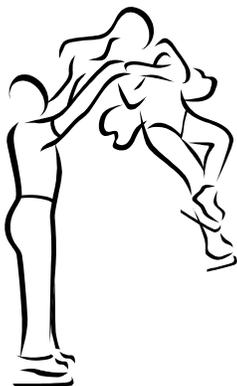


Research shows how pairs work to learn English



Recent research at the NCSALL-sponsored ESOL Lab School at Portland State University (www.labschool.pdx.edu) focuses on how beginning-level ESOL students acquire English as a second language. One focus of the research is about pair work, an instructional strategy in which the teacher gives the students a task to complete in pairs. For example, a pair might take turns asking (and answering) each other

questions about what they did when they got up in the morning, or practicing past tense verbs and vocabulary about activities in daily life.

Implications for Teaching

In *Focus on Basics* (November 2005) researcher Kathryn Harris explained, "Teachers find that pair work is good for language learning. The results of this research confirm that belief and call for more pair work when possible. This, as well as other research in the field, suggests that negotiation between students is an important part of language acquisition. To this end, teachers can choose pair activities that promote or maximize negotiation between their students. Teachers can try a variety of activities and monitor their own students: Do their students negotiate more when the activities are highly scripted? Require an exchange of information? Allow free conversation? With beginning-level students, it is not clear that one type of pair activity generates the most

interactivity, so teachers must determine what promotes negotiation for their specific students.

"These findings also suggest that students will learn what they need to learn in their pair-work negotiations. This means that teachers can expect to hear students negotiating around different elements of the same pair activity, but these will be the elements of language that students need, when they are ready."

Harris' work also confirmed Garland's (2002) in finding that negotiation will likely stop when teachers approach the student pairs. "Students appeal to the teacher for the correct answer, or they go back to a previous item to perform it for the teacher, or they start interacting with the teacher directly," Harris explained. "The Northwest Practitioner Knowledge Institute ... helped several teachers conduct research in their own classes. These teachers discovered that students negotiated more and for a longer time when the teacher stayed away from the pair activities (Claussen, 2005; Domman, 2005; Greif, 2005; McFadden, 2005; Solberg, 2005). The teachers expressed surprise and pleasure at the degree to which their students' language skills improved as a result of this negotiation."

Blog on Pair Work

As part of the Northwest Practitioner Knowledge Institute, an adult ESOL practitioner in California has been conducting a practitioner research in her classroom, focusing on student interactions and pair work. The blog for these projects at <http://calpronwkipairwork.blogspot.com/> describes the ups and downs of her experience.

New Web site for college-bound learners

With support from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the National College Transition Network recently launched a new web site to help nontraditional adult learners prepare for college. Designed to simulate the pre-college experience, www.collegeforadults.org contains information to help prospective students identify career goals and understand the admissions process, college placement tests, financial aid and the academic preparation necessary to succeed in college.

"This web site was developed in response to many emails to the Network's main site (www.collegetransition.org), which is geared toward practitioners," said Deepa Rao, ABE-to-College Transition Project Coordinator at the New England Literacy Resource Center/World Education. "Adult learners found other college planning Web sites were geared to high school students and sought information targeted more to their needs."

The college for adults site is open for enrollment!

ARCS reading research yields practical tools

The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) recently announced the availability of a 30-minute video on NCSALL's ARCS research produced by the Institute.

ARCS was the first large-scale attempt to use a battery of individually administered reading and language tests to describe the reading of students enrolled in adult basic education (ABE) and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programs. Nearly 1,000 adult learners from 30 learning centers in seven states were assessed in order to develop instructionally relevant cluster profiles of adult readers.

The video offers a panel discussion about NCSALL's ARCS research and ways in which programs can use the Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles, an on-line assessment tool based on the ARCS research, to assess students and plan instruction tailored to their specific profiles.

The "Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS) Panel" can be viewed at www.ncsall.net; click on "publications," then on "videos." You may order a DVD (\$5.00/copy for shipping and handling) from the site or by emailing info@nifl.gov; be sure to include your mailing address.

Massengill shows guided reading works for adults

Reprinted from *The OLCRC News*, Fall 2004

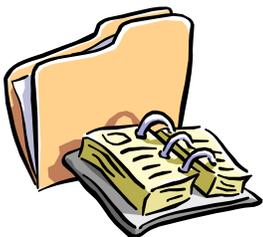
What sort of instruction leads to reading growth for beginners? Donita Massengill explored whether guided reading, often used in primary-grade classrooms, would be effective for beginning adult readers. Her three-month study with four adults involved individual one-hour sessions three times each week. Sessions were organized in three stages:

- 📖 The student reread a familiar text aloud using authentic literature, both fiction and nonfiction.
- 📖 The student and Massengill worked on words, with the focus based on student need. Students worked on segmenting and blending words (using Elkonin boxes or interactive sentence writing), word sorts, word building (using word families), making words, structural analysis, and sight word acquisition (nonphonetic words and high frequency words).

📖 The student and Massengill read a new text together.

Massengill tested the guided reading paradigm using single-participant experimental procedures that involved administering a variety of tests to the students over time. In this way, she was able to quantify each student's growth. Results showed that each participant increased in decoding ability, structural analysis awareness, and overall reading ability as a result of the guided reading framework. Two of the four students made expected growth (approximately 1.5 years); the other two, who were more advanced readers to begin with, showed remarkable growth (approximately 3 years).

Massengill, D. (2004). The Impact Of Using Guided Reading To Teach Low-Literate Adults. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 47, 588-602.



Upcoming conferences

Additional events at www.literacynet.org/nevada (click on calendar)

What: ProLiteracy Worldwide Annual Conference, October 4-7, Atlanta, GA
Contact: www.proliteracy.org/; conference@proliteracy.org; 315/422-9121 ext. 352

What: AAACE Annual Conference, November 7-10, Milwaukee, WI
Contact: www.aaace.org

What: National Reading Conference, November 29 – December 2, 2006, Los Angeles, CA
Contact: <http://www.nrconline.org/>

What: Meeting of the Minds II: National Adult Education Practitioner-Researcher Symposium
November 30 – December 2, 2006, Sacramento, CA
Contact: www.researchtopractice.org; mcorley@air.org or eoka@air.org

Briefs, bibliographies provide concise guides to research

CALPRO, the California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project, provides many professional development resources targeted to ABE and ESL providers. Research briefs and annotated bibliographies pack pertinent information into four easy-to-assimilate pages. Two new documents were posted in May to www.calpro-online.org/pubs.asp

◆ **Distance Education and E-Learning: New Options for Adult Basic and English Language Education**

Electronic learning, also known as e-learning, is characterized by the use of electronic technology to support learning and deliver instruction. E-learning can take place in conventional classrooms where learners and teachers are present physically, but it is commonly thought of as a model in which teachers and students are separated by time and/or space. This brief reviews ways that e-learning is used in distance education and provides recommendations for programs interested in this approach.

◆ **Research on Adult Numeracy Practice**

Research on adult numeracy typically is concerned with how adults use mathematics in specific contexts (e.g., work, school, the home) and how these contexts

affect adults' mathematical behavior. By looking at the use of mathematics inside and outside of school, researchers can help teachers and adult education programs build on what adult learners already know and value. Rather than treating mathematics as a decontextualized skill, researchers and teachers working within the adult numeracy framework see mathematics as a social practice grounded in larger social and cultural contexts. This annotated bibliography highlights studies that focus on adult numeracy practice and pedagogy, including studies of specific classroom strategies.

Other useful publications include:

- ◆ Research on Participatory Approaches to Adult Basic and Literacy Education (Annotated bibliography, January 2005)
- ◆ Applying Adult Learning Theory: Self-directed Learning and Transformational Learning in the Classroom (Digest, January 2005)
- ◆ Learner Persistence in Adult Basic Education (Digest, January 2005)

Latest *Focus on Basics* highlights research on learners' experiences

FOB editor Barb Garner writes: "Quick, tell me about your students' self esteem. Low, because of their academic struggles? That's not what a recent NCSALL-Rutgers study showed."

"Teachers, have you ever seen yourself teach?" she challenges. "Or noticed just what that clump of students was doing while you were engaged with one person on another side of the classroom? Teachers working with NCSALL-Rutgers found that videos taken of their classroom for research purposes provided them with rich information useful to their own professional development. Learn how useful video can be in helping pinpoint issues and suggest new ways of doing things in the classroom."

The May 2006 issue of *Focus on Basics* highlights these and several other recent studies, including one on adult learner engagement. In

"Shaping and Sustaining Learner Engagement in Individualized Group Instruction Classrooms", researcher Hal Beder discusses findings from a five-year qualitative study to determine what influenced learners' engagement and how it was fostered.

To access *FOB*, visit www.ncsall.net and click on "publications," then on "Focus on Basics." Print copies are \$2 each; call 617/482-9485.

Engagement is defined as mental effort focused on instructional tasks or, more simply, working hard at learning. Learners cannot progress unless they are engaged. It is important for teachers to understand what affects engagement so that they will know how to keep learners engaged and what to do if learners become disengaged

NDE policy on harassment posted

The Nevada Department of Education has developed *Procedures for the Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment* and posted it to the Department's Web site — go to www.literacynet.org/nvadulted, then click on "links". For more information, contact Garry Wyatt, gw Wyatt@doe.nv.gov, 775/687-9167.



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This professional development project is a leadership activity funded by a grant from the Nevada State Department of Education, Workforce Investment Act, Title II (Adult Education and Family Literacy). There is no discrimination or denial of participation on the basis of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Teaching sentence structure: a tip

*Pam Woicicki, CCSN ESL instructor and mentor,
dzrtwilo2@yahoo.com*

My students wrote an essay (of sorts!) for me one day. Some of them were still making major sentence construction errors. I divided them into groups of four and gave each group 10 verbs from a list I had previously given them. I told them to make a sentence with each verb.

Each person in the group had a part to play. Student 1 chose the verb and tense. Student 2 chose the subject and made the verb agree with it. Student 3 added a complement. Student 4 had to enhance the basic sentence with an adjective, prepositional phrase, etc.

The students loved this activity and worked diligently on it.

The next time, I had the students do a paragraph **before** they did the activity. Then, after practicing the activity a couple of times, they rewrote and edited their paragraphs. I could see an improvement in basic sentence structure in most of those edited paragraphs. For a few students, the difference was dramatic!

... and a smile

*Thanks to WNCC newsletter editor
Bodie Coates for finding these
chuckles at:*

<http://iteslj.org/c/jokes.html>

Teacher: Today, we're going to talk about tenses. Now, if I say "I am beautiful," which tense is it?

Student: Obviously it is the past tense.

ESL teacher: You must never begin a sentence "I is ...".

Clever student: Please sir, what's wrong with "I is a vowel".

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