2006) and commentaries reveal, and the comments of an anonymous reviewer also suggest, there are many issues which the second language acquisition community need to be aware of before carrying out further research with span tests.

Finally, it is worth repeating our speculation that literacy may be the key to gaining oral language proficiency in a second language for less educated learners. The experience of participants 62 and 63 in their many years of 'immersion' in the USA may have been different if they had had greater literacy skills in their L1. We might speculate that text provides a parsing device that assists in noticing how the L2 sound stream might be broken up and analyzed for acquisition, compensating for the loss of implicit learning ability.

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WHAT MAKES THE ILLITERATE LANGUAGE LEARNING GENIUS?

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1 Introduction

At the 2006 LESLLA conference in Richmond, Virginia, we presented some preliminary results of the data we collected on illiterate adult second language learners, focussing on the role of working memory in the more or less successful acquisition of second language (L2) and literacy skills in the LESLLA population (Kurvers & van de Craats, 2007). More specifically, we wanted to compare the adult data with those of primary school children and investigate whether the individual differences among adults in success at learning Dutch as a second language might be attributable to differences in working memory (WM) capacity. We had two good reasons for trying to find out more about this. First, the phonological loop, one of the main components of WM (see Juffs & Rodríguez, this volume) had been considered to be important in processing and analysing new verbal information. Therefore, WM capacity might be expected to influence L2 learning of low-educated adults as well as of children (Baddeley, 1999, 2003; Baddeley, Gathercole & Papagno 1998; Baddeley & Hitch, 1974; Ellis, 2001), and more specifically to play a role in the initial stages of reading in L2 (Baddeley & Gathercole, 1992; Carr Payne & Holzman, 1983; Goswami, Ziegler, Dalton, & Schneider; 2001). Secondly, we still did not know whether the working memory systems of low-educated second language and literacy learners are similar to those of educated literate second language learners and how their capacity can be measured (Juffs, 2006).

The results, however, not only pointed to a clear picture of differences in WM capacity of different groups of adult L2 learners compared to children and of the relationship between differences in WM capacity and differences in both second language and reading skills, but also to some intriguing but contradictory results that could not be explained by the data we had been analysing thus far. In short, we were left with some inconclusive results. Therefore, we wanted to dig further into the data to find out more about the participants who seemed to have done extremely well in learning Dutch as an L2 in comparison with other adults with similar backgrounds who did not seem to show much progress in L2 proficiency and literacy skills. If working memory capacity does not tell the whole story, then what constitutes the illiterate language learning genius?

In this contribution, we first summarize the main outcomes of the previous study (Section 2), and then look for candidate predictors of the illiterate language learning genius by a comparison of two groups of participants matched on background variables (Section 3) and we take a closer look at some individuals who did very well or very badly in L2 learning (Section 4). Section 5 closes with discussion and conclusions.

2 Memory, Second Language Reading, and Vocabulary: A Summary

This section presents a brief summary of the study that was described extensively elsewhere (Kurvers & van de Craats, 2007), to give the necessary background for the new data and analyses in Section 3.

2.1 Design of the study

The participants in our study were 57 adult L2 learners, learning Dutch in adult education centres, between 18 and 61 years old, without any elementary schooling in

their home country (seven male, 50 female, 36 from Morocco, seven from Turkey and 17 from a variety of other language backgrounds), and 116 primary school children (44 Turkish, 34 Moroccan and 38 from a variety of minority groups) ranging from 4 to 12 years old. The children were divided according to their grade in (pre)school, the adults according to their literacy level in combination with their general proficiency level as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) (Council of Europe, 2001). As for the adults, 25 had reached Level A, a very basic level of literacy, and an L2 proficiency level below A1 (the lowest level of CEF), 13 had reached Level B for literacy, but an L2 proficiency level below A1, eleven had reached Level C in literacy and only eight adults had reached level A2.[1] For this study, two types of span tests were used: a digit span task (viz. the subtest of the WISC-R), and a non-word repetition task. The non-word repetition task (NRT) used here was developed by Gerrits (De Bree, Wilsenach & Gerrits, 2004), based on Dollaghan & Campbell (1998). The stimuli were 24 pseudo-words, ranging in syllable length from two (*keefuus*) to six (*peetaaneisookoonief*). These words did not contain any consonant clusters. The standard score of the NRT is the percentage of correctly pronounced phonemes. Because it is well known that adults have serious problems in acquiring native-like phonological skills, we doubted whether this measure would be adequate for assessing their WM capacity. Therefore, we calculated another score as well (NRT span score), more comparable to the digit span score (i.e., how many syllables could be repeated correctly). For this last measure, small deviations in the pronunciation of phonemes were disregarded, e.g. *keefienuu* pronounced as *keefienoe* was accepted as a correct repetition of a three-syllable word (as this is a well-known pronunciation error for many learners of Dutch).

In order to look for evidence of a potential relationship between WM capacity and L2 vocabulary learning on the one hand and learning to read on the other, an L2 vocabulary test and a word reading task for decoding fluency were administered. To assess receptive vocabulary, a subtest of the TAK ('Language Test for All Children', Verhoeven & Vermeer, 2002) was used. This subtest takes the form of a picture selection task and consists of four pictures on each page. The participant is asked to point to the correct picture when asked questions (e.g., where is the bike? where do you see reading?). The lexical items are all frequent Dutch words and belong to the domain of daily life and thus are of relevance to adults as well. As a word reading task, the first card of the DMT (Three Minute Test) was used. Items on the first card are monosyllabic words without consonant clusters. (For more details, see Kurvers & van de Craats, 2007.) The reading score is the number of correctly read words. Small and frequent deviations in the pronunciation of typical Dutch vowels were not counted as reading errors.

2.2 Results

For all participants, the intercorrelations between the three measures of WM were high and significant ($p<.01$). The highest correlation was between the two NRT scores, the next highest between the digit span score and the percentage of correct phonemes on the NRT and the lowest between the two span scores. This pattern was common for children and adults. These results are comparable to those reported in Gathercole & Baddeley (1991) and Papagno & Vallar (1995:104) who suggest that both measures tap the same underlying construct, namely phonological working memory, unlike Snowling, Chiat & Hulme (1991), who claim that a non-word repetition task measures both WM capacity and phonological processing, and De Bree *et al.* (2004), who found that a low score on the NRT phoneme score did not predict a low score on the digit span task (in a population with a risk of dyslexia).

[1] See also Appendix 1 for a schematic overview of the proficiency levels for literacy and second language of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

All WM scores were higher for the children than for the adults, although the difference was only significant for the digit span scores (t=2.71, p<.01), but not for the two NRT scores, probably because children work intensively with the Dutch digits on daily basis, whereas illiterate adults do not.

However, when we compared the WM scores of the adults at several L2 levels, and when we related WM score to vocabulary size, we came up with results that at first seemed to contradict each other, as can be seen from Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Group scores for below or above A1 proficiency level in L2.

	Groups	N	Mean	SD	T-value
Forward DST	Below A1	38	3.32	1.16	-2.74**
	A1 / A2	19	4.40	1.52	
NRT phoneme score	Below A1	38	80.71	9.73	-3.08**
(% correct phonemes)	A1 / A2	19	88.22	6.60	
NRT span score	Below A1	38	9.03	3.84	-4.80**
	A1 / A2	19	14.58	4.58	
Vocabulary	Below A1	38	19.03	14.31	-4.72**
	A1 / A2	19	48.58	15.65	
Word Reading	Below A1	38	18.67	13.91	-4.16**
	A1 / A2	19	35.95	13.02	

** p<0.01 * p<0.05

As can be inferred from Table 1, the two groups differ significantly on all working memory scores, with the above average students outperforming the average students. In fact, this information contradicts the absence of correlations with vocabulary size in Table 2, since here the higher WM scores go together with higher proficiency levels in Dutch. The two groups also differed significantly in L2 vocabulary size and L2 word reading level, with the A1/A2 group having much higher scores on both measures.

This seemed to indicate positive correlations between WM scores and L2 vocabulary, comparable to what was found in studies with children. Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2: Correlations between WM-scores and estimated vocabulary size

		Estimated vocabulary size
Children (N=116)	Forward DST	.570**
	% of correct phonemes NRT	.349**
	NRT span score	.363**
Adults (N=57)	Forward DST	.085
	% of correct phonemes NRT	.041
	NRT span score	.195

** p< .01 * p<.05

As shown in Table 2, for the children, all WM correlations with vocabulary are positive and significant, although not very high for the non-word repetition scores. However, when we focused on the adult learners in our sample, none of the working memory measures in Table 2 correlated significantly with L2 vocabulary size. Quite the contrary: two of the correlations are close to zero. For the L2 word reading scores of the adults, two of the WM scores did not correlate significantly (digit span and % correct phonemes), while only the NRT-span score correlated significantly with the L2 reading score (r=.395, p<.05).

We had to conclude that although the higher level L2 groups had significantly higher WM scores and also significantly higher scores on both L2 vocabulary and L2 word reading scores, the correlations between WM scores and L2 vocabulary and

reading scores were low in most cases and not significant (for more details, see Kurvers & van de Craats, 2007).

To determine the source of these contradictory results, we began by taking a closer look at the groups that consisted of L2 learners who differed – also within groups – in many respects, such as years of residence, months of L2 lessons, age, country of origin, contact with native Dutch speakers and number of children. We then selected pairs of L2 learners who clearly differed in proficiency level of Dutch, but not in background variables.

3 Comparison of matched groups

We started again with the two groups of adults as described in Section 1. The first group had literacy levels A or B and an L2 proficiency level below A1 in terms of the Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2001) and a second group of individuals had a proficiency level above average (C/A1 or A2). See Appendix I.

From this group of individuals, we formed pairs of individuals, one from each group (below average and above average), who were matched on the following variables:

- months of L2 instruction
- age
- years of residence in the Netherlands
- having children[2]
- native language.

We used the variables in this order, starting with individuals in both groups that had had the same amount of L2 instruction time, were roughly of the same age, had been in the Netherlands for about the same number of years, had both either children of primary school age or no children, and had the same language background. None of these subjects had received any education in the country of origin.

Adopting this procedure, we were able to form 12 pairs with similar backgrounds but different levels of L2 proficiency. Table 3 presents the main background variables of the two groups. As can be seen in Table 3, the two matched groups do not differ regarding length of residence in the Netherlands, age and average period of having attended L2 lessons. Eight of the subjects came from Morocco and 16 from various countries such as Somalia or Afghanistan. In eight pairs, both participants had children, in two pairs neither participant had children, and two pairs were mixed in this respect.

Table 3: Background data of the matched groups: duration of L2 lessons, age and length of residence.

	Group	N	Mean	sd	T
Duration of L2 lessons†	Average	12	3.08	1.16	-0.37
	Above Average	12	3.25	1.05	
Age	Average	12	36.08	12.05	0.51
	Above Average	12	33.75	10.57	
Length of residence	Average	12	9.08	8.27	0.12
	Above Average	12	8.71	6.82	

†=Scale from 1 to 5 (<6 months, 6-12 months, 1-2 years, 2-5 years, >5 years)

For this group of 24 individuals, the intercorrelations (Pearson) between the three WM measures were .37 for digit span and NRT phoneme score, .26 for digit span and NRT span score and .62 for NRT phoneme score and NRT span score. Only the last correlation was significant ($p<0.01$). Table 4 presents the differences between the two groups for the WM measures and the scores on L2 vocabulary and word reading.

[2] Having young children attending school is considered a variable that guarantees (much) contact with the target language.

Table 4: Scores of the matched pairs groups on WM measures, L2 vocabulary and L2 reading

	Group	N	Mean	Sd	T	Cohen's D
Digit span	Average	12	4.08	1.16	-0.97	0.40
	Above Average	12	4.67	1.73		
NRT phoneme	Average	12	86.07	3.94	-1.54	0.63
	Above Average	12	89.54	6.74		
NRT span score	Average	12	11.00	5.00	-2.06*	0.73
	Above Average	12	14.83	5.49		
Vocabulary	Average	12	30.58	14.69	-2.63*	1.07
	Above Average	12	47.33	16.48		
Word Reading	Average	12	17.80	12.09	-2.89**	1.23
	Above Average	12	32.92	12.49		
L2 level	Average	12	1.50	0.52	-9.05**	3.69
	Above Average	12	3.42	0.52		

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

The difference in level of L2 proficiency (T=9.95, p<0.01) between the two groups was the selection criterion but it is striking that the average proficiency level of the first group is about two levels lower (on a five point scale) than that of the above average group. On all WM measures, the scores of the above average group are higher, but the difference only reaches significance for the NRT-span score (the number of syllables that can be correctly repeated). Because the t-values are calculated for small group numbers, the effect sizes (Cohen's D) might be more telling here. Except for the forward digit span with a medium effect-size (0.40), the effect sizes are high for the two non-word repetition scores and also for L2 vocabulary and L2 word-reading scores. In short, the two groups do not only differ substantially in WM measures, but also in L2 vocabulary and L2 word reading.

Table 5 presents the correlations between WM measures, vocabulary and word reading for this group of 24 participants.

Table 5: Correlations between WM measures, L2 vocabulary and L2 reading scores

	L2 Vocabulary	L2 Reading
Forward DST	-0.097	0.115
% correct phonemes NRT	-0.073	0.427*
NRT span score	0.155	0.478*

* p<0.05

None of the correlations between WM measures and L2 vocabulary are significant: The correlations are low and even negative for two of the three measures. Both measures of the non-word repetition test, however, reveal positive and significant correlations with the scores on the word reading test. These correlations are, in fact, relatively high compared to many of the correlations that have been presented in the literature (Juffs, 2006). For these 24 participants, WM capacity does not seem be a good predictor of success in L2 learning.

Before discussing these outcomes in more detail, we present some characteristics of the three most and the three least successful learners of Dutch as L2, who seemed to have fossilized or are fossilizing at a low L2 proficiency level.

4 WM Scores and Learner Characteristics

The group of most successful learners who attained proficiency level A1 or A2 for all four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing - were characterized as 'above average.' That characterization is, in fact, an understatement because it took considerable trouble to find immigrants meeting these criteria. We phoned, sent e-mails to teachers and adult education centres and put out a call for participants on several websites to second language teachers all over the country and finally found eight people meeting the criteria of level A2 and 11 of level A1. It might be the case that we missed half of the potential number of L2 literacy students who had reached this level, but even then we have to conclude that truly successful L2 learners who started as fully illiterates are really quite rare. Therefore, the question as to what the learner characteristics of these few learners are is an intriguing one. In Table 6 the scores of the three best learners are presented, ordered with respect to vocabulary scores, and in Table 7 the scores of the three best learners are presented, ordered with respect to reading scores.

Table 6: Scores on language and WM tests of the three best learners ordered with respect to the vocabulary test score

Code of participant	Vocabulary score	Reading score	Digit span	NRT phoneme score	NRT span score	L2 proficiency level
#59	77	43	5	95	21	A2
#56	71	40	4	89	16	A2
#60	68	32	2	77	8	A1

As can be seen in Table 6, learner 59 has the highest scores on the NRT phoneme score and the NRT span score, but not on the digit span score (highest score is 8). The WM scores of learner 56 are lower and the WM scores of learner 60 are extremely low. So it is only for the best learner that there seems to be a relationship between NRT scores and vocabulary size.

Table 7: Scores on language and WM tests of the three best learners ordered with respect to reading

Code of participant	Vocabulary score	Reading score	Digit span	NRT phoneme score	NRT span score	L2 proficiency level
#51	55	53	7	94	19	A2
#53	49	47	4	89	16	A2
#55	35	46	3	95	19	A2

The best readers, shown in Table 7, all have good WM scores but not the highest, except for learner 55, who has the best NRT phoneme score (together with learner 59 in Table 6). The correlation found between NRT score and reading score is reflected in the results of the three learners above.

In the same way we can consider the results of the least successful learners of the paired groups. In Table 8, the scores of the least successful learners are ordered with respect to vocabulary scores and in Table 9 with respect to reading scores.

Table 8: Scores on language and WM tests of the three least successful learners ordered with respect to the vocabulary test scores

Code of participant	Vocabulary score	Reading score	Digit span	NRT phoneme score	NRT span score	L2 proficiency level
#31	12	0	5	90	13	Literacy A
#04	13	-	5	87	12	Literacy A
#39	21	20	4	84	10	Literacy A

Table 8 shows that the digit span scores are similar to those of the best learners in Table 6 and that also the phoneme scores of these learners are not extremely poor.

Table 9: Scores on language and WM tests of the three least successful learners ordered with respect to the reading test scores

Code of participant	Vocabulary score	Reading score	Digit span	NRT phoneme score	NRT span score	L2 proficiency level
#31	12	0	5	90	13	Literacy A
#36	59	7	2	79	6	Literacy A
#17	57	9	2	82	10	Literacy B

Most striking in Table 9 is that a low reading score can go together with a fairly good score for vocabulary. Learners 36 and 17 seem to belong to the type of illiterate learners who can learn the spoken language but for whom learning to read and write is perhaps too high a target.

One might expect that the best learners are young, have much language contact, are motivated learners, have much support from home, attend intensive courses and can learn under favourable social and economic circumstances (SES), but this expectation is not confirmed, as the overview in Table 10 shows.

Table 10: Overview of characteristics of the six best learners

	Residence	Age	L2 lessons	Fem/ male	Language contact	Motivation/ home support	SES favorable
#59	20 yrs.	44	5th yr.	Fem.	Much	High/no	no
#56	8 yrs.	29	4th yr.	Fem.	Little	Normal/yes	yes
#60	23 yrs.	60	1st yr.	Fem.	Much	Normal/yes	yes
#51	5 yrs.	23	3rd yr.	Fem.	Much	High/yes	yes
#53	8 yrs.	28	4th yr.	Fem.	Much	High/no	no
#55	6 yrs.	28	2nd yr.	Male	Little	Very high/no	yes

The data shown in Table 10 suggest that length of residence, age, duration of the L2 lessons, language use and language contact do not seem to be contributing factors either: there is not a single background factor that accounts for all successful L2 learners. Not all successful learners are young, have attended L2 lessons for a long period or have much language contact. An older learner like #60 is a successful learner, but only has been attending L2 lessons for a year; in this case it is more likely that her high vocabulary score is more due to her long stay in Netherlands than to the number of L2 lessons that she attended.

Table 11 shows the same characteristics for the least successful learners. The learner who is least successful in vocabulary (#31) is also least successful in reading.

Table 11: Overview of characteristics of the five least successful learners

	Residence	Age	L2 lessons	Female/male
#31	10 yrs.	49	2nd y.	Female
#04	25 yrs.	56	1st y.	Female
#39	15 yrs.	52	1st y.	Female
#36	7 yrs.	34	5th y.	Female
#17	25 yrs.	49	5th y.	Female

The same as was concluded for the successful L2 learners can essentially be concluded about the impact of background variables for the least successful L2 learners. Not all are old, have not attended L2 lessons for a short period, or have been in the Netherlands for roughly the same length of time. When comparing Tables 6 through 11 for the most successful and the least successful learners, it can be concluded that the best results for reading are found for relatively young learners between ages 20 and 30, that the success in reading does not necessarily entail a large vocabulary and that higher NRT span scores are involved, although some of the least successful learners also have high digit and phoneme scores. The best learners have obtained these results within two to four years of L2 lessons and after five to eight years' of residence in the Netherlands. The least successful learners on average are older and have been resident in the Netherlands for much longer time (seven to 25 years). A longer stay seems to be negatively correlated with good results.

5 Conclusions and Discussion

Returning to the literature on WM and its relationship with vocabulary learning and learning to read and write, we note that we found significant differences between the two matched groups for NRT span score, vocabulary size and reading (and of course L2 proficiency level). We found significant correlations between the NRT phoneme score and reading ($p<.05$), the NRT span score and reading ($p<.05$) and length of time spent on L2 lessons and vocabulary ($p<.05$), but not between WM measures and L2 vocabulary. Again these data do not support the idea that for illiterates varying levels of success in learning a second language are attributable to differences in working memory (cf. Juffs, 2006).

Given the high and positive correlations of the two NRT scores with word reading, it might be that the ability to learn to read and write – for which WM capacity does seem to be predictive – might operate as a mediating factor, i.e. for illiterates, working memory affects the ease with which the subjects learn to read and write in an alphabetic writing system, which in turn might influence and speed up the acquisition of L2 vocabulary learning. In that case it makes sense to conclude that it does not seem wise to omit L2 reading from lessons for illiterates and focus only on oral skills (as is sometimes suggested). Or are we viewing this backwards? It could also be that some hidden factor affects the ease with which some subjects learn to read and write in Dutch as a second language, which in turn has a positive effect on WM capacity. In other words, the direction of causality is not clear. What came first, a larger non-word span and the ability to recall series of phonemes prior to learning to read and write or a larger span which is the result of learning to read and write? In order to provide a clear and convincing answer further research is needed.

Coming back to the question as to what makes the illiterate language learning genius, we can only say that it is not one specific factor such as length of residence, WM capacity, contact with the target language or age. Rather, it is a complex of factors. The most striking finding of this study seems to be that for each individual LESLLA learner this complex differs. Fine-grained research and analyses of what this complex will be key in future research that goes beyond the assumption that a single factor is responsible.

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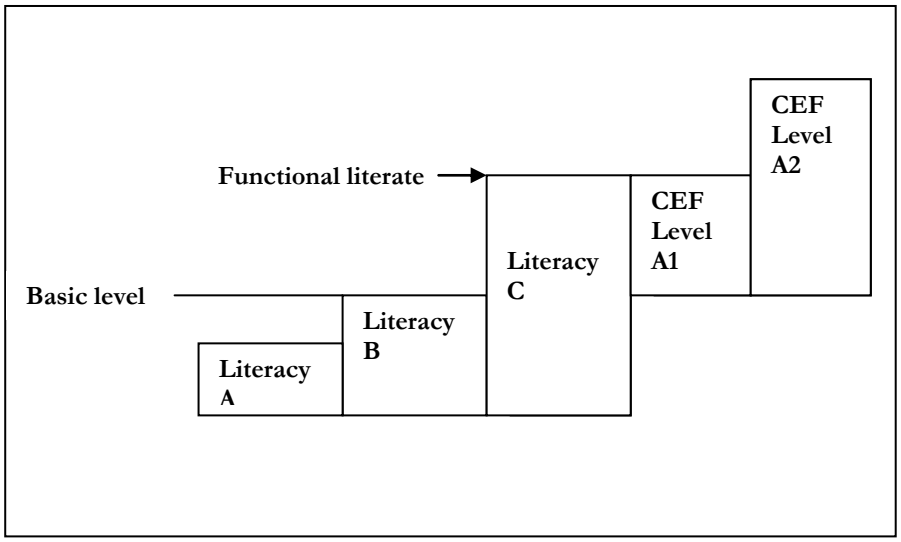
Verhoeven, L.T.W. & Vermeer, A.R. (2002). *Taaltoets Alle Kinderen*. (Language Test for Children). Arnhem: CITO.

Appendix 1: *Literacy and L2 Levels in CEF (Common European Framework) format*



Appendix 2: *Back ground data pairs*

Paar	Nummer	Age in years	Years of residence	Period of L2 lessons**	Any children?
1	1*	26	4	2-5 years	yes
	2	23	5	2-5 years	yes
2	1	34	7	2-5 years	yes
	2	29	8	2-5 years	yes
3	1	56	25	<6 months	yes
	2	61	23	6-12 months	no
4	1	49	10	12-24 months	yes
	2	35	9	6-12 months	yes
5	1	30	1	6-12 months	no
	2	31	1	6-12 months	no
6	1	26	4	12-24 months	yes
	2	33	3	12-24 months	yes
7	1	24	5	<6 months	yes
	2	23	6	6-12 months	no
8	1	32	4	12-24 months	yes
	2	28	6	12-24 months	no
9	1	33	6	2-5 years	yes
	2	28	8	2-5 years	yes
10	1	22	3	2-5 years	no
	2	30	3	2-5 years	no
11	1	52	15	2-5 years	yes
	2	40	13	2-5 years	yes
12	1	49	25	2-5 years	yes
	2	44	20	5-6 years	yes

* 1 refers to the subject of the average group, 2 to the above average group
** Categories: less than 6 months, 6-12 months, 12-24 months, 2-5 years, more than 5 years.

Appendix 3: *Pair-wise comparisons scores*

Pair	Subject	Vocabulary score	Forward DST	Percentage correct phonemes NRT	Score NRT	L2 level
1	1*	22	4	90,10	13	2
	2*	55	7	94,80	19	4
2	1	59	2	79,17	6	1
	2	71	4	89,58	16	4
3	1	13	5	87,50	12	1
	2	68	4	77,08	8	3
4	1	12	5	90,10	13	1
	2	33	5	90,63	18	3
5	1	34	4	85,42	12	2
	2	38	8	93,75	19	3
6	1	31	5	92,19	16	2
	2	35	3	90,10	9	3
7	1	25	4	85,94	11	1
	2	30	2	90,10	17	3
8	1	32	4	86,46	13	2
	2	35	3	95,83	19	4
9	1	29	6	88,02	10	1
	2	49	4	89,58	16	4
10	1	32	4	80,21	6	2
	2	40	5	75,00	13	3
11	1	21	4	84,90	10	1
	2	37	6	92,19	3	3
12	1	57	2	82,81	10	2
	2	77	5	95,83	21	4

* 1 refers to the subject of the average group, 2 to the above average group

RECASTS AND LEARNER UPTAKE: THE NON-LITERATE ADULT L2 CLASSROOM DURING ORAL SKILLS PRACTICE

Susanna Strube, Radboud University Nijmegen.

1 Introduction

This paper addresses the problem of teaching and learning to speak a second language by non-literate adult learners of Dutch, more particularly the role of error correction in the form of recasts and the learner uptake during normal second language classroom sessions in which oral skills are practiced. Here I will adhere to the definition for recast and uptake given by Ranta and Lyster (1997). A recast is an implicit form of correction in which the teacher reformulates the student's error without directly indicating that the student's original utterance was incorrect. The response of the student to the feedback is called uptake. In general very little research has been done concerning low or non-literate learners of a second language, and even less concerning the classroom and feedback. Many studies in the past have focused on the second language classroom, but only a few on the second language literacy classroom. These include studies by Mezirow, Dakenwald, & Knox (1975),[1] Kurvers & Van der Zouw (1990) Beder & Medina (2001) and Condelli, Wrigley, Yoon, Cronen & Seburn (2003).[2] The first three studies were carried out in the United States. The Mezirow et al. project concerned behaviour in the adult L1 and L2 literacy classroom. It focussed on forms of information exchange, binding of groups and modes of instruction. The Beder and Medina study also comprised L1 and L2 literacy learners. It focussed on the content and organisation of classroom instruction, social processes that characterise the interactions of teachers and learners and the forces outside the classroom that shape classroom behaviour. The Condelli et al. project was the first extensive study of its kind exclusively concerning L2 literacy classroom practices. The objective of this project was to identify instructional activities that help to develop and improve literacy and communicative skills. Kurvers and Van der Zouw were the first to focus on L2 literacy classrooms in the Netherlands. In their study a closer look was taken at the literacy processes during two types of classrooms: intensive (15 hours per week) and non-intensive (1½ to 6 hours per week).

Research on the use of feedback in the literacy classroom is, however, rare. Nevertheless there is an emerging interest in the low- and non-literate second language learner. Most of the studies concerning these learners have focused on the influence of literacy on the learning process. One recent experimental study took a closer look at the effect of literacy in the oral production of a second language (Bigelow, Delmas, Hansen & Tarone, 2006; Tarone, Bigelow & Hansen, 2007). The data for this study were gathered from non-, low- or moderately literate Somali immigrants living in the United States. The subjects performed three second language tasks: repetition of a recast, elicited imitation and the production of an oral narrative. The results of this experiment showed that literacy had a clear influence on the oral production in a second language. For the recasts this meant that the higher the literacy level, the better and more accurate the recall on a recast. Another study (Kurvers, Van Hout & Vallen, 2006) concerned differences in the metalinguistic awareness of children and adults who were either literate or non literate, all with similar ethnic and social backgrounds. The researchers

[1] This report was mentioned in Beder & Medina (2001).

[2] The cited research is described in Strube (2007).

found that literacy had an effect on how one perceives language. For example, in sentence segmentation tasks, illiterates segmented based on content while, in general, literates segmented along word boundaries. Illiterates seem to have particular difficulty reflecting on formal linguistic features, which makes oral repair on grammatical errors all the more difficult. For this reason, if an uptake takes place, a lexical repair is expected to be the most prevalent. These results coincide with the findings in a quite different study by Castro-Caldes and Reis (2003) concerning brain function and literacy. They found that in pseudo-word repetition tasks, the brain of an illiterate was considerably less active than that of a literate. The conclusion that was subsequently drawn was that literacy enhances the possibility of manipulating language units with no semantic content.

In this paper, I take a closer look at recasts and learner uptake in yet another setting, that of the literacy classroom during the practice of oral skills. The studies described above demonstrate the difficulty the non-literate second language learner has in repeating a specific type of oral input. These studies were experimental in nature and were carried out under controlled conditions in order to be able to focus on specific factors in the processing of language. The present study was non-experimental and took place in an educational setting for literacy students in several centres for adult education. It was carried out with the least possible amount of interference. During the research period the teachers prepared their lessons as usual. The only intrusion on the lesson programme was the intermittent presence of the researcher and the MP3 recording device pinned to the teacher's garment. The teachers and the students were made aware of the researcher's interest in teacher-student interactions during lesson time, but no further details were given. Under such conditions the process of teaching and learning was observed. This paper covers one aspect of this process, that of corrective feedback in the form of recasts. These represent the most frequent type of corrective feedback (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2001; Panova & Lyster, 2002; Lyster & Mori, 2006), but as shown above, this type of feedback is not unproblematic. If in a classroom setting, literacy students have the same difficulties with recasts and recognition of formal linguistic features of language as the experimental studies described above show, then this should be of concern in teaching practices. This study therefore focused on two questions. First, does the type of recast have an effect on learner uptake? Second, does the type of class activity during which the recast occurs have an effect on the uptake?

2 Method

2.1 Data base

The data presented in this chapter are part of a larger research project described in a previous LESLLA publication (Strube, 2006) to which I refer the reader for details. In that project, six classes were observed during lessons in which oral skills were practiced. Within a period from October 2006 through to November 2007, each of the classes was observed eight times. Here I describe the use of recasts and the subsequent learner uptake in three different classes, each taught by a different teacher.

The selection of the classes for the entire research project was based on a survey of all the centres of adult education in the Netherlands which offered second language literacy courses.[3] From this survey surfaced three basic types of program organization labelled Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3. Two organisational features were characteristic of each type. One concerned the organisation of oral and literacy skills and the other, the

[3] Each adult education centre had its own rules and regulations for making courses available for students. These varied depending upon student status as newcomer or long term resident, number of enrolments and municipal subsidies. In general a course was at the outset 600 hours or approximately one and a half years. But because this could vary from year to year, a course was often planned on a yearly basis. Not taking these differences into account, three basic types of programme organization surfaced, as explained above.

placement criteria of students in a literacy class. Type 1 literacy courses were organised along didactic criteria in which oral and the literacy skills were viewed as separate processes, each with their own particular learning materials and tasks. For each skill a set amount of time was allotted, often an equal amount for each skill. The students in such classes were often placed according to the level attained in each skill. This meant that a student could be placed in one class for oral skills and in another class at a different level for literacy skills. Type 2 courses viewed the two skills as separate learning processes, but they did not form separate classes. This meant that students were placed in a class according to their level in one of the skills, often resulting in mixed level classes for one of the skills. Type 3 courses viewed these skills as being complimentary to each other. No specific time was allotted to a skill and all types of materials were used. All students involved in the study formed one class throughout the duration of the course.

For the study at hand, one class from each type of programme organisation took part (see Table 1). Type 1 was composed of two classes: one for oral skills and one for literacy skills. Each class met three times a week for 90 minutes, totalling 270 minutes or four and a half hours practice on each skill per week. Only the class in which oral skills were practiced was part of this project. The Type 2 class also met three times a week, but each time for 165 minutes or a total of eight hours and 15 minutes a week. Two lessons a week were entirely focused on literacy skills (330 minutes) and one lesson on oral skills (165 minutes). This meant that one third of the lesson time was reserved for oral skills and two thirds for literacy skills. Again only the class during which oral skills were practiced was part of the research project. The Type 3 class had two weekly 150-minute class periods totalling five hours of lessons each week. The time allotted to literacy and oral skills could vary from lesson to lesson, all depending on the teacher's program. Because it was not known beforehand how much time would be allotted to each skill, the entire lesson was part of the research project.

The placement of the students in each of the three observed classes also varied. The students in the Type 1 class were placed according to their individual level in both oral and literacy skills. In the Type 2 class the students formed one group during the oral and the literacy skills lessons, and they were placed in the class according to their level in literacy skills. This automatically resulted in a mixed level class for oral skills. The type 3 class differed from the other two in placement criteria. Placement was not determined by the level in any of the language skills, but by the type of student. (See Section 2.2 for a description of these students.) During the course of the programme these students stayed together.

Table 1: The three observed classes in terms of organization of the oral/literacy skills, student placement and total lesson time.

Organization Type	Organization of Oral/Literacy Skills and Allotted Time	Student Placement Criteria	Total Lesson Hours p/w	Oral Practice Hours p/w
Type 1 Class	Separate classes; Fixed at 50-50.	According to oral or literacy level.	9	4.5
Type 2 Class	One class; Teacher aims at 50-50	Students stay together; often mixed levels.	8.25	2.75
Type 3 Class	One class Teacher determines allotted time.	Students stay together; often mixed levels.	5	<5

2.2 Participants

Students in Type 1 and Type 2 classes differed distinctly from those in the Type 3 class; see Table 2.) As stated above the students in a Type 3 class were selected and placed according to characteristics other than their level in one of the language skills. The selection criteria for these students were stipulated by the government and local municipality. In accordance with these criteria, special programmes were set up. Eligibility for these programmes was restricted to minority women who were long term residents in the Netherlands and who, due to their poor command of Dutch, had little contact outside the immediate family and consequently lived relatively isolated from the larger Dutch society. For this reason the classroom was located in the students' own residential neighbourhood. In the Type 3 class studied, all the students were of Moroccan origin. The majority were older than 45 and had lived in the Netherlands for more than six years. The students in the other two classes, Type 1 and Type 2, were not selected according to gender, country of origin or social status. By chance there were, no male students during the first half year, the in the Type I class. Most of these students were recent arrivals in the Netherlands, and the average age in these two classes was much lower: 40 in the Type 1 class and 33 in the Type 2 class. The years of L1 schooling as well as in Dutch as a second language (DL2) were comparable in all the observed classes. None of the students had schooling in their country of origin and all were illiterate upon arrival in the Netherlands. The students in the Type 1 and 2 classes had fewer than two years of schooling in DL2. The students in the Type 3 class, in spite of the fact that they were long-term residents, had less than three years of DL2.

Table 2: Student characteristics in the three classes observed

Organization Type	Average Age	Number Gender	Country of Origin	Years of Schooling L1	Years of Schooling DL2	Years in the Netherlands
Type 1 Class	40	11 F	various	none	<2 yrs.	±3 yrs.
Type 2 Class	33	8 F 1 M	various	none	<2 yrs.	±1-6 yrs.
Type 3 Class	48	12 F	Morocco	none	<3 yrs.	±6-24 yrs.

2.3 Class structure

In the three classes observed the class structure consisted of two or three distinct components, each characterized by its own particular type of activities. These components were: semi-guided conversation, linguistic focus and communicative focus. The time allotted to each component varied per class as did the type of activity. The general structure of each lesson was comparable, in spite of the fact that in two classes no active attention was paid to the communicative skills (see Table 3).

Table 3: The time allotted in minutes (with percentage of total time) for each lesson component in the three observed classes

Organization Type	Actual Lesson Time	Semi-guided Conversation	Linguistic Focus	Communicative Focus
Type 1 Class	89	21 (23.6%)	38 (42.7%)	30 (33.7%)
Type 2 Class	84	7 (8%)	77 (92%)	0 (0%)
Type 3 Class	71	50 (70.4%)	21 (29.6%)	0 (0%)

Semi-guided conversation refers to the part of the lesson in which a student was allowed to respond freely, and not limited to using any particular linguistic form. The teacher determined the main course of the conversation, although students could add or deviate from it. Activities with a linguistic focus concerned exercises centered on form, i.e. aspects of phonology, vocabulary and/or grammar. Activities with a communicative focus centered on proper language use in specific social settings. Such activities were interactional and often contained dialogues. All the lessons commenced with the semi-guided conversation component. In the Type 1 and Type 2 classes, the subject matter during semi-guided conversation was similar. The teacher began talking about the calendar (date, season), the weather and/or current affairs. In the Type 2 class, the usual discussion was cut short to seven minutes, comprising only eight per cent of class time. During this time a new class assistant was introduced to the students. In the Type 3 class, most of the lesson time (70.4%) consisted of semi-guided conversation. The lesson opened with a discussion about a window which had been broken the evening before. The topic then turned to giving some personal information such as date of birth, home address with postal code and country of origin. The final topic during the semi-guided conversation part of the lesson was about Valentines Day, which was coming up the following week.

The form-focused activities in the Type 2 and Type 3 classes were designed as building blocks for dialogue practice in a later lesson. The material used in the Type 2 class would likely be used by the teacher to prepare the students for a communicative situation concerning shopping. The vocabulary was combined with the verb *hebben* 'to have' and sentences were practiced such as: *Ik heb een blik bonen. Hij heeft een fles melk.* 'I have a can of beans. He has a bottle of milk.'. The material used by the teacher in this Type 3 class was not so narrowly focused, although the teacher had the intention of expanding on the knowledge built up in a subsequent lesson. In that class the students practiced using words of feeling with the verb *zijn* 'to be' as in: *Zij is blij. Ik ben moe.* 'She is happy. I am tired.' The teacher then switched to nouns of a personal nature such as in: *Ik ben cursist. Zij is een vrouw.* 'I am a student. She is a woman.' The focus on form was frequently sidelined by reactions on meaning by the students as well as by the teacher. At one time a student remarked: *Zij is oma.* 'She is a grandmother", upon which the teacher responded: *Ja dat kan, maar Yamina is nog niet oma. Zij is lief.* 'Yes that's possible, but Yamina is not yet a grandmother. She is nice.' Here the student's response was correct for the exercise, only the teacher remarked on the reality of the response and concluded with a sentence which would be more acceptable. In the Type 2 and Type 3 classes no communicative activities with interaction, in which the focus was on meaning and not on linguistic form, were practiced. In the Type 1 class, the communicative and linguistic activities were also not in any way related through vocabulary or grammar. They clearly formed two different activities. The form-focused activity was on SV sentence structure in the present tense using pictographs from the textbook PICTO by Paulussen-van Vugt (1994)[4]. Figure 1 illustrates such a pictograph with the sentence: *Hij leest.* 'He reads.' The communicative activity was a fixed dialogue on making an appointment with the doctor.

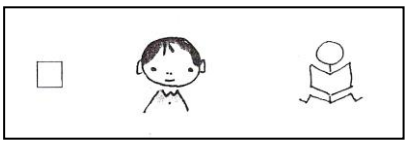


Figure 1: A pictograph taken from textbook PICTO by Paulussen-van Vugt (1994)

[4] PICTO is a remedial programme for children who are native and non-native speakers of Dutch and have difficulty with speaking in complete and correct sentences. It has also been used in DL2 adult education. Through the use of pictures and symbols (pictographs) the student's attention is focused on the structure of a sentence.

The data were collected through classroom observation of three lessons, each given by a different teacher and representing one type of programme organization (described in Section 2.1). An MP3 device pinned to the teacher's upper garment recorded the voices during the lessons while the researcher sat at the rear of the classroom taking notes. The recorded lessons were then transcribed orthographically. The transcripts for each class type were then scanned for all types of recasts made by the three teachers and all cases of student uptake of those recasts. Subsequently, the recast types and uptakes were grouped according to class structure described in Section 2.3.

There are various definitions of recast (on this see Sheen, 2006). In this chapter, the definition used is from Lyster and Ranta (1997:46) in their study on corrective feedback in French Canadian immersion classrooms. They define recast as 'the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error.' This form of recast has also been characterized as being implicit corrective feedback (Panova & Lyster, 2002:582; Gass 2003:239; Sheen 2006:364).

The recasts found in the transcripts were divided into two categories: focus on form or focus on language use. The recasts on form were subsequently divided into three sub-categories: pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Recasting on language use is a broad category which refers to any error made in applying language for communication (Canale & Swain 1980). It pertains to pragmatic competence, which 'refers to the ability to use language in culturally and contextually appropriate ways' (Fujioka, 2003:1).

All recasts were then linked to student uptake of each type. An uptake was interpreted as a student's reaction directly following a recast (Lyster & Ranta 1997:49). These reactions were then coded according to two categories: repair and no repair. This is a simplified version of the three categories distinguished by Lyster & Ranta, which include repair, needs repair and no repair (1997:49-50). The 'needs repair' category could be ambiguous. In many non-Western cultures a reaction to a question or statement with a simple 'yes' or an equivalent response does not necessarily mean acknowledgement or even agreement, let alone understanding. Often it is just a sign showing attentiveness. Consequently, repair included those utterances by the student that were either full or partial repetitions of the recast. 'No repair' included all other utterances or no response made after a recast, as well as acknowledgement, hesitation, repetition of the same error, making of a different error or an off-target response. These were all coded as 'needs repair' by Lyster and Ranta (1997). Sometimes the discussion or activity at hand was continued by the teacher, giving the student no opportunity to respond. This was coded as 'topic continuation'. If the student continued the topic, then it was coded as 'no repair', as this was termed an off-target response to the recast.

The recast and the uptake form a set sequence. Each feedback sequence begins with a trigger. This trigger is the response of the student to a question or remark made by the teacher or another student. This trigger pushes the teacher to respond with a form of (corrective) feedback, in this case, a recast. The student may or may not respond with an uptake to the given feedback. This feedback sequence minimally consists of three steps, as shown is in (1).

(1) *Feedback sequence.*

Student trigger	(erroneous utterance)
Teacher feedback	(teacher's response to the trigger)
Student uptake	(student's reaction to the feedback)

Example (2) illustrates a typical feedback sequence using recast and an uptake with repair.

(2) *Feedback sequence with repair.*

Student:	*Doos, twee doos.*	(trigger)
	'Box, two box.'	

Teacher:	*Twee dozen.*	(recast)
	'Two boxes.'	
Student:	*Twee dozen.*	(repair)
	'Two boxes.'	

Below are three examples of recast type and student uptake which occurred during the classes observed. The underlined parts in the utterances in the examples are explained in parentheses following the utterance. Example (3) illustrates a recast focusing on a grammatical and a vocabulary error made during vocabulary practice.

(3) *Recast on a grammatical and vocabulary error during a linguistic activity.*

Student:	*Jan heeft drie pak sinaasappelsap.*	(error on vocabulary and grammar)
	'John has three carton of orange juice.'	
Teacher:	*vier pakken.*	(recast on vocabulary and grammar)
	'four cartons.'	
Student:	*vier pakken sinaasappelsap.*	(repair)
	'four cartons of orange juice.'	

Example (4) shows a grammatical error made during an activity with a communicative focus. In this activity the student was practicing making a doctor's appointment. The teacher played the role of the doctor's secretary.

(4) *Recast on a grammatical error during a communicative activity*.

Student:	*Kan afspraak maken?*	(error on grammar)
	'Can make appointment?'	
Teacher:	*Kan ik een afspraak maken?*	(recast on grammar)
	'Can I make an appointment?'	
Student:	……	(no response, no repair)

Example (5) illustrates an error in language use during a dialogue practice. The student response to the question is grammatically correct, but pragmatically incorrect.

(5) *Recast on an error in language use during a communicative activity.*

Teacher:	*Kunt u woensdagmiddag komen?*	(source)
	'Can you come on Wednesday afternoon?'	
Student:	*Ja, dit is goed.*	(error in language use)
	'Yes, this is fine.'	
Teacher:	*Dat is goed.*	(recast on language use)
	'That is fine.'	
Student:	……	(no response, no repair)

3 Results

3.1 Recasts and learner uptake in the three observed classes.

For each of the three observed classes, the recasts were coded according to their programme organization type (as explained in Section 2.1), and the particular focus of the recasts: phonological, lexical, and grammatical or language use. To this was added the number of student uptakes and either repair or no repair (see Table 4). Across the three classes there was a total of 124 recasts. Most of the recasts were focused on form (95.2% or 118 recasts). Of those form-focused recasts 54%, or 67 out of a total of 124 recasts, concerned grammatical errors. In the Type 1 class, a total of 75 recasts were made. Of those recasts, 40 or 53.3% were focused on grammatical errors. In the Type 2 class, which focused on vocabulary practice, there were a total of 25 recasts. Most of these recasts were on lexical errors (52% or 13 recasts). Only 28% or seven recasts were

on grammatical errors. Very few recasts focused on language use (only six or 4.8%). In the Type 3 class, where the greatest part of the lesson was semi-guided conversation (70.4% of class time), no recasts were made that focused on language use. In that class there were 24 recasts of which 20 or 83.3% focused on grammar.

In slightly less than half of the recasts, the student responds with a repair (59 repairs or 47.6%). Taking a look at the classes separately we see that in the Type 1 class, the distribution of repairs and no repairs was almost the same: 37 repairs or 49.3 % and 36 no repairs or 48%. This was certainly not the case in the other two classes. In the Type 2 class, there were a total of 25 recasts. Student repair occurred on 80% of those recasts. In other words in 20 occasions the student reacted with a repair. Most of those recasts were also of a lexical nature (13 recasts or 52%). In the Type 3 class, the situation was just the opposite. Out of a total of 24 recasts made in this class there were only two cases of student repair (2 repairs or 8.3%). In the remaining recasts, there was no repair (75%). Moreover in that same class, which had spent 70.4% of class time on semi-guided conversation, topic continuation by the teacher after a recast occurred more often than in the other two classes (four times). In Type 1 class teacher topic continuation occurred only twice and in Type 2 class never.

Table 4: Number and percentage of recasts and student uptakes in classes; Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3.

Organization Type	Total Recasts	Linguistic Focus			Language Use	Student Uptake		Teacher Topic Continuation
		Phonological	Lexical	Grammatical		Repair	No Repair	
Type 1 Class	75	20 (26.7%)	10 (13.3%)	40 (53.3%)	5 (6.7%)	37 (49.3%)	36 (48%)	2 (2.7%)
Type 2 Class	25	4 (16%)	13 (52%)	7 (28%)	1 (4%)	20 (80%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)
Type 3 Class	24	1 (4.2%)	3 (12.5%)	20 (83.3%)	0 (0%)	2 (8.3%)	18 (75%)	4 (16.7%)
Total	124	25 (20.2%)	26 (21%)	67 (54%)	6 (4.8%)	59 (47.6%)	59 (47.6%)	6 (4.8%)

3.2 Recast and class structure

In section 2.3 the three lesson components of the class structure were described: semi-guided conversation, linguistic focus and communicative focus. The time allotted to each component varied per class, as did the type of activity, but the general structure of each lesson was comparable. All the lessons were review lessons; none of the material practiced was entirely new. Each lesson began with the component semi-guided conversation followed by a component with linguistic focus. Only in the Type 1 class did the communicative component follow the linguistic-focused component. The linguistic activities in that lesson did not build up to a communicative activity. In the Type 2 and the Type 3 classes the linguistic practice laid the basis for a communicative activity by practicing the essential vocabulary and sentence structures.

In Table 5, the number of recasts for each category of focus (phonological, lexical or grammatical, and language use) is compared to the lesson component in which it occurred. Here we see that out of 124 recasts, 118 were made with a linguistic focus. Only six recasts focused on language use. Of these six, five were made in the Type 1 class during a communicative activity. The remaining recast on language use was made in Type 2 class during a linguistic activity. In the Type 1 and Type 2 classes, a majority of the recasts was form focused (70 recasts or 93.3% and 24 recasts or 96 % respectively). In both classes, most of these recasts occurred during an activity with a linguistic focus. For the Type 1 class this was 40 recasts or 53.3%. Of those recasts 25 (33.3%) had a grammatical focus. In that lesson the greatest amount of class time

(42.7%) was spent on practicing a particular linguistic structure. In Type 2 class 92% of class time was spent on a linguistic activity. During that time, of the 25 recasts, 24 (96%) were made on linguistic items and one (4%) on language use. For the Type 3 class just the opposite emerges. In that class 24 recasts were made. Since the largest portion of lesson time was spent on semi-guided conversation (70.4%) most of the recasts occurred during that part of the lesson (17 recasts or 70.8%). Of those 17 recasts, 13 were focused on a grammatical error (54.2% of the total).

Table 5: Recast focus and lesson component (SC = semi-guided conversation, LF = linguistic focus and CF = communicative focus).

Organiza-tion Type	Total Recasts	Linguistic (recast) Focus									Language Use		
		Phonological			Lexical			Grammatical					
		SC	LF	CF	SC	LF	CF	SC	LF	CF	SC	LF	CF
Type 1 Class	75	0	12	8	2	3	5	9	25	6	0	0	5
Type 2 Class	25	0	4	0	0	13	0	0	7	0	0	1	0
Type 3 Class	24	1	0	0	3	0	0	13	7	0	0	0	0
Total	124	1	16	8	5	16	5	22	39	6	0	1	5

3.3 Learner uptake and class structure

In total 124 recasts were made. The students responded with an uptake to 118 of those recasts. On 59 uptakes (47.6%) a repair was made. Table 6 shows in which lesson component the uptakes with repair occurred. Most of the repairs on a recast had a linguistic focus (57 repairs or 96.6%). In the Type 1 class, the majority of the repairs were made during a linguistic activity (33 repairs or 89.2%). During the communicative activity 24 recasts were made while the student reacted with a repair on four recasts (16.7%). Only one of these repairs concerned language use. In the Type 2 class, which had no communicative activity, the lesson focussed on vocabulary practice (92% of class time). All of the 24 recasts were also made during the linguistic activity. On 20 recasts there was repair. Of these, 19 were focused on form and one on language use. During the Type 3 class, 24 recasts were made. On only two was there repair. One repair occurred during the semi-guided conversation part of the lesson and one during the linguistic activity. Both repairs were in response to a linguistic correction.

Table 6: Student repairs for each class type and lesson component (SC = semi-guided conversation, LF = linguistic focus and CF = communicative focus).

Student Repairs per class	Total Repairs	Linguistic Focus									Language Use		
		Phonological			Lexical			Grammatical					
		SC	LF	CF	SC	LF	CF	SC	LF	CF	SC	LF	CF
Type 1 Class	37	0	10	2	0	4	0	0	19	1	0	0	1
Type 2 Class	20	0	5	0	0	8	0	0	6	0	0	1	0
Type 3 Class	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total	59	1	15	2	0	12	0	0	26	1	0	1	1

4 Discussion and conclusion

What does this tell us about the use of recasts in the literacy classroom during the practice of the oral skills? In interpreting the results presented in this paper there must be a word of caution. These results are based on the observation of three lessons by three different teachers, each representing one type of programme organization.

Despite being based on a limited corpus, the results nonetheless give a clear indication of how a non-literate learning to speak and read in Dutch tends to react to a recast. Experimental investigations by Bigelow et al. (2006) and Kurvers et al (2006) show that low-literates have difficulty responding accurately to recasts and they conclude that formal linguistic features are problematic for these learners.

Keeping this in mind, the findings presented in this paper lead to the following two observations:

- Recasts seem to be more effective in generating a repair in activities in which the item of focus is salient, as in activities with a linguistic focus.
- Recasts seem to be less effective in generating a repair in activities in which the focus is on meaning, as in activities with a communicative focus. During such activities, recasts can focus on form as well as on language use.

By looking at class structure it is easier to understand these statements. In all three class types the activities which focused on form centered on one linguistic feature: either grammatical (verb form) or lexical. The Type 1 class practiced making sentences using the present tense. The Type 2 class focused on the formation of the plural noun and the use of the verb *hebben* 'to have' in the present tense. The Type 3 class focused on using the verb *zijn* 'to be' in the present tense. In all three classes there were in total 72 recasts made during activities with a linguistic focus. On those recasts 54 repairs were made (75%). During the activities the student's attention was focused on a single linguistic feature which enhanced the salience of the recast. In other words, the student was prepared; s/he knew what to expect in terms of correction. This seems paradoxical to the findings in the Kurvers et al. study which concluded: "they [illiterate adults] are not able to reflect on more formal aspects of language; an ability they probably did not acquire because they did not receive literacy training" (Kurvers et al. 2006:85). Reflecting on a linguistic feature implies a conscious action. Making a repair on a recast does not necessarily mean that one is aware of what one is saying. It could be just an automatic reaction to the recast, without entailing any aspect of awareness. Moreover, if the recast is salient *and* focused on one linguistic feature *and* the student is prepared, then the possibility of a repair is most often expected. For this reason I conclude that recasts only *seem* to be more effective in such circumstances. By contrast, 52 recasts were made in all three classes during the lesson components semi-guided conversation and communicative focus. On those recasts five repairs were generated (9.6%). In activities during which the student's attention was on conveying a message corrections were often left unnoticed or not understood. The student's attention during a *form* - focused activity was on *form* while the student's attention during a *communicative* activity was focused on *meaning*. A recast during a form focused activity was most often on form, while a recast during a communicative activity could be on almost any language feature: pronunciation, word choice, grammar or even a language routine (as shown in example 5). The correction, as it were, comes unannounced. The student is not only unprepared, s/he is often unaware of the relationship between her/his erroneous utterance and the teacher's recast.

Examples (2) and (3) above illustrate salient recasts on which repair was made. Both of these examples occurred in the Type 2 class during the linguistic-focused activity. Example (6), taken from the Type 1 class during the linguistic focus component of the lesson, is another example illustrating a repair on a salient recast.

(6) *A repair on a salient recast.*

Student 1:	*Lezen.*	(trigger)
	'To read.'	
Student 2:	*Lezen.*	(trigger)
	'To read.'	
Teacher:	*Leest.*	(recast)
	'Reads.'	

Student 1:	*Leest.*	(repair)
	'Reads.'	
Student 2:	*De jongen leest.*	(repair)
	'The boys reads.'	

Here the activity was focused on the use of the third person singular in the present tense using the PICTO textbook illustrated in Figure 1. Each picture in the book cued the student as to which verb to use. The students worked in groups of four. In turn one student asked the fixed question *Wat doet de jongen?* 'What does the boy do?' to which the next student is expected to respond using a complete sentence. In example (6) above one student had already asked the fixed question. Two students, cued by the picture in the book, responded with the non-inflected verb form *lezen* 'to read'. The subsequent recast given by the teacher, *leest* 'reads', was immediately understood. Student 2 most likely was aware of her error as she responded by forming a complete sentence using the corrected verb form. In other words, the recast was salient.

Examples (4) and (5) above illustrate non-salient recasts which occurred during a communicative activity in the Type 1 class. Example (7), taken from the Type 3 class, illustrates a non-salient recast during the linguistic focused component of the lesson.

(7) *A no repair on a non-salient recast.*

Teacher:	*Wie is zij?*	
	'Who is she?'	
Student:	*Zij Fatima.*	(trigger)
	'She Fatima.'	
Teacher:	*Zij is …*	(elicitation feedback)
	'She is …'	
Student:	*Fatima.*	(response)
	'Fatima.'	
Teacher:	*Zij is Fatima.*	(recast)
	'She is Fatima.'	
Student:	*Zij Fatima.*	(no repair)
	'She Fatima.'	
Teacher:	*Zij is Fatima.*	(recast)
	'She is Fatima.'	
Student:	…….	(no response)

In this exercise the students were practicing the use of the verb *zijn* 'to be'. In order to make the grammatical structure clear the teacher decided to illustrate its use by using a familiar context in the class: the students and their names. She initiated the exercise by pointing to one of the students and asking another student who that was. Such questions have often been practiced during a semi-guided conversation activity with the social purpose of getting acquainted. At this stage the question did not have a social purpose but a grammatical one. The student's first response triggered the teacher to provide corrective feedback using an elicitation technique. Unfortunately her attempt elicited the name and not the omitted verb. On the next two feedback attempts using a recast again, no repair was generated. Clearly the student was unaware of the use of the verb. Her response focused on meaning: giving the name of the other student, whereas the teacher was focused on grammar. The purpose of the exercise and the subsequent feedback were not salient.

Analogous to these findings are those presented by VanPatten (1990) with respect to paying attention to both meaning and form while processing input. VanPatten's experiment used highly literate students to read a written text. They were instructed to concentrate on form as well as the meaning of the text. He found that '… conscious attention to form in the input competes with conscious attention to meaning, and, by extension, that only when input is easily understood can learners attend to form as part of the intake process' (VanPatten 1990:296). He also concluded that these processes

particularly affect the beginning language learner, who in his/her struggle to comprehend has extra trouble in coping with form at the same time. Such is also the case with the non- and low-literate second language learners in this study.

In conclusion, there were two questions posed at the beginning of this paper:
1. Does the type of recast have an effect on the uptake?
2. Does the type of class activity during which the recast occurs have an effect on the uptake?

Both questions can now clearly be answered in the affirmative. The type of recast and the activity in which it occurs are determinants in the possibility of uptake with repair. But to conclude that the student is also aware of this process is for the time being a step too far. These results are just a beginning; more research needs to be done to provide definitive answers. Experimental research has identified factors which are problematic for the non-literate adult second language learner. Implications for classrooms must be interpreted. The student must be made aware of his/her learning processes; the teacher must be made aware of her/her teaching practices.

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LEARNING TO READ IN PORTUGUESE IN EAST TIMOR: STRATEGIES OF ADULT LITERACY LEARNERS

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1 Introduction

In an earlier volume of LESLLA proceedings, reference was made to the enormous amount of studies on how children learn to read and write, while at the same time studies on how adults who never attended school get access to the meaning of written language are remarkably scarce (van de Craats, Kurvers & Young-Scholten, 2006). And although interest in the acquisition and uses of literacy by unschooled adults is growing, there still are hardly any studies that focus on the first period in which adults have to learn the principle behind the written code that is used in their culture. Moreover, studies on second language literacy acquisition of unschooled adults are even scarcer (Wagner, Venezky & Street, 1999, Wagner, 2004), although it is not uncommon that adult literacy learners all over the world only get access to writing in a second or even third language.

This paper will focus on the results of a pilot study carried out in 2007 in two adult literacy classrooms in East Timor, a country with illiteracy rates of about 50% that after independence in 2002 started to develop and implement new national adult literacy programs and teacher training. The main focus of the pilot was on word recognition skills and the reading strategies of adults who are learning to read and write in Portuguese as a second or third language in relation to some differences in methodologies and classroom practices that teachers were putting into play.

Word recognition is assumed to be one of the basic skills to be developed by beginning readers (see Kurvers, 2007 for an overview) and can be defined as determining the identification of a written word, i.e. the pronunciation and meaning of a word encountered in print or writing. Kurvers argued that two models are in use to explain the learning processes of beginning readers: on the one hand there are stage models of beginning reading, and on the other non-stage models (Juel, 1991; Chall, 1999). Her review of studies revealed much evidence in favour of a sequence of rather uniform stages in reading development: a first stage of direct-word recognition on the basis of either visual or context-bound cues, a second stage of indirectly mediated word-recognition through the use of graphic instead of visual cues (grapheme-phoneme correspondences) and another, third stage of direct word-recognition but now based on automatisation of indirect word-recognition (see section 3 for more details). These stage models of beginning reading, however, were based on research with young children during the first year of formal reading instruction in their native language. Since all stage models are crucially based on the mediation of spoken language (of which neither the sounds nor the word meanings might be known), it made sense to investigate whether these stage models could also explain the development of word recognition skills of adults learning to read and write in a second language. The results of Kurvers revealed they do. Kurvers, however, investigated adult first time readers in a highly developed western country who learned to read and write with the help of well-educated literacy teachers trained and experienced in teaching the alphabetical principle to new learners. It is not self-evident that adult literacy learning and teaching in a developing country such as East Timor with different traditions in learning and teaching would show the same learning processes for adult beginning readers. The aim of the pilot study therefore was to see whether the same types of learning strategies and progress in word recognition would be apparent in East Timor. The main research question was how these adults develop word recognition skills in Portuguese and

whether the stages Kurvers found would also be found in East Timor. A secondary research question was related to some educational features: would it matter whether teachers used the newly developed materials that tried to combine a phonics approach with contents derived from relevant social practices of the adults?

In the next section, we first present some background information on East Timor: the country, the sociolinguistic landscape and a state of the art on adult literacy. In section three, the pilot study is introduced and in section four, the results are presented. The paper ends with some conclusions.

2 Background: East Timor history, languages and literacy

The Democratic Republic of East Timor is a new nation in Southeast Asia, located 600 kilometres northwest of Darwin, Australia. It comprises the eastern half of the island of Timor, the enclave Oecussi on the northwestern side of the island within Indonesian West Timor and the nearby smaller islands of Jaco and Atauro. From the sixteenth century until 1975, East Timor was a colony of Portugal. Between 1975 and 1999 it was occupied by Indonesia. From 1999 until 2002 the United Nations formed an interim government and in May 2002 it became independent. Of its population of around 1 million, three quarters live in the mountainous rural areas of the island (UNDP 2006). Although steadily working on its development, East Timor is still the poorest country in Asia.[1]

Today's language situation reflects East Timor's history. When it became independent in May 2002, it was decided that the country would have two official languages: Portuguese and Tetum (Constitution 2002[2]). Tetum and fifteen other national languages were 'to be valued and developed by the state'. English and Bahasa Indonesia were accepted as working languages within civil service side by side with official languages as long as deemed necessary.[3]

The 16 national languages of East Timor can be divided in two groups (G. Hull, 2003): the Austronesian group (Tetum, Habun, Galoli, Atauran, Kawaimina, Welaun, Idalaka, Mambai, Kemak, Tokodede, Baikenu, Makuva) and the Papuan group (Bunak, Makasai, Makalero, Fataluku). Except for Tetum, most of these languages have only been spoken languages. Recently, East Timor's National Institute of Linguistics (INL) has developed dictionaries and grammars for some of these languages.[4] Tetum is widely used as a lingua franca and a written language, and many people in at least 11 of the 13 districts of the country speak and understand it to some extent. Besides the national languages and local dialects, the use of Portuguese is growing. Older generations who went to school in Portuguese times (until 1975) still speak Portuguese, and since it became one of the two official languages of the country in 2002, many young people are learning Portuguese as well. During the 24 years of Indonesian occupation however, it was forbidden to use Portuguese, and East Timorese had to speak and write Bahasa Indonesia in school and many other official domains. From 1999 until 2002, when the United Nations formed an interim government, English started to be used in East Timor as a working language.

This large variety of languages leads to a situation where most East Timorese are using several languages in their daily lives (Van Engelenhoven, 2006), depending on the domain in which the interactions take place. They speak a national language or local dialect with their families and in their communities. In school and in their studies they are supposed to only use Tetum and Portuguese. But for the whole generation that

[1] Nr. 150 of 177 countries ranked in the Human Development Index, as included in the Human Development Report 2007-2008 (UNDP 2007).

[2] Constitution of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, Section 13, Official languages and national languages.

[3] Constitution of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, Section 159, Working languages.

[4] In the Government Decree No 1/2004 of 14 April, "Orthographic standard of the Tetum language", Article 4 describes the "Role of the National Institute of Linguistics (INL): 1. The INL is the scientific custodian of Official Tetum. 2. The INL must develop the scientific activities necessary to the preservation and protection of the other national languages devising orthographical stanards for each of them. 3. (…) etc.

grew up and went to school in Indonesian times, Bahasa Indonesia is easier and many still use it a lot. Many schoolteachers also still use a lot of Bahasa Indonesia, and they often use local languages to explain lesson content that is presented in Tetum or Portuguese. In official situations and in contact with governmental institutions, Tetum and Portuguese are the languages to be used, but also in those situations many conversations, discussions and explanations take place in (or have to be translated in) national languages or local dialects. To communicate with UN departments or international aid and development organisations many East Timorese learn and use English.

Literacy rates in East Timor are relatively low: only 50% of the adult population is estimated to be literate (UNDP 2006). The percentage is lower in the rural areas, and, as usual, there are more women among the illiterates.

Since 2001 the government has been providing national adult literacy programs in Tetum and Portuguese. Also a range of NGO's have been providing adult literacy programs in recent years, mostly in Tetum and Portuguese as well. Since the first language of most East Timorese is one of the national languages or a local dialect, learning to read and write in East Timor hardly ever takes place in a first language. Attending a first language adult literacy course is only possible for the small part of the population that speaks Tetum as a first language, and even then there will be a difference between the official Tetum standard[5] that is being used by the state and the variety that participants have learned in their own village. For many native speakers of other national languages or dialects, a Tetum literacy course still is the best option because they mostly understand and speak Tetum to some extent and not many of them are proficient in Portuguese.[6]

Portuguese is sometimes a second (and for many East Timorese a third or fourth) language. For the small percentage of the East Timorese that speak and understand Portuguese, literacy courses in Portuguese seem to be a good option. Sometimes East Timorese people who do not speak Portuguese still want to become literate in Portuguese because of its (perceived) higher status. This occurs in many multilingual situations in which languages have a different status, or are perceived as more or less useful for people's futures (Coulmas, 1984, Asfaha et al, 2006).

Is Portuguese more difficult to learn to read and write than Tetum? Many people in East Timor think so, even without taking into consideration the already mentioned fact that Tetum is more widely spoken than Portuguese. Portuguese orthography is thought to be more difficult than Tetum, although there is little research on this. In Europe however, some comparative research is available. Seymour (2005) compared several European languages and orthographies on syllabic complexity and orthographic depth. Syllabic complexity refers to the amount of different syllables a language can have, for example only V, CV, or CVC or many combinations of consonant clusters and vowels that can be a syllable, as in English. Orthographic depth basically refers to the correspondence between phonemes in spoken language and graphemes in writing. Orthographies are shallow when there are hardly any exceptions to the basic rule of one phoneme, one grapheme (such as Finnish) and deep when one phoneme can be represented by several graphemes, or one grapheme can be pronounced in several ways (such as English). According to Seymour (2005), Portuguese is classified as having a rather simple syllable structure, simpler than, for example, German, Dutch, Danish or English, with its orthography deeper than, for example, Greek, Italian, Spanish and German, but less deep than, for example, French, Danish and English. Seymour expects the rate and efficiency of literacy acquisition to differ between languages in the

[5] Official Tetum, as developed by the National Institute of Linguistics of East Timor according to the April 2004 Government Decree, is based on Tetum-Praça, also referred to as Dili Tetum, with Tetum Terik and Portuguese as source languages for loanwords that should conform to the rules of the orthography of Official Tetum (Taylor-Leech, 2007).

[6] According to UNDP, in 2005 less than 5% of the East Timorese spoke Portuguese, as stated in the *Timor-Leste Human Development Report 2006: The path out of poverty; integrated rural development*, page 8, box 1.2, published January 2006.

ranking from simple to complex syllable structures and from shallow to deep orthographies. For the first year of reading, this expectation has been partly confirmed: children learned to read much faster in the more consistent Finnish orthography than in the deeper and less consistent English orthography (see also Ziegler & Goswami 2006).

If we place Tetum in Seymour's classification, its position would show an even simpler syllable structure than Portuguese: syllables with consonant clusters such as *for* 'flower' in Portuguese, hardly exist in Tetum, except for loan words. In addition, the orthography is considered shallower and more consistent. In East Timor, teaching reading to adults (like teaching reading to children) has for a long time been guided by what is called the alphabet methodology (Gray, 1969). Generally speaking, this is a teaching practice in which beginning readers start with learning the alphabet by heart, most often the names of the letters (a, bee, cee), and classroom practices with much chanting (collectively repeating after the teacher) and a low rate of usage of exercise books and reading materials.

In recent years, other methodologies and different didactic approaches have been introduced. In 2004, the Ministry of Education of East Timor, together with UNDP and UNICEF,[7] developed contextualized[8] literacy materials for one year of adult literacy teaching in both Portuguese and Tetum. These materials[9] have been developed in cooperation with a large number of local stakeholders. The teaching methodology combines a contextually functional and meaningful content (things that matter for adult life in East Timor) with a phonics-based methodology for learning the principles of the alphabetic writing system (for more details see Boon, 2007). The materials for the beginners courses in Tetum and Portuguese were piloted in 2006, revised and printed in 2007, and were implemented nationally in January 2008. The advanced level materials field-tested and revised in 2007, will be implemented nationally in the second half of 2008. Apart from the almost 300 government groups, there is a number of local NGOs using the new manuals in their own literacy programs in various districts in the country.

Besides implementing this new national adult literacy program, the Ministry of Education rolled out a national literacy campaign using the Cuban program *Sim eu posso*.[10] *Sim eu posso* provides the learner with three months of basic literacy training in Portuguese. The materials were used in Brazil before, and are now being adapted to the East Timorese reality. A Tetum version is being developed as well.

Finally, some international and national or local NGOs have developed their own literacy materials; OXFAM, for example, has developed some manuals in Tetum and Tokodede, one of the national languages, in collaboration with Tokodede-speaking communities. The local NGO GFFTL has also developed its own literacy manuals, linked to income-generating activities. All in all, the availability of literacy programs and materials in East Timor is gradually becoming greater and more varied.

3 Pilot on learning to read in Portuguese as a second language by adult literacy learners

To obtain more information on the learning of Portuguese as a second (third/fourth) language by adult literacy learners, a small pilot was carried out in 2007. The pilot focussed on learning to read in Portuguese as a second language in two adult literacy groups in East Timor. Data were collected in April and August 2007. A few of the questions that were asked in the research pilot will be highlighted in this chapter, namely, How well developed are word recognition skills in Portuguese as a second language after almost a year of literacy instruction two times a week? What word

[7] (and with support from USAID)
[8] The term 'contextualized' refers to: reflecting East Timorese culture and daily life.
[9] Literacy manuals for beginners in Tetum called *Hakat ba Oin* and in Portuguese called *Passo em Frente* (both meaning 'Step Forward' in English). Advanced level literacy manuals in Tetum called *Iha Dalan* and in Portuguese called *A Caminho* (both meaning 'On the Way' in English).
[10] This program, originally named *Yo sí puedo* in Spanish ('Yes I can' in English), was developed in Cuba and has already been used in mass literacy campaigns in many countries.

recognition strategies do East Timorese adults use while learning to read in Portuguese as a second language, and are these strategies related to word recognition skills? Do the outcomes reveal that adult beginning reading in a second language is a process that can be described in terms of reading stages? And what problems do these learners encounter while learning to read and write in Portuguese? (See below for a more detailed presentation) This section first describes this pilot's position in a larger research project on adult literacy in East Timor. Secondly, it explains word recognition issues and research already carried out. Thirdly, it provides information on the design of the pilot, its participants, instruments and analysis.

3.1 The pilot study's position in a larger research project

The pilot described in this paper is part of a larger research project on adult literacy in East Timor which was developed in 2006-2007. Its main aim is to investigate the historical and contemporary aspects of literacy acquisition and use in multilingual East Timor. The research project consists of an empirical study in two parts: (a) a multi-site sociolinguistic-ethnographic case study investigating the values and uses of languages and literacy, instructional practices and learning in the act of becoming and being literate in Portuguese and Tetum; and (b) an evaluation study assessing the influence of language choices, teaching methodology and orthographic transparency on the effectiveness of adult literacy programs in these two languages. Within this research project, adult literacy acquisition in East Timor is investigated from two different perspectives: a sociolinguistic or social-cultural perspective and a psycholinguistic perspective. From a *socio-cultural* or sociolinguistic perspective literacy can be conceptualised as social practice, embedded in historically situated and continuously changing larger social, religious and cultural traditions (Barton, 2001). Recent studies in this tradition describe literacy as deriving meaning from the context as much as from the act of reading and writing itself (Banda, 2003; Street, 2001). Verhoeven and Snow (2001) and Martin-Jones and Jones (2000) show that different meanings of literacy may be even more apparent in multilingual societies with multiple literacy practices and traditions. Herbert and Robinson (2001) deal with the interest in literacy practices in multilingual African and Asian countries. These studies show the interplay of literacy in languages with local and (inter)national status (Fasold, 1997; Herbert and Robinson, 2001; Prinsloo and Breier, 1996). A recent literacy study in Eritrea also shows that literacy practices and values are influenced by ethnic, religious and linguistic affiliations, and at the same time lead to diversified literacy teaching and acquisition practices in education (Asfaha et al., 2006).

Central to a *psycholinguistic* perspective on beginning literacy is that in order to get access to the meaning of print, a literacy learner must learn the code that is used in his/her culture to represent speech by visual symbols. A first step in becoming literate therefore is acquiring the system of correspondences between visual symbols and units of sounds (Byrne, 1998; Ziegler and Goswami, 2006). For a literacy learner, mastery of this system allows access to most of the words that belong to his/her vocabulary prior to learning to read. The actual process of learning to read, however, is complicated by factors such as familiarity of the (first or second) language, inconsistency of the sound-to-symbol mapping, the inventory of phonemes and the syllabic make-up of a language (Kurvers, 2002; Ziegler and Goswami, 2006), differences between adult and child characteristics of literacy acquisition in a second language (Van de Craats et al., 2006), and the fact that, although literacy acquisition might be much easier in the mother tongue, the mother tongue is not always appreciated for reasons of perceived status or economic profit (Coulmas, 1984). The focus in this paper is on the psycholinguistic aspects that are required for the first steps on the highroad to adult literacy: the word recognition strategies and skills of beginning readers in Portuguese as a second language.

3.2 Word recognition

As already discussed in the introduction, for a long time reading researchers have been investigating the process by which beginning readers acquire the ability to identify a written word, i.e. word recognition. Most studies have been conducted in the context of learning to read and write in a Roman alphabetical script, and most of the fundamental theory-building research has focused on children learning to read and write in their native language (Ehri & Wilce, 1985; Juel, 1991; Chall, 1999; Wagner 1999; Van de Craats, Kurvers & Young-Scholten 2006). There is ample evidence that children go through several stages during the process of learning to read (Adams 1990; Juel, 1991). Many models of beginning reading development propose the following stages of word recognition (Juel 1991; Kurvers 2007):

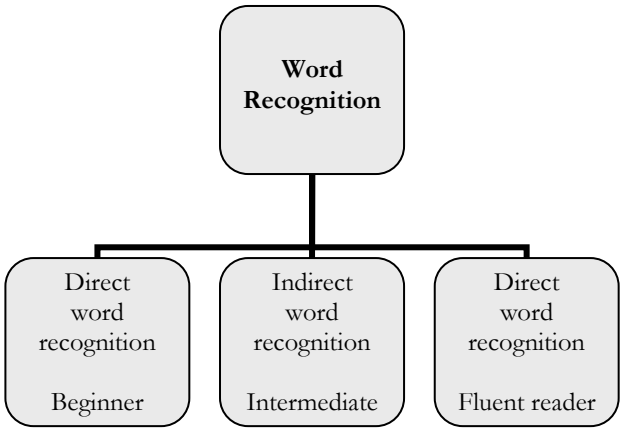

Figure 1: Word recognition stages

According to Juel (1991), word recognition during the first stage is direct and takes place on the basis of either visual or context bound cues. At this so-called logographic stage, beginning readers recognize a written word immediately on the basis of non-systematic visual cues such as length, a salient letter or an illustration.[11] During the second stage, the alphabetic stage, word recognition takes place indirectly, through the use of graphic instead of general visual cues. Beginning readers learn the alphabetic principle, i.e. they learn to decode a written word letter by letter and blend the successive pronunciations. The third stage, the orthographic stage, shows direct word recognition again, but is now based on automatisation of indirect word recognition. Kurvers (2007) investigated the beginning reading of illiterate adult migrants in the Netherlands who learned to read and write in Dutch as a second language. She was interested to see whether the models used to explain the beginning reading of young children would also be applicable to adults and to beginning reading in a second language. Analysing reactions on word-reading tasks, Kurvers classified the following strategies for word recognition:

- Visual recognition/guessing based on visual or context cues;
- Letter naming: responding with the names or the sounds of individual letters, without any blending;
- Decoding letter by letter: sounding out letters and blending;
- Partial decoding: decoding by groups of letters;

[11] The term visual cues is used here to illustrate all kinds of visual features of written words, such as length, place on the page, lay-out or a specific visual feature of individual letters; graphic cues is used whenever the reader systematically uses the information that is covered by the order of graphemes.

- Direct word recognition: a word is read without any spelling out.

Kurvers' study revealed that adults who used the latter strategies were more successful in word recognition than students who mainly used the first strategies - outcomes that more or less confirmed the applicability of the word recognition model presented before. Because these models and strategies were mainly investigated in the context of western education, it is worth finding out whether adults in East Timor also use these strategies and whether their reading development points to the same stages in developing word recognition skills.

3.3 Design of the pilot

Participants
In total 21 East Timorese literacy students participated in the pilot of 2007. All of them were adults, 15 women and 6 men, and they had never attended any school before. They were students from two different literacy groups, one in Dili and one on the small island of Atauro. The Dili-group (group 1) consisted of 14 female students with 6 different mother tongues: Mambae (5x), Tetum (3x), Kemak (2x), Fataluku (2x), Tokodede (1x) and Makasai (1x). The students attended, with some variation due to starting date and presence, the literacy course for almost a year. The exact ages of the students were not known, but all of them were adults (18 years or older). The teacher sometimes used part of the old, non-contextualized literacy manuals[12] and mostly no literacy materials at all. The Atauro-group consisted of 7 students, 6 male and 1 female. The mother tongues of these students were Rasua (4x) and Raclungu (3x). This group attended the literacy course during 11 months and used the newly developed, contextualized materials *Passo em Frente*, Timorese literacy manuals for beginners in Portuguese. Six students were between 43 and 55 years old, the seventh was 28 years old.

3.3.1 Instruments

Two research instruments were used during the pilot: a word reading task and a writing task. The *word reading task* consisted of a list of 60 Portuguese words, starting with short monosyllabic words and ending with words consisting of five syllables. Fifty percent of the words were taken from the recently developed and rather widely used series of literacy manuals[13] (although words used like 'fish' (*peixe*) or 'rice' (*arroz*) were very common words in East Timor and probably known by many literacy learners); the other fifty percent were comparable in linguistic structure and did not occur in those manuals, but were also common words like 'good' (*bom*) or 'school' (*escola*). The participants were asked to read the words out loud and their reading was audio-recorded. The word recognition score was the number of correctly read words in 3 minutes. The *writing task* consisted of a basic form to fill out. Participants were asked to write their name, birth date, name of their village/town and district, their first and second language and their signature. They were also asked to answer one open-ended question about why they wanted to learn to read and write.

3.3.2 Analysis

The audio recordings of the *reading task* responses were transcribed and coded twice, first as correct or incorrect (if incorrect, errors made were noted) and secondly on the word recognition strategies the students were using. It turned out that the list of word recognition strategies that was presented in the previous section basically could be

[12] The literacy manuals *Aprender Ler, Escrever e Contar, Língua Portuguesa, Volume 1 & 2* (Ministry of Education of East Timor, National Directorate of Non-Formal Education, 2001)
[13] The literacy manuals *Passo em Frente; ler e escrever para adultos* (Ministry of Education of East Timor, National Directorate of Non-Formal Education, version 2006).

applied, with two exceptions. While observing and later analysing the reading recordings of the pilot, it was found that the first strategy in Kurvers' list, visual recognition, was not used at all by the participants in this pilot. Instead, another strategy was found that had to be added to the list: random letter mentioning.[14] Participants who applied this strategy started reciting the letters of the alphabet (a-b-c-d) and seemed to hope that by coincidence there might be a match between what they said and what was pointed at on the paper (the words ranked from mono- to multisyllabic). This is different from the letter-naming strategy in Kurvers' list of strategies in which the letter naming matched with the letters of the written word.
Summarizing, the categories that could be detected were the following:

1 Random letter reciting (for example: saying the letters a-b-c while at the same time pointing at the letters b-o-m of the word *bom* 'good');
2 Letter naming without blending: responding with the names or the sounds of individual letters, without any blending (for example: saying the letter names m-a-r without blending these three sounds to make the word *mar* 'sea');
3 Decoding by letters: sounding out letters and blending (for example: first saying the letters p-a-i and then the word *pai* 'father');
4 Decoding by clusters: decoding by groups of letters (for example: first saying the syllables 'tar' and 'de' and then the complete word *tarde* 'late');
5 Direct word recognition: a word is read without any spelling out (for example: saying the word *nariz* 'nose' in one burst of effort).

The *writing task* resulted in a number of filled-out forms that were analysed first on correctly or incorrectly written answers (if incorrectly, it was noted which errors were made), and additionally on factors such as motor skills and fluency, use of spaces between words, use of capitals or lower-case and accents. The latter will not be presented here.

4 Results

Table 1 presents the results on the word reading tests of the pilot in the two groups, showing group statistics on reading scores (t-test for independent samples).

Table 1: Means, standard deviations and t-values of word reading scores by group

	Group:	Mean:	Std. Deviation	T
Total number of words read correctly	1	4,71	8,96	
in 3 minutes	2	42,71	17,67	-5,36**
Total correct first twenty words	1	3,36	6,21	
	2	19,14	1,46	-9,02**

** $p<0.01$

Table 1 first shows reading scores of group 1 and 2 - the number of words correctly read in three minutes. Major differences were found between the two groups in word reading scores. Group 1 on average reads five words correctly (mean 4,71, sd 8,96); group 2 on average reads 43 words correctly (mean 42,71, sd 17,67). This difference is significant ($p<.01$). Group 2 not only reads many more words correctly, but also with much more speed. Because it was necessary to limit the frequency analysis of the uses of different word recognition strategies (see Table 3) to the first twenty words (hardly anyone in the first group read more than twenty words), the average number correct of the first twenty of the list is presented as well. This reveals the same difference between

[14] The term *random* refers to the fact that there was no relation between the letters mentioned and the letters in the written words.

the groups: Group 2 reads on average nearly all the words correctly, while the average of group 1 is around three words (p<.01). It should be added immediately, as was already mentioned in section 3.3, that half of the words in the word reading test originated from the reading materials group 2 was using. To test whether this significant difference in word reading scores between the two groups was caused by the words that group 2 might have been practising, we computed two different totals out of the first 16 words (eight method-related words and eight words that did not originate from the reading materials the groups were using). Table 2 presents the outcomes. In both cases, group 2 on average read nearly all of the words correctly, group 1 on average between one and two words. For both measures the totals of group 2 are significantly higher than for group 1 (t=-9.75, p=0.000 and t=-9.43, p=0.000 respectively for method bound words and other words).

Table 2: Means and standard deviations method and non-method bound words by group

	Group	N	Mean	SD	T
Total method words	1	14	1,43	2,41	-9.75**
	2	7	7,86	,378	
Total non-method words	1	14	1,21	2,49	-9.43**
	2	7	7,71	,49	

** p=.000

Because some strategies are likely to be more efficient than others, it was observed which strategy was used how often while learners read the first 20 words (see Table 3).

Table 3: Frequencies of word reading strategies by group

Word reading strategies	Group:	Mean:	Std. Deviation	T
1. Random reaction	1	10,00	10,38	
	2	0,00	0,00	2,52*
2. Letter naming without blending	1	3,14	5,60	
	2	0,00	0.00	2,10*
3. Decoding by letters	1	4,64	7,37	
	2	0,00	0,00	2,35*
4. Decoding by clusters	1	0,86	3,21	
	2	1,43	2,15	-0,43
5. Direct word recognition	1	0,00	0,00	
	2	18,57	2,15	-22,86**
Total correct out of twenty	1	3,36	6,21	
	2	19,14	1,46	-9,02**

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01

Group 1, which had weak reading scores (see Table 1), used more strategies that tend to occur early in the "learning to read" process. Group 2, which had much higher reading scores, used strategies that tend to occur later in the "learning to read" process. Except for strategy four (the partly automatized strategy of decoding by letter clusters), all differences between the two groups are significant (p<.01 for direct word recognition and p<.05 for all other strategies).

To investigate whether reading scores were related to the word recognition strategies the students were using, frequencies of the different strategies within and between groups were calculated and compared with the reading scores. Pearson correlations between the frequencies of word recognition strategy and the word reading score revealed significant correlations: a strong and significant negative correlation

between the frequency of random letter naming (strategy 1) and reading score (r=-0.68, p=0.001), a strong and significant positive correlation between frequency of direct word recognition (strategy 5) and reading score (r=0.84, p=0.000), while the other correlations between reading score and strategy use were in between (r=-0.45 for letter naming, r=0.14 for decoding by letters and r=0.29 for decoding by letters). This seems to support the claim that beginning readers (also in a second language) must acquire the alphabetic principle (Byrne, 1998), and that they acquire this gradually. We also looked at this relationship for each of the students. Table 4 presents an overview of five of the students, together with the word reading score (see appendix 1 for a complete overview).

Table 4: Main strategy-use and reading scores of five students

Student:	Main strategy-use:	Reading score:
1. Domingas (group 1)	1 (random reaction)	0
8. Amelia (group 1)	2 and 3 (letter naming and decoding by letters)	2
14. Madalena F (group 2)	3 and 4 (decoding by letters and clusters)	14
19. João (group 2)	4 and 5 (decoding by clusters and direct word recognition)	16
18. Mateus (group 2)	Only 5 (direct word recognition)	20

The examples in Table 4 show that, in general, learners with lower word reading scores used the 'lower ranked' strategies, while learners with higher scores mainly used the 'higher ranked' strategies. Apparently learning to read in a second language takes place in phases (although no longitudinal research had yet been conducted). This does not necessarily mean that the students of group 2 will use the recently acquired literacy skills functionally, i.e. that they can transfer their reading skills to socially relevant reading materials such as public health information. A comparison with the scores on the writing task (which was based on real life functional writing) might give some indication (see later in this section).

4.1 Relations with instructional practices?

One of the reasons for the large differences in reading success between the two groups, besides the fact that group 2 had been practising a portion of the words, is probably caused by the use of different course materials. The second group was using the newly developed, contextualized literacy course manuals, while the teacher of the first group showed some evidence of using some of the old (non-contextualized) materials or very often no materials at all (she would teach 'by heart', she reported). Most probably the guidance provided by systematic use of the new literacy textbooks led to the results for group 2.

Differences in teacher qualifications, methodologies and feedback most probably have also contributed to the large differences between the two groups. As far as could be observed, the teacher of group 1 spent a lot of time on the skill of copying the alphabet from blackboard to notebook. When reading words, there was a focus on naming single letters, not on blending sounds. The teacher, like many literacy teachers in East Timor, used the official names of the Portuguese letters, instead of the sounds, at least for the consonants.[15] For example for /f/, the letter-name *efi* is used, for /l/ *eli*, and for /r/ *eri*, which erects the following obstacles: spelling a word like *flor* 'flower' becomes *efi-eli-o-eri*. For /h/ they use *aga*, for /m/ they use *emi* and for /n/ *eni*, which makes the word *homen* 'man' spelled out sound as *aga-o-emi-e-eni*. Instead of helping learners to blend (link) the letters to words, these letter names create problems for the

[15] *Names of the letters* refers to terms like gee or double uu, *sounds* to pronouncing /g/ or /w/.

learners. This was clearly the case in the literacy classes of the first group. As far as could be observed, the teacher paid little attention to demonstrating and practising how to blend (link) correctly, or how to abstract from the level of letter names (i.e. showing that the letter that is called *efi* sounds like /f/ at the beginning of the word *flor*).

Observations in group 2 showed that the teacher used the new literacy materials fairly systematically; he seemed to use the teacher guidelines and worked on one or two pages of the workbook every lesson. In addition, he was looking for ways to make learning fun by using games or telling jokes in explaining new words or in guiding students' exercises. He seemed to focus more on results in practising (reading complete words) and functionality (words the learners can use in their daily life). He also seemed to have a better command of the Portuguese language than the teacher of the first group. Further research is needed to find out what the impact is of these factors. The main point in this pilot was to see whether investigating word recognition skills and strategies would be useful to differentiate between students that did and did not succeed in learning to read.

4.2 Errors

We also looked at the reading errors of the students that read more than a few words. We do not present details here, but merely the most frequent errors to see in what way first language phonology might have influenced second language beginning reading. Because of the low reading scores of group 1, no group-comparison is made here. The most frequent occurring reading mistakes were the following:

- Portuguese **v** in *vem* 'come' or *uvas* 'grapes' often pronounced as **b** (as in some Tetum varieties);
- Portuguese **j** in *já* 'already' often pronounced as **z** (as in some Tetum varieties):
- Portuguese **x** in *peixe* 'fish' or *xadrez* 'chess' often pronounced as **z**/**s** (as in some Tetum varieties);
- Portuguese **c**, to be pronounced as 'k' in *zinco* 'roof' or *escada* 'stairs', often pronounced as **dzj** / **tsj** (in Tetum the letter 'c' is only used for foreign names);
- Consonant clusters in Portuguese leading to adding a vowel and creating an additional syllable, like *flor* becoming *fe-lor* or *fo-lor,* or *centro* becoming *cen-te-ro.*
- An error likely caused by visual confusion seemed to be the Portuguese **rr** in *arroz* 'rice', that often was not recognized as such but seen or read as **n.**

It seems that the students adapted their pronunciation of items with sounds that are unknown or infrequent in their L1 to the phonology of that language. The most frequently observed errors reflect the pronunciation of sounds in L2 that do not (or not in the same way) occur in L1 and therefore seem to cause problems in reading in L2. This is a well-known phenomenon in adult second language beginning reading.

4.3 Relationship with writing skills

Since reading comprehension was not tested in this pilot, and (good) word reading skills could also have been observed without any grasp of the meaning ('barking at the moon'), the more functionally based writing skills of the two groups were also compared. In the writing products (the filled out forms) major differences were also found between the first and the second group. The average total writing score of group 1 was 4.14 (sd 2.28) and of group 2 was 15.86 (sd 0.38), the difference being significant ($t=-13.32$, $p=0.000$). Most participants of the first group only wrote their name and signature, most of the second group completed the entire form, including the open question on why they wanted to learn to read and write. (See examples of writing in Appendix 2.) The frequently made errors again seem to reflect the fact that letters or

sounds in L2 that do not (or not in the same way) occur in the L1 cause problems in writing in L2. That better word recognition skills seem to go together with better functional writing skills is also illustrated by the high and significant correlations between word reading scores and writing scores (r= 0.80, p=0.000).

5 Conclusions

Taking into consideration that this study was only meant as a pilot to investigate what kind of instruments and observations of reading strategies and instructional practices might be relevant in a larger research project, as described in section 3.1, a few conclusions can still be drawn. Considerable differences were found between the two adult literacy groups, both in word reading scores as in the use of word recognition strategies. Group 1 mainly used the random strategy of reciting letters of the alphabet or letter naming without blending. This group had low reading scores and did not succeed in recognizing written words. Group 2 mainly used decoding strategies or the already automatized word recognition strategy. This group was much more successful in reading words. The differences in outcomes seem to confirm the stage models of beginning reading in an alphabetical script and are probably caused both by differences in teaching methodology and teacher qualifications in instruction and in feedback strategies. Using more efficient word recognition strategies does not seem to be restricted to better reading of lists of isolated words, but seems to transfer to better functional writing skills as well.

Though this was only a pilot with a limited number of participants, the results seem to suggest that options exist to improve the literacy learning process and add to the efficiency of teaching reading. In addition, if more is known about the errors that are likely to be made by these learners learning this particular language, this knowledge could be useful for literacy teaching and for the current and future development of literacy manuals to be used by teachers and learners. The pilot showed that carefully assessing the reading and writing skills of beginning literacy students seems to be relevant, but so are the linguistic and sociolinguistic differences between first and second languages, a thorough collection of background variables and of classroom practices. As for the implications for adult literacy teaching, it can be assumed that more knowledge about stages and strategies in beginning reading, about specific second language problems, and about more and less successful ways of teaching will lead to improved literacy course materials, improved literacy teacher training and improved literacy programs and policies, regarding both Tetum and Portuguese as a first or second language in East Timor.

Figure 2: Literacy learner from the Atauro group (group 2) writing his name on the blackboard

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Appendix 1: Reading scores and strategies

Background data, word reading scores and frequencies of word recognition strategies by student and group

Group:	Name:	Sexe:	Mother tongue:	Score:	Strategies:				
					1	2	3	4	5
1	Domingas	Female	Fataluku	0	20	0	0	0	0
1	Laurentina	Female	Tokodede	0	0	10	5	0	0
1	Ilda	Female	Makasae	13	0	0	20	0	0
1	Filomena	Female	Fataluku	0	20	0	0	0	0
1	Ana Madalena	Female	Mambae	0	20	0	0	0	0
1	Ana Jesus	Female	Kemak	0	20	0	0	0	0
1	Antonia	Female	Tetum	1	0	14	1	0	0
1	Amelia	Female	Mambae	2	0	5	11	0	0
1	Bernadete	Female	Mambae	17	0	0	20	0	0
1	Teresa	Female	Mambae	0	20	0	0	0	0
1	Rosa	Female	Mambae	0	20	0	0	0	0
1	Regina	Female	Kemak	0	0	15	0	0	0
1	Florentina	Female	Tetum	0	20	0	0	0	0
1	Madalena F	Female	Tetum	14	0	0	8	12	0
2	Angelino	Male	Racunglu	20	0	0	0	0	20
2	Amelia SO	Female	Rasua	20	0	0	0	0	20
2	Jacob	Male	Rasua	19	0	0	0	1	19
2	Mateus	Male	Racunglu	20	0	0	0	0	20
2	Joao	Male	Rasua	16	0	0	0	5	15
2	Lucas	Male	Racunglu	20	0	0	0	0	20
2	Anteiro	Male	Rasua	19	0	0	0	4	16

Appendix 2: Writing samples

Errors are noted as follows: word > misspelled word

- *Ler e escrever e muito importante para mim* > *muto*, *min* / *mien*
  'Reading and writing is very important for me.'

  The error in *mim* is probably due to the absence of word-final Portuguese –m in East Timorese languages such as Tetum.

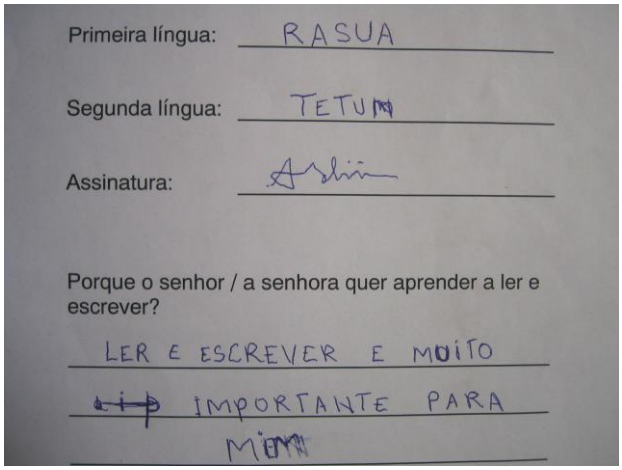

Figure 3: Ler e escrever é muito importante para mim.

- *Quero assinar o meu nome* > *asinar*
  'I want to sign my name.'

This is an example of writing phonetically: the double ss is a convention, not a different phoneme from s.

Other errors made, mainly by learners of the first group:

- forgetting the difference between capitals and lower case and leaving out spaces:

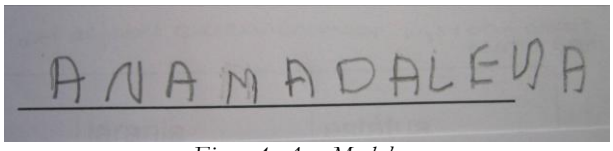

Figure 4: Ana Madalena

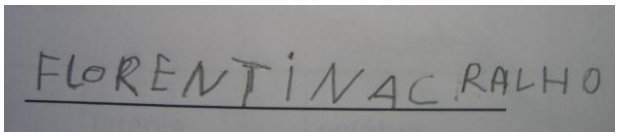

Figure 5: Florentina Cralho

- errors with the tilde (~), which is frequently used in Portuguese (on *o* and *a*) and less frequently in Tetum (on *n*) or other L1's:

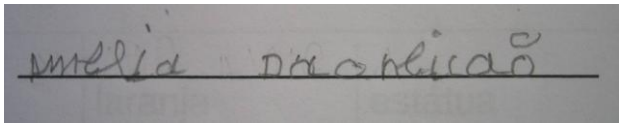

Figure 6: Amelia's family name ending on -ão

Figures 7 and 8 show that some differences in writing fluency were found. Low writing scores - due to many errors - were obtained mostly by learners with low reading scores:

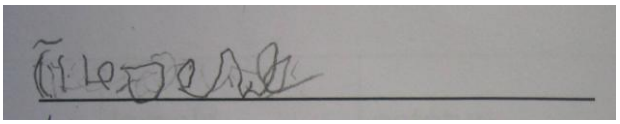

Figure 7: Theresa

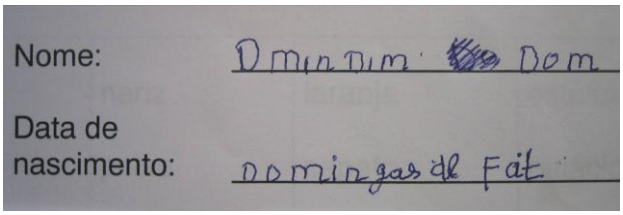

Figure 8: Domingas

A SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH TO LITERACY INSTRUCTION FOR ADULT ESOL LEARNERS NEW TO LITERACY

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1 Introduction

In this chapter I draw on socio-cultural views of learning influenced by Vygotsky (1997) to argue that cognitive processes have their origin in social activity. Compatible with this view of learning is a view of language which acknowledges that acquiring literacy is a sociolinguistic as well as psycholinguistic process in which learners need to make sense of language in context. This includes an awareness of not just the *what*, but the *why* of texts - why does X respond in such a way to Y for instance – commonly referred to as pragmatics (cf. Thomas 1995 for an introduction to this field). I will argue, drawing on several case studies, that literacy instruction for adult non-literate learners is best seen as induction into understandings of the function of literacy in social life and the manner in which we make sense of different text genres, as opposed to the teaching of discrete, sequential, autonomous skills. The distinction between literacy as social practice and literacy as skills instruction has been extensively explored through the new literacy studies (cf. Street 1984, Baynham 1995, Gregory 2008) and they point the way to a socio-cultural, sociolinguistic approach to literacy instruction for adult ESOL learners.

Adult learners of English as a second language who are new to literacy present a particularly interesting case of how interwoven identities and life experiences and culturally grounded views of learning impact on literacy acquisition. In this chapter, I shall talk about three learners who have had no or little prior education in their countries of origin. The vignettes illuminate in different ways the role played in present literacy learning by past learning and life experience.

2 A socio-cultural view of learning

The view I take here is that socio-cultural, Vygotskyan models of learning are more appropriate for adult ESOL learners new to literacy than skills-based approaches. Learning-as-skill assumes that there is a set of competences which are universally applicable and culturally neutral. One example of this is the espousal of phonics instruction as the point of departure for all subsequent literacy instruction, regardless of the context of learning and teaching, the nature of the language being taught and the life and learning experiences of learners. A social view of literacy emphasizes the need for explicit teaching of knowledge about written language as related to speech but sees this relationship as linguistically and culturally variable and context dependent.

Socio-cultural theory, in acknowledging prior learning and thus the fundamental principle long argued by educators that new learning builds on existing knowledge, allows learners to draw on the tools and resources they bring with them to their acquisition of literacy. A Vygotskyan model emphasizes the role of mediated learning, where resources available to learners from their cultural context are drawn on to develop new forms of knowledge or reshape familiar ones. Their real life experience is legitimized. As Luis Moll says: current policies (Moll talks of the United States but much the same would be said of the United Kingdom) 'effectively eliminate lived experiences and funds of knowledge from the learning and teaching process' (Moll 2002:266). A preoccupation with the teaching of decontexualised skills rather than with knowledge and understanding of principles leads frequently to phonics instruction of a mechanistic kind. Moreover, as Collins and Blot point out; phonics programmes tend to be 'visited on the disprivileged' (Collins and Blot 2003: 173).

Collins and Blot do not specify who is disprivileged, nor do they elaborate on which version of phonics they have in mind. However it has been frequently observed in countries like the UK and the USA that one consequence of differential instruction is

that those perceived as needing special assistance with language and literacy are confined to form-focused instruction of a cognitively unchallenging nature (cf. Mertzman 2008 for a recent discussion of research in this vein). Included in such 'disadvantaged' groups are second language learners, particularly those with limited or no prior educational background. This is in spite of the fact that the heterogeneity of second language learners, linguistically and culturally, is likely to mean a mismatch between their learning needs and the blunt tool of prescriptive, rigidly defined forms of literacy interventions, which Moll (2002:266) sees as 'desperate efforts to impose uniformity on diversity'. Second language classrooms or groups of the kind envisaged in this paper, which consist of new immigrants to English speaking countries, are typified by high diversity. Socio-cultural theory sees this as a resource for educational activities rather than a problem to be overcome or a basis for divisive classroom procedures, such as particular kinds of supposed 'ability' grouping, which allow early second language learners little access to rich models of language and literacy instruction.

3 *A sociolinguistic perspective on language*

A theory of language needs to accompany a theory of learning. The work of psycholinguists such as Urquhart and Weir (1998) and sociolinguists such as Stubbs (1980) and more recently Blommaert (2008) is seldom acknowledged in the reading acquisition literature, leading to a neglect of linguistic knowledge beyond that related to phonemic understanding at word level. Particularly important for instance is the role of syntactic parsing (cf. Urquhart and Weir 1998), which presents a challenge for second language learners, who concurrently with learning to read, are learning how English is structured at sentence level and beyond.

In spite of the clear relevance of lexical and syntactic knowledge for L2 readers, research on linguistic aspects of literacy has been largely confined to debates around phonics (and indeed the merits of two *versions* of phonics instruction, namely analytic or synthetic) in recent educational discourse, to the extent that both major political parties in the UK have pinned their colours to this particular mast in the wake of an apparently highly successful intervention in Clackmannanshire in Scotland (Johnstone and Watson 2005)[1]. Admittedly, there have been dissenters who note that the success of the primary school children was largely limited to word decoding with only slight improvements in comprehension (cf. Dombey 2005). One might add, too, that the school population in the Clackmannanshire study was more homogenous than in most inner city schools or colleges, thus side-stepping the difficulties presented by linguistically diverse learners whose language systems would not readily match up with a single monolithic phonetic target of the kind which synthetic phonics assumes.

I do not wish to argue against phonics instruction but to locate this within a richer and more comprehensive understanding of language. This embraces knowledge of grammar, morphology, lexis and pragmatics. In homogenous monolingual groups this kind of knowledge about language tends to be taken for granted, but it is highly relevant to the language and literacy development of second language learners. The linguist Michael Halliday (1994) takes a functional view of grammar by which linguistic choice is always motivated by social purpose. Function drives form which means that words and sentences cannot be readily interpreted outside of situational or textual context. (cf. Wallace 1987). Vygotsky notes that 'understanding cannot be reduced to naming the word' (Vygotsky 1997: 147).

[1] The researchers conducted an analysis of the children's performance from Primary 2 to Primary 7, comparing the same children right through in word reading, spelling and reading comprehension. It was found for word reading and spelling that the gain in skill compared with chronological age had increased significantly over the years, even though the training programme had ended in Primary 1. In Primary 2, word reading was found to be 11.5 months ahead of chronological age, but in Primary 7 it was 3 years 6 months ahead. For spelling, in Primary 2 it was 1 year ahead, whereas by Primary 7 it was 1 year 9 months ahead. However, for reading comprehension, a different pattern was shown. In Primary 2 the children comprehended what they read 7 months ahead of chronological age, but by Primary 7 this had dropped to a 3.5 months advantage.

Rather than 'reading words' readers process the lexico-grammar of texts, making judgments not just about word meaning but word class. One pedagogic implication is that it is particularly important in the case of second language learners to encourage certain strategies such as backtracking and reading ahead to allow them to unpack and predict sentence structure. We see Anna, one of the learners I look at below, doing this in the case of 'it'. She notes the discourse function of the item 'it' in the text and is thus 'reading the grammar' rather than reading the words.

I go home and get a cup of tea
I sit down and drink it

Anna comments sotto voce to herself on encountering these lines: 'What means 'it'? It means tea'.

A sociolinguistic perspective means looking beyond language as form or meaning at individual word level, to language in use within whole texts embedded in a context of situation. Functional views of language which I want to argue mesh well with socio-cultural views of learning start with the text as a functional unit. Of course a text may be one word such as 'Danger' on condition that this word is embedded within a context which suggests the need for warning. The formal structure of extended texts is determined by social purpose. For instance academic essays such as the present paper are required to set out the premises of an argument at the start (at least in Western academic prose), unlike a personal letter. Once readers recognize a text's macro function, choices at clause level within texts begin to make sense. Recognisability of the social purpose of texts ties in with pragmatic knowledge linked to cultural knowledge of ways of doing things in particular groups and societies. Readers draw on this level of language/cultural knowledge to relate what is said to what is meant. Frequently this relationship is indirect and the reader or listener needs to infer what is intended. In children's stories for instance, the reader may be expected to understand an image or event metaphorically or ironically rather than literally.

Because the nature of language processing involves so much more than word decoding even in its earliest stages, and crucially is tied to social and textual context, it is appropriate to see the reading event itself as sociolinguistic. It is characterized by a high degree of variability which procedures like miscue analysis are able to capture, as they take account of which aspects of text - semantic, syntactic, phonological or pragmatic - are miscue triggers (cf. Wallace 1988). In particular because the lexico-grammar can only be interpreted in context, individual words will be variably predictable and therefore variably readable (cf. Wallace 1987).

Researchers of child language acquisition also acknowledge the principle that readers need to embed the reading of words within wider structure. A study by Paterson et al. notes the complexity of interpretation of seemingly 'simple' items, phonetically considered, such as 'just' (Paterson et al. 2006). It may be for this reason that what learners sometimes call 'the little words' are harder to read than fully lexicalized items, such as *giraffe* or *explode (*cf. Wallace 1988).

Of course experienced readers are highly skilled word readers regardless of context, but emerging readers are, as it is widely agreed, dependent on context. This means that their reading will evidence greater variability, to the extent that textual and contextual supports are either provided or denied for them. It becomes particularly important to provide the most predictable contextualization of individual words within a whole syntactic, semantic and pragmatic context, rather than assuming, as phonics instruction tends to, that reading in the early stages is a matter of 'reading words' as evidenced by a number of studies which take reading words as the starting point developmentally (e.g. Ehri in Stainthorp and Tomlinson 2002).

In short, a sociolinguistic view of reading is posited on reading text rather than an accumulation of words. The whole is not the sum of its parts. At the same time the reader is a meaning maker, drawing on the meaning potential of texts. Overall such a view meshes with a socio-cultural view of learning where the reader is using textual

cues at all language levels as well as, crucially, her/his existing knowledge of the world, as tools to create meaning.

4 Three Adult Learners

I shall present three vignettes of learners of literacy, two working one-to-one with a teacher, and the third within a small group. I should emphasize that these learners were not subject to formal testing. I do not wish here to make claims about 'what works', but in a more open spirit of enquiry, to raise some issues of approaches to the learning and teaching of literacy for adults who have received little or no formal education. Each of these learners illustrates in slightly different ways the role of social context in literacy instruction. For Hillyard we see that when guided to use overall text context, he is able more readily to read individual words. In the case of Anna and Zahib what emerges are more socio-cultural and pragmatic issues related to their expectations of oral narratives and other artifacts such as photographs, as experienced in their daily lives.

4.1 Hillyard

Hillyard comes from Dominica and his first language is a variety of French Creole, but he has had some quite limited education, through the medium of English. Hillyard is reading *Toussaint l'Ouverture of the West Indies* (Bentley 1969) about the Haitian slave who led the successful slave revolt against the French. As his teacher, I am supporting him through this text (cf. Wallace 1999 for a fuller account of the case studies of Hillyard and Anna below).

Notes on transcription: Capitals are given where the learner renders the word successfully. Capitalized letter names are given where the learner is using the letter names to decode a word, as in C-R-U. When the teacher gives the word direct to the learner this is italicized.

4.1.1 Text Extract

'Some of the owners were very cruel. If they thought that their slaves were not working hard enough they beat them with big whips. In all the West Indian Islands, whether British or French, and also in America there were quite a lot of cruel slave-owners.'

Hillyard	Catherine
Some of the owner were very –very cruel. If they does – if they don' T- H- O- U- G- H - T - thought that they – THEIR slave were not workin' hard…	
	Start again from beginning of the sentence
If they thought that their slave were not workin' hard ENOUGH they beat them with big hip – big whip. In all the West Indies,	*whether*
British and French and also in America there were Quite a lot of a lot of C- R – U – cruel slave owner	
	So who were cruel?
The owner of the slave	

A major resource which mediates literacy for Hillyard is his expectation that text makes sense, so that words which do not fit the textual context are not tolerated in his reading aloud, as in 'big hip – big whip'. Hillyard's reading defies a view of reading as word reading, in that his miscues show he is reading not words but syntax, as he replaces the standard syntax of the text with his own typical variety when he reads 'owners' as 'owner'. Hillyard is reading the grammar not words – or rather the words are embedded within a syntactic frame. This is clearly crucial in the case of function items such as 'enough'. Culturally the text resonates not with personal life experience, but as a learner from the Caribbean, with a likely folk memory of significant events in that part of the world. Finally, we note that he uses a letter naming device to apparently decode words he is unsure about. Hillyard's schooling has encouraged this strategy and it is as effective for him as phonic decoding might be for learners taught by synthetic phonics. For although phonics advocates will argue that the link between /m/ /a/ /t/ and <mat> is readily made, for many learners, especially when their pronunciation differs from that of their teachers as it does with second language learners, such connections may be elusive. For Hillyard, it seems that naming the letters triggers a memory of a word already known and offers an analytic tool which does the job.

4.2 Anna.

Anna is from Pakistan, and at the age of nineteen has never been to school. She has been in the United Kingdom for about eighteen months. Her strategy is to comment on and question both form and meaning in the texts that she and myself as her teacher work with together. In taking the initiative to challenge what does not make sense to her, she guides me to provide constructive mediation and thus learns more about the nature of written text and the reading process. Anna's reading is very hesitant, and I need to provide many words (these are given in italics). It will be noted that the text is written for children; it is part of an old, but still popular Ladybird series in the United Kingdom. However for a very early reader such as Anna, it proved hard to find simple narrative texts which could support her reading at this stage of reading development.

4.2.1 Text Extract

'Then before the fox could move she flew up to a high beam.' (It is important to add that accompanying the written text is a picture of the fox in Little Red Hen's kitchen. This shows a shelf with a plate rack above and cups suspended on hooks below. Anna's attention is drawn to the cups hanging on the wall.)

Anna	Catherine
Then before the fox could move	*could move*
She…fly up to the – no	*high beam*
Miss she er…you know…	What?
Cup here in the house…cup	
Cup…she no use cup	Why not? Why can't she use a cup?
No Miss…because she…	
She you know. She…	
She chicken you know	Can't chickens use cups?
No miss…she took and maybe	
Nice…she nice thinking, you know	But you don't think she uses them to drink out of?
No Miss…she eat in the floor	

She no use cup and plate	Um. But in stories things are different…I mean…in this story the hen can talk and the fox talks
Yes Miss. No in Pakistan. No him Talking and no her	Not even in stories?
Maybe story	

Anna mounts a challenge to the text because it does not match her real world experience of stories. While the text is in many ways therefore not suitable as literacy support for Anna, it offers a space for talk about textual expectations and the degree to which these might be culturally shared. We see that what we might call pragmatic failure – due to lack of familiarity with culturally expected features of children's stories where animals take on human characteristics – offers a learning opportunity, one which is shared with her teacher. Anna, as a meaning maker, has no inhibitions in challenging what she sees as excessive anthropomorphism.

4.3 Zahib

Zahib works as a maid in London with a wealthy Saudi Arabian family. Like Anna she has had no schooling. Unlike the other two cases, Zahib is being taught in a small group of four women. On the occasion I observe the class, she and several of the women in the group use a strategy comparable to Anna's to make sense of their learning experience. This is a strong resistance to culturally unfamiliar scenarios. They challenge the story of a fictional person, based around a photograph of a young woman, on the grounds that the woman, Sara, cannot be allowed to 'have three children' because she is only 22. Narratives produced about fictional characters – triggered in this class by photo prompts – have to be seen to mesh with the real world experiences of this class of women. Any text has to be meaningful in the terms of the learners' own worlds. This moment recalls the famous one described by Luria (1976) where learners' real life experience over-rides claims presented in syllogisms. Here it is not a matter of logic but of genre (namely that in invented texts we need not bother too much about what might be the case in real life). It seems likely that fictional texts which 'allow' counter-experience events – as with hens drinking out of cups and very young mothers with many children - are not part of the life world of these new-to-literacy learners. It must be added though, in anticipation of any notion of 'deficit' in these readings, that plausibility remains a part of response to texts for *all* of us, even experienced and sophisticated readers.

As a helper in Zahib's class, I assist her in constructing a story on the whiteboard. The tools are therefore the board and pen which she uses to scribe the story, the picture of Sara as a prompt, my support and, most importantly, Zahib's own life experience. What happens is that even though the intention is to tell the story as in the picture and as rehearsed earlier in the whole group, Zahib decides to give an account of her *own* daily life instead. The process involves me, as a scaffold to this event, spelling out the tricky words. We see that the letters are needed here, not the sounds. This makes the point about how work with letters and morphology help in a language experience approach of this kind. As Zahib and I build the text together, we need to talk not about the sounds /i/, /e/ or /a/ but the letters. We see then that letter names or morphemes as in directions such as 'add an ed' to make it past or an 's' to make it plural offer tools in the Vygotskyan sense to support this early learner as she constructs a simple text. She is thus gaining an understanding of what it is to be a writer, a sense of story and crucially, an understanding of basic lexico-grammar, made more visible in the concrete form of written symbols than in talk.

5 Conclusion

Each vignette sheds light in a different way on ways of teaching early literacy. They also, I would argue, offer evidence for the value of a socio-cultural view of early literacy. I shall conclude with some implications for practice under three headings: the need to nurture existing language and world knowledge resources, the role of miscue analysis in the learning to read process and the need to scaffold learning to new levels of understanding.

> *The importance of nurturing a range of existing resources in low educated adults which mediate in the manner in which they make sense of text.*

The learners here have come to literacy instruction with limited resources, educationally speaking. However they are expert, mature users of language, with varying degrees of bilingual skill and knowledge. Above all, they expect language to make sense. And we see the sense making process in evidence here as Anna challenges a text which does not mesh with her real world knowledge. At the same time, she is able on another occasion to work out through access to print some of the principles of written language, as we see in her comment 'what means it'? In fact it is easier for learners to develop a meta-language for lexical and syntactic features of text - looking beyond individual words and grapheme/phoneme relationships - than it is for phonology. Features such as word order and morphology are more transparent and more readily talked about. For instance, at one point in our lessons, Anna comments: What means 'ed'? 'Ed' means past'. She is learning about the way English creates past tense through access to text itself.

> *The value of fine grained miscue analysis which allows teachers and learners together to see why errors occur, that indeed some errors are to be viewed positively, rather than to judge error in terms only of failure.*

Miscue analysis is commonly seen as assessment tool but can be a teaching/learning tool documenting for both teacher and learner which aspects of texts are creating difficulty at particular moments of learning. Miscues may be grapho-phonic, syntactic, semantic or related to the overall intention of a text. THE strength of miscue analysis is first that it looks at all levels of language in context. Second, it acknowledges that errors can represent a development in the meaning making process and are not always to be judged negatively.

> *The importance of building on the real life experiences of learners in ways which take their learning to a new level. The teacher's role is to make use of various kinds of scaffolds to support this learning.*

The use of scaffolds or tools to mediate in learning is a key principle of Vygotskyan learning theory. For adult learners these may consist of all kinds of artifacts, such as images or simple texts which resonate with daily life. Carefully chosen material allows learners to be the experts – for instance an image of a particular kind of water pump used back home or visuals/texts which represent salient aspects of their lives in the new country. Such key texts can trigger a different level of debate around what these artifacts might represent, offering learners' experience of critical engagement with print which must ultimately be one aim of any adult literacy programme.

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WHO IS 'YOU'?: ESL LITERACY, WRITTEN TEXT AND TROUBLES WITH DEIXIS IN IMAGINED SPACES.

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1 Introduction

For experienced readers/expert navigators in the imaginary space of books, second language reading can be a rich source of "real world" language (Cates & Swaffar 1979; Krashen 1989; Cho & Krashen 1994; Mason & Krashen 1997). But in the case of fledgling adult readers, is written language an unequivocally good source of L2 vocabulary and structures for them? The assumption that L2 reading supports L2 learning with adult beginning readers has yet to receive sufficient scrutiny. This paper presents findings from a qualitative study of an adult ESL literacy classroom which examined the various functions teachers and students assigned to written language (textbooks, written handouts, dialogue journals, workbooks and language written on the blackboard) (Whiteside 1997). The study's findings shed light on the kinds of difficulties adult students may experience with written expressions in L2, and how these difficulties can impede progress in SLA. The study compared students' and teachers' normative assumptions about the uses of written material, and documented communication breakdowns in discussions about written text. In particular, these data show the trouble low- intermediate readers may have orienting themselves *vis à vis* the imaginary spaces represented in L2 textbooks, and then reorienting themselves in the real time/space of the classroom. This paper will describe such troubles with "deixis"; that is, the time/space/person relationships represented by the language of a given text. We then consider what these findings suggest about early-stage adult L2 readers, and discuss some implications for pedagogy.

2 Background

Research on early-stage L2 reading and the extent to which it supports SLA or *vice versa,* is meager to say the least. With the exception of recent work done by members of the LESLLA forum, second language studies have generally neglected adult early second language readers (Adams & Burt, 2002; van de Craats, Kurvers and Young-Scholten, 2005). Researchers in L2 reading have historically focused on school-age children, and have tended to replicate studies in L1 reading rather than to chart new territory in L2 reading (Bernhardt 2002, p.796). Bernhardt and Kamil (1995) framed the discussions on L2 reading with these two questions: "(H)ow first language literate does a second language reader have to be in order to make the second language work?" and "How much second language knowledge does a second language reader have to have to make the first language reading work?" (p. 32). Findings from their own study suggest that L2 reading draws on both L1 reading ability and L2 syntactic knowledge. Their study looked at college undergraduates, whose skills are very different that those of adult new readers with few years of formal schooling, or none at all, who lack many of the skills normally acquired before or during the first few years of schooling. These skills include a general orientation to books, text genres, graphic conventions, and the relationships between pictures and texts.

Much of the "expertise" in adult L2 literacy that has emerged over the last 30 years in the U.S. has come not from academics but from practitioners. Beginning in the late 1970s, adult ESL programs began developing *ad hoc* solutions to problems posed by non-reading students, who were arriving in increasing numbers (Burt, Kreeft Peyton and Adams, 2003). These programs were generally poorly funded, with little or no professional development, and in the absence of research on how adult immigrants

learn second language or on the effects of particular interventions (van de Craats, Kurvers and Young-Scholten, 2005). ESL literacy textbooks written by these "experts" often focus on communicative competencies, along with sight word and letter recognition. But questions remain about the efficacy of these texts, or the functions of text in L2 development with low educated adults.

3 Description of the study

This qualitative study, part of an M.A. thesis "*All the words are in the story": uses of text in an ESL Literacy classroom* (U.C. Berkeley, 1997), looked at how intermediate literacy students and the teacher used a popular introductory L2 text, *Collaborations* (Weinstein-Shr & Huizenga, 1996), not a designated literacy textbook. The subjects were members of an ESL Literacy B class, held at a predominantly Latino[1] campus (8,000 students enrolled, 82 sections of ESL) of a large urban California community college where I had taught for many years. The class had 38 students ranging in age from 18 to 80, all Spanish speakers, with the exception of three students, who spoke Vietnamese or Amharic. These students placed in the Literacy B section if they were considered "semi-literate" in their first language; that is, they could decode basic sentences in English and/or had 1-3 years of schooling. The class was itself part of a literacy program with four levels of literacy and over 400 students, within the ESL department.

The study started with five questions: What is the function of text in this classroom? How are students using it? How is the teacher using it? What do the textbook authors say about its intended use? What metalinguistic talk is used to refer to language structure and rules? The plan was to document the discourse of the teacher and students during or after literacy "events" and tensions that arose in relation to these events (Dyson, 1992; Heath 1986). The approach was interpretive, its purpose to shed light on the terms of the problems by looking for "emic" or insider perspectives of the various participants: the teacher, the students, and the authors of the text used (Erikson, 1986) about what counts as learning and knowledge (Cazden, 1988).

The project used a case study method, following the trajectories of five students, four female and one male from Mexico and Central America, all native speakers of Spanish. Four students had three years of education, the other, six years. The most fluent reader, a woman in her 30s with three years of schooling, felt she was making progress in English; the others, in their 40s and 50s, felt they were not. The teacher had had seven years of part time ESL teaching experience, but no training in literacy; she expressed frustration with how the class was going and with her choice of textbook for this level. My role in this case was as a researcher/participant-observer. Although some students knew me as a teacher, my role in the class was as an observer who helped out minimally.

3.1 Data collection procedures

Data were collected biweekly over two months. These consisted of observation notes; audio-taped classroom interactions; semi-structured audio-taped interviews with three focal students and the teacher; and written artifacts, including tests, journals, handouts, and the ESL textbook. Spanish data were translated. Transcribed data were coded and analyzed, yielding four kinds of evidence. These were grouped as: evidence of frustration, task discrepancies (teacher expectation vs. student behavior), discrepancies between communicative competence and academic incompetence, (Cummins 1984) and problems with deixis. I limit my discussion here to the last category, data that show

[1] Students are generally from South and Central America and the Caribbean. They speak Spanish, Portuguese in addition to a variety of indigenous languages. (For details about this US immigrant population, see Juffs and Rodríguez, this volume.).

these low- intermediate readers struggling with relationships represented on the written page, between pictures and words and between various texts, and between these relationships and real space, or problem with "deixis".

3.2 What is deixis?

The term "deixis"[2] refers to those linguistic phenomena that index something or somebody. These phenomena belong to the more general linguistic category of indexicality; that is, language which directs attention to a person, object or context, without describing it (Hanks, 1996; p.58). Indexical-referential terms, terms like "now/later", "us/them", represent relationships between objects and their contexts (Hanks 1999). Deictic terms are "shifters", or words whose meaning shifts according to their context of use. They include pronouns and demonstratives and other words whose interpretation depends on knowing the time, position and identity of the speaker. That identity is considered a deictic center: "I" has to be identified before "you" can have meaning. Deictic terms also include time expressions, such as verb tense, aspect markers and adverbials. A written note pinned to a door reading "back in 10 minutes" is useless unless you know what time it was posted. Many verbs like "come" and "go" encode deictic relationships. Contextual cues like eye gaze or a pointed finger make these relationships explicit in face-to-face interaction (Gumperz, 1982); they are not so obvious in written text.

" Want me to pick you up?" I'd ask my two-year-old daughter. "Yes, pick you up" she would answer. Children take time to develop deictic reference in L1 acquisition, as they gradually learn to recognize points of view other than their own (Tanz, 1980). Parents often compensate by avoiding shifted reference ("Mommy wants you to sleep") (Ibid, p.50). In L2 development, deictic terms can be a source of confusion, since pronoun systems can differ greatly from the L1 (marked vs. unmarked plural of English 'you' singular /'you' plural vs. Spanish *Usted/Ustedes*), phonological cues can be misleading (*Yo* in Spanish is not the equivalent of 'you'), and their cultural dimension (e.g. rules for using the familiar *tu* vs. the formal *Usted* in Spanish) may be unknown.

Charles Fillmore (1997) identified five types of deixis, for which interpretation depends on knowing the following: 1. Person deixis, on the identity of the interlocutors; examples include pronouns, and shifted pronouns of reported speech; 2. Place deixis, on the location of these individuals; examples include demonstratives (this/that), adverbs (here/there), and prepositions (in front of/behind); 3. Time deixis, on the encoded time of the message, and the time it's received (back in 10); 4. Social deixis, on social relationships; examples include teacher/student, social status (*tu/Usted*); 5. Discourse deixis, on the discourse context of the utterance; examples in written text include, "as mentioned above" or "Ibid". In addition to the five types described by Fillmore, Musloff (1997) distinguishes "visual sensory" deixis which depends for meaning on perceptual cues like eye gaze or spatial arrangements, from imaginary deixis:

> (W)hen discussing any not directly and sensorial 'given' referent, speaker and hearer must either project it into their present situation (e.g. putting a problem 'before' someone) or vice versa, by projecting the concrete situation coordinates onto an imagined context (e.g. describing and imagined route by way of positioning the interlocutors' deictic roles in it) or both. (Musloff, 1997; p.7).

While reading is restricted to the imaginary deixic relations in the text, discussion about reading involves both imagined deixis and sensory deixis, with the reader switching back and forth between an imagined space and the real time/space/person relations.

[2] from the Greek word "to point"

Relatively little research has been done on deixis in second language reading, although Cates and Swaffar (1979) argue for the key role of negotiating deictic reference L2 reading comprehension (p.13 ,14). A recent study of Iranian undergraduate students of English found that deictic terms are significant variables affecting EFL readers' comprehension and that deictic terms can interfere with comprehension (Varzegar, Afkami & Khabiri, 2004). But no previous studies have looked at early adult L2 readers and deixis.

4 Findings

The present study found a marked contrast between students' claims about their ability to speak English, and their perceptions about their performance in class. "Speak, yes, I can, although not correctly, but, yes, I can some, and read, yes, a little, but I don't know how to write, and it's really hard for me, since I don't understand very well what it means, so I can't write." All but one expressed concern that they weren't learning in class: "We can't do it"; "The little I learn I forget; Listen, I'm very worried because I'm not learning and they contrast themselves to other students who have more schooling (*Ellos si aprenden-* 'They do understand'). The teacher expressed frustration about how the class was going: "I don't know how to teach reading at the level that they're at…feel bad for them, whenever I ask them to write in their journals it's just AGHHHH"…"The class has been such a struggle…since the book has been such a struggle, every once in a while there will be a page where everything seems to, they understand and they answer all the questions…"

The data revealed student confusion with four types of deixis in the textbook: person, temporal, social and discourse.

4.1 Trouble with Person deixis

Students had trouble establishing who was speaking in a given text, or were unable to make inferences about a protagonist or those to whom he or she referred. For example, the teacher described one class discussion about a story by a man named Jose Tamoyo. The textbook shows a photo of a group of students facing the camera, below which the text begins: "We have a small class. I like it because I get lots of personal attention from our teacher…." Below the text, and to the right in smaller type, it says: "Jose Tamoyo is from Mexico. He studies at the Chicago Commons. He is sitting in the middle of his class in the photo." There is no visual cue about which of the two men in the photo Jose Tamoyo; students were unable identity the author of the first text.

> "…there was NO connection that it's his story, you see it's supposed to be Jose's story, it's signed Jose Tamoyo. Unless it starts with "My name is Jose' they don't make the connection that it's his story."

Another story involves a woman, who is identified below a photo of people talking in a classroom as Ruth Chang. In the photo, an Anglo American woman on the right is talking with an Asian looking woman on the left while other students listen in. The text reads (in part) "I was a teacher in Taiwan…". The attribution text below this, which is distinguished by different typeface, reads: "Ruth Chang is from Taiwan….She is on the far left in the photo. Adena is on the right." The reader must infer that the "I" in the story is the "she" in the attribution text, but the "she" in the first person narrative is Adena, another teacher. Students had trouble answering questions about Ruth Chang, and distinguishing her from Adena, according to their teacher, who described her interaction with them:

> "When I asked them, you know, 'yes or no, raise your hand, Ruth Chang was a teacher in Taiwan', nobody knew that; 'Yes or no, Ruth Chang is the teacher

> in this picture', I mean they didn't know all those things about who was telling the story."

But these students had no problems with sensory deixic reference with the same pictures. Deictic reference in imaginary space generally caused more trouble than references to photos of people in the third person, as the teacher noted:

> "If it just started saying "We live in Miami and we like it" they're like "Who?"…but they don't seem to have a problem then discussing that person in the picture in the third person…"

4.2 Trouble with temporal deixis

In written text, temporal deixis depends on inferences about sequencing that involves turning pages, anaphora or looking above or below. This is compounded by story deixis in which "the reader must be able to sort through the flashbacks, montage techniques, and project into the future" (Cates & Swaffar, 1979; p.14). Student difficulties with temporal deixis, demonstrated by the following event, concerned a section of the Jose Tamoyo story. In this text, Jose is writing about how teachers dress and the impact it has on the students, remembering a former teacher who dressed badly:

> "If they wear old jeans, small blouses and punk hairstyles, the students will not take them seriously. Once I had a teacher like that."

The teacher described a discussion in which students were unable to make inferences about Jose and his teachers:

> "They had terrible trouble with the idea that Jose had two different teachers. They thought he had two teachers now. They couldn't imagine that he had a teacher you couldn't see. They thought the old guy with a bald head (the older man in the photo) was a teacher, even though they had seen him in other pictures of the students."

The source of confusion may have been the past tense of the verb (had), the deictic center of the story, or the meaning of "once". Regardless of the source, an inability to ground the events in a sequence interfered with their reasoning about the story. These same students later told me stories with flashbacks and futures in interviews with me, suggesting that their trouble had to do with orientation to textually represented space/time.

4.3 Trouble with social deixis

According to Musloff, the interpretation of deictic terms depends on the relationship of speaker to listener, their common background knowledge and action goals (1997; p.9). This is particularly evident in social deixis. In my data, students were confused by social relationships implied by photos and their accompanying text. These confusions were exacerbated by confusions about English social relationship terms and unknown cultural factors. The Latino students were confused by a photo in of a Lao family, who are identified as the Kaxoyos. In the following transcription of a class discussion about the text, after establishing that Mr. Kaxoyo is speaking in the text below the photo, the teacher asked:

T: …who is he speaking about?
S1: He saying the story.
T: Yeah.. about who?
S1: about, about…

S2: about his…(pause)
T: About the family?
SS: No..no…
T: about his son?
SS: (mumbling)
S1: His daughter.
T: The daughter! About the daughter! It says right here, daughter (surprised tone)…About the daughter. So he's talking about his daughter…

Gender and its cultural baggage add confusion. In one assignment, a focal student had written about Mrs. Kaxoyo, referring to her as a father. She reported to me that she thought the man in the photo, Mr. Kaxoyo, was a woman.

Other ambiguities stemmed from the implicit assumption of the textbook authors about whom to include in the third person plural. One task involves "Thinking of jobs that suit us". The vocabulary provided includes: "cashier, carpenter, computer technician, doctor, homemaker, musician, sales clerk". A student who was having trouble filling in the blanks told me: "I understand what it says, but I can't answer, I can't say it and I can't write or do what they…" The students, themselves service workers, were unable to relate to the "us" in the text, or to the idea of jobs "suited" to that "us". Another page instructs students to:

> Work in pairs to describe yourselves:
> "I am ____and my partner is too. Vocabulary provided: (active, cheerful, friendly, intelligent, rich, romantic, sad, talkative)"

After much hesitation, one student wrote: "I am poor and my partner is too." Another later complained, "…the work in this book is very difficult, and it's very hard for me because I don't know what I'm supposed to do. Just now for example, they asked us what we plan to do in the future, according to what we want to be, or why we are studying. I understand what it says but I can't answer, I can't say it and I can't write or do what they…". These "action goals" which include "career plans", may contrast with survival strategies of immigrant service workers, who don't have the luxury of choosing an occupation.

4.4 Trouble with discourse deixis

References within or across a text, which make use of pronouns and antecedents or temporal anaphora, build textual cohesion (Halliday, 1976). Fillmore describes discourse deixis as "the "matrix of linguistic material within which the utterance has a role". Students had trouble figuring out implied connections between pronouns and their antecedents as in the examples above. There was less data specifically on discourse deixis, although I would include the following problem with logic. A page in the textbook lists several class rules, the first of which reads: "Students should not smoke in class". On the following page, students are instructed to check boxes "Agree/disagree" about each rule. One focal student had checked "disagree" about the smoking rule. Her stated reason was, "Because smoking is bad." Her disagreement was with the last three words of the sentence, not the whole idea, and the problem is one of reference, not necessarily one of faulty logic.

4.5 Evidence of interactional competence

In contrast to the seemingly basic difficulties students had answering questions about the textbook, these same students demonstrated an impressive ability to negotiate meaning in real time space, despite limited vocabulary and use of pidgin-like structures (on the syntax of such learner varieties, see Klein & Perdue 1993). For example, one

student who showed up late to class explained to the teacher that she wasn't coming to class but had tried to go to the bookstore:

S: I sick but I coming for the buy the book y *es* closed.

T: Oh, I think it opens… what day is the bookstore open?

S: I come in the bookstore?

T: Tuesday or Wednesday? Do you know?

S: Tuesday and Wednesday, tell me (intonation= "they tell me")

T: Un huh.

S: But now, nobody, *y* I'm waiting. Maybe late.

T: Maybe late.

In another instance, a student had this question about the verb to be:

> "Sometime no *am,* sometime *am*. When yes *am,* when no *am*? I need information for when writing *am* and *I* and when writing no *I* and no *am."*

And in a conversation about food they like, two focal students were able to understand each other using their limited vocabularies:

S1: I like burrito but hot dog no like.
S2: I like steak, for chile,
S1: Salsa?
S2: Yes.
S1: I can't take too much for the oil, very…I like everything I can, I eating rice, I cook, no put the oil, can eat to much, I too fat. Oil.
S2: Oil is fat for you?
S1: Yes.
S2: Do you like beer?
S1: I everytime I medicine.
S2. Oh, no good.

In these exchanges, students' ability to communicate far exceeded their capacity to function within the imagined space of text. This conflicts with the stated goals of the textbook authors who suggest that reading is the best way to improve vocabulary, and that of the teacher, who said her "whole crusade" was to make the text a resource for the students. Yet the focal students felt that the book was not an autonomous resource:

> "The book is useful only with the teacher, if the teacher guides us and shows us what it's for and how, because if I buy a book just to study and to look in it's as if I had no book."

They rarely used the book outside of class. As one student put it,

> "Very little, only one time. I try to look at what they gave us, but anyway I don't understand very much…Yes, I can read the book and yes, it helps, but since some words I understand and others I don't, so, no."

Others seemed to use the textbook as a kind of word suitcase, which you can carry home to show people who can explain it.

5 Discussion of Findings

Asked how she liked her textbook, a student once told me, "We see the little drawings, but we don't know what they are or what we're supposed to do with them". These findings demonstrate that students like these focal students, who were all fairly fluent oral readers, nevertheless may have difficulty orienting themselves in the imaginary time/space relations of written texts, and as a result, be unable to make inferences about text. In such cases, language learning is stymied by a general confusion about the basic who/what/when/
where and why of an activity. A number of deictic variables may be involved in each of these confusions; future research might be isolate and examined some of these such as L2 pronouns, prepositions, cultural assumptions, spatial relations, relationships between two texts, etc. However these findings suggest that deictic reference must be addressed before students can benefit from texts, and that students would benefit from practice with basic orientations to texts, pictures and to implied relationships between the two. McDonald's (2007) experience with giving students explicit instruction about visual conventions such as speech bubbles suggests that general orientations to such conventions are needed before these devices can be used to teach L2. As Cates & Swaffar argued almost 30 years ago (1979), students need practice in "inferential thinking about internal redundancy, orientational framework, genre based expectations, and background knowledge" (p.23).

The findings also suggest that texts designed for this level should make deictic reference as simple as possible, and favor sensory deixis. Texts such as picture dictionaries and picture stories are particularly suited to this kind of use. As one student told me, "If you use a word to show me the word, then I'll understand and I'll learn, but if you just write it, in Spanish and in English, how am I going to learn it? I'll be left without knowing the name, I'll just understand in Spanish. But pictures with words help. Then I know, I look at the picture and I remember". Classroom practices can involve more transactions in the "here and now", refer to concrete objects and make referential practice clear using gestures, and eye gaze.

6 Summing up

Second language literacy students may be good language learners, albeit weak readers and writers. Some of my Mexican and Guatemalan students learned Spanish after the age of 18, and in few years, without being able to read or write. Literacy students are not "interactional dopes" (Garfinkel, 1967); they can make sense of language which is grounded in the familiar. For teachers to rely on written input is to start from student weaknesses. This study shows some of the pitfalls of using written text as a source of new language. Its findings suggest that early stage reading may pose a number of obstacles to L2 comprehension, deictic reference being one of them.

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A CASE OF A STUDENT WITH LITTLE PRIOR FORMAL EDUCATION: SUCCESS AND INTERACTIONAL PRACTICES IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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1 Introduction

Research on education and language acquisition has suggested that adults who have little formal education prior to arriving in the United States may progress more slowly in English language programs than their peers with higher levels of previous education (Reder & Cohn, 1984). The reasons for this are likely to include unfamiliarity with classroom interaction, low literacy in the home language, and formal education's focus on decontextualized knowledge (Scribner & Cole, 1978, 1981). Those accounts aside, the true extent of and the reasons for this population's lack of success in the language classroom have not been well understood by researchers, due to the fact that little research has focused on this population (Reder, 2005), and the research that has been done has not systematically looked at what goes on in the classroom.

The research reported on here attempts to add to our understanding of how adult learners of English with little formal educational experience interact and learn in a language classroom alongside other students who may have substantially more years of education behind them. The data for this study came out of a larger study that compared peer-to-peer classroom interactions between two cohorts of students: those who had completed six years or less of prior formal education before immigrating to the United States, and those who had completed seven years or more. This paper presents a subset of that data as a micro-ethnographic case study of one of the learners in the low-educated cohort, Marco[1]. He completed six years of formal education as a child in Mexico City before immigrating to Portland, Oregon in the United States as a 29-year-old adult, where he enrolled in community ESOL classes.

Marco was chosen as the focus of this analysis because, compared to other students in his cohort, his educational background did not preclude him from successfully progressing through, and completing, the four levels of the community ESOL program. In fact, in his participation with other classmates who had more years of prior education than him, Marco displayed motivation and leadership that is more consistent with a teacher's behavior than that of a student who has remote, and what can be considered a small amount of, classroom experience.

Using methods from Conversation Analysis (CA), we uncovered the features of Marco's talk in various task interactions in the classroom. CA examines turns of talk in the context of a sequence of turns to show how talk is locally organized (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). The researcher focuses on details of the interaction to show the orientations of the participants in the conversation, or in this case, the language-learning task (see Markee, 2000 and Seedhouse, 2004 for in-depth accounts of Conversation Analysis in the second language classroom).

From a Vygotskyian or socio-cultural framework, these didactic conversational features reported on in this paper function to move learners through their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf, 2000). In the context of language learning, the ZPD is a cognitive level where a learner, the *novice* in this theoretical framework, is not independently capable of producing certain linguistic forms. However, within the ZPD the novice is capable of performing a task or producing a linguistic structure if scaffolding (relevant assistance) is provided by a more knowledgeable person or *expert*. Thus, the ZPD is essentially a socially-mediated place

[1] All names used are pseudonyms.

where knowledge is co-constructed between participants. In order for the novice to internalize new knowledge or acquire new mental functions, which for our purposes is attaining proficiency in a new language, engaging in social interaction in the ZPD is a necessary prerequisite (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

1.1 Study purpose

The idea of ZPD and the co-construction of knowledge fits well with what we already know from second language acquisition theory: adults, unlike children acquiring language, are more able to take advantage of previous learning experiences in deductive learning (Slobin, 1993; Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978). Learners require some sort of negative evidence if the interlanguage they produce does not conform to the grammar of the target language (Gass, 1997; White, 1991). The question we must then ask is: who is an appropriate person to fulfill the expert's role of providing negative evidence to the adult learner?

Some studies have concluded that learner-to-learner discourse is a limited way for the learners to receive this important feedback (Pica et al., 1996). However, the purpose of this study is to further document the intricacies of learner-to-learner talk at the beginning level of study and show how learners can indeed serve each other in providing feedback (i.e. negative evidence) on target language production (Gass, 1997). The data indicate that even students who are seemingly either more dominant or less outgoing are capable of alternating between the roles of expert and novice during a given task, providing each other with relevant assistance and feedback. The important result of this is the ability to produce target language that the students would not have been independently incapable of, as documented in other studies (Ohta, 2001).

We have two main goals in mind for this research as it is read by language practitioners who may be working with low-educated students or multi-level classes. The first is to support the idea that having low-educated students in the second language classroom does not always entail a painful struggle or even an unsuccessful experience with instructed language learning. On the contrary, low-educated students can contribute in valuable and unexpected ways to the classroom community. The second goal is to make teachers aware of the suite of interactional features that we will profile in this paper because they corroborate classroom management that strategically pairs students based on their participation patterns in class.

2 Methodology

2.1 Micro-ethnographic setting: The Lab School

As a micro-ethnography this study is empirically grounded and concerned with observing the participants' natural behavior and language as it happens on a regular basis in a given community (Steeck & Mehus, 2005; Nunan, 1992). What is micro about the approach is that the researcher defines the community being studied as a circumscribed group within a larger society. The prototypical example of this circumscribed community is a classroom. Here, we have defined the study community as an adult ESOL program in the United States.

The site of data collection for this study was the National Labsite for Adult ESOL, locally known as The Lab School.[2] The Lab School is a federally-funded collaboration between Portland State University and Portland Community College: the facilities are located on the university campus while the students, instructors, and curriculum are

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part of the community college's system (Reder et al., 2003). Before enrolling in an ESOL class at the community college, students are placed according to their proficiency level using a measure called CASAS Listening (for more information on the assessment, visit www.casas.org). There are no educational perquisites for students to enroll in ESOL classes at the community college, so by default, each class contained a wide variety of prior educational attainment and mixed home language literacy levels. Figure 1 below provides an image of a Lab School classroom.

Figure 1: A Lab School class in session.

Despite the diversity in the student population at the Lab School, it is important to remember that all of the students attended the program voluntarily, which is evidence of their shared goal of becoming members of a proficient English-speaking community (Hellermann, 2008). Following from socio-cultural theory, being proficient in a language is much more than having structural knowledge of the language's grammar and lexicon (Kramsch, 1986). Rather, proficiency should be defined in terms of interactional competence, or "a learner's ability to co-construct appropriate linguistic forms…and sequential routines in appropriate contexts in order to accomplish discursive practices [or essentially,] the development of skill in interacting" (Hellermann, 2007: 85). Additionally, a teacher-fronted classroom configuration alone is not adequate in driving students toward the development of interpersonal social skills in the second language (Kramsch, 1986). Rather, interactional competence in the second language is developed through the performance of tasks (Prabhu, 1987), or teacher-assigned work units, with peers (Ellis, 2000, Skehan, 2003).

It is because of the need to develop interactional competence, as well as the processes of providing and receiving scaffolding in the ZPD, that every student in a language classroom has an investment in each one of their peers. The students depend on each other as much as, if not more than, they do the teacher to accomplish the shared goal of gaining membership in a proficient English-speaking community. As part of their routine practice, the teachers in the Lab School project dedicated at least one portion of each three-hour long class to learner-centered activities.

2.2 Data

2.2.1 Data collection

During the 2001-2006 data collection project at the Lab School, each class was audio and video recorded. The Lab School consists of two classrooms that are each equipped with six cameras mounted on the ceiling. The teacher and two students wore lanyard microphones each class on a rotating basis throughout the terms. The microphones recorded the speech that matches with the video data. The result of recording from 2001 to 2006 was almost 4,000 hours of classroom data. During the span of data

collection, about 750 students from approximately 50 different countries and various educational backgrounds attended the Lab School.

For each day of class at the Lab School, the cameras focused on the students with microphones. The focused recordings of certain students during the classes provide researchers with a privileged view of learner-to-learner interactions. All of the recorded data was saved digitally into a multi-media corpus that is accessible using a software suite called ClassAction (Reder, 2002). The specific program used for this analysis is a viewer called Toolbox. A screenshot of the Toolbox interface can be found in Figure 2.

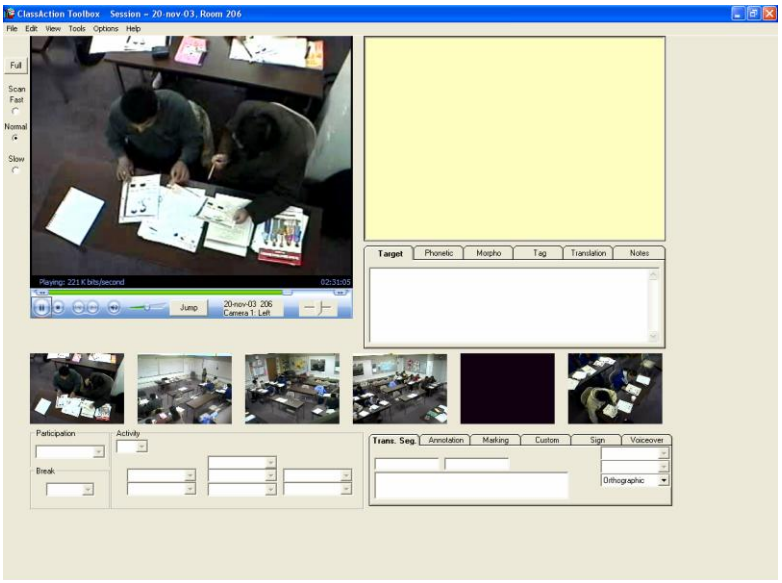

Figure 2: Screen shot of the Lab School's software. The student on the left is Marco, who is the focus of this analysis.

2.2.2 Participant and data selection

The focus of this analysis is a 29-year-old male L1 Spanish speaker from Mexico City, Mexico. Marco was classified as a 'successful' learner based on his teachers' evaluations, standardized test scores, and the pace at which he progressed through the four levels of the community college's ESOL program. Before he enrolled in classes at the Lab School in 2003, he had been living in the United States for four years.

Marco was chosen as a participant in this and an ongoing Lab School study because of having little experience with formal education (6 years) and being considered a highly successful student. Impressionistically, what we found unique about his behavior when we observed the video recordings of him in the classroom was a consistency in leadership and initiative in performing tasks with his classmates. Closer observation of his transcripts lead to the noticing of how his verbal behavior was very similar to a teacher's discourse in the use of such features as third-turn feedback (saying things such as "good", "yes", or "uh huh" with rising intonation in response to his partner's answers to questions), and initiating repair sequences (e.g. correction) for his partners.

The data for this analysis consist of transcribed "clips" or segments of recorded dyadic interactions from four different dates spanning Marco's first 30 weeks in the program. In order for a clip to be selected as part of the analysis, Marco or his partner had to be wearing a microphone, and the video clip had to be some interactional period lasting longer than one minute. We looked at interactions with a peer of a different L1, as well as different task activities. Not only are the data highly illustrative of how

students assist each other in the co-construction of knowledge, they also show this particular student's emerging interactional competence as he participates in and facilitates socially-mediated learning.

2.3 Transcription

The transcripts for this analysis are orthographic, though they do loosely represent when a learner does not articulate a word in a way that matches English phonetics. Because we analyzed the students' discourse from a CA perspective, the transcription conventions are adapted from Schegloff and can be found in the appendix (2007, see http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/Transcription Project/page1.html). In this text we include links to the recordings themselves so the reader can hear and see the recordings of each learner-learner classroom interaction.

3 Analysis

3.1 Classroom discourse

We can think of classroom interaction as a type of institutional discourse (for a more general overview of Conversation Analysis done in institutional settings, see Drew & Heritage, 1992; Heritage, 2004; van Lier, 1988). Along with the notion that the classroom is part of an institution comes the assumption that there are certain rituals, as well as pre-defined roles for behavior and interaction (Heritage, 2004; Kramsch, 1986). According to the norms of the institution of school, it is the teacher who is responsible for either directing or facilitating classroom talk, and we assume that the teacher has certain objectives in mind for lessons. A teacher can be more or less explicit in conveying the goals of particular language-learning tasks as they relate to the larger lesson. However, even if the teacher is thorough in explaining or modeling certain activities, the way the students actually do the activities depends on many factors; ultimately everything that is done in the language classroom is interpreted differently by different students (Harris, 2005; Schmidt, 1993).

Our research takes advantage of technological developments which have recently allowed researchers new insights into the language and interaction of students in classroom talk (Harris, 2005; Hellermann, 2008; Markee, 2000; Ohta, 2001; Reder, Harris & Setzler, 2003). The occurrence of what we call didactic talk in Marco's peer interactions is a result of him interpreting the objectives from the teacher's work plan (Breen, 1989), adapting those objectives to his own needs, and then trying to achieve (through talk) a shared understanding or 'intersubjectivity' (Markee, 2000) of these goals, with his partner (Seedhouse, 2004). Sometimes the achievement of intersubjectivity looks likes scaffolding, or relative assistance that an expert provides to a novice in helping them transition out of the ZPD towards independent proficiency; however, this depends on how each partner is interpreting the purpose of the task.

3.2 Features considered

After viewing Marco's recorded interactions from his first 30 weeks at the Lab School, we developed a categorization of features to illustrate how his talk was markedly didactic. The three features are:

1. Meta-task talks about pedagogical goals
2. Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) sequences
3. Choral co-production where Marco is both issuing the questions and participating in the choral response.

These practices give evidence of Marco's high degree of concern for mastering language form and performing the task according to the teacher's model. The

organization of the rest of the paper dedicates a subsection to each of the didactic features.

3.2.1 Meta-task talk about pedagogical goals

It is not uncommon for students engaged in pair-work tasks to begin some kind of spontaneous side-conversation. These side-sequences, depending on their purposes, may be thought of as meta-task talk, task expansions, or interpersonally-oriented talk (Ellis, 2000; Markee, 2000). Although some research has discovered off-task talk in the classroom, but as something to be disguised from the teacher (Markee, 2005), we observed Marco engaging in meta-task talk for the purpose of explicitly justifying pedagogical goals, rather than for strictly social reasons.

When students come to a class of their own volition (as Marco did), an explicit justification of what it is that students are doing when they come to class is rare in classroom discourse itself. Generally and implicitly everyone agrees the reason they come to class is to learn. Furthermore, there is an implicit agreement that learning itself is good, and this does not need to be reaffirmed between the students. However, if explicit talk about pedagogy is to occur in the classroom, the expectation is that it is the teacher who would be the one to explain the importance of certain activities. By the very nature of the traditionally unequal status between teachers and students (Kramsch, 1986), the teacher is the "leader with the vision" and the students respect the teacher and follow the lead. However, the data from this case study challenge our expectation about who in the classroom should make discourse moves that provide a rationale for classroom activities.

Excerpt 1 below is from Marco's first term in the program (Level A), and it is an illustration of a student engaging in talk about pedagogical practices. The teacher had set the task up so that the pairs were to exchange *yes-no* questions and practice answering in the complete sentences: *yes, I did* or *no, I didn't.* Excerpt 1 was taken after Marco and his partner, Guangli, had been doing the task for about 7 minutes. They were instructed to write each other's answers in the space provided on their handouts. Guangli was 46 years old at the time of this class. He had had 15 years of formal education in China including three years of college.

At the time Excerpt 1 starts, they had completed one cycle of all of the questions on the paper and had written in the appropriate answers. At that point, they were essentially finished with the teacher-assigned work unit, but the majority of the class was still working. In lines 1-7, Marco asks Guangli to repeat the task questions again. The request he issues in lines 1-7 eventually launches them into a repetition of the task (lines 28 - 41). In lines 1-7 it is clear that Marco's intention is to convince his partner to engage in more task-focused conversation: "one more okay. just for play" (line 2).

There is a one-second pause in line 4 that shows that Guangli does not immediately respond to Marco's request. After his original suggestion to continue practicing the task questions outside the boundary of what the teacher assigned, Marco has to do the work of reaching intersubjectivity with Guangli. Marco's strategy to accomplish this is to elicit a confirmation from him in lines 3 and 5 with "you like it?" After this, Guangli gives a non-verbal (weak) confirmation in line 6, Marco acknowledges it and the two students go on to repeat asking each other the same task questions several times until line 41.

EXCERPT 1: Task expansion
Marco & Guangli (male Mandarin L1 speaker) Term 1, Level A. 10-20-03 54:00-59:54
http://www.labschool.pdx.edu/Viewer/viewer.php?MarcoLESOLLA1

1 G: ((writing on his paper))
2 M: ok↑ay. (.) other one. (.) one more. okay? (.) just for play ((rubs hands together))
3 heh. ((laugh)) (0.2) ((nodding)) you like it?
4 (1)
5 M: yes? you like it?

6 G: ((slight nod)) ((still writing))
7 M: okay. ((looks down at paper and begins to read))
((lines omitted)) 58:09
28 M: did you::. did you go and (0.4) an:: mmm. (1) play in the park?
29 G: park?
30 M: park.
31 G: ((looks down at paper))
32 M: .hh park. ((points to the word on the board))
33 G: park?
34 M: yes. (1) did you go::
35 G: ((points to his own paper))
36 M: ((looks at G's paper)) yes! ((points to question on G's paper)) did you go to the
37 park? for play?
38 (0.5)
39 G: no.
40 M: no?
41 G: no.
42 (11) ((M looking at his paper and coughing. G seems to be waiting for M))
43 → M: this is important ((gesturing to paper)) 's more important it's like the
44 convention. conversation?
45 G: mm.
46 → M: you and me and the other people (.) was in English. you understand?
47 G: English.
48 → M: this is important ((gestures to paper)) okay.
49 G: yeah.
50 → M: so more important is uh. (0.2) speak. espeak with everybody people.
51 G: ((nods))
52 → M: mhm. this is important.
53 G: important.
54 (1)
55 → M: ((gesturing to paper)) this is uh. homework. okay? (0.5) homework. so, the more
56 important is you speak with other peoples ((waves hand in front of mouth)) (1) mm?
57 (0.5) for example ((turns around)) with other guys, with teacher, and the other
58 peoples on the street. (0.5) you you you ask (.) with other people. okay? (1) hi
59 ((waving)) how are you? oh fine thanks and yourself? pretty good. alright. (1)
60 everyday everyday everyday.
61 G: [((nodding))
62 M: [((nodding)) yes.
63 ((both look back at papers))
64 (6)
65 M: did you go to the library?
66 (2)
67 G: no.
68 (3)
69 M: why. ((gestures with hands eliciting more information))

In line 28, Marco begins the task repetition by asking the task question "did you go to play in the park?" The two students negotiate for meaning immediately after the question, but the true trouble source is where Guangli uses a minimal "no" response in line 39. From the following line, we know that Marco is dissatisfied with the minimal "no" because he tries to prompt Guangli by saying "no?" with rising, incredulous-sounding intonation.

The reason Marco prompts Guangli in line 40 could be that the teacher's instructions for the task which were to answer in complete sentences: *yes, I did* or *no, I didn't* and Guangli just uses the simple "no". When Guangli's utterance does not meet Marco's expectation, the two do not achieve intersubjectivity and the long eleven-second pause happens. This is the trigger for Marco to start the key sequence of meta-task talk that we see in line 43.

What Marco says in line 43 is clearly a departure from the actual task, but it is related because he talks about what they are doing in the classroom as assessment of the task. This sequence continues for twelve turns until line 56 - these twelve lines show that Marco is assuming the role of expert in an attempt to motivate his partner to participate more, just as a teacher would do. Essentially, he tells Guangli that the meaning of the questions on the paper is not their true focus. The questions are just a springboard ("homework", line 55) for interaction, and it is the interaction ("speak with other peoples", line 56) that is the important thing for learning English.

There are other pieces of evidence in his discourse that show that Marco is assuming the teacher/expert role. In lines 43 to 60, he delivers several long monologic turns that are similar to the structure of a teacher's talk during the delivery of a lesson (Seedhouse, 2004). Besides the long turns, other structural items are particularly teacher-like in Excerpt 1: the use of the tag question "okay?" in lines 55 and 58 and "you understand?" in line 46. Both of these questions are conversational modifications which might be characteristic of expert speakers' interaction with learners. Another significantly didactic characteristic of Marco's talk is the modeling of the sample dialogue that he does in line 58 ("hi, how are you? I'm fine thanks", etc.). This modeling is what a teacher does in facilitating activities, or providing candidate exercises for students.

One explanation for why Marco would enter into this meta-task sequence is to achieve a mutual understanding with Guangli about why he is continuing to ask him questions again rather than sit quietly and read, for example. Since they had finished the required work, a viable possibility would have been for them to stop engaging with each other. Marco displays an orientation to the activity-focused nature of the task and how that relates to language learning. That is, he thinks it does not really matter if they repeat the same questions. What matters is the basic experience of conversing, or the activity itself. From a socio-cultural perspective, Marco is assuming the role of the expert by encouraging the novice to reach his potential by attempting more target language production.

After the monologue task-expansion, both participants acknowledge the closing of that sequence by nodding and breaking their gaze in lines 61-63. There is a silence of six seconds, and when Guangli does not initiate more interaction, Marco demonstrates his commitment to the goal he has just explained by asking another task-derived question in line 65: "did you go to the library?"

The significance of Marco's persistence in encouraging his partner to maximize classroom time and continue to interact beyond teacher-assigned tasks is not only significant from the socio-cultural lens of showing how learners can assume the role of expert, it also shows that a student with little prior education at an early stage in their formal study (here, in the second month) can display a deep understanding of and a motivation for what it takes to be successful in acquiring a new language in the classroom.

3.2.2 Third-turn 'feedback' in IRF Exchanges

Another way in which Marco displays teacher-like linguistic behavior is in his response to his partner's answers, sometimes called the 'third turn'. Third-turn feedback is part of a common pedagogical exchange known as Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) or Question-Answer-Comment (QAC) (Markee, 2004). The IRF or QAC structures are typical patterns found in classroom discourse, and according to institutional norms, it is the teacher who is licensed to use these IRF

sequences in order to give students practice with newly learned forms or to evaluate students' comprehension during lessons.

Typically, the type of question that serves as the initiator in an IRF sequence is a "display" question, where the asker is not concerned with the content or meaning of the response, but the grammatical or phonological form of it. After the Initiation or display question is asked, the student's response is subject to some kind of evaluation or feedback from the teacher such as "good", "great', "mhm", a recast, or a repair initiation.

Excerpt 2 is a sequence of interaction from the classroom that has four examples of IRF exchanges where Marco's utterances correspond with the turns that are canonically reserved for the teacher's role: the Initiation and the Feedback. This excerpt is taken from a single task with a student, Hana, a 28 year old female with 14 years of formal education in Korea. After reading a story from their textbook about a character named Oscar, the students are supposed to take turns asking each other the questions from the book that compare their life with Oscar's. While the purpose of these questions is to presumably check or reinforce the students' comprehension of the story, Marco interprets and adapts the task as one that is focused on language form.

Evidence that Marco is orienting to this task as a form-focused one (rather than meaning-focused) comes from an explicit correction he does in line 6. He thinks that Hana uses the negative (*n't*) in her answer that begins with an affirmative "yes" in line 5. In line 8, he clarifies why he issued the repair, "you ask didn't". That Marco interprets the task as form-focused lends credibility to the claim that he is really asking prototypical display questions as part of IRF sequences. The four IRF sequences in Excerpt 2 can be found in the following line numbers: (1) lines 1-3, (2) lines 21-24, (3) lines 27-29, and (4) lines 31-34.

EXCERPT 2: Marco providing third turn feedback
Marco and Hana (female L1 Korean speaker). Term 3, Level B. 05-24-04
http://www.labschool.pdx.edu/Viewer/viewer.php?MarcoLESOLLA2

1 → M: .hh okay (0.2) did you:, break your /h/arm?
2 → H: no i didn't.
3 → M: okay. good. (.) did oscar graduation from high school?
4 (.)
5 H: yes he did.
6 M: he DID.
7 H: he did. yeah.
8 M: you ask didn't.
9 H: no::. ((touches M's arm)) yes he did.
((lines omitted))
21 → M: okay. he DID. no(t) didn't. (0.2) okay. did you wo:rk, did you work while in high
22 school?
23 → H: no i didn't.
24 → M: okay good. (0.3) something else?
25 H: hmm
26 (0.5)
27 → M: okay. ((looks at other page)) did oscar move to 'u' 's' (.) united states alone?
28 → H: yes he did.
29 → M: okay good. (.) did you move to 'u' 's' 'a'. d- do you- ah god!
30 H: ((laughs))
31 → M: ((laughs)) did you move to u- united states alone?
32 → H: ((laughs)) yes I did
33 → M: yes. ((sits up in chair)) (1) it's good. (1) but this (.) ye::s she did. and yes i did. (.)
34 okay? but no: yes he didn't.

35 H: he did. he didn't. ((points to book)) xxx say he didn't?

Marco uses "good" in each of the third-turns in the conversation, and in three of those he combines it with "okay". Because Marco combines the "okay" with the "good", the function of the third turn feedback in the first three IRF sequences is a combination of evaluation and transition. He simultaneously acknowledges that he is going to accept his partner's response without any repair, and that he is moving on to the next question. By the very nature of deciding about transitions and monitoring his partner's responses, not to mention the initiation of repair in line 6, Marco is assuming a leadership or expert role in the task with Hana, a student who has much more classroom experience and who we might otherwise expect to be assuming the expert role for a lesser-educated student.

If we compare this example of Marco interacting with Hana in Excerpt 2 with the previous interaction with Guangli in Excerpt 1, we can see that both show Marco encouraging his partner to maximize class time by extending task engagement and repeating the practice questions. Not only does he control this interaction with Hana by using IRF sequences, he also displays persistence in continuing to interact by saying "something else?" in line 24 and starting a repeat sequence of the task questions in line 27 after a short pause.

3.2.3 Choral co-production

The final didactic feature of Marco's interactions to be discussed in this analysis shows Marco's awareness of and participation in the discourse of the classroom as a whole. This participation occurs in sequences of choral co-production (Lerner, 2002). Lerner describes choral co-production in conversation as a type of "properly overlapping speech" where each participant is "simultaneously contributing to the same turn-constructional unit…by recognizably attempting to do such things as match the words, voicing, and tempo of the other speaker" (2002: 226).

In everyday conversation, choral co-production is a unique type of overlapping speech because the conversation partners do not see it as problematic (Lerner, 2002). The form of choral co-production is noteworthy because "grammatically, pragmatically, and prosodically, it is just as one would…[expect if the utterance] was produced by a single speaker" (Gardner & Ko, 2006: 8). Compared to interruption, for example, choral co-production has a cooperative feeling that serves to display the participants' shared understanding, knowledge, belief, or enthusiasm concerning a given topic. Lerner alludes to the gift-opening ritual at birthday parties as a good situation to imagine how choral co-production happens. He reminds his readers of "the cacophony of verbal and vocal assessments" that occurs when a gift is being opened, or when there is another sort of emotionally-charged or exciting event where talk-in-interaction takes place (2002: 225). Importantly for our purposes, this phenomenon has also been documented to occur in the language classroom (Gardner & Ko, 2006; Ohta, 2001).

Choral co-production, or multi-response sequences (Gardner & Ko, 2006) among language students is a particularly fertile place for learning, or at least evidence of students grappling towards comprehension and accuracy. In teacher-fronted classroom configurations, where the teacher poses an Initiation or display question to an entire classroom, learners can offer responses together with peers so as to feel less exposed when answering a teacher question or to highlight "collaborative achievement" (2006: 8), both of which may have an important affective component for learning. Additionally, the pedagogical value in these types of sequences is one of scaffolding and co-construction of knowledge. Learners are pooling their strengths and weaknesses to arrive at higher level of performance.

Excerpt 3 exemplifies several turns of choral co-production by Marco and a 35 year old Amharic-speaking classmate, Alysha, who had 8 years of formal education in Ethiopia. This interaction takes place during Marco's second term at the Lab School.

However, different than Gardner and Ko's findings, the feature of interest in Excerpt 3 takes place in the context of dyadic task-based interaction, not teacher-fronted interaction. We can see Marco performing two roles at once in this interaction: he is in the role of the teacher by way of asking the display question as part of the task, yet he is also playing the student because he participates in the choral recitation of the response along with his partner. Lines 1-10 show how the teacher introduces the task. The students are to ask and answer yes-no questions about characters from the textbook. The teacher shows that this is a form-focused task designed to get students to respond in "whole sentence(s)" with the form *yes he is* or *no he isn't* (line 1).

When Marco and Alysha begin their interaction, it is Marco who initiates the first task question. At line 31 he is still taking turns as the question-asker. The explicit repair initiation that Marco issues in line 36 shows that he perceives that Alysha is having comprehension problems in the task. Marco asks the task question again in line 41, but this time he provides scaffolding assistance to Alysha in the form of gesture (shaking his head because the answer is *no*). In line 42, Alysha shows that she is still struggling with the meaning of the question by saying "oh now". Marco does not treat this as a viable response and assumes her turn in line 43 giving the full sentence instructed by the teacher "no. he isn't". However, Alysha takes her rightful turn in the sequence (a response to Marco's question) and in line 44 first overlaps with Marco's turn, then shadows his utterance.

It is difficult to say if the turns in lines 43 and 44 are precisely cooperative or precisely competitive; nonetheless, they mark the beginning of more rhythmic turn-taking where Marco asks a task question, and it is followed up by jointly-produced choral responses in lines 48-49, 56-57, 59-60, and 62-63. What makes the sequences from these line numbers rhythmic and almost a chant-like call and response is that, unlike the choral responses in whole-class teacher-fronted interaction, Marco is not issuing third-turn feedback that would separate one adjacency pair from another.

EXCERPT 3. Marco initiating and participating in choral co-production
Marco and Alysha (female L1 Ethiopian Amharic speaker). Term 3, Level B. 03-29-04
http://www.labschool.pdx.edu/Viewer/viewer.php?MarcoLESOLLA3

1 T: uh. and then and then the whole sentence. yes he is, no he isn't. yes she is, no she
2 isn't. (.) so (.) the first one is about ana luisa. so it's about this person here. okay?
3 .hh is ana luisa from Japan?
4 LL: no::.
5 T: [no she isn't.
6 M: [no she isn't.
7 (2)
8 T: and then in the next question they just say she. (.) that means they're still talking
9 about ana luisa. (.) until they give a new name it means (.) still (.) this person. (.)
10 okay? so (.) go ahead and take turns with your partner.

((lines omitted))

31 M: is she at home now?
32 A: he=
33 M: =is he? at home now?
34 (1)
35 A: yes.
36 M: NO. he is at work.
37 (1)
38 A: where? [xxx

39 M: [is HE.
40 A: uh he.
41 M: is he at home now?= ((shaking head))
42 A: =oh now.
43 → M: [no. he isn't.
44 A: [no. no he isn't.
45 (3)
46 M: are him and su jin married?
47 A: married?
48 → M: yes. [they are.
49 A: [yes they are.
50 (1)
51 M: are they from Russia?
52 (1)
53 A: no (.) they aren't.
54 M: they aren't. (.) are they at school now?
55 (1)
56 → M: n[o. they aren't.
57 A: [yes. no they aren't.
58 (2)
59 → M: is Texas a big state? (.) [yes it is.
60 A: [yes it is.
61 (1)
62 → M: is Austin the capital of Texas? (.) [yes it is.
63 A: [yes it is. (.) ah.
64 M: ((sits up from leaning over, adjusts in seat))
65 (6)
66 A: mm:::. ((reading book))
67 (10)

What began as a functionally ambiguous overlapping of turns in lines 43 and 44 developed into an example of how learners provide each other with relevant assistance. We see Alysha struggle with the task from lines 32 to 47. Marco perceives this and takes the lead in establishing the brief rhythmic pattern that models the correct responses for her and then pushes her to say them correctly and more quickly. For example, with Marco's co-participation in the turn in line 57, she is able to repair her own talk (e.g. from "yes" to "no"). The self correction she does is significant because being able to self-repair is the preferred form of correction in conversation (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977). Indeed, learning to monitor one's own utterances and self-correct may be the most desirable form of repair for language students because it is the least face-threatening and shows independence development overall interactional competence.

4 Discussion

The data presented in this paper have shown how an English language learner with limited formal education can demonstrate sophisticated leadership strategies with peers and achieve shared understanding with his language-learning peers, some of them who have the apparent advantage of having more experience with formal schooling. He does this in various ways using features of meta-task talk, IRF sequences, and choral co-production.

We have argued that the reason why he takes on the didactic role can be explained from a socio-cultural perspective in that every student in the language classroom has an investment in their classmates due to their mutual dependence to develop interactional competence. From this perspective, Marco's use of these three features is evidence of

his emerging or already-existing interactional competence, and he is using that competence to invest in his fellow classmates in the process of the co-construction of knowledge.

Whatever the underlying intentions for his behavior, this analysis serves to show how someone with only six years of formal schooling in his home country can take a very active role in shaping the classroom community. We know that Marco brought literacy skills with him from his first language when he began learning English - skills which give him a great advantage over other learners with little formal education (Harris & Hellermann, 2008; Tarone & Bigelow, 2005). He also had strong instrumental motivation to learn English, reporting that he wanted to get a high school equivalency and to start his own business. Marco may be an example of how high motivation and some literacy may be key factors in the determining success in the second language classroom for students with little previous formal education.

5 Conclusion

The excerpts presented in this paper have implications for researcher-theorists as well as for teacher-practitioners. From a theoretical standpoint, we have contributed an example of how research methods that consider the turn-by-turn social interaction of learners (CA and Socio-cultural Theory) can add to the body of research in Second Language Acquisition (for more discussion see Hall, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 2004).

Our data allow researchers and practitioners a privileged view of student-to-student interaction as it happens naturally without the facilitation or interruption of the teacher. What we have seen is that some students like Marco can show surprising agency in helping each other and committing themselves to the goals of the classroom community. This information should encourage language teachers who work with students with little education or with mixed level classes to monitor students' participation patterns during pair and small group to work to the best of their ability. They can note when certain students are exhibiting leadership with fellow classmates like Marco and pair them with students with lower participation when assigning activities.

Finally, this analysis can also serve as a reminder for teachers that learners will take the task-as-work plan (Breen, 1989) and adapt it as task-as-improvisation according to their immediate needs in negotiating their interactional competence (Ellis, 2000; Harris, 2005; van Lier, 1988). An example of this would be when, in Excerpt 2 with Hana, Marco is decidedly focused on the forms of the answers rather than focusing on the vocabulary or ideas from the questions. This adaptation of tasks is part of what it means to be an active participant in classroom life, and this knowledge may help teachers to view students' improvisation and interpretations during tasks as evidence of learner autonomy and a healthy classroom community.

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Appendix: Transcript Conventions

adapted from Schegloff, 2007
(http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/TranscriptionProject/page1.html).

I. Temporal and sequential relationships

[Overlapping or simultaneous talk
[
= "latched utterances" no break or pause between utterances
(0.5) Numbers in parentheses indicate silence, represented in tenths of a second
(.) A dot in parentheses indicates a "micropause"
LL: Several learners are talking together, as in response to teacher's question to the whole class.

II. Aspects of speech delivery, including aspects of intonation
A. The punctuation marks are not used grammatically, but to indicate intonation.

. period indicates a falling intonation contour, not necessarily the end of a sentence.

? question mark indicates rising intonation

, a comma indicates "continuing" intonation

;/؛ a semicolon is used to indicate a rise greater than a comma but less than a question mark.

:: Colons are used to indicate the prolongation or stretching of the sound just receding them. e more colons, the longer the stretching.

- A hyphen after a word or part of a word indicates a cut-off or self-interruption

word Underlining is used to indicate some form of stress or emphasis, either by increased oudness or higher pitch. The more underlining, the greater the emphasis.

WOrd Especially loud talk may be indicated by upper case; again, the louder, the more letters in upper case. And in extreme cases, upper case may be underlined.

º The degree sign indicates that the talk following it was markedly quiet or soft.

↑↓ The up and down arrows mark sharper rises or falls in pitch

>< The combination of "more than" and "less than" symbols indicates that the talk between them is compressed or rushed.

<> Used in the reverse order, they can indicate that a stretch of talk is markedly slowed or drawn out.

hhh Outbreath
.hh Inbreath

(( )) Descriptions of events: ((cough)), ((sniff)), ((telephone rings)), ((footsteps))

(word) All or part of an utterance is in parentheses indicates transcriber uncertainty

xxx word was unintelligible to transcriber

Creaky voice

/ / item between slashes represents non-target pronunciation (or omission of one or more phonemes)

' ' item between single quotes indicates speaker is saying a letter from the alphabet, as in spelling a word aloud or using an acronym.

MEETING DIVERSE NEEDS: CONTENT-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AND SETTLEMENT NEED FOR LOW LITERACY ADULT ESL IMMIGRANTS[3]

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1 Introduction

Teachers of LESLLA learners face the challenge of assisting their learners to develop language and literacy skills, while also supporting the significant learning needs faced by learners in coming to understand their new social and cultural environment. In this chapter we describe some examples of how content-based language teaching has been developed and applied to LESLLA learners in the Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP) in Australia, to meet these challenges.

Content-based language teaching (CBLT)[4] has been developed and applied in academic settings in schools, colleges and universities for more than two decades (Brinton, Snow & Wesche 1989, Crandall 1986, Kasper 2000). However, while the focus of most work in CBLT has been within the context of formal education, there are also examples of work done in community settings, for example Mohan's use of a an adult community ESL class working on automobile insurance to illustrate his knowledge frameworks approach to CBLT (Mohan 1986).

CBLT is concerned with concurrently teaching an area of learning (often referred to as a topic) as well as language. The content provides both a context for language learning, and the language learned also enables learners to communicate about the particular topic. Language learning includes the types of texts and other features of the language often used in dealing with specific content in particular contexts. Examples include topics like the construction of a simple electric circuit with accompanying instructions for beginning English learners in a secondary school.

CBLT incorporates various approaches to language teaching and shares much with English for specific purposes, text-based approaches to teaching and to some extent situational language learning. However it is also distinctive from similar approaches in that it involves the teaching of content; the teaching of language in an interplay between the elements of the language curriculum and the content curriculum (Snow Met & Genesee 1989).

The literature on CBLT consistently reports positive responses from students and teachers. Advantages reported include learners' satisfaction in learning two things at once, increased learner motivation, development of contextually located language skills, learning that connects learners with their new social context and opportunities for learners to communicate about their existing knowledge and skills (see Brinton, Snow & Wesche 1989 and Brinton & Master 1997).

There is no single approach or methodology in CBLT, but there are similarities in the different approaches that are used. Content-based teaching is usually based on visual input of content taught through realia, pictures, charts or diagrams. This input is related to texts on the topic that are authentic to the style of language used in dealing with the content. This is supplemented with exploration and practice of such texts and the language features used, and at times further exploration of the content. Most approaches also involve opportunities to explore aspects of learning, such as Chamot &

[3] The project reported here was conducted by the AMEP (Adult Migrant English Programme) Research Centre, which is funded by the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). The authors wish to express their gratitude to DIAC for and the AMEP research Centre for supporting and funding the project, and to the participating teachers and students, who very generously gave their time and experience.
[4] In North America it is generally referred to as 'content-based instruction' (CBI).

O'Malley's attention to learning strategies in their Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (Chamot & O'Malley 1994).

2 Context

In recent years the number of LESLLA learners has grown in Australia in response to the increasing need for resettlement of refugees from Africa and the Middle East, and more recently South East Asia. The proportion of LESLLA learners has therefore increased significantly in the AMEP, the national programme which provides ESL instruction for recently-arrived immigrants.

AMEP teachers and providers have a long tradition of relating English language teaching to the settlement needs and context of AMEP learners. Language is usually presented in the context of situations and conversations learners are likely to participate in within the Australian community. Information about settlement related services is often provided by teachers and AMEP service providers, at times in the learners' first languages by bilingual aides. Australian ESL teachers also have a history of working with low literacy learners (the term used in Australia for LESLLA learners) since the 1980s, although earlier approaches (Hoy 1987, Ramm 1994) tended to focus on what Street (1993) terms the 'autonomous' literacy skills, with less systematic attention to Street's 'ideological' dimensions of literacy', that relate to the significance of different texts and the expectations and conventions associated with written texts (Street 1993).

The curriculum framework used in the AMEP (the Certificates in Spoken and Written English - CSWE AMES NSW 2008) has also been adjusted to meet the changing clientele of the AMEP with a *Course in Preliminary Spoken and Written English* for low literacy and non- literate learners to precede four conventional certificate levels. This level not only is intended to provide teaching that is more closely attuned to the needs of LESLLA learners, but also aims to provide more realistic steps that are achievable for these learners. This course enables more accurate measurement and recognition of progress made by LESSLA students that was not captured by the more complex competency descriptions in the original Certificate 1.

3 LESLLA learners and CBLT

The literature on content-based language teaching makes only limited mention of working with low literacy learners (see Hoy 1987, Kaspar 2000). However, previous successful experience of using CBLT in other contexts (see Williams 1987) and the experience of using a content-based approach with low literacy learner drivers in the AMEP suggest it can be both possible and useful to adopt such approaches with low literacy learners, for the following reasons:

- the highly contextualized language and learning tasks of a content-based approach provides a concrete basis for learning that assists low literacy learners in their learning;
- teaching topics helps LESLLA students learn about and better understand their new environment;
- a variety of learning tasks the opportunity to develop literacy skills and relate spoken and written language;
- teaching can address content areas of interest identified by learners.

Although CBLT has generally been devised and applied in the context of formal schooling, and often in a college or university context, there are reasons why it offers considerable potential for low literacy learners.

4 The appropriate topic content for low literacy[5] learners projects

In response to increasing concerns by teachers in the AMEP about how to best meet the needs of LESLLA learners, and building on an earlier project in which LESLLA learners learnt relevant language and road rules in preparation for driving license tests (Hemming, Sydorneko, Lloyd & Murray, 2004), the AMEP Research Centre included a project focused on the development of content-based materials for low literacy learners in its 2005-6 research activity programme.

The project involved similar activities focused on two groups of LESLLA learners, younger learners ages 18 to 24, and LESLLA learners 25 and over. Both projects involved the same activities:

- an initial stage where low literacy learners and experienced teachers of low literacy learners were interviewed, with a view to identifying areas of content that were of particular interest or relevance to these learners;

- Workshops and follow up preparation time in which teachers developed content-based materials to use with their learners followed by the teachers trialling their materials with a class. This use of the materials was documented through teacher journals, classroom observations of some trials, interviews with the teachers, and some group interviews with learners (conducted through interpreters);

- a third phase in which teachers shared their materials with other teachers in another part of the country, to be trialled with other classes to identify the extent to which such materials can be shared by teachers, and issues involved in transferring these materials across different learning contexts.

The first stage revealed that LESLLA learners were interested in content that helped them to understand aspects of life in Australia. These findings and the insights of teachers working in the project were used to identify the focus of the materials the project teachers developed. Table 1 presents an overview of the topics developed by project teachers working with each group of LESLLA learners.

Table 1: Units produced by teachers in the Appropriate topic content projects 2005-6

Older learners	Younger (ages 18 to 24) learners
Australia An introduction to the city in which the students live (Melbourne), and other parts of Australia. *The Australian hospital system* Based on a visit to a local public hospital, these materials helped learners to use the public health services available in their area. *Op-shopping* Explored shopping in opportunity shops (thrift shops or charity shops) as an economical means of obtaining essential needs such as clothing and household items. *Budgeting* Exploring strategies and advice for managing finances, to take account of factors such as seasonal variations in energy bills and ways to plan how to	*Using the internet to find out about jobs and occupations* Use of the internet to find essential information about the nature of duties or tasks, training requirements and demand for different occupational groups. *Australian culture through soap opera incidents (Neighbours)* Exploring aspects of Australian culture through critical incidents in the TV soap opera 'Neighbours' including discussing what was observed with practices and expectations in learners' countries of origin. *Nutrition and fast food* An exploration of nutritional issues related to high consumption of fast food, based on scenes from a documentary movie 'Supersize Me'. *Understanding mobile phones*

[5] This is the usual term used for LESLLA learners in Australia.

cover household expenses. *Stay Safe readers* Three readers on safety in different parts of the home. (See below) *The world of work* These materials were computer based and explored language associated with different occupations, places of work and the nature of work done by people working in different occupations.	Learners explore information about using mobile phones, including different payment and charge plans, texting and so on.

These teaching materials are available as *Living in Australia* materials accessible from http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/resources/professional_development_resources

As a result of the teachers developing, using and sharing these materials, the data collected from the teachers and their students revealed that:

• younger low literacy learners were much more adventurous and prepared to take risks in their learning behaviour, than older learners. They were more willing to explore content which contained difficult language, and were often interested in learning more, while older learners tended to prefer to work within well defined and 'safe' tasks, in terms of being able to succeed at what they were asked to do;

• the outcomes achieved by all learners were usually higher than their teachers originally expected;

• the teachers preferred to follow their own insights in constructing their teaching materials, rather than utilising an existing framework provided in the CBLT literature (such as Mohan 1986, Chamot & O'Malley 1994, or Stoller & Grabe 1997);.

• while the preparation of content-based materials was time consuming, the teachers were able to produce effective and motivating content-based learning materials that led to effective learning of content, language and literacy skills.

The ways in which this happened are exemplified in the following section, which provides an account of the experiences of three teachers in the project, working with older literacy learners. The materials they developed were called the *Stay Safe Readers*, and dealt with safety in the home.

5 The Stay Safe readers: Context and experience of learners and teachers

Three teachers involved in the project, Christine Adby, Laura Chapman and Leanne Zuvich, were working in the AMEP at the Institute of TAFE Tasmania, with a high proportion of refugee clients, of whom a significant number were LESLLA learners.. The teachers had previously developed materials for these learners, and shared an interest in developing more accessible materials that would enable a greater level of content to be delivered to these learners. The Appropriate Topic Content project provided an opportunity for the teachers to both develop content-based materials and trial CBLT approaches.

Content-based materials were developed for trialling across three small Preliminary CSWE AMEP classes. In total 33 refugee and humanitarian students participated in the trial, from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya, Burundi, and Sierra Leone, with one student from Iran. Ages ranged from early 20s to early 70s, with the majority being in their mid forties to mid fifties. The majority of students (26) were women including one women-only class, with 7 men participating in the other classes. At the beginning of the trial the learners had spent between one and fourteen months in the AMEP.

Thirty of the students had no previous schooling on commencing the AMEP, two had three years of schooling and one student had five years. Twenty-nine students had an entry level of no recordable English proficiency across the skills of Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing). All learners were identified as Band A (slow paced) through their initial assessment interview. Around half of the learners were identified as having additional special needs, either from departmental information regarding health issues, needs identified in initial interview or teacher observation. The teachers noted that this specific group appeared to have particular difficulty learning even within the Preliminary SWE course.

Some of the characteristics of these learners warranting particular consideration in the appropriate topic content project were:

- learners' lack of familiarity with classrooms and formal learning
- an imbalance between their literacy and oral/aural skills
- the struggle of literacy learning in a second language
- a need to make use of informal learning strategies
- the need for explicit teaching of learning skills
- learners tend to learn through concrete tasks
- learners require much repetition and slow paced delivery.

(Allender :1998; Nichols and Sangster :1996; McPherson :1997)

6 The development of content-based readers

The teachers identified a strong need for recently arrived refugees to learn about safety in their new environments because students were suffering the consequences of minimal awareness of safety in the home. There were cases of students and their family members sustaining various injuries, both minor and severe emergency cases. During the winter months in Tasmania, home heating brought up a range of safety issues for these learners, many of whom had limited experience with heating appliances and equipment. Community groups and service providers working with newly arrived refugees had also identified education around home safety as a significant settlement need at a family and community level.

This need, combined with the teachers' view that there was a lack of content-based materials suitable for this target group in terms of skill level and cultural appropriateness, motivated the teachers to address the topic of safety in the home. In order to develop a new learning resource, the teachers aimed to identify situations and target language that would reflect students' real life experiences and therefore provide the context and motivation for "a more socially contextualised learning" to take place (Sangster, 2002:14). The teachers therefore decided to develop content-based readers to provide content information, and other supplementary materials for classroom use to provide a range of learning activities based on the readers.

A key element of the materials was that the characters be representative of people in the refugee community - appropriate cultural role models with whom the students could identify. As the great majority of the students at that time were African, the main characters were portrayed by a Sudanese woman and her child living in Hobart. It was equally important that these actors understood the purpose behind the books and were enthusiastic about the project.

7 Considerations in the design of useable materials

In designing the materials the teachers needed to consider issues related to delivering complex content to LESLLA learners who often have difficulty identifying abstract graphic representation and culturally-bound imagery (Achren 1991; Allender 1998; Ramm 1994; Sangster 2002). They therefore ensured that visual aids were appropriate and transparent (Allender, 1998) and all graphics were simple, contextualised and

realistic (Ramm, 1994). Images were expected to be instrumental in conveying the content and needed to be clear and uncluttered to support the texts rather than present ambiguities. In considering the visual literacy aspect of the materials, it was decided that colour photographs were the clearest and most practical means of expressing the visual content. A photo shoot was set up in a private house to provide visuals of safety practices that were as close as possible to the original text.

Worksheets accompanying the readers relied heavily on photographs, had minimal information on each page, and used an enlarged *Comic Sans* font as it is clear and similar to handwriting. Colour and symbols were incorporated to highlight safe and unsafe practices by the use of green ticks (check marks) and red crosses. This colour symbolism was tied into other uses, with green for 'safe' or 'go', such as with a "Walk" symbol, and red for 'danger' or 'fire'.

To engage the learners through a more "hands on" methodology (Allender, 1998; Nichols and Sangster, 1996) flashcards, matching activities and picture cards were developed for a range of uses. Activities were designed to engage learners in manual dexterity tasks such as manipulating realia or cutting and pasting pictures and sentences. All the activities were put on CDs and the school intranet to allow teachers to adapt and print activities for these purposes.

The teachers recognised that many of the low level students lacked confidence in learning and so wanted to ensure that resources were "presented in a way which built in success" (Badenhorst, 1994:69). They were mindful of the need for constant revision and recycling of language, skills and content. Learners with minimal schooling also have difficulty with transferral strategies, so it was considered important to move language and learning skills from one context to another (Ramm, 1994; Badenhorst, 1994). These concepts were built into the design of the materials through recycling of language and content to assist learners with retention, developing formal learning skills, recognising language patterns and building confidence (Huntington, 1992; Ramm, 1994; Hajnkl, 1994). The broad range of activities also enabled teachers to fulfil individual students' needs and preferences in independent learning arrangements.

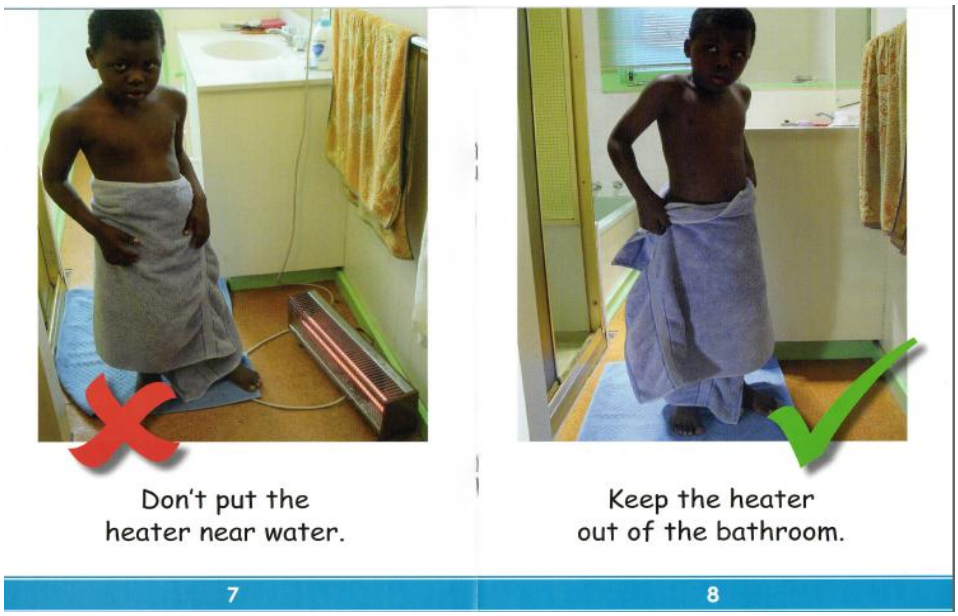
8 Overview of the readers

Readers were chosen as the core of the teaching materials for their manageable, compact, and versatile format for use in a range of settings. Students could take the readers home to extend learning beyond the classroom. Readers were also preferred for their potential in literacy development, from the basic skills of handling a book, reading left to right and top to bottom of the page. It was hoped that the learners in the trial would begin to conceptualise or read sentences and, for some, manage a whole text in the form of a book for the first time. While the teachers found that simple books proved exceedingly popular as students gained a great sense of achievement from reading them, they were not able to find published readers with safety content for low literacy adult learners.

In the development stages, the writers compiled specific content by drawing on anecdotes from students and from information forums with other settlement services.. They researched existing home safety resources such as community information brochures, internet sites and educational resources. In writing the key texts of the resource, it was necessary to balance the content and language without compromising the safety message or placing unreasonable language and literacy demands on the learners. The safety information was broken down into very simple imperative instructions, each tied to a tick (√) or cross (X) symbol to indicate safe or unsafe practices.

The final resource was a set of three readers categorised by safety theme: The Kitchen, The Bedroom and Living Room, and the Bathroom and Laundry. Each book began with a contextualising page of the location, such as the kitchen, followed by a simple format of one instruction or piece of advice under a photo on each page (see Picture 1 below). At the end of the books two to three pages were devoted to key

vocabulary from the texts (Picture 2). The readers were written with a view to clearly conveying content, providing a clear and strong language model, and being a basis for language and literacy learning activities.



Picture 1: *Sample pages from Stay Safe: The Bathroom and Laundry*

Concepts for additional materials arose during the trial as the teaching and learning cycle fed an evolving process of materials development. Needs arising in the classroom demanded more individualised resources for each learner group, such as simplified or personalised texts and various extension activities. This led to a sharing of activities and methods that were proving successful with each class, and these were in turn written into further activities to be trialled. Throughout the process the writers scaffolded both individual tasks and the unit of work as a whole to support learner development in a logical progression and create a cohesive collection of resources (Hammond and Gibbons, 2005).

Picture 2: Sample vocabulary page from Stay Safe: The Bathroom and Laundry

The project teachers developed a set of classroom work sheets and materials based on the readers. The activities were designed to recycle skills and support the students' language and literacy in a variety of ways for different learner groups and to provide an initial introduction to activity types for newer arrival learners. Accompanying resources included worksheets, flash cards, vocabulary matching card sets, Language Master cards and an audio CD. When they were drafted it was clear to the teachers that they could be used for a wide range of classroom tasks and activities, which are listed in the following section.

9 Teaching the materials

The classroom trials were conducted over four weeks, with intensity varying from 3.5 hours a day for two days per week to 3.5 hours a day for four days, depending on class timetabling. Two classes were taught on campus and one was taught in a community setting with adjunct childcare. The extent to which materials were used, and the manner in which they were used, varied across the three classes and different learner levels. However, the teachers adapted a common approach to content-based instruction that they felt best addressed the needs of low literacy learners. This involved a broad range of activity types that were repeated with varying content, the use of key texts in multiple forms, extensive use of visuals, opportunities for guided individual learning and practical components.
Examples of activities used across the three classes were:

- snap, bingo, 'go fish' and memory games with card sets
- using picture cards as prompts for question and answer activities, spoken procedures, joint construction of oral texts and discussions.
- word attack activities focussing on syllables and spelling/sound relationships.
- pronunciation activities, especially focussing on syllables
- cut up sentences for reconstruction and syntax activities
- cut up texts such as procedures for sequencing
- cross and tick / unsafe and safe matching activities with pictures
- cloze activities with whole texts and procedures
- formulaic spoken language of asking for and giving information through surveys and spoken Q and A
- completing surveys with simplified ticks and crosses or words
- vocabulary activities such as picture/vocab matching, and cut up or jumbled words
- individual learning of vocabulary and pronunciation with Language Masters
- listen and repeat activities and listen and read with the audio CD
- pre-reading activities involving prediction, vocab building and oral texts based on images

The teachers also made the content concrete to learners by providing practical or experiential lessons. The classes participated in practicums in student kitchens and in a kitchen specifically set up for students with special needs studying in TAFE.[6] Safety procedures, risks and dangers were demonstrated in the kitchen environment and constantly reinforced with spoken language. Vocabulary was recycled and introduced as

[6] Technical and Further Education, a vocational training institute, the equivalent of a polytechnic in the UK.

it arose, both orally and on visual signs around the kitchen. During the process of demonstrating procedures and activity types, teachers focused on developing the language of instruction in context. This follows Hood's findings that preliterate learners relate most strongly to context-embedded oral language (1990).

Informal learners learn through observation and imitation (Ramm, 1994), and therefore the explicit demonstration of safety procedures with the use of realia and photographs was very effective. In this 'real life' context students were able to demonstrate their understanding and teachers could identify both levels of practical knowledge and learning needs in relation to language and literacy development.

The teachers were aware that language experience approaches had proven highly successful with preliterate learners (Huntington, 1992). The practical sessions led to much oral/aural work back in the classroom relating to safety procedures or students' personal experiences. As these students were generally from highly oral cultures, we found they responded well to speaking activities involving repetition and rhythm (Sangster, 2002) and joint construction of oral texts (Nicholas and Williams, 2003). Spoken language was used as a basis for class compositions of written procedures and recounts. Other valuable literacy work grew out of extension work based on photographs of signs in the kitchens.

By placing a strong emphasis on an integrated skills approach, students could capitalise on their skill strengths to support weaker areas. Students also supported each other through working in a range of groupings such as pairs, small groups, or in combined classes to focus on areas of need or interest. Where appropriate, students were encouraged to use their first language to explain content or procedures to each other as a foundation for language work.

Bilingual and bicultural assistants were used with some students at the commencement of the trial, and with all students in the evaluation process. At the time of the trial, classes had minimal access to bilingual support due to the disparity of cultures and languages in the classes. Teachers felt it would have been beneficial to deliver the materials with more bilingual support to enable students with minimal English oracy to voice their safety concerns and discuss experiences in more depth. More use of bilingual assistance would also give the students further opportunities to clarify understandings of content, language and learning processes, and allow ongoing evaluation throughout the trial.

10 Outcomes of teaching

10.1 Language and Literacy development

The materials exceeded the teachers' expectations in regard to student interest, motivation and both knowledge and skills development. The familiarity and relevance of the content was hugely motivating and promoted a lot of discussion, so students' engagement was high from the beginning of the trial. The students responded positively to the range of resources and activities, and when a new resource was introduced, such as the audio CD, they were motivated to extend their language.

The teachers involved in the project observed a significant level of achievement across language, literacy and learning skills in all classes. Although specific data on language and literacy development were not collected in the short timeframe, teachers observed that learners were competent on a range of language and literacy tasks they had formerly been unable to achieve, and noted learners' increased confidence in participating in a range of activities. Even the recognition of some key vocabulary and how to handle a book was a major achievement for the lowest level learners. Researchers noted that some students who had initially entered the course at "preliterate" level could actually read complex words such as 'electrocute' and 'appliance'. After extensive scaffolding and repetition, some learners were reading quite extensive texts both individually and collaboratively by the end of the trial.

The students' ability to read authentic texts and to recognise the relevance of this learning in their personal lives contributed immensely to their sense of achievement. No doubt such success with authentic language was a large factor in the continued level of motivation as classes broadened their learning into different safety sub-topics. Students were also thrilled to be able to read and gain meaning from signs "for Australian people" and so the unanticipated inclusion of these authentic texts really enhanced the content of the unit of work. The Stay Safe materials also demonstrated to learners that books can contain practical content applicable to daily life.

10.2 Learning skills development

A further goal of the materials was to assist students in becoming familiar with classroom activities, procedures and resources. Through this unit of work the students used a range of resources and participated in a variety of activity types that were repeated across the books. Teachers observed that students gradually began to transfer skills and knowledge across topics and adapt more quickly to new activities with similar tasks. Even some of the slower paced, 'teacher–dependent' learners were using some of these materials independently or chose to work on them in guided individual learning sessions in the Flexible Learning Centre.[7]

10.3 Demonstration of content knowledge and practical skills

The feedback from the learners in relation to content was very positive, with many students able to articulate content they had learned through interpreters at a group evaluation of the trial. Low level learners were able to differentiate between safe and unsafe situations in photographs and demonstrations. They were also able to demonstrate safe practices using realia in the classroom and resources in student kitchens. With bilingual support, the students were able to discuss how this content was relevant to their lives. The discussions that arose indicated a high level of engagement with both the concepts and the language.

The materials had elicited a lot of anecdotes from students about accidents in their homes and even past experience in their countries of origin. Being able to identify how these incidents could be prevented shows how much they had learned about content. This learning also enabled students to overcome unreasonable fears that they had in relation to electrical appliances, for example, learning that most smoke alarms do not have active currents, and therefore contain batteries that can safely be changed.

The students were now putting their learning into practice by discussing solutions to safety issues in their homes. An equally important achievement was that many students were using English to communicate these ideas, and related simple content back to teachers without the use of interpreters. The success of the trials emphasised the importance of integrating relevant settlement content into appropriate language and literacy materials. The trials also showed that the teaching of detailed content *is* achievable with really low language and literacy students, provided there is appropriate scaffolding and support.

10.4 Materials outcomes

The materials offered the flexibility to be used in a variety of ways across a range of teaching contexts and learner levels. These resources have been successfully utilised in classrooms, the Flexible Learning Centre, guided individual learning sessions and in a community setting. Several students asked if they could take the books home to read

[7] The Flexible Learning Centre (FLC) is a learning and teaching area that provides a range of specialised resources and technical support for independent and flexible learning. It differs from Independent Learning Centres in that it also caters for low literacy and special needs learners to reduce teacher dependence and diversify programme delivery

and demonstrate safety procedures to their children. They reported back that the books were very helpful in reinforcing safety concerns around the house.

Students also responded very positively to and identified with the African role models in the photographs. African learners reported that they used the parent in the books as an example of someone in their community for teaching their own children about safety. It is also of note that, although the numbers of men in the trial groups were significantly small, and much content focused on domestic issues around the home, the men appeared equally interested in the materials and participated enthusiastically in the units of work.

The teacher-produced readers were considered of sufficient standard and relevance that they were commercially published under the title of *Stay Safe: The kitchen*, *Stay Safe: The bathroom and laundry* and *Stay Safe: The living room and bedroom* (Adby, Chapman & Zuvich 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). As a commercial publication, they have been disseminated to teachers in other parts of Australia and internationally.

The AMEP in Hobart incorporates much settlement content into language programmes, and such content is a strong basis for syllabus design across the centre. Integrated Language CBI courses have also been run in specific areas such as learner driving, food handling and kitchen operations, enrolled nursing, work placement and experience, horticulture, First Aid and industrial machining. The success of the Stay Safe project has given staff further impetus to look at means of developing content-based materials for low literacy learners and establishing a community of practice to facilitate a more comprehensive approach to integrating language, literacy and content.

11 Conclusions

The work described here illustrates the possibilities and value of using content based teaching with low literacy ESL learners. The experiences of participants and the findings of the projects suggest that CBI can be a powerful and effective approach for developing LESLLA learners' content knowledge and skills relevant to the lives they are making for themselves in a new country. It also provides a context for the development of second language and literacy skills in areas of relevance for learners and produces high levels of engagement for learners. Content-based materials and teaching provide scaffolding that enables teachers to give learners opportunities for meaningful use of target language and literacy skills. They also provide contexts for stimulating and valuable opportunities for practice and extension of skills.

These developments illustrate the potential of content-based approaches in assisting teachers to meet the complex and diverse language and literacy leaning needs of LESLLA learners in ways that connect with their new social environment and contribute to their empowerment in that context.

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TEACHING BASIC LITERACY TO ESOL LEARNERS: DEVELOPMENTS IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

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1 Introduction

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes for adults in England have been available in one form or another for over 150 years (Rosenberg, 2007). Over this time, the organisation, curriculum and costs to learners have changed very many times; at the time of writing, ESOL classes are free to learners on low incomes (Learning and Skills Council, 2006), and are considered alongside literacy and numeracy as 'Skills for Life' (Department for Education and Employment, DfEE, 2001). ESOL courses are intended for settlers in England, and ESOL learners come from a vast range of different backgrounds. Classes often have learners with very mixed educational histories and, in a typical class, a former teacher may sit next to a learner who has only had two years of school. In the last few years changes have been made to government requirements for qualified teachers of ESOL (Lifelong Learning UK[1] known as 'LLUK', 2007; this is the government-funded body that is charged with developing standards for teachers in post-compulsory education). However, these do not specify much detail about teaching basic literacy and do not prepare teachers to work with learners with low levels of literacy and very little education in any language. LLU+ at London South Bank University is a research and professional development centre specialising in ESOL, literacy, numeracy, dyslexia and family learning. It has a history of supporting ESOL teachers to teach basic literacy and this chapter will describe efforts to prepare teachers to work in this area. The chapter will describe custom-made courses, the training of teacher trainers and ways we provided the course throughout Great Britain and in Ireland. It will end by outlining research we are just beginning into teachers' approaches to teaching ESOL learners with low levels of literacy in any language.

2 Background

The government's policy paper, *Breaking the Language Barriers* (Department for Education and Employment,[2] 2000) identifies four broad categories of ESOL learners. These are

- settled communities, principally, although by no means exclusively, from the Asian sub-continent and Chinese from Hong Kong
- refugees
- migrant workers, mostly from elsewhere in Europe
- partners and spouses of learners from all parts of the world who are settled for a number of years and need to participate in the local community.

It suggests that "each of them brings a wealth of cultural experience and diversity to this country but this very diversity presents challenges to planning and offering appropriate learning provision." And it goes on to say that within these groups, learners

[1] Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) replaced the organisation, FENTO - see below. It is the government agency charged with determining standards for teachers of post-compulsory education.
[2] In the last 8 years, the government department dealing with post-compulsory education has changed names three times from Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to Department for Universities and Innovation (DIUS). In the UK, education is dealt with separately by the different nations, so the government department has a brief only for education in England.

would have very different needs depending on their language background, work and life experience, aspirations and educational background. It points out that the educational background of learners "could be anywhere on a continuum from no formal education at all to higher education and professional training." (Part 1, Section 2).

More Than a Language (Grover, 2006, p.22) suggests that these categories are still very much in evidence, with the proviso that "there has been a marked increase in the number of learners from the EU, specifically migrant workers for the A8 countries." This increase has meant that ESOL classes now contain more learners who are fluent readers and writers of the Roman alphabet and the contrast with those who are not is more marked.

Government funded ESOL classes in England are run in a range of settings, funded through the education budget or the training for employment budget. Classes also exist funded through the voluntary and charitable sector or run by volunteers in church or community groups. Learners may attend full time (30 hours per week) or part time (studying for as few as 2 hours per week). At the same time, private language schools also provide fee-charging English language tuition, mainly aimed at visitors rather than long term settlers to this country. (See also Simpson et al., this volume.)

Most learners are assessed on entry to ESOL provision, through a mixture of oral and written tests, and placed in graded ESOL classes. Since the advent of the *Adult ESOL Core Curriculum* (Department for Education and Skills, DfES, 2001, see below), the classes are generally graded according to curriculum level - these are roughly equivalent to the Council of Europe[3] *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEF) levels. A very few organisations split the two lowest grades, Entry 1 and Entry 2, into two depending on the literacy level of the learners, but the majority put all learners in together. This means that a learner from, say, Europe or French-speaking Africa, with a mastery of the Roman alphabet and a high level of education, may be put into the same class with learners who either write a different script or who have had no or little education at all. The paper by Sunderland in this compilation describes how the little provision that does exist for learners with low levels of literacy is being threatened as a result of government targets for qualifications at a higher level (the school-leaver level). This mixture of learners in one class poses particular problems for teachers who are expected to address the individual needs of learners in groups with extremely diverse educational backgrounds. Not only are they expected to do this almost impossible job, they have very little teacher-training which prepares them to teach learners with low levels of literacy.

Before 2002 and the development of the *Subject Specifications for Teachers of ESOL* (see *Developments in ESOL teacher education in England,* below) there were no national requirements or standards for ESOL teachers which specified necessary subject knowledge or subject-specific pedagogy. The most commonly used qualifications for ESOL teachers were the 'Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults' or the 'Trinity Certificate in Teaching ESOL' and neither of these highlighted basic literacy as a potential subject of study. So, in general, teachers were not learning about teaching basic literacy as part of their initial teacher education (that is, leading to their first teacher qualification). Many teachers came to ESOL from the private sector (and still do) where, though they may have had some learners with low levels of literacy in English (because they wrote a different script), were unlikely to have met learners who had received very little education in any language.

As a teacher education unit we found that we were continually being asked by teachers and educational establishments to put on continuing professional development sessions for teachers on teaching basic literacy. We were asked for a half day session that would cover the teaching skills needed. We demurred and tried one day and two day courses, but these were never long enough to cover awareness raising, some theory and a range of practical teaching techniques.

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[3] Council of Europe: an international organisation in Strasbourg which comprises 47 democratic countries of Europe. It was set up to promote democracy and protect human rights and the rule of law in Europe.

2.1 Development of the Teaching Basic Literacy course

As a result of our experiences, in 2000 we made a successful bid to the London Development Agency to put together a continuing professional development course for teachers who were working with learners with very basic levels of literacy. Our proposal was to develop and pilot the course, evaluate it, and publish it for other teacher trainers to adopt. Part of the funding allowed us to film an existing literacy class for use on the course. The original pilot course ran for 3 days and covered some awareness-raising, some processes (for example assessment and planning) and some theory. We had not put much about practical teaching into the course, assuming, erroneously as it turned out, that teachers would have a basic repertoire of techniques for teaching handwriting or composition and would need support for wider educational management, for example in assessing learners or writing schemes of work. This proved not to be the case. We evaluated the course by asking course participants and trainers to fill in individual questionnaires, and also by giving time to participants to discuss the course in the final session and feed back to the trainers. Evaluations were mainly very positive, but participants asked for a longer course with more detail on specific teaching techniques. We had been aware that many teachers were experienced in this kind of work and felt that they needed a chance to get together and discuss issues, rather than be involved in a more didactic course. Again, evaluations did not support this; participants asked for more input and less sharing. However, participants appreciated the modelling of different techniques and the interactive approach that the course took. We acted on the evaluations and published a course in 2000 which reflected them. The videos are still available (LLU+, 2000), as is the publication (Spiegel and Sunderland, 2000) which contains suggested lesson plans, materials and notes for teacher educators.

As a result of good participant feedback, we started being asked to run the course in other venues, initially in London and then further afield. The five days could be run in one very intensive week or spread over 5 or even 10 weeks. We submitted it for validation (accreditation) through London South Bank University, and it was approved at the equivalent level of the first year of a university degree. European Social Fund (ESF) 'Equal'[4] funding through the ASSET[5] project allowed us to run the course further afield and also to run a 'training the teacher trainer' course with graduates from some of the early courses who had continued to work in this area. At the time of writing we have run the course in different further education colleges all over England; centrally in LLU+ each year, and in Scotland, Dublin and Jersey. We would estimate that approximately 900 teachers are now graduates of the course. Feedback has been consistently positive - teachers have told us over and over that this is such an important part of their teaching and yet standard teacher training does not cover it in any real depth. We return to this last point in the section below on *Developments in ESOL teacher education in England.*

3 Content of current Teaching Basic Literacy course

The LLU+ course presents a particular view, one rooted in the notion of literacies as social practices (New Literacy Studies e.g. Barton, 2007; Hamilton, Barton, and Ivanic, 1994; Street, 1985). It emphasises a holistic, meaning- and text-led approach, which integrates text, sentence and word level work within contextualised activity, in contexts of relevance and interest to learners. The course is constantly being adapted, as all courses are, to meet the needs of particular groups and to reflect the changing educational context. However, much of the core content is now settled. At the time of writing the programme looks something like this:

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[4] 'Equal' is a European Social Fund funding stream - see <http://www.equal.ecotec.co.uk/> accessed September 2008

[5] Asylum Seekers Skills Empowerment and Training

Table 1: Content of current Teaching Basic Literacy course

Session	Content
1	What good readers and writers know Learning to read in an additional language Definition of basic literacy in ESOL Individual learning styles/perceptual preferences
2	Breaking down the skills involved in reading and writing Text, sentence and word levels Learning skills in meaningful contexts Teaching approaches - composition
3.	Assessing ESOL basic literacy learners Designing a scheme of work Dyslexia and bilingual learners Teaching approaches - handwriting
4.	Setting learning outcomes for ESOL basic literacy Strategies for teaching mixed levels Staging and managing a lesson Teaching approaches - spelling and phonics
5.	Evaluating learning materials Materials making workshop

The course sets an assignment which involves assessing a learner, then designing, teaching and evaluating a short learning programme for that learner.

4 Developments in ESOL teacher education in England

In the eight years since we first developed the course, a number of developments have impacted on teachers' awareness of how to teach learners with basic levels of literacy. These have mainly taken place as a result of the government's *Skills for Life Strategy* (Department for Education and Employment, 2001). We describe some key developments below.

4.1 2001 Adult ESOL Core Curriculum (Department for Education and Science, 2001)

For the first time, reading and writing at a basic level for ESOL learners was described in a national document. The Adult ESOL Core Curriculum describes beginner reading and writing skills at text, sentence and word level. For example: "recognise that different types of text (e.g. very simple letter, signs and symbols, very simple form or appointment card) will look different from each other" or "hold and control a pen effectively". The curriculum document gives examples of application, e.g. "take down phone number and name spelt aloud by another person" and examples of teaching activities, such as language experience, where the teacher takes down dictation from a learner and the learner reads it back (Spiegel and Sunderland, 2006). The curriculum document spells out the skills that basic literacy learners need and gives ideas of how to teach them. Teachers in general welcomed the support given by the curriculum and feedback on it was very positive when it was reviewed in 2007 (Quality Improvement Agency/QIA unpublished report, 2008). However, a negative impact of the skills-based approach and the division into text, sentence and word, is that many less experienced teachers feel they 'ought' to start at word level and work their way up to text (despite

recommendations to the contrary in the document itself). This means that there is considerable de-contextualised word level work going on in ESOL literacy classrooms. So it seems that teacher education is still needed on how to interpret the curriculum document.

4.2 2002 Subject Specifications for Teachers of ESOL (Further Education National Training Organisation, FENTO[6])

Up till September 2003 teachers followed a variety of routes to qualify to teach ESOL. From 2001, all teachers in further education (whatever their subject) had to follow a course that allowed them to meet the *Standards for Teaching and Supporting Learning* (Further Education Development Agency, 2001). In addition, in 2002, the government laid down the subject knowledge required by ESOL teachers as part of initial teacher education, and published it in the above document. From September 2003, teachers had to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the "wide range of learners' cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds" including that "learners will include people who are not literate in any language" and "are literate but in a different script". In addition, they were required to have an understanding of approaches to help learners who "are not literate in the first or another language, and the problems associated with acquiring first-time literacy in a language in which they may not be fluent." (pp 24 and 27). In order to be considered qualified to teach ESOL all new teachers had to have a qualification that lead to these standards. FENTO was responsible for checking and validating all courses, at universities and run by national awarding bodies such as Trinity or Cambridge. This meant that all teacher education courses, including the well-regarded Cambridge courses, now had teaching basic literacy on the syllabus and reflected in the assignments.

4.3 2005 Skills for Life Quality Initiative (SfLQI) teacher education modules (Learning and Skills Council)

As part of a national quality improvement project, funded by the government agency Learning and Skills Council, LLU+ developed a modular[7] programme to enable teachers to gain a qualification in the subject specifications. We divided up the qualification into 11 different modules and included a module on teaching basic literacy. Like its longer sister course, this module was accredited by London South Bank University at the equivalent level of the first year of a degree and included a two day course. The two day course, designed to meet the specifications described above, included some of the elements of the 5 day course, including some of the practical activity and the information on dyslexia, but several of the educational management items, such as planning a scheme of work, had to be dropped. In addition, theories or models of literacy learning, including literacy as skills or as social practice, were also examined.

This teacher education module, with session plans and materials, was published on the SfLQI website (SfLQI, 2005) and the materials and activities were taken up by teacher educators all over the country and possibly beyond. LLU+ ran the module at London South Bank University as part of their Certificate for ESOL Subject Specialists (the subject qualification for ESOL teachers). We also ran it as a free-standing module for organisations that wanted a shorter model than the five day course, and for the Skills for Life Improvement Programme, a further government quality development programme, in 2006/7. Altogether, we ran approximately 20 courses all over England and in Wales and approximately 300 teachers attended.

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[6] FENTO was the government agency charged with determining standards for teachers of post-compulsory education before LLUK was formed.

[7] We use the term 'modular' to refer to a course made up of several discrete elements and a 'module' as of these discrete elements. So, the *Basic Literacy module* can be run as a course by itself, with part qualification, or as part of a whole, leading to a full qualification.

However, further changes in the education of teachers were made in the summer of 2007 and became mandatory from 1st September 2007 (see below). This means that the module can no longer count towards an initial teacher qualification, though it can be (and is) still run as continuing professional development.

4.4 2007 Application of the professional standards for teachers of English (Literacy and ESOL) (Lifelong Learning UK, LLUK)

In 2006, the government made changes to the qualification structure for teachers in post-compulsory education. As part of these changes, Lifelong Learning UK (the successor to FENTO) produced the *Application of the professional standards for teachings of English* document, which replaces two 'Subject Specifications' documents – the documents for ESOL and Literacy. This *Application* document now sets the standards for all teachers of ESOL and courses have to demonstrate that they will enable student teachers to reach these standards. The document details the knowledge, understanding and professional practice to be demonstrated by teachers of English (Literacy and ESOL). It is a less transparent document than the 2002 *Subject Specifications* and not as easy to navigate. It does refer obliquely to basic literacy, with statements such as "Literacy and ESOL teachers know and understand ….the second chance nature of adult literacy…." or "…the sub-skills of reading". However, of the many different items in this document (54 subject elements in 6 different domains, each with an average of four bullet points underneath them), only one of these actually relates directly to teaching basic literacy. Under the heading "Know a range of learning and teaching approaches associated with listening, reading, speaking and writing processes" (C21 En) it gives further guidance which includes "How to support the development of beginner readers and writers." (p. 28). It appears that it would be very easy for a course developer who does not have much knowledge of this group of learners to entirely miss their particular needs from a teacher training course.

4.5 Publication of Teaching Basic Literacy to ESOL Learners (Spiegel and Sunderland. 2006)

While we were developing and teaching the basic literacy course and the module, we became aware that there was very little published material that would act as back up for the course. We wanted something that would cover theory, case studies of typical learners, something related to the current concerns in the UK around assessment and planning and practical teaching techniques for this very distinctive group of learners. Finding nothing suitable, we decided to write the book ourselves and it was published in June 2006. As far as we know, it is still the only book that covers this subject in any depth and it is currently selling well in the UK and USA.

5 On-going debates

During the developments of the last eight years we have found debates on certain topics keep recurring. We will examine key issues below.

First of all, from the beginning we had difficulty with a title that did justice to the life experience and wisdom of our learners and did not appear to sell them short.

> "Should we use the terms 'basic literacy', 'beginner literacy', 'pre-literacy' or something else? The more we talked, the more the terminology appeared heaped with connotations and implications. 'Basic literacy carries the associations that have accompanied basic skills and basic education over nearly three decades - government slogans preaching the 'back to basics' message…..'Beginner literacy' might lead to confusion around the general language level of the learners, giving the impression it is….aimed at learners who are at a beginner stage of learning the language. 'Pre-literate' implies that none of the learners in our classes are literate in any language and does not convey the fact that they come forward to learn

> English at different stages of learning to read and write…We struggled for some time with these issues and could come to no conclusions beyond sharing these concerns with you, our readers. We decided to continue to use the phrase 'basic literacy', though we do not embrace it." (Spiegel and Sunderland, 2006, pp 14 and 15.)

This debate continues to exercise many practitioners in the UK, including the teacher trainers of our 'basic literacy' course.

Another early debate was what kind of balance to strike between theory and practice. The initial course had some theory, particularly around learning to read, but in general was at a fairly practical level. The development of the subject specifications for ESOL teachers (see above) has made us look at theory again and gradually we are integrating more and more. Some teachers really like this; others only want it if it is truly integrated and not too obvious. In particular, we waver on how much to say about the social practices view of literacy and how it applies to teaching basic literacy in ESOL. To some teachers it seems so obvious as to almost not need saying, while others fail to see the point and how it applies to their learners. We do now overtly include this theoretical perspective in both the course and the module, and refer those who are interested to further reading.

The dyslexia session has always been very popular, but we continue to debate the worth of including it. We are concerned that teachers seem to want an instant solution: use this method and the dyslexic problems will go away, or refer a learner on for an assessment and someone else will teach him/her - neither of which is likely to happen. We have to stress that good practice for dyslexic learners is good practice for all, and that, at this level it is very difficult to conduct a dyslexia assessment, which rather begs the question, why bother with screening or awareness at all? However, we feel it is important that teachers should be aware of one possible reason for why a learner may be having particular difficulties with, say, sound/symbol relationship or with visual memory for spellings. We also think that it is important for learners to be aware that their difficulties may be due to dyslexia and that they may be able to access a diagnostic assessment in the future, if not immediately. So, at the moment, we have decided to keep in the slot on dyslexia awareness and support.

Over the last eight years we estimate we have worked with at least 900 teachers who are motivated to improve their teaching of basic literacy to ESOL learners. In the next section of this chapter we go on to describe the very initial stages of our research into their approaches.

6 Research

6.1 Purpose of the research

As a result of the many discussions we have had with teachers attending the *Teaching basic literacy to ESOL learners'* courses, we have developed an interest in how ESOL teachers' views of suitable pedagogy for teaching basic literacy are shaped, and this is an area we are starting to research.

There are, of course, a range of views about suitable pedagogy and the LLU+ course presents a particular view; as noted above, this is one rooted in the notion of literacies as social practices. The course emphasizes a holistic, meaning- and text-led approach which integrates text, sentence and word level work within contextualised activity, in contexts of relevance and interest to learners. Language experience is an example of a method that we examine on the course which embodies this approach: the text is composed *with* the learner, rather than *for* the learner, with the teacher acting as scribe. The text is then used for a wide range of text, sentence and word level activities, e.g. text reconstruction, according to the needs of the learner. Not all teachers share the view promoted by the course. Despite promoting a particular view, the course provides a forum for discussion, critique and reflection on this and other approaches that the

course participants know about, and believe in and use, for example, a more decontexualised word level-led approach.

We are interested in what has shaped teachers' views in the widest sense of life experiences, and we are researching this through semi-structured interviews with some of the teachers who have attended the course. We also plan to carry out some observations of classes as a spring board for discussion. We had considered interviewing teachers before and after the course, but decided against it as we felt it might put undue emphasis on the place of the course in forming teachers' views. We are not concentrating solely on the effect of the course on people's views (if any), but we will be interested to see what type of contribution it might have made.

6.2 Early findings

Our research is an attempt to probe how teachers describe and talk about the evolution of their approaches. We are using a qualitative approach and we are interested primarily in what teachers say about themselves rather than what we as teacher educators might think about their methods. We are seeking to find a way to explore the connections between different teachers' stories, and consider how we might use the results of this research in our teacher education. The data that we cite below come from the semi-structured interviews with teachers.

While it is early days in the research, there are some interesting issues that are starting to emerge. In particular, it is interesting to see how people's views about pedagogy interrelate with their identities as people and as teachers. A key question is emerging: why do teachers pull some approaches into their repertoire, adapt some and resist others?

We might summarise one teacher's story as a description of how she 'pulled in one approach, and adapted it and then later resisted it': she told us that she adapted the Montessori approach because she was not very sure at first how to work with a basic literacy learner. She had learnt about it from her mother, a Montessori teacher, and she had previously used it to teach her children to read. She concluded, however, that it was not suitable for adults, and she emphasized that she became concerned that that she was coming across to the learners as condescending. As she did not want to come across like that, she looked for other approaches from the ESOL teacher training course she was taking at the time. So, we might interpret her story as an example of a teacher pulling in an approach that she is familiar with from her own family experience, and adapting it, but then starting to resist it when she reflects and realises that it contradicts with something that is important to her, i.e. how she comes across to the learners. She then looks to another source for ideas, specifically, the teacher education course she is following.

There are a few interrelating patterns that are emerging from this and other teachers' stories:

a. adapting approaches used with their own children, as exemplified above;

b. reflecting, evaluating, problem solving, experimenting and looking for ideas *e.g. this same teacher (see example above), said she reflected on her use of the Montessori method, and concluded that it was appropriate for children but not for adults, and decided to look to another source for ideas – her current course; another teacher said that when she realised that both she and the learner were getting frustrated by the lack of progress, she started trying out new things to see what worked;*

c. doing what feels right *e.g. one teacher said "I think I did that naturally but not properly" (referring to language experience);*

d. taking account of what they consider to be important *e.g. one teacher reported that she was very motivated to use the language experience approach that she had learnt about on the LLU+ course because she liked the emphasis it puts on meaning, which, she said, is very important to her;*

e. drawing on own experience of learning and what they felt worked for them *e.g. one teacher said that she used drama, which she had studied; another teacher identified a teacher from her own return to learning studies as a role model;*

f. reflecting on how they feel they come across to the learners, with reference to what kind of teacher they want to be *e.g. one teacher said that when she reflected on her work with a particular class, she decided that she was talking down to the learners, and this conflicted with her view of how she wanted to come across, and resulted in her seeking to change this.*

These patterns may be significant in relation to how teachers' views of suitable pedagogy are shaped; our follow up research will allow us to probe further. We will be interviewing and observing a small sample of teachers, some new to teaching basic literacy, but also a sample of the experienced teachers who have attended our 'training the trainers' course. We hope to be able to share the findings with LESLLA members in the future.

7 Summary

This chapter has shown the extent to which developments in teacher education for ESOL basic literacy at a policy level have been intertwined with and have responded to the demand for ESOL basic literacy training from teachers and educational establishments. The paper describes the work of LLU+ in developing training and resources to meet this demand, demonstrating the iterative nature of course development, and outlines some of the discussions involved. This chapter also documents some research which has emerged from our extensive discussions with ESOL basic literacy teachers into how teachers' views of suitable pedagogy for teaching ESOL basic literacy are shaped. We feel that it is important to investigate and build on these views, particularly since we reject a transmission view of teacher education.

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