

## 1.18 Popular Health Literacy Definitions: Effectiveness for ESOL Health Literacy Purposes

Definition	Source	Comments	Usefulness for ESOL?
"the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions"	U.S. medical field  Ratzan and Parker in Selden, C., Zorn, M., Ratzan, S. C. and Parker, R. M. (2000) <i>Health literacy</i> (bibliography online). Bethesda, MD: National Library of Medicine. Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.nlm.nih.gov/archives/20061214/pubs/cbm/hliteracy.html#20">http://www.nlm.nih.gov/archives/20061214/pubs/cbm/hliteracy.html#20</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The most popular definition for health literacy in the U.S.; used by federal government and health care system</li> <li>• Has received criticism for placing the onus for improving health communication on the patient</li> <li>• The use of the word "appropriate" is ambiguous here: who determines what is appropriate, provider or patient? Where does cultural variation fit in?</li> </ul>	Limited
"[W]e define health literacy as the wide range of skills, and competencies that people develop to seek out, comprehend, evaluate and use health information and concepts to make informed choices, reduce health risks and increase quality of life."	Sociolinguistics and medicine  Zarcadoolas, C, Pleasant, A., & Greer, D.S. (2005). Understanding health literacy: An expanded model. <i>Health Promotion International</i> , 20(2), p. 195-203. Retrieved from: <a href="http://heapro.oxfordjournals.org/content/20/2/195.full">http://heapro.oxfordjournals.org/content/20/2/195.full</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strength and limitation: broad interpretation of range of skills and competencies needed for health literacy; perhaps not specific enough to be helpful for ESOL</li> <li>• Strength: wording allows for cultural variation in understanding health, risk, and quality of life</li> <li>• Limitation: does not indicate any responsibility for clear communication on part of care providers</li> </ul>	Yes

<p>“Health literacy represents the cognitive and social skills which determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access to, understand and use information in ways which promote and maintain good <i>health</i>.</p> <p>“... Thus, health literacy means more than being able to read pamphlets and make appointments. By improving people’s access to health information, and their capacity to use it effectively, health literacy is critical to <i>empowerment</i>...”</p>	<p>Public health field (World Health Organization)</p> <p>World Health Organization (1998). <i>Health promotion glossary</i>. WHO/HPR/HEP/98.1 Geneva: Author. Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/about/HPR%20Glossary%201998.pdf">http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/about/HPR%20Glossary%201998.pdf</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strength: focus on both cognitive and social skills</li> <li>• Strength: goal of promoting and maintaining good health (allows for different cultural understandings of health)</li> <li>• Strength: focus on ability to gain access to health information as part of the issue</li> <li>• Strength: focus on building individual capacity to use skills, or empowerment, rather than medical compliance</li> <li>• Limitation: does not indicate any responsibility for clear communication on part of care providers</li> </ul>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>“Health literacy defined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health literacy allows the public and personnel working in all health-related contexts to find, understand, evaluate, communicate, and use information.</li> <li>• Health literacy is the use of a wide range of skills that improve the ability of people to act on information in order to live healthier lives.</li> <li>• These skills include reading, writing, listening, speaking, numeracy, and critical analysis, as well as communication and interaction skills.”</li> </ul>	<p><i>The Calgary Charter on Health Literacy</i> (signatories from health care, adult literacy, and academia)</p> <p>Coleman, C., Kurtz-Rossi, S., McKinney, J., Pleasant, A., Rootman, I., and Shohet, L. (2009). <i>Calgary Charter on Health Literacy: Rationale and Core Principles for the Development of Health Literacy Curricula</i>. Montreal, QC: The Centre for Literacy. Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/sites/default/files/CFL_Calgary_Charter_2011.pdf">http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/sites/default/files/CFL_Calgary_Charter_2011.pdf</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strength: puts responsibility for clear health communication on public and care providers</li> <li>• Strength: specifies a wide range of skills needed for health literacy, including critical thinking and interactional skills</li> <li>• Strength: wording allows for cultural variation in understanding “healthier lives”</li> <li>• Limitation: does not mention access and empowerment which are so crucial to many ESOL learners in health care</li> </ul>	<p>Yes</p>