

this issue:

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our worlds

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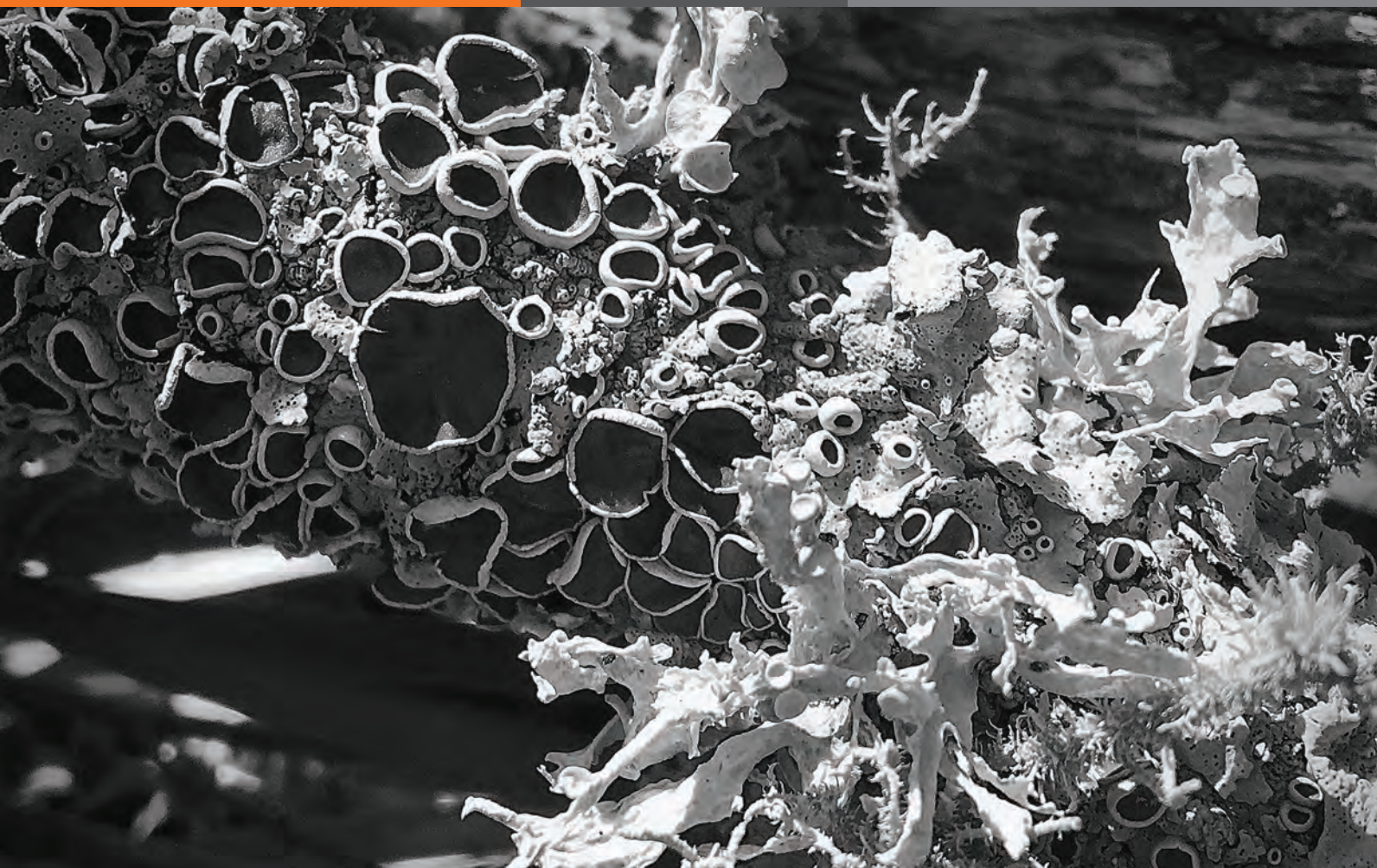
by Julianne Krusche

2020 vol: 43 # 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: Deryn Mansell

Editor: Deryn Mansell

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Layout: Sarah Tuke

Printing: Melbourne Polytechnic Printroom

Editorial, advertising and subscription enquiries:
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VALBEC acknowledges the financial support of the ACFE Board



Adult Education in
the Community

Editorial

This issue of *Fine Print* has been compiled in very strange times – it feels like reality shifts with every news cycle so I am in no doubt that reality will have taken a few turns between the time I write this and the time you read it.

Some of the challenges that COVID-19 has thrown our way are evident in these pages, as are the creative ways our community has dealt with them. Carmel Davies and Sharon Duff (the Urban Lyrebirds) were scheduled to lead a VALBEC workshop on using song in teaching when the lockdown put an end to in-person professional learning. Instead they directed their energies towards their YouTube channel and in ‘Teaching songs in the English classroom’ they offer answers to the most common questions teachers ask them in their workshops. For more Urban Lyrebirds ideas, see Jodie Whitehurst’s review of *May Street Stories* in What’s Out There.

Rebecca Smith wrote ‘Putting language to work’ before COVID-19 restrictions were introduced. At that time, the Service Stars program worked with catering companies to link pre-accredited courses to work experience in hospitality. It is impossible to read the story now without wondering how the program graduates are faring, but the words of one graduate, Abuk, offer hope: “I learned that nothing is impossible in this world and sometimes we just need a bit of help.”

How best to provide that ‘bit of help’ is the subject of the *Future of Adult Community Education in Victoria 2020–2025 Ministerial Statement* and the *Adult, Community and Further Education Board Strategy 2020–25: Skills for study work and life*, both of which are discussed by Sarah Deasey and Linno Rhodes in Open Forum.

‘In This Together’ was chosen as the Reconciliation Week theme for 2020 before it became a COVID-19 trope. To mark Reconciliation Week, Melinda Harper, Aboriginal Liaison Officer for Castlemaine Health, asked Aunty Julie McHale and Jacinta Douglas to reflect on what the theme means to them. We are grateful to all involved for giving us permission to share their thoughts with you in *Fine Print*.

On your way to the treats above, please stop a while with our Features. In this issue, Rob McCormack concludes his three-part examination of the life and work of Paulo Freire by bringing Freirean curriculum design into the spotlight. Victoria Wilson writes on trauma-informed teaching of adults, offering research-based and practical insights. Victoria will give the keynote presentation at the VALBEC conference in December, so this article makes for excellent pre-reading.

‘Road blocks, turning points and light bulb moments’ was the title of an article that Julianne Krusche wrote for *Fine Print* back in 2016. Julianne was a highly regarded member of the adult literacy and numeracy teaching community and her death in 2019 was a great blow to the profession. To accompany Liam Frost-Camilleri’s tribute to Julianne, we have reprinted her article here – may it inspire you to embark on your own journey of reflection and discovery.

Please contact me if you have a comment about this issue of *Fine Print*, or would like to propose a future article: fineprintvalbec@gmail.com

Deryn Mansell

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.

Freire's literacy: reading and writing our worlds

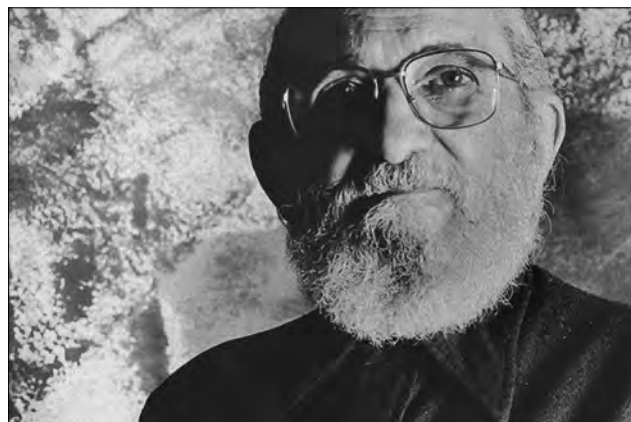
by Rob McCormack

This is the third in a three-part series published here to mark the 50th anniversary of the English translation of Paulo Freire's seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

So far in this series, I have approached Freire from two different angles. *Part 1* emphasised the variety and range of practical contexts over his lifetime of experience and learning that shaped and prompted changes to his thinking. *Part 2* reframed his eclectic theorising, suggesting that his theoretical writings were not concerned so much with theory *as such*, but more with articulating an ethico-political *ethos*, a way-of-being he had discovered in his educational praxis, especially with the culture circles of the Brazilian social movement, Movement of Popular Culture (MCP). Both parts suggested that there was much more to Freire than *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970; henceforth PO). PO represented just one short 4-year phase in a long life of reflection.

This instalment examines the actual curricula Freire was involved in designing. This is not an easy task because Freire tends to focus on abstract principles governing the design of curriculum, not concrete procedures or processes themselves. This means it is difficult to figure out what actually does happen – or might happen – in Freirean education. This is not an oversight on Freire's part; he wanted to discourage others from simply imitating his curriculum.

But it was also, in my opinion, because he had never really been a classroom teacher. Right from the start, he was a program developer mainly involved in professional development sessions, not actual classroom teaching. As we have seen, his most famous program, the Brazilian adult literacy program, never actually ran. This meant he was more comfortable talking about principles of curriculum design than about actual classroom practices. Admittedly, late in his life, when responsible for public schools and technical institutes of São Paulo, Freire did address his books more towards teachers (Freire, 2005). But, even here he spent more time on general principles than detailed descriptions of actual curriculum in terms of their structures, activities and practices.



Paulo Freire. <https://mst.org.br/2017/05/02/20-anos-sem-paulo-freire/>

Teachers have the right and in fact duty to understand what implications for actual classroom practice are implied by Freirean principles. Otherwise, actual pedagogic practice could not be informed by Freirean principles and would be prey to one kind or another of debilitating banking teaching. So, I will try to describe a typical Freirean curriculum because, to my knowledge, he fell back on the same pattern and practices in all his many curriculum designs across quite different contexts.

Key elements of Freirean curriculum

The overriding goal of Freirean pedagogy is humanism

As detailed in Part 2 of this series, humanism is a 2000-year old tradition of education embodied in the liberal arts that is dedicated to producing wise ethical political leaders who can engage in free, reasoned discussion and offer discerning judgements about practical matters in order to bring accord and act collectively on an issue (McCormack, 2011a). These matters elude the grasp of abstract knowledge. This pedagogic tradition, called 'practical philosophy', is concerned with fostering *phronesis*, practical judgement (McCormack, 1999). It contrasts with 'theoretical philosophy' which fosters

abstract knowledge of fact, *epistemé*. So, humanism tries to cultivate more worldly ethico-political capacities in students so that they can participate in the collective dialogic work of forming wise decisions about what to do and what to think about what is happening. We could think of this as an education into the *ethos* or *habitus* of active citizenship (Crosswhite, 2013).

This purpose of education means that students ‘come to discover’ themselves in a more engaged, more ethically and politically charged relationship with the world around them. The goal is not that they learn some new content, some quanta of knowledge or skill, but that they will find themselves changing, that they are becoming more humanist. This means that Freire’s curriculum is primarily *formative* (forming the students), not *in-formative* (handing over information). It is designed to change people, not just give them more knowledge. Importantly, humanism formed the initial stage of all his curricula because coming to think of yourself as intelligent means you become open to learning and change.

Humanism was presented to students in Freire’s curriculum in different ways:

- as the initial ‘learning to learn’ sessions reframing student self-belief
- as the *ethos* to be discovered within what he called ‘re-presentations’
- as the *ethos* or spirit governing collaborative dialogic discussion & enquiry
- as the *ethos* imbibed from connecting with social movements of hope.

Begin from where students ‘are at’

From the contrast between the banking assumptions of the employer-based Social Service of Industry (SESI) and the progressive democratic humanism of the student-led MCP¹, Freire learned that people will only learn or change their deep ways-of-being-in-the-world if this is offered for their free exploration and consent. To present ethical or political matters as if they are matters of fact or logic amounts to banking education. They are matters of judgement (*phronesis*), not fact (*epistemé*). For example, in contemporary circumstances no degree of self-certainty on the part of a teacher on the facts of climate science will be persuasive if presented as facts to be learned and accepted. People must be allowed time to freely explore and entertain shifts in their fundamental ethico-political perspective and their sense of who they are and who and what they are responsible for.

Study student ‘life-worlds’

Given his role as program leader, it was inevitable that Freire would devote careful and detailed attention to preparation (Freire, 2009, pp.71–93). Before any curriculum was designed, Freire always insisted on an investigation into the ‘vocabulary world’ in which students lived. This investigation would reveal the background economy, languages, culture and social circumstances shaping the life-world of potential students as well as their hopes, their fears, anxieties, pain, and dreams. This alerts educators to the *doxa*, the life-world that provides the fundamental footing on which students stand to engage with the curriculum. It thus sensitises teachers to likely sources of misunderstanding or misconnect.

Organise life-world themes into ‘hinge themes’

This ethnographic research into the life-world of students is then distilled into themes or topics such as ‘housing’, ‘work’, ‘land’, ‘health’, ‘education’. These themes were called ‘hinge themes’: they are selected because they can be aligned and connected with themes derived from underlying socio-political structures. So, hinge themes connect two realms: the local existential lifeworld of the students on the one hand; and the wider political world together with its divides and challenges on the other. This means that there is a path of meaning for students to follow leading from their lived understanding of their situation to a more global abstract understanding, a path whereby students can expand their sense of the world and their place in it. These hinge topics open a door between their local space and a more expansive world.

‘Re-presentation’ of hinge themes

In order that the students not be confined to simply perceiving their own world and meanings – as they would be if they only gave voice to stories from their lives or expressed their fears, hopes and anxieties, these hinge themes are ‘re-presented’ in a slightly distanced medium: as a graphic, a painting, a dialogue, scenario, or short text. These re-presentations are like those ambiguous duck/rabbit pictures. They can be ‘read’ from the point of view of both realms, the concrete situation of students, as well as from the state of the wider world. Both realities lie present within them, waiting to be discerned. Students are invited, as it were, to take up a position where the hinge pivots so they can look both ways, discerning both realities at the same time. For example, students might come to see themselves, not just as individuals hiding a feeling of personal shame or sense of inadequacy, but as connected to a whole generation of others who are similarly subject

to the unjust workings of neoliberal capitalism and who can potentially fight with hope to right this wrong.

De-code the 're-presentations' towards lived worlds

The first task for students is to study, question and discuss the 're-presentations' in order to reveal what they are about; what reality they are referring to or presenting. The assumption is that students will first 'see' that they point to the very situations and issues in their own lifeworld, things that they worry about. This is the essential starting point, the footing, for mobilising student learning. But it is important to note that even though Freire's pedagogy first focuses on the knowledge and lived world of students, he is not interested in simply celebrating 'student voice'. His real goal is to help students embrace a bigger world and connect with broader socio-historical forces embodying *phronesis*, to enter more fully into a field of praxis. Even re-viewing their world and situations through the medium of the 're-presentations' has already slightly distanced students from their intuitive immersion in their way of life. They have already begun to talk 'about', not just 'from within' their lives. Their stance and communication is already slightly more distanced and objective, not just unthinkingly *in situ*.

Re-code the 're-presentations' towards the wider world

Now comes the most critical, and fraught, task for Freirean educators. They must help students discern another world, the wider socio-political world and its central ethico-political conflicts, limits and injustices hidden within these very same re-presentations and examples. In this way, situations in a student's world become linked to this larger framework, perhaps as instances or loci of injury, insult, disrespect, injustice or other-ing. (Freire, 2009, pp.60–95; Freire, 2013, esp. Appendix, pp 57–80; McCormack, 2011b is a local effort to address these same issues) 2011b a local effort to address these same issues.

Exploratory collaborative conversation, not teacher-based expounded content

Both tasks – decoding and recoding – must, for Freire, be primarily the work of students. Educators may offer assistance or ask leading questions, but the primary agency must lie with the students themselves. Guiding a process of dialogue in this low-key, facilitating style requires great intelligence, wisdom, compassion, integrity, agility, and imagination, the power of which is not to be underestimated. In this sense, the teacher is not 'equal' and is certainly a co-agent².

Even Freire had to acknowledge that this was by far the weakest part of the curriculum. In their efforts to keep to the pre-planned sessions and timetable, his teachers and coordinators often resorted to 'teaching' or 'telling' students what they should discern hidden within the 're-presentations'. This immediately skews the classes towards banking pedagogy.

Humanist ethos - reasoned discourse

Not only is the decoding and recoding primarily assigned to the students, it has to be carried out collectively in the form of democratic dialogue. Classroom discourse consists of respectful listening and tentative interpretations and debate, not dogmatic opinions or argumentative contestation. It is governed by the rule: *You might be wrong; the other person might be right*. In fact, the focus is on creating a shared consensus, a new common sense, a new praxis that looks to stitching together the students' lived worlds and the larger world. Thus, it is as if the hinge themes can swing open a door separating the two realities to form two levels of the same reality.

I need to say something more about Freire's understanding of dialogic conversation. The first thing to note is that he is not thinking of conversation or dialogue in the way we tend to in modern democratic societies, whereby conversation is a situation where people compete to impose their individual opinions on each other. This modern view of conversation, which we may have been trained into through 'clear thinking' and school debating, mirrors the dominant liberal view of society generally; that it is built on the competing actions and interactions of individuals.

Freire's view of both society and conversation is quite different. It is a more social, more collectivist, more communal view. He thinks of conversation as a matter of looking for what is shared, what is common, what can be agreed on, not on trying to settle which is the best opinion. Collective discussion is not aimed at finding out who has the 'truth', but at finding out what is already shared and held in common without our realising. It is a discovery of shared belonging.

Moreover, Freire observes:

As the dialogue intensifies, a 'current' is established among the participants, dynamic to the degree that the content of the codifications corresponds to the existential reality of the groups. (Freire, 2013, p.44)

The best description of this ‘current’ which emerges in conversation is by Gadamer (McCormack, 2014) whom unfortunately Freire did not study. The thing that Gadamer notices about conversations is that they can ‘suck people in’. Ideas can bounce around, ricocheting off different contributions and formulations in such a way that momentum and direction seem to emerge and the conversation takes on a life of its own. No-one fully controls its direction or movements. It becomes ‘an experience’, a ‘happening’ that engrosses, overwhelms and envelopes those present (Walhof, 2005).

Gadamer calls this ‘hermeneutic experience’ (Gadamer, 1989, pp.383–389): it is when what is being said seems to take control of us, mesmerise us, and floods us with a different way of experiencing the world. Typically, in my experience it is very hard to say after such an experience exactly what we have learnt or what happened. It is like walking out into a busy sunny street after having experienced a powerful matinee movie. We know something happened, we know we were deeply affected, we know that this has probably changed us in some way, but we can’t quite put it into words. Gadamer calls this ‘the event of truth’, a happening in which we experience a better understanding of things.

Not all conversations reach this pitch of intensity. In fact, most don’t. But this is what can happen in conversation and it is this that embodies powerful learning experience. It can, as it were, re-wire our brains so that the world and who we are feels different. When in intense conversation, we have not been sharing or sorting competing cognitive statements, but immersed in an intellectual and emotional flow of meaning moving towards the gradual formation of a shared common sense and sensibility, a shared ethico-political habitus that is attuned to the world, its hopes and possibilities together with its flaws, failings and injustices. This is what dialogic discussion means in a Freirean curriculum.

Reprise: summarising the features and shape of Freire’s curriculum

Freire understood that the teacher/culture-circle facilitator must first change students’ belief in themselves. They must first overcome their sense of hopelessness, despair, nihilism and self-blame. So, the first task of his curriculum was to change their sense of self-worth. He did this by, beforehand, studying the students’ lives and life-worlds – including the economic, social, cultural, linguistic and psychological dimensions. He then identified some key

‘hinge issues’ that could bring together their existing sense of self with a different, enhanced, more connected, more energised sense of self.

This new sense of self is not just a more abstract theory-based ‘view’ of their lived world, it is a more abstract set of social relations. That is, it is a deeper sense of belonging to a more powerful historical force. So, it is a praxis, not just a cognitive schema. It is a social connection to a movement with a sense of mission, seeking social justice and resisting injustice. In short, Freire’s humanism is concerned with shifting students into a new praxis, into a new set of social relationships and into an enhanced sense of self-agency, not just into a new abstract theory. This new praxis and relationality is then cultivated and reinforced by the emphasis on horizontal dialogic discussion among staff and students in the work of finding some sense of consensus concerning the realities hidden within the ‘re-presentations’. Issues – both local and wider – can then be understood from within a wider sense of ‘people power’ and collectively imagining new forms of institutionality for mobilising political power.

Even before doing anything about literacy, Freire first presents students with the task of coming to experience themselves and their relationship to the world and others differently, as humanist creators of culture and the world. He wants them to come to feel ‘in touch’ with the world and people around them, and that they have some agency, that they can make a difference, even if it is only a small difference. Furthermore, he does not want them to learn *about* this humanist form of life – the anthropological concept of culture – as an abstract theory. He wants them to ‘discover’ that they have always been humanists, responsible for making and re-making the world, without necessarily realising it. Or, as I would prefer to say: they discover that being involved in democratic conversation has changed their sense of connection with others and opens up a larger world, thereby expanding the reach of their sense of responsibility.

Notice that this new humanist *ethos* or *habitus* students are invited into is an increased sense of connectedness, relationality and agency. It is primarily a shift in the sense of where one is placed and one’s embeddedness in community with others – reaching into the past and future, not just the present. This shift is not a matter of learning a theory or discipline. It is more a matter of understanding oneself to have already been, but also becoming more consciously and deliberately, part of a

culture, an *ethos* or tradition of resistance or fight for justice. So, for example, First Nations students may come to sense themselves as inheriting the values, strength and tasks of a continuous line of activists.

Disciplinary or vocational content

It is only after an initial 10 to 12 sessions devoted to cultivating an enlarged humanist habitus that a Freirean curriculum begins to engage with the usual sorts of content we find in schooling, TAFE or higher education. Because his curriculum principles were developed within the informal popular education sector, he did not really face the challenge of mainstream content education until late in life when he became responsible for all public education, including schools and technical education in São Paulo. As a consequence, how to present or re-present subject matter from educational or vocational disciplines, as distinct from inculcating an ethico-political stance of humanism, was not well addressed or documented by Freire.

What about literacy?

In terms of the teaching of basic literacy, Freire seems to me quite conventional. Because Portuguese is more phonetically regular than English, he uses a bottom-up constructivist curriculum that works well at the level of syllables, encouraging students to build new words by combining syllables. However, more importantly, he insists that the real work of literacy, which he often calls 'post-literacy', is reading and writing the world and the word in relation to each other. *Reading and writing the world*: that is, understanding and formulating the world behind written language. *Reading and writing the word*: that is, decoding and making meaning of written language by relating it to the world it speaks *to* or *for* or *against*.

But these practices of reading/writing the world and reading/writing the word are also interactive and relational; or as Freire would say, dialectical. When reading a text, we use our prior understanding of the world to help us understand the text and its language or wording. And when we read the world we draw on what we have learned from reading texts and their wording. This interaction means that our reading moves towards re-readings and re-writings of both world and language. Language and world are *yin* and *yang*. They mirror and make meaning of and with each other. Literacy is not just learning language; it is learning the world(s) that language speaks *to*, *for* and *about*. It is learning to re-learn and re-imagine these worlds, the worlds we live *in*, *with* and *against*. This is the Freirean view of literacy and learning.

Explicit pedagogy and banking education

There is one question always hovering around Freirean pedagogy: Is explicit pedagogy *ipso facto* banking education? Or can some explicit pedagogy help students grapple with what is 'presented' in the re-presentations. We need to remember that although strongly influenced by progressives such as Dewey, Freire was not a classic progressive. He insisted that radical educators must be authoritative, directive and responsible for the structure and direction of the curriculum. He insisted that teachers should not abnegate or hide their difference from students, or their more abstract discourses and forms of knowing. But nor should they insist or imply that students should come to agree with them. This would be to subtly rob students of their freedom. Dialogic teaching is so intricate and elusive that it is not directly teachable or learnable. It is a matter of experience and instinct. And yet it is precisely in and through this intricate relational dance between teacher and students that the real work of education and transformative learning is transacted.³

Conclusion

To conclude, if we view Freire's life work as seeking to institute (or revivify) a form of life and educational *ethos*, democratic humanism, then, although he may not be widely read today, in fact he has had enormous impact. His *ethos* of universal democratic dialogue bent on forming 'good enough' agreements and consensus has been widely adopted throughout the 'impossible professions', the professions concerned with protecting and enhancing integrity, autonomy and solidarity. This humanist *ethos* of care and respect has been deeply embraced – despite government efforts to expunge it in favour of market-based 'value for money' outcomes – not only by educators, but also by community workers, nurses, feminist collectives, ecological movements, political activists, First Nations organisations, as well as many frontline workers.

The final irony is that, even though I have argued PO is not the only expression of Freire's message and that it was tied to the heady 60s, it now looks likely that in fact we are heading towards an impending epochal socio-political crisis that may be uncannily similar to 1968. Could it be that Freire's call to non-banking revolutionary political action in PO will 'speak' again, that we will 'hear it' as a call to a collective praxis linking us with all past, present and future biological life on this planet, Earth? Will all institutions, not just educational ones, develop eco-pedagogies based on pluralist culture circles to explore through democratic dialogue how to create the 'people



Efter badet (After the bath): sculpture by Pye Engström depicting seven political figures. Paulo Freire is depicted second from the left. Photo by Bengt Oberger (cc BY-SA 3.0)

power', the institutional structures and political power to move forward in responding to the climate catastrophe facing us? *Viva Paulo, he lives yet!*⁴

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Notes

- 1 SESI and MCP are discussed in more detail in Part 1 of this series: *Fine Print* 42 (1) 3–9.
- 2 My thanks to Delia Bradshaw (personal communication) for these two sentences.
- 3 This issue of how directive a teacher should be is intricately woven throughout Freire's entire corpus. He never treats it as an isolated topic that can be dealt with or settled separately from other aspects of education. In a sense, all his writings and discourse circles around inventing concepts, metaphors and stories as ways of capturing in writing the chemistry at the heart of education, the point of balance and equilibrium, between leaving students to their own devices, on the one hand, and overwhelming them with more powerful discourses, on the other. For me, *Pedagogy of Hope* eminently captures this tension with reflective grace and rigorous passion.
- 4 Unhappily, there are two matters I have left aside for lack of space: Freire's relationship with First Nations peoples; and issues around translating from Brazilian Portuguese into English. Freire has been both embraced and criticised by First Nations activists, but doing justice to these complexities would require a lengthy article. The issue of deficiencies in English translations, especially of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is evocatively explored in the 35-page Notes for *Pedagogy of Hope* by Freire's second wife and eminent educational scholar, Ana Maria Araújo Freire.

Trauma-informed teaching of adults

by Victoria Wilson

Having immersed myself in trauma-informed teaching of adults learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) for the past five years, I am often tempted to say that the practice is obvious and common sense. However, recently I was again reminded that treating students like humans, that valuing and respecting their identities and backgrounds, is not obvious and common sense for everyone. If it were, small acts of kindness would probably not be so gratefully received.

As I write this, it is the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. I posted a Ramadan greeting on Facebook, where I am friends with many of my former students from a variety of Muslim-majority countries. As always, I was somewhat embarrassed by their responses to my simple message of “Ramadan Mubarak” (Ramadan Greetings). I was told that I am ‘amazing’, ‘wonderful’, ‘thoughtful’, and even ‘compassionate’, simply for posting that message.

I admit that I am not that effusive when my students from non-Christian cultures wish me a Happy Easter or Merry Christmas. I can take it for granted, as I am living in a country where I am the cultural and linguistic norm, where I am not subjected to hate speech or violence because of my religious or cultural identity. But I know how it feels to be threatened and fearful, and for many students affected by trauma, prejudice, and chronic stress, even a small gesture of inclusivity can make them (us) feel welcome, valued, and cared about.

Trauma and learning

In this paper I will outline how trauma and learning interact, especially in relation to teaching adults learning EAL. Based on trauma-informed principles from a range of disciplines, I will discuss what we, as educators, can do to mitigate post-traumatic stress responses that can interfere with the learning process. I will also reflect on my understanding of trauma and learning, from the multiple perspectives of a teacher working with trauma-surviving students, a researcher in trauma and learning, and the experiences of both teaching in a disaster zone and teaching traumatised students while managing my own post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

My initiation into teaching, learning and psychological trauma was somewhat delayed. It was never mentioned in

any of the English language teacher training or academic study I completed, and was not something I consciously thought about even while teaching in a disaster zone. In March 2011, I was living and teaching in coastal Fukushima at the time of the 9.0 earthquake, the tsunami that killed approximately 18,000 people, and the nuclear disaster that was triggered by these events.

In the months that followed, my students and I lived through continuous traumatic stress. More than 5000 aftershocks followed the main earthquake in the year that followed, with 82 of these being over magnitude 6.0 (Mustain, 2012). As a reference point, the infamous Christchurch earthquake of that same year measured 6.3 (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2019). Many of my students in Fukushima lost their homes, friends, and colleagues in the tsunami, with our small town holding funerals every week for months. School children wore Geiger counters around their necks, the Japanese self-defence force camped out in the town centre, and thousands were relocated into ‘temporary’ housing. Families were split up, livelihoods were lost, and uncertainty reigned.

However, the concepts of psychological trauma and PTSD were not widely discussed or acknowledged in the disaster zone at the time, partly because of the ingrained stoicism of the rural Japanese (Kotani et al., 2013). It was only later that the scale of the mental health repercussions for survivors was acknowledged and documented (for an overview, see Wilson [2017]). At a day-to-day level, my students and I were trying to preserve a sense of normality: me by continuing to teach, and my students by continuing to learn English. It has been argued that keeping this sense of continuity is one of the best ways to stave off post-traumatic stress and other destructive effects (Ungar, 2018), but it is not a cure-all.

It was not until I returned to Australia in 2012 that my post-traumatic responses started to develop, and not until 2014 that I began to make a conscious connection between psychological trauma, teaching, and learning. In 2014 I began teaching English language at a university in a refugee-welcome zone in Queensland. Many students were from refugee backgrounds, at that time mostly ethnic Afghans from Iran and Pakistan as well as South Sudanese. In addition, many of my class members were Iraqi professionals who had come to Australia to pursue their PhDs.

My colleagues and I noticed that a small minority of these students – from both the refugee and Iraqi groups – exhibited various difficulties, such as being easily distracted, falling asleep in class, reacting with heightened alarm to seemingly pedestrian events (for example, a maintenance man glancing through the window, an exam ending and being told to put their pens down). Many others told me stories of their lives and losses, such as the chronic trauma that comes from being a child labourer, of having family members killed by Islamic State or the Taliban, of witnessing a suicide attack, of life-threatening illness, family separations, and circumstances that led to exclusion from academic-track schooling.

Of course, not all trauma survivors go on to develop PTSD or other prolonged mental distress (Silove, 2013) and neither is PTSD “fixed or immutable” (Silove, 2013, p. 238). Furthermore, in the post-traumatic environment, certain socio-interpersonal elements constitute risk factors for PTSD while others serve as protective factors (Harris & Fallo, 2001; Maercker & Horn, 2013; Silove, 2013). These factors are especially salient in the teaching and learning environment and will be discussed further below.

Recognising trauma

As pointed out by trauma specialist and psychiatrist Judith Herman (1997), when PTSD first appeared in the American Psychiatry Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) in 1980, traumatic events were described as “outside the range of usual human experience” (American Psychiatric Association, 1980, p. 236). This definition was changed in later versions of the DSM to reflect the reality that trauma is so common that “only the fortunate find it unusual” (Herman, 1997, p. 33). Given the prevalence of traumatic experiences, our classes are bound to include traumatised students, and educators cannot necessarily judge which students these are. They may have refugee backgrounds or not, be from developed or developing, peaceful or war-torn countries.

Similarly, our students’ interactions in class may not necessarily indicate whether or not they have PTSD. They may speak openly about traumatic events in their past, yet experience little mental distress. They may be the class clowns with seemingly not a care in the world, while out of class they self-harm and attempt suicide. They may be intensely quiet or outspoken, genial or gruff. Despite the popular image of the military veteran exploding with rage, PTSD can manifest outwardly in a number of ways. It may also be somatised, appearing as bodily aches and pains,

insomnia, or a general malaise (Silove, Steel, & Bauman, 2007). Furthermore, post-traumatic stress can and does manifest in different ways across cultures. For example, epileptic-like seizures are common amongst traumatised Yazidi women who have been subject to sexual violence but are very rare in other populations (Kizilhan, Steger, & Noll-Hussong, 2020). Nevertheless, there is a strong body of evidence that PTSD is considered a valid concept cross-culturally (de Jong, 2005; Silove et al., 2007).

Trauma and language learning

Furthermore, even though PTSD is considered to have a social-environmental rather than biological *cause*, it has certain neurobiological markers which affect learning, in particular, verbal processing and learning of an additional language. Stimuli that recall the original trauma cause a spike in memory function and brain activity specific to that trauma (Bryant & Harvey, 1995; Thrasher, Dalgleish, & Yule, 1994; van der Kolk, 2014). When this happens, speech centres in the brain are impaired, meaning that perceptions, feelings and thoughts cannot be verbalised (van der Kolk, 2014). The ability to organise information logically and sequentially is also incapacitated, making it difficult to identify cause and effect and to make long term goals (van der Kolk, 2014).

Flashbacks also trigger the amygdala, the part of the brain responsible for detecting threat and activating fight or flight reactions. Naturally, focus and concentration are impeded while in this state of arousal (Isserlis, 2009; Perry, 2006). Post-traumatic stress can also negatively affect verbal learning, memory and concentration (Brandes et al., 2002; Bustamante, Mellman, David, & Fins, 2001; Jelinek et al., 2006; Johnsen & Asbjornsen, 2009; Lindauer, Olf, van Meijel, Carlier, & Gersons, 2006; Vasterling et al., 2002), all of which play a major role in learning an additional language. Furthermore, research has found that the symptom load of PTSD is inversely correlated with the speed of second or other language acquisition in a sample of resettled refugees (Theorell & Sondergaard, 2004).

This poses a problem for educators, as learning will not take place when the learner is in a state of mental distress. Nor can we “fall into the trap of suggesting that learners can go away and ‘heal’ from the trauma and come back to class when they are ready to learn” (Horsman, 1998, p. 1). The learning environment can play an important role in either exacerbating or minimising post-traumatic stress and accordingly, whether or not students are in an optimal state to learn.



Cooperative learning tasks contribute to a supportive learning environment.

While research on trauma-informed teaching of adult EAL students is scant, the literature is clear on the socio-interpersonal factors that can help or hinder trauma recovery. In psychosocial terms, trauma shatters trust and worldview, and robs survivors of a sense of safety, meaning, connection and identity (Herman, 1997; Silove, 2013; van der Kolk, 2014). Therefore, a sense of security, social belonging, and a valuing of identities and abilities are among the factors required for recovery from trauma and the ability to learn unimpeded (Adkins, Birman, Sample, Brod, & Silver, 1998; Finn, 2010; Perry, 2006; Silove, 2013; van der Kolk, 2014).

Safety

Just because a trauma survivor is no longer in physical danger does not mean that there is a feeling of safety. Survivors of trauma “feel existentially unsafe, and find the world profoundly and imminently dangerous” (Burstow, 2003). Furthermore, those with more severe symptoms of PTSD tend to have less belief in benevolence of both the world and the people in it (Ter Heide, Sleijpen, & van der Aa, 2017). Educators can create a sense of emotional safety by being transparent and consistent in both the lesson content and their interactions (Perry, 2006). A risk-free space for students to ask questions and make mistakes without fear of humiliation or reprimand is essential (Isserlis, 2009; Nelson & Appleby, 2015).

Students have told me of English language teachers whose unpredictable moods make them too intimidated to ask questions or admit difficulties in understanding. Conversely, students have told me that an emotionally consistent and genial classroom (peers and teacher) allows

them to simply focus on learning. Similarly, students have reported to me that knowing the lesson content beforehand, and a teacher’s use of simple scaffolding techniques such as pre-teaching vocabulary before a reading, reduces their stress and makes learning easier.

Predictability also relates to lesson materials which may activate some students’ traumatic memories. Many commercial EAL textbooks contain chapters on disasters and life-threatening events, which can be distressing to those with first-hand experience of such trauma. Rather than risking such material, educators should find an alternative way to meet the lesson aims. If students raise potentially traumatic topics themselves, this is a different scenario; the educator must find a way to navigate the situation, balancing the needs of students to feel heard with the needs of other students to feel safe. In a classroom of adults, this is usually easily done by explicitly laying out those competing needs to the class members.

My primary research also indicates that treating students like responsible adults, worthy of trust, plays an important role in emotional safety. Students from a refugee background have told me of being subject to unnecessary and heavy-handed surveillance by language centre management in Australia, making them feel like they were once again in the repressive regimes they had fled.

Social support and belonging

This leads to the closely related trauma-informed principle of social support and sense of belonging. Social support is a well-known protective factor against PTSD and other forms of mental distress (Herman, 1997; Silove, 2013; van der Kolk, 2014). Conversely, marginalisation, which often accompanies the experience of resettlement, can exacerbate PTSD (Rees, Silove, & Kareth, 2009; Silove, 2013). Policies that may not have repercussions for those who are trauma-free – such as separating friends and family members with the same level of English into different classes – can be catastrophic for students who have been forcibly separated from their families and communities.

Educators should also create cooperative rather than competitive learning tasks, and foster supportive relationships between students and with staff. The latter, admittedly, can be fraught in the neoliberal education system of Australia. While advocacy of behalf of students and their families is expected for EAL teachers in the US (Harrison & Prado, 2019), Australian EAL teaching bodies have no such expectation. In fact, many institutions

may explicitly ban communication between students and teachers except in a narrow, official capacity.

Valuing of identities

My doctoral research as well as my own classroom observations and feedback have shown that valuing students' ethnic, religious, and other identities adds to a sense of belonging and ease in the classroom. The simple act of displaying a poster or wearing a t-shirt that says "Refugees Welcome", or some other act of solidarity with a marginalised group, can make a palpable difference to students. In my classroom, posters of refugees and immigrants who have achieved educational success in Australia have garnered the appreciation of students, as have teaching materials that foreground the students' own cultures in a positive way. My research and informal feedback have shown that such gestures not only make students feel welcome and valued; they take away the fear of rejection so that they are free to focus on learning.

Valuing of knowledge and abilities

Closely linked to a valuing of identities is paying respect to the knowledge and abilities that students bring to the classroom. Recovery from trauma requires "a culture of justice and human rights that afford survivors and their communities a sense of acknowledgement, dignity, respect and empowerment" (Silove, 2013, p. 243). In this regard, the sharing of expert status in a language learning classroom is vital. Inexperienced or ineffective language teachers may make the mistake of 'teaching' first rather than eliciting what students already know. This robs students not only of the opportunity to practise their language but to contribute knowledge to their peers. Being silenced, patronised, and robbed of legitimacy as a person of knowledge is anathema to both mental health and learning (Chamberlin, 2012; O'Hagan, 2014; Ryan & Viete, 2009), while low self-worth has been correlated with more severe post-traumatic stress responses (Ter Heide et al., 2017).

Especially egregious is when EAL teachers presume to 'teach' students about the students' own culture or country. Unfortunately, this is not just confined to the non-'woke'. I once attended a seminar run by a critical theorist who specialised in decolonising methodologies. Present in the room were a number of Australian Indigenous people; when one of them described building a humpy (an Australian indigenous housing structure), the visiting scholar turned her back on the speaker to ask the White host "What's a humpy?" Just because our English language

students are not experts in the English language does not mean that they are not experts in many other fields, especially their own cultures.

Therefore, teachers should give all students – not just the loudest and brightest – the opportunity to shine. Sometimes that opportunity is related to their non-English-language skills and knowledge. Recognising their strengths and allowing them to demonstrate these to others can bring a boost that often later translates to more confidence with using English and the knowledge that they are capable in the eyes of others.

Conclusion

When I began writing this paper, it was the Muslim month of Ramadan, and as I am finishing, the festival of Eid has begun. Once again I received heartfelt messages of thanks from former students when I sent them Eid greetings, including one from a young woman I taught for several months some years ago. Four years ago, I had found her on a corridor floor weeping after being retraumatised by the institutional policies of a language centre and being told "You're in the real world now". Distraught, she said that her treatment here was no different from her life before, in the country where she was born but, as a daughter of refugees, had no rights. Now she has almost finished her degree. In reply to my Eid greetings, she posted the picture below with the caption: "When a non-Muslim wishes you Eid Mubarak".



When I asked why it had that effect, she wrote, "I don't know. It is so sweet when I see respect from friends who have different cultures and beliefs."

Ultimately, trauma-informed teaching of adults is about being human, and treating our students as the humans

they are. They know the real world only too well and are not poor victims to be saved, but competent people with strengths and skills who simply need some extra tools to build the next stage of their lives.

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A tribute to Julianne Krusche

by *Liam Frost-Camilleri*

In 1981, Julianne Krusche began her journey into the teaching world by enrolling in a Diploma of Teaching at the Institute of Catholic Education in Ballarat (now the Ballarat Campus of Australian Catholic University). Widely regarded as a 'naughty' student, Julianne began teaching in 1985 at St Lawrence O'Toole Primary School in Leongatha. Julianne returned to Ballarat, married, and then taught at St Augustine's Primary School in Creswick.



The card that Julianne's colleagues made for her when she attained her PhD aptly summed up her personality. Courtesy of Roland Krusche

Instilling her love of lifelong learning early, Julianne was awarded her Bachelor of Education in 1987 from the Ballarat College of Advanced Education. In the early 90s, Julianne started her family and remained connected to her love of education by becoming a volunteer tutor in the adult literacy and numeracy program at the University of Ballarat. Her skill and enthusiasm for teaching resulted in prompt employment by the University as an ongoing teacher in Humanities and Adult Education.

Julianne's passion for education continued as she developed and taught in a range of programs including Adult Education, Disability, Youth Education, First Aid and Apprenticeship Support where she established the

first literacy and numeracy support program for TAFE students at the University of Ballarat.

Julianne took her first steps into management as the Program Coordinator of Adult Education in 2009. In this position she led 10 staff and developed her adult literacy networks across Victoria. From this position, Julianne became the Associate Director of Federation College, where she was responsible for a wide range of programs including Certificate I courses, Advanced Diplomas, English as a second language courses, Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning courses and prison education. In this role, Julianne demonstrated her prodigious work ethic and an ability to work long hours at an exceptionally high level. She also never lost her sense of fun or the 'naughty student' that was born in her during her early studies.

As a manager, she believed that not only could every one of her staff learn, but she could always learn from her staff. Julianne's foresight and ability to strategically plan were some of her most valuable assets as a manager. Julianne was always prepared to make difficult decisions, but always considered the impact her decisions had on her staff.

Continuing her learning journey, Julianne completed her Master of Education in 2004 on 'Unpacking literacy and numeracy within training packages'. After swearing that she would never return to study, she enrolled into a Doctor of Philosophy in 2011. Julianne felt energised through her study and enjoyed talking about it to anybody who was willing to listen. Showing how much she loved to talk about her findings, Julianne would go on to speak at a number of conferences.

Julianne's PhD study was focused on how TAFE policy was impacting the identity of language, literacy and numeracy teachers. This topic was a strategic choice for her as it combined the policy element of her Associate Director role with her passion for literacy and numeracy education.

Her career trajectory was altered with a move into higher education, becoming the Acting Manager of Aboriginal Education and later the Manager of Health and Wellbeing

of Student Connect, both at Federation University. Julianne approached these roles with excitement, seeing them as opportunities to learn something new. She was quickly able to bring her management skills into both roles and remained a valuable asset to the University.

Despite falling ill during her studies, Julianne was awarded her PhD in 2018. She was especially proud of her PhD journey and spoke very fondly of her supervisors, Annette Foley and Barry Golding. Julianne's next intent was to publish several articles stemming from her PhD and eventually become a supervisor of higher education students herself. These intents demonstrate how Julianne very much embodied what it is to be a lifelong learner. Unfortunately, Julianne passed away before she was able to achieve these goals.

Her colleagues miss her for the 'naughty' antics, and her ability to always put the human element of her role first. As a manager, she was considerate, inspiring, firm and always fair. She was able to get the best out of everyone she worked with and always enjoyed a challenge. Julianne's passing has also impacted the wider community of literacy and numeracy networks across Victoria, with her loss felt greatly in the identity of adult literacy and numeracy teachers. We are indebted



Julianne was a natural mentor. Shown here with Liam Frost-Camilleri at his master's degree graduation ceremony.

to Julianne for her unwavering and infectious passion for education and learning.

Vale Julianne.

Liam Frost-Camilleri is a lecturer within the School of Education at Federation University. He worked under Julianne in the VET sector of FedUni TAFE (now Federation TAFE) as the Literacy and Numeracy Coordinator for a number of years.

Road blocks, turning points and light bulb moments

By *Julianne Krusche*

Julianne Krusche was awarded her PhD in 2018. Despite reservations and setbacks, she found the journey especially rewarding and encouraged others to take the plunge. This article was originally published in *Fine Print* Vol.39 (1) before Julianne completed her PhD. It details the journey it took to discover and refine the main finding of her study: the 'weather system' of policy and the impact it has on Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) teacher identities. As Julianne passed away in 2019, we are revisiting her work in fond memory of the contributions she made and the positive impact she had on her colleagues and the wider research community.

The journey begins

My PhD research journey may best be described as one where you embark with little more than a broad 'navigational tool' that you don't really know how to use. Like most other early PhD students, I really had no firm idea about my research questions. All I knew was that it was always going to involve something around adult literacy, as this has been my passion for a long time. Thus far in my research, I have experienced a series of 'turning points' and many 'road blocks'. However, I have been fortunate enough to work with great supervisors who have been instrumental in teaching me how to turn on the navigational tool and then allowed me, through trial and error, to progressively learn how to use the buttons properly.

I have been frequently asked, 'why undertake this study?' My initial response has been something along the lines of having unfinished business; a curious nature; seeking a personal challenge; and wanting to broaden my knowledge within the LLN field. Like many of the teachers that I have interviewed, I have been immersed in the LLN field for a long time and have witnessed and implemented many government policy changes handed down at an institute level.

With my very broad concept proposal propped under my arm, I went to meet with Professor Barry Golding at Federation University. After this first meeting, although still bereft of concrete ideas and with even more questions, I saw this as the first turning point in my research journey. Barry instilled in me a sense of self belief that I was capable of undertaking this level of study. We should not underestimate the power of agency and building confidence to work towards achieving goals for ourselves, just as much as for the students in our LLN classes.



My first 'light bulb' moment occurred while attending the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) Conference in 2011. During a presentation about the lack of clarity of roles and qualifications regarding adult literacy and numeracy teachers in Australia, it occurred to me that this would be my research focus. There appeared to be very limited research on LLN teachers themselves, at both a national and international level.

Finding a focus

As my initial focus was to investigate how the LLN teachers understood the term adult literacy and numeracy, I embarked on a whole range of reading in this area. I discovered that, although the discourse had changed over time, there was very little research about how teachers perceived it. After discussions with Barry Golding, it had become apparent that my research was going to take me down a post-structural theoretical path. Although I did not know it at the time, I was starting to develop interest in exploring the relationship between discourse and the formation of teacher identity.

To explore this further, Barry recommended that I meet with Dr Annette Foley, an expert in post-structural theory, and send her copies of the research questions and

preliminary literature review work that I had already undertaken. Being the naïve emerging research student that I was, I assumed that this meeting would confirm that the work I had achieved to date was fantastic, and that I was on the right path. I can only describe my first meeting with Annette as being both a ‘roadblock’ and a ‘turning point’ all in one. I left this meeting very confused and frustrated. I believed that she was asking me to consider theoretical concepts that were foreign to me and had little to do with the work I had completed to date.

As it turned out, this meeting became the greatest turning point because after I had gone away and reflected on our discussion, I was compelled to explore the ideas that she had asked me to consider. Symbolically, Annette challenged me to hold up the navigational tool and look at it from a different angle and, like Barry had done, didn’t tell me exactly which buttons to push but gave me a whole series of options to consider.

Another light bulb moment came early in one of my supervision meetings with Annette when she commented:

Most PhD students commence their study because they are interested in a topic. However, what they are actually measured on is their ability to understand and apply an academic theory. The topic is just what keeps you entertained along the way to master the theory.

Prior to this, I’m not sure exactly what I was thinking in terms of what PhD actually stood for. After all, it does mean Doctor of Philosophy, not Doctor of LLN!

Exploring post-structural theory

With this in mind, I set about reading as much literature as I could on post-structural theory, in particular, the work of Michel Foucault. To say that understanding his post-structural theory was challenging is an understatement. From my perspective, Foucault appeared to articulate his ideas in semi-prose writing. This was very difficult to comprehend and make sense of what he was actually saying, and in turn consider how I was supposed to apply this to my own research. To combat this, I was advised to read up on how others had applied his theories as a way of making sense of it all. This advice really helped.

To summarise, post-structuralists such as Foucault, see language as the “common factor in the analysis of social organisation, social meanings, power and individual consciousness” (Weedon, 1987, p.21). Post-structuralists

presume that identity is created as a response to ongoing and pervasive changes in cultural practices and discourses (Fenwick, 2006). In essence, this means that the teacher’s identity is constantly renegotiated in relation to experiences, situations and other community members in culturally constituted working life contexts (Wenger, 1998).

Identity can be constructed out of numerous and competing discourses (Whisnant, 2012) and certain discourses may dominate the culture by helping to shape the political and social institutions. Cross (2010) also states that the teachers’ identities are also derived in part from their lived experiences and their own social and cultural history which form their personal narratives (Cross, 2010). All of this combined to inform and influence teachers’ practices (Widin, et al, 2012). Foucault describes discourse as, “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (2010, p.49). Such practices produce meaning, form subjects and define what is, and what is not possible for people, such as teachers, to say within specific institutions (Foucault, 1981).

Staying calm

The working title for my thesis was, and still is *Unpacking the Professional Identities of LLN Teachers in Victorian VET Institutes*. Along with a 10,000-word summary document, I successfully undertook my Confirmation of Candidature presentation in June 2014. Anybody who has been through a similar experience is likely to describe it as a nerve-racking ordeal. My supervisor calmed me by saying, ‘You’ll be fine. Remember that you are the most expert person in the room with regards to this particular research’. This was yet another light bulb moment.

Another useful piece of advice was that if people are polite enough to ask you what your research is about, you have a maximum of three sentences before their eyes will start to glaze over and lose interest. My three sentences were:

1. I am investigating the professional roles and identities of LLN teachers working in VET institutes in Victoria.
2. This is in light of massive governmental policy reform in both VET and LLN in recent times.
3. To do this I will be using a post-structural theory to examine how language and discourse has played a role in the creation of LLN teacher identity.

Finding a voice

I believe that the decision to undertake this research has come at an important time in the shaping of VET and

LLN policy in Australia, coinciding with the release of the *National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults* policy in 2012. Although the policy reinforced the critical role that adult LLN teachers play in the success of the strategy, it also raised questions around the current professionalism and experience of the teachers involved (Roberts & Wignall, 2011). At the same time that Widin, Yasukawa and Chodieswicz (2012) had claimed that, “the field of adult language, literacy and numeracy in Australia is a site of struggle as policy changes...challenge teachers’ expertise and beliefs about good teaching practice” (p.9).

According to McGavin (2013) this could result in teachers potentially questioning their professional identities due to changing roles and performance expectations. My review of the literature in this area led me to believe that, in spite of the importance being placed on the role of the adult LLN teacher, to date little research had been done in this area (Aspin et al, 2012) and as such, LLN teachers are “in desperate need of a voice” (Harris & Morrison, 2011).

Without doubt the most positive experience to date has been interviewing the 23 participants in the research. Using a series of open-ended questions, I sought to capture the first-hand experiences of LLN teachers working in VET in Victoria. The participants came from both TAFE and ACE institutes, ranging from three to over 27 years’ experience working in the LLN field. It was such a privilege to speak with them and hear their professional stories. The questions were centred on what had led them into the LLN field, the impacts of policy and practice on their roles and identities, what they needed to do their jobs better, how this made them feel and what they saw as the future for VET and LLN.

Interpreting the data

Once I had completed the data collection phase of my research, the next challenge was to make sense of and analyse the wealth of data into themes (or interpretative repertoires) for later discussion. To have 23 individual transcripts laid out in front of you, each one being approximately six A3 sheets in length, is daunting in itself. To make sense of this data, I borrowed from the work of Talja (1999) and used a discourse analytic method. She describes the process thus: “the analysis of interpretive repertoires is like putting together a jigsaw” (1999, p.8). The discourse analytic method does not take an individual viewpoint as the primary point of analysis but rather looks for consistencies across a range of viewpoints to draw out emerging themes.

Through the process of a series of mind-mapping exercises, I saw the emergence of repertoires that could be grouped into three layers of discourse: macro, meso and micro. The macro layer structure can be defined as the broad policies of federal and state governments concerned with economic, environmental and political developments and trends affecting VET and LLN reform (Lemke, 2007). The meso layer structure encompasses the institutional level discourse originating from institute managers, vocational teachers and students. The final layer can be described as the micro structures which refer to the deep internal feelings, values and actions of the participants (Lemke, 2007).

Mindful of the fact that this analysis is still in draft stage, still subject to change, a summary of the emerging themes to date is:

Macro layer

- LLN teachers’ roles and identities are influenced by rapidly changing governmental policy reform in funding, compliance and curriculum change.
- The focus of LLN curriculum has shifted from a primary focus on social inclusion to employment outcomes. This is due to changes in funding and a greater voice from vocational industries.

Meso layer

- Teachers’ daily job roles have changed where they now spend greater time on compliance related work and less time on preparing meaningful learning experiences for their students. This raises questions as to whether the increased auditing and paper trails are making sustainable differences to student outcomes.
- The unique identity of the LLN teacher has become increasingly subsumed into wider VET practice which is perceived to have both positive and negative impacts on teacher identity.
- At an institute level the majority of professional discussions are now centred on funding and compliance rather than teaching and learning.
- The teachers feel valued by their students and believe that in spite of policy change restricting funding and curriculum, that they continue to make a difference.
- Teachers working in settings where other vocational courses are being delivered feel that their expertise is valued by vocational teachers.

Micro layer

In defining LLN, teachers place equal importance on the development of student attributes and ‘learning to learn’

skills as they do on the development of functional literacy and numeracy skills. Due to limitations in funding and allocated time, it is becoming more difficult to provide meaningful learning experiences to cater for all the students' needs.

- The role of the LLN teacher is very broad and, along with being a literacy and/or numeracy teacher, they are also playing roles such as advocate, counsellor, supporter, parent to accommodate the range of needs of their students.
- The teachers feel that they have lost the capacity to have a voice to influence policy and practice changes. Contributing to this has been the decline in LLN pedagogy professional development opportunities.
- There is a lack of real understanding by the policy makers about the realities of LLN students' needs.
- The students deserve better – changes to policy is having a detrimental effect on students' ability to succeed.
- The teachers are feeling challenged in their ideological stances on what teaching literacy and numeracy should

be compared to the actual practices they are allowed to implement within their institutional settings.

- The teachers feel that they have been undervalued and, although many are positive that an LLN future exists, they are very uncertain about what that may look like.
- In spite of all the challenges noted by the participants, LLN teachers still maintain a passion for the work that they do.

The written analysis in its current draft form is actually 49 pages in length and has a series of verbatim quotes and discussion points, of which the short summary above does not appear to do justice. To highlight the three broad layers of discourse emerging from the data, I have presented it in a pictorial representation (Figure 1).

Standing back and viewing the pictorial representation, I began to see similarities to a weather system. The three layers of discourse could also be described as atmospheric climatic conditions (macro layer), ground weather patterns (meso layer) and subterranean conditions (micro layer). Weather systems occur as a

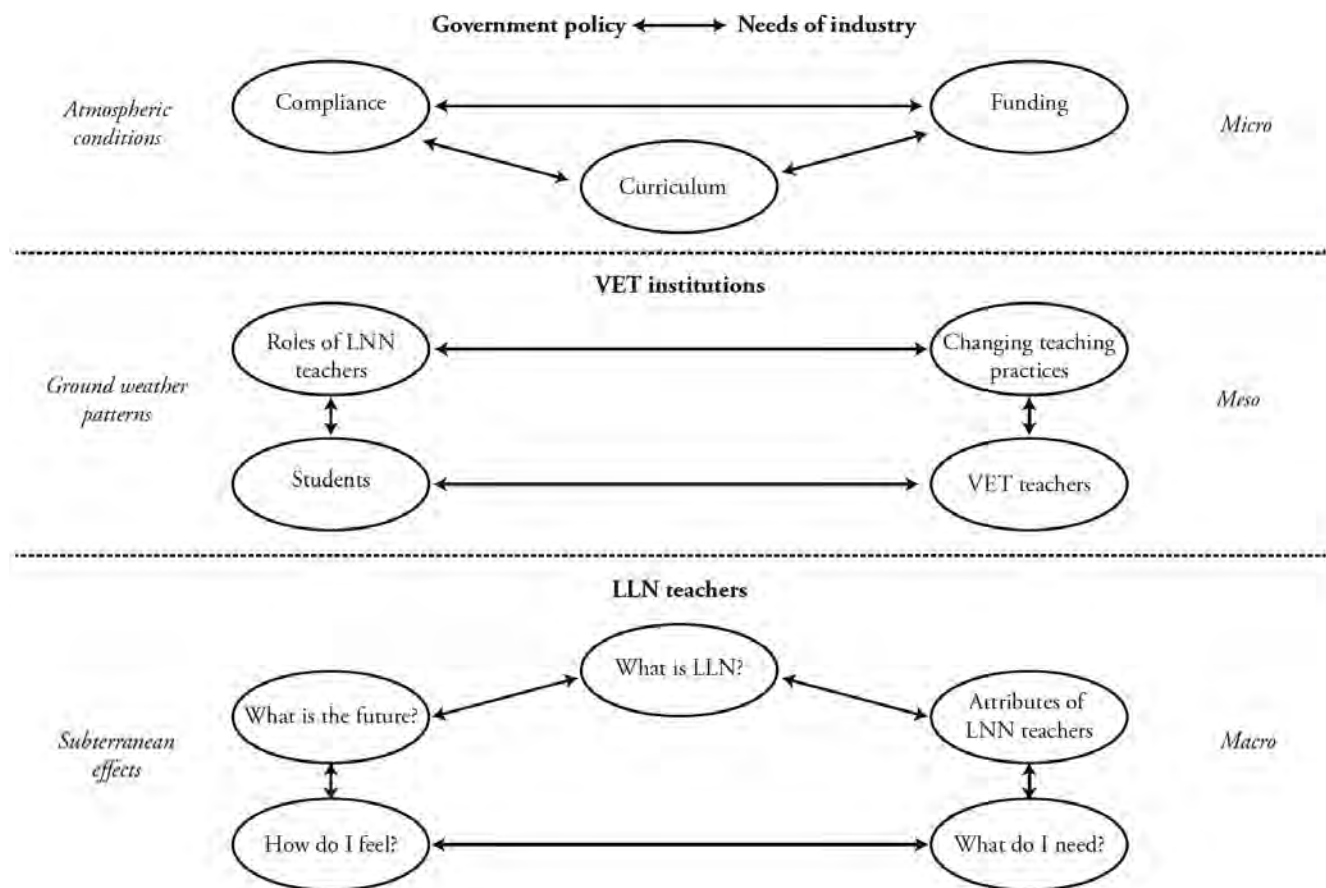


Figure 1: Layers of discourse



Julianne Krusche at her graduation ceremony with her supervisor, Annette Foley.

cause and effect of climatic conditions resulting in actual weather patterns occurring at the ground level, which in turn creates the subterranean conditions affecting growth and regeneration. Similar to a weather system, the emerging discourse within each layer can be seen to have a direct upward and downward effect on the surrounding levels.

When I embark on the discussion chapter ahead, I am fairly certain that I will continue to be presented with many simultaneously occurring road blocks followed by light bulb moments, as I attempt to make sense of the data and link it with post-structural theory, Foucauldian theory and the current literature, while drawing some conclusions. I will also be confronted with the challenge of articulating what is new and different about my research from those researchers before me.

My experience over the last four years has given me the opportunity to learn many things about myself. Reflecting on the experience, I have learned that in order to succeed you need to take on the role of project manager of your own learning journey, including mapping out steps and phases along the way. In line with sound project management principles I also need to be prepared to constantly reassess and make changes as required.

I have discovered that undertaking research is like juggling a whole series of balls in the air at the same time: literature review, theory/methodology preparation, data collection and review and analysis, plus trying to maintain some type of study/life/work balance at the same time. When people have asked me how I fit study in with a demanding job my answer usually is – I treat my study as a hobby that I really enjoy. During the week I will read academic articles

and highlight parts relevant to my research and on the weekend I do more intensive written work.

Early on, I was forewarned by both supervisors about the temptations of ‘jumping down rabbit holes’ that distract me from my topic and, then when I resurface, find myself in another research paddock all together. Usually this occurs because there are so many interesting things to read related to my topic, which can steer me off in another direction. Like many other research students, this has occurred to me on numerous occasions and it has been my supervisors who have pulled me firmly back on track.

Another challenge is not to allow the many roadblocks to become ‘road stoppers’. I have learned through many moments of despair that it is a necessary part of the journey as just on the other side of despair comes the next light bulb moment. My advice to those who are interested but undecided about whether to undertake postgraduate research includes:

- If you are waiting for the period in your life when you will have more time, it will never happen.
- If you have an interest and your personal life has some degree of flexibility, then do it.
- If you think that you aren’t smart enough – you are. However, it is a unique style of literacy that many of us, including me, are quite unfamiliar with at the beginning. The largest factor to your success will be commitment.
- There will be many times during your journey when you believe that your supervisors are being overly critical of your drafts. Remember they are not – it is their job and they just want to bring out the best in you and your research.
- If you have a broad study interest but can’t define it exactly, discuss it with a potential supervisor as they are skilled to assist you to hone your research questions.

Throughout this journey, both Barry and Annette have made it very clear that, as a postgraduate research student, they would critique my work and offer suggestions for improvement. However, it would be up to me to decide whether to accept them or not. But what foolhardy research student would be arrogant enough to go against the expert advice of their supervisors?

One unexpected outcome of this journey has been how I have become drawn into this research work. For this I must give credit and express admiration to my two wonderful

supervisors for bringing that out in me, and believing that I am capable of success. What this research has shown me thus far is that I have gone on a personal journey of reflection and discovered the many ways I view the world. Research has played a role in sharpening my professional practices. Finally, although I still have a long way to go, I continue to be more captivated by my research and look forward to future challenges that will come my way.

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- Julianne Krusche worked in the LLN field for over twenty years in a variety of teaching, coordinating and management roles at Federation University, Australia. A tribute to her life is published in this journal on pp.20–21.**

Practical Matters

Teaching songs in the English classroom

by Carmel Davies and Sharon Duff

Singing in the English as an Additional Language (EAL) classroom has so many benefits. Our *Sing with Me!* 1, 2 and 3 resources have been percolating throughout EAL classes around Australia and overseas since 2014. They are suitable for all ages and levels; one mother of a Grade 3 child told us her daughter was singing in the bath and wanted her to sing along, while adult students in Footscray were heard singing in the stairwell after class.

In *Engaging Students: creating classrooms that improve learning*, Goss and Sonnemann, (2017, p.3) state that using song in the classroom engages students and creates classrooms that improve learning. It can also promote class bonding. Singing in the EAL class can improve all language skills, create opportunities for students to interact, enhance memory, reduce anxiety and improve mental health.

Teachers ask us many questions in our workshops. Here are our answers to the most common queries:

1. I can't sing. I feel really nervous. How can I possibly teach singing to my students?

There are several strategies to help you feel more confident. Remember you're not teaching singing, you're teaching language.

You can sing along with the recording or use the recording by itself. We recommend students always sing together unless they volunteer to sing alone and enjoy their moment in the spotlight.



Flagstaff AMES students demonstrate the job interview song on the Urban Lyrebirds YouTube channel

Choosing a simple song to begin with will make the process easier for both you and your students. Practise the steps in Question 7 to introduce and teach the song. Do this with other teachers first, before you teach it to the class. This will build your confidence and highlight any challenges.

If you still feel nervous, don't worry, the confident students will carry you. The quieter students will often be the ones to take risks, surprise you and shine in the moment!

Be the conductor by raising or lowering your hand to teach the rising and falling intonation and pitch.

2. What do you do when students are shy or don't want to participate?

Krashen (1982, p.31) points out that low levels of motivation, self-confidence and anxiety can impede learning in *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Using song in class is a great way to lower anxiety and engage students. Play a language game using a grammar point in the song before students sing. This will help everyone to relax and have fun!

Mix up the class so the shy students are alongside more confident ones. Place them in the centre of the group. It will help to boost their confidence and motivation. Those that don't want to participate could be grouped with others who are keen. From our experience, it is very rare for students to have cultural or religious reasons for not wanting to sing. However, if this is the case, ask them to participate in other ways. For example, these students can listen and clap the rhythm, or distribute the activity cards.

3. How do I 'sell' singing to my students?

Show the video from the Urban Lyrebirds YouTube channel where students are singing the job interview song – this always works!

Talk to the students about the activities you will use and the advantages of using them. The benefits of using song in the EAL classroom are outlined in more detail in our *Fine Print* article, 'Song Matters' (Davies & Duff, 2014).

Relate the song to the theme you're doing in class rather than using it as a gap fill activity.

4. My students are advanced. Is singing really for them?

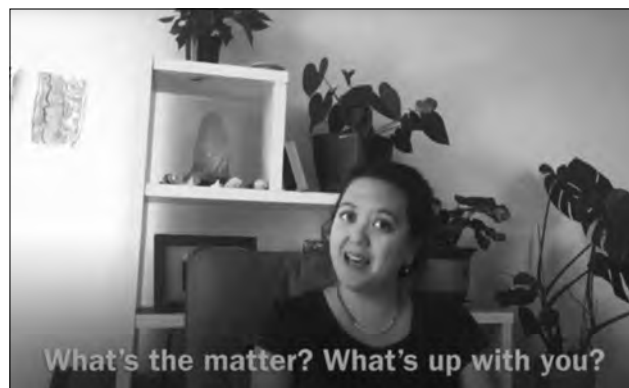
Singing is invaluable for all language learners. A simple song can be used as a warm-up or introduction to a new topic for any level. We all know how a creative warmer energises a class, workshop or professional development event.

Learners at higher levels often have challenges with paralinguistic cues, as well as pronunciation. Teachers can choose an appropriate song for individual practice. For example, the song *I'm walking to the station* can be used to practise (ə) as in around/o'clock /station. The way we change entrenched patterns is through repetition because repetition creates new neural pathways. Repeating a song feels much more natural than repeating a spoken text.

5. We have a lot of pressure with ongoing assessments. How can we find time for singing?

We understand the pressure on teachers and students. However, songs can be embedded in the curriculum; they can be used to support a topic, a teaching or grammar point. Each song in *Sing with Me!* is crafted around a relevant theme for EAL and literacy learners.

Teachers can include relevant songs in their term planning. Below is an example of how to use a song, in this case,



A screenshot from *What's the matter?* on the Urban Lyrebirds YouTube channel

What's the matter? from Book 1, in an EAL program. These ideas can be adjusted for any curriculum.

6. How do we organise the classroom?

First, transform the space. Bring the students from behind their desks, away from books and computers. Bodies are freed up in an inclusive space where they can move around. Push back the tables and chairs. Now get students in a circle or semicircle.

All students need to see and be seen. In the song activities, students change places, regroup or mill around. This has two functions. Firstly, it helps them relax, as they are

What's the Matter?		Language activity/game
Theme	Health	Simon says (revising body parts) or Miming health problems guess "what's wrong?"
Vocabulary	Sick /headache /toothache /dentist /doctor /afford	Picture cards to match words – find your partner
Pronunciation	Linking between consonant and vowel	Link arms for targeted practice e.g. I can't <u>a</u> fford it I've got a <u>h</u> eadache
Grammar	Contractions	Matching pairs What is / What's
Reading and writing	'What' questions	Spelling game on the white board in groups
Conversation	Health problems	Question/answer using the survey from Sing with Me! Book 1

EAL Certificate 1 Participate in short simple exchanges

involved in a language activity and too busy to be anxious. Secondly, the focus is not on singing.

Make sure you have cards, pictures, and props ready. They need to be large and clear enough for students to read across the space. (Busy teachers can ask students to make these prompts at the beginning of the session.)

Songs related to common classroom themes:

Work

- A job interview (interview questions) Book 2
- Got a job (employability) Book 3
- Igor my mentor (Australian workplace culture) Book 3

Health

- What's the Matter? (symptoms) Book 1
- Triple zero (emergencies) Book 2
- Walk a k every day (healthy eating) Book 2
- I'm not sleeping (isolation/mental health) Book 2
- Keep going matey (healthy lifestyle) Book 3

Food and Shopping

- I like a busy weekend (likes and dislikes) Book 1
- What do you do in the morning? (daily routines) Book 1
- I'm going shopping (shopping) Book 2
- What do you feel like for dinner? (food) Book 2

The *Sing with Me!* workbooks have grammar, conversation, pronunciation reading, writing and vocabulary exercises to accompany the songs. There's also a language map to help with planning.

7. How do I introduce and teach a song?

You can find details of how to do this in our *Fine Print* article, 'Song Matters' (Davies & Duff, 2014), which can be downloaded from the *Fine Print* archive (see References below for the link).

Check out the Urban Lyrebirds YouTube channel for videos of our songs: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzLfkPb7L0KSYBYBK_xowp3w. We hope you'll be inspired to incorporate some singing into your class. Your students will love you for it!

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Sharon Duff has more than 20 years' experience teaching, delivering workshops, and developing EAL resources for new migrants, including writing materials for the AMEP Distance Learning course, 'Your Call'. She co-founded Urban Lyrebirds in 2013 and co-wrote the highly commended *Sing with me!* English grammar, conversation and song series. She is currently teaching, illustrating and writing resources.

Carmel Davies has over 20 years' experience teaching English language skills in a variety of contexts in Australia, the UK and Southeast Asia. Carmel has written EAL materials including *What's the law? Australian law for new arrivals* and *Pictures to Words Book 1*. She also co-wrote the *Sing with Me!* series. In 2008 she was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to travel and research ESL through performance. She recently published *May Street Stories* – a set of readers for post beginners (see review in this volume).

Putting language to work

By Rebecca Smith

When it comes to providing vulnerable learners with the language and literacy needed to transform their lives, pre-accredited education is in a class of its own. This article highlights the way language, literacy and numeracy skills can be embedded in highly practical vocational training.

Abuk arrived in Australia from South Sudan in 2005. She had never been to school and had not learned to read or write in her first language. Abuk needed English skills but with seven children to support, she needed work even more urgently.

Angelina attended primary school in South Sudan but was unable to attend secondary school. Arriving in Australia in 2011 with four children under eight, she needed to earn an income as soon as possible while still allowing for family commitments.

Like thousands of other migrant women in Victoria, Abuk and Angelina found themselves having to choose between formally learning English and getting work. A program developed by two grassroots community organisations allowed them to do both.

Since 2015, Kensington Neighbourhood House and Service Stars Community Jobs Alliance have been working together to deliver a pre-accredited training course called “Prepare For Work – Service Stars”. As the name suggests, this course provides participants with the language, literacy, numeracy and hands-on practical skills they need to work in the service sector.

A practical approach to entry level employment

The Prepare For Work – Service Stars course is designed for the most vulnerable workers in our community – those with very low levels of English literacy, minimal previous education and life circumstances that prevent them from taking on full time work.

To date, all Service Stars participants have been from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. All have been unemployed and living on government benefits, 96% have been women and 70% have had less than a Year 7 education. The majority have multiple children and complex life circumstances, making traditional adult education very difficult.

The Service Stars program provides a supported pathway from pre-accredited training to paid shift work with hospitality firms Peter Rowland Catering and Spotless Epicure. Courses are timed to link directly with major events requiring a lot of staff. For example, the opening of the AFL season at the MCG, the Melbourne Grand Prix or the Spring Racing Carnival at Flemington Racecourse. Participants gain ‘on the ground’ fully paid experience in peak times – putting their communication, literacy and customer service skills into practice and learning to problem solve in real work settings.

Language for working life

Unlike generic ‘prepare to work’ courses, the Service Stars program offers participants a very clear, tangible goal at the end of their training. They learn the language and skills needed for work in a very specific environment doing a very specific job. Their language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) learning includes completing online workplace induction modules and occupational health and safety (OHS) training for a particular work site. They also acquire the skills to complete employment forms such as banking details, superannuation and tax file documents.

Supportive mentoring is a key component of the course. It is one thing to learn about a workplace in a classroom but it’s a whole different experience to actually turn up somewhere as big as the MCG. Which door do you go in? Who do you talk to? Where do you get a uniform? How do you get to the refreshment kiosks? What do you do when hundreds of thirsty football fans are stampeding toward your counter at half time?!

These questions and more are answered by Director of Service Stars Community Jobs Alliance, and teacher, Jane Farrell. In most cases, Jane also accompanies participants to their first shift to check that everyone makes it to the right place at the right time. Within each workplace, experienced staff mentor new workers until they feel more confident.

“We do a LOT of role plays,” says Jane. “For most of the women I work with, being assertive or just speaking up and asking a simple question is really hard. So we practise over and over again. They learn the vocabulary needed for workplace tasks and interactions with other staff or customers. Often they are afraid of making mistakes or getting into trouble so we role play that. What might the boss say? What could you say back? Generally, once they find the language to express themselves, their fears diminish.”

Jane emphasises fair work in her teaching. Migrant and refugee women are some of the most vulnerable people in our society and are frequently the targets of exploitative, unfair or illegal work practices. The Service Stars course incorporates education on fair work practices including award wages, anti-discrimination and where you can turn for help.

“Educating women about fair work practices is really important,” says Jane. “The companies we choose to work with (Peter Rowland and Spotless) have a strong commitment to ethical employment. This means we can be sure we are introducing women to safe workplaces. Knowing the law around work conditions is enormously empowering for women and it doesn’t have to be complicated. If I know that my students all understand the concept of minimum wage, penalty rates and what harassment means, then I’ve done a good job!”

Many migrant and refugee women desperately want to work, however family circumstances make it very difficult to commit to set hours or days. By providing a pathway to shift work, the Service Stars program offers women a way of earning money, gaining language skills and building work experience while still being able to care for children. Evening and weekend shifts are often much more useful to this cohort than more traditional hours.

In their own words

So far more than 130 women have completed the Service Stars program with 78% going on to regular shift work. Here are three of their stories:

Angelina

The training took me just two weeks and I really learned a lot! I learned how to get a job and what to do when I go there each day. I also learned about

working safely and what my work rights are if someone treats me unfairly.

I got a job at Peter Rowland at Flemington Race Track in the kitchen on race days. I washed the glasses. So many glasses! The job was really nice – it was perfect and I felt good when I was there. I feel really comfortable and happy when I work. Jane also sent me to work at the National Gallery of Victoria. It was busy but I loved going there – such a big place full of nice things and people.

The money was great and it helped me pay some of my bills and get some nice things for the kids and me. I still go to English classes with Kensington Neighbourhood House helping me now and my English has got better since I started work. It was Service Stars that got me started and I want to say thanks.

Theyat

I met Jane when a friend told me about Service Stars. I wanted to change my work from family day care to something where I worked with older people. I was happy to do the training and I learned a lot. I learned things I did not know or I was not confident in doing like interviews and job applications. I learned about how to talk to other people and how to be safe at work so I do not get hurt. The training made a lot of sense to me.

After I finished (the training) I went to work with Peter Rowland Group at Flemington Race Track for the Melbourne Cup. I worked in the kitchen, very busy all day washing glasses and dishes. I met new people and they were all really nice. I also worked at the Formula 1 Grand Prix. I was in an outdoor kitchen with a team of women from Service Stars. It was hot, noisy and very busy but I loved it!

I used my experience and got a job in Home and Community Care with Jane’s help. They called her to talk about me and I got the job straight away. I love this job and it is my dream job. Back in South Sudan and in Egypt, I was a nurse and this job is as close to being a nurse as I can get. This job makes me feel really good and I love talking with the elderly people and sometimes we laugh.



A Service Stars graduating group

I need to work for my kids and I want to work. I have a big family and things cost so much. I want to make sure I can look after them.

Abuk

I came to Australia in 2005 and now I have seven children. I did not go to school in my country so I just stay home for a long time with the kids. I started to go to English class and I still go there. I can speak but I need to learn more about reading and writing.

I did the Service Stars course during the school holidays and I really learned a lot. I now know about how to talk to people at work, how to do the job, what safe work is and Jane helped me with knowing about the rules.

Jane got me and the other women to do the Responsible Service of Alcohol course with William Angliss and I passed!

I now work with Spotless at the MCG. On my first day I was nervous but Jane said everyone was nervous.

She said to smile and I am good at smiling. They see that I can do the job and I do it well. I love working and I get happy and excited when I go to work.

I learned that nothing is impossible in this world and sometimes we just need a bit of help.

Empowered students are the best measure of success for any training program, but the Service Stars course has also received official recognition – winning the Outstanding Pre-Accredited Pathway Program category at the 2018 Learn Local Awards.

Kensington Neighbourhood House and Service Stars Community Jobs Alliance are now working on an intensive mentoring program for Service Stars graduates. Called Women Into Work, the program focuses on supporting women to develop long term work goals and to map out steps toward those goals.

As Abuk says, nothing is impossible. Sometimes people just need a bit of help.

Rebecca Smith is the Community Education Coordinator at Kensington Neighbourhood House.

Note

This article was written prior to the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions. The cancellation of the 2020 Melbourne Formula One Grand Prix meant the cancellation of Service Stars training for 20 women. At the same time, numerous Service Stars graduates have lost their jobs in hotels, hospitality companies and event venues. Over the past months, KNH and Service Stars Community Jobs Alliance have been assisting as many women as possible to transfer their hospitality skills into jobs within the cleaning, supermarket and food processing sectors.

Open Forum

Policy update: statement and strategy

by Sarah Deasey and Linno Rhodes

After a process of review, research and consultation with stakeholders over 2017 and 2018, and the circulation of *Future Opportunities for Adult Learners in Victoria: Pathways to Participation and Jobs Discussion Paper* (Department of Education and Training [DET], 2018), the *Future of Adult Community Education in Victoria 2020–2025 Ministerial Statement* (henceforth, the Ministerial Statement) was launched in November 2019 by the Honourable Gayle Tierney, Minister for Training and Skills and Minister for Higher Education. It is the first Victorian Government statement on adult community education since 2004 and it sets out the role of, and priorities for, adult community education in Victoria.

The preamble on the Department of Education and Training website states that:

This Ministerial Statement aims to fulfil the Victorian Government’s commitment to uniting the adult community education sector with a focus on learners, and to build recognition of the distinct and invaluable role the sector plays.

It establishes a reform agenda for the six years 2020 to 2025, focusing the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and the adult community education sector on adult literacy, numeracy, employability and digital skills training.

It also identifies a strengthened role for the sector in supporting students to enter and successfully complete TAFE and university courses; and in upskilling and reskilling low-skilled workers who may be vulnerable to becoming unemployed as work changes. (Department of Education and Training [DET], 2019, para.2-4)

The *Adult, Community and Further Education Board Strategy 2020–25: Skills for study work and life* (henceforth, the Strategy) outlines the implementation of the Ministerial Statement’s aspirations and goals. It is a response to:



...trends and challenges in the Learn Local sector, including changes in learner needs, changing modes of skills acquisition, changes in place-based models, changes in industry and the nature of work, policy and regulatory changes at the State and Commonwealth Government levels, and changes in society more generally. Above all, it reflects the right of people to access core education and training. (Adult, Community and Further Education Board [ACFE], 2020, p.1)

Underpinning both documents are principles of access and equity affirming the value of local, place-based learning, supported by education providers that have firm links to their communities. Local provision of literacy, numeracy, digital skills and employability skills are the key to a pathway to employment and further training in the TAFE and university system.

Here we interpret some of the key messages of these documents and pose a few questions and comments.

Clarity of purpose and community recognition

The broad aims of both documents are to preserve, protect and extend the sector. To this end there are a number of goals and aspirations with the overarching mission of building the profile and position of the Learn Local sector as a key player in the post-secondary education system.

There are 272 registered Learn Local providers in Victoria. Surveys show a consistently high level of pre-accredited learner satisfaction and indicate that learners who have done pre-accredited training before enrolling in vocational education and training (VET) courses in TAFE are more likely to complete the VET courses.

According to the Ministerial Statement, “Adult community education providers ... do incredible work, but lack clear definition of their core purpose” (DET, 2019, p.6). Certainly, that clear definition is still undervalued and under-recognised in the broader community.

In order to clarify and reinforce the purpose, the Ministerial Statement sets out three roles of adult community education:

To engage and support adult learners who need to develop their core foundation skills for work, further study, and to participate in society as valued citizens.

To play a lead role in adult literacy, numeracy, employability and digital skills education and training for Victorians.

To support workers who may be vulnerable to becoming unemployed to develop the skills necessary to remain and thrive in employment as work changes. (DET, 2019, p.6)

Many Learn Local providers are already doing all three in their provision. How can the rest follow suit? How can these roles be cast into broad community recognition? Below we discuss some of the strategies.

Delivering foundation skills and literacy for adults both in and out of the workforce

The *Future Opportunities for Adult Learners in Victoria* discussion paper (DET, 2018) noted that “In Victoria, there are 650,000 adults at the lowest levels of literacy, including 265,000 workers with low educational attainment in low skill jobs, and there are more than 17,000 15 to 19 year olds who are not engaged in employment, education or training” (DET, 2018, p.6). The discussion paper also quoted Australian Bureau of Statistics data that found “970,500 Victorians have very low levels of numeracy” (DET, 2018, p.10).

The adult community education (ACE) sector can build these skills with pre-accredited training, moreover the aim

is to work with adults who need more skills in order to move into more secure and skilled sections of the workforce.

In order to build this profile, there is a commitment to build the quality of teaching and expertise of the ACE workforce in teaching literacy, numeracy, employability and digital skills. A goal of the Ministerial Statement is to embed literacy, numeracy, employability and digital skills into all adult community education courses (DET, 2019, p.10). The Statement acknowledges that literacy and numeracy training is highly specialised and that the sector has insufficient specialists to meet that demand. The goal is to provide all adult community education providers with access to free, high quality professional development to enable teachers to address the literacy and numeracy needs of learners in ACE (DET, 2019, p.11).

The Adult Literacy and Numeracy Practitioners Program (ALNPP), an initiative of the ACFE Board, has been developed for this purpose. This program has trained 24 practitioners in four units: Exploring Adult Literacy and Numeracy Learning Theory; Using Adult Literacy and Numeracy Frameworks; Identifying Adult Literacy and Numeracy Requirements; and Leading Innovative Literacy and Numeracy Thinking and Practice. In the second phase of the program these practitioners will in turn train groups of teachers across Victoria. The capability of the workforce is clearly necessary.

We understand that although the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA) – which is used with success in adult literacy delivery – is part of the responsibility of the ACFE Board, the focus for the future of ACE is clearly on pre-accredited course delivery and development. We hope that the content and development of the practitioner program is a success, but that there will continue to be a promotion of accredited qualifications such as TAE80113 (Graduate Diploma of Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy Practice) or TAE80213 (Graduate Diploma of Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy Leadership) to further ensure the quality of adult literacy teaching.

There are a number of ACE Registered Training Organisation (RTO) providers that are using the accredited CGEA which incorporates literacy and numeracy skills from Pre Level 1 of the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) through to ACSF 3. However, there are 272 Learn Locals in Victoria and the scope and potential to deliver pre-accredited literacy will give a greater reach across the state. It is hoped that continued

resourcing, oversight and leadership is incorporated to build and reinforce the ALNPP.

Collaboration and partnerships within the sector, with employers and with government

Developing collaboration and partnerships across the whole post-secondary education sector, in particular with TAFE, is another key goal: “Specific training provision will be directed to courses established in partnerships with TAFEs with direct pathways to specific accredited training courses” (DET, 2019, p.14).

There have been some successful examples of TAFE partnerships with Learn Locals across Victoria. Some have been resourced through the ACFE Capacity and Innovation Fund (CAIF). In a competitive funding environment both organisations need to benefit, and more resourcing will be needed to enable both parties to come together and find mutually beneficial programs. Collaboration and partnerships with local employers is another aim (DET, 2019, p.15) and ACE providers are well placed to draw on the connections that already exist in their local communities and networks.

There are a number of Learn Local RTOs which combine pre-accredited courses, accredited English as an Additional Language literacy and VET programs and make these transitions and pathways internally with a range of VET courses. These providers can serve as examples for the broader ACE field and TAFE.

The Ministerial Statement and the Strategy both recommend that other government departments and services such as Justice, Health and Human Services have a clear awareness of the role of ACE. Learners will benefit from this connection. Many ACE providers lead the way here with colocation of services, and collaboration in the community. If the upper echelons of government departments can take account of ACE that is even better. Building the capacity of the ACFE Board through appropriate legislation, capacity and partnerships is another part of the Strategy which is about further raising the profile and capacity of ACE to implement the goals.

Increased resourcing is needed to implement these goals. The very nature of Learn Locals in that there is huge variety

in facilities, annual turnover, location and scope. Each one is unique, reflecting the history and nature of its local community, and this adds complexity to the distribution and allocation of resources. There are very locally based small providers on one end of the scale, and larger Non Government Organisations who take ACFE funding across a number of regions. All providers need to benefit to scale.

Already there are projects which are supporting the Strategy such as the ALNPP and the Industry Contextualised Literacy and Numeracy Program.

We welcome the plan and ambitions and above all the values of the Ministerial Statement and the Strategy. In particular, we applaud the underpinning value: “Inclusion and universal access to core education and training are fundamental rights” (DET, 2019, p.1).

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Linno Rhodes is currently President of VALBEC and is on the *Fine Print* Editorial Committee.

Note

VALBEC receives funding from the ACFE Board

In Conversation

In this together: Reconciliation Week 2020

interviews with Aunty Julie McHale and Jacinta Douglas

To mark National Reconciliation Week 2020, Castlemaine Health's Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Melinda Harper, asked Aunty Julie McHale and Jacinta Douglas to talk about their lives and reflect on what In This Together, the Reconciliation Week theme for 2020, means for them. Aunty Julie has been an educator for many years and is an obvious choice for an 'In Conversation' profile. Jacinta is a young woman at the very beginning of her university studies who wants to make a difference for people in the criminal justice system, particularly young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We trust these stories will resonate with adult literacy educators and thank Castlemaine Health, Melinda, Aunty Julie and Jacinta for allowing us to share the stories with you.

Aunty Julie McHale, a Palawa woman (Tasmanian Aboriginal) from the Trawlwoolway People, was born in Castlemaine and has lived her whole life (63 years) on Jaara Jaara Country. Aunty Julie was a primary school teacher for 40 years and has worked in the Castlemaine community for over 30 years as an educator, teacher and learner. Her teaching work has extended to an enormous range of roles, from primary schools, kindergartens, secondary schools, TAFE, prisons, La Trobe University (Aboriginal Support Unit), running professional development activities for teachers in a range of schools and at Castlemaine Health, and running bush tucker courses at Castlemaine Community House. She is the coordinator and leading teacher at The Meeting Place [a program for Aboriginal children in the Mount Alexander Shire] which is held fortnightly. She has a passion for bush foods and plants, and this has extended to growing. Her garden is looking amazing.

I included learner because you are a great reader and you are constantly engaging in learning and researching. Your perspective is not that of the 'expert' which I find interesting.

Do you see yourself as a learner and why is that important?

I know the term 'lifelong' learner is bandied around but I do believe this is true. I love learning through reading because reading gives you time to analyse what you have read and relate these understandings to your experience in life. I love learning also, from other people especially older people in our community.

I can be quite obsessive and often spend ages on the internet, reading books and speaking to other people about a particular current interest. Since 'retiring' from teaching I have become particularly interested in indigenous and



Aunty Julie McHale

native plants especially with regards to food and medicinal plants. What a lot to learn!

I don't believe I am an 'expert' because I still have lots to learn about plants and other areas of interest. I don't believe anyone can truly be an expert; they can have lots of knowledge but there is always something else to learn. I like the true definition of the scientific process where a hypothesis can be tested and supported but never proven, just supported.

The theme for Reconciliation Week for 2020 is In This Together, what does this mean to you?

Wow, In This Together has become a theme for the world at the moment, it is almost like a portent. In terms of COVID-19, I have been conscious of the fear and sorrow around this pandemic and relate this to the fear and sorrow of the Dja Dja Wurrung people when smallpox came to this area through trade routes, long before the arrival of other people. Two thirds of the population were wiped out and these people had no knowledge of what was happening. How horrifying this must have been.

In terms of the Reconciliation Week theme, to me it means that Reconciliation is something we have to work together (Aboriginal and other Australians) to acknowledge the past, the good and the bad, and use this to decide how we can truly make Australia a country where all peoples are treated respectfully. I know this is unlikely to happen, but I believe we can become better. I want to see the gap closed, not by some random percentage but 100%. Once again, maybe not realistic but better to be the aim rather than 85% or even 95%. For this to happen both black and white needs to look closely at their attitudes to each other.

Aunty Julie, you were working on a fantastic writing project for Reconciliation Week with some members of Nalderun [a support service led by Aboriginal people], unfortunately this was postponed due to COVID- 19. Do you think we can hope to see the writing project in 2021?

Yes, it was very sad that the Writing for Reconciliation Project wasn't able to continue. I certainly hope we can do the writing project next year. The children I spoke to at the schools were very motivated and some have done writings already. There was also a fantastic response from adults so I believe they can be encouraged to do the Project next year. The Judges we had approached were also very much on board, I'm sure they'll still be enthusiastic about next year. I'm not sure whether the theme will carry over to next year or whether the Council for Reconciliation will come up with a new theme. I think that we will still accept writings done this year even if there is new theme.

What project are you most passionate about at the moment, or hope to work on?

I love working with Murnong Mamas and am excited about the potential of the grant we have applied for to grow bush tucker at Harcourt. Although time consuming (and mind consuming), preparing the grant application has re-inspired me. I love the idea of helping our young people start micro-businesses in this area and am looking forward to preparing produce for sale at the Farmers' Markets and other places. I am enjoying experimenting with the foods I have harvested from my plants mixing curries, rubs and dukkha. On the fine days I am in my garden, tidying up, weeding, potting and repotting, preparing cuttings and germinating seeds. I love being outside but am not keen on freezing cold mornings. I simply don't understand it when people say they are bored, I don't have time to be bored!



Jacinta Douglas

Jacinta Douglas is a young Dja Dja Wurrung woman living in Castlemaine. Last year Jacinta completed VCE with the ambition of getting into the University of Melbourne to study Criminology and Psychology. And congratulations, Jacinta, you did it!

So I am interested Jacinta, why Criminology/Psychology?

During VCE I studied psychology and fell in love with the field, discovering that it aligned with my passion for understanding and being able to help people. I decided to combine this with my interest in understanding crime, which more specifically has recently been geared towards the inequitable experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the current criminal justice system. I am a firm believer of needing to become knowledgeable in a given field in order to critically engage with it and seek change in it.

What are you most interested in as a career path with this area of study?

At this stage I'm not sure what exact career I will have, but I intend to work in a field in which I can continue to learn about people from varying walks of life every day. Currently, I think that criminal profiling or working in rehabilitation for young offenders is where I want to work, although eventually I would like to be involved in policy change that would decolonise the way in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are treated within the judiciary system.

You were involved in the last two years in Nyarn-gakgo Mangkie, a First Nations young women's network that is a program of Weenthunga Health Network. Can you tell me a little about that and was that helpful?

The Weenthunga Health Network programs were an incredible opportunity for me to get to know other like-minded Aboriginal women my age, which really provided me with a community of people I felt welcome in and supported by through my final years of high

school and entering into higher education. Their health days gave me an opportunity to listen to amazing guest speakers that were successful Aboriginal women who had entered health-related careers, and although my interests are no longer particularly within the health field, it was incredible to hear of people like me being able to achieve their dreams through hard work and inspired me to do the same.

I suppose an obvious question is how is the COVID-19 virus affecting your study and how do you think we as a country will change from this?

All of my university classes have moved online for the semester, which, although I can cope with, has taken away the opportunity for me to experience interacting with a new community of people on campus like I have for so long dreamed of doing.

Nowadays I often see in the media peoples' hopes for things to eventually 'go back to how they were' as soon as possible, but in my opinion it is much more crucial for every individual to take responsibility for the health of our population and correctly social distance/isolate for as long as possible than to risk the lives of others for selfish purposes.

In the future, I hope that not only the government but the general public will have a newfound respect for our essential workers, from those in healthcare to supermarket or cleaning services, who before the COVID-19 crisis were often considered lesser in society and yet did incredible things daily before the pandemic and media attention,

and will continue to do incredible things to keep society functioning when these circumstances fade away.

This year's theme for Reconciliation is In This Together, which seems very relevant at the moment, what does this mean to you?

In This Together for me holds many layers as a phrase. I think that it not only shows the connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with each other and the land on which we live, it highlights the importance of the need for all Australians, despite any cultural or political differences, to support and respect each other in such turbulent times.

This theme for Reconciliation fits perfectly with my hopes for a time when the world will genuinely be a better place in which people can respect each other and help each other as a community should, after all we are all living in the same beautiful country.

Acknowledgement

These are edited extracts from interviews originally published by Castlemaine Health: <https://www.castlemainehealth.org.au/events/reconciliation-week-2020/>

Links

National Reconciliation Week: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week/>

Nalderun and its programs (including The Meeting Place and Murnong Mammals): <https://nalderun.net.au/>

Weenthunga Health Network: <http://www.weenthunga.com.au/>

What's Out There

May Street Stories by Carmel Davies.

reviewed by Jodie Whitehurst



When I recently became aware that *Urban Lyrebirds* (Carmel Davies and Sharon Duff) were releasing a new series of readers for adult English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners, I was genuinely excited. I have long been a huge fan of their brilliant *Sing with Me!* series and the equally fabulous *Passages* books (by Maggie Power), thus my expectations were high. I am delighted to report that *May Street Stories*, a collection of six readers written by Carmel Davies, have exceeded my expectations.

At first glance, these books, beautifully illustrated by Veronica Dixon, are aesthetically compelling with vibrant colours and thoughtful design elements. The cover of each of the six readers features its key characters and, along the spine, a motif of cultural significance to that particular story. Upon closer observation, as you leaf through the pages, it becomes apparent that these motifs reappear in the illustrations throughout the books on characters' t-shirts, crockery or other items. Such appealing design is sure to draw our learners in immediately.

The *May Street Stories* are rich in themes which are relevant to adults learning EAL in Australia. The overarching theme of the series is that of community, as illustrated by the way in which its characters frequently help their neighbours in need. Other topics explored within the stories include: making friends, learning English, workplace rights, racism, emergencies, indigenous Australians, food allergies,

responding to crime and managing technology in the lives of teenagers. Such themes have enormous potential for inspiring class discussion and writing. Additionally, for students who may have recently arrived in Australia, many of these issues are key to their settlement.

An exploration of a wealth of cultures has clearly been a major focus for Davies in the creation of these stories. Within the setting of the books, a block of flats on May Street, the residents hail from diverse cultural backgrounds. As each story begins, we learn the origin of its characters and are immediately presented with the geographical location via a map. Additionally, important aspects of each culture are embedded within the storylines. These include references to food, customs, such as an Ethiopian coffee ceremony, and national animals such as New Zealand's kiwi. Another example of multiculturalism being embraced is in Book 5, *Where's my bike?*, in which the Brazilian character, Rafael, addresses his partner, Angela, as 'Querida', a term of endearment in the Portuguese language. With the characters being not only culturally diverse, but spanning a wide range of ages and occupations, from students to council workers to grandparents caring for their grandchildren, it is likely that learners will make personal connections to their own experiences.

The layout of the stories is engaging and user-friendly with a good balance of text and illustrations on each page. While the stories are written in prose, all the dialogue is presented in a scripted format. This immediately sets the scene for students to read the dialogue aloud and offers enormous potential for roleplay and other drama-based activities that a teacher may wish to utilise in the lesson. The language is well-pitched for post-beginner learners of English, presenting a colourful and useful range of vocabulary and appropriate tenses. In addition, the inclusion of colloquial terms, such as 'guy' and '24/7', enhances the authenticity of the dialogue. While the stories are simple enough to be accessible to new learners, they are rich with dramatic tension, which will undoubtedly motivate and intrigue readers. The positive outcomes and messages within the stories are also likely to be well-received.

Much like other Urban Lyrebirds resources, each of the May Street Stories contains a set of activities to be completed by the students. These include comprehension questions, sentence ordering tasks and discussion topics. Such exercises instantly provide teachers with an excellent basis for exploring the stories in greater depth.

Given how thoughtfully written and designed the May Street Stories readers are, I am personally very inspired to use them with my students. I feel sure that the language development, conversation and enjoyment to be gained from reading and exploring these texts will be significant. It is worth noting that in addition to the printed texts, PDF versions can be purchased and accompanying audio tracks are also freely available on the Urban Lyrebirds website. Congratulations to author, Carmel Davies, and

illustrator, Veronica Dixon on the publication of these outstanding resources.

May Street Stories books and audio are available from Urban Lyrebirds: <https://urbanlyrebirds.com/cds-and-books/may-street-stories>

Jodie Whitehurst teaches EAL at Williamstown Community and Education Centre and recently completed a Master of TESOL at the University of Melbourne. In 2018, Jodie was awarded an ISSI Fellowship to travel to Europe and Canada to research the benefits and best practice of using drama in adult EAL education. She reported on her Fellowship in *Fine Print* Vol.42 #3.

Azebe lives in Apartment 6, 84 May St.



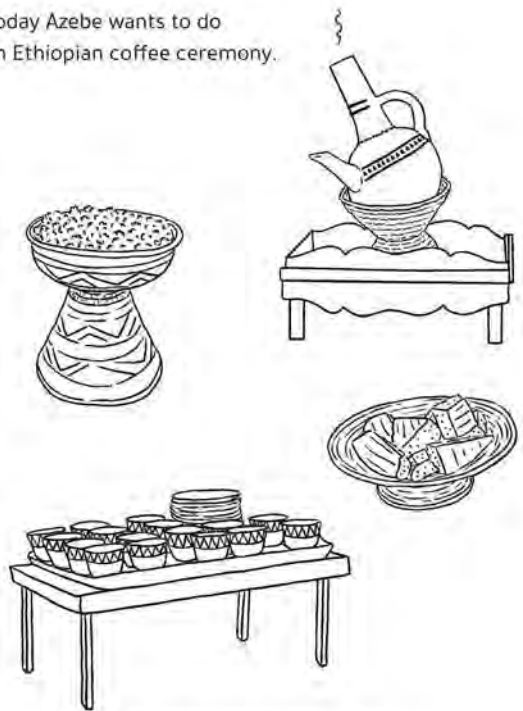
She has two children. Her daughter Saba is six. Her son Tomo is four.



She comes from Ethiopia and she lived in Sudan for 6 years.

P4

Today Azebe wants to do an Ethiopian coffee ceremony.



She wants to make popcorn and special bread.

P5

A sample spread from May Street Stories showing how illustrations support the text.



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