



LESLLA Symposium 2008

Abstracts

Thursday 23 October

14.00-15.00 Keynote

Evaluation of Literacy Instruction on Low-literate Adult ESL Learners

Larry Condelli

American Institutes for Research – Washington, USA

This study will evaluate the effectiveness of a structured language approach to reading instruction on improving the English reading and speaking skills of ESL students with little or no literacy in their native language. The approach is based on the Wilson Reading System and provides instruction that is direct, systematic, sequential, and multi-sensory. Instruction follows a controlled sequence for introducing English phonics and high-frequency English sight words to non-native speakers of English and also introduces and builds basic English speaking and reading vocabulary and foundational skills in basic English grammar. Both the vocabulary and grammar components are focused on the functional needs of new immigrants.

This direct, literacy-based approach has never before been evaluated with adults learning English as a second language who have little education and little or no literacy in their native language. Most of the students in the study are immigrants to the USA from Haiti, Mexico, China, Armenia and Iran.

The evaluation will address the following research questions:

- Do adult ESL learners who receive the study-related ESL instruction make greater improvements in English reading and speaking skills than adult ESL learners who receive the instruction normally provided by the program?
- Does the study-related literacy instruction have different effects on subgroups of adult ESL learners?
- How well do instructors implement the study-related instruction?

The study will include 40 adult ESL classes from 10 adult schools in four states in the USA. In 20 of the classes teachers will use the structured literacy approach and in the other classes teachers will teach with their usual method that does not employ this approach. Students will be assigned randomly to classes and pre-and post-tested at the start and the end of one semester of instruction on English reading and oral language skills.

This presentation will discuss the design overall, issues in implementation and present a short video of the instructional approach. It also will describe the students, teachers and classes participating in the study and also present the English language and literacy measures that will be used to evaluate the effect of the intervention. Implications for the effective instruction for LESLLA learners will be discussed with the audience. The study will provide practitioners with valuable information on the kind of instructional strategies that are likely to improve the skills of this challenging population.

15.20 -16.05

Strategies and Errors in the Reading Process

Alexis Feldmeier
University of Bielefeldt - Germany

Reading involves different kinds of strategies, which depends on the proficiency level and the difficulty of the task. Reading a text for instance involves top-down and bottom-up processes. For literacy beginners, reading isolated words however demands especially bottom-up processes: mapping sounds to letters enables them to figure out a word.

Practitioners know that learning how to solve the problem of reading words letter by letter needs time. This is the case especially, when you are learning to read a second language that you don't understand. How do read learners (unknown) isolated words? Which kind of strategies do they use on word-level-reading? Which kind of problems do they face? These questions were the mainspring of a classroom-research project. Some of the results of this project are presented.

16.10 – 17.00

Word Concept of Illiterates and Low-Literates: Worlds Apart?

Liesbeth Onderdelinden
Radboud University Nijmegen - Netherlands

Over the years extensive research has been done into the development of children's metalinguistic awareness and its role in learning to read. Although results contradict each other regarding the question which of the two appears first, there is undoubtedly some kind of interrelationship between metalinguistic skills and literacy.

This paper deals with one aspect of metalinguistic knowledge, viz. word concept. In order to examine what illiterates and low-literates count as a word, a small-scale study was carried out among adult immigrants in The Netherlands. 14 illiterates and 15 low-literates listened to a story and were asked to repeat the last word when the narrator paused. There were 32 target-words, 16 open and 16 closed class words, which were divided into equal subsets of mono- and disyllabic words. The methodology that was used was introduced by Karmiloff-Smith et al. (1996) and was replicated in a cross-linguistic study by Kurvers & Uri (2006). In both studies 4- and 5-year-old children were tested concerning their awareness of the concept *word*. Karmiloff-Smith et al. found that 75% of the 4-year-olds and 96% of the 5-year-olds were able to define word boundaries in English. The results of Kurvers and Uri, however, showed that only about 26% of the 4- and 5-year-old Dutch and Norwegian children were able to isolate words.

Contrary to the findings of Karmiloff-Smith et al. and Kurvers & Uri, who found no differences in correct scores on open and closed class words, both illiterates and low-literates performed better on open class words. When the scores of open and closed class words are taken together low-literate adults performed significantly better on this task than illiterate ones. This confirms the conclusion of Kurvers & Uri that those who cannot read nor write, whether adults or children, do not have a clear word concept and indicates that literacy acquisition enhances one's awareness of words.

15.20- 17.00

Panel on African Literacies: Uses of English language and literacy in African contexts

**Yonas Asfaha & Kasper Juffermans
Tilburg University - Netherlands**

Many countries in Africa have long promoted educational programs that are mainly conducted in the English language. For many of the communities in these African countries English is a foreign language with little local cultural basis. The provision of education in English and the status it holds in Africa, therefore, emanates from its prestige as a world language and its role in national or global cultural or economic transactions. The papers in this symposium highlight the scope and depth of English language and literacy use in various African countries and its promotion in education.

English language and literacy use in The Gambia, West Africa, is illustrated by Juffermans in a paper that discusses the social distribution of literacy resources and the collaborative nature of everyday literacy practices. Beckman's ethnographic study investigates English language/literacy use and education by looking at a school and the surrounding community in Namibia, Southern Africa. Barasa presents a case study of text messaging through mobile phones in Kenya, East Africa, in a study that broadens our understanding of English language and literacy use in the 21st century. Finally, Asfaha's paper deals with a Horn of Africa country, Eritrea, and presents adult Eritrean's attitudes towards the use of local and regional languages (including English) in schools.

These diverse case studies from four different corners of the continent, provide a picture of the social and educational use of English language and literacy and their value and role among African communities. We believe the topic of this panel is immediately relevant to the theme of this workshop, lowly educated second language and literacy acquisition (for adults) as for the an overwhelming majority of Africans, education at all levels, including its most basic levels, prominently takes place in a second language. Literacy instruction is often only offered in an ex-imperial language, which brings about a lot of learning difficulties for many students. Together with often poor material conditions for schooling in Africa, many African are indeed lowly educated second language and literacy learners.

None of us, however, has a background in adult education or applied linguistics, coming from varied disciplines such as sociolinguistics, mass communication, African studies, etc. We would like to share some of the insights we gathered on the field in these various African contexts for an audience of educationists for two reasons. One the one hand, we hope that this panel will help teachers of adult education here understand something of the sociolinguistic and educational backgrounds of the African learners they may be dealing with in their profession. On the other hand, we hope that our presentations will elicit reactions from adult education practitioners on the pedagogical implications of our work.

Friday 24 October - morning

9.30 -10.30 Keynote

From Survival to Thriving: Designing a New System for Immigrant Education and Training

**Heide Spruck Wrigley
Literacywork, Las Cruces, New Mexico - USA**

Most countries that support language and literacy programs for refugees and immigrants emphasize self-sufficiency as a goal and highlight the importance of work-related language education. Not surprisingly, most immigrants also list language for employment or training as the primary reason for attending language classes. Yet, there are others who hope to see language and literacy programs serve a broader purpose, serving goals related to civic integration, social justice, academic achievement, and/or personal growth.

As yet, there is no agreement across countries on what the goals of adult immigrant education should be or what characteristics of effective models are. Nonetheless, there is an emerging consensus that one size does not fit all, and that it may be best to design flexible programs that differentiate their language and literacy services taking into account a range of factors, including the educational background of adult learners, societal needs, and the life goals of adult migrants and their families.

This presentation will summarize policy discussions in the United States that call for a system that combines various strands, including (1) native language literacy for those with few years of education, (2) integrated services that combine occupational skills training with language and literacy development for those who can only afford to invest a few months of education and (3) community ESL for those not in the workforce or those interested in issues related to family literacy, civic integration and community empowerment. A fourth component addressing the needs of those who have professional degrees in the home country but are still part of the low wage workforce will be mentioned but not discussed in detail. Examples of individual programs that focus on one or more of these goals will be included.

10.35-12.20 panel

Principled Training for LESLLA Instructors

**Patsy Vinogradov & Astrid Liden
Graduate School of Education & Minnesota Department of Education - USA**

Teachers of low-educated literacy-level adults are faced with a double-challenge: teaching a new language and also teaching adult students to read for the first time in a language they do not speak. Teachers find that it is not enough to be an adult language teacher or to have the experience of teaching young children to read. Many experienced language instructors shy away from teaching literacy-level adult learners because it is so different from any other classroom. It is perceived that this instruction is slow, challenging, and frustrating. Programs often end up putting their least experienced, least trained teachers (or often volunteers) in the position of teaching learners that perhaps require the most expertise. What research, models and training can be provided to both veteran and novice instructors to grant them an effective framework and base from which to help these learners develop literacy skills in a second language?

In this workshop, the presenters and participants will first identify the key knowledge and skills that second language teachers need to provide effective literacy-level instruction. The presenters will then demonstrate a literacy-level instructor training module that involves several steps: a brief foreign-language literacy lesson; a summary of reading development

theory including five driving principles; a critical look at scenarios of effective literacy-level classrooms; and, moving further from theory to practice, a sample detailed thematic curricular unit. This unit models how teachers can create literacy lessons that are contextualized, meaningful, and soundly integrate what we know about reading development, adult learning, and SLA. The training module ends with time for trainees to develop their own thematic curricular unit. Finally, after this demonstration of the sample training module, participants will complete several workshop tasks that allow them to identify other literacy-level training activities and develop training plans for their own contexts.

10.35-12.20 panel

Literacy: Assessing progression

Anne-Mieke Janssen-van Dieten – Radboud University Nijmegen
Willemijn Stockmann – ROC Tilburg
Kaatje Dalderop – Cito, Arnhem
Netherlands

It is often not possible to easily provide insight into the progression of literacy students. The students often have a slower learning pace than regular students, making it necessary to assess smaller steps in the learning process. As the learning skills of the students are often limited, the option to use various forms of testing and assessment are also limited. It is, therefore, a challenge to develop a valid system of assessment for this target group. In this panel, we will present how we have been working on the development of a coherent set of assessment tools, together with a reliable framework of reference for literacy. The first speaker will deal with theoretical and pedagogical considerations when (self) evaluating and testing the group of literacy learners, the next speaker will discuss the development of a framework for (self) evaluation and testing and the last speaker presents the test battery developed or under construction.

In the Netherlands, it is not so long ago that teachers answered the question regarding a student's educational level with, "The student has done 3 volumes of method x". In 2005, Stockmann developed the Literacy Framework Dutch as a Second Language. This framework describes three levels in literacy acquisition, describing both technical and functional skills for each level. The Literacy Framework connects to the Common European Framework. The launch of the Literacy Framework brought structure to the literacy process and implicitly promoted a didactical approach: technical and functional skills are trained hand in hand.

Simultaneously with the publication of the Literacy Framework, a Literacy Portfolio was published. This portfolio is a language portfolio, inspired by the European Portfolio model. The portfolio contains a checklist that helps students gain insight into the process of their language acquisition. This, in turn, encourages them to take responsibility for their own language acquisition and enables them to learn how to get aware of their personal progress.

For the checklist to be accessible to literacy students, it not only consists of 'can-do statements', but also offers an example for each statement. The portfolio also contains guidelines on how to assess the evidence collected in the dossier to enable the literacy level of the student to be determined. The framework focuses on written skills. The portfolio, a tool which helps students get a grip of their own language acquisition progress, also focuses on oral skills. In this way, both written and oral language learning receive equal attention simultaneously.

In addition to the above tools, the need originated for a more concrete measurement tool that could produce quick results: the Placement test and the Achievement test. This need comes from the fact that literacy in the Netherlands has become a commercial activity with local authorities 'buying' literacy courses for their citizens from educational institutes. The customer (i.e. the local authorities) requires visible results on their investment. On the

other hand, the need arose from teachers and students for an easier and unambiguous check on their progress. For this reason, we began the development of an entrance test in 2007, which was followed in 2008 by the development of a set of achievement tests. The tests contain functional language tasks, always adapted to the level of the learner. The assessor's guidelines contain criteria for marking both functional and technical skills. All tools offer test reporting and results within the guidelines of the aforementioned Literacy Framework.

The result is a coherent toolbox that has introduced structure to literacy education and that, in all expectation, will contribute to the learning process within this target group.

10.35 - 11.20

What do teacher do? A look at oral skills practices in the non-literate adult second language classroom

Susanna Strube, Radboud University Nijmegen – Netherlands

This paper primarily concerns those educational practices occurring in the non-literate adult second language classroom during oral skills lessons. Second language research has shown that classroom interaction contributes to language learning (Ellis 1990, Mitchell 2004). Certain kinds of interaction promote comprehension, such as real and natural communication and topic control by the learner. If this is so, then language learning in the classroom should be characterised by ample interaction. In the non-literate L2 classroom teachers rely on various techniques in order to elicit productive language and to promote communication.

In this paper I will take a closer look at these techniques. The data was collected through recordings and classroom observation. The recordings were subsequently transcribed and analyzed using modified COLT observation schemes. From this surfaced the classroom structure, educational practices of the teacher and the types of teacher-student verbal interactions. Even though the instruction in each class was strongly teacher-centered the activities and types of interactions varied.

11.35-12.20

Integration and Vocational Training for Illiterate Second Language Learners (“Analfabeten, ingeburgerd aan het werk”)

Els Maton, Karel de Grote-Hogeschool, Antwerpen - Belgium

The current situation for Second Language Literacy Learners in Flanders is that students can only follow general language courses in centres for basic education. As these courses are not intensive enough, it takes a long time to get some results and they are not very successful. So students drop out and cannot reach the required level to start a vocational training.

The project “Integration and Vocational Training for Illiterate L2 Learners” had the following aims:

- Organising an integrated training for beginners of second language and literacy learning in order to get experience in methodology and organisation of this kind of training for this specific target group.
- Developing course materials and methodology for integrated vocational training of low-literate speakers of other languages.
- Formulating policy recommendations.

The project ran from January 2006 to April 2008. The program was based on the model of integrated schooling, in which the three components (training of key skills, vocational training and real live experience) are closely related to each other. There was also an intensive individual guidance with emphasis on career guidance. The methodology was based on the model of Theme Centred Action (TCA) and the model of Powerful Learning Environments. The most important features of TCA are emancipation and self-evaluation. The features of Powerful Learning Environments are: working at clearly defined aims, interaction between students, content-based learning, self-evaluation, active learning, and extensive learning.

After one year and a half, all students had acquired enough skills to find a job in the cleaning sector and to manage the required writing skills. An important aspect of the training was getting work experience. The developmental process of much guidance at the beginning to little or no guidance at the end of the training made it possible for students to take the big step to employment.

In the presentation we will focus on the model of the training and on the methodology.

Friday 24 October – afternoon

13.15-14.00

Assessing adult literacy: the aim, use and benefits of standardized screening tools

**Lode Vermeersch, HIVA, University of Leuven - Belgium
Joke Drijkoningen & Matthias Vienne, Centre for Language and Education
University of Leuven - Belgium**

Large-scale surveys, such as IALS, provide interesting data on literacy and numeracy skills on a cross-country level. They attempt to answer policy-related questions like: how many adults are, or risk becoming lowly literate and what are their characteristics? In these studies groups of adults are commonly described as either highly- or lowly-literate. But since reading or writing ability itself is a continuum, the question arises: what is the cut-off point? In other words: where does the “problem” of low literacy begin and when is educational intervention necessary or desirable?

When answering these questions and promoting adult literacy development, most educational sectors will make use of micro-level analysis to complement the macro-level data. Tools that describe the learning needs and interests of individuals are necessary. The research we report on in this paper session, examines the (practical) possibilities, difficulties and policy measures which underlie the use of such literacy screening devices or basic skills audits among adults. Built upon a qualitative analysis of existing screening instruments in Belgium (Flemish Community) and the Netherlands this study explores how screening procedures are adopted today in different sectors and in which way these procedures are able to identify the particularities of individual adults’ literacy skills. By conducting in-depth interviews with experts (policymakers, academic experts, educational practitioners, low-literates) on the topic of (low)literacy, the (dis)advantages of the implementation of a single and uniform standardized screening tool for different educational sectors was explored.

The results of this study show not all social domains are equally open to educational assessment using a standardized literacy test in an objective and accurate way. Moreover, literacy screening may lead to several negative effects. None of the existing tools in Belgium and the Netherlands is able to screen all aspects of literacy in one short and practical way. This leads to the conclusion that although there is a powerful internal logic in the use of one single screening instrument for assessment, the practical and ethical benefits of such a device can be questioned. The use of several instruments aligned with the needs of specific

target groups is therefore strongly recommendable. The context of the screening procedure and the literacy context (such as health care, workplace, ...) should also be incorporated in the instrument. Other results will be presented in this paper, such as the importance of oral feedback on the candidate results, the training of the assessors, the integration of the screening in normal educational procedures and the link between the assessment and the methods of training.

13.15 -14.00

How to integrate automatic speech recognition (ASR) into CALL applications

Helmer Strik, Centre for Language and Speech Technology (CLST), Radboud University Nijmegen - Netherlands

More and more computer-assisted language learning (CALL) applications have 'speech inside'. However, in most cases the speech is produced by the system, i.e. speech is output. The CALL system reads utterances, avatars or movies are shown, and the student has to listen and respond (usually, by means of a mouse or a keyboard). In some of these CALL systems the student is also asked to speak. What these systems do with these utterances spoken by the students differs, e.g. nothing at all, or the speech is recorded to give the teacher the possibility to listen to it (afterwards), or the student immediately has the opportunity to listen to (and/or look at a display of) the recorded utterance, and possibly compare it with an example of a correctly pronounced utterance.

In a few systems automatic speech recognition (ASR) is used to give more detailed feedback. ASR can be briefly described as the conversion of speech into text by a computer. The performance of ASR systems has gradually improved over the last decades, but ASR is certainly not error-free, and probably it will never be. An important question then is, when and how ASR can usefully be incorporated in applications, applications such as computer-assisted language learning (CALL) for low-educated and illiterate people.

In my presentation, I will make clear what ASR is, and clarify what ASR can and what it cannot (yet) do. Although ASR is not error-free it can successfully be applied in many applications, if one carefully takes its limitations into account. The most well-known application at the moment is probably the reading-tutor, but there are other ones, and other possibilities that have not been developed yet. I will show some examples (including demonstrations) of such applications.

13.15 – 14.00

The use of L1 in L2 language and literacy learning

Jonneke Prins, Bureau Inburgering Utrecht / ROC West Brabant - Netherlands

As a part of Netherlands' policy to stimulate social and economic participation of low-educated migrant women, experimental projects in different cities in the Netherlands were started. One of the projects in Utrecht aimed at enhancing and speeding up second language literacy acquisition by explicitly using the students' first language as language of instruction or as supportive language. Moreover, there were bilingual teachers or teaching assistants in the classrooms.

In 2007, about 100 migrant women, mainly originating from Turkey and Morocco participated in the project. The project was monitored and evaluated from the beginning until about a year after the first groups started. In this presentation the main characteristics of the project will be described, including some difficulties that arose in applying the design and the main outcomes of the evaluation will be presented by comparing groups in which the L1 was

used as language of instruction, as support language or groups with Dutch as second language only.

14.05 – 16.00 panel

How many hours does it take? Short and sweet steps to influencing policy

**Martha Young-Scholten, Newcastle University - UK
Louise Younger, Gateshead College, Newcastle - UK**

Included in LESLLA's mission statement is the goal of influencing policy. When considering the information upon which a convincing case can be built, the term *evidence-based* springs to mind. Here evidence implies robust findings, which in turn involves either replication of experimental studies or representative surveys. Such research requires funded projects whose duration is often many years. Or does it? The current precarious state of funding for the lowest level learners and anti-immigration laws that discriminate against those without L2 skills coupled with world events that continue to displace adults without formal schooling call for efficient means of collecting relevant data.

The minimal amount of research on the real-time development of reading by low-literate adults, where yard stones rather than mile stones mark progress, precludes citing many robust findings. However, there is converging evidence from systematically-conducted studies and from extensive anecdotal observations by teachers that the task of learning to read in an L2 is considerably more difficult for completely unschooled adults than for those with some schooling. What remains undefined is the number of hours of instruction required before a first-time reader grasps the alphabetic principle and begins to move beyond dependence on glancing and guessing on the basis of a sight word repertoire to develop skills to successfully sound out words.

This paper discusses a small-scale survey conducted with the aim of straightforwardly providing data on hours of instruction required before learners start on the road to real reading. We report on this pilot study, for which we used various techniques, including listserv announcements and snow-balling, to contact teachers of first-time readers in a number of countries, and we discuss whether the simple questionnaire we designed yielded the expected data.

With contributions from: Germany, USA, UK, Belgium and the Netherlands.

14.05 -14.50

Beginning with the Basics: Teaching Beginning Literacy to Adult English Language Learners Online Course

**Nancy Faux, Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center - USA
Vanessa Caceres, Independent Consultant, Virginia - USA**

Although many of the English language learners in the state of Virginia's adult education classrooms are at the lowest level of literacy, few teachers possess the knowledge or skills to work with this population in need of special attention. During 2006-2007, almost one quarter of all learners enrolled were at the Beginning Literacy proficiency level which is the lowest of six in the adult education system in the United States. This was the highest percent of all proficiency levels. Most teachers, however, know very little about teaching literacy and

language to adults and have been requesting specialized training in this area. In response to this demand and recognition of the knowledge gap, a six-week online course has been created that will help teachers work with the low-literacy adult second language learner using instructional strategies based on current research and best practices. This free course is asynchronous so that teachers will not be hindered by scheduling conflicts. It is facilitated by an expert in the field that responds to all participants' discussions, assignments, and contributions through an online management system. A demonstration of the course will be conducted during the presentation.

14.05-14.50

Functional illiterate, non-Dutch speaking parents participate in the education of their children

**Heidi De Niel, Centre for Language and Education, University of Leuven
Ellen Colpaert & Lien Strobbe, CBE Antwerpen - Belgium**

The laborious communication between non-Dutch speaking parents and the primary school of their children inspired the Centre for Language and Education to the development of the project "Parents in (inter) action". The aim of the project is to optimise the communication between the school and its parents and to increase the involvement of the parents in the school of their children.

This aim was reached by:

- organising Dutch as a second language classes in the school of the children. These language classes dealt with the materials that each specific school submitted (for example, reports, forms, letters, the agenda ...)
- organising an event, such as a musical, a breakfast, an exposition
This event was organised by the parents in co-operation with the school. In this way, the participants of the course were stimulated to get in contact with the "outside world" (in this particular case, the world of the school). They got in contact with other (Dutch and non-Dutch speaking) parents, with the personnel of the primary school and even with extra-curricular partners (in case of sponsoring for example).
- making the schoolteachers aware of the complexity of the communication they have with the parents, not by training them directly, but indirectly through the contact they had with the parents during the project.

Several centres for adult education and centres for adult basic education brought the concept of the Centre for Language and Education into practice in a number of primary schools. Some of these groups completely consisted of illiterate parents, some others only partly.

In this presentation, teachers of "Open school Antwerp", together with a member of the Centre for Language and Education will show how the project "Parents in (inter) action" was carried out for those illiterate parents and how their level of literacy increased, but above all, how their involvement in the education of their children increased.

15.15 – 16.00

Language Teaching Practices Outside the Classroom

**Anne van Cauteren & Mimine Vleminckx
VOCVO, Mechelen - Belgium**

In addition to the regular Dutch lessons, several Centres for Adult Basic Education (CBE) in Flanders successfully organize language training in real life. The students work as volunteers for a short period (at least 40 hours), for instance twice a week in non-profit organisations

(like hospitals, homes for the elderly, nursery schools, shops specialized in recycled goods, etc). The main objective of this training is that students become familiar with the real Dutch language use in a working environment or social setting. So, their increasing self-confidence, the mature way they can deal with choices to make, their competencies, their ability to make social contacts, the exploration of their own prospects and perspectives are as important as the language acquisition itself.

So far, in CBE Willebroek, real language training was restricted to the more skilled and competent learners of Dutch. However, language training can also be valuable and successful to less competent and even low-literate or illiterate learners. CBE Willebroek has shown this in a special project meant to develop this methodology also for illiterate and low-literate learners.

The guidance and coaching of the students in such a kind of language training project is of crucial importance, the more so for low-literate or illiterate learners. The entire approach, the preparations, the language tasks and the coaching of the students are different and far more intensive.

Organizing language training in real life requires a multiple, complex and well-structured method. The students must be coached intensively: They need information about the training spot; they must be assisted in making the right choices; all the tasks they have to perform must be discussed and evaluated; they have to reflect about their experiences, etc. A final evaluation and assessments during the course of the project are also needed.

In order to get a successful language training, supervisors and persons in charge on the training spot must be informed as well about the aim of the training, the meaning of the tasks, the way of guiding and evaluating the learners. As a preparation for the language practice in real settings learners are stimulated and trained to perform language tasks outside the classroom right from the start of the language lessons. So even the weaker and slower learners are able to evolve to self-reliant language users who can function in organisations and services they are tuned to.

A complete manual (including a CD-Rom and DVD) with the underlying vision, all the necessary information about objectives, organisation, the target group, a step-to-step-plan and all kinds of exercises and tasks even for the low-literate and illiterate learners was the result of the project.

15.15 – 16.00

Teaching phonics synthetically to people with little or no education

Ann Macdonald, Newcastle ESOL Service, UK

The Newcastle ESOL Service has developed and trialled a language and phonics programme with learners who have little or no schooling based on the recommendations made in the Rose Report (2006), in the United Kingdom, for teaching phonics discretely, systematically, incrementally and fast. The programme is also informed by the interactive reading model and by Vygotsky's mediated learning model. By engaging in a course that has been carefully sequenced and is linguistically rich, being built on topics relating to survival and integration into British society, learners develop their ability to ask simple questions and respond, make requests, make offers, and make past and present statements. All this gives learners the language foundation they need to meaningfully engage in the discretely taught phonics programme. Materials have been developed in-house for the programme and care has been taken to locate these attractive, topical and inviting resources within the local and wider social context in order to invoke a desire in learners to speak, read and write in English. This paper will share and evaluate some of this practice.

16.05-16.45

poster display

Writing literature for low literates

Martha Young-Scholten, Newcastle University – UK

This poster display reports on a semester-long project which involved UK undergraduate English Language and Linguistics students taking a course on the second language acquisition and literacy development of adult immigrants. Their individual assignments were to write story books for low-literate adults at a specific ESOL programme level learning English at a local further education college. In the display, each author separately describes the linguistic, literacy and literary decisions that were made in the process of writing his/her story. Along with the standard readability criteria, the linguistic decisions included reference to the stages of Organic Grammar for English (Young-Scholten & Ijuin 2005), where students attempted to limit the range of syntactic constructions and inflectional morphology. The story books are also included in the display, along with a critique by each author, where the field testing of their books with ESOL programme students from Afganistan, the Czech Republic, Iraq, Portugal, Somali and the Sudan raised various unanticipated issues. The display reveals that the challenges of writing stories for low-literate adult L2 learners with little or no native language schooling, particularly at the ESOL Pre-Entry level where the need for books is by far the greatest, are not insurmountable, and can be met by linguistically aware authors.

16.05 -16.45

Active Learning in the ESOL Classroom

A presentation of materials from the Sheffield College
Teaching and Learning Development Project

Nicolas Sambrook - UK

This is the second year I have been involved in this project. It is a UK national project which seeks to enhance learning in some subjects through the use of active learning materials. I applied to be the ESOL representative for 2006/07 and I was accepted to do it again for 07/08. The project is financed through Objective One funding marked for regenerating economically depressed areas of the EU.

If passive learning can be defined by such activities as copying from a board, from a text book or reading handouts then active learning can be defined as anything that encourages group collaboration and problem solving.

Almost all activities have been designed with pair or group work in mind. I find that ESOL learners tend to struggle with things like information gaps and substitution tables, so I have turned those into matching and categorisation activities. Other difficult areas of learning English, like spelling patterns, word building and grammar terminology have been turned into card games.

When learners have requested some material on British culture, geography, history, customs and festivals I have developed board games or wall displays which correspond to fact sheets and answer keys.

For learners with basic literacy I have used two approaches. Firstly, there is the language experience approach. From conversations with them I have built texts which must be re-ordered, sentences that must be re-ordered and other activities too.

Secondly, I have tried to bring the outside world into the classroom by using street maps, pictures of local shops/streets/landmarks and common signs and symbols, and from there build up language at word level.

Some of the pictorial resources I have developed have been very useful in assessing learners' level of English. This is both for initial assessment of which level class to put them in, and so that I can write my programme of learning. All the materials are colourful and eye-catching, as I believe this is an important aid to memory, and are laminated in plastic so that they may be written on with dry-wipe pens and re-used over and over.

Friday 24 October – morning

9.00 – 10.00 Key Note

Policy on LESLLA learners in Flanders

Jeroen Backs – consultant Flemish ministry of Education and Labour

Abstract is not yet available

10.00 – 10.45

Policy developments impacting on ESOL basic literacy learners in England: the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum

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The Adult ESOL Core Curriculum, published in 2001, was the first government document to lay down what should be taught in post-16 ESOL courses in England. Along with learning materials and learner qualifications, it has had considerable influence on what has been taught in ESOL ever since. After 6 years, the government commissioned a review of the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum and the document is currently being re-written as a result of the review.

This presentation will examine the impact of the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum on the assessment and teaching of basic literacy to ESOL learners. It will compare the first levels of reading and writing from the curriculum with the first levels of the Common European Framework. The presenters, who conducted the review for the government, will discuss feedback from the review of the curriculum, particularly focussing on feedback regarding teaching basic literacy. They will present proposed changes, currently in the process of being implemented, to the first levels of reading and writing. Finally the presenters will pose and discuss some of the questions about pedagogy and underpinning ideology which were raised during the review.

The relevance of human language technologies for low-literate language learners: the contribution of the Nederlandse Taalunie to Dutch language education

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Increasing mobility makes people more often face the challenge of having to learn other languages. Learners that are more at risk such as low-educated and low-literate individuals form one group of learners who are in need of tailor-made language courses and distance learning (from home, in evenings etc). Technologies that make interaction with computers more natural and efficient, like human language technologies (HLT), can play a pivotal role in the development of course materials for this group.

It is for this reason that in the last decade the Nederlandse Taalunie (Dutch Language Union) together with the relevant ministries in the Netherlands and Flanders, has set up a number of initiatives aimed at promoting the development of HLT for the Dutch language. The Dutch Language Union is a Dutch-Flemish intergovernmental organization that has the aim of promoting the Dutch language. Governmental support was considered to be mandatory because since Dutch is a so-called mid-sized language, companies are not always willing to invest in developing such technology for a language with a relatively small market. On the other hand, the development of language and speech technology is considered to be crucial for a language to be able to survive in the information society. For learners of Dutch the Nederlandse Taalunie aims at creating the right conditions for learning Dutch in the most efficient and pleasant way, both within and without the Dutch language area. With this aim in mind the Nederlandse Taalunie took the initiative of analysing the specific needs in the education sector in terms of applications and related HLT resources so as to identify a minimum common set of HLT resources that would be useful for developing learning applications, also for second language learning and literacy acquisition. The priorities set in this survey could be used to inform policy, research and development and eventually stimulate take-up by industry. In this paper we describe this approach.