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RaPAL

Research and Practice in Adult Literacy

Journal

This Summer Edition focuses on international perspectives in practice, pedagogy and policy in adult literacy. Articles describe work in refugee camps, in isolated rural communities and with different migrant communities. It covers family literacy, teaching maths, issues surrounding second language acquisition and local reading and writing schemes. Articles come from Thailand, Cameroon, Ireland, Canada, Uganda, Cambodia, England, Australia and Malta.

The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Network

Who we are
RaPAL is an independent national network of learners, practitioners, teachers, managers and researchers engaged in adult literacies and numeracy. Our support is generated by membership subscription only, and we are therefore completely independent in our views. RaPAL is the only national organisation focusing on the role of literacies in adult life.

What we do

- **campaign** for the rights of adults to have access to the full range of literacies in their lives
- **critique** current policy and practice where it is based on simplistic notions of literacy as skill
- **emphasise** the importance of social context in literacy
- **encourage** collaborative and reflective research
- **believe** in democratic practices in adult literacy
- **create** networks by organising events (including an annual conference) to contribute to national debate
- **publish** a journal three times a year

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We are a friendly group - open to new members and new ideas. Please contact us with any contributions (views, comments, reports and articles) and do not be put off if you are new to the field or if you have not written for a publication before. This Journal is written by and for all learners, tutors and researchers who want to ask questions about this field of work. It does not matter if the questions have been asked before. We want to reflect the many voices within adult literacy and numeracy work and to encourage debate. Why not join in?

Further information can be found at our website: www.rapal.org.uk

The RaPAL Journal expresses a variety of views which do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial group.

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RaPAL

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Editorial

Welcome to the summer edition of the RaPAL journal that looks at international perspectives on practice, pedagogy and policy. Indeed, articles in this edition range from work in a refugee camp in Thailand to a family literacy project in East Timor. Along the way we visit Cameroon, Ireland, Canada, Uganda, Cambodia, England, Australia and Malta.

Reflective practice means that we often focus, perhaps too much, on what we are doing in the context in which we work. How well did that go? What would I change next time? What these international perspectives offer us is the opportunity to look outwards and see the points of similarity and difference. You might find some ideas that you can apply to your own practice or research. Or you might be using similar activities within a very different context. Either way, this glimpse into other countries and other policy settings gives us pause for thought.

With such an open call for papers it is interesting to see that some general themes emerge. For example, family literacy is explored in section 1 in terms of practice and also in section three in terms of a comparative study into projects in England, Ireland and Malta. There is also a focus, as you should expect with RaPAL, on practitioner research. Overall though lies the question, asked specifically by more than one contributor whose literacy? Whether we are working in multi- or mono-lingual settings, which literacy or set of literacy practices are we teaching and researching?

In section 1 Delia Bradshaw describes the collective and collaborative writing group in Australia which led to the creation of the book Fancy Footwork. Mary Patience introduces us to a family literacy project in East Timor, which starts with photos as the basis for creating meaningful books for the learners to read. Sarah Rennie looks at activities used to train teachers and school leavers in a refugee camp in Thailand. The schemes in East Timor and Thailand are looking to train people who will continue the literacy work started by projects, whether they are mothers or teachers.

In section 2 Ian Cheffy questions what the focus of adult literacy should be in developing countries, with a particular focus on Cameroon. Should the focus be on the individual or on changing the community? Kieran Harrington presents practitioner research exploring attitudes towards a particular group of immigrant learners within ESOL classes in Ireland. Kate Nonesuch reports on a process for exploring what teachers see as good practice in teaching numeracy in Canada. Another contribution from RiPAL in British Columbia, Canada looks at a collaborative process between practitioners, researchers and students of developing programme evaluation tools. Linda Pearce looks at the evaluation of a bi-lingual education programme in Cambodia, raising questions such as, 'whose literacy anyway?' Contributions in this section range then from a focus on what we should be teaching to reporting on processes that can lead to change in attitudes or pedagogy.

In section 3 Yvon Cloutier takes up the themes of multilingualism and immigrants with his review of research on L2 acquisition of Canadian immigrants. Anthea Rose reports on a comparative study of family literacy programmes in Europe, looking at similarities and differences between Ireland, England and Malta. George Openjuru links theory, practice and policy in his review of work in Uganda.

As editors, we are very grateful for the contributions of participants and it is just worth noting that editorial meetings have happened in a virtual environment as we are spread across the United Kingdom. Enjoy these articles and let them help you reflect on what you are doing, inspire you to try something new or take that first step into practitioner research.

Yvon Appleby
Ellayne Fowler
Sarah Rennie

RaPAL Journals 2007 Themes and Deadlines

Issue	**General Theme**	**Copy deadline**
Autumn 2007	Conference 2007 edition: Learning journeys - voices and identities in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Fri 28th Sept 2007

Fancy Footwork

Delia Bradshaw

Delia Bradshaw's work in adult education in Victoria, Australia, has included, over thirty years, being a teacher, mentor, researcher, writer, editor and curriculum advisor. She has worked in a wide range of contexts, including neighbourhood learning centres, Technical And Further Education (TAFE) institutes, Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) regional councils, community agencies, government bodies, professional organisations and university education faculties. Her particular passions are women's education, multicultural education, foundation education and e-learning. Her work as an adult educator is dedicated to creating a world that is more just, compassionate, harmonious and hopeful.

Fancy Footwork was published in March 2007. It is the story of a group of women adult educators from Melbourne who, two years earlier, embarked on a journey to explore the spirit of adult education. The group, also known as 'Women of Spirit', was keen to share and record histories and reflections on the world and work of adult education in Victoria, Australia. During 2005 and 2006, they met and wrote every six weeks, in a regular rhythm of meeting, conversing, reflecting, writing, reading and conversing once again.

Their reflections, collected in this book, take you inside their world. With you, they share what adult education means to them. Writing of joys, dilemmas and dangers, they reveal the complexities of teachers' lives and teaching work.

A quick overview of the questions and issues that preoccupied these teacher-writers can be seen in the table of contents that is organised under the following six section headings:

- Teaching with spirit
- Professional identity: weaving public, private and political
- Learning spaces
- Transformation in the spotlight
- The art of pedagogy in action
- Bodies and/of knowledge.

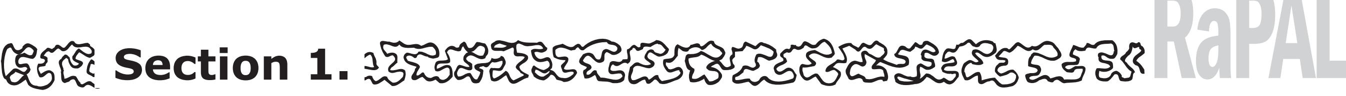
As all parents know, naming is a powerful act. The group considered many alternatives before finally choosing **Fancy Footwork: adult educators thinking on their feet**. As the introduction explains:

> …, 'fancy' is often characterised as private, genteel, domesticating, artistic, elitist, and sedate… At its most extreme, this view reduces 'fancy work' to an inessential and bourgeois luxury.
>
> 'Work'… can easily be presented as public, robust, liberating, practical and democratic a vigorous and productive activity requiring a strong mind and body…the place where the 'real thing' happens.
>
> … Not only does 'foot' in 'Fancy Footwork' act as a bridge between 'fancy' and 'work', it also reveals ways in which both 'fancy' and 'work' can emerge as co-operative contributors rather than as hostile, competing opposites.
>
> By positioning 'foot' at the centrepoint, as in 'Fancy **Foot**work', this new alignment moves our attention to matters such as nimbleness, split-second timing, precise judgments, pacing and spacing. All of these are sophisticated capacities drawing on the whole body, the whole self, including heart, mind and spirit. (pp. 24-25).

'Women of Spirit' continues to be a community of practice, deeply committed to the ethical foundations of adult education, a multi-dimensional ethos fusing body and mind, head and heart, contemplation and activism.

Bradshaw, Delia, Campbell, Beverley & Clemans, Allie (Eds). (2007). **Fancy Footwork: adult educators thinking on their feet**. Melbourne: VALBEC.

Copies of **Fancy Footwork** are available from VALBEC, http://www.valbec.org.au/.



Kami Aprende Putu' ('We Are Learning Together') - a family literacy project

Mary Patience

Mary Patience is the co-ordinator of Oxfam Hong Kong's Family Literacy project in East Timor. She has been involved in education and education related issues since 1973 and worked for 13 years with Oxfam in Glasgow in development education. In 2001 she was seconded to East Timor to help with their REFLECT adult literacy programme and went back to close that programme in 2005. She has been with Oxfam Hong Kong since then.

The issue of how best to teach literacy to adults is often a very contentious one, with many arguments for and against various methodologies. I do not intend to go into those arguments here but rather to just give an account of a process which I have been working on for the past year. This project in Timor-Leste [East Timor] is funded and implemented directly by Oxfam Hong Kong (OHK) and has been running since April 2006. It is part of a larger OHK country programme which has been operating in country since 2001.

Background

This project is based on a small pilot project which ran in 2005 on Atauro island just off the coast of the capital Dili, the main aim of which was to raise awareness of the importance of literacy through participants making books about themselves, their families and the communities they live in.

The project is based on the premise that people want to know what the words which accompany photos about things familiar to them 'say' and give them a reason for wanting to read when they know that the writing is about themselves.

Books produced are written in the local language, Tokodede, and then into the majority language, Tetun, allowing for discussions around how words might translate into the latter. Many of the participants are not so conversant with Tetun so are also learning it through this process.

Where we work

The project works in communities where Oxfam Hong Kong already has a presence, so they are not unfamiliar to us and vice versa. Thus far, the programme has concentrated on working with groups which our partner Moris Foun identified as in need of help with literacy and numeracy.

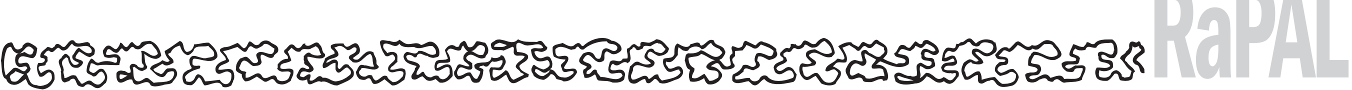
Who we work with

In view of the very low rates of literacy and numeracy for women and because they are usually the primary carers of children, women are the specific target of this programme. The programme has been designed to overcome what have been identified as some of the major obstacles to women's participation in non-formal education. Attaining literacy can be a key element of increasing self-esteem, especially for mothers, whose lack of literacy may lessen their already low status within the family and in the eyes of their children as their children become educated.

Originally the project sought to address both the literacy needs of women and the need to better prepare pre-school children for primary school but the team soon found out that there are a lot of school age children who, for one reason or another are not going to school or have dropped out.

We have encouraged those children so that we can build their confidence and support them to go to school. Evidence of their attendance at our class can be used as a lobbying tool to persuade local government to provide a school nearer to the community.

Often when men come to such programmes, they take the lead in discussions and intimidate the women and children. In all the groups we have men, male teenagers and boy children. So far they have not dominated, and where they can read, have helped the others.



How we work
We use the everyday experiences of the participants to address literacy and numeracy issues, bringing family members together and focusing initially on generating interest and motivation, through working with groups to produce reading books featuring snapshots of their lives. The approach used is one of active learning, where everyone, whether child or adult, has a stake in the sharing of knowledge. It does not see learners as the passive recipients of knowledge that has been created elsewhere, but as the creators of that knowledge, using their experience as the basis of the learning.

Photos are taken, chosen or discarded, captions written in both languages and books put together with the black and white prototype used as a work book. When we write the captions, the words are their words and as we scribe for them, we comment on things like capital letters, discuss sounds and 'model' the writing, talking about how letters are formed etc. The participants discuss how words should be written in Tokadede and how words translate into Tetun. When we write books about how they do certain things, like weaving for example, much discussion and argument ensues.

Once the participants are happy with the black and white version, we produce it in colour. The final version is for reading NOT for writing in. Once the books are made, we use them in a variety of ways, reading aloud together, using words, word games, phonics, number games etc.

Mixed abilities and ages
All the groups have a mix of ages and abilities and in all but one, the children just do the same as the adults. However in one group the number of children is so high that we take them separately. In all groups the participants help each other in one way or another, regardless of age or ability.

Children
In all the classes there are children who are not yet of an age to go to school. The children who are three and under play with pens and crayons and we have not really worked with them, other than encouraging them to hold a pen properly and to use books. However we see them model the behaviour of the adults, 'reading' the books and 'writing'.

Four-year olds and above have been helped to write their names, recognise letters, numbers etc. and the team has encouraged women who can read to help their own children. The children have been given their own copies of the books which have been made together. They have also made their own 'Kami aprende putu' books and number books. The photos have also been made into jigsaws and card games.

Young people
There are young teenagers, some of whom have been to school and others who have not. The challenge is to encourage those who can, to help those who can't without lowering the self esteem of the latter but also to provide stimulating enough activities to push on the ones who can read and write. They are in the same group as the adults and learn together with them.

Adults
Many of the younger adults have had some sort of school experience and even if just one year of primary, they quickly remember previous learning. The older participants have a lot of problems if they have never been to school or adult education classes. Age does not improve memory, eye sight or motor skills and even holding a pen is difficult. Some struggle and try so hard and I wonder why they are bothering when they have managed to live so long without reading, especially when there isn't anything to read in their communities. I am filled with admiration and humility when I see how they persevere. For this older group the desire at first was only to learn to sign one's name but the books are proving an incentive to want to do more. Having learned to write her name, Cesarina, one of the older women signed her name for the first time when she received a per diem for her trip to town. Her family's pride in her achievements has led to them working at home with her and she can now read independently. Unfortunately she is not the norm - yet.

Learning together by themselves
From the beginning the communities were unwilling to nominate a facilitator unless we paid them and this is not sustainable. As group members become more committed to and engaged in increasing their literacy and numeracy skills, they are much more able to work together by themselves, practising the activities we have been doing. Using their own books gives them the opportunity to self correct their own work. This removes the opportunity for any one person to be the holder of knowledge and therefore of power. The participants are working by themselves at home and meeting together when we are not able to go to the classes. Provided they have the materials, they can run the activities which we have done with them in class by themselves.
In each group there is a person who can read but who has come to the class and helped out. They have been active in helping both their own children and whoever is sitting next to them. They can be there as a 'touchstone' in case the group get the words completely wrong but the team has given each group enough 'stand alone' activities and resources to be able to self correct. This gives the participants a new self confidence and sense of responsibility.

The drawback to this way of working is that the groups rarely take a chance and try something new without support, ideas, encouragement and help from our team. This is related more to the lack of imagination or experience on how to use the words they have already learned in other ways, i.e. being able to add to sentences; write new sentences with other words that they have learned; breaking up and remaking words, sentences etc.

In all three communities, children who go to school and can read are helping their parents and siblings at home. We've encouraged them to come into the class so that they can see what we are doing and how they can do the same at home.

The books
The first book which was produced in each community was called 'My name is', with a photograph and few simple sentences about each participant in dual language form. The familiarity of the subject matter gave them immediate success in at least knowing that the words must be about the person[s] in the photos, in the same way as the familiarity of the packet format, colour, plus the word 'Supermie' on a packet of noodles tells them the packet contains noodles.

We moved on to using photos of the participants learning together and kept adding on new photos every week, asking what was happening in each new photo. Some repeated phrases from the previous weeks and others introduced new words. Each group now has several 'Kami aprende putu' workbooks and a final colour version.

The photographic record of one group's visit to another group has been used for another book, while the process of how to produce a woven bag from start to finish has been the topic for another. This copy can also be used to accompany the woven items which they sell to foreigners.
We are also producing individual books for each family so that they have a book which is almost like a family album.

First steps to literacy.........
After 6 months of working with us for a couple of hours a week and for some of them, working by

themselves at home, all of the adults now recognise their own names and most recognise the names of others in their group, especially if it starts with the same letter. All can copy their first names but not all can write independent of an example, and not all with ease, even when they are just copying. Some are still struggling to hold the pencil properly and others forget quickly, recognising only the first letter of their names and confusing their own name with one of which starts with the same letter. There are several others who have difficulties related to sight and one who is perhaps dyslexic.
Now most participants have three/ four books with photos and captions in both languages, so at least there are now things to read at home.

...............and numeracy
The adults have quite good mental mathematical skills because they deal with money in the markets, buying and selling. However this knowledge does not translate to recognising numbers in their written form. The team have started to talk about what the numbers look like in their written form and so far have shown the participants how to record the mathematical process of addition.

Using dice games has helped them record up to three numbers, using plus and equals signs.This simple recording then moves to simple bookkeeping, helping them write down and record their business transactions, for all are involved in selling coffee, woven items like purses and bags, pillows, cushions etc.

Conclusion
The whole idea of this way of working was to move from the traditional ABC approach, to make books which would raise an awareness of literacy and provide those learning to read with *things* to read so as to promote a literate environment. The books have all been centred round the groups so that the pictures and words are their own and that familiarity and ownership should facilitate word recognition.

I don't want to make any claims about this approach, other than that I believe that if people are involved in the production of books about their own lives, with photographs of familiar things and people, using their own words and language, then there is an automatic interest and desire to want to read what those words say.

Although our classes won't do the children harm, they can never substitute for attending school. They provide alternative ways of learning apart from the boring, passive and often violent approaches used in the country.

Usually non-literate adults feel ashamed that they are unable to read and write; their children often feel ashamed of them too. However, the team has learned to encourage school-going children to help their parents and non-literate siblings and not to make fun of them. The result of this is that the children are very proud of their parents' achievements. It has been very exciting to watch the whole process evolve and to see the pride all the participants have taken in their efforts.

This project can be the foundation of learning which evolves through discussion, critical thinking and reflection, to a more issue based approach, one like REFLECT where reading of the words which they are learning can facilitate their 'reading of the world' in which they live.

The classes are fun and provide them with an alternative view of learning, of themselves as learners and of 'school', a model which they would prefer their children to have at school.
As the team moves on to other communities and just visits on an ad hoc basis, we hope that the commitment which the groups have to organise themselves will continue and that they will not lose the momentum of the past few months.

Dili, East Timor April 2007

For further information about the project Mary can be contacted on maryannep@oxfam.org.au.

Literacies in Karen and English: Easter 2006 at Mae Ra Ma Refugee Camp on the Thai border with Myanmar (Burma)

Sarah Rennie

Sarah Rennie is currently Senior Lecturer in Literacy Education at the University of Sunderland.

This article is a brief reflection on a week spent in a refugee camp for Karen people who have been forced to leave their homes in Burma because of persecution by the military regime. Many have lived there for more than twelve years after the deaths of members of their families and the burning of their villages. There have been continuing campaigns of destruction; new refugees were arriving in the camps when we were there.

The camps are under the protection of the Thai army and are supported by the UN High Commission for Refugees, the European Union and by a range of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). One of these is the Burma Education Partnership which is a small north east of England charity supporting teachers in the camps and more widely in the border region. The charity has been running "summer schools" in the camps for the last 5 years. They take place at Easter which is the long school holiday when the weather makes access to the border region possible. In our summer the roads are impassable because of the monsoon rains.

We were a group of six from the Burma Education Partnership and we were paying guests of the camp authorities and schools' administration all of whom are Karen. The aim was to provide support for the teachers who were doing an amazing job with almost no resources. The plan was to run workshops, modelling interactive ways of learning and provide an opportunity to work with English speaking teachers. About 70 people came to the five and a half day workshops, about twenty of whom were teachers; the others had recently completed high school and because of the situation in the camps there were few opportunities for them to progress anywhere. All were keen to develop their English; all spoke Karen and Burmese; some were very confident in English, while others had little spoken English but were confident with grammar exercises. Some also spoke a little Thai.

We were three teachers paired with three young people, all of whom had relevant experience; one had a Karen mother and spoke some of the language. The education organisers in the camps divided the participants into three groups and we rotated round the groups.

In this short article, I shall describe two of the activities which we developed as well as an approach to evaluation.

Making and sharing maps

The camps are divided into sections, strung out along a river with between 600 and 800 people in each section. Almost all the buildings are traditionally built of wood and leaves.

On the first day, students worked in small groups with other people who lived in the same section. Together they drew a map of the section showing their houses, the schools, churches, (the majority of Karen people are Christian of different denominations) the Buddhist temple, shops, (only a few) store, football pitch, hospital and whatever the groups felt was important. The discussion was all in Karen and when they were happy each person in the group talked in English with support from each other about their home, their family, their school, and the sports they enjoyed…..

On one level this could have been any EFL class: *My name is… I live with my mother and a brother and sister. I like football.*

On another level I began to get some insight into the horror and lack of opportunities of life in the camp.

- Families were living in numbered sections. The building materials were provided by the United Nations and European Union; I didn't discover who had allocated the numbers.
- Most were living in families with women and younger siblings because the men were dead or away fighting the Burmese army.
- There were almost no places to work, apart from the schools, hospital and other roles associated with the running of the camp.
- Basic foods and household supplies came from the Burma Border Consortium Store because this was where the food rations were distributed.

There was so much I didn't find out and couldn't ask. We had been told not to ask too many questions.

Sharing stories
One of the other activities we used in the workshops was story telling.

I chose a traditional story with a rain forest setting which I hoped would be familiar: **How the birds got feathers**. First I read the story twice with actions and props, then the groups were given a copy and we read it aloud to each other. The sections of the story were given out and sequenced and re-read.

We re-told the story with actions and lots of repetition. The groups of school leavers took great delight in the language. The snake *slithered and shook.*

With the group of teachers, we then looked at the classic story structure: setting the scene, development of the story, how it ended, what happened. We looked at some of the language: *long ago, now, later*.
They then worked in groups, talking in Karen, to share a story of their own. The groups then wrote them in English and read them aloud to everyone.

Long ago in the forest there was an old pig. She had only one son but she had a friend. Her friend was a tiger...

Long ago, there were three friends. They were lion, donkey and fox. One day they went hunting in the forest. They hunted a deer ….but they quarrelled and the lion ate the donkey………But then the lion knew his weakness and later he lived with fox peacefully.

19 people worked in groups and wrote stories together. Some sounded like Aesop (the snail and the rabbit were the same as the hare and the tortoise); sadly there was no time to discuss where their stories came from.

One man sat on his own and wrote:
Long ago there were many nations in the world and one of these nations was called (the) Karen nation. And in that nation, the person called Anon lived also. He had four sisters and two brothers. His family was very poor. When he was eight years old, he saw many troubles because one nation called Burmese treat them badly. So Anon's home become ashes and his family poorer than before. After that…he came to a refugee camp in Thailand and could continue to study. But when he passed all the schools in the camp, he could not continue his study. He can't get out of the camp. He is hopeless because he is refugee.

Sharing Stories at Mae Ra Ma Refugee Camp, April 2006

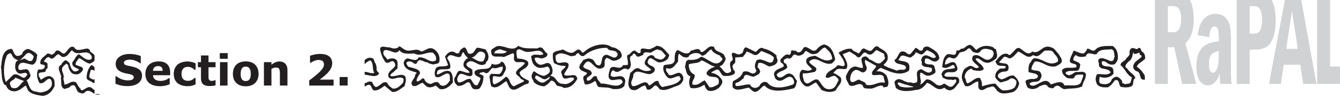
Evaluation of the Summer School
At the end of the week, we gave everyone a paper leaf and asked them to write on one side something they had learnt, and on the other what they would like from a future summer school. We put them on one of the wooden tree trunks supporting the roof so they made a tree.

They had enjoyed the songs, stories, games and activities; the teachers felt they had learnt some new ideas for teaching children. All wanted more speaking and listening, reading and writing.

Reflection
Sixteen months later (August 07), the political situation of the Thai/Burma border has not changed. The lives of a few of the people we met have, as they have been resettled in other countries as part of the UN Refugee Resettlement Programme. There is a group of Karen in Sheffield and two families are in Norway. The Burma Education Partnership continues to support education programmes in the camps and among migrant communities in Thailand.

There are many complex questions surrounding any programme like the summer school, including ones about language, about the role of the outsider dropping in for a week, about what is really going on. However the enthusiasm of the participants and their total commitment to education made it an experience of great mutual value. We certainly learnt from everyone we met.

With thanks to all the teachers and students I met in Mae Ra Ma for their welcome and for giving permission to share their maps and stories



Changing the Way We Teach Math

Kate Nonesuch

Kate is an Instructor, at Malaspina University-College, Cowichan Campus Duncan, British Columbia, Canada

The research question

For many years I have taught adult students basic numeracy: operations with whole numbers, decimal and common fractions, proportions and percents. I have tried many different methods and texts in my attempt to teach so that students would understand math and, I hoped, learn to like it. However, being too busy teaching, I didn't have time to search systematically for relevant research material, and it wasn't until the recent explosion of material online that searching from a remote location became at all feasible. Hence, when I received funding from the National Office of Literacy and Learning (NOLL), Human Resources and Social Development Canada, I welcomed the luxury of spending time away from the classroom, to read, think, talk, and write about teaching math. My research question was "How can ABE math instructors in BC apply research findings to their practice?" While the question was big, and each of its many parts was big, it came from a personal question: How can I apply research findings to my own teaching practice?

My project had three parts: I searched for and read some of the literature about teaching numeracy to adults (Nonesuch, 2006b); I consulted with numeracy and math practitioners in my province about their reactions to my reading; finally, I wrote a manual, *Changing the Way We Teach Math*, (Nonesuch, 2006a) based on my consultations with them.

The literature

I began by searching out and reading the research about teaching basic math to adults. I concentrated on books and articles about teaching basic concepts to the kinds of ABE/Literacy students who come to programs in BC. Even though I was looking at programs in BC, I wanted to see what was going on in other places, so I read some literature from Australia, the UK and the USA, as well as Canada. I concentrated on material about instructional methods and teaching philosophy, rather than questions about policy or curriculum.
Although some major players, such as Diana Coben (2003) from the British National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, have said that there hasn't been enough research done to make any definitive statements about how to improve instruction, many people have gone ahead to make many definitive statements about exactly that. I soon found a comprehensive and concise statement of principles written by Lynda Ginsburg and Iddo Gal (1996) that fit well with what many authors were saying:

- Determine what learners already know about a topic before instruction.
- Address and evaluate attitudes and beliefs regarding both learning math and using math.
- Develop understanding by providing opportunities to explore mathematical ideas with concrete or visual representations and hands-on activities.
- Encourage the development and practice of estimation skills.
- Emphasize the use of "mental math" and the need to connect different mathematical skills and concepts.
- View computation as a tool for problem solving, not an end in itself; encourage use of multiple solution strategies.
- Develop learners' calculator skills and foster familiarity with computer technology.
- Provide opportunities for group work.
- Link numeracy and literacy instruction by providing opportunities for students to communicate about math.
- Situate problem-solving tasks within familiar, meaningful, realistic contexts in order to facilitate transfer of learning.
- Develop learners' skills in interpreting numerical or graphical information appearing within documents and text.
- Assess a broad range of skills, reasoning processes and dispositions, using diverse methods (Ginsburg & Gal, 1996, p 2, ff).

Further, I found two recommendations about best practices for retention of students that I thought fit well into the topic, from a report prepared for the College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading, a committee of the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario:

- The management of learning should lead to the development and reinforcement of the learner's control of his/her own learning.
- The management of learning should strive to build a shared power relationship in the

classroom that contributes to self-esteem and self-confidence ("Best practices in managing the classroom to improve student commitment", no date).

I was interested in these final two best practices because they fit with my own ideas about teaching adults; in recent years I have thought and written about the power relationships between teacher and learner, and I have worked hard to facilitate learner control of learning. The two recommendations from *Best practices in managing the classroom to improve student commitment* deal with the “heartwork” of learning math, rather than the headwork. In my opinion, some of the difficulty with learning and teaching math is a neglect of the emotional or affective side of teaching and learning. The head that comes to learn math is attached to a heart, and cannot function except as the heart influences how much and what kind of work the head can do. Similarly, the head that comes to teach math is attached to a heart, and functions only in relationship to that heart, no matter how hard the head tries to deny or bury the emotions.

Reaction to the literature

At first when I found such recommendations for instruction, such articulations of “best practices,” I was surprised to find nothing very new. I had heard of all of these things over the years I had been teaching math to adults, and I agreed with all of them. Yet, if that was so, why did I not apply them in my teaching practice? I had certainly tried to apply many of them, perhaps even all of them, from time to time, but had been unable to make them work consistently for me. In spite of my best intentions and in spite of all the work I had done to make my teaching successful, I had often fallen back on teaching the way I was taught, tying my instruction to a text that I didn't particularly like, and focusing on getting students through the material rather than teaching for understanding.

Furthermore, I didn't know any other math instructor who was able to consistently use all of these “best practices,” although I knew many who were regarded by their students and colleagues as good teachers, and who spent many hours outside of class working to improve their teaching. They, like me, had tried some or all of the strategies suggested by the experts, but were not able to consistently put them all into practice.

More reactions: Consultations with the field

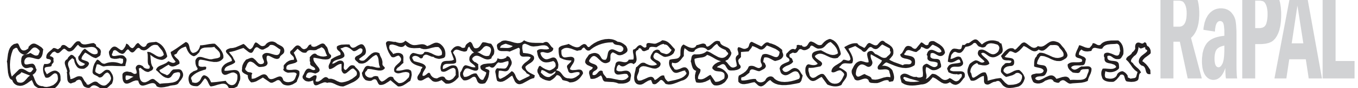
I took my dilemma with the research to eight groups of people in BC who are concerned with teaching math, in all, 90 people, mainly tutors. At each consultation, I began by presenting some of the research I had read, always including in some detail the best practices cited above. First, I asked participants to indicate which of the best practices they had never heard of before, and almost without fail, they said they had heard of them all. Occasionally someone who was not an ABE math tutorperhaps a new volunteer or an administratorwould say they were unfamiliar with one or two of the strategies, but generally they all had the same reaction that I had had“I have heard of these before.”

After this initial response, I asked participants for a more detailed response to the research, and particularly asked participants what made the recommendations difficult to apply in their practice. What did you hear that you didn't already know about? What did you hear that confirms your own experience? What seems to go against your own experience? What findings would you most like to implement in your own situation? If/when you try to implement these findings what gets in your way? Eighty people turned in these questionnaires to me at the end of the workshops; I discarded answers from four people who indicated on their sheets that they did not instruct any math.

Because I knew that the next phase of my project was to write a manual for instructors, I was especially interested in the answers to the final two questions: “What findings would you most like to implement in your own situation?” and “If/when you try to implement these findings what gets in your way?” I knew that the answers to the first question would guide me about what to write about, and the answers to the second would shape what I had to say on the topic.

Strategy	*Number of instructors interested in adopting the strategy*	*Barrier: Time constraints*	*Barrier: Student resistance*	*Barrier: Instructor’s lack of training or discomfort*	*Barrier: Rigid curriculum*
Use concrete or visual activities	*19*	*10*	*7*	*6*	
Situate problem-solving tasks within familiar contexts	*15*	*3*	*5*		*3*
Provide opportunities for group work	*11*	*6*	*6*		*2*
Develop shared power relationship in the classroom	*12*	*2*	*4*	*3*	

Table 1 *Strategies chosen, and barriers to their implementation*



"What findings would you most like to implement?"

Of the 56 participants who answered this question, some of them said they would like to implement more than one finding. As Table 1 shows, four strategies were overwhelmingly chosen by participants**:**

- Develop understanding by providing opportunities to explore mathematical ideas with concrete or visual representations and hands-on activities.
- Situate problem-solving tasks within familiar, meaningful, realistic contexts in order to facilitate transfer of learning.
- The management of learning should lead to the development and reinforcement of the learner's control of his/her own learning **and** the management of learning should strive to build a shared power relationship in the classroom that contributes to self-esteem and self-confidence. (I combined two strategies, both dealing with sharing power/responsibility in classroom management.)
- Provide opportunities for group work.

If/when you try to implement these findings what gets in your way?

Very interesting things happened when participants wrote down the barriers they experienced in implementing these strategies. The same two barriers were cited for every strategystudent resistance and time constraints. In three of the four strategies, student resistance was the most frequently cited barrier! (Table 1).

Conclusion

I was surprised a little about the answers to the questions. I was surprised that so many instructors said that student resistance was a major factor. I had talked in the workshops about my own experience with student resistance, but it seems I opened a floodgate for teachers to say how much it affected them. I was surprised that so many instructors said they wanted to work with manipulatives or graphic representations, but were unwilling to do so because they were uncomfortable working with them themselves. I was surprised that participants wanted to connect math with real life, since I had presented some research findings that showed how difficult it was to do so, for example, an article by Alison Tomlin (2002); I thought it showed the hunger participants felt to make math meaningful to students, and I was delighted, if surprised, to find it showing up.

Based on the findings from the workshops, I decided that in my manual (2006a) I would write about implementing those four "best practices" that participants had said they were most interested in. Further, I knew that I wanted to write about overcoming the barriers instructors named to implementing these best practices, rather than simply saying, "Do this, do that." I wanted to lay out the complexities behind those deceptively simple statements of how to improve math instruction. Much of the art of teaching is hidden, not only to people who have nothing to do with education, but also to teachers themselves, to administrators and to students. So much of what we do well is not articulated, and so much of what is difficult to do is also not articulated, so that it seems that we do not do it well because of ignorance, or inattention, rather than the complexity of the factors that influence our work. By laying out the complexities, I hoped to make clear the problems that face us in implementing these best practices. Only once the problems are clear can we go about finding solutions.

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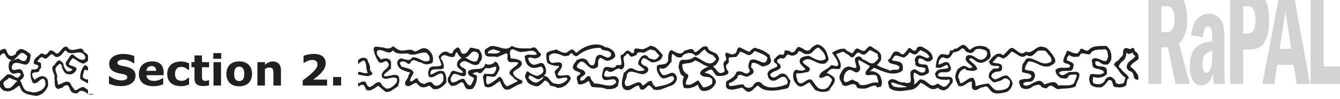

International - National - Local: Whose Literacies Anyway?

Linda Pearce

Linda Pearce is a Skills for Life researcher; before that, she worked as a Family Literacy Co-ordinator.

I was recently privileged to be part of a team working on an interim evaluation of the work of a Non Government Agency (NGO) working in partnership with the Cambodian Government to provide bi-lingual literacy education in the Non Formal Education sector for indigenous minority rural peoples who traditionally do not have a text based culture.

Whilst this work was first and foremost evaluation for development and was framed in the context of recommendations made 3 years previously during a major evaluation, there were significant relationships present in the process, which were of interest and would be worth fuller investigation. The interplay between the International, here UNESCO; the National at Government and then Provincial and District levels; the implementing NGO and its philosophy and the village elderships that had requested 'literacy' education for their people was both interesting and complex.

With sustainability in view, the NGO had recruited and trained staff from both Khmer speaking people (the official National language) and indigenous hill tribe peoples from the key language groups who were orally bi-lingual and able to read and write Khmer to some degree. These staff typically started as volunteer bi-lingual literacy teachers in their own communities and then moved on to paid employment with the NGO. They were employed in a variety of roles including language development, culturally relevant book illustration, recruitment and basic teacher training of new volunteer teachers and monitoring provision.

Culturally relevant book-illustration

The students are village people, many of whom have not had access even to Primary Education in Khmer owing to the geographical and transport issues relating to where they live. The age range of students therefore varies depending on whether there is locally available Primary Education or not. Where this is available the student age range tends to be 14 plus; where not students can be as young as 8 years old, which provides quite a challenge for teachers.

I'd like here to give a flavour of the work I was involved in by including an edited excerpt from the Evaluation Report and then present just a few of the questions that this raises for both reflection and hopefully future research.

Purpose

The pilot phase of the project underwent a comprehensive evaluation in 2002.
This major evaluation examined the processes of implementation up to that point and then noted strengths and weaknesses, outlined achievements and made recommendations for improvement.

The recommendations made linked to ongoing international concerns which are outlined in the Summary EFA (Education for All) Global Monitoring Report 2006 prepared by UNESCO. Of the 6 goals used to provide a summary measure of a country's situation in relation to EFA, 3 directly relate to this evaluation and have been included in the process of evaluation. These are: adult literacy, gender, and quality of education. Whilst Cambodia has made significant progress in relation to the Education Development Index since 1998 (UNESCO: 2006) it is important to build on this progress particularly by strengthening the work that is taking place in the adult literacy sector; a sector in which this NGO has a unique role.

The purpose of this interim evaluation carried out by 2 expatriate evaluators in partnership with NGO staff has been to look at the recommendations made for improvement, to provide a summary of distance travelled since the last evaluation, to identify any significant new developments within the program and to produce a 'working document' that will contribute to planning for the next phase of this community-based literacy project.

Evaluation Design
The team have endeavoured to take an 'inclusive approach' (Saunders: 2006) to this evaluation by working with key NGO staff in the design phase to ensure that the concerns of those working in the field have been taken into consideration. This collaboration took place through electronic communication and planning meetings prior to the evaluation.

The team have also been concerned that this evaluation foregrounds the 'voice' (Saunders: 2006) of the different people involved in the project at all levels, from the students, teachers and librarians in the villages to the implementing team based at the NGO offices both expatriate and national, and representatives of the Government at both Provincial and District levels. We have been particularly concerned that indigenous ethnic minority people from each of the 3 main language groups currently involved in the project be represented at both an organisational and community level.

To this end we have used qualitative methods to gain insights from the different groups of people involved at each level of implementation/reception of the project in relation to the key questions.

We have used statistical information provided by the NGO as well as curricula and MIS surveys conducted by the team to further investigate the extent to which the key questions have been addressed.

Opportunities anticipated
There were no scheduled interviews with either Village Elders or District Monitors owing to the tight timescales and difficulties with communication but we hoped for the opportunity to talk to representatives of both groups owing to the importance of their roles in relation to the setting up and maintenance of the literacy program in the villages.

We were presented with the opportunity to interview one group of elders in the most remote community. This was a welcomed addition to the schedule as, without both the approval and active participation at village level of the elders, the literacy programs would not be able to function.

During the visit to another village one of the District Monitors was present and we took the opportunity to interview him, as this role is central to the maintenance of the quality of teaching and learning at a village level.

Difficulties encountered
The questions used for interviews had been prepared in advance in consultation with the programme staff, expatriate in the first instance and then national interpreting staff in the second and were revised for clarity. During fieldwork however, some of these needed to be adapted further for ease of interpretation and clarity of understanding. When interviewing teachers the question, 'How well do you think your teaching can be applied?' caused problems both in interpretation and understanding. This question was answered variously from two different perspectives; either that of 'How well do you think your teaching can be used (in the community)?' or 'How do you apply what you have learnt in classes?' One set of answers addresses how students use their literacy in the community, the other how the teachers use their literacy in the community. Both sets of answers gave insight into how literacy is used in people's everyday lives.

Again when in the field it was thought best to combine the questions, 'Which lesson/s in your training have you enjoyed most and why?' and 'Which lesson/s in your training have been most useful and why?' as interviewees tended to conflate the meanings of these questions owing to interpretation difficulties.

Working through interpreters often from minority language to Khmer and then from Khmer to English did mean that we were not always able to pick up on the broader discussions around the questions we asked, or on asides and nuances. This did however depend on the experience of the interpreters available for each community visit.

The logistics of getting to a more remote village meant that we were limited as to how many of the villages we could visit in the time available. To get to one of these villages involved in excess of a 6 hour journey using jeep and boat, an overnight stay so as to be there at the break of day to interview people before they set off for their fields, followed by an equally time consuming return journey. It was however important to visit a sample of the more remote villages as community based literacy is often the only education provision they have in their communities as some of these villages don't yet have access to primary education for their children.

Owing to communication difficulties we were unable to visit one of the villages on the schedule.

These two experiences brought to our attention some of the logistical difficulties surrounding the implementation and maintenance of the literacy program and raised the issues of communication, time required to get to training events if they are not held in the communes where villages are located and staffing implications for monitoring effectively.

The time of year being harvest time in the region's agricultural cycle meant that the numbers of teachers and students available for interview could be variable as both teachers and students work on the land to live and either teach or attend classes on a voluntary basis.

Reflections

This is only a snapshot of both what we were trying to achieve in a limited period of time and some of the issues we came across in the field but there are some interesting questions raised in reflecting on the processes involved.

Working from the ground up firstly, why were these indigenous ethnic minority communities now asking for literacy education where traditionally they had a rich oral culture, which was not text based? What had changed in their lived environment to create this sense of need? Also what literacy were the people asking for primarily; mother tongue, Khmer or both?

Secondly, in a culture where the official language had been French up until 1953 and where the French based education model continued to be a strong influence until the Civil War, which was followed by a more persistent programme of Khmerisation, what were the incentives or imperatives now for the Government to be seen to be working towards a UNESCO influenced literacy development programme?

Thirdly, in a Country where the Government has no budget for adult literacy education and not all children yet have access to primary education in the more remote regions, what is the role of the NGO and how does it negotiate between international global imperatives and national and local expectations whilst meeting the priorities of its donors?

I'm sure these are questions that many of us are asking in different contexts around the world but much more on the ground research needs to be carried out across a broad range of cultural contexts to begin to get to grips with some of these issues and to explore possible answers.

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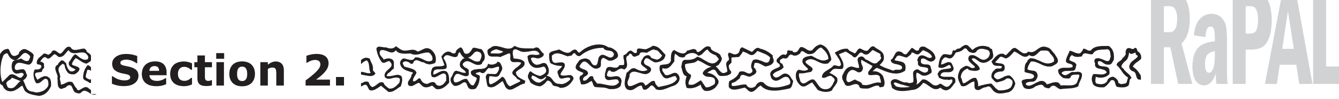

Literacy in Development: A View from Cameroon

Ian Cheffy

Ian Cheffy has been involved in adult literacy in Africa since 1989 when he and his family first moved to Cameroon. He worked for 6 years developing a literacy programme for a minority language group before moving to a different part of the country as a regional adviser and trainer. Since 1999 he has been working in the UK as a trainer for literacy programme designers and advisors in developing countries. He is a member of SIL International, an NGO specialising in the development of unwritten languages through the provision of alphabets, literature and training.

In developed countries such as the UK, where literacy occupies a central place in social interaction and where adults generally possess the literacy skills necessary for meeting the communicative demands that they face, adult literacy work is focused primarily on the minority of people whose inadequate mastery of basic literacy skills places them at a disadvantage in relation to the rest of the population. But in parts of some developing countries, where the majority of the population is not literate and where the literacy demands on citizens are less pressing, does adult literacy work have the same focus? My ongoing research in a rural area of Cameroon would suggest that in developing countries the focus may not so much be on enabling individuals to participate more fully in the life of their community, as on the greater goal of changing the communities of which the adult learners are part. This, of course, is a monumental task. This article will illustrate some of the challenges faced by adult literacy efforts in one context in a developing country.

Literacy central to international development

The importance of literacy is not doubted in the international community which in recent years has renewed efforts to improve literacy rates in developing countries. Literacy is seen as a means of promoting the development of communities and nations and education is held to be a basic human right which is currently denied to many. In 2000, the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, under the sponsorship of UNESCO, produced a Framework for Action, a set of targets for each level of education from pre-school to non-formal adult education based on the view that education is "the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalization." (UNESCO 2000). Among these, the target for adult education stated the aim of "achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults" - an ambitious goal indeed in many areas of the world given that overall literacy rates are stated to be only 60.9% in South Asia, 63.3% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 69.9% in the Arab States, the three areas of the world reporting the lowest literacy rates (UNDP 2006). Although the accuracy of such statistics is highly problematic, it remains undeniably true that significant numbers of people in developing countries are unable to read and write and that this has implications for their personal advancement and that of their communities.

Subsequent to the World Education Forum, the Millennium Development Goals, agreed by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000, gave education a prominent place in its wide ranging strategy for international development and the eradication of poverty. The following year, the United Nations endorsed the Dakar Framework for Action when it proclaimed the period from 2003 to 2012 as a United Nations Literacy Decade, stating that "literacy for all is at the heart of basic education for all and that creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy." (UN 2001). Whatever the link between literacy and development, and it is now recognised that there is no simple causal connection, there is no doubt that literacy occupies a vital place in international development efforts.

Progress is being made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the increasing numbers of children now being enrolled in primary education, but considerable challenges remain in the field of adult literacy (UNESCO 2006). The situation in the part of Cameroon where I am now conducting research provides a vivid illustration of this.

The Mofu-Gudur area

Out of 177 countries featuring in the United Nations human development index, Cameroon is ranked at 144. The official adult literacy rate is 67.9% but this aggregated figure hides significant disparities between men and women, between younger and older adults, and between urban and rural areas. In the Mofu-Gudur area in the rural north of the country, where the population of the largest village is only some 2,500 people, only

15-20% of adults out of a total population of about 70,000 may be literate, the majority of these being younger men. The Mofu-Gudur language is one of approximately 270 languages in use in Cameroon, each in its own distinct area. Although patterns of language use are changing, most of the indigenous languages of the country remain in everyday use. Most Cameroonians speak one of these languages as their first language rather than English or French, the official languages, or any regional language of wider communication within the country (Gordon 2005, UNDP 2006).

Almost all Mofu-Gudur people rely on growing the food which they need for their own families and selling any surplus for cash. Many also earn a little money by growing cotton to sell to the national cotton company. The dry climate, with rain during only five months of the year, makes farming difficult and hunger is common before the crops are ready for harvest. Water for use in the home comes from wells and few Mofu-Gudur people have electricity in their homes. Awareness of the wider world comes by radio and personal contact. The lack of electricity also reduces opportunities for local enterprise.

Most adults have not attended school. The first primary schools were established in the area only 30 years ago and at that time parents had to be forced or induced to send their children to school. School attendance has improved considerably since then but the majority of young people still do not receive more than seven years of primary education. Education achievement for many is hampered by the fact that lessons continue to be taught in French rather than Mofu-Gudur even though French is not widely spoken in the area outside of school. Many young people leave school with a limited command of French and limited literacy skills.

There are few written materials in the area. People generally possess no more than their identity card, health record booklet, political party membership card and receipts for their taxes and the cotton they have sold, and not everyone has all of these. Most people cannot read these documents although they understand their significance. The only newspaper in the area is bought on subscription by a few people and distributed through the local church in the absence of a postal system. The low incidence of printed materials offers little reinforcement for literacy learning.

The few opportunities for paid employment in the area are frequently taken by more educated people from other language groups. For this reason, many young people leave the area to find work in the major cities of the country for shorter or longer periods, although typically the only work available to them there is casual and unskilled.

Literacy work faces the further challenge that little time is available for literacy classes. First priority has to go to farming, so classes are only held between January and April when there is little work to be done in the fields. This raises serious issues of continuity for the literacy learners from one year to the next.

Literacy Teaching Provision

The international concern for literacy is reflected in the existence of several local organisations offering literacy teaching. The Cameroonian government has also opened some literacy centres in the area under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPC) whereby debt repayments otherwise due to the World Bank are being spent on development projects within the country.

The largest programme is run by CALMO (Comité d'Alphabétisation en Langue Mofu-Gudur), a local organisation supported by SIL, an international NGO specialising in the development of unwritten languages. In 2005, some 1,100 adults registered in 55 literacy centres in this programme, all of these being in local churches. This is the only programme in the area teaching basic literacy exclusively in the local language; it uses a locally developed curriculum based on a series of decontextualised school-like primers.

The second largest programme is organised by the Catholic CDD (Comité Diocesain de Développement). This is targeted specifically towards young people up to the age of 25 and offers literacy teaching mostly in French, although some centres also teach in Mofu-Gudur.

Other literacy centres include classes in French, one organised by an NGO working with women's groups and the other by a French expatriate for a group of women in a church. In the past, literacy classes in Fulfulde, the regional language, have been offered by the cotton company and specifically directed at the literacy demands of the cotton industry but these are not currently taking place for lack of local demand.

Attitudes to literacy

Adult literacy work, whether in the developed or the developing world, has to face the reality that only the minority of adults are willing to invest time in structured adult education programmes. In the Mofu-Gudur area, as elsewhere, people need to have specific reasons for wanting to learn

to read and write. For some, these are linked with an appreciation for education in its own right; for most, the reasons are specific and immediate.

My research has indicated that most Mofu-Gudur people, whether attending literacy classes or not, recognise that being literate has a value but they do not feel that the investment of time required to learn to read and write will be rewarded by much immediate change in their own circumstances. They express the view that learning to read and write may increase one's opportunities for gaining employment, but they know that this is a remote possibility for them given the lack of employment in the area and the demand of most employers for educational qualifications rather than basic literacy skills.

Many people value literacy for maintaining confidentiality in personal correspondence. Mobile phones are few in number in the area, and expensive to use, so letter writing is still widely practised. However this, in itself, is not sufficient to bring people to literacy classes since most people have their own strategies for sending and receiving letters, commonly using the younger members of their family who have some education to read or write for them.

My interviews with people who have committed themselves to literacy classes have revealed very clear reasons which have led them to want to learn to read and write. For those attending the CALMO classes, it is because they want to be able to read the Bible in Mofu-Gudur. Portions of the Bible in Mofu-Gudur have been available for some years and the complete New Testament is due to be published in 2008. Those attending the French literacy classes have a wider motivation as they are seeking to improve on the limited education they received at school. They see French as offering them more opportunities in life and in the wider culture of Cameroon than their own language on its own.

Development and Literacy

Even though literacy work in developing countries aims to contribute to the development of these countries, it is legitimate to ask how far the programmes described are successful in achieving this goal. It has to be said that the link is not immediately apparent. None of the programmes directly promote income generating projects or other community development activities, although the curriculum of the CDD programme does include some discussion of topics to do with health, nutrition and farming.

One reason for this lies in the inherent structural weaknesses of the programmes. Lack of resources is a real issue and it is certainly true that these programmes would benefit from greater financing, particularly for improved teacher training and supervision. Within the CALMO programme, many of the teachers have little or no formal education and need considerable support. Greater funding would also permit the production of teaching materials more relevant to the goals and lives of the learners and a wider range of curricula including transition materials into French for those who have learned basic literacy skills in Mofu-Gudur. There is a considerable need for a wider range of reading texts on subjects relevant to adults.

However in spite of the contextual difficulties and weaknesses of the literacy programmes, it must be said that they are nevertheless contributing to the development of the area. Their aim is to make a difference to the lives of the individuals who make up the community and thus, in time, to affect the community as a whole. Through these programmes, significant numbers of Mofu-Gudur people are acquiring important new skills, and in doing so showing a positive commitment to learning which they pass on to their children and other members of their families; this is leading to a gradual improvement in the overall attitude of the community to education. Development is best understood as a long and arduous process most successfully accomplished through individuals becoming more able to take control of their lives.

Literacy work in this context, as elsewhere, is difficult and its effects are often intangible, being located within the learners in their sense of achievement and greater personal confidence rather than in obvious and radical differences to their way of life. In Mofu-Gudur, the results of literacy work are to be found for some in their easier access to the Bible in their own language and for others in their greater ease of communication in French when travelling outside their home area rather than in a rapid and radical transformation of the community as a whole. Community development is a long term and complex process; adult literacy work has an important place in this process but it does not provide any quick or easy solutions.

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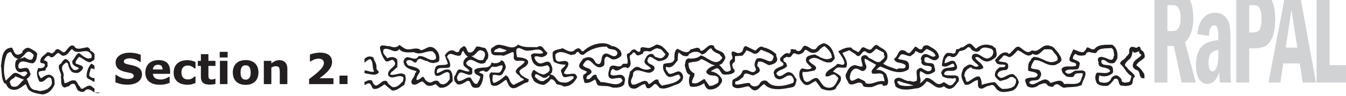

Section 2.

The impact of Nigerians speakers of English on ESOL classes in Ireland

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Introduction
In this study I investigate a new problem associated with the presence of speakers of English as a second language in ESOL classes in Ireland. ESOL tutors, coordinators, and learners from countries where English is not used as a lingua franca, are specifically opposed to the attendance of students from Nigeria at ESOL classes, basing this perspective on the *alleged* disruption of classrooms due to *alleged* increased noise level, different turn-taking strategies and lexicogrammatical deviations. The specific question I will address here is whether the impact of Nigerian speakers of English is as problematical and negative as tutors and non-Nigerian learners suggest.

Nigerian English
The Englishes associated with Nigerian speakers are known as indigenized or nativized varieties and contain elements which differ in some cases substantially from 'standard' British or American English, influenced to a large degree by their own cultures and languages. In the case of Nigeria, there is the further complication of gradation as described by Brosnahan (reported in Bamgbose, 1992), where at one extreme the variety resembles standard British English and at the other it 'is limited to a few words of a pidgin variety'. He classified its use into 4 levels:

Level 1: Pidgin, spoken by those with no formal education
Level 2: Spoken by those with primary school education
Level 3: Spoken by those with secondary school education
Level 4: Close to standard English

Bamgbose (1992) pinpoints general 'deviations', such as pronunciation the reduced vowel system, the use of 'he' for either 'he' or 'she', the pluralization of mass nouns *furnitures,* the different use of verbs and phrasal verbs and even the different use of words in context, such as *sorry* when somebody sneezes. Kachru and Nelson (2001:15) also mention norms of speaking, 'social rules of when to speak and when to be silent'. All of these type of 'deviations' either come up in the data I have examined or are quoted by those who complain.

The Setting
This study is set at The Knockalisheen Reception Centre opened in 2001 as part of the Irish Government's 'dispersal' policy - the resettlement of asylum seekers in locations outside Dublin due to problems of accomodation in the capital city. The County Clare Vocational Education Committee operates an adult education facility at the centre, where over 100 people per year attend language classes.

Methods used to collect evidence
I have carried out interviews of the tutors involved in the ESOL classes in Knockalisheen and I have also interviewed both sets of students - eastern European students and Nigerians. (I have replaced the interviewees' names with either numbers or fictitious names). The main body of the research is an analysis of recorded classroom interaction.

Methods used to analyse evidence
Interviews
I have summarized the tutor interviews under the headings of cultural issues, classroom interaction, and the use of English. The objective of this qualitative analysis is to identify any trend in the perspectives of the three sets of interviewees that can be compared and contrasted with the analysis of data from classroom interaction recordings.

Classroom Analysis
Mercer (2000:245) refers to the exchange structure Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) as a universal feature of classroom interaction. Transcriptions of classroom discourse in which Nigerian learners are mixed with non-ESL learners are analysed for IRF. The objective of these analyses is to verify if Nigerians conform principally to pedagogical discourse or if, as reported by teachers and other learners, they disrupt the class with constant interruptions.

Tutor Interviews

Cultural issues
A1 comments that it is a wider society problem in that "everybody hates them". She quotes her friends who tell her stories of Nigerians jumping queues and talking loudly. She believes that not

all Nigerians are the same - those who are loud and behave badly are from a certain social level, they are "rednecks and have no upbringing". She comments that Nigerians rarely say "please" and "thanks" and are impolite. B1, although wishing to complement the Nigerians, comments that she has only had intercultural problems with one Nigerian, the rest "*learn to behave the longer they are here*".

Classroom interaction
A1 claims that attendance falls if there are Nigerians in the class, because of loudness and interruptions. The tutor, B1, says that "they don't give the rest a chance, their way of communicating is very aggressive, even amongst themselves; they are constantly interrupting". B1 says that Eastern European students have told her that they don't want to share a class with Nigerians. C1 says she has noticed "what appears to be frustration" of the Eastern Europeans at the Nigerian's loud *behaviour* and dominance during discussions. C1 quotes one non-Nigerian student as saying he had understood nothing of what Nigerians had said in English in the classroom, that he "didn't know [if they were] were speaking English or French". The Nigerians, according to C1, on that particular occasion in the classroom "had been talking all at once each one trying to get their own point across over the other one".

Language
B1 says that it is important to "change *their* English for the future", but that she does not have enough time in class to address this as 'their command of English isn't up to level'. She classifies their use of certain phrases as incorrect and gives the example of the word "suffer" which she says can mean "almost anything". C1 also comments on the different use of words: Nigerians tend to speak pidgin English when *they speak among themselves*, don't appear to be able to pronounce the letter 'h' at the start of a word, use phrases such as 'I will pick my baby' when they mean 'pick up my baby', or 'I go city' instead of 'I go to the city'.'"

Learner Interviews

Nigerians
"Jude" a thirty year-old Nigerian (Urhobo) university graduate, says she is aware that other people complain of the loudness, interruptions and lack of politeness. As far as loudness is concerned, she posits the frustration of living in the asylum seeker centre as a possible reason for outbursts of "shouting". She considers that these problems are mainly due to a lack of good upbringing. She believes politeness has more to do with respect and that the use of words like "please" and "thanks" are not essential.
"May" a 41 year old Nigerian (Yoruba) female says she is embarrassed by the loudness, interruptions and lack of politeness of her compatriots. She believes it is a matter of upbringing and rudeness and disagrees with people, she says, who try to find cultural reasons for the behaviour. She says that well-brought-up Nigerians are extremely polite and that in her own country, at her present age, people would have to call her "auntie", "prostrate before her" and wait for a cue from her before speaking.

July is a thirty-year old Nigerian (Yoruba) female, who has had no education above primary school and speaks pidgin English, makes an interesting point as regards the allegation of loudness; she says "if so many Irish people were together they would make as much noise".

Non-Nigerians
Ivan a 54-year old Russian, says he has no problem with black men but he refers to black women as "monkeys". He said that "they try talk everybody at the same time, break, turn, okay, turn, why you like an animal?" He exempted from blame one of the Nigerian women (Heather) who attended and said "she has knowledge … she can lead herself normally". He remarks that he has met people 'like this' before in his life, in the Ukraine and that the problem is not race or colour, that it is "condition of mind" or "воспитание", which translated means "upbringing".

Marina, a 25 year old Romanian attended a certified course in Level 2 English and dropped out after two classes. She said that the Nigerians and Liberians did most of the talking in the classroom and that their loudness was too much to tolerate. She asked: "Can't you hear them shouting now?" referring to the noise coming from a gathering of people queuing at the door of the Social Welfare Officer's clinic.

Anna, a 22 year old Ukrainian attended a certified Level 1 ESOL course in 2003 and passed. She left the centre in 2005 without having joined the Level 2 group. Anna told me that she had not pursued the course because of the dominance of Liberians, Ghanaians and Nigerians in the group, and considered she would not get enough attention as the "others would talk their type of English continually and make a lot of noise". I asked her if she felt the same about all Nigerians. She contradicted herself by saying the two Nigerians and one

Liberian who had attended the Level 1 class that she herself attended were "different".

Classroom Interaction

I have listened to 18 hours of recorded classroom discourse in which there were two or more Nigerians present. I have failed to find any evidence of the negative claims made by tutors and other learners, with respect to loudness and problems caused by 'deviant' lexicogrammatical items, such as the very common "pick" for "pick up", and "he" used for both "he" and "she". What follows is a sample of the interaction analysis that was carried out.

Sample 1

This class in which there are five participants, a male Croatian, a male Russian, a female Byelorussian and two Nigerian women, begins with a typical IRF exchange, followed by a conversation which lasts for over five minutes on the song "Don't worry, be happy". The two Nigerians remained silent during this stage, explaining later that they didn't know what we were talking about. The interesting point is that they did not interrupt or carry on any overlapping talk. Stella, the Nigerian learner, does not take part until lines 84-87:

T:	Maybe two bedroomed three bedroomed … eh you know flat also means?	84	**I**
Stella:	Flat thick	85	**R**
T:	Like this and it also means, flat … tyre	86	**F/I**
Stella:	Tyre	87	**R**

The initiation by the teacher is a typical one of eliciting information. The elicitation on line 86 is what Mercer (2000: 250) calls a "cued elicitation". The holding of the 't' sound draws the correct response from the learner. In the next interaction, Stella, knows that the teacher is talking about music but doesn't intervene until she is directly cued:

T:	Okay music flat	109
Stella:	Yes flat	110
T:	In music you have flat … and sharp	111
Stella:	[sharp	112
Ivan:	Ugh flat and sharp	113

Sample 2

In this sample the teacher goes through a list of phrasal verbs and asks the students, four Nigerian females (Stella, Heather, Tomi and Tola), one Croatian male (Davor) and one Byelorussian female (Nadia) to provide the Latinate equivalent. Tomi, a university graduate, who speaks English at a level close to that of the "standard" of Brosnahan's classification, appears to usurp the interaction, but always does so within the bounds of normal IRF classroom exchange:

T:	To cut down is? One word for it	1	**I**
Tomi:	To confine	2	**R**
T:	No	3	**F**

Stella and Heather respond when they are directly cued and Tola only when the correct response is not forthcoming from the others:

T:	Now face up to	40	**I**
Tomi:	Challenge	41	**R1**
Heather:	( )	42	**R2**
Davor:	( )	43	**R3**
T:	Yes	44	**F1**
Tola:	Accept your responsibility	45	**R4**

Sample 3

This excerpt comes from a beginners' class of 9 students from Nigeria, Somalia, Kosovo, Pakistan, the Congo and Angola. The English of the two Nigerian women who participate is closer to the pidgin side of Brosnahan's classification. They conformed to the typical IRF discourse pattern during the class which I myself gave in substitution of an absent teacher. Below is the transcription of the conversation at the point when I returned to the class after a brief absence. Again, one of the Nigerian women (Bosi) intervened only when the question was directed at her. Sadi is a Somali learner, and Sofia an Angolan:

Sadi: Teacher is very good	1
Bosi: Ha?	2
Sadi: Good	3
[……..]	4
Teacher: What's wrong? What were you doing?	5
Sadi: Talk … hmm (quickly)	6
Teacher: Who? me? No. Will I tell B1 the	7
other teacher?	8
Sofia: Teacher, yes	9
Teacher: Ok	10
Sadi: I don't understand. You understand, A1 Mary	11
understand, but B1 talk too quickly	12
Teacher: Do you think the same? You understand	13 (*To Bosi*)
B1?	14
Bosi: Yes, *I do*	*17*

Findings and implications

The analysis of classroom discourse demonstrates that Nigerians fully conform to typical IRF pedagogical exchanges, thus casting doubt on the claims made by tutors and fellow learners of interruptions that disrupt classroom procedure. The interviews of students and tutors alike contain contradictions that cast doubt on the claims being made. Anna, the Ukrainian student, for example, claims that she didn't join the next level because Nigerians and other Africans usurped classroom time. Yet, she exempts from any blame two Nigerians and one Liberian who were actually the only Africans who had attended her previous class.

The problem seems essentially to be one of

racism, lack of intercultural awareness and negative stereotyping, evidence of which is found in the interviews. Ivan, the Russian uses the word 'monkeys' to describe Nigerian women; the tutors rely on anecdotal evidence and reveal preoccupying intercultural un-awareness making categorical but incorrect statements such as “They never say 'please' and 'thanks' because they don't have those words in their own languages” (D1). B1 reveals a stereotypical attititude when she *implies* that Nigerians need to be civilized: “[they] learn to behave the longer they are here”. The tutor C1, apart from gross generalization, ethnocentrically considers phrases that are common in Nigerian English, to be incorrect (e.g. “pick my baby”), and reveals a strong sense of superiority and ownership of the English language when she says “they say 'I will pick my baby' when they mean 'pick up my baby'”.

Both the tutors and one of the students, Marina, the Romanian, allow events outside the classroom to blur their perspective. Marina says “Can't you hear them shouting now?” referring to the noise coming from a gathering of people queuing in the corridors at the social welfare clinic. As July, the Nigerian learner points out, we do not come to the same conclusions when we observe groups of Irish people making noise or groups of stereotypically “noisy” nationalities, such as the Spanish and Italian.

Implications

The implications not only have a bearing on the question of the disputed presence of speakers of nativized varieties of English on ESOL courses, but also on curriculum and tutor training. The present study suggests that any ESOL curriculum that may be drafted should take into account the changing roles of English around the World. In Ireland, in theory, we teach English to asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers so that they can both integrate and find respectable work. In the case of Nigerians, we must not forget that they use English to communicate amongst themselves, and the English that they use is acculturated it bears traces of their own cultures and languages. But it is not only a means of communication; it is as Widdowson (reported in Jenkins, 1993) says a symbolic possession of community. If we attempt to alter this English as tutor B1 suggests - then we might be guilty of a type of “linguicide” because the English Nigerians speak is their English, just as much as the English Irish people speak is our English and part of our culture. A case can thus be made for creating a curriculum for ESOL using English as a lingua franca for communication in what is already a pluralistic and multilingual country, and not simply as a tool of integration.

The necessity for tutor training that incorporates intercultural communication is evident. The Irish Department of Education through the national Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) runs short one-day seminars on intercultural awareness for teachers. But this study suggests the need for more in-depth programmes for ESOL tutors and the need for Language and Culture modules in ESOL training courses that create an awareness of nativized varieties of English. Various revelations in the study also suggest that classroom management may be part of the problem one limitation of this particular study is that it reflects the work of particular teachers and therefore it cannot be assumed that problems arise or don't arise in the classes of other teachers. However, if there are disruptions in a classroom and everyone is “talking all at once each one trying to get their own point across over the other one”, then classroom management needs to be addressed. Tutors, Nigerians themselves and the other learners that were interviewed mentioned “upbringing”. Disruptive behaviour associated with upbringing is a universal classroom problem and one that is addressed by upskilling in classroom management. Again, it is unfortunate that upbringing is generalized by the tutors and non-Nigerian students as if it were a national characteristic.

Conclusion

This study has confirmed that the inclusion of speakers of indigenized varieties of English in ESOL classes is problematical. However, it has been demonstrated, albeit as part of a brief and limited research project, that the problems lie rather with generalizations, racism, stereotyping on the part of the teachers and the non-Nigerian students and with an ethnocentric approach by the teachers. Further and lengthier investigation, perhaps of the ethnographic kind carried out by Canagarajah (2001) in Sri Lanka, could be used to provide a broader perspective of the “problem”.

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From the Ground Up: A Research-in-Practice Approach to Outcome-Oriented Program Evaluation

By RiPAL-BC

RiPAL - BC is a grass roots network of individuals and organizations committed to research in practice in adult literacy in British Columbia, Canada. Their work has three main objectives: a) to support research-related professional development among BC practitioners; b) to promote research in practice and create opportunities for BC practitioners to participate; and c) to develop a plan to sustain research in practice in BC over the long-term. At present, Betsy Alkenbrak, Sandy Middleton, Marina Niks, Suzanne Smythe, Bonnie Soroke and Anneke van Enk work together to manage the project and support the field. A provincial advisory committee provides guidance and further support.

Introduction

In the fall of 2004, members of RiPAL-BC attended a meeting with the Regional Literacy Coordinators for the province of British Columbia, Canada. The role of the Regional Literacy Coordinators is to: strengthen and support regional literacy networks, coordinate professional development and training, provide consultation, information and support, and build awareness about literacy. A representative of the provincial Ministry of Advanced Education, which funds community adult literacy programs throughout the province, was there. Program evaluation was raised during the meeting. The representative from the Ministry stated that the reports received from community-based programs did not provide the information the Ministry needed. The Coordinators asked what was missing, what information *was* needed? In total honesty, the representative acknowledged that he could not describe what the Ministry would like to see in the reports. Furthermore, he added, Ministry personnel were not reading the reports because they did not have the capacity to do so.

We knew then that evaluation was an important issue, one that RiPAL-BC could take on. We were also aware, that with the increasing emphasis on accountability and results in the public sector in Canada, changes were coming. Evaluation was going to have a significant influence on adult literacy practice in the province. We decided, therefore, to take a proactive stance. We successfully applied to the National Literacy Secretariat, a federal funding body, to carry out a two-year project to support practitioners to develop tools to evaluate their community based programs and facilitate the reporting process. We envisioned the tools as useful to practitioners and learners as well as funders and policy-makers; flexible enough to accommodate the diversity among community based programs; and rigorous in their approach to outcomes assessment.

In this article, we describe the major components of *From the Ground Up* and some of its findings. We start by describing how and why the project took a research-in-practice approach and then discuss the different components of the project with some examples.

A Research-in-Practice Approach

The research-in-practice movement encourages practitioners to engage with research in a variety of ways (Horsman and Norton, 1999). It opens up opportunities for practitioners to critically reflect on existing research and to apply findings to practice. It also supports them in conducting research themselves, in systematically creating and sharing knowledge that is anchored in practice. In these ways, research in practice can promote improvements in practice, inform policy, and contribute to learner success.

The research-in-practice approach of the project implied that we would work from the ground up, starting with practitioners and their experiences and understandings of literacy work. We also wanted to develop the capacity of the field by providing training to practitioners and offering ongoing support. Finally, we believed that we needed to engage in continuous reflection, dialogue and debate about adult literacy and evaluation with a variety of groups. This belief translated into relationships that we intentionally developed and maintained with the field through the Regional Literacy Coordinators.

The Ministry of Advanced Education supported the project and contributed financial resources to it. We wanted to include the Ministry in the conversations and looked for ways of including several Ministry officials in the project. After the project started, however, the Ministry underwent changes in staff and the officials who had initially committed to participating in the project left their posts. The Ministry also initiated a review of their accountability processes. These changes meant the partnership that we had envisioned with the Ministry could not be fully achieved.

We also developed a strong relationship with Literacy Now, which has recently become a major funder of community-based adult literacy initiatives in the province. Literacy Now is part of Legacies 2010, a not for profit organization created by the British Columbia government as a result of hosting the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. Literacy Now currently funds some of the Regional Literacy Coordinator positions. It also offers funding to communities to undertake a community planning process. This process focuses on building partnerships, networking and sharing best practices within BC's communities and regions. More information is available at www.2010legaciesnow.com/literacy_now_communities/ Literacy Now has been very supportive of *From the Ground Up* and the tools produced by the project.

From the Ground Up: The Project - Program Site Selection
We started by selecting five programs to develop the evaluation tools. In collaboration with the Regional Literacy Coordinators we developed criteria for the selection as well as an initial list of possible sites. The final five programs were selected because they had the capacity to dedicate time and resources to the project. We also looked for a variety of different types of programs and geographic contexts. The five programs are:

Program	Location	Focus of Program	Tool Developed
Literacy Inreach/Outreach Program of Carnegie Learning Centre	Downtown Vancouver – Urban	Outreach literacy with marginalized adults (many dealing with addiction, trauma, homelessness, etc.)	Learning in a Group Setting
Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy	Eastern BC Rural	Adult and family literacy with emphasis on community development	Community Literacy Development
Houston Link to Learning/Storytellers' Foundation	Northwest BC Rural	Isolated practitioners working in remote communities	Reflective Practice
Parents and Children Together	Chilliwack & Abbotsford Semi-urban	Family Literacy	Adult Goal Progress Chart
Project Literacy Victoria	Downtown Victoria Urban	One to one volunteer tutor	Tutor Tools

Training
The next step consisted of training in outcome measurement. For this task, we hired a consultant who had extensive experience working with community-based organizations. Primarily, the training focused on learning the language and concepts of an outcomes-based approach to evaluation and monitoring. By the end of this stage, each program had developed an Outcome Measurement Framework (OMF) and monitoring plan.

Development of the Tools
Practitioners who participated in the training subsequently developed tools to measure selected outcomes and indicators from their OMFs. RiPAL-BC has been supporting adult literacy practitioners in the province to engage in research through the work of research friends who mentor and serve as sounding boards. The evaluation consultant as well as research friends were always available to help in this process.
RiPAL-BC has been supporting adult literacy practitioners in the province to engage in research through the work of research friends who mentor and serve as sounding boards.

Each program decided what outcome they were going to focus on in creating a tool. For example, the Inreach/Outreach Program of the Carnegie Learning Centre serves the population of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, often described as Canada's poorest neighbourhood. Here's an extract of the OMF and tool developed by instructors Lucy Alderson and Betsy Alkenbrack.

Outcome Measurement Framework

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short Term Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Long Term Outcome
Instructors Volunteers Resource Bank Learning spaces Office space Equipment Supplies Food Funds for learning Materials Computers with internet access in some sites	Identify, assess and match individual learners with volunteer tutors in neighbourhood sites and in the Carnegie Centre.	X learners identified and assessed X matches made	Learners demonstrate a comfort level in learning sessions and progress towards their acquisition of literacy, numeracy, computer and/or emotional intelligence skills.	Residents have: increased literacy and numeracy skills, confidence in their ability to engage in learning and increased capacity to negotiate complex government and social support systems.	The Downtown Eastside is a learning community where residents read, write and participate fully in community life.

Monitoring Plan *(for the Short Term Outcome stated above)*

Indicators	Collection Method (Tool)	Data Sources	Who Collects
Examples of learners identifying their learning goals and working towards achieving them. % of learners who show progress in the acquisition of literacy, numeracy, computer and/or emotional intelligence skills.	Individual learner rubric Group process rubric Adult goal progress chart	Student files Portfolios Tutor observation Demonstration	Learners Tutors Instructors

Assessment Tool (Rubric)

	Avoidance	Exposure	Engagement	Application	Looks for Challenge
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Reading	Attends program but avoids reading and written material, uses a variety of methods (verbal, friends) to acquire info.	Listens to others reading and may engage in games that involve minimal reading, most likely with a reading partner.	Picks up books and/or reads easy articles in newspaper (comics, horoscope). Identifies goals	Volunteers to read aloud in group. Asks for other interesting reading material, and may begin studying with lots of support.	Gets involved in a course or self-improvement activity that involves reading. Exhibits new confidence and independence.

N.B. The rubric also assesses progress in writing, numeracy, computers, discussion and group participation.

Field Testing
Once the tools had been developed and all participating practitioners had reviewed them, it was time for the rest of the field to try them out. In January and February of 2007 we offered four workshops on outcomes-based evaluation in different parts of the province. The practitioners who had developed the tools attended the workshops and described their tools in detail. Over 60 practitioners attended these workshops. All participants had the opportunity to sign up to test one of the five sets of tools. Each field tester received $1,000 (approximately £500) for their work.

Between March and May 2007, 36 practitioners tested the tools with learners, colleagues, and partners. The practitioners who had developed the tools supported the field testers and facilitated online discussions where everyone testing the same tool shared their experiences with it. In this process, testers suggested changes and additions to the tools. In many cases, the online conversations included insights into the different incarnations of adult literacy practice in the province. For example, we learned about practitioners working in isolated situations, about particular successes and challenges of certain groups of learners and about how practitioners organize their learning spaces.

Revision of the Tools
The information collected during the field testing (specific feedback forms submitted by field testers as well as the online discussions) was used to inform revisions to the original tools. In June 2007, all the project participants came together to share their findings and the revisions to their tools.

For example, in a revised version of the rubric presented above, the language is changed to "I" statements:

	Avoidance	Exposure	Engagement	Application	Looks for Challenge
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Reading	I like to come to the program but I don't read or write. I use other ways to get information, like listening or asking friends for help.	I like to listen to others reading and I might join a game that has some reading or writing. I like to do this with a partner.	I like to pick up books and/or read the newspaper (comics, horoscope). I can identify my goals.	I volunteer to read aloud in the group. I ask for other interesting reading material, and may begin studying with lots of support.	I am taking a course or participating in a self-improvement activity that involves reading. I feel more confident and can work on my own.

Defining Literacy
We started the project with what we understood as a need expressed by the field and by the government. We acknowledged that various groups have legitimate interests in the outcomes of literacy education and that their perspectives on what needs to be evaluated, and how, might differ.

We walked a fine line, trying to balance the requirements of government funders for large-scale quantitative data about the literacy levels of the population with the reality of community literacy work. Practitioners know that programs benefit learners in ways that are rarely measured through quantitative means. Practitioners are also attuned to the ways in which personal circumstances affect learners' ability to participate and to succeed in literacy programs. There is a tension between the needs of broad-based policy and on-the-ground practice. It is a complicated tension because funders have the ultimate authority in the end the biggest program need is to please funders so they will support program delivery.

During the project, practitioners had to learn a new, sometimes awkward, language while they designed and tested tools. Throughout this process, the adult literacy field in British Columbia became more familiar with evaluation approaches and their implications. We learned that measurement always has an impact on programs and learners. It can give legitimacy to learning that was not previously measured and this, in turn, can be empowering. On the other hand, traditional accountability measures have the potential to be detrimental to practice because they can influence what is taught, and how it is taught.

For us, it became clear early on that we were involved in an advocacy endeavour. As practitioners developed their outcome measurement frameworks they were stating what is important in literacy work. They were defining literacy.

The revised tools will be available in the fall of 2007 on the RiPAL-BC website at http://ripal.literacy.bc.ca/

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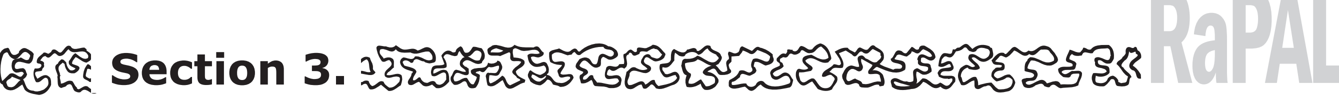

Family literacy programmes in Europe: do the children need to be there?

Anthea Rose and Chris Atkin

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Introduction

Implicit in the title 'family literacy programmes', is the notion that many different family members may be participating; grandparents, fathers, mothers, children and so on. Yet, in practice, the adult learners are predominantly mothers (Brooks, et al., 1996; Ofsted, 2000; Goldman, 2005). Attendance by fathers is rare (Goldman, 2005). It is usual for mothers who are participating in family literacy programmes to have at least one child of primary school age also involved. However, findings from this study show that this is not always the case. Investigating the differences and similarities in family literacy programmes in England, Ireland and Malta, the authors found that in Ireland, in general, children as well as fathers were missing. In this paper, we investigate the possible reasons for this apparent anomaly and consider if mother-only family literacy programmes are as valid as joint parent-child models of delivery.

Defining family literacy programmes

First coined by Taylor (1983), family literacy covers a wide range of programmes and initiatives (see the work of Brooks, et al., 1996, 1997, 2002; Hannon, 1999, Borg and Mayo, 2001; Benseman, 2002). Internationally, the term is used to cover a variety of learning offered to adults and children in the context of the family, including lifelong learning, intergenerational learning, adult or family education. Whilst there exists a large body of research concerning family literacy - mostly from the United States of America and Britain (see above and Pahl and Rowsell, 2005; Wasik, 2004; Wagner et al., 1999; Wolfendale and Topping, 1996) - each has considered family literacy from their own perspective with local definitions. Some have looked at literacy within the family, some in the community, with others investigating programmes designed specifically for research purposes. (For a more in-depth, critical review of family literacy programmes, see Rose and Atkin, 2007a.) Having said this, few appear to have looked at family literacy programmes in a comparative, cross-cultural light, despite its growing international interest among policy makers.

In the context of this study the term family literacy programmes is defined as:

> …a formal programme of delivery, which occurs within a set time frame…delivered at a designated geographical location. Programmes are delivered by at least one experienced facilitator, usually the adult tutor. The learners attending generally have dependant children at pre-school or primary school (aged three to 11 years old). The underlying ethos of programmes is to teach literacy and numeracy skills. (Rose and Atkin, 2006:131)

However, even within this definition there is a great deal of room for difference as illustrated by the research findings of this study.

The study and project methodology

This article draws on data gathered as part of a doctoral study conducted at the UNESCO Centre for Comparative Education Research (UCCER), School of Education, at the University of Nottingham in England. The study aimed to investigate the similarities and differences between the three countries in their approach, rationale and delivery of family literacy programmes.

Following an initial exploration of family literacy programmes in Europe, three countries were chosen, England, Ireland and Malta, as suitable comparisons. Within each country, one area was selected to participate in the research forming three local case studies. All three case studies were considered locally to be rural.

Unlike most European countries, at the time of the study they were all offering formal, publicly funded family literacy programmes which had

broadly similar objectives; the improvement of adult and child literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) competencies under a social inclusion agenda. As well as all belonging to the European Union, all three countries have English as a widely spoken language, with Malta being bilingual. In Malta, a translator was made available to the researcher and helped clarify, when necessary, learner responses during the interview process.

A full explanation concerning why and how the three case studies were selected and discussion relating to comparative research methodology can be found in Rose and Atkin (2007a).

Predominantly qualitative in nature, the research comprised of 94 semi-structured face-to-face interviews with a range of key players in the field of family literacy across the three study sites. Interviews were conducted with policymakers, practitioners, learners, ex-learners, non-participating fathers and children's teachers. Thirty interviews were conducted in both England and Ireland and 34 in Malta. The interviews were supplemented by 13 classroom observations; four in both England and Ireland and five in Malta. Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the range of interviews conducted.

Table 1 Breakdown of interviews (n=94)

Type of Interviewee	No.
Coordinators	3
Adult practitioners	11
Children’s teachers	10
Learners	48
Ex-learners	17
Non-participating fathers	5

The fieldwork took place over a five-month period between November 2005 and March 2006. The interview sample included 48 learners, the majority of whom were mothers (45 of 48). The majority of learners were 26-35 years of age. Most, (31) were married. All learners lived locally, with 32 born in the immediate area. Most, 38, left school between the ages of 16-18. The average number of children was two and two-thirds of the learners were in paid work full or part-time.

An overview of the programmes involved in this study

The research study focused on the Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) strand of family literacy programmes. Since the implementation of Skills for Life (SfL) (DfEE, 2001), family literacy programmes in England have gained popularity with policy makers as a strategy to meet government targets for learner engagement and achievement (Atkin, et al., 2005). Whilst family literacy programmes have been available in England since the early 1990's, (Brooks, et al., 1996), the length of time they have been operating, their nature and their mode of delivery vary considerably across England, depending on local need and priorities (Atkin, et al., 2005). The English case study area was located in the west of England, in a rural county where family literacy programmes had been operating for five years at the time of the research.

Family literacy programmes in Ireland were delivered by the Vocational Educational Committees (VEC's) Adult Literacy Schemes through partnerships with adult education providers, schools, libraries and community projects (NALA, 2004). According to the National Adult Literacy Agency in Ireland (NALA), programmes should involve two or more family generations and aim to improve and develop literacy and numeracy in the family context. The VEC tutors who participated in the study, tried to reassure parents that they (the parents) were the most important educators of their children. They did this by building parental confidence in learners who were traditionally sceptical of educational opportunities or who had previously had negative experiences of the school system. The Irish case study area was also rural and located in the west of the country.

In Malta, the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) is responsible for offering and delivering family literacy programmes. Established in 2001 to work with the Ministry of Education, the main aim of the FES is to address issues of low literacy and numeracy in the education sector under a social inclusion agenda. Several initiatives are available in Malta. The main programme was 'Club Hilti', meaning 'my ability' in Maltese (Camilleri, 2004) and was targeted at families who had children at primary school.

As part of the broader social inclusion agenda, programmes in Ireland were specifically targeted at those in disadvantaged groups, unlike England and Malta where some targeting did occur but it was not linked directly to funding requirements. Frequently, in England and Malta, attracting a specific type of learner came secondary to

enrolling a sufficient number of learners to secure the viability of the programme. The VEC funding is specifically to aid adult learners from socially deprived areas including those in rural isolation, refugees and asylum seekers, migrant workers, lone parents and the physically disabled. Ireland has a large number of 'Traveller' families (Clark and Greenfields, 2006) and these were included in the target group. The interview data suggested many of those deemed as 'in need', did not traditionally value the role of education. The VEC is trying to alter such negative perceptions of learning within the target groups to one of valuing education by demonstrating its potential benefits and relevance. Offering family literacy programmes in locally deprived communities has been one strategy used to try and achieve this aim. Programmes in the Irish study area were delivered mainly in community centres.

In England, the joint parent-child programmes, FLLN, generally involve parents who have children aged five to seven. The majority of programmes in the study were delivered in primary schools during the school day. In Malta, the joint parent-child programme, Club Hilti, was delivered in either Maltese or English, directly after school (from 2:30pm) with children aged six to nine. In addition, in England and Malta, separate programmes for the parents-only were offered, 'keeping up with the children' (KUWTC) and 'Id f'id', meaning 'hand-in-hand' (Camilleri, 2004: 54). These programmes did not require children to be present but they were closely linked to the school curriculum. Their aim was to provide parents with an understanding of current pedagogical techniques that would enable them to help their children with schoolwork, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Although focused on literacy, this knowledge will also help other subjects within the school curriculum. In Ireland, basic family literacy programmes were predominantly targeted at families with children aged up to seven.

Club Hilti, FLLN and basic family literacy were similar in content, with the emphasis on learning through fun. Literacy and numeracy learning was embedded in a range of craft and oral activities such as the making of puppets, story books, gluing, singing nursery rhymes and so on. All family literacy programmes in England and Malta, both joint and parent-only, were closely linked to teaching in schools and were directly comparable. However, there was a major difference between England and Malta and Ireland concerning the composition of the learners and the venues where programmes were delivered. In Ireland, the children were almost always absent at family literacy programmes and school premises were not commonly used. In Ireland, the children did not, as a rule, attend family literacy programmes with their parents.

The role of children in family literacy programmes

Some believe there is little evidence to suggest that joint family literacy programmes yield the best results:

> …there is no convincing evidence in England, (or, for that matter, in the United States) that intergenerational programs combining provision from adults with provision for children (including parent-child sessions) have greater effects, or are more cost effective, than separate child-focused or adult-focused programs.
> (Hannon and Bird 2004:34)

Yet, despite the experience in Ireland, tutors interviewed at all three case study areas felt the inclusion of children in family literacy programmes was important. In England and Malta the presence of children in sessions was not questioned; essentially it was not considered family literacy without the children. But in Ireland, tutors relied on mothers implementing the strategies learnt in class with the children at home. Indeed, Hannon and Bird (2004) above are not suggesting children are not taught, simply that the teaching of parents and children does not necessarily have to occur together. However, the mothers interviewed in England and Malta reported many benefits to both them and their children as a result of attending family literacy programmes together.

The majority of learners, all mothers, reported that their children really enjoyed them coming into school frequently stating; he or she 'loves it'. Children looked forward to their mothers attending, some becoming upset if they were not able to be there. When mothers were asked what their child liked about them attending, many felt it was the act of them coming into school. This comment from a mother in England is typical; 'I think it is just the fact that mum's coming to school'. Classroom observations undertaken in England and Malta, confirmed this acceptance of the presence of the mothers in school. Children welcomed the additional attention. However, it must be noted that given the young age of the children this finding is not particularly surprising. Many of the children were

in the very early stages of schooling and were, until recently, at home with their mothers during the day. Mothers represented a stability and familiarity that provided the child with the confidence to participate in a positive learning environment. A mother in Malta felt her son was pleased that she came to school. It showed him she was interested in what he was learning. A mother in England echoed this stating, 'he thinks that I'm learning and going to school as well and he likes that idea. He thinks that I am being taught which I am in a way'. In Ireland, where the children were not present, mothers commented that the children were looking forward to what they would eventually be taking home to share with their children. One mother from the Traveller community commented, '…my small one, when I come back, I bring her a surprise. So every week I come home and I bring her home something'.

One lone mother in Ireland, attending the story sack programme, described what attending the programme meant for her and her family. 'It's not just for us [the mothers] this time it's more for the children you know. It's something you could do at home with them again like.' When asked if she felt her attending the programme would make a difference to her family, she stated, '…it probably will it's probably because we haven't brought much stuff home yet'.

Mothers in Ireland enjoyed the programmes and felt that they benefited from attending by having time out of the house and time for themselves. One Irish mother stated, 'I feel more out-going, confident and less stressed out.' A mother from the Traveller community commented, 'it's nice to see and come and find out more about the children and the issues.' Whilst another commented that she came to, 'learn more about the children and to get a break'. The fact that the children were not present did not appear to be problematic.

Overall, mothers in all three study areas preferred not to have fathers present. In England and Malta, some mothers believed that to do so would replicate conditions at home and that the presence of the father would be unsettling for the child. One English mother felt it would give the child the opportunity 'to play one parent off against the other'. In Ireland, half of the mothers interviewed said that the fathers were actively involved in the upbringing of the children. The majority of these came from the Traveller community where there was still a strong expectation to marry young, especially amongst the girls, and for life (Clark and Greenfields, 2006). However, the mothers in the Traveller community still preferred to attend programmes without the men. Comments included, 'I wouldn't like it,' and 'there would be no babysitter.' According to the mothers, the fathers 'wouldn't fancy coming', 'they wouldn't want to do what we have been doing', 'they are not interested in arts and crafts, they wouldn't have the patience for this sort of thing', and 'he just wouldn't like it, not with all the women here'. Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview any of the fathers from the Traveller community to solicit their views. Whilst the fathers interviewed in England and Malta took an active role in the education of their children for example, by regularly reading to the children at bedtime, they did not, in general, attend family literacy programmes. The main reason given for this was time, mainly due to work commitments and the fact that programmes were scheduled during the day. A non-participating father in England would have considered attending if the roles were reversed, '…if it was the other way round and [mother] was the breadwinner and I was the one looking after the kids, I would do it.' A non-participating father in Malta stated, 'I would like to, but I am afraid time is a problem. I am involved in so many things that finding the time to go is difficult.'

In England and Malta, mothers were clear that their child enjoyed attending programmes, often disappointed if they could not go. In Malta one mother reported, 'my child, she loves it, when she wakes up she says, "do we have Club Hilti today"? She is disappointed on a Saturday when we don't go'. Attending the programme provided some children with the encouragement or reason to attend school on days when they were otherwise reluctant to go. One mother in England stated, '...if he is on an off day and he doesn't want to go to school, I say I'm coming to school today and he can relate to that'. The attendance of mothers at school strengthened the relationship between the mother and the child. At the same time it emitted positive messages about the value of learning to the child. This shared experience was not possible to observe, at least in the same format, in the Irish case study where the children were not present. Mothers in Malta felt their children were happier to do their homework and more 'obedient' since starting the programme. One Maltese mother commented, '…he looks forward to reading these days...now he is more interested, he is picking up more'. Mothers in England and Malta reported an improvement in the children's academic capabilities after only a short space of time. One English mother commented, '…she tends to pick

up things a bit quicker. When she comes across a word like 'dog' she will do 'd, d, d,' makes the sound and works it out for herself.'

Teachers felt that attending programmes gave parents a better understanding of the school that in turn improved the parents' ability to work with their child. Whilst such reported improvements are encouraging, it is difficult to establish if they are a direct result of the family literacy intervention or simply a part of the child's natural development. However, comments from the mothers suggest they felt the children had benefited from attending, in a way that the children in Ireland had not. However, Irish mothers, particularly those from the Traveller community did report some benefits to the children, even though they were not directly involved. They felt it made the children interested in what the mother was learning and introduced the family to a new attitude regarding the value of learning. One mother in Ireland recognised that making items for the child that she could then share with them at home was a way of connecting with her child. Mothers wanted a better life for their children; knowing how to support them in their learning was viewed as the best way a child could achieve their full potential in school and improve their opportunities in life. Opportunities that mothers recognised they had not been able to access, often due to a lack of education attainment. However, one of the main difficulties faced by the VEC to including children in family literacy programmes is the lack of collaboration with schools.

Despite government directives in Ireland encouraging schools to work closer with parents, this does not extend to obliging them to work collaboratively with the VEC. However, at the time of the study this was beginning to occur through home-school link workers (Department for Education and Science, 2006). Home-school link workers have been introduced to try and encourage parental involvement in schools in some of the most deprived areas of Ireland. One such worker, a retired primary school teacher of over 25 years and a nun, was attached to one of the schools in the Irish study. As part of this role the nun worked closely with the VEC tutor to try and deliver family literacy programmes in the immediate area, (More details of their role can be found in Rose and Atkin, 2007b). However, currently family literacy programmes in Ireland are essentially seen as adult learning and remain separate from children's learning. Whilst programmes may aim to help parents understand how their child is taught in school and to develop LLN before a child starts school, programmes do not directly relate children's education with that of adult education. The children do not attend sessions with a school teacher, sessions are not planned to include the children and separate sessions for the children with a teacher of their own to complement the adult delivery does not take place. This is because, in general, there is little communication, collaboration or interaction between the two fields of education. Some participation by children was found, but not in the same way or for the same reasons as it was in England or Malta. In Ireland, the presence of children in family literacy sessions mainly occurred within a specific group of asylum seekers, with mothers who had children under the age of four years old, including babies in arms.

Conclusion: Does it matter if the children are there?

Whilst the VEC seeks to ensure parents are at the heart of children's learning, it is difficult to achieve without the cooperation of a range of powerful stakeholders. Partnership with and support for schools, is essential if the full potential of family literacy programmes is to be realised.

The lack of children in Irish family literacy programmes is unusual (Brooks, et al., 1996; Hannon, 1999). The home-school link workers could be a way to encourage parental involvement, thus providing an opportunity for the different social sectors to work together rather than in isolation. However, the link workers currently exist in only a few select, severely disadvantaged areas. It is unclear that if only mothers are attending, how effective programmes can be for the children when informal, non-structured methods of dissemination are relied on within the home to achieve these planned outcomes.

Further, the gender bias in the participants of family literacy programmes appears to be entrenched. Mothers were found to be the dominant participants, reflecting stereotypical notions in society that the mother is responsible for a child's learning and social development. However, all the mothers had made conscious decisions to take responsibility for the educational needs and the day to day care of their children; they saw this as their role. Mothers, especially in Malta, were frequently found to be better educated than fathers. Therefore, mothers often viewed themselves to be in a better position to

engage in their children's education. One mother in Malta stated that she attended rather than her husband because '…he knows that I am more educated, capable of the school maths and literature'. Whilst one of the fathers in Herefordshire confessed, 'I'm a bit thick she's a bit brainier…' In general, mothers did not see themselves as oppressed, but as having a voice, being in control and making decisions that were best for their children and family. As one mother in Ireland commented:

> …he (her husband) goes out to work and is the breadwinner…It's the way I want it to be. I want to be at home when my kids come in from school in the afternoon. I want to be there in the mornings to put them out to school. I'm not saying that working mothers are any disadvantage to their children I'm just saying for me, I like to be at home.

Despite being aware of their social and economic opportunities many mothers still chose to divide family responsibilities along the lines of traditional gender roles. The education of the children was seen by the mothers as primarily their responsibility, mainly because the fathers were working. As one mother in Malta commented, '[its] because of the work he does, he puts the 'thing' on the mother, basically he knows that I have a higher education level than he does, so I do the education on his behalf.' The data would suggest fathers played different roles in the education of their children, such as teaching the children to swim and reading with them before bedtime. Mothers were happy to attend family literacy programmes without the fathers, seeing it as time and space for them. This was true in all three case study areas, particularly for the Traveller women in Ireland.

It would seem from this study that, for the mothers, family literacy programmes is popular with or without the presence of children. What appears important is that mothers can see the relevance of attending to the development and progression of their children. Adult learners did not specifically want to enrol on programmes to improve their own literacy or numeracy skills but to help their children.

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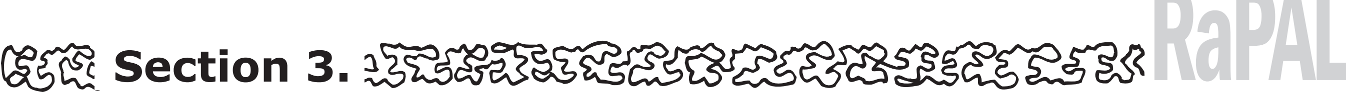

An examination of the difference between the contents of the FAL curriculum/primers used in Uganda and everyday literacy practices in rural community life.

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Adult literacy learning programmes in Uganda and, I believe, in most African countries, are largely driven by national and community development concerns (see Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Fiedrich & Jellema, 2003; Wagner, 1995). These concerns are informed by the dominant theories of literacy. However, how the content of adult literacy learning programmes relates to literacy uses in everyday life is often taken for granted when developing adult learning programmes. In this article, I used the Uganda Functional Adult Literacy [FAL] programme as a case study, to show the difference between the content of the FAL curriculum/primer and what rural people read and write in their everyday life in Uganda's rural community life. I then recommend a social practices or the real literacy approach to adult literacy education as a better alternative that can reconcile literacy learning and literacy use in rural community life, and help the learner to make the connection between what they are learning in the literacy classes and the literacies that goes on outside the classrooms.

Introduction

The question of a relevant and meaningful adult literacy programme has for long been a major preoccupation of literacy practitioners. "Throughout the world, efforts are being made to find new ways of developing more effective adult literacy programmes" (Rogers, 1999, p. 220).This paper attempts to show how some approaches to adult literacy education makes it difficult for the learners to make the connection between what they learn in literacy classes and their everyday reading and writing. This is because the curriculum/primer of the adult literacy learning programme does not closely relate to the everyday literacy practices that are going on in the community from which the literacy learners live their everyday lives. This comparison reveals that there is very little similarity between the contents of the FAL curriculum and primer and everyday literacy practices in rural community life. The paper argues that basing literacy learning on the learner's everyday literacy practices will help them to make the connection between what they are learning and the literacies of their everyday lives. This can be achieved either by using what Hamilton, Hillier and Tett (2006, p. 2) calls the "social practice approach" to literacy, or Rogers (1999) "real literacy approach".

The study of rural community literacy practices

The paper is based on an ethnographic study (see Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994) of rural community everyday literacy practices in Bweyale a rural community in Masindi District of Western Uganda. The details of the methods used in this study have already been reported in another publication based on the same study (see Openjuru & Lyster, 2007, pp. 100-102).

Literacy theories

The arguments in this paper are based on two literacy theories classified by Street (1984) as the ideological and autonomous models of literacy. The ideological model, which is also referred to as the social practices theory of literacy or New Literacy Studies [NLS], posits that literacy is best understood within the social and institutional contexts in which they are located (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998, 2000; Street, 1995, 2000). This theory emphasises literacy in use, and argues that to facilitate literacy learning there is a need to have an understanding of the social, historical and economic contexts of literacy use in everyday life. This theory is used to critique the FAL curriculum/primers used in Uganda and recommend a social practices or the real literacy approaches as better alternatives for adult literacy education programmes for literacy learners in Uganda and other similar developing countries (see Hamilton et al., 2006; Rogers, Hunters, & Uddin, 2007).

The other theory is the autonomous model, which is also referred to as the "Great Divide theory" of literacy (Street, 1984). This is the dominant theory of literacy that informs FAL in Uganda and most national adult literacy learning programmes in developing countries. According to this theory, literacy is an individual skill with positive consequences for the individual and their societies (Goody & Watt, 1968). It is a prerequisite for civilisation or modernity (Goody, 1968; Goody & Watt, 1968). Becoming literate means being able to read and write in any context where the literacy is required. This assumes a neutral and autonomous Literacy that

is uniform in all contexts of literacy use (see Street, 1984, 1995).

Critics of the autonomous model of literacy argue that the model focuses more on the "text" than literacy, and sees it as something that contributes to positive cognitive and large-scale historical, economic and social developments of human civilisation over the years (see Gee, 1990; Grabill, 2001; Prinsloo, 2005; Street, 1984).

The concept of Functional literacy

Understanding the concept of functional literacy is important because it provides the basis for understanding the FAL programme and the materials used in it. Functional literacy emphasises economic development, modernisation, and individual employability through literacy skill development. It defines literacy as a "set of skills that enables an individual to function better in the socio-economic arena" of their communities (Holme, 2004, p. 21). Becoming literate according to functional literacy means acquiring the basic level of literacy required to perform particular tasks that contribute to the economic development of ones community (Venezky, 1990). According to Gray, a functionally literate person is one who "has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group" (Gray, 1956, p. 24 cited in Levine, 1986, p. 28). Teaching literacy is to be accompanied by learning technical knowledge like in agriculture, health, and income generating activities to facilitate the process of achieving a "fuller participation of adults in economic and civic life" (Hutton, 1992, p. 33).

The distinction between the functional and the social practices perspective of literacy is a difficult one because they both make reference to literacy in life's activities. However, according to Hamilton, et al (2006, p. 3), the functional approach "focuses attention on the autonomy of the text and the meanings it carries, it search for universal features of adult literacy, numeracy, and language and other semiotic systems." This means that, although they both emphasise literacy in relation to life, functional literacy takes a standard and uniform view of literacy in all activities, emphasising what people *should do* with literacy in those activities and not what they actually *do* with literacy in the same activities. The functional approach does not recognise other different ways in which people engage with texts other than what should be. That is why functional literacy is associated with the autonomous model (see Street, 1984).

Functional literacy and poverty eradication in Uganda

In line with the idea of functional literacy above, adult literacy education policies in Uganda emphasise national and community development concerns. The constitution of Uganda acknowledges literacy as important for the development of the country (Sandhaas & Asnake, 2003). The 1992 White paper on education stated that, "Literacy especially as taught to adults should be 'functional' and not just 'basic', and it should be 'permanent' and 'developmental'" (Government of Uganda, 1992; Parry, 2000, p. 59). The overall objective of the National Adult Literacy Strategic Investment Plan [NALSIP] was to achieve a literate, well-informed, and prosperous society. To achieve this vision, the NALSIP was designed to support the five pillars of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan [PEAP]. These pillars (1) are

- rapid and sustainable economic growth
- structural transformation
- good governance and security
- increased ability of the poor to raise their incomes
- enhance quality of life for the poor

Literacy education is seen by the Government of Uganda as a strategy in the fight against rural poverty through individual economic development (see Fiedrich & Jellema, 2003; see Obbo, 2004; Okech, 2006; Openjuru, 2004; Parry, 2000).

This literacy policy is informed by UNESCO's well-known position of promoting functional literacy, which says, "Literacy programmes should be incorporated into, and correlated with, economic and social development plans" of the country (See Levine, 1986, p. 31; UNESCO cited in Lyster, 1992, p. 33).

The contents of the FAL curriculum and primers

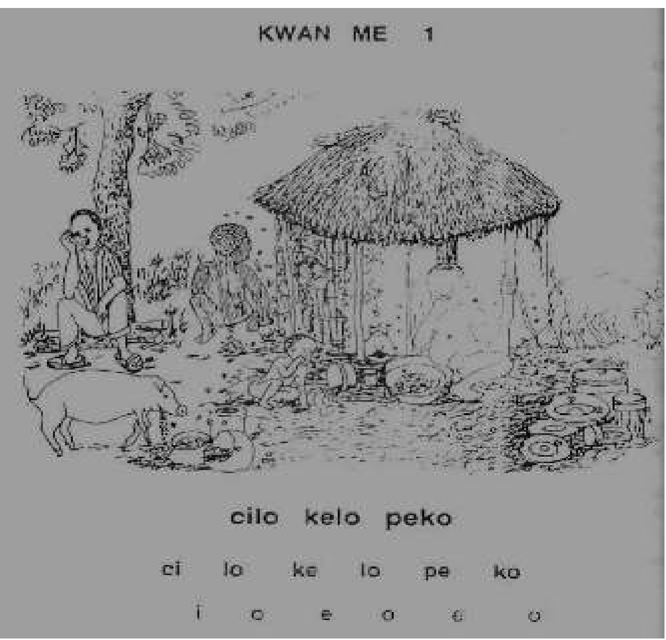
In response to the national adult literacy policy, the contents of the FAL curriculum and primers focuses on issues of economic development and poverty eradication through three major content areas. The first area is agriculture, co-operative, marketing and trade, with four themes of improving agricultural productivity, keeping animals, marketing our produce and products, farming and joining cooperatives, clubs and associations. The second area is health, with themes covering food, water, common diseases,

environmental hygiene, sanitation, and HIV/AIDS. The third area is about gender issues, culture and civic consciousness with five themes covering home management, sex education and family planning, social and national responsibilities, rights and laws, and cultures of Uganda (see Acaye & Omara-Akaca, 2003; Department of Community Development, 1993). The primary objective of this curriculum and primers are to impart new knowledge that can help in poverty eradiation through teaching reading and writing.

The FAL primers consists of pictures and lessons [see examples in figure 1 and 2 below], which depicts both negative local situations that needs to be changed, and positive ones that need to be introduced and encouraged. In the Luo primer, for example, out of 21 lessons based on the curriculum content areas discussed above, eight lessons have pictures depicting negative situations that need to be changed and 13 lessons have pictures depicting positive situations that need to be introduced or encouraged in the community. The reading/writing and numeracy lessons under the pictures are based on messages designed to inform the learners to live according to the positive depictions associated with many social and economic benefits for them and avoid the negative depictions that bring them problems (Acaye & Omara-Akaca, 2003; Department of Community Development, 1993). Using lessons from the Luo primer I have attempted to show how the focus of the literacy programme is stronger on providing useful new knowledge for the learners than literacy uses in rural community life.

Firstly the primers in the different languages use similar themes. For example, the first picture for the first lesson in the Luo primer [see Figure 1] (Acaye & Omara-Akaca, 2003) depicts a picture that is in the Runyankore primer [see figure 2] (Busingye, 2005; Ministry of Local Government, 1993). The title of this first lesson for which the picture was drawn in the Luo primer is *"cilo kelo peko"* meaning "dirt brings problems" (Acaye & Omara-Akaca, 2003, pp. 1-2). In the Runyankore primer, the first lesson is "*obukene buba bubi"* meaning "poverty is bad" (Busingye, 2005; Ministry of Local Government, 1993). Both lessons are instructive and designed to impart knowledge on the value of proper home hygiene and problem of poverty respectively. It is evidently clear that these primers were deliberately developed to communicate development and health knowledge alongside learning how to read and write. However the question I am raising is are these supporting the reading and writing that goes on in the community from which the learners come?

Figure 1: Content of the Luo Primer



Source document: Acaye, A., & Omara-Akaca (2003)Ryeko aye lonyo: buk me acel [Luo primer] Kampala: Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development

Figure 2: Content of the Runyankore Primer

Source document: Ministry of Local Government (1993) "Amagyezi n'eitungo" Runyankore/Rukiga Primer, Kampala: Government of Uganda

Everyday literacy practices in rural community life

The ethnographic study of rural community literacy practices revealed six overlapping domains of literacy use. These are livelihoods (2), school, religion, bureaucracy, family [households], and private personal reading and writing. For religious literacy practices in rural community life (see Openjuru & Lyster, 2007). Two literacy domains livelihood and health related literacies are used as examples to show what rural people read and read as part of their everyday life.

In livelihoods, people read and write as part of their livelihood activities. The readings and writings are in most cases idiosyncratic, that is, they are not uniform for similar activities undertaken by different people. For example, when selling beverages in a bar, a person can record sales in a format and with meanings that are specific to them only. In that case, they create both language and writing to record their bar shop transactions. See figure 3 below:

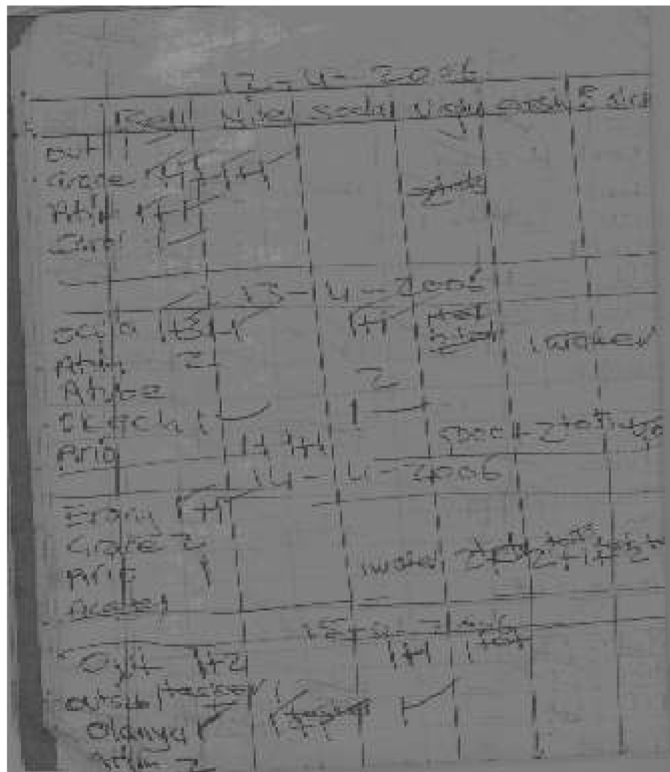


Figure 3: One page of a bar record book

The above page contains sales record of four days in April 2006. These are, the 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th. On this page, the names of the customer, if known to the seller or their identification markers as specified by the seller if the customer's name is not known, for example, *"Out,"* meaning the customer sitting outside the bar, are written on each rows of this table of sales records. The heading of each column is labelled with the names or abbreviation of the different types of drinks sold in the bar, for example, *Bell, Nile, Soda, and Ug/W,* which stands for Uganda Waragi. The last two columns are labelled *Cash* and *balance*. That is were the seller records those who owe her money for the drinks they have taken.

Every time a customer makes an order, the number of beer bottles ordered are entered into the record book under their names or the identification markers assigned to them, for example, 2 under the column of Bell [see figure 3 above]. The next order is added to the old ones with a plus sign for example 2+1 this goes on until the customer pays for his or her orders. When payment is made the number of bottles of beer paid for is ticked out for example if the customer pays for only two bottles of beers, the number 2 will be ticked off. This goes on until the end of the transaction. The transaction record of each customer is kept in one row depending on the type of drinks he or she is ordering. A study of the whole record book reveals that the *'cash'* column was not being used, while the '*balance'* column is used to record debts taken by the customer, which is what they have not paid for. The reason for this could be that the seller is more concerned with unpaid orders.

Figure 4 is one page of a tailor's record of measurement taken from her clients. This information is important for the tailor's work, and you need some knowledge of tailors writing to be able to comprehend what has been written on the page.

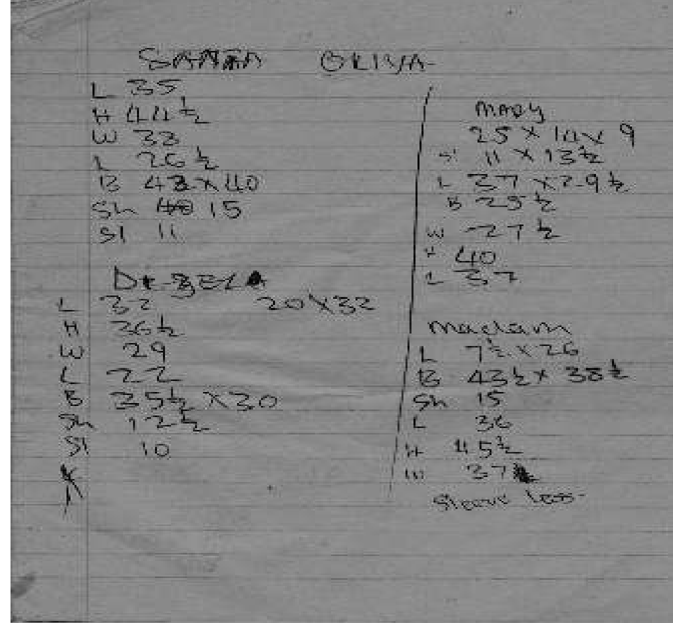


Figure 4: Tailor's Record book

What is common in the above two records is that they both have a combination of numeracy and literacy. In livelihood numeracy tends to dominate, and the use of literacy is meant to facilitate an activity, for example, selling beer in a bar or tailoring and not to learn new information.

In practising agriculture, rural people encounter texts that are written in English providing information on how to grow cotton. Such information is distributed by the agricultural extension officers, and they are not in the format and language literacy learners are exposed to in the FAL classes, see figure 5 below and relate it to figure 1 and 2 above.

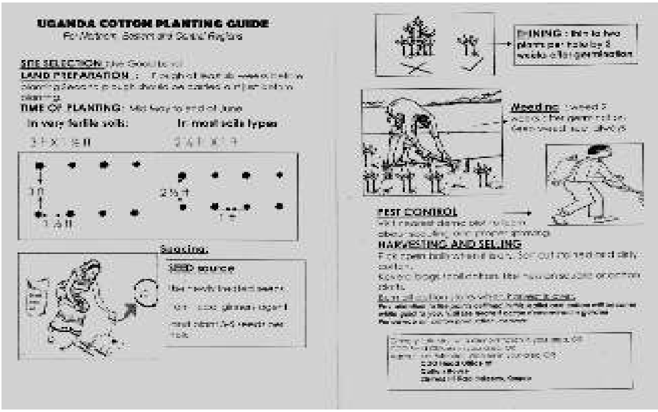


Figure 5: Cotton growing leaflet handed out farmers

Health related reading usually comes in the form of medical forms and prescriptions, which rural people get when they go to seek medical services in private and public health facilities that are locate in their villages. See figure 6 below and relate it with figure 1 above.

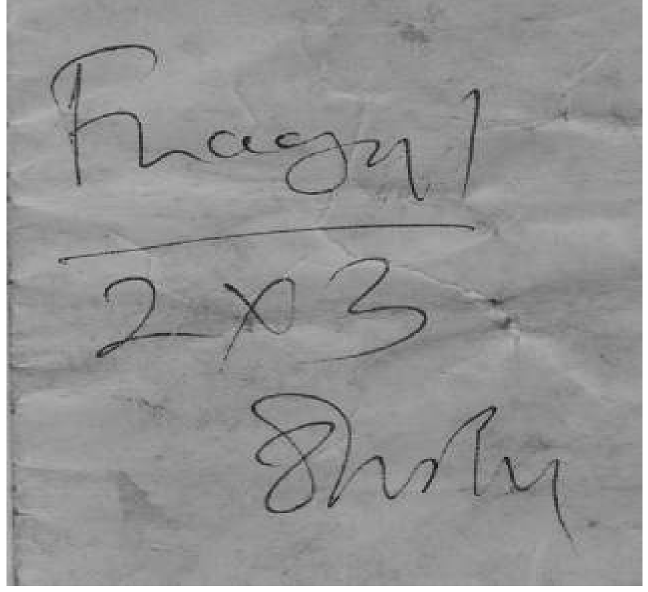


Figure 6: Medical dose on a packet of medication

The writing in figure 5 and 6 are instructions showing a person how to plant cotton and take medication respectively. They are not meant to create awareness about the value of cotton growing or proper medication. Note that the information in figure 5 and 6 is in English and mathematical expression with a different meaning. These are some of the example of the literacies in rural people's everyday lives.

Discussion, conclusions and recommendation

The contents of the FAL curriculum/primer are emphasising learning new knowledge. It is meant to positively change people's lives. The curriculum/primer is not based on the current literacy practices in the lives of the learners, but on new practices that are assumed to be good for the community and lacking among them. These new conditions are to be introduced through teaching reading and writing.

It is a good idea to base literacy learning on useful other learning geared toward improving the daily lives of the learners. However, as Rogers (1999) argues, emphasising literacy learning and not their uses in life has been a major cause of literacy programme failures in developing countries. It is also acceptable to argue that once the learners become literate they should be able to read such informative materials that can change their ways of doing things for the better. This assumes that such materials are available in the community from which the learners are coming and in the format and language that are the same with those that they are exposed to in the FAL classes. However, going by figure 5, the available reading material in agriculture is in English and that relating to health, figure 6, is in a medical expression in which the application of the multiplication symbol is for a different purpose from that which the learners could be learning in their numeracy lessons in the FAL classes (see Acaye & Omara-Akaca, 2003; Ministry of Local Government, 1993). These differences make it difficult for the learner to make the connection between their literacy learning and the literacy that is in their environment.

As shown in figure 3 and 4 rural people are already engaged in poverty eradicating activities that involve literacy in ways that are best known to them and appropriate for managing their livelihood activities. Even the non-literate people in the community encounter such literacy practices, for example, as they interact with a tailor. There are many other activities in which literacy is used in a rural community, for

example practising the Christian faith, and dealing with children's education. For all these the learners need to learn specific practices associated with those activities and also learn how to learn new practices that will frequently come up in the course of their everyday lives (see also Openjuru & Lyster, 2007; Rogers et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the literacy learners do not need to be informed about the value of growing cotton, because the fact that they are involved in cotton growing means they already know the importance of growing cotton. Instead they need to learn how to read the leaflets given to them by the agricultural extension workers and the weighing scale used to weigh their cotton during sales. They do not need to be told to seek medical care but how to be able read the doctors' prescriptions on how to administer a particular medication.

The literacy in everyday life is largely tied to the life activities of the people. The primer on the other hand is design to communicate new and useful development information to the learners in a school like model. The primer is based on the idea of a fixed meaning text uniform in all contexts of literacy use, while the literacy practices that go on in the community are flexible, creative, and to somewhat idiosyncratic to the different activities and individual involved in those activities. Literacy in that case is under a continuous process of reconstruction and negotiation (see also Rogers et al., 2007). Prinsloo (2005) coined the concept of 'variable literacies' to capture this aspect of variability in literacy practices over time and place.

Additionally, the primer is in the local language while most of the written information in the community comes in English. These are two different orientations of situating literacy learning in which one is based on what the learners *need to know and do* with literacy, while the social practices or real literacy approach being recommended in this paper is based on what the learners *do* with literacy.

There is therefore a need to reconcile literacy learning with literacy use in everyday life. The literacy learning curriculum should not be made overly prescriptive, and learning how to read and write should support the existing uses of literacy in which the learner is already involved outside the classrooms. The curriculum should therefore be made flexible and easily adaptable to the different contexts of the learners' literacy lives. Literacy programmes should support the work of the health and agricultural extension workers by enabling people to be able to read the kind of information that is being distributed by these community workers. For example they could advise the agricultural extension officer to write their information in a language and format that is accessible to people who are not yet very competent in reading and writing in the second language. Real literacy material could be used in the literacy classes to help the learner make immediately a connection between what they are learning and the literacy in their environment**.**

Notes

1. These pillars have been revised two times in 2001 and 2004. The 2004 version was economic management; production, competitiveness and income; security, conflict-resolution and disaster management; good governance; and human development.

2. This may be referred to as commerce or business.

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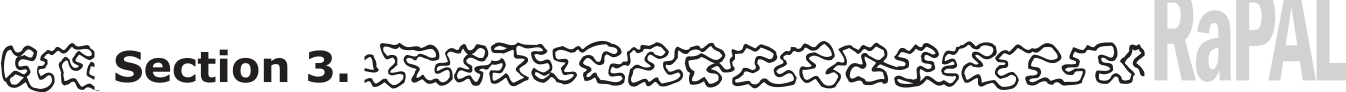

Section 3.

Revisiting the Determinants and Complexities Associated with Learning English as a Second Language for Newcomers to Canada.

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Introduction

Today, immigration populations in Canada are increasing and there is a growing concern that the lack of literacy skills needed to integrate into the economy and society will inevitably constrain the rate of growth in our country (Statistics Canada, 2001, 2003). This concern has been voiced primarily by the business sector's need for immigrant workers with proficiency in English (Meltzer, 2006). Hence, the lack of English language proficiency has created a "literacy gap". That is, the interactive and integrative aspects of second language development of newcomers to develop social and academic linguistic competencies in the four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Factors that contribute to this literacy gap are not well understood and as a result of the rise in Canadian immigrant workers to fill job vacancies, there is a need to unravel the mystery behind what is needed to "access the system" and how this type of second-language learning applies to theory and practice. That is, there is a need to explore the complexities associated between affective components such as competence, interest, and utility shown to be involved in the second-language learning process of immigrant workers, and what may cause, if any, some of these components to decrease or increase. Therefore, this article is an attempt to spark renewed interest in pursuing to understand some of the determinants and complexities associated with learning English as a second-language made relevant not only to the adult educational community but to human resource development as a whole. Seven of the most commonly known reasons for these complexities are discussed.

Canadian Population Immigration Patterns And Labour Force Participation

According to the latest figures (Statistics Canada, 2001), Canada welcomed an annual average of close to 200,000 new immigrants and refugees over the 1990s. Immigration accounted for more than 50% of the net population growth between 1991 1996 and for 70% of the growth in the labour force during that same period. It is predicted that immigration will account for virtually all of the net growth in the Canadian labour force by the year 2011. A significant change in the source countries has occurred, with over 75% of new immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s coming from what is called the global South. Statistics Canada (2001) also indicates that during the census period (1996-2001), the growth of the racialized group population far outpaced the Canadian average. While the Canadian population grew by 3.9% between 1996-2001, the corresponding rate for racialized groups was 24.6%. Over the same period, the racialized component of the labour force by (males 28.7%/females 32.3%) compared to (5.5% and 9%) respectively for the Canadian population. According to the 2001 Census, racialized group members made up 13.4% of the Canadian population while immigrants accounted for 18.4%. These figures are projected to rise to 20% and 25% respectively by 2015.

Canada's aging population, known better as the baby boom generation, is leaving the workforce (Statistics Canada, 2003). In fact, it may be conceivable to think that in the next decade or so, most of the growth in Canada's workforce will be drawn from immigrants. Employers from several sectors of Canada's economy are already forced to look overseas to fill job vacancies (Canadian Tourism Human Resources Council, 2005). According to Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC, 2002), immigration currently accounts for more than 70% of Canada's workforce growth. They predict that by 2011, almost 100% of Canada's workforce growth will be due to immigration. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada predicts one million skilled job vacancies in the next 20 years (Bloom & Grant, 2001).

Second-Language Learning

Second-language learning is an extremely complex process involving many factors and is

not so easily defined. The term "second" language usually refers to any language that is acquired after the first or native language (Danesi, 1983). Usually, the learning takes place in an educational setting and strangely enough "a second-language learner usually has no 'ancestral' motivation for studying the language" (Danesi, 1983, p. 9). In addition, the term "second" stands in contrast to "first" language acquisition in that the former refers to learning an additional language after having learnt the mother tongue (Ellis, 1988). Sometimes the term second-language learning is contrasted with second-language acquisition. Both terms have been defined as subconscious or conscious processes by which a language other than the mother tongue is learnt in a natural or instructional setting (Ellis, 1988).

It is important to note that these terms are often used interchangeably and are sometimes not intended as different processes. Furthermore, second-language learning is equally identified with foreign language learning. In Canada, the term "heritage language" has also been used in second-language discourse. The term however refers to the languages, other than English or French that belong to a person's ethnocultural heritage or ancestry.

Whereas positive language attitudes and motivation facilitate second-language learning (Gardner & Smythe, 1975), language anxiety has been shown to impair the language learning process. Studies indicate that apprehension over communication in the second language can be debilitating to performance on a wide variety of second-language tasks (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991b). Newcomers in general, are often unprepared to meet the challenging and complex requirements associated with migration or the task of learning the host country's majority language. Apprehension and anxiety may be the resulting experience if newcomers are unsuccessful in overcoming unexpected barriers or hindrances. My next section looks into some of the most anxiety provoking determinants known to be associated with learning a second language for Canadian newcomers.

The Seven Most Commonly Known Determinants and Complexities Associated with Learning a Second Language for Canadian Immigrants.

Language Skills

Many immigrants arrive in Canada not knowing English (or French), however, not knowing English, may be the least of the challenges many immigrants face. For example, there may be variations among immigrant second-language learners based on the extent and quality of prior formal schooling experiences they had in their home country and how similarities and differences exist between their home country and Canada. Among other factors discussed in this paper, these may have an impact on their adjustment and ultimately their successes in Canada.

Since the passage of the Official Languages Act in 1967, Canada has been officially bilingual (English and French). The history of bilingual education in Canada is primarily the history of the struggle for equal status for French, which is currently the minority language. However, there are strong indications that this may change in the next decades as the influx of Asian immigrants are rapidly growing, particularly in the western parts of Canada. Most Canadian educational institutions have bilingualism and biliteracy as primary goals. Hence, most business is increasingly conducted in both official languages. In some instances and depending in which province you live (e.g., Ontario vs British Columbia), the minority language, French, may hold equal or greater status to the majority language, English

Canada continues to struggle with the needs of speakers of so-called heritage languages, languages other than French and English used by indigenous or immigrant minorities. Second-language instructional programs have been established, some with the goal of transitioning learners from their primary languages to English, and others with the intention of preserving or restoring proficiency in a heritage language.

The challenges of meeting the needs of second-language learners at all proficiency levels are complicated by a number of factors. The structure of the schools themselves, with multiple course offerings and tracks, makes it difficult to offer a consistent program for second-language learners without restricting choices of electives and limiting their school experiences. Even though some learners may learn English quickly, they may encounter difficulties with advanced curricula. For those who aren't literate, the challenge is clear, and materials and methods for meeting their needs are not always available. For many learners, daily routines might be perplexing, even overwhelming. Finally, newcomers may have needs associated with the pain of leaving their home countries or adjusting to Canadian society. Some of them may be

refugees, some may have left parents and other family behind, and some may have suffered the deprivations and horrors of war.

Newcomer programs take a number of forms but generally attempt to assist second-language learners overcome the trauma of relocation, develop familiarity with the customs and culture of Canada, develop English proficiency, adapt to Canadian society, and overall to succeed in their attempt to transition in mainstream society. In general, these programs provide academic, linguistic, and social support to recently immigrated students. They are designed to address the needs of recent arrivals who have limited or no native literacy skills or who lack formal education in their native countries (Castro Feinberg, 2002).

Chinese are the largest immigrant group in Canada, and Mandarin has the potential to become the third official language, just after English and French. British Columbia's Chinese immigrant community has raised several issues in the past in regards to employment, education, and language. For example, in the Vancouver region, with its 350,000 people of Chinese heritage, the Nation Alliance Leader Wei Ping Chen stated that, "They [the Chinese people] have high degrees, master's degrees or doctorate degrees, but their job is just labour job. They are not satisfied with their situation right now." (Bermingham, p.7, 2007). The leader indicates that many Chinese immigrants leave British Columbia after getting their Canadian citizenship because they can't get ahead in their new country. Furthermore, it states that Chinese immigrants face severe language barriers and often feel lonely after arriving in Canada. In some cases, he notes that racial discrimination is often a barrier particularly in the workplace, and that this makes things even worse. Similar issues are being voiced by the East Indian community of approximately 5000 Bangladeshis of Ottawa, Ontario. For example, one report indicates that "…the lack of English proficiency is the main hurdle for us [Bangladeshis] to migrate, and move upward in North America (Islam, p.1, 2007). The report goes on to say that a more real challenge is to preserve and promote long cherished values and identities.

Technical Communication Skills
Immigrants may often find themselves unprepared to work in a technical English-language workplace like in Canada. While having adequate English literacy skills may improve the integration of immigrant workers into their new community, knowing other languages may also be beneficial as many employers who work in international markets or diverse communities in Canada seek workers with multilingual abilities.

Newcomers to Canada whose first language is not English must take an English test. English classes are offered to newcomers after they arrive in Canada and these are based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment; levels of English ability (spoken, written, comprehension). Most employers seek newcomers with at least a level 8 of English ability and are able to communicate effectively with the technical English required for their work. Most newcomer English classes do not teach any occupation-specific technical English that may be required and thus individuals must seek to fulfil this need on their own. Currently, however, the government is funding some *Enhanced Language Training* programs to address this issue. Further discussion on language training programs follows.

Language Training Programs
For years now educational communities across Canada have witnessed the expansion and growth of second-language programs. English-language proficiency is especially important in Canada because of the large number of immigrants that do not speak English. The growth in immigration population and technological advancements have been identified as the two major factors that are driving the need for more and improved workplace literacy programs aimed at improving employees' ability to communicate (Conference Board of Canada, 2006). With a large proportion of immigrants to Canada coming from developing countries and often speaking neither English nor French, services to assist them to settle in and adapt to Canada are an important part of the immigration program. Some of these programs are delivered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada itself, but most are delivered by private sector organizations, funded by the Department.

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is a broadly based program available to all adult immigrants, whether destined to the labour market or not. The classes are made as accessible as possible and immigrants may attend full-time or part-time for up to three years. Childcare is provided and transportation costs can be covered. Though LINC programs play a unique role in introducing newcomers to Canadian society, cutbacks in funding have impacted tremendously the ability of program delivery to sustain Adult ESL programs.
The ability to function in one of the two official

languages is a key component of the settlement process, and essential to effective participation in the Canadian labour market. However, with the gradual withdrawal of support for Adult ESL, a large number of adults who do not qualify for federally funded language programs have been left with no recourse. Lack of access to an official language restricts participation in retraining programs for qualified individuals. Several school boards across the country offer Non-Credit Adult ESL programs, and these programs provide essential language training to tens of thousands of newcomers and citizens (many of whom are not eligible for federally-funded programs). Non-Credit Adult ESL programs, unlike all other school board programs, including Adult Literacy programs, Adult Credit (high school) programs, do not receive Accommodation Grants (money to pay for space, electricity, etc.). Because of this hole in funding, many of these programs have been at risk. CESBA (the Continuing Education School Board Administrators' Association) has identified this as the biggest single issue in school-based adult education programs. Most Non-Credit Adult ESL programs (over 70%) are not offered during evenings or weekends but during the regular school day. Bridging and transition programs are designed specifically for foreign-trained professionals and tradespersons. They enable immigrants to transition more quickly into the Canadian labour market by providing training that addresses specific needs and facilitates the recognition of foreign credentials. These programs include training in areas such as occupation-specific language training; training in Canadian workplace culture, practices and communication; technical upgrading according to Canadian requirements; and, work placements to gain Canadian work experience.

Currently, bridging and transition programs offered by colleges and institutes across Canada focus primarily on professions such as nursing and healthcare workers, engineering and the trades. Colleges and institutes in Alberta, Ontario and Quebec for example, are delivering these programs with special funding from provincial governments. In Alberta, The Work Experience for Immigrants program is designed for unemployed foreign-trained professionals. It is a 16-week program comprised of 10 weeks of in-class sessions focusing on Canadian workplace culture, functionality and communications on the job followed by six weeks of Canadian work experience. Another, the ESL Trades Program is designed for immigrants with training and experience in a trade. It helps participants develop pre-trade skills, find work in their trade or occupation, and become qualified in their chosen field. In this program, participants also improve their English, and learn job search skills such as researching potential employers and writing resumes. In Ontario and Quebec, a Foreign-Trained Nurses Program assists foreign-trained nurses in meeting the professional educational requirements of the College of Nurses of Ontario to practice in the healthcare sector in Ontario. In addition, several Canadian colleges and institutes offer government-funded language training such as the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program funded through the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. In British Columbia, the LINC program is called "English Services for Adults" (ELSA), and in Quebec the "Francisation" program funded by the Ministère des relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration.

Though there is a wide array of provisionary second-language training services, some researchers have criticized the effectiveness and implementation of these programs. One such criticism is that the government assumes no responsibility for providing instruction beyond the basic level of the dominant official language of the community in which they live (Cray & Currie, 2004). That is, newcomers are not being afforded the opportunity to fully learn the type of language that allows them complete integration even though they are expected to do so quickly (Cray & Currie, 2004). Another issue is the interpretation of language policies. Descriptive statements such as "level of language proficiency", "language benchmarks", "assessment procedures", "the Canadian experience", and other policy guidelines have created concern for curriculum planners and other agencies who are attempting to meet the mandate and the delivery of these programs effectively. Central to the issues is that newcomers are not being given opportunities to explore and develop an understanding of how language is used in everyday Canadian life. As Cray and Currie (2004) indicate, "…there is a disjunction between what is stipulated in language policies and what is actually realized at implementation" (p. 62).

Employment

For most immigrants entering Canada every year, the workplace is a priority (Iwataki, 1981) and acquiring the language skills that is necessary to enter the labour market can be particularly challenging for them. Family and economic factors are of prime importance for

newcomers. Securing employment can be especially difficult because many lack the literacy skills to compete in the workplace (Statistics Canada, 2005). As Celce-Murcia (2001) indicates, "for most immigrant workers, learning a second language means survival and economic upward mobility" and "if not by them, then most likely for their children and grandchildren" (p. 396).

According to Statistics Canada and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Statistics Canada, 2005), immigrants whose mother tongue was neither English nor French have lower average scores in all four literacy domains compared to immigrants whose mother tongue is one of the two official languages. They further indicate that working-age immigrants performed significantly below the Canadian-born population in the Prose literacy domain. Statistics Canada and OECD (2005) define Prose literacy as the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, brochures and instruction manuals. In fact, they indicate that the large percentages of adults that do not currently possess the literacy and numeracy skills needed to fill the types of jobs that the Canadian economy is creating is problematic and may explain Canada's relatively weak productivity performance over the past decade. Most Canadian newcomers require either English or French language skills to meet potential job requirements.

Immigrant workers will usually have the necessary occupational skills and experience to fill jobs in Canada. However, very few have the level of literacy skills required by employers. Statistics Canada and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Statistics Canada, 2005), report that 65% of Canadian immigrants have achieved higher than upper-secondary education. However, even though the majority of Canadian immigrants achieve at a higher than upper-secondary education, very few of them have the skills level suitable for coping with the demands of everyday life and work. Only 40% of recent immigrants in Canada score at those levels (Statistics Canada, 2005). ABC Canada Literacy Foundation (2005), an organization devoted to understanding and improving upon literacy issues, support these findings indicating that despite the high educational levels that immigrants have achieved in their country of origin they do not necessarily have the literacy and numeracy skills needed to function fully in the Canadian economy.

For most immigrants, the decision to immigrate is an economic one. They expect to work in the area where they have been working for years only to find that it is not easy to find work in Canada that corresponds with their skills and experience. Naturally, there may be other reasons to immigrate but most newcomers only want to find meaningful employment when they arrive. Fortunately, Canadian employers have an emphatic perception of newcomers. That is, they have a positive attitude toward immigrants and immigration. According to a recent survey by the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (2005), it seems that for most employers in Canada, hiring recent immigrants is not a hindrance; they welcome the opportunity to participate in strategies that seek to better integrate them into the workforce. However, the survey found that immigrants were overlooked in their human resource planning, did not hire immigrants at the level that they were trained, and that employers often faced challenges integrating recent immigrants into their workforce. The authors suggest that discrepancies may exist in their findings depending on destination areas and non-destination areas, and that outcomes may differ for large and small companies. These findings correspond with an earlier study conducted by Statistics Canada in that 70% of immigrants settling in Canada in 2000 and 2001 had trouble entering the work force due to insufficient access to qualified jobs. The reasons for this are not yet well understood, as newcomers to Canada are increasingly better trained and more experienced in terms of their professional experiences in their host societies and often must settle for under-qualified jobs (Frenette & Morrisette, 2003). According to one author, "transferable skills" of migrants are often not utilized leading them no alternatives but to accept lower skilled levels of employment (Reitz, 2001). According to a 2003 Statistics Canada report, this may explain why low income rates can be found among 47% (1995) and 35% (2000) of immigrants who have lived fewer than six years in Canada (approximately 17% lower on the average for the Canadian population for that same period).

Credentialing

The lack of recognition of foreign credentials, work experience, and licensing have been serious issues for employers, but a significant hindrance for newcomers to Canada. For highly skilled immigrants, the primary problem is the access to an entry job close to their occupational education and experience in their country of origin. According to the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, 2001, the widespread

underutilization of skills indicate that migrants have major problems re-entering professional fields with qualifications that would seem to be internationally transferable and that migrant women are more affected by this.

Recognizing and assessing credentials is often perceived negatively by newcomers. They see the process as too lengthy, obscure, arbitrary, and restrictive (Sangster, 2001; Salaff, Greve, & Li Ping, 2002). In the past, some of these difficulties have been attributed to a lack of public information in that many newcomers are not aware that assessment agencies exist and that they must adhere to specific credentialing regulations (Sangster, 2001). Canadian employers in the healthcare industry are particularly concerned with the immigration of healthcare professionals and the transitioning of credentials. Immigrants who espouse to secure employment in the field of medicine must undergo severe scrutiny of their professional qualifications and ability to communicate in English. As for those who migrate to Canada to attend university in areas of medicine, they tend to have a high unemployment rate due to language problems despite their higher level of education compared to the norm (Mwarigha, 1991). Unfortunately, many students find that their accent is unfavourable in terms of integrating into the society and in finding employment and that language problems are the primary reason for losing or leaving their former employment (Kasozi, (1986).

As ethnic minority populations continue to grow at a rapid rate, and because effective communication is fundamental in the field of medicine, little is known about the impact of language differences on patient care. What is known is that those patients or caregivers with limited English proficiency may not be able to communicate healthcare issues or needs effectively, more so for women (Woloshin et. al., 1997). There are also indications that limited English proficiency is associated with socioeconomic status variables and health, and decreased utilization of care. That is, lower income, lower educational attainment, and lack of insurance (Ontario Health Survey, 1990; Feinstein, 1993).

According to an Ontario study (Hall et. al., 2004), international medical graduates (IMGs') in the Canadian healthcare environment need higher levels of English literacy skills to communicate day-to-day hospital activities, more opportunities to practice these skills, and more support from faculty and staff on cultural challenges faced by IMGs'. Therefore, and because language may be closely related to culture and that language may denote functional membership in a particular cultural group, it may be probable that language differences may signal differences in values about the use of healthcare.

Stereotyping

For newcomers with limited communication skills in the host country, the migration dilemma may be compounded by an already challenging time for their family. That is, they have to deal with the social, emotional, and psychological changes as the family leaves behind and begins the process of becoming integrated into the new society. Migration may force newcomers to renegotiate not only their individual identity, but also their cultural identity. That is, they are moving from countries where they once were the majority to one where they are the minority. Often, their family and settlement issues may be compounded by discrimination based on race and cultural differences.

Societal expectations may significantly affect the transitional process or adjustment period of newcomers into their new surroundings, particularly school-aged children. In the past, newcomers to Canada have faced the pressures of being stereotyped as having poor language and communication skills, low levels of participation, and in the case of males, may often be perceived as aggressive (Anderson & Grant, 1987). Even today, hidden discrimination against ethnic minorities continues to play a role in the Canadian labour market (Li, 2003). As a result, many find themselves failing in school, isolated, and frustrated.

It is unfortunate, that we as Canadians may often ascribe someone a social identity based on their use of language, where standard English may often be the only acceptable dialect of a given region. Being verbally misunderstood eventually may lead to lower self-esteem and the frustration in turn may lead to feelings of being rejected by others. This in turn may affect a newcomer's attitude towards becoming a member of the host community they live in. I expand on the notion of attitude in my next section.

Attitudes

Attitudes are a combination of beliefs, feelings, and evaluations, coupled with some predisposition to act accordingly (Deckers, 2001). Hence, in a learning or work environment, a second-language learner's

attitude could be their manner, disposition, feelings, or position towards second or foreign language learning. The notion of one's attitude is particularly important when considering the role of identity in communities of practice. A newcomer's attitude or predisposition may be influential on their ability to identify themselves as members of a host community. In the past, researchers have found that an individual's adeptness in a second language might be linked to their attitudes toward the group speaking the second language (Carroll & Sapon, 1959; Ervin, 1954; Miller & Dollard, 1941; Mowrer, 1950). Others (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) have found that success in language attainment was dependent upon the learner's affective predisposition toward the target linguistic-cultural group. They maintain that learners' ethnocentric tendencies and attitudes toward the ethnolinguistic group will determine how successful the learners will be in second-language acquisition. Furthermore, the learner's motivation to learn is thought to be determined by his/her attitude toward members of the target group in particular, and toward foreign people in general, and by orientation toward the learning task at hand. Attitudes, as it may pertain to stereotyping, should be considered important because they may sustain a learner's level of motivation. Therefore, if appropriate ways of talking about, understanding, and performing in ways that more centrally located members recognize and use for their continuing participation in the community of practice are not fully realized, participation in learning sociolinguistic skills may be discouraged. Hence, identity and affiliation with others situated into practice is crucial for second language learning (Kanno & Norton, 2003). My point is that perception, what we do and are expected to do, may affect attitudes toward a particular linguistic-cultural group. And as a result, variables such as effort, persistence, goal salience, attribution, success, and attention may have direct or indirect effects on successfully learning a second language (Tremblay & Gardner, 1994).

Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of this article was to contribute to the understanding of the determinants and complexities of learning a second language for newcomers to Canada. Clearly, the issues are more complex and need to be explored more intensely by anyone wishing to obtain a deeper understanding of the topic. On the other hand, the research discussed in this paper has several practical implications for second-language learners, policy makers, and/or program developers. Overall, the literature indicates that it is important to recognize the power of these determinants and complexities as environmental conditions on acquiring a second language. For immigrant workers, these environmental conditions act as barriers or hindrances and describe how newcomers with strong integrative motives to learn a second language may be discouraged from doing so. The role of attitudes and perceptions on social integration or affiliation has been a dominant theme throughout this article and particularly significant. That is, there is some evidence to suggest that we as Canadians are often unwilling to accept the integration of newcomers, even if they learn the majority language completely. Hidden discrimination against ethnic minorities continues to play a role in the labour market even though Canada has been successful in banning unsubtle forms of discrimination from public life (Li, 2003). Ultimately, we need to realize that our attitudes and perceptions of migrant workers become responsible for their success in their inability to find employment and peacefully settle in their new environment. That is, employment where they can practice the second language in the work environment and host community without prejudice. In the past, recommendations to address this issue have been made. For example, it has been suggested that we as Canadians introduce courses on migration in our elementary and secondary school systems. Schools can play a vital role in eliminating racial stereotypes early by examining the unique needs of immigrants in their community. Also, educating Canadian employers and their employees about immigrant issues through the use of democratically held group discussions, could be effective anti-discrimination methods. Ironically, it may be us that need to be studied further and not newcomers.

In order for immigrant workers to realize their full potential, they need to learn how to adjust and adapt to Canadian customs and organizations, that is, the “Canadian” way of doing things. For example, what and how we recognize foreign credentials and work experience, where and how to deal with licensing issues and workplace rights, or even what to expect in regards to childcare services. Newcomers should be aware of the type of job experience they may need to enter the workforce, that there may be a lack of available jobs, that the transferability of credentials may be a problem, and that there may be a lack of social networks or support available to them (Statistics Canada, 2001).

Finally, the literature clearly indicates that for newcomers to Canada, the key gap in settlement issues for host communities is the need to learn English as a second language or to significantly upgrade language skills. If we are to emphasize the need for more skilled migrant workers in Canada, then we need to increase financial support for language training specific to the labour market and improve funding and accessibility to programs. As a nation, we need to understand that learning a second language successfully by systematic study requires newcomers to identify, integrate, and/or become more familiar with the language spoken by his/her community's culture and customs. The integrative experiences become our responsibilities and will inevitably further their understanding of the target language and improve their competence in the second language. The closer that the second-language learner and their target group (or community) becomes alike, the closer to the end (or goal) learners may become. That is, languages are learned in the process of becoming a member of a particular group, and the underlying motivation is one of group membership, not of language acquisition per se (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

Potential researchers may note that the acquisition, maintenance and loss of skills, including the intensity of skill use associated with a job and intensity of participation in language training programs may be key factors to examine in the future. Future research emphasis might focus upon determining causal relationships between achievement and motivational components in the second-language learning process. Identifying motivational traits, states, and changes would help extend the theoretical knowledge base on second-language learning. Attention could be given to the development of methods to assess affective reactions and improve the second language learning process. Furthermore, investigating causal relationships through causal-comparative studies in learning settings may help determine alternative approaches for intervention.

However, we need a unified theory of second language learning to provide us with frameworks to understand and to recognize the complexities involved in learning English as a second language for newcomers as environmental conditions; this would help the development of coherent and effective instructional programs. Finally, as the issues of learning a second language for newcomers to Canada receive increasing attention, it seems reasonable that variables associated with employment, attitude, stereotyping, credentialing and language training as it controls engagement in and persistence with the learning task of learners, be considered worthy of renewed scrutiny.

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Reports and Reviews

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Review by Angela Porter

Angela is the Skills for Life Manager at Blackpool & the Fylde College with responsibility for leading the process of embedding Literacy and Numeracy into vocational programmes across the college. She is also the programme leader for Skills for Life staff development programmes at levels 2,3 and 4.

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2007 Conference Edition of the Journal

Following the successful RaPAL conference in Belfast 'Learning journeys voices and identities in adult literacy, Numeracy and ESOL' the next edition of the journal will feature papers, reflections and materials from the conference.

Contact the conference edition editors Amy Burgess and Shelley Tracey for more information or to submit your contribution.

They can be contacted at:
s.tracey@qub.ac.uk or
a.j.burgess@hotmail.co.uk