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Teacher Reflections

Building resilience for lifelong learning By Lisa Hall

Longitudinal perspectives on adult literacy development and program impact By Stephen Reder

2015 vol: 38 # 2

fine
print

valbec 

a journal of adult english language and literacy education

Publication Details

Fine Print is published by the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council Inc. (VALBEC). The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Fine Print editorial group or VALBEC.

Fine Print is the registered journal of VALBEC: ISSN No: 0519-3978

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Cover image: pixabay CC.

Illustration: Biancha Raffin

Layout: Digital Environs, Melbourne.

Printing: Ability Press, Keysborough, Victoria.

Editorial, advertising and subscription enquiries: info@valbec.org.au

VALBEC acknowledges the financial support of the ACFE Board

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Editorial

The themes of 'significant others in life and learning' and 'learning journeys' has inspired a bevy of moving and motivational stories. Behind each story are myriad spoken words and experiences, now recorded on paper. The voice of each writer comes through strongly, in the heartfelt portrayal of a significant person or persons who have influenced them in their learning journey, whether as a young person or an adult. Throughout the stories is the inherent thread of the transformational power of education.

This diverse selection of writing represents a wide range of life experiences and learning contexts from across metropolitan and regional Victoria, and from countries around the world. Unfortunately, we were not able to include all the stories and thank all those teachers and students who submitted their stories for consideration.

It is important for the adult language and literacy sector to continue to provide a forum for the 'student voice'. Just as it is important in a democratic society that the voice of the oppressed and disenfranchised be heard in the media and broader society. Beverley Campbell reflects on the power of the spoken and written word to enhance understanding of what it means to be human, especially in times of adversity.

Resilience has many definitions and is more commonly linked to a community's capacity to overcome trauma or catastrophe. Resilience for the individual can be seen as more of a dynamic process that incorporates attributes such as persistence, being adaptable and a capacity to cope with changing environments. Lisa Hall's research illustrates how awareness of resilience factors in program design and delivery have made a significant difference to Indigenous learners' experiences of further study. Their voices speak of the importance of the support of others, a safe learning environment and the role of friendship in learning.

There is a growing body of research on the contribution, in both economic and social terms, of participation in adult language and literacy programs. Stephen Reder's article provides insights that resonate with the preceding teachers' reflections and student stories. Each individual has a life journey that is impacted by life events and opportunities over extended periods of time. There are no quick fixes, despite what policy and funding bodies may determine. The challenge, as Stephen puts it 'is to find ways to recognize the difference between program accountability and program impact evaluation'.

How do we know whether our students' lives are transformed by education over the longer term? How do we ensure that adult education engenders agency for our students to determine their learning pathways? Perhaps recording their stories is one way to provide some permanence in our rapidly changing world.

Lynne Matheson



The Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC) aims to lead the adult literacy field through identifying issues of importance to practitioners and facilitating positive change. This is achieved through networking, professional support, the sharing of information and the promotion of best practice.

Significant others in life and learning

Parents and other family members play significant roles in how we develop as individuals. They influence the formation of values that we take with us throughout life. Each writer has paid tribute to loved ones and drawn on life experiences which have shaped them in their life and learning.



Inspiration: illustration by Bianca Raffin

Inspiration

By Shuman Rai

We all know the importance of encouragement. Encouragement is like inspiration and everybody needs encouragement. It feels good and it provides support. In my life my inspirational person is my mum. She helps and supports me in every step of my life. I can't imagine my life without my mum.

She is the most loveable person in my life. I know she did not get the chance to study but she is my hero. I am always thankful for the love, care and support she gives me. She always encourages me to do the right thing and never to get into bad company.

Nowadays, education is an essential part of life and people know that without good education we can't get a good job and a high salary. In my life, education plays a huge role. It teaches me about discipline, how to respect our elders and how to love small kids. I will never forget the way my mum cares for me. I will always be grateful because she helped me and is the inspiration of my study.

Shuman Rai is a student in the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) 3 program at Bendigo Kangan institute.

My greatest teacher

By Ala'a Al-Ebady

For a long time, when I was a child, my father taught me reading and writing in Arabic. He bought magnetic letters with pictures. I was happy with them so I learnt very quickly. After six or eight months, I became a good reader and writer. I started reading my first book when I was five years old. It was *The Oldest Human* and I still remember most of the words from that book.

I really honour my father because he was, and remains, my first and greatest teacher. My father enjoyed reading health books and magazines and he liked to read English while he worked in the harbour in the port city of Basra, Iraq. I will never forget those days all my life. I will always be forever grateful for my greatest teacher, my father.

Ala'a Al-Ebady is a student in the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) 3 program at Bendigo Kangan institute.

Learning from others

By David Walker

Mum taught me how to cook and my grandpa taught me to play golf. My dad taught me about family values. My big brother taught me to travel by train and it was good for me. My youngest brother taught me to stay away from fights. My big sister got me a job and my little sister taught me to babysit and it was good fun. All the family taught me something.

David Walker is a student in the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program: Certificate I in General Education for Adults at Wyndham Community and Education Centre.

Significant others in my life and learning

By Amanda Ashley

My mum and dad have been the greatest encouragement in my learning. A friend of mine, who was in the same class as me, used to say, 'Never give up, keep learning'. He taught me how to stand up for myself.



Amanda Ashley at Olympic Adult Education

The benefits of learning for me are; it is important to be able to get a job and to get better with my skills. Being able to teach my nephew and niece makes me want to learn more.

Moving school and being bullied at school were difficult for me. Reading, writing and numeracy open doors for work and other opportunities and help me use technology.

Amanda Ashley is a student in Building Literacy: Certificate I in General Education for Adults at Olympic Adult Education.

My precious father

By Shorook El Ashqar

When I was a child, I sat with my brothers and sisters to listen to the stories of my father, talking about his life when he was small, his adventures and his challenges. I listened to him eagerly for sweet stories, difficult and sad, with some little happiness. Most of his life was difficult and tough. However, I could see his beautiful smiling face which spoke with confidence, pride and love.

My grandfather died when my father was five years old. He left my father and his brother with a huge responsibility for his mother and his little sisters. My father left school early and worked. After a while his mother left her sons and married another man. This left him with an unknown fate. He went with his older brother to live with his uncle's

family. He didn't go to school or get educated; it was an impossible dream.

My father was so passionate about education. He was very clever. He read a lot of books after a long period of suffering. He travelled with my mother and started a new life in Kuwait. The first concern of my father was to provide education for his six children. My older brother studied mathematics in America. My sister studied physics in Jordan. I studied business administration in Iraq.

My father always says, 'Studying and education are the most rewarding way to get a better life'.

Shorook El Ashqar is a student in the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) 3 program at Bendigo Kangan institute.

The person who I admire in my life

By HoungVo

I would like to say the significant people of my life is my family. The main influence on me to study is my mother. She is a good mother, she takes care of the children and teaches the children the right way. But I went wrong way and now I'm thinking back to the past. I would like to get more education so that I will go the right way, to have and show my heart's respect for my mother.

HoungVo is a student in Certificate I in Spoken and Written English at Tarrengower Campus Bendigo TAFE.

My father

By Nga Pham

My father was genuine and caring. He was always concerned for all his children and other people around too. My parents have ten children, so they used to work hard to get money for our food and our education costs.

My father was at home doing cooking, cleaning and looking after us. Therefore I am very close to my father. When I was a little girl, I never forgot what he did for me, like the way he dressed me. He brushed my hair and tied it back, then he took me to school by bicycle every morning.

In the cold weather he had to boil hot water to clean my face and afterwards he made my breakfast.

When I was not very well, he cared for me very much. He was always happy, easy going and kind to everyone. So I have learned a lot from him. My father taught me to be good to people, then people will love me back. Also it makes it easy for everyone then, I have peace in my mind. My father had simple ideas but very valuable. I love and admire my father always. My father passed away, but he is always in my heart.

Nga Pham is a student in Certificate I in Spoken and Written English at Tarrengower Campus Bendigo TAFE.

A powerful grandmother

By Ghassan Fatoohi

I called her my grandmother, but she was my father's aunt. Her name was Bidoor. In the 1970s, I was a child starting to understand life. I was an active child, so it was hard for anybody to control me. My grandmother visited us often. Because my father loved and respected her so much he never said no to her. When my father didn't agree to something I wanted, I went straight to her and she told my father to agree.

The amazing thing about my grandmother, who was born in the 1890s, was that at that time in Iraq like many countries, women did not go to school. Somehow she received a good education, so she taught me that books are important. That helped me look for education and changed my life as I grew up.

Ghassan Fatoohi is a student in the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) 3 program at Bendigo Kangan institute.

Significant others in my life and learning

By Anna Qi

When I was seven years old, my mum put me in a boarding school. I had never left her before for a whole day. Although at this time, I could come back during the day, I cried very



Students at Pines Learning

badly. The teacher called my mum who came and told me why she was sending me to this good school and how many things I could learn.

She gave me lots of examples. I still remember my mum's words, 'You are rubbish if you have no knowledge. You are a useful person if you have a good education'. My mum told me that my father was still learning something even though he was a commander and I should be like my father and study hard.

I understood that and told my mum I would study hard from that day. I became a really good student and got a lot of rewards. I hoped I could become an engineer. But when the Cultural Revolution started, I lost my good education for a long time. This happened not only to me but for all Chinese young people.

My father and mother were very good at reading and writing but they were not very good at numeracy, so they wanted for me to be good in this area. I am enjoying learning more English now and improving in all areas.

Anna Qi is a student in Reading and Writing for Further Study at Pines Learning.

My father

By Lachakan Chuaychandee

I remember when I was young, my father was a hard worker who always had a job to provide for his family. He was a kind man and always gave time when he came home from a full day of work, to play with his children before he had eaten.

When he had to move to work in Saudi Arabia, it was a sad time for us. My mother told us to be brave as there was no work in Thailand for him to earn enough money. He wanted us to have a more comfortable life.

On his return from Saudi Arabia, he invested in a pig farm. We helped him with the work making us realise how much he loved us by working in the day time and night time to provide for his family. My sister and I admired that he worked hard, loved us and provided everything for us.

He always made us study, reading and writing, especially English, for us to get good jobs. Later in life, which I realise now, this was very smart of him, as I was able to get a good job after we finished school. I think a lot about him and how he always encouraged us to be good living people and always be friendly with everybody. He was a very good man who we all loved and admired very much.

Lachakan Chuaychandee is a student in the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) 3 program at Bendigo Kangan institute.

Learning from others

By John Walker

The first teacher I can remember is Mrs Grills. I was five or six years old and she taught me how to write my name. When I left home at 16, I stayed at a hostel and I had to pay rent, so I learned how to budget.

Grandpa taught me how to catch eels with a hand line. He showed me how to do it, using just a string and a stick with some meat for bait.

John Walker is a student in the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program: Certificate I in General Education for Adults at Wyndham Community and Education Centre.

People I've learned from

By Reg Nash

My good friend is a great artist and he showed me his paintings. He talked about how he mixed all the colours. It was really interesting. I enjoyed learning about the

different colours. Now I really enjoy mixing different colours.

Reg Nash is a student in the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program: Certificate I in General Education for Adults at Wyndham Community and Education Centre.

Good hearts

By Den Nguyen

I would like to say the significant people of my life are my children. They influence me to study hard. I was born in

Vietnam and I lived in a small island. The town I lived in was poor. I have not been to school, although I really like to go to school. Luckily for me I am here in Australia, and now I am in Tarrengower, I have the opportunity to study English.

The teachers have a good heart and are patient to teach me, who didn't know any word of English and also not much Vietnamese language. I would like to say thank you to my teachers. Good hearts of my teachers encourage me to study English.

Den Nguyen is a student in Certificate I in Spoken and Written English at Tarrengower Campus Bendigo TAFE.

My journey through education

By Lindsay Howell

My daughter has not only encouraged me in my learning, but also has helped me to think about what I want for my future. The other person that has influenced my life is the late General Eva Burrows, AC, a retired Salvation Army pastor, who after her retirement chose to return to university. She obtained three degrees in theology, but also at age 75 she chose to take up painting.

My decision to return to school after 35 years to improve my maths has been the best decision for me in a very long time, in fact I am really loving it. I am learning lots of new things and have also have made some new friends.

My grandchildren are all being my role models at their young ages of two, three and six. My late wife, whose illness put a strain on me both physically and mentally, along with my late parents, all had a role in my learning, and in who I am today. The use of technology, both mobile phone and computers, has helped me along the way, especially in taking and uploading photos.

Lindsay Howell is a student in Building Literacy: Certificate I in General Education for Adults at Olympic Adult Education.

My journey

By Trynh Pham

My family came from Vietnam in 1984, hoping to find a good life and a better education for the children. My parents taught us to have a positive attitude toward education. I had hard time at school due to the language barrier and racism. I was often in trouble at school. I left school when I was 16 and had my son, without my parent's support. I completed Year 11, VCE by correspondence and then an apprenticeship in office administration.

I made some poor decisions, which led to my incarceration. It was a world that would turn my life upside down, but it had some very positive consequences. I have discovered a previously unknown talent for the creative arts and have met many genuine people such as teachers, officers, Catholic Church people, visitors from Prison Fellowship and prison program organisers. Their encouragement has given me the belief that I can do anything, and has instilled

a strong work ethic, which will help me in life. Sadly, I did not have this help in society, and I am extremely grateful for their support.

When I was 16, I did not value education, but my life experiences have taught me how important it is to have knowledge and to develop skills. This has helped me to develop self-confidence. I am a lot stronger than I thought I was, more sure of who I am, what I want in life and what I expect in life. I am definitely less naive. I've wised up.

Trynh Pham is a student in the Certificate III in Spoken and Written English at Tarrengower Campus Bendigo TAFE.

This is how I roll

By Katherine Prasad

I am a mother of four, also a grandmother of six. I have had some hard times in my life, however I decided that I needed to go back to school to learn my numeracy and literacy as I had forgotten what I'd learned many years ago.

I spoke to my children and my friend Liz and I received nothing but praise and encouragement and good luck wishes from them. I was always telling my children that education was very important, not only for their self-esteem but also for getting a better job and having confidence in yourself.

Now I keep telling myself why I need to get a better education. I was never very good with maths so coming back as an adult has taught me that it's never too late to learn. My reason for wanting to come back to school is I would like to pass the entrance exam into nursing and become a full time enrolled nurse.

Katherine Prasad is a student in Mastering Literacy: Certificate II in General Education for Adults at Olympic Adult Education.

A reason to learn

By Dennis Shum

Somebody once told me, 'English is not too hard to learn and very useful in our world at the moment'. So I went

back to school and I studied English—reading, writing and talking. Step by step, I think I can learn something.

Anyway, English is not easy to learn. Sometimes it is so hard for me. But I still keep learning English and try to do my best. I just keep on.

My teacher told me to write down my story about who influenced me on my educational journey. It is because of my granddaughter. She is growing up. She is two years old. Her English is good, and because it is her first language, she sometimes corrects me!

I want to be close to her and be a friend with her. I must speak English a bit well and make sure I can talk with her and discuss things with her. She is my reason, she pushes me to learn English.

Dennis Shum is a student in ALBE, Certificate in General Education for Adults Intro / I at Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre.

The people in my life

By Danny Learmont

My mum has been a big influence and encourager to me. We do a lot of things together that help me, such as paying bills over the phone, food shopping and saving money.

My first teacher, Catherine O'Farrell was a positive influence on me and was a fantastic example of how important learning is even though her writing sloped on the board. I wouldn't be where I am now if it wasn't for her.

For me, the reasons I want to learn are to improve my skills and learn new skills to help others, as I like a challenge. I have been helping my mum with her U3A work on the computer.

The hard thing for me was being teased at school as I was slow and my writing was messy. My teacher used to rip up my work and make me do it again and not let me have lunch till it was done. I did a night literacy class and had to stop learning when my brother died in 1999 and then my dad died in 2005.

After we moved to Heidelberg Heights, one of my mum's



Danny Learmont at Olympic Adult Education

friends told her about Olympic Adult Education. She took me for an interview and I was put into Building Literacy and I have never looked back because the support of all my teachers has been great. For me being able to read and write has raised my self-esteem.

Danny Learmont is a student in Mastering Literacy: Certificate II in General Education for Adults at Olympic Adult Education.

My experience as a student

By Anne Yang

When I was young I was not a good student. I liked to play with things I was interested in. Even though I always finished my homework, it was not enough.

When I was in college, we had to have exams each week and the results were not good. My parents told me that I must study hard. I must go to a good high school, a good university. I must be conscientious, to win step by step. Just like climbing a high mountain.

School rated the students in order of grades and posted the results at the back of the room. Every exam was a race,

no-one was accepted as a loser. This feeling followed me through to graduation.

Now I can go back and look at things my own way, I have lost a lot, such as my own ideas, my innovation. On the other hand, I have learned much, such as toughness and persistence.

Anne Yang is a student in Reading and Writing for Further Study at Pines Learning.

A sacred place

By Masoumeh Ahmadi

In May 2012, I came to Australia by boat. I had a hard life in Iran. I decided to pass the dangerous sea to come here first and then bring my children. Now the law is changed and I still wait for my children to come. I am sad and depressed.

I tried a few times to study English and I would leave and be sad because of my life. Then I came to Chisholm to study. I saw my teacher and I was interested in English. I talk to my teacher and my teacher listens to me. Some days I feel that I don't want to go to school, but I know I will see my teacher and then I go.

Now I'm glad I decided to come back to school. I come every day to understand English better. School for me is a sacred place and I'm very grateful for that.

Masoumeh Ahmadi is a student in the Certificate II in EAL at Chisholm Institute.

My life of learning

By Tae Needham

I remember when I was eleven years old, my family and I went to my auntie's wedding in another city. On the way back, we saw an American hitchhiker and we stopped and gave him a lift. I sat with him at the back of the truck and tried to speak English with him. After we dropped him off, I really wanted to learn how to speak English better!

At my secondary school I always played a scrabble game



Masoumeh Ahmadi (second from right) with fellow students at Chisholm Institute

and went to competition but came second or third place. My English subject was always my best subject. I finished Commercial College at 18 years old and I went to University for one year until my dad died. I started to work and study at the same time. After a year, I was really good at my job and earned quite good money. I worked really long hours and didn't have time to continue my study so I stopped.

I worked in customer service and some of my customers were from overseas. I started to speak English more with my customers. I wanted to study more English because I got to know more foreigners and gradually spoke more English.

I returned to studying English because I wanted to improve my writing and I always wanted to return to university. I haven't given up on my dream yet!

Tae Needham is a student in Reading and Writing for Further Study at Pines Learning.

My journey learning

By Kimberly

My family, friends and teachers have been the greatest encouragers in my learning. My psychologist, Tom, has helped me with my depression and anxiety and given me techniques to manage these things so that I can focus better on my learning. Learning is benefitting me by improving my skills for myself and work, especially spelling and grammar.

The things in my life that have been important in my

learning are my family, work and being organised. The things that have been difficult in my learning have been getting teased and bullying, as well as health and family issues.

It's important to be able to read and write so that I can help my family and friends and also improving myself.

Kimberly is a student in Building Literacy: CGEA I at Olympic Adult Education.

The angels who changed my life with their generosity

By Seyed Majid Mousavi

My parents encouraged me to do my best when I commenced my education. As you know, all new students are under pressure to conform when they start their education. Although my parents only completed primary school, as was the custom of that time, they talked positively to encourage their children.

For instance, when there was a barrier in my way, they inspired me to put it away. Even though they only studied

for five years, they believed that education was the key to the future. It's good to know about math, science, physics, art, astronomy, algebra but it depends on what you are looking for and they may not be enough to learn. Sometimes you need to know some extra and fundamental things that just belong to your own conscience and dignity.

My parent's behaviour toward people was the best lesson for me and they are my superheroes. They will remain in my heart forever. Everyone has two hands for writing, driving, fishing and lots of things but sometimes we forget that we have two hands to hold others' hands that are empty of help to make life more beautiful.

In fact, life has already put some obstacles in our way. We will never give up because FAIL means 'First Attempt In Learning'. If you get NO as an answer, remember NO means 'Next Opportunity'. So let's all be positive. I learnt these things from the angels who raised me.

Seyed Majid Mousavi is a student in the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) 3 program at Bendigo Kangan institute.

Tia Senhora

By Amalia Grimaldi

This story evokes a time and place through the lens of childhood memories. The mystery and character of Tia Senhora may resonate with readers' own recollections of family.

Shuttered windows revealed family worries because of a serious children's disease. In the period after the Second World War, in the mid-fifties, chickenpox was an epidemic in my city. My family's house was a Spanish colonial building, in Salvador, the capital city of Bahia in northern Brazil. It had eight small windows, a long noisy wooden staircase and downstairs was my father's bakery.

My mother sent a letter to her sister, Tia Senhora, asking for help because of the chickenpox epidemic. Tia Senhora lived in a small seaside village down south. My parents told me she could perform miracles, just as I was feverishly praying for the chickenpox marks to disappear from my face.

At that time, my five siblings and I were not sent to school for many days, to avoid possibly contaminating other students. The dry crust of old blisters were the visible marks of the disease on our skin. This was the major evidence of our secret and there was no point in hiding it. In a time before an appropriate vaccine, the authorities were worried about public health. Not until much later did vaccines become mandatory in Brazil.

One rainy Sunday, a telegram arrived; Tia Senhora would come to stay with us. My father asked his friend to pick her up down at the sea port in the city. His friend had a small imported car, a green Skoda. The next evening at nightfall, I could see through the dimming light a slim silhouette.

Finally, Tia Senhora had arrived with 'arms and baggage!'



She hugged us and brought sweet presents for us: coconut candies and fabric dolls. We were very excited. My mum was very happy and they chatted all night. At that time, we had a shortage of electric power and we usually played making ghostly shadows on the walls. After ten o'clock the city was cloaked in darkness and the German submarines were thought to be spying along the coast.



As I remember, my aunt Tia Senhora was of a mature age and had never married. She had bright black eyes framed by dense silvery hair, tied up in a bun. She was a slightly bizarre but sophisticated old lady. She loved to be among children. She delighted us by enthusiastically decorating the kitchen shelves. She would cut long strips of wrapping paper into precious shapes. She would fold up the paper and when she opened it, it was like an accordion, an amazing thing. Flowers and little cats just popped up.

Tia Senhora was a legend due to her spiritual prophecies and her 'surgical skills'. She had the knack of performing surgical operations on the birds of our henhouse, with turkeys and chickens serving as guinea pigs. She spared only the rooster. These operations were occasionally successful, but unfortunately most were not.

Thus, a convenient explanation about the spiritual world of divination may have been a pretext for her operations. However, my father was very sceptical about the value of the killings. In contrast, my mother was somehow convinced that the killings were for a just purpose. Perhaps Tia Senhora might have been a brilliant surgeon in another incarnation. Thus, the trail of bird's feathers have left a stain on the patio stones of my childhood memories of Tia Senhora.

Amalia Grimaldi is a student in Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG) program, Further Study, Level 3 at Melbourne Polytechnic.

A special place

These poems were written by a class of Course in EAL students in the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) Program at Melbourne Polytechnic, Epping Campus.



Melbourne is blue and bright
It sounds like singing and dancing
It smells like flowers
It tastes like spring rolls
Melbourne is freedom.

By Rita Mansour

Bitola is yellow and red
It tastes like tomatoes
It smells like pizza
It sounds like music
Bitola is far away.

By Vera Korras

Queensland is green and white
It sounds like birds
It tastes like mangoes
It smells like waves and sea salt
Queensland is happiness.

By Ly Thi Truong

Italy is terracotta
It sounds like music
It tastes like pizza and spaghetti
It smells like a beach
Italy is a special place to live
Life is beautiful, people are nice and very friendly.

By Claudia Rivelli

Phnom Penh is yellow green
It sounds like dogs
It lasts like mangoes
It smells like soy sauce and jackfruit
Phnom Penh is happiness and worry.

By Chhon



Teacher reflections

Learning on the job

By Liz Iacono

How do you keep your approach to teaching writing fresh and engaging? This is a perennial question that Liz Iacono tackles with a mix of classic instruction and process methods.

I have been teaching reading and writing at Pines Learning for three years now. During this time, there have been two or three returning students whose writing journey I have been able to observe. However, for the most part, there is a regular turnover of students who come and go for various reasons, and some of them are only with us for a semester.

It is therefore difficult to observe transformations in students who spend a brief period of time with us. As for those who have been with us for some time, the transformations have been gradual rather than revolutionary. Many students have blossomed and have increased in confidence. Progress has often been achieved through hard work, writing regularly and persistence.

Over the years, I have aimed to inspire and build confidence by helping my students to find their voice. If I have succeeded in this fundamental aspect of teaching, it is through treating each student individually, rather than as one of a group.

I have a diverse group of students, not only in terms of cultural, but also in educational backgrounds. Whenever I ask them to perform common tasks, I try to assess each piece of work relative to the student's capabilities as well as how it compares to the class. I believe in also challenging them to do a little more each time.

Some students come to the class lacking in confidence, with a checkered schooling history. I try to help them rebuild it by acknowledging each effort, however small, with a view to improving. At first we work from a basis of familiarity and knowledge by attempting to find out where their strengths and interests lie. The students are then guided to write about subjects that are newly introduced to them in class, through perhaps a reading activity. With encouragement and positive feedback they will try even harder.

Fortunately, my students do not require motivating as they have usually chosen a writing class because they want to



Liz Iacono (standing) with a student at Pines Learning

improve their skills, for various professional or personal reasons. Writing about subjects of interest and familiarity is motivating but the challenge is often to get them to write about new things. The difficulty can also lie in the mechanics of writing. Writing is often the last skill to be acquired and the hardest to master.

One way in which I have changed my approach this year is to treat writing initially as a process and a practice, rather than producing a polished result. When I was new to this class, I prepared for class by re-reading guides on teaching writing and gathering resources to draw on, from time to time. I taught students the mechanics of writing, such as using connectors and organizing paragraphs. In other words, I followed the classic approach of teaching writing.

We would prepare the writing in class and I would ask students to write up their final version at home, ready to hand in the next week. I found that over time, the same diligent students, who also attended regularly, did their homework. However, the rest often did not, as they attended irregularly and were difficult to pin down or to make progress.

I have chosen a different tack and now get the students to write most weeks in class, aiming for fluency and for less quantity to begin with. I might get students to write one paragraph summarizing a newspaper article of their choice, or a news item they have watched. However, I still aim to return to the traditional approach, hoping to improve on my teaching practices. The main idea to start with is to get them used to writing less but more often.

This will enable them to extend to greater length and improve gradually.

The significant influences on my teaching and learning practices have been many and varied. Often it has been from colleagues, not only through teachers' meetings and professional development more formally, but also informally in casual exchanges over lunch or a coffee. I might hear about an idea or approach that has worked and take these ideas on board. I have also learned through volunteering and observing, which have given invaluable insights.

Shaping up my life

By Jelena Petronijevic

Reflection on our life experiences is an integral component of adult language, literacy and numeracy teaching practice. For Jelena Petronijevic, her experiences as a migrant enable her to empathise with her students and provide insights to Australian society and culture.

I came to Australia in 2008 and at that time could not express myself in English as I wanted to, which I found frustrating. I enrolled in English as a Second Language and I studied hard. After three years in Australia, I became an English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher. I started working at Foundation College, Chisholm Institute in Dandenong, where I still work today.

My students come from broad demographic and economically challenging areas. Most of them have no, or very little, formal education. My role as a teacher starts even before I introduce them to the EAL course. I need to get them into the 'ready to learn' mode, which can be things like prompting on how to hold a pen, working on their time awareness or helping them to manage their schoolwork and home life.

Being a migrant myself has definitely helped me to connect better with my students and made an impact on my teaching. I remind my students that once upon a time I was one of them. That I was sitting in the classroom, trying to understand the logic behind the phrasal verbs, articles and the art of communicating in English. I use that powerful image to stress that you can be whatever you want to be, if you put your mind to it. I see on their faces admiration and hope. And I love what I see, because

In summary, complacency is probably the enemy of progress and learning. I hope I will continue to learn by attempting new things, by checking back regularly to the Needs Analysis we complete with our students, to make sure I am on track, and by trying to keep the classes relevant and fresh.

Liz Iacono is an EAL teacher at Pines Learning.



Jelena (right) with student, Masoumeh Ahmadi

I know that they will go home thinking that they can achieve in this country.

This year I teach Certificate I in EAL and it is always busy in our classroom. We work hard: we calculate, we read, we write, we role play, we work in groups, we play games and we laugh. We laugh a lot! Some of my students come to school weighed down with migrant's worries and shaky hopes. I make sure that they laugh in my class and that they smile when they go home.

From my experiences, I have learned that integration into Australian society happens not just through learning English, but also through learning about things around

you. Learning about Australia is hard and most of our students struggle to do so. They might improve their language abilities but they tend to get stuck in their own communities. That may lead to depression and a constant or unhealthy comparison with their own countries.

I make sure that they hear, see and learn a lot about Australian life. I include activities that take them out into the city and into the wider community. I give them homework like going to IKEA and to describe favourite things that they have seen. I ask my Afghani ladies to pick an AFL team according to colours or pictures they like. I organise a mock sweep for Melbourne Cup Day. I try to give them some knowledge and a taste of Australia, so they widen their horizons and open themselves to the

beauties of Australia. And they come back to school excited by what they see and hear: 'Teacher, I heard on the news Richmond Tigers!'

My students inspire me and 'shape up my life'. Never before had I listened to the Iranian singer, Mohsen Namjoo, or made Indian chapatti bread for dinner. My favourite movie is *The Kite Runner* and I dine with my friends in Chok Dee, a local Thai restaurant. My students are the reason why I go into my classroom with a big smile on my face, and I know I am one of the reasons they leave the classroom with big smiles on their faces.

Jelena Petronijevic is an EAL teacher at Chisholm Institute.

Building resilience for lifelong learning

By Lisa Hall

This research examined how resilience is a key determinant of success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-tertiary students who successfully complete the Preparation for Tertiary Success (PTS) program through the Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Education (ACIKE). The students developed academic skills as well as lifelong learning skills that will influence their future career pathways and in turn, those of others.

What is resilience?

Resilience is increasingly acknowledged as a key component in education and student academic success. There is evidence that academic success directly connects to resilience for Indigenous students (Martin 2006). It should not be seen as a stand-alone skill but as a dynamic process that is built through the interconnected interaction of lots of different skills, strategies and experiences (Rutter 1990, in Fleming & Ledogar 2008, p.3). It is a combination of intrinsic personal protective factors and extrinsic processes (Martin 2006). The following intrinsic and extrinsic factors emerge that combine to build student resilience.

Intrinsic factors

Student learning identity

Martin (2006) states that relatively speaking, Indigenous students have a lower academic self-concept. One of the barriers to Indigenous students gaining a positive academic self-concept is the historical construct of an education system in Australia that has not taken into account students' cultural values. Finding ways to help students explore, re-examine and re-define their own learning identity requires a great deal of resilience.

Student's ability to shift in their thinking

One of the most powerful ways to create learning identity resilience is to allow students to develop a greater awareness about learning in general, that supports them to shift in their own thinking. Richardson (2002, in Fleming & Ledogar 2008, p. 6) talks about this as 'resilient reintegration' when a person gains some insight or growth as a reaction to some stress or adversity that 'results in the identification or strengthening of resilient qualities'. Students can use 'resilient reintegration' to turn previous negative experiences about learning into a positive experience.

Engagement and motivation

The importance of students being able to see where they are going, having a passion for what they are doing, being interested and challenged, all impact on their learning.



PTS students with Lisa Hall (far right)

Martin (2006) points out that Indigenous student motivation and achievement has strong connection to consideration of their cultural background and history of the culture, elements that are often ignored or minimised by mainstream education.

Extrinsic factors

Pedagogy, curriculum design and teaching

Howard et al (1996) argue that curriculum and pedagogic practices need to be re-examined because these practices unconsciously make it more difficult for some students to learn than others. Both Fogarty & White (1994) and McInerney (2001) identify a conflict between the values and goals of schools and the values and goals of Indigenous students. So the pedagogical, methodological and curricular choices that we make as teachers and institutions have a major impact on how resilient and successful our students are capable of being.

Philosophy—What is valued

What is valued in a learning environment is also a powerful extrinsic factor that affects student learning. In the case of Indigenous students, often who they are and what they bring in terms of existing knowledge is not valued, leading teachers and institutions to have low expectations about what they can achieve. It has long been acknowledged that when teachers establish high (or low) expectations for children socially and academically, it is said to affect children's behaviour in the direction of the expectation (Rosenthal & Jacobson 1968). Thus teachers who set high

expectations for children are more likely to realize high levels of accomplishment (Howard, Mc Laughlin and Vacha 1996).

Indigenous academics such as Chris Sarra (2014) suggest that this explicit naming and grounding in 'high expectation' is the transformative step needed for Indigenous learners. He names 'deficit thinking' as the opposite to 'high expectations' and suggests that for too long educators, educational institutions and students themselves have had a 'deficit thinking' model when it comes to Indigenous learners. A key aspect of this is the ability of the teachers and institutions to value and incorporate the strong Indigenous Knowledge base that these students bring with them into any new learning.

Supportive Relationships

The student-teacher relationship is often cited as a key factor in academic success. Penno (2013) states that student-teacher relationships form a vital part of the supportive networks that enable student success. Chris Sarra pushes this idea further saying that supportive relationships are not enough. He reframes this relationship as needing to be one of 'high expectations', stating that:

High expectations relationships honour the humanity of others, and in so doing, acknowledge one's strengths, capacity, and human right to emancipatory opportunity (Sarra 2014, p 7).

Cultural safety and creating a safe space

Deakin-Crick and others (2004) state that learners who are resilient:

...like a challenge, and are willing to 'give it a go' even when the outcome and the way to proceed are uncertain. They accept that learning is sometimes hard for everyone, and are not frightened of finding things difficult. They have a high level of 'stickability', and can readily recover from frustration. They are able to 'hang in' with learning even though they may, for a while, feel somewhat confused or even anxious. They don't mind making mistakes every so often, and can learn from them (p 255).

Often the thing that defines whether Indigenous students are willing to 'give it a go' and take risks is the level of cultural safety they feel. In Bin-Sallik (2003), cultural safety is defined as:

...an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together. (Williams 1999, pp.213, in Bin Salik 2003)

So the willingness and ability of the institution and the teachers to create a space that is culturally safe for Indigenous students also has a big impact on their resilience and success.

Teachers can't necessarily build resilience by focusing on resilience but by instead ensuring that the pedagogy and learning experiences are well designed, accessible, achievable, challenging and transformative.

Yarning

This research used a narrative or 'yarning' methodology (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010) to explore how graduates of the PTS course analysed and evaluated their experience in the course, particularly in relation to resilience. Within one to six months of completion of the PTS course, graduates were contacted by one of the lecturers from the course and asked to tell their story of how they came to do the PTS course, what the course had been like for them and how they viewed their future now.

The students were not asked specific questions but invited to participate in a conversation. For many students this exercise proved to be an important final reflection supporting them to see how far they had come. Each student had the chance to read, edit and revise their story in order to add emphasis or remove unintended parts of the story. Only when the student was comfortable with the narrative was it considered finished.

At this point, again with the student's informed consent, the story was published to the publically available tertiary success blog (www.tertiarysuccess.wordpress.com). Between Semester 1, 2011 and Semester 1, 2014, eighteen student stories were published on the blog. Data from the eighteen stories was analysed and some clear themes emerged in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that supported their resilience throughout the PTS experience.

The themes that emerged correlated strongly with the themes in the literature about the intrinsic and extrinsic

factors that affect Indigenous students' resilience and success. There were three themes that related to intrinsic factors and four themes that related to extrinsic factors. They are discussed below and reinforced by the students' own voices.

Intrinsic themes

Learning Power theory and understanding self

The Learning Power theory, as explained by Ruth Deakin Crick and others (2004, 2006, 2007) is the foundation of the Preparation for Tertiary Success (PTS) course. The Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI) with its seven learning dimensions/dispositions (Resilience, Changing & Learning, Creativity, Strategic Awareness, Critical Curiosity, Learning Relationships and Meaning Making) is the tool and the language of the Learning Power theory. In the stories, the PTS students and graduates confidently talk about their own learning identity using the ELLI language:

All that ELLI stuff we learned about like resilience, at first I thought that was over-rated and a waste of time...Once I found out what all the dispositions meant it helped me work out what sort of learner I am and I understood myself better...I often find myself talking to other PTS students about the ELLI things, especially resilience.

Changing and learning

The student stories are a rich insight into how deeply the PTS students and graduates are able to identify and explain their own strengths using the learning power language. Through the students' stories, we gain insights into how students are transferring the knowledge and skills from PTS to future study. We also see how students are thinking about themselves, their learning and their future in new and exciting ways:

I didn't really think of study, and especially University, as something that I could do. And now I'm trying to convince other people, 'If I can do it why can't you?' My idea of my own self-worth and what I think I am capable of is much higher now than before I did PTS.

I've gained a lot of life skills like communicating better and valuing other people's experiences and life. I learnt a lot about working in teams and understanding that people work in different ways—my way is not the only way!

Engagement and motivation

Many PTS graduates talked about the difference it made being a part of a course where they were interested in the content that was covered and felt challenged by the work they were doing. Many of the students either discovered a passion for further study while completing the course or have further established and confirmed clear goals for themselves as a result of the course:

I was still trying to figure out what I wanted to do. I had really hit a brick wall. It was my language teacher who sparked the interest in linguistics... (she) was pushing me as she could see I had a gift for languages. Now I'm studying the Bachelor of Indigenous Language and Linguistics (BILL) which feels awesome to be finally working towards my dream...I'm not thinking about how long it will take; I'm just concentrating on the end when it will all be worth it. I keep thinking about graduation day and how the dancers lead all the graduates out—I have that visual in my head.

Extrinsic themes

The way that we teach

For many students, the way that the PTS course is taught is a very different experience for them. For many, this was a combination of being challenged to do things in different ways, but also being invited to co-create the course, while being respected and listened to:

I thought it was taught really well...I questioned a lot of things at the start, like I was questioning why we used metaphors all the time, and why Both Ways learning was so important. I'd never heard of that before but now that I understand it, it makes a lot of sense to me and I'm really happy that I've learnt it. I use it in my current study all the time. I can see things clearer; see the bigger picture of how we learn.

What we value—Both Ways and cultural intelligence

The Both Ways philosophy is a foundational philosophy of Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and can be more fully understood by reading Ober (2004). This philosophy values all of the Indigenous knowledge that the students bring with them from their families and home communities and looks at that knowledge as the foundation from which to explore new knowledge, including western academic learning. This valuing of the students' existing knowledge was identified as being crucial for student success and resilience:

Learning about Both Ways really stood out for me...I don't think the school really knew how to cater for us Aboriginal students. At school I kept my culture to myself as I was scared of being judged. I learnt how to code-switch at a very early age. In PTS I fitted in and with the Both Ways approach I was encouraged to share and it was like my knowledge was unlocked from within me.

Supportive relationships

Supportive relationships were identified by graduates as being an immensely important part of their resilience, and their eventual success. These relationships existed on a number of different levels. The student-teacher relationship was important:

What stood out for me about PTS was the lecturers who were always there to help me...The first time I tried to do Discipline Inquiry I had too much on, there was too much work. It was good to be able to sit down with my lecturers and talk about that and decide what to do. I made the decision to come back for another semester and do it again...It helped me to get control, rather than feeling as it was all too much.

Family relationships and support was also important:

At one point I was thinking about dropping a unit but my sister asked me if that's what I really want to do. It's like she wasn't going to let me just take the easy way out. Everyone needs one of those people in your life; someone who challenges you but also supports at the same time.

The friendship and support of their peers was also identified as a protective factor for PTS students:

I made a lot of friends, really good friends...We're all close and we are here for each other. We also motivate each other. It's really important to have people around you that motivate you, a bit like having a gym buddy!

Through social media these relationships were able to continue to support the students between face to face workshops:

I also really like keeping in contact with everyone through Facebook...I see who is coming to the next workshop and I don't want to miss out so I made sure I made it to the workshop!

Culturally safe space, high expectations & focus on success

An integrated approach by lecturers to build conditions and climate for achievement were valued by students:

I liked the environment at Batchelor. I can ask lecturers questions and people don't talk down to me. It's a safe environment for us Indigenous students. During PTS I have learnt the academic skills like how to write an essay and how to reference but I've also learnt social skills and that's made a really big difference in my life. I always used to be the shy one but now I stand up for myself. Even back home now I am full of confidence in myself, with other people and also with my study.

This sense of confidence is reflected in all of the student stories, with students able to identify feeling more resilient and confident as being the biggest factor in helping them achieve success:

I'm so much more confident and resilient now after doing PTS, and that's helping me heaps.

More than resilient

The development of resilience in an adult learning environment is a complex and dynamic interplay of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that impact on and shape the student.

What we now call resilience is linked to Bourdieu's (1971, 1973) theory of cultural capital. This theory largely focused on the idea that schools sustained the practice of serving only a small segment of the population well by teaching according to the approved consciousness of the highly educated elite (Howard, McLaughlin and Vacha 1996). We see resilience as a crucial characteristic of successful learners who have often previously been excluded by mainstream educational practices. A significant shift is required on the part of the educational institution in terms of what is taught and how it is taught, and there are tangible things that we can do as educators that will have a direct impact on both the resilience of learners and their educational capital required for success.

Building educational capital

We believe that the student narratives that we have been exploring demonstrate that there are certain things that are within our control as educators, that support the

development of academic resilience and educational capital—things such as:

- Providing students with ways of understanding themselves as learners
- Paying attention to how we teach, what we teach and our philosophy of teaching to ensure alignment with both the needs and the cultural knowledge of the students
- Ensuring a culturally safe environment that has high expectations of student success
- Having a strong focus on the supportive learning relationships we all need to be successful.

All of these things in combination have the dual effect of not only helping students to be more resilient in their academic pathway, but of building the cultural capital that many of them have needed in order to be successful in the formal western higher education world.

We must understand the intrinsic elements that affect an individual student's ability to be resilient and successful, while at the same time understand the things that we do, and can do, as teachers and institutions to better facilitate student resilience and success. When Indigenous students experience learning that helps them to understand themselves better as learners, and do that in a culturally safe, supportive and academically challenging environment, then the results can be transformational.

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Although Lisa Hall grew up north of Melbourne, she was lured to the blue skies and red dirt of Central Australia over a decade ago and has lived and worked in remote communities throughout the desert ever since. She has worked as a teacher, a curriculum advisor and a teacher lecturer across a number of remote indigenous schools. She is currently working for Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education as a lecturer in the Australian Centre of Indigenous Knowledges and Education (ACIKE) Preparation for Tertiary Success (PTS) course. She is also completing her PhD in 'Pathways into Teacher Education for students from Remote Communities'.

Longitudinal perspectives on adult literacy development and program impact

By Stephen Reder

This article is edited from several presentations by Stephen Reder during his visit to Australia in October, 2014. He provides insights from the Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning (LSAL) research and proposes that new approaches are needed to research, evaluation and policy.



It was my good fortune to travel to Australia in October 2014 to give a series of presentations on my adult literacy research to a variety of audiences across the country. I brought some of what I had learned in the United States during a career of research and teaching to these presentations and ensuing discussions with adult literacy researchers, practitioners, policymakers and members of the public. I also brought a keen desire to learn from colleagues and adult educators in Australia.

During the previous years, I had become increasingly distressed to see a narrowing of public discourse about adult literacy in my own country and in others, and wondered what I might see and learn in Australia. I hoped that there would be interest in some of my research findings that seem to strengthen the case for expanding investment in adult literacy education. This article is a reflection on what I experienced and learned from giving the presentations and participating in the surrounding discussions. I am very grateful to my colleagues from Australia who arranged these opportunities for me to learn.

What counts as literacy

The discourse and policy frameworks for adult literacy and numeracy have narrowed as increasing attention has been given to the role of adult basic skills (ABS) programs in reducing unemployment and increasing economic productivity in developing countries. A growing body of economic research indicates a strong economic return on basic skills at given levels of education (Acemoglu and Autor, 2011; Hanushek, Jamison, Jamison and Woessmann, 2008; Heckman, Stixrud and Urzua, 2006; Pryor and Schaffer, 1999; Reder, 2010). International surveys such as the recent Survey of Adult Skills provide strong evidence of the need for, and economic value of, adult basic skills (Hanushek, Schwerdt, Wiederholt and Woessmann, 2013; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013). Estimates have been made of the potential economic benefits that would accrue from increased educational attainment and levels of basic skills (Parker and Spangenberg, 2013).

Although one might think that this growing research base about the economic importance of adult basic skills would expand the breadth of interest and investment in ABS programs, this has not proved to be the case. There are at least two reasons for this. First, the discourse about the importance of ABS programs has focused narrowly on the short-term facilitation of employment and vocational training. Hamilton (2012) and Wickens and Sandlin (2007), among other authors, provide compelling analyses and examples of how *who* funds literacy programs determines *what* is measured and valued in program evaluations and how that in turn determines what counts as literacy.

Within the discourse of short-term employment and training, the important contributions to human and societal development of programs that can be more clearly seen through broader and longer-term lenses, are too easily overlooked and forgotten. A second problem is the lack of rigorous research about how participation in basic skills programs directly impacts skill levels, educational attainment, and the social and economic wellbeing of adults with low levels of education.

Addressing these problems requires a better understanding of adult literacy development, based on research that examines changes in individuals' literacy in multiple contexts and assesses the other impacts of programs over significant periods of time. Most prior research has examined change in adult literacy in a single context over the relatively short periods of time in which adults participate in basic skills classes. In most of these studies, the follow-up intervals are too short to observe meaningful change. In many studies, only program participants are observed, making it difficult to understand program participation and persistence patterns or assess the impact of program participation (Beder, 1999; Brooks, Davies, Duckett, Hutchinson, Kendall and Wilkin, 2001; Lesgold and Welch-Ross, 2012; Miller, Esposito and McCardle, 2011; Smith, 2009). Research is

needed that looks at life-wide and lifelong trajectories of adult learning and literacy development.

Although ABS program evaluation and accountability reports typically show small gains for program participants in test scores and other outcomes, these studies rarely include comparison groups of non-participants, and most studies that do include such controls have not found statistically significant ABS program impact (Reder, 2012; Smith, 2009; Vorhaus, Litster, Frearson and Johnson, 2011; Wolf and Evans, 2011). Research is needed that compares adult literacy development among program participants and non-participants across multiple contexts and over significant periods of time to provide a life-wide and lifelong perspective on adult literacy development, and a better assessment of program impact on a range of outcome measures.

The Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning (LSAL) is one such life-wide and lifelong study. LSAL randomly sampled about 1,000 high school dropouts and followed them for nearly a decade from 1998–2007. LSAL followed both participants and non-participants in ABS programs, assessing their literacy skills and skill uses over long periods of time, along with changes in their social, educational, and economic status, offering a rich picture of adult literacy development.

LSAL design and methodology

The overall design, methodology, population, and instrumentation of LSAL are described in detail elsewhere (Reder, 2009). The study population was defined as adults who, as the project began in 1998: lived in the Portland (Oregon) metropolitan area; were ages 18–44; had not completed high school nor were enrolled in high school or college; and were proficient but not necessarily native speakers of English. This defined population is a major segment of the target population of ABS programs operated by community colleges and other organizations in Oregon, and across the United States. A carefully sampled panel of 934 adults was followed from 1998–2007. At study onset, the LSAL population had an average age of 28 and was evenly divided among males and females, with one-third from minority groups and one-tenth from immigrant populations. Nearly one in three reported having a learning disability.

Some of these defining characteristics of LSAL's population changed over time. Everyone's age increased, of course, while some adults received GEDs (equivalency certificates for high school completion) and college degrees, experi-

enced changes in their employment and family situations, or moved away from the Portland area. LSAL followed its panel members regardless of these and other changes, with about 90 percent of the original panel retained in the study until data collection ended in 2007.

LSAL conducted a series of six periodic interviews and skills assessments in respondents' homes between 1998 and 2007, with either one or two year intervals between successive waves.

The first interview gathered background information (e.g., demographics, family-of-origin characteristics, K–12 school history). The initial and each successive interview collected information about recent social, economic, and educational activities (e.g., participation in basic skill programs; post-secondary education and training; employment, job characteristics, and earnings; household and family composition; and life goals and aspirations).

Literacy proficiency was assessed in each wave using alternate forms of the Document Literacy Scale of the Test of Applied Literacy Skills (TALS) developed by the Educational Testing Service. TALS assesses adults' ability to extract and process written information in a variety of everyday document formats, similar to assessments used in the recently conducted Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). TALS measures proficiency on a 0–500 scale, with scores often reported in terms of five proficiency levels.

Measures of engagement in everyday reading, writing and math activities were constructed from interview questions about how often respondents performed each of a set of specific reading, writing, numeracy and computer activities in various everyday contexts (home, community, work). Two longitudinally stable scales were constructed, engagement in literacy practices and numeracy practices (Reder, 2009a).

LSAL subjects were asked to consent to release of matched administrative data from state agencies. About 88 percent of the panel consented and administrative records matched from state agencies included individuals' hours and wages reported by employers over eleven years (1997–2007). Further details about these consents and matched administrative data are described in Reder (2014a).

Some key results

Patterns of participation in ABS programs were often complex and fragmented, with individuals participating

multiple times in the same or different programs across the years of the study. Figure 1 shows the estimated percentage of the LSAL population that ever participated in an ABS program through each given wave of the study (line graph), as well as the median total hours of program attendance accumulated by participants (bar graph).

By the end of the study in 2007, over half (54%) of the LSAL population who had never participated in ABS programs before LSAL began had participated in ABS programs, accumulating a median of 65 hours of attendance between 1998–2006 (Reder, 2014a). Besides participating in formal adult education programs, many adults also worked independently to improve their basic skills or prepare for the GED certification tests, termed self-study by Reder and Strawn (2006).

Given these complex patterns of program participation, there are many ways of defining and measuring participation, of comparing the changes observed in participants and non-participants over time, and of estimating the impact of ABS program participation on earnings, literacy proficiency and other outcomes.

We begin by considering the changes in earnings among program participants and non-participants from the LSAL population between 1997 and 2007. Details of these data analyses are given by Reder (2014a). The income trajectories of these two sub-populations are remarkably different. Participants started off in 1997 with earnings much lower than those of non-participants and experienced a gradually rising income across time, while the non-participants started at a much higher average income level in 1997, which remained fairly constant across the decade, despite some ups and downs.

As participants' incomes increased and those of non-participants remained roughly stable, the income gap between the two sub-populations diminished until the mean income of participants finally exceeded that of non-participants in 2007. Between 1997 and 2007, the mean income of participants rose 53 percent (in constant 1997 US dollars), from \$7,699 to \$11,792, while that of non-participants dropped 2 percent, from \$11,779 to \$11,580, over the same time period.

The large overall difference in wage trajectories of participants and non-participants, at least at face value, suggests that ABS program participation may be central to sustained income growth for this low-education

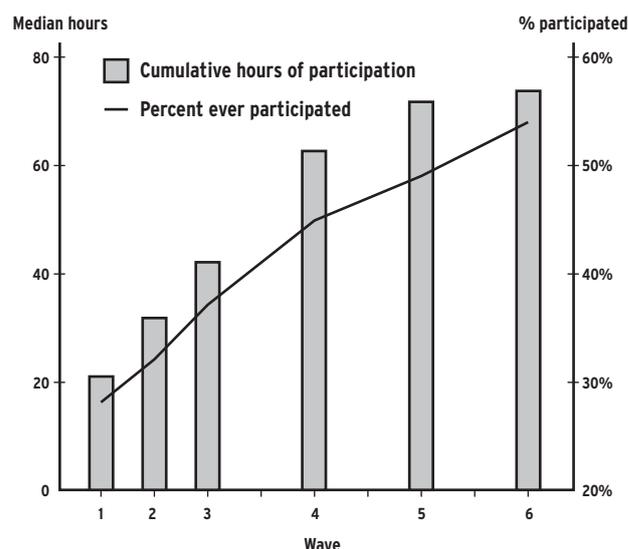


Figure 1. Percent of LSAL population that had ever participated in ABS programs (line) and median hours of program attendance for those who had participated (bars), by LSAL wave. LSAL waves 1–6 are placed on a time axis to represent their temporal spacing.

population. Care must be taken, however, in interpreting these differences. First, individuals in the target population self-selected in terms of participating in ABS programs, and there may be other important differences between the two groups as well. The effects of those other differences may be confounded with the effects of participation; this is often termed *selection bias* in program evaluation literature (Angrist, 1998; Imbens and Wooldridge, 2009).

Program participation impact on income

A number of different models were used to control selection bias using differing assumptions and methods. Reder (2014a) provides details of the analyses of the different models. All three models - treatment effects, difference-in-differences, and fixed effects panel regressions, come to essentially the same robust conclusions:

1. There are statistically significant and financially substantial impacts of ABS program participation on earnings growth. Individuals who participate in programs have higher future earnings as a result of participating.
2. The income premiums are larger with more intensive levels of participation, and minimal levels of participation do not produce statistically significant premiums. With participation defined as 100 or more hours of attendance, participation is estimated to raise participants' annual post-program incomes by an average of about \$10,000 per year (in 2013 US dollars).

3. This income premium takes time (in the order of years) to develop after participation.

The quantitative details of these general findings vary with the measure of participation and analytical method used. The specifics likely vary with characteristics of programs and participants. However, it is clear from the LSAL analyses conducted that higher intensities of participation, with a threshold of around 100 hours, have substantial impact on future earnings, an impact that typically takes several years to develop after participation. Comprehensive reviews of program evaluation and persistence research have concluded that 100 hours of attendance is the approximate point at which program impact on basic skills development becomes discernible as well (Comings, 2007; Vorhaus et al, 2011).

Figure 2 illustrates the income trajectories between 1997 and 2007 of propensity-score-matched participants who had attended for a total of at least 100 hours and controls who had not participated at all. Although the two groups had similar income trajectories early in the time period, they diverged after 2002 as the treatment effects became apparent as the earnings of the program participants continued to rise, while the earnings of the non-participants fell.

Because of the complexity of the program participation patterns observed, LSAL's relatively small sample size limits the precision with which estimates can be made of how many hours of attendance and how long a follow-up period are required to see a significant earnings premium of a given size. Additional research with larger longitudinal data sets and those drawn from other contexts can help clarify some of these important details. The impact models developed here could address these questions more precisely if applied to larger longitudinal data sets that follow comparable ABS program participants and non-participants over longer time periods.

Wider program impacts

Although the details will likely vary with the population and programs examined, the robust finding that programs generally have long-term (but not short-term) impact on participants' earnings is of critical importance. Since the earnings premium increases systematically during the time period following participation, it is important to examine and understand what else may be happening during that time period to help drive incomes upward over time.

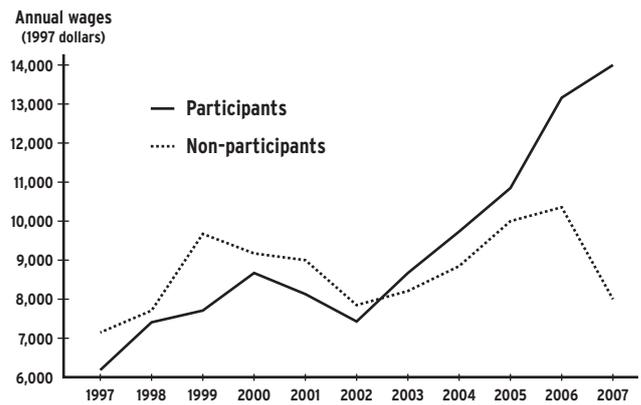


Figure 2. Income trajectories of propensity-score-matched participants and non-participants. Participants had attended programs for a total of at least 100 hours between 1998 and 2006. Non-participants had never attended a program through 2006.

Program impact participation could lead to a number of possible events that have mediating effects on future earnings after participation. ABS program participation has a positive impact on passing the GED Tests which result in alternative secondary school completion (Reder, 2014c). Of the LSAL population, 27% received a GED credential at some point during the study, three quarters of whom (76%) had participated in an ABS program. Previous research indicates that receipt of GED credentials leads over time to improved employment and earnings (Tyler, 2004). ABS program participation also has an impact on later engagement in post-secondary education and training, which could serve as an 'on-ramp' to a long-term pathway into better employment and earnings (Reder, 2014d).

Finally, ABS program participation has long-term impact on assessed literacy proficiency levels (Reder, 2014b). The proficiency gains attributable to program participation take time to fully develop after participation. This is in line with a body of previous research which has found that ABS programs have direct short-term impacts on adults' engagement with literacy and numeracy practices but not on their assessed proficiencies in the short term. Over time, as literacy proficiency and engagement in literacy practices interact with and reinforce each other, proficiency levels will steadily rise across the adult lifespan (Reder, 2012).

To determine the extent to which these impacts of participation could be mediating the observed long-term ABS program impact on earnings, additional analyses were undertaken. Time-varying measures of GED attainment,

post-secondary engagement and literacy proficiency collected at each LSAL wave were added to the predictive models to estimate the mediating effects of these variables along with the direct effects of ABS participation on earnings. Reder (2014a) provides details about the analyses and results of these models.

There are two principal results of interest here. First, receipt of the GED credential has a significant positive impact on earnings over and above the impact of program participation. Like the impact of ABS program participation, the impact of GED attainment on earnings takes several years to develop, consistent with other GED research (Tyler, 2004). Second, the combined effects of GED, literacy proficiency and post-secondary engagement are responsible for only a small fraction of the total impact of program participation on earnings. ABS program participation has long-term impacts on earnings that far exceed the impacts that can be attributed to increases in proficiency, educational engagement and credentials that may result from participation.

Implications for program design

These findings have sharp implications for policy and program design in adult education. Participation in ABS programs generates very substantial educational and economic benefits. However, both the proficiency and wage premiums can take many years after participation to fully develop. Policies that focus on only short-term outcomes—and this is the predominant approach to policy and program accountability in many countries—overlook much of the impact that programs actually generate.

If public policy and investment in ABS programs are rationalized in terms of their short-term learning, employment and earnings impacts alone, it will continue to be difficult for programs to put their best foot forward and demonstrate the impact they are actually having. Furthermore, program improvement efforts based narrowly on short-term criterion measures of effectiveness are unlikely to be very productive.

When I talk with practitioners and policymakers about these results, which they generally see as containing much good news for the field, concerns are sometimes expressed about the difficulty programs would face being accountable for their students' longer-term outcomes: 'How can we be responsible for things that happen to our students years after they leave our program?'

To address this, we must recognize the difference between program accountability and program impact evaluation. Accountability is related to compliance with applicable policies and regulations and efficient use of program resources. Impact evaluation, on the other hand, is about the consequences of participating in a program—how were students' lives changed by going to the program?

In the research presented here, that showed some five years after students participated in ABS programs, their average earnings were estimated to be US\$10,000 per year higher than they would have been if they had not gone through the program. That is a very different type of statement than reporting a percentage of students who were employed within 90 days of finishing a program or reporting a percentage of students who exited a program with higher levels of assessed skills than they entered with.

Input and output measures

Our finding that program impact can take many years to develop following participation does not imply that accountability should be structured with long follow-up intervals; in fact, it may suggest that accountability should focus more on program *inputs* (adequacy of funding, preparation and support of teachers, sufficiency of facilities and materials, etc.) and less on short-term program *outputs*. If accountability systems continue to utilize short-term outputs, then those short-term outputs should be ones that research demonstrates are linked to longer-term outcomes of value.

For example, although programs typically do not produce short-term proficiency gains (when matched participants and non-participants are compared), they do generate short-term increases in students' engagement with literacy and numeracy practices. Research shows that increased engagement in literacy practices leads to growth in literacy proficiency over time (Reder, 2012). So programs might well use measures of practice engagement as short-term outputs for accountability purposes, knowing that short-term increases in practice engagement will lead to longer-term gains in proficiency.

A continued narrowing of the policy focus around short-term proficiency gains and economic outcomes will provide too little opportunity for programs to demonstrate their impact and experiment with ways to improve. It would be useful for programs to assess students' engagement with literacy and numeracy practices. To do this, better methods

and tools (both observational and self-report) need to be systematically developed.

The research finding that the long-term impact of ABS participation on earnings cannot be explained only in terms of observed changes in skills, certifications and post-secondary education also has important implications. This points to the economic value of broader processes of adult learning and development that are not tied to the specific content of the curriculum. To leverage this potential, programs might usefully explore new ways to provide continued support to adults after they leave the classroom—perhaps technologies could be developed to support continued learning and basic skills development in other work and outside-of-work settings.

If these findings were based on longitudinal data from Australia, I would not hesitate to suggest to policymakers and funders in Australia to expand investments in programs in relation to their evident longer-term economic, social and educational impacts, rather than short-term impacts on gains in measured skills or employment. I would also recommend that researchers and practitioners use longer-term outcomes for program evaluation and continuous improvement purposes. Of course, the findings in this paper are *not* based on data from Australia, so the first order of business may be conducting new longitudinal research that illuminates adults' learning trajectories and programs' social and economic impacts in Australia.

To realize these and other important improvements, however, programs and practitioners need to operate within a space that is friendly to systematic innovation, experimentation and development. These innovation spaces need to encourage new approaches that are rigorously evaluated in ways that the field of adult education can learn from its experience and find better ways to facilitate and support life-wide and lifelong learning as well as skill development.

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Open forum

Our guest columnist, Beverley Campbell continues to draw threads together from her experiences and ponderings about how we communicate and what it means to be human.

The power of words—spoken or written?

By Beverley Campbell

‘No last words’ as put by Mikhail Bakhtin, Russian philologist, serves both the spoken word and the written word. A response is always possible. Of the two, spoken or written, which is the more powerful? The spoken word is immediate but ephemeral. The written word has a dispersed audience but is captured for posterity.

Last week, I heard a chorus of voices, both spoken and written, raising for me the question, ‘which is the more powerful?’ I begin where an article in the last issue of *Fine Print* left off. It was the article by Janet Galbraith about her project ‘Writing through Fences’, connecting a network of young asylum seekers and refugees. Janet encourages them to express their experiences through poetry and art.

As part of World Refugee Week, the Castlemaine Library hosted an evening with a focus on this project. We listened to a young Somali man read the poem, ‘Mother’, written by his friend who is still in detention. It contained the lines:

When I groaned you took my head,
patted it, guided me
not to lose hope,
not to give up.

An Iranian man, recited his poem in Persian, and we understood the sentiments of the poem, if not the words. ‘Writing through Fences’ has given young asylum seekers and refugees a medium by which they speak of their past fears and traumas, and of their future hopes and dreams. These recitations had an immediacy for the audience.

Some of the poetry has been published in a chapbook, ‘Our Beautiful Voices’, so that the poetry can be shared with a wider audience. The collection allows the words of the poets to endure through time. The poems speak beyond the silence imposed on the writers by imprisonment in a detention centre. Their poetry is a cry for hearing; it speaks to the government, to their families back in their countries of origin and to the people of Australia.



Two other events in that week prompted in me, thoughts of the power of the spoken or sung voice and the power of the written word. First was the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra concert of Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*. Multi-discursive in so many ways, comprising soloists, a large choir and a boys’ choir, and full orchestra. The soloists represented the three protagonists of WWI, Britain, Germany and Russia. The ethereal sound of the boys’ choir represented voices from heaven. The female soloist and orchestra gave voice to the words of the Requiem Mass.

But perhaps the most powerful voices were the two male soloists, representing the voices of two soldiers singing the words of Wilfred Owens’ war poems. Owens was killed in the war in 1918, shortly before the armistice. His legacy is his anti-war words.

Voices of old despondency resigned
bowed by the shadow of the morrow, slept.

Owen’s words speak still of the horrors of war, as powerfully as they did one hundred years ago. At the end of the performance the conductor held the silence for more than thirty seconds, before allowing the audience to applaud. The silence allowed the power of the performance to speak.

The very next night, I sat snugly in the audience of a very different performance. I was there to enjoy *Under Milkwood: a play for voices* by Dylan Thomas. Five readers gave voice to the multiple characters from the village of Llareggub: Polly Garter, Captain Cat, Mr and Mrs Pugh, Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard, Mog Edwards and Myfanwy Price, among them. The narrator drew us into the atmosphere of village life commencing with:

To begin at the beginning: It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courtiers'-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeback, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea.

And with that beginning we entered into the dreams and hopes, the disappointments, fantasies and fading memories of the many colourful characters. We could imagine we were also in Llareggub. Dylan Thomas' characters created over sixty years ago continue to captivate audiences, transporting them into the fictional life of a Welsh village.

In the early 1980s, when I began to be involved in the adult literacy and basic education field, an integral part of VALBEC's policy was to give ALBE students a voice. Students were represented on committees. They held workshops at conferences. Student writing publications were a popular means of extending the reach of their writing. Early editions of *Fine Print* often included poetry by students, alongside that of tutors. There was a certain democratization of writing, of voices in the ALBE field. Regrettably, the increasing professionalisation of the field has led to a decrease in the representation of student voices.

At the conclusion of Britten's *War Requiem*, a single figure had the power to hold the silence. Oppressed groups do not have the same entry into that same power. They are the silenced ones, their voices taken away by oppressive powers, by persecution, by imprisonment. The freedom movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the challenging of authority by students rights groups, by gay rights, by the women's movement, by the adult literacy movement, by the black power movement, were all popular movements which

challenged the status quo. For too long, their silence had been imposed on them. In their different ways, all wanted to claim a voice, to make themselves heard.

This desire has not been silenced. In this volume of *Fine Print*, with its focus on student writing, VALBEC continues a commitment to student representation. Once the language of student empowerment was part of the discourse of ALBE education. The idea of agency has stronger currency. Students, whose writing is published, are being given a sense of agency, a voice with which to articulate their ideas and experiences to a wider audience.

What are we to say about the relationship of written to spoken text? Dylan Thomas' poetic lines will continue to entertain through the characters in *Under Milkwood*. The poetry in 'Our Beautiful Voices' will continue to communicate the trauma of being a refugee. Wilfred Owen's poetry, immortalised in Britten's *War Requiem*, yet again reminds us of the ugliness and futility of war.

Does then the written word gain precedence over the spoken word? Conversations will be enriched as written word becomes spoken, only then to prompt new ventures of writing it down. Here then, there are no last words—but there may be newly minted words which open and prompt new conversations and acts of liberation.

After a long career as teacher, academic, past president of VALBEC and author of *More than Life Itself: a handbook for tutors of adult literacy* and more recently, *Reading the Fine Print: a history of the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC) 1978–2008*, among other publications, Beverley Campbell continues to write and advocate for adult literacy.

Tapping into the creative spirit

By Sue Paull, with comments by Parris Frangie

Many students, and teachers too, shy away from the idea of writing poetry in class. Sue Paull used a kinaesthetic and collaborative approach to create the selection of *A special place* poems in the Student Writing section.

The process of writing poems can be slow, but invariably the results are rewarding. The students who are part of a class in the Course in EAL, Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program at Melbourne Polytechnic, began experimenting with acrylic paints some weeks before they actually started writing. Small 16cm x 12cm rectangles of cardboard were painted by the students with their creativity limited only by the safe and economical use of the paint. The rectangles were then cut into a variety of shapes: circles, squares, hexagons and smaller rectangles.

The word *poem* was introduced as *a song without music*, along with the purpose for writing a poem and the topic, *A special place*. Students were encouraged to think about special places that were then brainstormed on the board. These included birth countries, cities, holiday destinations, homes, parks and favourite natural places.

One place was chosen by the class to create a model using the approach in diagram 1:

Each of the senses was explored and colour swatches from paint shops were named and labelled; a range

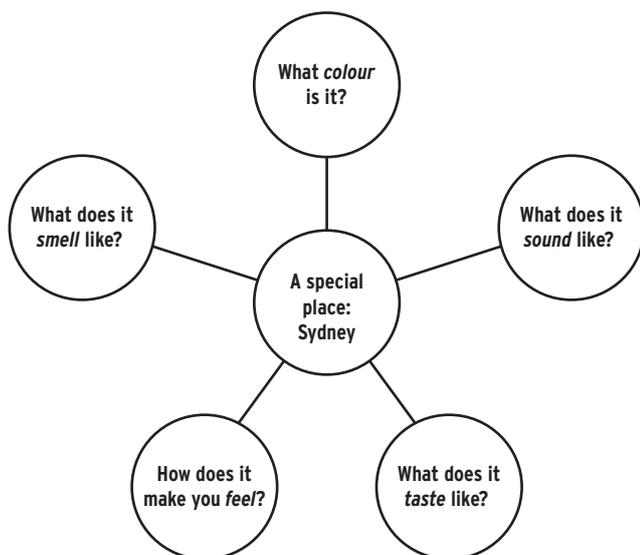


Diagram 1: the senses



of sounds from animals to trains were identified from a sound effects CD and added to the board; different herbs, spices, condiments, fruit and foodstuffs were brought into the class and identified. In the end, two large whiteboards were covered with vocabulary listed under each of the five senses.

Drawing from the brainstormed words, a model poem about Sydney was written and copied by the students. Each student then chose a place special to them and referring to the word lists, wrote their poems. Assistance was given during the writing and suggestions were made for editing. A second draft was written and these were photocopied, pasted onto poster board and displayed with the painted shapes.

The final display of poems and painted shapes were hung on the corridor walls, which was a cause of satisfaction for everyone. It was an enjoyable exercise that had brought the students closer and also revealed some hidden talents. The kinaesthetic aspects of the task had particularly suited the learning of the large number of students in the class with little, or no, prior education. These reasons were validation enough; however, the task also covered aspects of all learning outcomes in the ACSF and all employability skills except technology. Specific EAL units addressed were VU20939 Recognise and interpret safety signs and symbols and VU21433 Give and respond to basic information and instructions. So in the end, it was a 'win-win' activity for us all.

Comments

Activities such as writing poetry, art or singing, allow students to relax and tap into a creative, 'child within' spirit. This may promote feelings of joy and freedom, as inhibitions are broken down. The students become more comfortable to work together, talk to each other and share thoughts and ideas. A less structured, creative approach may lighten and possibly encourage a more receptive approach to learning.



Poems on display

In the poems, the feeling and sensation of likening a city to a familiar taste, sound or smell may open up a pathway into the students' hearts. This may lead to a process where

the new language could gradually become part of their identity, alongside their language of origin.

I was fortunate enough to observe the students for a short time while they were working on the poems and it was so uplifting to experience the ownership, pride and absolute joy that permeated the classroom. This project was wonderfully rewarding and a great pleasure to see the enjoyment from both teacher and students, when they placed their work on the wall for others to view.

Sue Paull is a teacher in the Course in EAL, Melbourne Polytechnic, Epping campus.

Parris Frangie is a Senior Educator in the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program at Melbourne Polytechnic.

Using drama in adult ESL classes

By Carol Frost

Building confidence to speak in front of others and improving pronunciation are just two of the benefits of using drama with students that Carol has discovered—it just takes some teacher courage to jump in and try it.

Silly old Snake! Doesn't he know,
There's no such thing as a gruffalo!
(from *The Gruffalo*, by Julia Donaldson)

The group of pre-school children shriek out the last line and the smiles are evident on the faces of my Beginners' English class. The children are the audience for my students' performance of *The Gruffalo* and their pleasure is plain to see, and hear. Not as easy to see, but just as real, is the pleasure my adult students are taking in the audience response and confidence they have gained through the performance.

I have used drama as a natural conduit for extending my students' skills throughout the five years I have been teaching ESL for adults. Although drama is not used much as an educative tool in some cultures, I think it is worth working through any initial resistance you may encounter. Persuade your students to 'give it a go'. The benefits of the experience are too many to ignore, however, the students have to experience them for themselves.

Among the benefits of drama is the general loosening up of the class that acting together provides. Previously

shy students, given a part to play, will often surprise everyone with an imaginative or comical performance. It is important to cast well so that everyone has a part that suits their reading level. This enables the students to relax and focus on their own roles.

Casting against type is also a risky but often rewarding way to go, and sometimes it is just plain necessary. My female class has had to play many male roles (to hilarious effect) and sometimes the more softly spoken, but better readers, have had to take the more assertive parts that require greater fluency, like the Gruffalo.

An improvement in pronunciation is another by-product of using drama in the classroom. There is no doubt that pronunciation skills, often the bane of an ESL teacher's existence, are much easier to teach in the context of spoken dialogue. Students appreciate that it is important to be understood and will work hard to remember and use the correct sounds in rehearsal and performance.

In the process of adapting a story to become a play, I keep in mind the number of students involved and their levels

Practical matters

of oral ability. Often the students and I have to change the script after a first reading when we find that certain words are too hard to pronounce and some sentences are too long to say easily.

A good audience will inspire confidence. Like other actors, ESL students suffer bouts of stage fright that may threaten to derail the performance. Their audience must be one that encourages their work and applauds their efforts. I have found that the other ESL classes at our Neighborhood Learning Centre and the children in the childcare centre are consistently reliable audiences. Even so, there are times of absence or illness when the teacher must be ready to hop into any part at any time!

One successful source I've used for our plays is the website www.worldstories.org.uk/stories. I have adapted *The Wooden Bowl* and *How the Old Woman Got Her Wish* because they contain both characters and stories that adults can identify with. Children's books with rhythmic spoken dialogue and an enjoyable, witty story like *The Gruffalo* are also good choices for adult performance. I believe the overall improvements in fluent reading,



A performance of *The Gruffalo*

better pronunciation, and class morale are well worth the work involved in producing and presenting a dramatic performance. Besides, it is great fun!

Carol Frost currently enjoys teaching **Beginners' English** at the **Kew Neighborhood Learning Centre**. She may be contacted at awcmfrost@hotmail.com for a copy of the adapted plays referred to in the article.

What's out there

New series of PageTurners

By Chris Malakar

The Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education (PRACE) PageTurners team are happy to announce they have a new series of ten books now available. These popular books are suitable for adults and young adults learning to read and are appropriate for both EAL and adult literacy students. The new stories, like the earlier ones, show that reading can be fun. And they contain all the regular PageTurners features: humorous stories, appealing illustrations, follow up language activities (spelling and word level, sentence level and whole text exercises), discussion points, complete wordlists used in the text and online audio files.

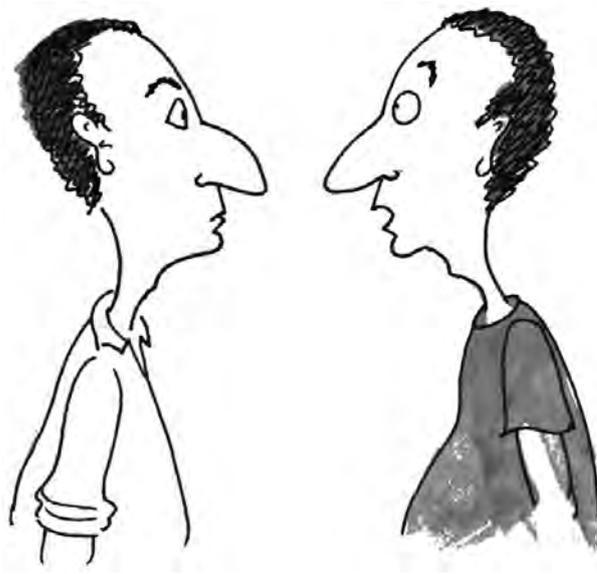
Two of the fun new titles are: *The Drink Machine is Evil* by Anne Dunn and pictures by Moira Hanrahan; *Double Trouble*, story and pictures by Moira Hanrahan. Both of these stories are amusing and interesting and contain universal themes.

These two books would suit beginning readers. Equally they would suit readers who are a little more advanced but still wish to enjoy reading stories without the pressure of dealing with large amounts of new vocabulary. The audio of the stories can be found on the PageTurners website. They are ideal as listening activities for improving reading fluency and pronunciation and can be used on a computer, tablet or mobile phone.

The Drink Machine is Evil is a very short, but lively, Level 1 story with approximately one hundred words in the text. It would appeal to most people, as its theme is the difficulty of dealing with machines in our lives, but tackled in a humorous way. The subject matter could be used to stimulate class discussion about the role of machines, technology and human redundancy in modern life.

The story centres on a woman at work who can never get the drink machine to provide what she wants. The machine is personified as an evil character. The story uses the present and past tenses as well as the first conditional which could be used as teaching points.

The illustrator, Moira Hanrahan, has done a great job with the pictures. The various pictures facilitate understanding



Double Trouble illustration by Moira Hanrahan

as well as entertain the reader. Exercises at the end of the book provide language development practice and prompts for thought and discussion.

Double Trouble is the story of two young men who crash into each other on a country road and, as one of the men puts it, 'start something big'. It has approximately 190 words with many fewer unique words and a large amount of repetition for reading ease. The story would appeal to most men, and young men particularly, as well as general readers. It picks up on the idea of relations between family members often being close, but not necessarily easy. Unlike in many of the stories, there are two main characters. Thus, readers can become accustomed to the use of *they* and *their* in the context of the story.

Below is a full list of the PageTurners Series 7 new titles by reading levels.

Level 1

- Spider!: the story of a young man who is scared of spiders.
- Late for Work: about being late for work and its consequences.
- The Drink Machine is Evil: a drink machine gives a woman trouble at work.

Level 2

- Lost: for anyone who has had trouble driving in a strange city.
- Double Trouble: two young men find a car accident leads to something big.
- Whale Watching: who would have thought that bananas on a boat are bad luck?

Level 3

- Dancer: Suzanne quit her job to try becoming a dancer.
- Rescue: it is simple to rescue a cat up a tree, or is it?

Level 4

- Dog Gone: one day Greg's dog, Diggy, just disappears.
- Scary Story: John's love for telling scary stories backfires on him.

PageTurners are available from the PageTurners website: <http://pageturners.prace.vic.edu.au/index.php>

Since 1999, Chris Malakar has been a key member of the PageTurners creative team and a literacy and EAL teacher at PRACE.

New Literacies around the Globe: Policy and Pedagogy

Edited by Cathy Burnett, Julie Davies, Guy Merchant and Jennifer Rowsell.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Gunn

One of the great things about adult education is the chance to work with learners who bring a range of life experiences to the learning context. Whether in prior education, the workforce, or as parents and guardians of the next generation, adult learners' repertoires of life roles vary and expand in unexpected ways beyond literacy classroom walls. For example, many adult learners are intergenerational mentors, helping other family members with literacy practices at home. Somehow the literacy practices and meaning making of toddlers, primary school students, adolescents and young adults in contemporary digital media communication landscapes are relevant to everyone these days. For this reason, Australian adult literacy educators will find *New Literacies around the Globe* a fascinating read.

The eight studies of everyday literacy practices in the UK, South Africa, Australia and Canada presented in *New Literacies around the Globe* provide keys to understanding how learners, and teachers, are adapting their literacy practices in response to rapidly changing sociotechnical environments. In commentaries accompanying each study, the volume's editors emphasise three themes they see as important for new literacies research today; (1) that local responses to global communication technologies generate heterogeneous literacy practices, (2) that curriculum and policy should be informed by local practices, and (3) that issues of gender, class, race and nationality inform 'new' approaches to students' use of digital technology.

The commentaries also reiterate Peter Freebody's foreword message; that knowledge of students' richly complex 'communicational repertoires' gives literacy educators the wherewithal to resist 'lite' versions of literacy, social justice and globalisation as espoused by educational authorities; 'lite' because they omit detail of local, socially-orientated research (such as that in *New Literacies around the Globe*), and seek generic, one-size-fits-all applications of 'literacy'. In her recent keynote address at the VALBEC conference, Lesley Farrell outlined the increasing extent to which global professional service corporations are setting agendas and assessment regimes in Australia.

In the first study, Lemphane and Prinsloo convincingly upset notions of digital technology's universality in their account of unequal access and diverse local responses to electronic media resources in two South African communities. The study follows two Cape Town families; one living in the constrained circumstances of a shack settlement with little electricity and no internet, and the other in a middle-class enclave endowed with the modern amenities familiar to middle-class Australian households.

The authors point out that, although the shantytown children invent creative, multilingual literacy practices to make the most of their limited digital world, these responses are likely to go unrecognised in South African



schools or job markets. Instead, the middle-class children's identification with 'anglospheric' literacy practices, embodied by light-skinned, anglo-named avatar participation in online chat site and virtual reality games, is more likely to lead to future educational and economic success. One wonders how the shack settlement children would respond if they had abundant access to electricity and the internet.

With its portrayal of contrastive material realities (and their parallel *immaterial*, virtual realities), the Cape Town study reveals how access to digital media literacy can shape children's futures. Its premier position in the volume invites readers to consider students' material situations in their own local settings as they read the other studies about literacy practices and student engagement with digital media.

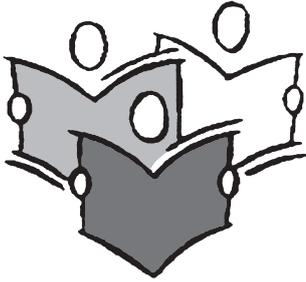
In brief, the remaining studies investigate: children's video story-telling practices to expand literacy beyond pen and paper; middle-school students' collaborative practices through play in a *Minecraft* club; hairdressing apprentices' social discourse practices with (and without) *Facebook*; high school students' explorations of digital games to express literature curriculum narrative conventions;

young adult immigrants' use of *Facebook* as a multilingual platform for experimentation with emerging and shifting identities; toddlers' early language and gestures in meaning making around iPad story apps; and finally, teenagers' never-ending devotion to literacy on mobile devices and its implications for classroom literacy practices.

As a parent, sister, aunty, former pupil and educator myself, I found lots to reflect on while reading *New Literacies around the Globe*. The literacy practices described in the studies often connected to my own family and professional life. Uncertainties about how much screen time our children are exposed, or not exposed to, students' oscillating attention between mobile devices and class activities, people's dwindling ability to read lengthy printed books; such (first world) concerns seem to dominate many discussions about literacy these days. The studies in *New Literacies around the Globe* provide refreshing insights into these conundrums and inspire teachers to respond creatively to their own local circumstances and channel the engrossing force of digital media towards enriching literacy education for all learners.

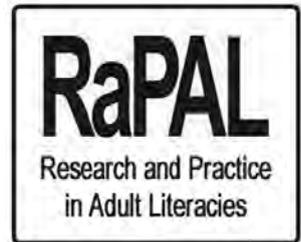
Elizabeth Gunn is an adult literacy and numeracy educator at Melbourne Polytechnic.

Editor's note



A C A L
Australian Council
for Adult Literacy

VALBEC and the Fine Print committee would like to promote to students and teachers, and encourage their participation in the ACAL-RaPAL Student Stories Project.



The Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) and Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL) in the United Kingdom are collaborating in a project to give voice to adult literacy and numeracy learners. They are seeking adult learners' stories around the broad theme of Resilience.

Hope, determination, perseverance, taking risks and overcoming obstacles are some of the recurring themes in the stories that many practitioners hear from their adult literacy and numeracy learners in classrooms around Australia and across the UK. Their stories tell us much about the experiences and hopes of the story tellers themselves, but also about the society and times we live in.

The stories from the project will be valuable teaching and learning resources for future learners and teachers. The stories will help us to tell a rich story about adult literacy learners. The kind of story we want our policy makers to read, see and hear, rather than the very partial stories that the statistics tell us. It is an opportunity for practitioners and learners across Australia, and with practitioners and learners from the UK, to work together.

The stories may be in narrative, visual, video or multimodal texts.

The submissions deadline is 17 December, 2015.

For more information refer to the ACAL website: www.acal.edu.au.

Acknowledgements

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**Thank you
to all the students and teachers
who contributed to the
2015 Fine Print
student writing edition**