The Mechanics of English Language Learning

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Speakers

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To enhance and expand delivery of legal services to indigent and low-income immigrants principally through diocesan immigration programs and to meet the immigration needs identified by the Catholic Church in the United States.
CLINIC’s Services

- Capacity Building
- Training and Technical Support
- Religious Immigration Services
- Advocacy
- Immigration Initiatives and Projects
Benefits:

- Citizenship
- More civic participation (voting)
- Better jobs
- More interaction in child’s education
- Home ownership
- Family reunification
- Security
Webinar Goals

This Webinar will:

• Explain how the adult brain learns;

• Examine what challenges an ELL faces in and out of the classroom; and

• Address how a program might overcome these obstacles.
Terminology

• ESL, ESOL, ELL, EFL

• NEP & LEP
In 2008, 19.64 million people identified themselves as LEP.

Adult ELLs were 44% of total adult ed. programs nationally in the 2003-2004 school year.

74% of CA and 80% of Nevada

(Information comes from MPI and NCELA)
ELLs in the United States

- 24.5 million speak English less than “very well” (44.2% of total population who speak a language other than English at home). (ACS 2007)

- In 2008, 27.1 percent of adult foreign-born had a bachelor's degree or higher. (MPI)

- In 2008, 32.5 percent lacked a high school diploma. (MPI)

- 60% of all foreign-born came to the U.S. over 19 years of age. (http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009034.pdf)
Why someone living in the U.S. may not speak English:

- Quality
- Affordable
- Accessible
## Barriers

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Supply and Demand

- Waiting Lists
- Level-appropriate classes
- Trained teachers

- New York example
- Massachusetts example
“People who speak different languages live in different worlds, not the same world with different labels.”

Edward Sapir, 1928
English Language Learners

• How the adult brain learns

• Why some brains learn language faster

• How to encourage adult brains to learn a new language faster
The Human Brain - Know Your Brain. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Strokes
Adult English Language Learner

- Integrates new information into already-existing schema;
- Takes a while to process information that does not fit into the schema;
- Takes a long time to accept completely new information; and
- Does not respond well to complex tasks used to teach new information.
• Has a specific, life-induced reason for wanting the material

• Needs to know “Why”

• Needs to know what can be applied immediately
Factors that might speed up learning:

Age
Self-awareness
Already speak a second language
Opportunities to practice
Materials to Use

• Activate the adult brain!

• Use real-world tasks:
  - practice the oral exam for the Citizenship test
  - write a resume
  - understand a job listing

• Ask the students what concrete tasks they want to be able to perform.
Characteristics of Good Materials

• Uses real-world tasks that allows students a chance to practice the language involved;

• Provides a chance to practice appropriate socio-cultural rules involved in a task;

• Provides practice in coping strategies to use when language is not yet fully developed; and

• Teaches new material in the context of real-world situations and tasks.

(Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults – TESOL)
Characteristics of a Good Teacher

• Can adjust material and lessons to reflect student experiences/knowledge/interests;

• Can plan and identify both short and long term goals for student learning;

• Develops lesson plans that include learning, review, and assessment;

• Uses a variety of strategies to appeal to all learning styles; and

• Can develop activities for outside the classroom to continue student learning.

(Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults – TESOL)
Suggestions for Adult Learners

• Create a classroom atmosphere that provides challenges in a relaxed and unthreatening learning environment

• There is diversity in learners and learning styles so the use of a range of techniques and strategies is necessary.
Research supports separate classes for non-print literate Adult ELL’s because of:

- A lack of orientation to text
- May lack self-confidence
- Do not risk losing social status among more literate peers
- Different assessments are used
- Use of materials more suited to non-literate ELLs and slower introduction of literacy
Guest Speaker

Maggie LeLeaux, Program Director, Migration and Refugee Center at Catholic Social & Community Services of Biloxi
Features of the Migration and Refugee Center ESL Program

• Multiple levels

• GED; TOEFL; College Level Course Options

• Course objectives for each level

• Methods/Activities for each level

• Materials for each level

• Evaluation for each level
What if you can’t offer an ELL program?

Partnerships you might pursue:

– Community Colleges, another community-based organization, a church, tutors, the local literacy council, employers

How to vet potential partners:

- Types of classes offered, assessments available, schedule of classes, teacher quality, location of classes
Good Resources

- TESOL: www.TESOL.org
  - Local TESOL chapter

- Migration Policy Institute: www.migrationpolicy.org

- Center for Applied Linguistics: www.cal.org


- Local adult ed programs, community college programs, and literacy councils
Literacy Directory

USCIS’ Office of Citizenship

http://www.literacydirectory.org/
References and Related Articles


Lera Boroditsky. “How does Our Language Shape the Way We Think?” (June 12, 2009) http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/boroditsky09/boroditsky09_index.html


Membership & Subscription

- Membership for Catholic non-profits
- Subscription for non-Catholic, non-profits

Contact Jeff Chenoweth at jchenoweth@cliniclegal.org for information and application.