


Assuring Success for Non/Preliterate Adult ESOL Learners


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Non/Preliteracy:


ALL --have NEVER been to school

- **Pre-literate:** Persons from a culture with no tradition of literacy (No written language!) (Think about that.....)
 - **Non-literate--** Persons from a literate culture who have never been to school--language is written, but learner only knows it as spoken language--no “school” language.
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If Our Learners Have NEVER Been to School.....

⊙ Teachers report that adult learners:

- ⊙ Hold books upside down
 - ⊙ Cannot relate to pictures
 - ⊙ Have poor handwriting & write very slowly
 - ⊙ Can't write in spaces/on lines
 - ⊙ Can't remember the alphabet
 - ⊙ Have difficulty learning to read
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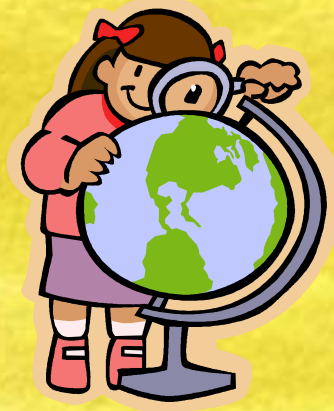




Three Important Skill Areas:

- ***VISUAL
DISCRIMINATION***
 - ***FINE MOTOR & VISUAL
MOTOR INTEGRATION***
 - ***PHONOLOGICAL
AWARENESS***
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Visual Discrimination

- Visual discrimination is seeing and understanding all that is intended in represented in visual information
- What makes a drawing or picture hard to interpret?






Visual Discrimination: What's in that picture?

What kinds of information can pictures convey?

Can you find examples of

- ⊙ Space/relation of objects in space
(Figure/ground)
 - ⊙ Distance (perspective)
 - ⊙ Time/sequence of events
 - ⊙ Consequences of events
 - ⊙ Cultural information
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Visual Discrimination

**Charts, graphs and other representation
of...**

****Quantities**

****Space**

****Change**

****Size**

****Patterns of behavior**

****Time**

****Frequency**

****Comparisons**

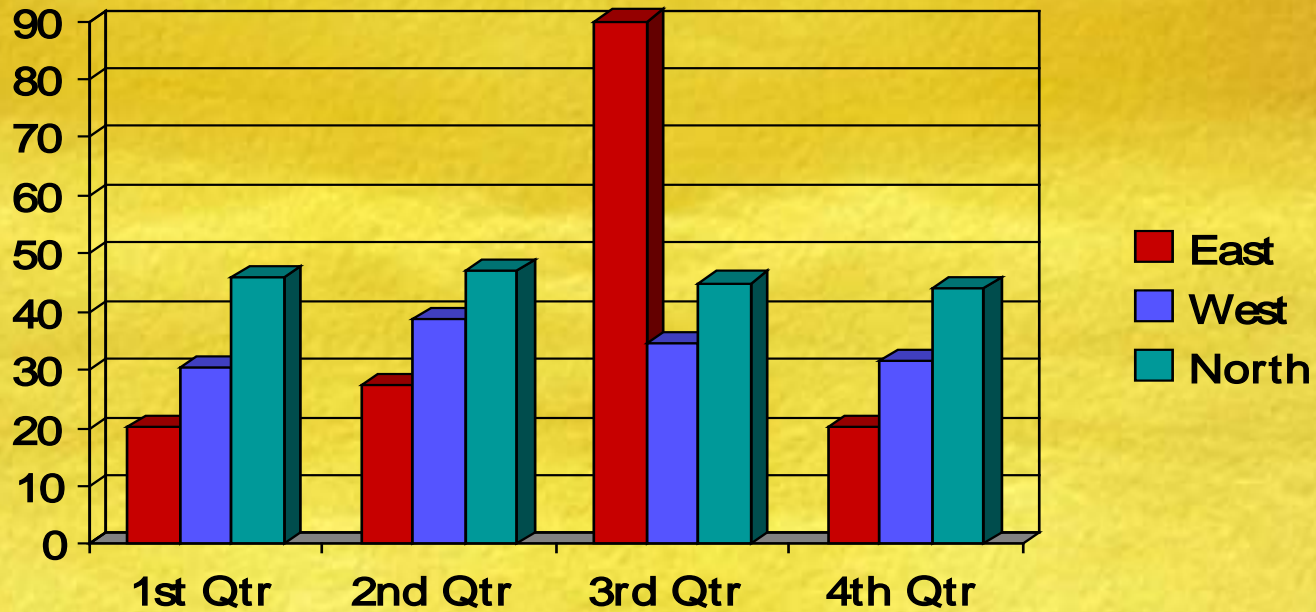
****Speed**

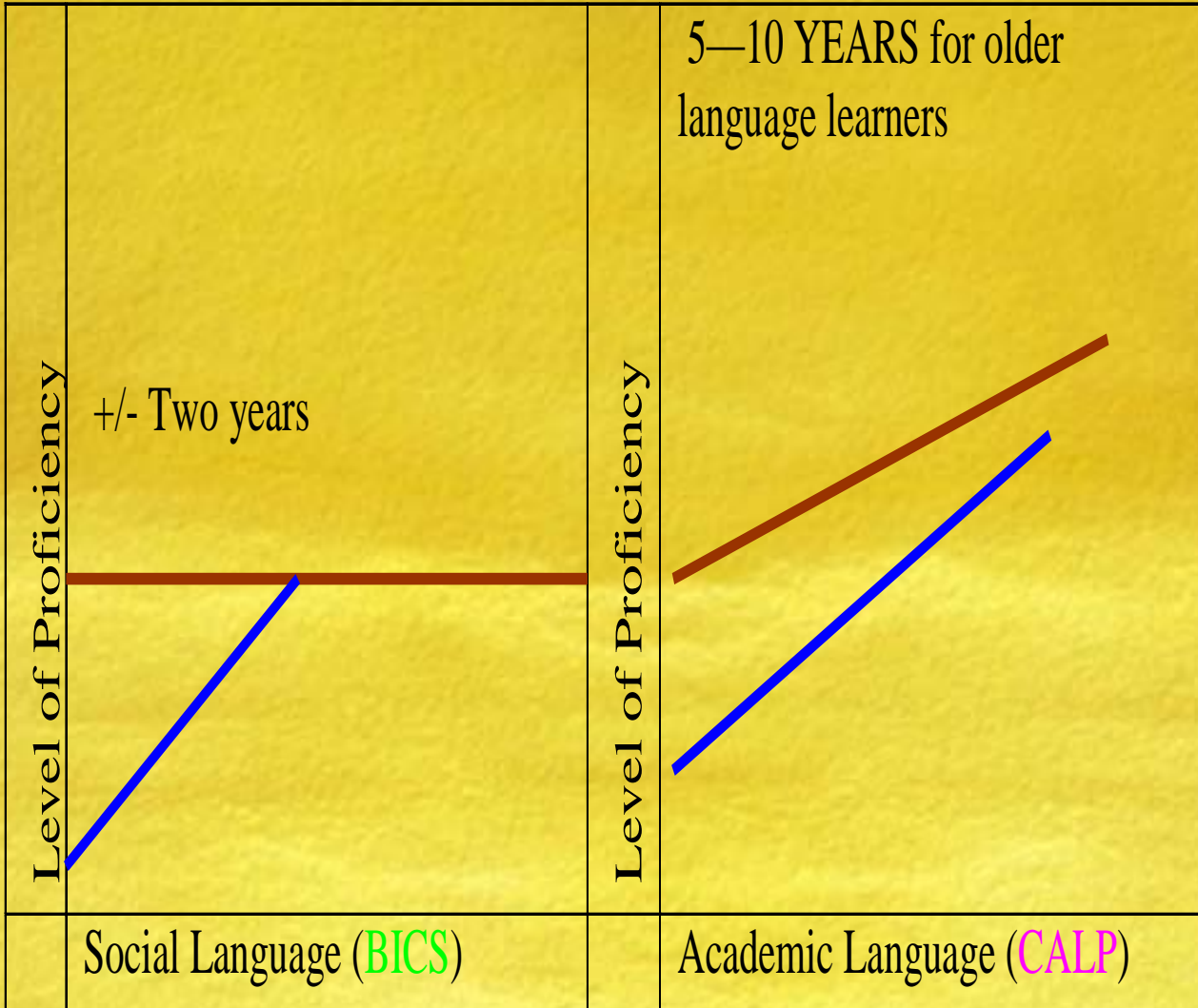
****Relationships**

And...???



What dimensions are in this chart?





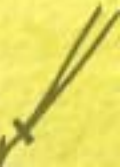


Fine Motor Skills/Visual-Motor Integration

Fingers and hands must be able to

- Form letters,
- Write on lines and in boxes,
- Draw geometric figures,

Just like ageing brain muscles, older hand and arm muscles need time to adjust and become familiar with these actions.






Fine Motor Skills/Visual-Motor Integration

- What skills are needed to copy words from the board accurately?
- What skills are needed to understand this:

Check the box for the correct sentence:

- The boy are tall.
 - The boys are tall.
- 



Are you sure?


~~Where are these words?~~

Where are these words?






Motor/Visual Motor Challenges

- Writing in unlined spaces
 - Understanding the relationship of lines where mid- and top lines are indicated
 - Making letters efficiently
 - Making capital letters bigger than small letters
 - Spacing words and punctuation appropriately
 - Writing in the various kinds of spaces in workbooks: boxes, lines in sentences, lines under sentences, etc.
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Motor/Visual-Motor Challenges

- Learners who struggle with these tasks are sometimes assumed to have writing disabilities
 - Like all skills for the pre-literate, these take time
 - We have no reasonable norms on how long this should take
 - It IS clear that frequent practice- and LOTS of it-- is necessary
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Auditory Skills/Phonological Awareness


- **Phonological Awareness** is the foundation of reading/literacy
- Pre-literate persons are NOT aware of (or not *adequately* aware of) these concepts:
 - ⊙ How speech sounds are represented by text
 - ⊙ Individual words in sentences
 - ⊙ Individual sounds in words--and the concepts of “beginning, middle, end sounds”
 - ⊙ Similarity and difference in speech sounds
 - ⊙ How changing a speech sound changes meaning

Auditory Skills/Phonological Awareness

- Not only are non-literate persons likely to be unaware of how letters represent sounds,
 - ⊙ They may not understand how text represents words
 - ⊙ Preliterate children have been observed to think that words represent entities directly:
1 cat = 1 scribble: ~ 3 cats = 3 scribbles: ~ ~ ~



Phonological Awareness

- **Preliteracy skills observed in adults:**
 - ◎ Initial sound awareness
 - ◎ Rhyming--basic level
 - ◎ Syllable awareness
 - ◎ Repetition of real words---not nonsense words
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Phonological Awareness

Skills preliterate adults seem to lack (And therefore NEED):

- Awareness of individual words in sentences that must be represented in text, THEN
- Awareness of internal phonemes and final sounds
- Ability to manipulate phonemes (deletion, Spoonerisms (Mary Poppins+ Parry Moppins) etc.)
- More advanced rhyming, nonsense word repetition



How Can We Build Skills in

● **Visual discrimination...?**


◎ FIND OUT WHAT YOUR LEARNERS can DO FIRST! Can they

◎ Match pictures to objects?

◎ Identify pictures when you say the words
(Remember!!! They must KNOW the words!)

◎ Match different kinds of drawings to each other/

◎ Talk about a picture or drawing meaningfully? (i.e identify what is in it without prompting and say something about it.)



Visual Discrimination Skills

Then, provide daily practice in building skills:

- ⊙ **Activities from children's activity books**

- Which picture is different?

- Follow-the-dots to complete pictures

- Coloring pictures to help with figure/ground

- And many, many more

- ⊙ **Have a word of the day: Tree/ house/
dog/street**

- Learners look through magazines and newspapers to make a small collage of different representations of that word.


- ⊙ **Have learners prepare pairs of pictures on cards to make a deck for matching games**

More Visual Discrimination Activities

- Create a “Go-Fish” deck--three or four cards with different pictures of the same object --with or without words under the pictures--
- Match a picture to a sentence-- learners hear a sentence and choose the right picture --(NO TEXT!! This is NOT a reading activity)
- Learners have a complex picture-- people at the park, for example
 - They choose individual pictures that match what they see in the big picture: Dog, children, car, bottle of soda, hat, etc. This could be done together with lots of discussion-- doesn't matter if it is in first language!~



Fine Motor Activities

- Tracing---LOTS of letter and number tracing
 - Copying
 - Mazes
 - Follow-the-dot
 - Coloring-- move to “adult” coloring books from museums when figure ground perception is good
 - Remember that these fine motor skills are just for WRITING--so LOTS of practice writing letters and words is **BEST**
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Extending Writing Practice

- **Use lined paper or surfaces**, pencils or markers-not ball point pens
- **Rotate among practice surfaces** to extend muscle building and visual practice
- **Learners practice all critical words until they are automatic** (This may take months)
- **Try using a modified cursive** (e.g. American Handwriting, Slow and Easy, Janette Haynes (out of print but available at [Amazon.com/textbooks](https://www.amazon.com/textbooks)) Cursive is easier to write fluently
- **Writing surfaces:** primary writing paper, tablets of different colors (primary width lines) erasable boards with lines, newspaper classified ads turned sideways, commercially available writing strips)




Phonological Awareness Activities

● Add these to your teaching:

- ◎ Syllable awareness
 - ◎ First sound awareness
 - ◎ Sound difference/similarity
 - ◎ Rhyming? (Remember that the concept does not exist in every language, though every language has structures that rhyme--be sure to TEACH before you have learners do rhyming.)
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Some Other Things to Think About

- PRE-literate learners' languages do not have words such as “syllable”, “sentence”, “grammar” or “tense”. These are ideas that evolved with written language. This can make it HARD for learners to understand. TEACH!
 - Non-literate learners' languages have these concepts--but the learners don't know them yet. They, too, must learn such ideas from scratch though the vocabulary is there.
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Non-literacy is NOT a Learning Disability

- But it IS a learning challenge:
 - ⊙ The non-literate brain is neurologically different from a literate brain
 - ⊙ Neuro-pathways for concepts of literacy must be built just as in children's brains
(You are not “refreshing” their brains!)
 - ⊙ These learners need PLENTY of time and practice through every learning channel, just as children do, to master these important skills.
 - ⊙ DO NOT begin literacy instruction until these skills are solid!
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Bibliography/Resources

Building Phonological Awareness

(These are not specifically for non/preliterate adult ESOL, but have excellent ideas--even pictures, to show how phonological skill building is done.--Just avoid using ideas needing TEXT.)

- ◎ Tolman, C. (2005). "Working Smarter, Not Harder: What Teachers of Reading Need to Know and Be Able to Teach." Perspectives **31**(4): 15-23.
- ◎ Edelen-Smith, P. (1997). "How Now Brown Cow: Phoneme Awareness Activities for Collaborative Classrooms." Intervention in School and Clinic **33**(2): 103-111.
- ◎ www.bdainternationalconference.org/2001/presentations/thu_p1_b_2.htm

Resources, Cont.

- ⊙ Reading and Adult English Language Learners: The Role of the First Language:

http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/reading.html

- ⊙ Teaching Low Level Adult ESL Learners:

www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/HOLT.html

- ⊙ What Non Readers or Beginning Readers Need to Know:

www.springinstitute.org/Files/whatnonreaders2.pdf

Resources, cont.

- American Handwriting Slow and Easy, Janette Haynes (out of print--locate at Amazon.com/textbooks)
- Making It Real: Teaching Pre-Literate Adult Refugee Students, Croyden, Treat & Bell--Tacoma Community House Training Project