

# The Hmong in Our Midst

## A Resource for ELT Classrooms



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## Forward

Adult literacy level learners come to the classroom with a wide variety of backgrounds. We use terms like pre-literate and non-Roman alphabet literate to try to get a handle on what students bring to the classroom, but in fact there are a whole host of factors, including previous education, age, gender, social status, religion that inform what students bring to the learning experience.

This publication focuses on adults who do not read or write in any language and have not lived in a society which relies heavily on literacy, in other words, true beginners.

The first section, **The Hmong: A Brief History**, provides some background information and has been reprinted from The Hmong: An Introduction to their History and Culture, from The Cultural Orientation Resource Center, Center for Applied Linguistics, 4646 40<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859; Phone (202) 362-0700; [www.culturalorientation.net](http://www.culturalorientation.net), [www.cal.org](http://www.cal.org). This CAL publication was developed with funding from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, United States Department of State.

The second section, **Sample Lesson Plans** and **Additional Sample Lesson Plans**, is a hands-on guide to practical strategies for the classroom. Materials come from various sources – From the Very Beginning by Shirley Brod; Total Physical Response (TPR), A Curriculum for Adults, English Language and Literacy Center, St. Louis, Missouri; SCANS Plans Portfolio, Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning, ETL 1997-98 Technical Assistance Project; Hands-on English; and **Additional Resources** – PEP Project from the Adult Learning Resource Center, Des Plaines, Illinois; LEP Parent Involvement Project; and two multi-language videos.

The last section, **Assessing Pre-Literate and Non-Literate Learners**, offers some helpful guidelines to assessing the performance of non-literate learners. This material comes from the Arlington Education and Employment Program; Clarendon Education Center, 2801 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 218, Arlington, Virginia 22201, Phone: (703) 228-4200, Fax: (703) 527-6966; email: [sgrant@arlington.k12.va.us](mailto:sgrant@arlington.k12.va.us).



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## **A Brief History**

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# The Hmong: A Brief History

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## **Introduction**

In December 2003, the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok announced that a large group of Lao Hmong living at Wat Tham Krabok, a temple complex 80 miles north of Bangkok, would be considered for resettlement in the United States. The decision to resettle the Hmong was applauded by U.S. refugee advocacy groups, who had become concerned about conditions at the temple and the possibility that the Thai government would send the Hmong back to Laos.

The Hmong at Wat Tham Krabok are the last large group of Vietnam War-era refugees remaining in Southeast Asia. Their resettlement represents the final phase of a relief and resettlement program that began in 1975, when hundreds of thousands of refugees fled Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia after the fall of U.S.-supported governments there.

The Hmong from Wat Tham Krabok will be joining large and well-established Hmong communities in the United States -- more than 186,000 according to the 2000 U.S. Census. While Hmong live throughout the United States, the majority are clustered in communities in three states: California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. For the Hmong, there have been added challenges. In the United States, they have encountered a society that is very different, sometimes fundamentally so, from their own. Many Hmong adults have arrived with little or no formal education and with skills as farmers, soldiers, and artisans that have not proven useful in the U.S. job market. Yet, while life continues to be a struggle for many, the community as a whole has achieved remarkable economic and educational progress in the 30 years since the first arrivals. Welfare rates have dropped, employment rates have risen, and Hmong students are graduating from high school and attending college in increasing numbers. The characteristic Hmong spirit of mutual assistance is evident in the more than 100 Hmong-run community-based organizations. In other ways, too, Hmong are contributing to their communities, and to the country as a whole, as doctors, lawyers, teachers, business people, police officers, and college professors.

We can expect that the refugees from Wat Tham Krabok will face many of the resettlement challenges that previous groups encountered. Yet if experience is a guide, we can also expect that with help from their families, friends, and service providers, the new arrivals will survive the hardships of resettlement and go on to rebuild their lives and contribute to their communities.

## **People**

The Hmong in the United States, as well as those awaiting resettlement at Wat Tham Krabok, are members of an ethnic group from Laos, where 315,000 Hmong still reside. Several million Hmong live in southwestern China, and there are approximately 500,000 in Vietnam and 120,000 in Thailand, with pockets of Hmong communities found in Burma. The Hmong in Southeast Asia include two groups, distinguished by differences in language and custom: Hmong Der (White Hmong) and Mong Leng (Blue Hmong). Hmong Der and Mong Leng speakers are

able to understand one another, for the most part, and in Laos, the two groups have a long history of intermarriage and harmonious relations.

In Laos, the Hmong, the Iu Mien, and several other highland groups are officially referred to as Lao Soung (‘Lao of the mountain tops’), because they have traditionally lived in the higher elevations (above 3,000 feet). In contrast, the Lao—the dominant political and cultural group in Laos—live in the lowlands bordering the Mekong River and its tributaries, and are referred to as Lao Loum (‘Lao of the lowlands’). The Lao language belongs to the Tai-Kadai language family that also includes several Thai dialects. The third major grouping in Laos is the Lao Theung (‘Lao of the mountain slopes’), who traditionally live at lower elevations on the mountains. The Lao Theung, sometimes called kha by the Lao, speak Mon-Khmer languages.

In 2003, the use of the word Hmong as a term for both Hmong Der and Mong Leng emerged as an issue in the Hmong community in the United States. Mong Leng speakers point out that Hmong, spelled H-m-o-n-g, is a Hmong Der word whose Mong Leng equivalent is Mong, spelled M-o-n-g. The term Hmong, therefore, refers only to the Hmong Der and does not include the Mong Leng, whose variety of language and culture is distinct and distinguishable from that of the Hmong Der, some Mong Leng speakers argue. Alternative terms, each with its own linguistic justification, have been proposed. These include Mong/Hmong, Hmong/Mong, Mhong, Mong, and M/hong.

### **Early History**

The origins of the Hmong are obscure and the subject of speculation and debate. Hmong folktales—which describe an ancient homeland of ice and snow, darkness and light—have led some to speculate that the Hmong originated in central Siberia, although there is no independent evidence for this theory. Because the Hmong retain cultural traces of the earliest forms of Chinese social organizations, however, other specialists have considered them to be among the aboriginal inhabitants of China, where about 4 million of the world’s 6 million Hmong still live today. The earliest written accounts of the Hmong—or Miao, as the Hmong are called in China—are found in Chinese annals dating to the third century BCE. These records focus on the Hmong’s many uprisings against the Chinese state, which regarded the Hmong as barbarians in need of the civilizing influences of Chinese culture. Driven off their rice fields in the fertile valleys of the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers, the Hmong gradually moved to more southerly latitudes and higher altitudes.

### **Under French Colonialism**

Fleeing Chinese rule, Hmong first began migrating into Southeast Asia around 1800. In Vietnam and Laos, Hmong immigrants, finding the best land at the lower levels already occupied, built small villages high in the mountains. In the 1890s, the French, seeking a southern route into China, established control over much of Indochina. Laos offered few natural resources to exploit, and the French made little effort to develop the country. Unable to profitably exploit natural resources, the French raised revenues through taxation and forced labor.

Establishing a cooperative relationship with the French colonial government, the Hmong began to participate more in national life, becoming the only ethnic minority in Laos to have a leader to represent them at the provincial level. During World War II, Hmong guerillas fought on both sides of the conflict, with some aiding the French and others working with the Japanese. It was a split that had its roots in a bitter feud between two Hmong clan leaders, Touby Lyfoung and Faydang Lobliayao. While Touby and his followers helped the French, Faydang and his followers served as guides and informers to the Japanese.

## **The Secret War**

After the defeat of the French in Indochina in 1954, the United States, fearing a communist takeover of Indochina and eventually all of noncommunist Asia, became a major player in the region. Laos, strategically situated between Western-aligned Thailand, Cambodia, and South Vietnam and their neighbors Communist China and North Vietnam, became a key domino in the Cold War. In the early 1960s, the United States, barred by a Geneva agreement from committing American troops to Laos, launched what later became known as the secret war, a 10-year air and ground campaign that cost an estimated \$20 billion. Between 1968 and 1973, U.S. Air Force planes flying out of bases in Thailand dropped more than 2 million tons of explosives on communist targets in Laos, making that country one of the most heavily bombed nations in history. The ground war in Laos was a CIA-run operation that began as a ragtag collection of a few hundred guerrillas and grew to an army of nearly 40,000. Most of the soldiers in this secret army were Hmong, who the Americans believed possessed an aptitude for warfare that the easygoing lowland Lao lacked. At first, the Hmong were used only to gather intelligence on North Vietnamese movements in Laos, but by the mid-1960s, under the leadership of Major General Vang Pao, Hmong soldiers were rescuing downed American pilots, flying combat missions, and fighting the ground war.

## **Under the Pathet Lao**

The war in Laos officially ended in 1973, with the formation of the coalition government between the U.S.-backed Royal Lao government (RLG) and the North Vietnam-backed Pathet Lao. Under the terms of the agreement, the Pathet Lao brought soldiers and policemen into the administrative and royal capitals of Vientiane and Luang Phrabang. In April 1975, in concert with events in Vietnam and Cambodia, the coalition government began to unravel as the Pathet Lao gained strength. After the RLG defense minister resigned and then escaped to Thailand, several RLG generals followed suit. On May 14, Vang Pao, the Hmong military leader, also fled to Thailand, after airlifting between 1,000 and 3,000 of his followers from Long Tieng to Thailand.

## **Life in Laos**

The Hmong in the United States, as well as those at Wat Tham Krabok, are originally from Laos. There, Hmong society has been shaped by life in the mountains, slash-and-burn agriculture, the practice of animism and ancestral worship, and a patriarchal family and clan system. War and dislocation, coupled with a long history of being an oppressed minority, have also altered the Hmong way of life. Yet the persistence of cultural traditions, in the face of forces to change them, is a well-observed feature of the Hmong.

Most of the Hmong in the United States come from Xieng Khouang, Houa Phan, Luang Phrabang, and Sayaboury provinces in northern Laos. Slightly larger than Utah, Laos is a land-locked nation of about 157,866 square miles in the center of the Southeast Asian peninsula, bordered by China to the north, Burma to the northwest, Thailand to the west, Vietnam to the east, and Cambodia to the south. In 2003, its population was estimated at 5.9 million. On the western side of Laos, the Mekong River serves as the natural boundary between Laos and Thailand, with only Sayaboury and Champasak provinces situated to the west of the Mekong River. Laos is full of rugged mountains with steep terrains and narrow river valleys.

More than half of the Hmong in the United States come from Xieng Khouang province in north central Laos. An area of wild and rugged beauty, Xieng Khouang is a mountainous region famous for its karst limestone cliffs.

### **Social Organization**

A typical Hmong village sits on the side of a mountain and consists of about 20 to 40 households. It is small enough to be in harmony with its environment, and large enough to take care of all of its own needs and to maintain the Hmong way of life.

Hmong are group oriented. Hmong society is built on thousands of years of war, resistance to oppression, and dislocation. In these circumstances, the survival of the individual depends on the survival of the group. As a result, the interests of the group come before the interests of the individual. A Hmong person belongs to a family, the family belongs to a clan, and the clan belongs to the Hmong people. The family is the basic social unit in traditional Hmong society. It serves as the unit of production, consumption, socialization, social control, and mutual assistance.

While a Hmong household may vary in size from a married couple to more than 20 people, a typical household consists of an extended family made up of many generations. There are about 19 Hmong clans in Laos: Cha or Chang, Cheng, Chu, Fang, Hang, Her, Khang, Kong, Kue, Lor or Lo, Lee or Ly, Moua, Phang, Tang, Thao, Vang, Vue, Xiong, and Yang. Within the clans, there might be several sub clans, whose members can trace their ancestors to a common person or share a common tradition of ancestral worship and other ritual practices. Clan membership is obtained by birth, marriage for women, and adoption. Although a married Hmong woman continues to identify herself by her birth family's clan name, for all practical purposes she is a member of her husband's family and clan.

### **Daily Life**

A typical day for a Hmong family in Laos begins at about 4:00 in the morning or at the first crow of the family rooster. The oldest daughter and daughter-in-law are usually the first to get up. They cook breakfast, prepare foods for lunch, feed the animals, and clean the house. The husband helps his wife feed the animals and grind corn. After breakfast, the working members of the family will head to their fields, leaving the young children with the paternal grandparents.

Children 6 years of age or older may accompany their parents to the fields, doing what they can to help. Hmong children are expected to contribute to the welfare of the family. Children learn to baby-sit their younger siblings and help with other chores at a very early age.

After working together in the fields, the family usually returns home before sunset. On the way, they gather firewood and wild plants and herbs for dinner. At home, there are activities in the evening for everyone. Parents prepare the evening meal, attend to the animals, and make sure there are enough supplies for the next day. The paternal grandparents sit next to the fireplace with their grandchildren and tell stories. Many of these stories concern animism, animals, and the environment; others are about the past, such as when the Hmong lived in the valley of the Yellow River in China. Hmong elders also use stories to explain why things are the way they are—why, for example, the tiger has black and yellow stripes or why the bear has black hair. Outside, in the moonlight, men and teenagers observe the stars and learn to play Hmong musical

instruments, while young boys practice the art of Hmong kicking. When dinner is ready, everyone is called to the table, and it is time to share news and information. A family dinner usually includes rice, meat (boiled, fire roasted, or fried), boiled or stir-fried vegetables, Hmong vegetable soup, and sauce (chili or tomato sauce). Chicken, pork, and wild game are common meats. After dinner, young men may go to court girls in the village or in nearby Hmong settlements.

## Names

The Hmong naming system has undergone change over the past half-century or so. And it continues to vary today, as well, depending on national context, fashion, and personal preference. But several patterns can be observed. Today, a Hmong person's clan name often serves as a last name. Before the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, Hmong villagers in Laos rarely identified themselves by their clan name, except when specifically asked their clan membership. In the 1930s, many Hmong leaders in Laos, such as Lo Bliayao, began to identify themselves with their clan names. Starting from the 1940s, some well-known Lao Hmong also began to use their fathers' names as their last name. For example, Touby Lyfoung and his siblings used Ly Foung, their father's name, as their last name. This practice is now more common among the Hmong in Laos than it is among the Hmong in the West. In the West, a young Hmong man today usually has two names, a first and a last name. A husband and father might have three names—his first name, his honorific name, and his clan name. A married Hmong woman from Laos or a Thai refugee camp might retain her clan name as her last name, but this practice is no longer common among Hmong Americans. It is more common for a Hmong woman in the United States to adopt her husband's clan name as her last name or to join her own clan name and her husband's clan together to form a new hyphenated last name. For example, Kazoua Kong-Thao is from the Kong clan but is married to a member of the Thao clan. It is increasingly common for young Hmong Americans to have a first name made up of two or more words. KaYing Yang, Kazoua Kong-Thao, Maykao Y. Hang, and Yuepheng Xiong are all examples of well-known young Hmong Americans who have adopted this practice.

Many Hmong American parents have begun to give their children English first names, using the clan name or the grandfather's name as the last name. It is very common today to encounter Hmong college students named Elizabeth Lee, Amorette Paj Tshiab Yang, Michael Yang, T. Christopher Thao, and Nixon Xiong. As a result of the Hmong diaspora, there are Hmong Americans with Thai, Japanese, and French first names. For example, Kimiko Moua has a Japanese name, and Paris Vue has a French name. Hmong parents tend to name their children according to gender and birth order. Many parents name their oldest son Toua ('the first'), their second son Lue ('the second'), and the third son Xang ('the third'). Tou ('boy' or 'Master') is a very common name for a Hmong boy, and many parents use this nickname for their sons, even though the actual name is different. May ('girl' or 'Miss') is a very common name for a Hmong girl, and many families use this nickname for their daughters. Upon marriage, a Hmong woman begins to identify herself with her husband and rarely uses her own name. Thus, if her husband's name is Cher Pao, she will be known as *Niam Cher Pao* (*Nam Cher Pao* in Mong Leng), or Cher Pao's wife, and her husband will be the only person to continue to call her by her given original name. Then, after the birth of her first child, her identity will be closely linked to her child. If her child's name is Tou, for example, her husband will refer to her as *Tou Niam* (*Tou Nam* in Mong Leng), or Tou's mother. Thus, from this point on, she is called either Cher Pao's wife or Tou's mother. Her birth name will be used less and less, and by the time she becomes a grandmother, very few people will actually know her original name.

A young man, in contrast, continues to use his original name after marriage, until he is given an honorific name, usually after he becomes a father for the first time. The name of a Hmong man is very important, as his wife and children will be identified with it. Children identify themselves as “I am Tou, son of Yia Long” or “I am May, daughter of Yia Long.”

### **The Refugee Experience in Thailand**

During the two decades after the communist takeover in Laos in 1975, several hundred thousand Hmong took the dangerous journey on foot through the Laotian countryside and across the Thai border, formed much of the way by the Mekong River. The fortunate who survived the trip ended up in one or more first-asylum refugee camps: Ban Vinai, Nong Khai, Ban Nam Yao, and Chiang Kham.

The early Hmong refugee movements have been divided into three waves. First wave refugee groups are typically made up of those who have the most to lose by the change in governments, and the Hmong were no exception to this pattern. Lasting from 1975 to 1977, the first wave of Hmong refugees mostly included soldiers from the secret army and their families.

A second wave of Hmong arrived between 1978 and 1982, a period when both lowland and highland Laotians fled drought and crop failure, compulsory farm collectivization enforced by the Lao communist government, and attacks on the resistance movement. These were also the years of the largest exodus of Indochinese refugees, a period when 21 first-asylum, processing, and transit camps were set up in Thailand, in addition to some encampments for Khmer refugees on the Thai–Cambodian border that were not designated as camps.

The numbers of Hmong refugees increased as a third wave (1982 to 1986) brought additional asylum seekers. By 1987, about 75,000 Laotian refugees were known to be in Thailand. Of these, the majority—about 54,000—were hilltribe people, mostly Hmong in Ban Vinai and Chiang Kham camps.

Neither Western governments nor their Indochinese counterparts were willing or able to reach a political solution to the refugee situation. Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia remained relatively closed, and development assistance from the West was minimal. Repression of the Hmong in Laos, declining economic conditions in that country, and the availability of food and medical attention in the camps contributed to the steady flow of Hmong refugees into Thailand.

Conditions in Ban Vinai were better, though hardly idyllic. In the early years, the Hmong themselves determined housing patterns in Ban Vinai, and observers often compared the camp to an overgrown Hmong village in northern Thailand. But by the mid-1980s, the camp had grown beyond its capacity to comfortably accommodate its many thousands of residents.

In these conditions, refugees nevertheless managed to create a culturally familiar way of life. Residents visited the shaman when ill and conducted funerals and celebrated New Year in the traditional Hmong manner. For the enterprising and resourceful, life in Ban Vinai was not without opportunities. Adults could attend English and vocational-training classes, and children could attend a Thai elementary school. Markets sold everything from fresh fish and fruit to cosmetics and herbal medicines. The camp included blacksmiths, silversmiths, a barber, several

small restaurants, and a photographer who took pictures of his subjects against a backdrop of the Swiss Alps. Small family vegetable gardens dotted the grounds.

By 1986, life at Ban Vinai had taken on a semi-permanent quality, with the average length of stay in the camp approaching seven years. The situation was not the result of a U.S. unwillingness to resettle the Hmong, however; because of their role in the war in Laos, more than 90% of Hmong refugees in Thailand had been accepted for resettlement to the United States. Rather, the large number of long stayers in Ban Vinai was largely the consequence of a Hmong reluctance to leave Thailand. Many hoped to stay in Thailand until they were certain that they could return to Laos without suffering reprisals, or until relatives in Laos could join them to resettle together in a third country.

### **Thai Concerns**

To the Thai government, the Hmong reluctance to leave Thailand was of great concern. While over the years Thailand had allowed temporary asylum for up to 200,000 Hmong, it had always made clear that local resettlement in Thailand was not an option for the Hmong. Not only was the Hmong population in the camps in Thailand not decreasing, it was growing, despite a gradual drop in refugee arrivals. The reason for this growth was the Hmong birth rate in the camps, one of the highest in the world and roughly three times the Thai rate. Worried about the growing Hmong population, the Thai government put into place a policy of “humane deterrence” designed to deter asylum seekers and to encourage those already in Thailand to resettle to the West or to return to Laos. Life for Hmong refugees in Thailand became more difficult as the government consolidated camps and tightened control over camp life.

In 1992, as pressures mounted to find options for the Hmong who remained in the camps, the Thai government made the decision to close Ban Vinai. Those not resettled in a third country would be sent to a transit camp pending repatriation to Laos. As the closure date drew near, several thousand Hmong fled into the hills of the northern Thai countryside. Others journeyed south to Tham Krabok Monastery, known in Thai as *Wat Tham Krabok*.

### **Wat Tham Krabok**

A Buddhist temple complex about 80 miles north of Bangkok, Wat Tham Krabok was headed by a charismatic abbot, Phra Chamroon Parnchand. Before becoming a Buddhist monk, the abbot had served as a policeman in northeastern Thailand. At his temple complex, the abbot began a drug rehabilitation program that received worldwide renown. Making use of herbs, the program was open to everyone, including foreigners, and among those the program helped were many Thai Hmong. The abbot was sympathetic to the plight of Hmong refugees in Thailand, and word quickly traveled to the Hmong in Ban Vinai and elsewhere that Wat Tham Krabok afforded protection and offered an alternative to repatriation to Laos and resettlement in the West..

The early 1990s were years of relative freedom for the Hmong at Wat Tham Krabok. In fact, the refugees proved useful in what had become a booming Thai economy. The abbot found jobs for the Hmong in construction work on a new road nearby, and others took jobs in neighboring towns and in quarries in the area.

While the atmosphere in the monastery was welcoming, services were minimal. Hmong cleared land for their homes and built their own houses using whatever materials were at hand. Unlike in

the first-asylum camps, Wat Tham Krabok offered no free medical or social services, and Hmong residents continued their traditional healing practices. In November 2003, a Hmong-run school began teaching Hmong and Thai literacy to residents.

### **The Temple and the Thai Government**

Although for years the Thai government tolerated the situation at Wat Tham Krabok, not all Thai officials were comfortable with the Hmong presence at the monastery. When the abbot died in 1999, the Hmong lost an important benefactor, and the Thai government decided to change the situation at Wat Tham Krabok. In 2003, after registering the monastery's Hmong residents, the Thai government officially closed Wat Tham Krabok to any additional Hmong. Access to work outside the monastery was greatly restricted.

Word began to circulate of Thai intentions to send all Hmong at the monastery to a camp in the northeast for eventual repatriation to Laos. Thai efforts to repatriate the Hmong came to naught when Laos refused to accept the Hmong because of their past involvement in resistance activities. News that the United States was considering a resettlement program for the Hmong eventually appeared in the Thai media and in December 2003, the United States announced its intentions to consider for resettlement the Hmong at Wat Tham Krabok.

### **Generational Responses to Camp Life**

The Hmong at Wat Tham Krabok have lived at the monastery and at other camps in Thailand for many years; indeed some of the younger Hmong have known no other way of life. The different generational responses to camp life sometimes caused tensions when decisions about the future needed to be made. Many elders wanted to stay put until they could return to Laos. Stories circulated about elders sabotaging a family's chances for a resettlement offer by smoking opium, thereby making it impossible to pass the required drug screening. Children, in contrast, were often keen to start new lives in the West. The war-generation adults were caught in between, wanting their children to have a future but not willing to leave aging parents behind. This also is the generation that has been most active in resistance activities.

Life in the camps and at the monastery has also had an impact on traditional family roles. Women, who can make money through sewing handicrafts and clothing, have often had more success at earning wages than men. Young people have learned English (and Thai) faster than adults—skills that have sometimes helped them find coveted jobs with camp service providers. Because of their proficiency in language, younger Hmong have often been the ones to translate documents or interpret for the family with camp authorities, service providers, or resettlement interviewers from embassies. This has given younger people an influence in the family that can upset the traditional family dynamics. All Hmong at Wat Tham Krabok, whatever their age and generation, have been exposed to modern urban life during their long sojourn in Thailand. Through work, recreation, and television, most have been exposed to the latest technology, modern modes of transportation, and even world politics. This makes them different from the first groups of Hmong refugees who were resettled in the United States.

### **Literacy and Education**

The popular notion of the Hmong is that they are an oral or “preliterate” people, lacking an alphabet and knowledge of basic literacy processes. In this account, most Hmong people did not

read and write as late as the 1950s, and many had never seen books or even held pencils. Such characterizations are not altogether inaccurate. The Hmong scholar Yang Dao has reported that in some provinces of Laos in the 1970s, the rate of Hmong who did not read or write was as high as 99%, while a 1986 study by Karen Green and Steven Reder of 20 Hmong refugee families in the United States indicated that 80% of those surveyed could not read or write Lao, and 70% could not read Hmong. Yet to think of the Hmong as a preliterate people oversimplifies the past and ignores the present. Far from being a people unfamiliar with writing, the Hmong have long been aware of the powers and potentials of written language. Moreover, they have experienced diverse forms of literacy in multiple languages over the last century.

### **The Power of Literacy**

Hmong stories reveal a preoccupation with the power of written language. According to Hmong legends, the Hmong once ruled a kingdom in China where they possessed their own lands, their own armies, and their own indigenous Hmong alphabet. In the continuous warfare against the expansionist Chinese, however, the Hmong king was killed, his family butchered, and great numbers of Hmong people driven south. In the course of their escape, the Hmong “book”—the symbol for their Hmong alphabet and knowledge of writing—fell into the waters of the Yellow River and was lost. In another version of this story, it was eaten by horses as the Hmong slept, exhausted from their flight. In a third version, it was eaten by the Hmong themselves, who were starving.

The prospects for Hmong literacy development began to change in the 1950s and 1960s, however, with the ascendancy in Laos of two very different powers with very different reasons for seeking out the Hmong: the United States CIA and Christian missionaries.

### **Literacy and the CIA**

As the Hmong army became central to the CIA’s secret war in Laos, Hmong leadership found they had greater leverage to make certain demands upon the Royal Lao Government and its patron, the United States. One of the demands was for greater access to education. In response, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) financed an intensive school construction program for Hmong students in the context of a nation-building effort designed to support U.S. goals in Laos.

### **Missionary Literacy**

The second major force stimulating Hmong literacy development in Laos was the creation in the 1950s of the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), a writing system designed by Western missionary-linguists for the Hmong language. The RPA was used to translate bibles, prayer books, hymnals and other religious materials into written Hmong and thus facilitate the spread of Christianity. Both While the RPA was known to some in Laos, the alphabet achieved a far more prominent role when it caught on among Hmong refugees in Thailand. As the Hmong were resettled in Western nations across the world, family members, friends, and other loved ones who had been separated needed a way to communicate across distances. Many Hmong turned to the RPA, which was in the Hmong language, was easy to learn and was taught informally in one-to-one settings.

## **Resettlement in the United States**

The Hmong from Wat Tham Krabok will be joining well-established Hmong communities in the United States. The first groups of Hmong refugees began arriving in the United States in 1975, shortly after the communist takeover in Laos. In 1979, the U.S. resettlement of Hmong refugees increased significantly, and by the mid-1990s more than 100,000 Hmong had been admitted to the United States. Today, the 2000 Census reports that there are more than 186,000 Hmong Americans in the United States.<sup>6</sup> While Hmong live throughout the country, the largest populations are clustered in five states: California (71,741), Minnesota (45,443), Wisconsin (36,809), North Carolina (7,982), and Michigan (5,998).

While the refugees will be resettled by experienced resettlement agencies, most will also have family co-sponsors, who will need information about their roles and responsibilities and the ways to help their refugee relatives gain access to resources and services.

The refugees will be joining Hmong communities in the United States that have achieved remarkable educational and professional successes over the past two decades, even as individual Hmong continue to struggle to adjust to a way of life that is very different from what they had previously experienced. In this section, we consider the resettlement prospects of the new arrivals in light of their background experiences and the experiences of previous groups of Hmong refugees resettled in the United States.

## **Education in Thailand**

It is expected that most Hmong adults at Wat Tham Krabok, like previous Hmong refugees, will arrive in the United States with little formal education. Many adults will not be literate in any language. It is not known how many have learned the RPA, the most common of the various Hmong writing systems. An estimated 50% of Hmong adults in the United States are able to use this writing system to some extent.

Since the announcement of the U.S. resettlement program, English classes, taught by Hmong volunteers, have become increasingly popular at Wat Tham Krabok. Hmong Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs), local resettlement offices, and other organizations serving refugee should expect the new arrivals to show a keen interest in English language classes. As we have learned from past efforts to teach English to the Hmong, adult ESL classes are more successful when they focus on the practical English that people need during their first months in the United States. For non-literate Hmong, successful approaches use a lot of visuals and take advantage of learners' memorization skills. (In cultures that do not depend upon print to pass down knowledge and communicate information, the ability to remember large amounts of material appears better developed than it is in print-based cultures.)

## **Special Group Issues**

As Hmong create new lives for themselves in the United States, they will face complex issues rooted in cross-cultural differences. The traditional values and attitudes that underlie Hmong behavior are often different from and at odds with those of many Americans. Perhaps the single biggest difference is that while Americans stress the importance of individual freedom, Hmong generally place the interests of the group—whether it is the family, the clan, or the community—before the interests of the individual. A second critical difference is that Hmong traditionally

view social roles, in terms of family, age, and gender, as fixed; in America, these roles are constantly being negotiated and challenged.

Hmong women and girls at Wat Tham Krabok will face a future that is dramatically different from the one their mothers were prepared for while growing up in the mountains of Laos. There, marriage marked the greatest change in the life of a woman, as she left her birth family to enter her husband's home. As a wife and daughter-in-law, she obeyed her husband and his family. In the United States, Hmong women and girls will have unprecedented opportunities to seek education and work in a profession outside the home. To succeed at home, at work, and at school will require a new and complex set of skills and the ability to balance old and new roles.

In Laos, men were the sole and undisputed leaders in their families. Life in the refugee camp may have already begun to erode traditional leadership roles, and in America men will face further challenges to their authority in a society that believes in an equal voice for women and greater freedom of choice for children. This change will be a matter of considerable concern to Hmong men. Men, like women, will need to find a balance between new and traditional roles.

Like other refugee and immigrant youth, Hmong children often feel caught between two opposing worlds—that of the traditional culture and that of America. Just as parents expect their children to be “more Hmong,” Hmong children often expect their parents to be more “American,” which means, among other things, to endorse their children's individuality and give them greater freedom of choice. How a young Hmong resolves the conflict between two contradictory sets of expectations is often the central issue in his or her life. It determines, for example, whether a bright young Hmong woman decides to get married at 17, as is often expected by her community, or goes to college, as expected by the society at large. Those who arrive in the United States as teenagers can face special challenges. Dubbed *generation 1.5*, they are part of neither the first generation of their parents nor the second generation of children born in the United States. More so than their parents or younger siblings, they live in two worlds, with two sets of languages, rules, and customs. And they are required to negotiate these two worlds at the same time that they are making the difficult transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Older Hmong refugees at Wat Tham Krabok represent a small but very vulnerable population. They have long suffered the rigors of involuntary displacement, and the move to America may prove most difficult of all. Given the hardships older refugees in the United States face, it is not surprising that many report psychosomatic illnesses, such as headaches and stomach pains.

Traditionally regarded as the source of wisdom in the community, many experience a dramatic loss of status and self-esteem in America, where social position depends on education, professional achievement, and financial success. Their knowledge of the traditional culture, while publicly praised by the community, is often seen as irrelevant in the new setting.

No research suggests that older adults cannot succeed in learning another language. Attitude, not age, is the most decisive factor in language learning. Physical ailments, depression, and stress interfere significantly with concentration and the commitment to learn English. For refugees who arrive after the age of 45, workforce entry rates are considerably lower than they are for those of younger refugees. Moreover, service providers may screen them out of job placement efforts, focusing instead on the family's primary wage earner. Yet older Hmong arrivals from Wat Tham Krabok will encounter pressures to work that previous groups of older Hmong did not face.

Under rules recently revised by the U.S. Department of State, older refugees are considered employable until the age of 65 years. This means that, unlike the Hmong who arrived a generation ago, a newly arrived refugee in his or her 50s is expected to go to work. And, as noted in the section on employment, they will need to work 40 quarters to become eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) at age 65, unless they become naturalized citizens in the intervening years.

## Language

The Hmong in Laos, Thailand, and the United States speak *Hmong Der* (White Hmong) and *Mong Leng* (Blue Mong).<sup>7</sup> *Mong Leng* is also frequently written as *Hmong Leng*, spelled with an initial *H*, but some *Mong Leng* speakers prefer the term without the initial *H*, and we follow that preference in this profile. *Hmong Der* and *Mong Leng* are dialects in the Hmong branch of the Hmong-Mien family, spoken in Southeast Asia and southern China. The Chinese designation for Hmong-Mien is *Miao-Yao*, but because that designation is not based on language exclusively, most linguists outside of China prefer the term *Hmong-Mien*. Anthropologists, who are interested in things other than language, continue to use the term *Miao-Yao*.

More than half of the words in *Hmong Der* and *Mong Leng* are Chinese in origin, and there are similarities in grammatical structure between *Hmong Der/Mong Leng* and Chinese, as well. For these reasons, scholars in the past classified Hmong-Mien as members of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Today, however, most linguists outside of China believe that the similarities between *Hmong Der/Mong Leng* and Chinese are the result of centuries of contact between the two rather than a common inheritance, and few scholars outside of China classify Hmong as a Sino-Tibetan language.

By looking at the differences between English and *Hmong Der* and *Mong Leng*, we can predict some of the areas of challenge that *Hmong Der* and *Mong Leng* speakers might encounter when they first begin to study English. Although English has a few vowel sounds that do not exist in Hmong—for example, the short [i] sound in the word *bit*—this area of difference does not seem to cause a great deal of difficulty. Consonants, on the other hand, generally do prove troublesome. Even though *Hmong Der* and *Mong Leng* have more consonants than English does, English has some sounds that can be difficult for Hmong learners. Two examples are the initial consonant sounds found in the words *this* and *thistle*. The [ʃ] sound in the middle of the word *suggest* is another sound that may be difficult. For many Hmong learners, consonants at the end of words such as *married*, *warmth*, and *bulb* are especially difficult, since *Hmong Der* and *Mong Leng* words rarely end in consonants. Because words in *Hmong Der* and *Mong Leng* are generally of one syllable, polysyllabic English words also can prove troublesome.

The basic subject-verb-object sentence pattern of English should not present problems to *Hmong Der* and *Mong Leng* speakers, since this is the pattern that prevails in their languages. Hmong learners, however, generally do encounter difficulty with the inflectional system of English—the various grammatical forms used to indicate (among other things) plural (*girls*, *children*), possessive (*boy's*), pronoun cases (*she*, *her*, *hers*), and verb tenses (*take*, *took*, *taken*), none of which exists in *Hmong Der* and *Mong Leng*. For Hmong learners, the difficulty is compounded because inflectional changes in English often involve adding one or more consonants to the end of a word, and as we noted earlier, words in *Hmong Der* and *Mong Leng* almost always end in a vowel. Thus, a Hmong learner encounters difficulty with the word

*showed*, not only because of the grammatical change from *show* to *showed* but also because of the consonant at the end of the word.

# Sample Lesson Plan

From the Very Beginning  
*Getting Started in the ESL Classroom with Pre-Literate and Non-Literate Learners*  
by Shirley Brod

## **From The Very Beginning**

*Getting Started in the ESL Classroom with Pre-Literate and Non-Literate Learners*

by Shirley Brod

<b>Time:</b>	early 21st century
<b>Setting:</b>	a classroom (or church basement, community center, etc.)
<b>Characters:</b>	<i>Teacher:</i> new or experienced; ESL-trained or volunteer; K-12 or Adult Ed. <i>Learners:</i> pre-literates* or non-literates**
<b>Action:</b>	<i>Teacher:</i> walks into room, smiles and says “Hello” to class. <i>Learners:</i> smile or nod heads, may respond “Hello” or “Hello, teacher.”

### THEN WHAT?

Where do you begin if your students cannot read or write? How do you present material? How can you tell if students comprehend?

This article and the lesson plans that follow will take a look at some of the ways pre-literates\* and non-literates\*\* learn and give some ideas on getting started with a beginning class, using the learning techniques students are already familiar with. As you continue, a good textbook will be a valuable tool, especially if you are a novice teacher, because it can give you an overview of what learners need to know as well as determine the order in which material can be presented.

\**Pre-literate learners* come from areas where there is no written language, or where learners have not been exposed to it, such as newly-arrived Hmong from Laos or Bantu from Somalia.

\*\**Non-literates* can neither read nor write their own language. These terms used here refer to non-speakers of English. (Other beginning level ESL learners may not be familiar with a Roman alphabet and cannot read or write in English but are literate in their own languages. They can usually handle regular beginning level materials and instruction.)

### **Learning Modes**

Pre-literates and non-literates frequently learn by using the following modes: a) by observation, leading to mimicry (learning how to greet elders); b) by listening, leading to repetition (learning to speak one’s own language); c) through hands-on activities (planting a seed or repairing an engine); and d) through multi-sensory approaches (recognizing poisonous plants by their color and odor). If we utilize these learning modes in the materials we present in early classes, students will be more comfortable in the learning environment and will learn faster.

Students will need to do lots of listening and repetition before they are ready to produce language independently. You will want to begin each day with oral exercises, probably including review of previous classes, then moving to reading and writing.

Word cards are used here from the first day to give the students an idea of which piece of the language stream they hear is a word. Handling sight words and learning word order from the very beginning increases students’ confidence in their ability to learn to read, and to do so in English.

## **Beginning Lessons**

The beginning lessons cover greetings, giving one's name, recognizing, reading, and writing one's first and last names - something students need constantly and are interested in learning; and numbers, as they also are used constantly (addresses, phone numbers, date of birth, age, etc.) and are easy to learn. As students work with these simple materials, they are also learning simple classroom commands and directions and how to learn in an English classroom. This gives you and your students a basis for more complex materials.

## **Getting Started**

Here are possible lesson plans for the first three days/six hours or so with your beginners. The timing on the activities is approximate. You will need to adjust times to fit the size of your class, the learning experience of your students, and the hours per week you meet. As a rule of thumb with beginners, each activity should be limited to approximately 20 minutes, and the activities mixed to allow some time for learners to move about and learn from each other.

The materials you need to gather or make ahead of time are listed together at the beginning of the lesson for each hour. Sample worksheets for the first pencil-and-paper activities are included at the end.

In general, you will find suggestions that students work in pairs to practice early language, and later as they tackle the first worksheets. This allows them to learn from each other and work in a supportive environment.

You may have students in your class who have had some exposure to English. You can give those who finish early *and correctly* re-usable "Teacher's helper" name tags and have them help groups of 1-3 less experienced students.

## **Day 1: first hour**

Performance objective: Students can respond to greetings and introduce themselves.

### Materials

Activity 1: Name tag for each student and for the teacher with first name in red, last name in blue.

### **Activity 1: Greetings (T = teacher; S = student)**

Configuration: Full class

Learning mode: Listen and repeat

Give each student the correct name tag.

T: *Hello.* (Repeat, motioning for class to respond. Do this two or three times until most of the class is responding.)

T: *Hello.* (Do not repeat. Motion for class to respond.)

Ss: Hello.

Walk to the desk of a student who is participating. Say “Hello.” Wait (or motion) for student to respond. Then motion for student to walk to another desk and say “Hello”, continuing until most of the class has had a chance to “perform” alone.

If the class is large, break it into groups of four or five and have them practice.

### **Activity 2: Introducing oneself, giving first and last names**

Configuration: Full class, then pairs

Learning mode: Listen and repeat

T: *Hello. My name is (Sarah Jones).* (Point to own name tag)

Ss repeat.

Walk to desk of first student, motioning for him to repeat: *My name is (Rashid Abdullah).* Repeat until student repeats with you, then says the sentence alone. Walk around the class, having each student say the sentence with his or her first and last name aloud in the same way.

If the class is very large, practice with a few students, then let them practice in groups while you work with the rest of the class. Then have students practice in pairs.

### **Activity 3: Mixer**

Configuration: Full class

Learning mode: Practice

Have students walk around the room, saying “Hello” and introducing themselves to each other for several minutes while you monitor their accuracy.

### **Break**

## Day 1: second hour

Performance objective: Students will be able to “read” a five-word sentence.

### Materials:

Activity 1: A set of the following word cards for each student.

(Be aware of capitals, period, and color. Use them again and again to help students become aware of English grammar and sentence structure without all the terminology: black for pronouns, purple for nouns, green for verbs, red and blue for target vocabulary, orange for punctuation - or any color system you prefer, as long as you are consistent.)

It helps with classroom management if you clip the cards together in sentences, place a rubber band around each set, or keep card sets in envelopes.)

My                      name                      is                      Mohammad                      Abdullahi                      .  
(black)                      (purple)                      (green)                      (red)                      (blue)                      (orange)

Activity 2: One set of word cards like the above, using your own first and last names, with cards large enough for students to read when you place the cards in order on the blackboard tray.

### **Activity 1: Word order**

Configuration: Full class, then groups, then individuals

Learning modes: Observe and mimic, Hands-on activity (kinesthetic learning), Multi-sensory: using color to reinforce word order

Take your large set of word cards and place them in order on the blackboard tray, or mount them on the wall or to a poster board with a glue stick or teacher’s putty.

Point to each word as you read: My name is [Sarah Jones]. Repeat this several times as you point.

Give each student his or her own set of word cards. Have students work together in pairs or small groups to try to put their own cards in the same order as your model. They can work on desk or table tops or on the floor.

Circulate to help, pointing to the model as you point to their cards. They may need help getting the cards right side up. If necessary, take a student’s cards to the board and match them to the model. Use color matching to help them see the order of their first and last names: your first name is written in red and goes before the name in blue. *Demonstrate, but do not try to explain!*

When students are successful, have a few take their sets of word cards to the board and make their own sentences, then “read” the result. The class can monitor their progress and help if necessary.

Have students pick up their cards and shuffle them, then repeat the process, “reading” their sentences to each other. Have students assemble their cards with the clips or rubber bands and return them to you for use the second day.

## Day 2: first hour

Performance objective: counting and using number symbols 0-5

Materials:

Activity 2: (optional) two large pictures of people, preferably of different genders

Activity 4: Worksheet #1. (Hint: Make extra copies for later review.) If the class were large, it would be helpful to make a transparency of the worksheet and use it with an overhead projector.

### **Activity 1: Chain game - Greetings and Introductions**

Configuration: Whole class (If class is large, do this activity in groups of 4 or 5.)

Learning mode: Review

T: Hello. My name is (Sarah Jones).

S1: Hello. My name is (Maryam \_ \_ \_ \_ \_).

S2, S3, etc.: etc.

### **Activity 2: Spiraling, adding new information.**

Configuration: Whole class, then pairs

Learning modes: Observe and mimic; Listen and repeat.

Draw two stick figures on the board, or hold up one large picture in each hand. Each stick figure or picture becomes a character in the dialogue.

Point to one figure or hold up one large picture and say:

*My name is (John Brown.) What is your name?*

Point to the other figure or hold up the second picture and say:

*My name is (Maryam \_ \_ \_ \_ \_.)*

Repeat several times and have students repeat after you. Model the first utterance, pointing to the first figure or holding up the first picture. Point to the second figure or hold up the second picture and have students respond. Then reverse, pointing to the first figure and having students in unison give the first utterance while you give the response.

Model the first utterance and have a volunteer give the response. Then reverse roles.

Model the dialog with a student volunteer, using your actual names. Repeat with another student.

Have students practice in pairs, using their own names, while you circulate to help.

### **Activity 3: Counting 0-5**

Configuration: Whole class, then pairs

Learning modes: Listen and repeat; Observe and mimic; Hands-on (kinesthetic)

Using your hands, hold up one finger and say “one”, adding fingers as you count to five. Repeat several times.

Hold up one finger, say “one”, and have students repeat. Continue adding one finger at a time while students repeat after you, counting to five.

Silently hold up fingers, having students count.

Hold up three fingers and motion for students to respond. (Model if they do not understand.) Repeat with different numbers of fingers. Have students hold up numbers of fingers while you respond.

Have students practice in pairs.

### **Activity 4: Reading number symbols 0-5**

Configuration: Whole class, then pairs

Learning modes: Observe and mimic; Listen and repeat; Write (hands-on, tracing - kinesthetic)

Give each student a copy of Worksheet #1. Hold up the worksheet, pointing to each picture and number and having students point and repeat.

Point to the pictures in random order and have students point and repeat.

Write the numbers in order in a line on the board without the pictures. Point to each as you say it and have students repeat. Point to the numbers in order and have students tell you the words.

Point to the numbers in random order and have students give you the words.

Point to a number and have a volunteer name it. Repeat several times with different students.

Erase a number from the line. Have students tell you what it is, then write the number in its place. Repeat with other numbers at random until most students can handle this.

Have students practice in pairs with their worksheets, pointing and saying the words. As they begin tracing the numbers, some students may need help in holding the pencil correctly. You may need to model the missing number activity at the end of the page until students understand what is expected.

### **Break**

## Day 2: second hour

Performance objective: Learning to distinguish first and last names

### Materials

Activity 5:

1. Packets of sentence cards from day one; teacher's large packet for the blackboard tray;
2. Two additional cards/student; large cards for yourself: **first** written in red, **last** written in blue;
3. Worksheets #2. Print student first and last names on the first line for tracing and copying.

Hints: Make several photocopies of the worksheet, as students will need varying degrees of additional practice. These can be used later as fillers at the end of a class, as homework, or as class review activities while you work with those students who have been absent or are having problems.

### **Activity 5: Arranging word cards in correct sentence order.**

Configuration: Individual

Learning mode: Review

Place the large word cards on the blackboard tray. Read the words, pointing to each.

Give students their packets of cards. Have them work in pairs or small groups to put their sentences in order and "read" them to each other. Move about the room to monitor progress or give help.

### **Activity 6: Spiraling with new information**

Configuration: Individual

Learning mode: Hands-on (kinesthetic)

Re-order the word cards on the chalk tray, being sure the class watches as you remove your last name, to read:

**My first name is (Sarah).**

Point to the cards as you read them to the students. Give students in pairs each their "first" word card and have them copy the sentence using their own names. Monitor progress. If students are having problems with first/last distinction, point to the matching colors in "first" and their first names.

Have volunteers say their new sentences for the class.

Repeat the process to introduce last.

### **Activity 7: Dialog**

Configuration: Whole class and pairs

Learning mode: Listen and repeat.

Using stick figures or pictures as in Activity 1, introduce the dialog:

A: What is your first name?

B: My first name is (Sarah).

A: What is your last name?

B: My last name is (Jones).

Have students repeat each sentence after you.

Then take A's part and have them take B's. Reverse roles.

Have volunteers take the part of A, saying the dialog with you.

Have a volunteer take part A and say the dialog, giving their own first and last names. Have students practice the dialog in pairs as you monitor, then reverse roles and repeat the activity.

### **Activity 8: Writing first and last names, Worksheet #2.**

Give one worksheet to each student, with their own names printed on the first line. Show them how to trace their names.

### **Day 3: first hour**

Performance objectives: Practice numbers 1-10

Materials:

Activity 2: Worksheet #3 for each student, plus extras to use for practice and review.

Activity 3: Worksheet #4 for each student, plus extras to use for practice and review.

Concentration: Make a set of cards with the numbers 0 -10. Cut up worksheets with hands showing 0-10 fingers and make a card with each "hand". You will need to make a set of 20 cards for each group of 2-4 students.

### **Activity 1: Review numbers 0-5, answer "How many?"**

Configuration: Whole class, then pairs

Learning mode: Listen and repeat; Observe and mimic; Hands-on (kinesthetic)

Using your hands, hold up one finger and say "one", adding fingers as you count to five. Have students repeat.

Hold up three fingers and ask students, "How many?" If there is no response, give the number.

Repeat with random numbers of fingers, asking "How many?" each time until most students can answer easily. Have students hold up fingers and ask you, "How many?"

Have students practice in pairs.

### **Activity 2: Circle the number**

Configuration: Whole class, then single students or pairs

Learning mode: Observe and mimic.

Draw two sticks on the board. Under them, write 1 2 3 4. Point to the sticks and ask, “How many?” When students respond, circle the 2, saying, “Circle” as you do it.

Repeat several times, using different numbers of sticks. Write four numbers under each and have volunteers come to the board and circle the correct number.

Give each student a copy of Worksheet #3. Have them complete the exercise in pairs.

### **Activity 3: Reading number symbols 0-10**

Configuration: Whole class; individual; pairs

Learning modes: Observe and mimic; Listen and repeat.

Give a copy of Worksheet #4 to each student. Hold up your worksheet, pointing to each picture and number and having students point and repeat. Point to the pictures in random order and have students point and repeat.

Write the numbers in order on the board without the pictures. Point and have students repeat. Point to the numbers in random order and have students repeat.

Point to a number and have a volunteer name it. Repeat several times.

Erase a number. Have students tell you what it is. Write it in the blank. Repeat with other numbers in random order until most students can handle this.

Have students practice in pairs with their worksheets. Circulate to help.

Write large numbers from 0 to 10 at the top of the board. As students finish their worksheets, have them come to the board and dictate numbers to each other.

### **Activity 4: Concentration**

If time remains, play Concentration, a good way to reinforce visual and aural number recognition. Make one set of number cards 1-10, and cut apart one set of pictures of fingers, 1 - 10, from the worksheets. Place the cards face down in rows on a table top. Students take turns turning two cards over, saying the number aloud. If the picture and the number match, the student keeps them and takes another turn. If they do not match, they are placed face down in their original positions and another student plays. The game is over when all the cards have been paired. The student with the largest number of pairs is the winner.

This game can be used often when time permits as review and reinforcement. You can upgrade the game by creating cards with new material as it is learned.

### **Break**

### Day 3: second hour

Performance objectives: Interviews with greetings and responses, giving names; filling out a simple form

Materials:

Activity 6: Table and two chairs, Worksheet #6.

#### Activity 5: Dialog

Configuration: Whole class, then pairs

Learning Modes: Listen and repeat; Observe and mimic; Write (hands-on-tracing)

On the chalk board, draw a table with chairs on each side, a stick figure in each chair. Introduce the following dialog, pointing to each stick figures as you say it:

A: Hello. How are you?

B: Fine, thank you. How are you?

A: I'm fine. My name is Mary Green.

What is your name?

B: My name is \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

Repeat the dialog two or three times, having students repeat each line after you.

Say the first line. Have students repeat. Do the same with the second line.

Say the first line. Have students say the second line. Help them if necessary. Repeat this several times until most of the class can join in.

Then have the class take A's first line and you take B's first line.

Have volunteers take the part of B, saying the first two lines of the dialog with you.

Have volunteers take parts A and B and say the first two lines.

Add a line at a time, practicing the whole dialog including the new line. Practice as above.

Continue adding lines until students can say the entire dialog.

Then ask a student to come to the front and sit down. Sit down opposite him and practice the dialog. Let the "audience" help as needed.

Have two students take the two chairs and give the dialog for the class.

Have students practice the dialog in pairs as you monitor, then reverse roles and repeat the activity.

### **Activity 6: Form language**

Learning mode: Listen and repeat.  
Write.

Configuration: Whole class, then pairs.

Review first and last names. Say, My name is Sam Jones. My first name is Sam. My last name is Jones.

Go to a strong student. Ask, What is your name? When they respond, ask, What is your first name? After their response, ask for their last name. Repeat this with several students.

Have students practice in pairs, each person asking for and giving both first and last names.

Reproduce the first form on Worksheet #6 on the board. Read First name, and write your own first name on the board. Do the same for Last name.

Give students Worksheet #6. Help them write their first and last names in the blanks. If they are having problems, help them refer to their word cards for reinforcement. The three forms ask for the same information but in a different way. Students may need help making this transfer of information.

As students learn more personal information in later lessons (telephone number, date of birth, address, etc.) make forms which include previously learned material plus the new information. Students new to this country need a great deal of practice in filling out forms.

# Sample Worksheet #1

*Listen. Point. Say.*



**0**



**1**



**2**



**3**



**4**



**5**

*Trace. Copy.*

Handwriting practice lines consisting of solid top and bottom lines with a dashed middle line for tracing.

My name is

My name is

M \_ n \_ me is

\_ \_ y na \_ e is

My n \_ me \_ s

Sample Worksheet #3

Circle.



0 1 2 3



2 3 4 5



1 3 2 5



5 4 2 3



3 5 4 0



1 2 4 3

Write.

_____	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	_____	<b>5</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	_____	<b>3</b>	_____	_____
<b>0</b>	_____	<b>2</b>	_____	_____	<b>5</b>
<b>0</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

# Sample Worksheet #4

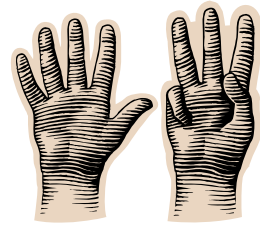
*Listen. Point. Say.*



6



7



8



9



10

*Trace. Copy.*

Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for tracing and copying.

Sample Worksheet #5

Trace. Copy.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Write.

0 1 2 \_\_\_ 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 1 2 3 \_\_\_ 5 6 \_\_\_ 8 9 10

\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_ 3 4 5 \_\_\_ 7 8 \_\_\_ 10

0 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 6 7 \_\_\_ 9 \_\_\_

0 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_

## Sample Worksheet #6

Write.

1.

XYZ Company
Application Form:
First Name _____
Last Name _____

2.

<b>Hospital Registration:</b>
_____
<i>First Name</i>
_____
<i>Last Name</i>

3.

Social Services Registration Form
Name: _____
Last <span style="margin-left: 150px;">First</span>

## **Other Sample Lesson Plans**

Total Physical Response (TPR) – Parts of the Body

Applications

Civics by the Calendar

Hands-On English – Homework Ideas for Beginning Students

## Health

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<b>Topic</b>	Parts of the body
<b>Level</b>	SPL 0 – 2
<b>Activity</b>	Total Physical Response (TPR), listen and do
<b>Objective</b>	Students will be able to identify 6 body parts: head, nose, chin, face, teeth, mouth; and Touch your
<b>Materials</b>	None
<b>Procedure</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Practice your first lesson in front of a mirror! Remember that, during the lesson, you will not be able to explain what you want your students to do. This is a low level class. So practice pantomiming the following. Make your actions explain what you want the students to do: <b>Watch. Listen. Do not speak.</b>  One verb or verb phrase constitutes a complete new unit of information, whereas nouns may be introduced in groups of up to three at a time.</li><li>2. Deliver your first three imperatives three times pointing as you do it each time. Maintain a consistent tone and speed.<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. You say, for example:  “Touch your head. Touch your hair. Touch your neck.” “Touch your head. Touch your hair. Touch your neck.” “Touch your head. Touch your hair. Touch your neck.”</li><li>b. You pantomime. Pantomime that you want the students to copy you by pointing as you speak. You may have to run around the first time to show students how to point, but after that they are usually very happy to find that they just have to listen, copy your actions, and not speak.</li><li>c. Randomize the imperatives. Instead of saying,  “Touch your head. Touch your hair. Touch your neck.”  Say, “Touch your nose. Touch your nose.” (deliberate repetition) “Touch your head. Touch your hair. Touch your neck.”  When you break the pattern of predictability, you are asking the students to differentiate among the sounds they are hearing. This is a test and the student responses give the teacher information about student uncertainties. Review and re-teach where uncertainty is apparent.</li><li>d. Individual response at random/evaluation: Check for individual competence/confidence. Start with your strongest student and work your way around the class (but DO NOT say student names). Give each student 4 or 5 imperatives in random order. Leave each student on a “success.” <b>Do not allow an individual student to fail at any stage.</b> Help immediately if necessary when you see a student hesitate by guiding through the required action. Start the next student with the last “success” the class heard.</li></ol></li></ol>

## ***Health***

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### **Parts of the body**

<b>Verbs</b>	<b>Nouns</b>		
Touch your	Head Face Nose Chest	Hair Eye Mouth Back	Neck Chin Teeth Stomach
Hold your Left Right	Arm Shoulder Leg Wrist	Hand Elbow Foot Knee	Thumb Hip Ear Ankle
Open your	Mouth	Hand	Eyes

### **Variation - Clothing**

<b>Verbs</b>	<b>Nouns</b>		
Point to the	Hat Shirt Shoes Socks Jeans	Jacket Boots Sweater Pants Dress	Gloves Slip Sandals Shirt skirt

### **Variation – U.S. Mail**

<b>Verbs</b>	<b>Nouns</b>		
Point to the	Envelope Letter Carrier Stamp/Postage	Letter Return Address Postmark	Package Mailing Address Postcard

*Source: Total Physical Response (TPR), A Curriculum for Adults, English Language and Literacy Center, St. Louis, Missouri 63105. The complete document is available through Spring Institute, contact Burna L. Dunn, ELT/TA Project Director, 1610 Emerson Street, Denver, Colorado 80218, (303) 863-0188, or email [elt@springinstitute.org](mailto:elt@springinstitute.org).*

## Applications

<b>Topic</b>	Applications
<b>Level</b>	Low Level to Multi-Level
<b>Activity</b>	Reading words, linking pictures (or examples) and words
<b>Objective</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students will recognize vocabulary by matching pictures/examples and words.</li> <li>2. Students will fill out simple application forms completely and correctly.</li> <li>3. Students will work with in pairs or small groups to negotiate and come to agreement in matching application language with meanings.</li> </ol>
<b>Materials</b>	Picture and word cards, simple personal information and application forms
<b>Procedure</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Show large pictures of items that relate to personal information, transparencies on an overhead projector, or realia to the class. Have students verbalize the meaning of each item orally. For example, a picture of a phone with a blank space on the front should elicit <i>phone number</i>. If your students can read numbers, <i>977-3245</i> should also elicit <i>phone number</i>. (Sources of ideas for pictures or examples: <u>Chalk Talks</u> in the “Basic Facts-Vital Statistics” section of the book and <u>Basic English for Adult Competency</u> do a nice job of illustrating personal information concepts. See attached examples.) The initial list of words might include <i>SS#, address, name, country, zip code, telephone number, city, state</i>.</li> <li>2. Write the word for each item or concept on a the board. Read the words aloud and hold up the pictures (or examples) that correspond. Pass out the pictures. Have students come up to the board to match the large picture with the appropriate word. Gradually add to this list so that key application words such as <i>first name, last name, residence, social security number, date available, felony conviction</i>, etc. are very familiar to the students.</li> <li>3. Divide the class into small groups of three or four students. Provide each group with six to ten pairs of picture and word cards. Put the pictures on cards of one color and the words on cards of another color. Have students work together to match the cards. Increase the number of cards or difficulty of vocabulary for more advanced students or as students learn more words. You can give small groups a set of application language picture and word cards to match, even on the first day of class. It gives people a chance to work together and can be used as a diagnostic activity to show what they do and do not know.</li> <li>4. If your students are illiterate, work on the formation of numbers and letters to write the words and numbers they will need for application forms. Have all students practice writing personal information. Start with their own names, add the city and state, then their address and phone number.</li> <li>5. Give students simplified forms which ask for information in a different order, which utilize different formats such as boxes, and which are written in capital letters, italics, or in other scripts. Have them write their own personal information in the appropriate blanks (See attached examples).</li> </ol> <p>Gradually move to more complex forms. Add words they may not know but can begin to guess because of their position or placement on a form (such as <i>residence</i> for <i>address</i>, <i>family name</i> for <i>last name</i>, etc.). The principle is to move from the known to the unknown, from the simple to the complex.</p>

Source: SCANS Plans Portfolio, Spring Institute, ETL 1997-98 Technical Assistance Project

Name

Address

Zip Code

Phone  
Number

Social  
Security  
Number

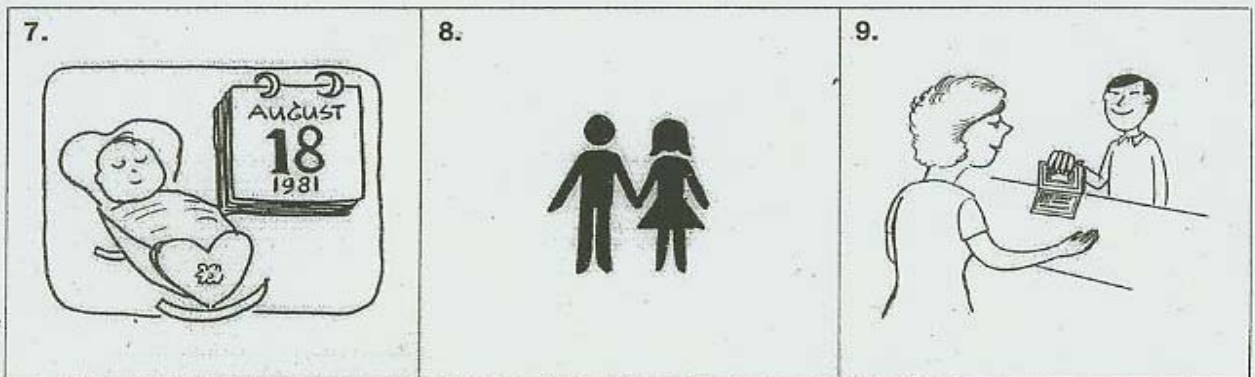
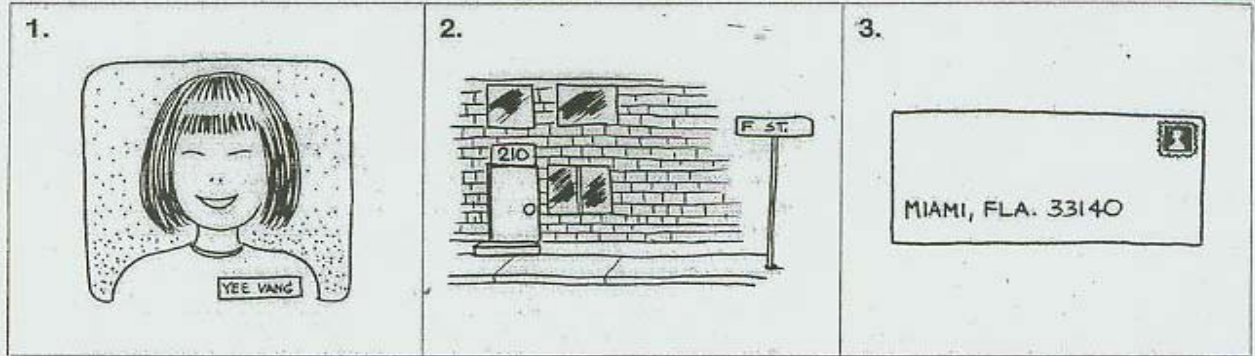
Country

Date of  
Birth

Marital  
Status

Occupation

PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION



Source: *Basic English for Adult Competency*, Prentice Hall Regents, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632

*Applications*

---

First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Middle Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

---

Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
Middle Name \_\_\_\_\_

---

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_  
First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Applications**

---

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Middle Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

*Social Security  
Number*

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--	--	--	--

-----  
**Full Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Middle Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name

**Address**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code

Emergency Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

**Age** \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security  
Number

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-----  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Last**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**First**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Middle

Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
**City**

\_\_\_\_\_  
State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip

Social Security No. \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Topic</b>	Civics by the Calendar
<b>Level</b>	Beginning SPL 1-2
<b>Activity</b>	Variety
<b>Objective</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interpret information about community resources.</li> <li>2. Express a need or opinion about a current issue.</li> </ol>
<b>Materials</b>	Clipart cut sheets for major holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Eve
<b>Procedure</b>	<p>Each holiday has its own target vocabulary and symbols; see the attached list of holidays and their symbols. Consider the learner's home cultures and background when choosing a symbol. Certain American symbols (witch, skulls, etc.) may be offensive to some people.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">National holidays (e.g. Independence Day or the Fourth of July)          Acknowledged but not Federal holidays (e.g. Halloween)          "Special" days typically known in American culture (e.g. April 15)</p> <p><u>Target Vocabulary:</u> (e.g., Independence Day or the Fourth of July) fireworks, parade, picnic, independence, revolution, barbecue, declaration (e.g., Halloween) witch, goblin, trick-or-treat, costume, black cat, broom (e.g., April 15) taxes, refund, deadline, IRS, owe, postmark</p> <p><u>Brainstorm:</u> Ask learners what they know about the upcoming holiday or event, or ask them to respond to pictures of holiday or event symbols. Write key words that students mention on the board.</p> <p><u>Match:</u> Students (Ss) match target vocabulary words with pictures. Match: Using a worksheet with words and pictures, learners draw lines to link them.</p> <p><u>Focused Listening:</u> Ss look at a worksheet with words or pictures of symbols; e.g., fireworks, parade. Ss listen to sentences; e.g., "The fireworks are beautiful." "There goes the parade." Ss mark the appropriate word.</p> <p><u>Listen and Point:</u> While looking at a worksheet which has examples of target vocabulary--e.g., witch, costume, broom, black cat--Ss listen to the statement and then point to the broom, the witch, a costume, etc.</p> <p><u>Fill in a Form:</u> Complete an IRS tax form. The exercise may be best for a higher level group, but targets the April 15 "special day". Stand Out, book #4, pp. 147-149</p>

Source: An EL/Civics State Leadership Project funded through P.L. 105-220 (Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Title II: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Section 222(a)(2) and 223) by the Colorado Department of Education, Center for At-Risk Education (CARE), Adult Education and Family Literacy, FY2002. Project developed by Spring Institute, Denver, Colorado.

**CIVICS BY THE  
CALENDAR**

**CLIP ART CUT SHEETS FOR MAJOR HOLIDAYS:  
THANKSGIVING**



turkey



family dinner



football



the Mayflower



cornucopia



harvest



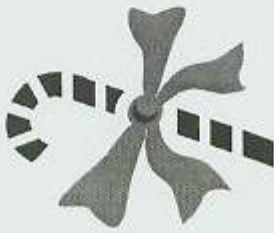



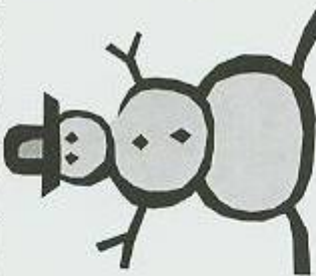



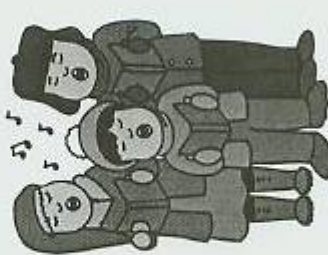
the Pilgrims





pumpkin pie



Native Americans

CIVICS BY THE CALENDAR	CLIP ART CUT SHEETS FOR MAJOR HOLIDAYS: CHRISTMAS	
 <p>candy cane</p>	 <p>Christmas tree</p>	 <p>wreath</p>
 <p>Christmas cookies</p>	 <p>snowman</p>	 <p>Santa Claus</p>
 <p>stocking</p>	 <p>presents or gifts</p>	 <p>carolers</p>

CIVICS BY THE CALENDAR	CLIP ART CUT SHEETS FOR MAJOR HOLIDAYS: NEW YEAR'S EVE	
 <p>champagne</p>	 <p>fireworks</p>	 <p>toast</p>
 <p>Baby New Year</p>	 <p>noisemaker</p>	 <p>midnight countdown</p>
 <p>party hats &amp; balloons</p>	 <p>Old Father Time</p>	 <p>New Year's kiss</p>

### Homework Ideas for Beginning Students

What kind of homework assignments can you give your beginning level students, particularly literacy-level students? Here are some suggestions that provided limited, do-able tasks for them. The ideas are mostly fun, and they should help bring your students in closer contact with the things going on all around them, as well as giving them focused language practice.

You can adapt these ideas to suit your class. Many of the TV ideas would be easy to adapt to a newspaper activity, which you could even do in class. And it would not be hard to make the assignments below more challenging for your intermediate or advanced students by increasing the number of things they can have to look for, for instance.

Write a list of items in your refrigerator.
Write the name of 3 streets that are near the street where you live.
Write the names of 4 TV stations.
Write the names of 2 radio stations (Hint: these names usually have letters and numbers).
There are many different kinds of soda pop, like Coca-Cola. Go to a grocery store and see how many names of soft drinks you can find.
Find out what days and what hours the library is open. Also, tell us how you found out.
Find out what days and what hours the post office is open. Also, tell us how you found out.
Find out 5 American names (first names) and how to spell them.
Find the names of 2 cars you like. Find the name of one car you do not like
Find the name of 2 supermarkets. Which one do you like better?
Find the name of 2 banks. Which one is closes to your home?
Write the name of a TV show you like. Write the name of a TV show you do not like.
Write the names of 10 items in your home.
Ask 3 neighbors (or co-workers) to tell you where they were born.
Find out the names of 3 movies.
Find 2 ads for shoes. How much do they cost?

*Source: Hands-on English, Volume 7., Number 4, November/December 1997 and Volume 11, Number 1, May/June 2001.*

# **Additional Resources**

## **On Parenting**

Parents as Educational Partners Curriculum

LEP Parent Involvement Project:  
A Guide for Connecting Immigrant Parents and Schools

Two Videos on Parenting

The ***Parents as Educational Partners Curriculum*** was developed and field-tested during a three-year family English literacy Title VII project funded by the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs. The Parents as Educational Partners (PEP) Project increased parent involvement and improved English language skills of language minority parents within school communities.

### COMPONENTS OF THE PEP PROJECT

The PEP Project was developed on the premise that *parent involvement is a process, not an event* (Davis, 1989). *Process* refers to the concept of building parent involvement through ongoing adult ESL education and interactive activities rather than through sporadically scheduled parent meetings or workshops. The PEP Project was designed to take language minority parents from the role of learners to the role of decision makers and advocates in their children's education through the following program components:

- ESL/Bilingual Classes for Parents (using the PEP Curriculum)
- Parent/Child Activities
- Parenting Workshops
- In-services on Parent Involvement for District School Teachers

**ESL/Bilingual Classes for Parents** focused on the content-based PEP Curriculum. The curriculum's school-related content helped parents understand their children's school experiences, as well as the schools' expectations of parents' roles. Participation in the classes also increased parents' communication skills in English, leading to greater school involvement. Participatory teaching techniques provided parents the opportunity to bring relevant educational issues into the ESL classroom for clarification or resolution. In the PEP classroom parents were not told what to do; instead they gained relevant information and explored the impact of their decisions. The PEP classroom, then, became a vehicle for fostering parents' involvement in their children's education.

Children services provided children 4-12 years old with homework assistance, learning activities, and supervised playtime while their parents attended the parent ESL/bilingual classes. The children services contributed to a strong, comprehensive family education program.

**Parent/Child Activities** supported the parents' in their role as educational partners. Parent/child activities were developed and carried out within a family strengths model which recognizes that all families bring positive characteristics to joint learning situations. These activities encouraged families to build on their healthy family traits while being actively engaged in learning activities. Positive family interaction during the learning process was stressed and supported. Parents were prepared in advance to take an instructional role in the parent/child activities.

## *Parenting*

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In addition to parent/child activities, family social nights were held to help build a community of parents. Decision-making and advocacy are accomplished more effectively through a community of parents than through individual efforts. Participation in social nights helped language minority parents feel less socially isolated from the other families in their children's schools.

**Parenting workshops** were designed to provide parents with additional support and information to strengthen their parental roles. The workshop topics were identified and prioritized by the parents and school personnel. Workshop topics included drugs, discipline, gangs, car/home safety, and family counseling.

**In-services on Parent Involvement for District School Teachers** facilitated the involvement of language minority parents by bringing their children's teachers into the process. Teachers attended a three-part in-service on parent involvement, which introduced them to different types of parent involvement activities and provided them with technical assistance as they developed activities supporting the involvement of their students' families.

PEP Project activities were held twice a week for two hours per evening. There were approximately 40 evenings offered each year. The ESL/Bilingual classes were the most frequently held activities offered on a less frequent basis; the parent/child activities were held twice a month and two or three parenting workshops were delivered each year.

Language and cultural differences, combined with school-home communication problems, can distance language minority parents from their children's schools. The PEP project provided the support such parents need to feel comfortable participating in school activities and their children's educational experiences. For these parents, the PEP Project was successful in bringing about change within their families and school communities.

*For more information about the PEP Project model and related training, contact Laura Bercovitz at the Adult Learning Resource Center, 1855 Mt. Prospect Road, Des Plaines, Illinois 60018, or call (847) 803-3535.*

## **LEP Parent Involvement Project: A Guide for Connecting Immigrant Parents and Schools**

This guide is a set of materials developed for use in adult education settings such as English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes, community-based organizations, and parent groups for the purpose of helping immigrant parents see themselves as active participants in their children's learning.

These materials are intended to meet the following goals:

- To build on what people already know from their experience as parents and caretakers in their own countries
- To help parents restore their vision of themselves as first and primary teachers (something often lost in the immigration process)
- To create opportunities for parents to explore similarities and differences between their new and native countries and to build bridges to link the two experiences
- To encourage parents to define and keep values and traditions which are meaningful parts of their culture

This guide is divided into the following six modules: Bridging Cultures; Schools Are Part of the Culture; Parents and Teachers; Discipline; Life at School; and Families. A User's Guide is also included.

*For more information, contact the author/creator: Diane Peacoraro, Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 1500 Highway 36 West, Roseville, MN 55113-4266. Tel: 651-582-8002, <http://cfl.state.mn.us>.*

**Amharic, Arabic, English, Hmong, Nuer, Oromo, Russian, Somali, and Spanish**

Two videos available in 9 languages

**You Can Talk to Your Child's School**

This educational video is designed for schools, teachers, community groups, etc., as a tool for encouraging refugee and immigrant parents to communicate with their children's school. The video focuses on the willingness of school personnel to meet with parents to discuss their child's education needs. The video includes sample conversations between parents and school staff.

*13 minutes, color VHS with subtitles, \$2.00 each*

Amharic	Stock No. 4-21
Arabic	Stock No. 4-4
English	Stock No. 4-1
Hmong	Stock No. 4-2
Nuer	Stock No. 4-12
Oromo	Stock No. 4-10
Russian	Stock No. 4-6
Somali	Stock No. 4-7
Spanish	Stock No. 4-3

**You Can Help Your Child in School**

This instructional video is designed for schools, teachers, community groups, etc., as a tool for use in communicating to refugee and immigrant parents. The video serves as a brief overview of the many facets of school which might be new or different for refugee and immigrant parents, including suggestions for what parents might do at home to support school learning.

*9 minutes, color VHS with subtitles, \$2.00 each*

Amharic	Stock No. 4-22
Arabic	Stock No. 4-31
English	Stock No. 4-8
Hmong	Stock No. 4-9
Nuer	Stock No. 4-28
Oromo	Stock No. 4-37
Russian	Stock No. 4-13
Somali	Stock No. 4-14
Spanish	Stock No. 4-11

Order from: Minnesota's Bookstore  
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St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 297-3000  
1-800-657-3757 (toll free)  
(651) 215-5733 (fax)  
(651) 282-5077 or 800-657-3706 (TTY)

# Assessment

# Assessing Pre-Literate and Non-Literate Learners

## **Designing Effective Assessment Activities**

Evaluation of the performance objectives should be "criterion-referenced", i.e. learners are evaluated on whether or not they can use language to perform the specified task within the conditions and criteria established by the objective.

Students are evaluated on their ability to use the language and life skill to complete a task in a novel situation, without assistance from the teacher or classmates. Good evaluation activities should:

- \* simulate real life tasks
- \* measure what has actually been taught and learned
- \* be practical in terms of administration time and necessary resources
- \* be reliable; someone else rating the learner should make the same decision as to the success/failure learner's performance, and
- \* be acceptable to learners as a valid activity.

In addition, the type of evaluation activity needs to match the language skill taught. The reading and writing development objectives and life skills objectives that require written language production can be evaluated individually with paper and pencil tasks (e.g. answering comprehension questions, writing essays, completing forms, writing checks or taking messages).

Tasks which require oral communication (i.e. oral life skills objectives) must be evaluated orally. However, individual assessment may not always be feasible given time constraints. Pair, small group and even whole group activities can sometimes be preferable in terms of usefulness as well as practicality.

## **Assessing Life Skill Performance Objectives**

Performance objectives provide the context within which students learn, practice, and are evaluated using language. Performance objectives:

- \* identify the task to be accomplished
- \* specify the conditions of the performance situation
- \* describe the language needed to perform the objective, and
- \* provide the criteria by which to judge success

Students should be evaluated on their ability to use the language and structures taught while completing the tasks stated in the performance objectives. The following chart describes how language is evaluated through performance objectives. Using this methodology along with the

level descriptions helps the teacher to determine whether a student is making gains in his/her language performance.

## Performance Objectives

COMPONENT PARTS	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
CONDITION	give context required	given a diagram of a supermarket and shelves
PERFORMANCE	name the action to be demonstrated	ask and answer questions
CRITERIA	describe the requirement for success	about the location of five items
LANGUAGE	language needed to complete the objective	vocabulary: food  structures: simple present tense, wh-questions,  preposition of location

## Evaluation Tools Chart

This tools chart provides suggested activities for evaluating individual learner achievement of oral performance objectives. All of the activities are teaching activities as well as/and should not be used for evaluation until learners are familiar with the technique. Most of the activities can be adapted for use at any level and with multi-level classes. These techniques are particularly effective in large classes where evaluation of individual achievement is challenging.

The tools are listed in the first column of the tools chart. Samples of the linked tools can be found in the learner needs assessment appendices or the techniques/or plans appendices. The technique column describes the technique. The logistics column describes how to set up the activity as an evaluation activity. The example column provides suggestions on appropriate life skills contexts.

## LIFESKILLS ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES CHART

TOOL	TECHNIQUE	LOGISTICS	EXAMPLES
<b>ROLE PLAY</b>	In an unrehearsed situation, learners take roles and perform them using practiced language.	<p>Several learners may be given roles in the situation if all roles have been practiced. Students not involved in the role play can complete a checklist analyzing their classmates' performances. Students can generate the checklist themselves.</p> <p>Several pairs can perform simultaneously. Teacher circulates, observes, and evaluates individual learners.</p>	<p>telephone conversations</p> <p>ask/answer questions about a housing ad</p> <p>job interview</p> <p>small talk</p>
<b>SIMULATION</b>	A role play in which the classroom set-up replicates a specific location.	See role play.	<p>grocery store aisles</p> <p>lost and found</p> <p>post office</p>
<b>INFORMATION GAP</b>	Each learner is given different information and must communicate with others to get all necessary information in order to complete a task.	Teacher observes individual pairs while the whole group moves through the activity. Students may be seated back to back or with a manila folder placed between them so that they can not see each other's information.	<p>maps</p> <p>schedules</p> <p>floor plans (house, store)</p>
<b>LINE DIALOGUE</b>	Two lines face each other. In one line, each person stays stationary with a cue card and asks an appropriate question. In the other line, each person responds and then moves on.	Teacher stands at one end of the lineup and observes individual pairs while the whole group moves through the activity. One line could also be seated while second line rotates, e.g. telephones.	<p>prices</p> <p>health/housing problems</p> <p>returning merchandise</p> <p>personal ID</p>

<b>LIFESKILLS ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES CHART</b>			
<b>TOOL</b>	<b>TECHNIQUE</b>	<b>LOGISTICS</b>	<b>EXAMPLES</b>
<b>LEARNER TO LEARNER INTERVIEWS</b>	Learners ask each other questions necessary to fill out a form, information grid, or questionnaire.  Appropriate when students have practiced both asking and answering questions.	Many interviews can happen simultaneously while the teacher observes different pairs. Teacher may take one of the roles and circulate along with the students.	personal identification occupations likes/dislikes opinions
<b>CONTACT ASSIGNMENT</b>	Learners are given an assignment to accomplish outside of classroom/school environment. Learners must show proof of accomplishment.	Activity needs to be carefully structured so that it is clear who has/has not accomplished the task.	leave a message buy a fare card/ token call a recorded message to get information obtain a library card
<b>DEMONSTRATED PERFORMANCE</b>	Learners perform tasks according to directions. Tasks are not context-dependent. Total Physical Response (TPR) tests receptive skills.	Learners may be organized into small groups or teams with one person performing at a time. In practice rounds, team members act as coaches. In final rounds, no assistance is allowed.	follow instructions from doctor/supervisor produce correct change take a telephone message
<b>APPROPRIATE RESPONSE</b>	Given short situations or social formulae, learners produce appropriate responses.	The same situations may be given to several learners and each must produce plausible response. All learners may be asked to stand and once they have given an appropriate response, they may sit down.	You are leaving class early. What do you say?  Your co-worker looks sick. What do you say?

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