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Adult Education in the Community

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Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of *Fine Print* for 2018. I am honoured to be joining the VALBEC community as the new *Fine Print* editor and would like to thank Lynne Matheson for her careful handover. Fortunately for us all, Lynne will continue as a member of the journal's editorial group.

In my preparation for this role I have been reading back issues of the journal and was a little startled by the introduction to Lynne's article on the occasion of VALBEC's thirtieth birthday in 2008 (Vol.31 no.3): "Much has changed since the days when *Fine Print* was distributed from the back of a car." The fact that the story of Heather Haughton distributing *Fine Print* from the back seat of her mini minor was still part of the organisation's living memory thirty years later is a testament to the strength of the VALBEC community. It also exemplifies the important role that storytelling plays in keeping a community alive.

Storytelling abounds in this edition of *Fine Print*. In interviews, Marilyn Kell remembers the timber workers she knew as a child who set her on a path to challenge instrumentalism in literacy education and Kathrin Colgan reflects on the importance of listening to students' stories, to find out what they want to learn and why. Elizabeth Gunn discovers that migrant women entrepreneurs are using social media effectively to share their stories in ways that pose opportunities for literacy educators. Natalie Nawrocki and Marcella O'Connor describe the Welcome to the Library resource that makes sometimes marginalised members of the community the central characters in the library's narrative and Pip Mackey's investigation of the pragmatic language skills of aged care workers reveals that paying attention to the residents' personal stories helps workers from diverse language backgrounds negotiate the delicate tasks they must undertake.

As VALBEC embarks on its fortieth anniversary celebrations, whether or not the stories in these pages contribute to the strength and endurance of the LLN teaching community in Victoria depends largely on you, the reader: reading the stories; sharing the stories; continuing the stories at conferences, workshops, in your classroom and tearoom; contributing your own stories to *Fine Print*. Perhaps the last word should go to the teachers involved in a museum project reported on in this issue by Liz Suda. The 'big question' they posed for their primary school aged students to explore as an inquiry question for the year was: *What makes us part of the community?*

Deryn Mansell

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Literacy as social practice – how nine men managed their literacy difficulties in the workplace

An interview with Dr Marilyn Kell by Sarah Deasey

Marilyn Kell was a teacher in primary and secondary schools in NT, NSW and Queensland for almost twenty years. As a special needs teacher, she specialised in students with learning difficulties, especially literacy difficulties. She has studied with Allan Luke, Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope, was awarded a PhD by University of Western Sydney (now Western Sydney University) in 2005 and has written and published independently and with academic colleagues. In 2013 she co-authored *Literacy and language in East Asia: shifting meanings, values and approaches* about the impact of standardised literacy assessments. Now retired, Marilyn is a keen supporter of literacy education reform based on social definitions and practices.

Marilyn Kell's doctoral thesis 'Learning by Experience: reconstructing the literacy engagement of nine men who self-report literacy difficulties' was based on five interviews with each of the men, which took place over an eighteen-month period.

In her presentation at the 2017 ACAL Conference, titled *Reflections on a bygone era: how changes in work, workplaces and policy have changed what we research and what we find*, she questioned whether her research could be replicated in the current policy and research environment. Her paper can be found in the conference proceedings: http://www.acal.edu.au/conference/conference-proceedings/

This article is an edited transcript of an interview with Marilyn, inspired by both a practitioner's interest in the subject of the original thesis, and also the points raised in her conference paper about current literacy policy and the future of work for people with low literacy.

Can you talk about the original inspiration and background for your thesis?
My grandfather and father worked in the timber industry. They had a timber mill in Sydney and I knew, as a child, that at least two of the men who worked there could neither read nor write. My dad was pretty good with them and we were brought up to respect them as workers for their skills. In the late 1990s I was teaching at a high school in Townsville. A colleague and I took on the task of working with eight children in Years 9 and 10 who had failed a literacy test in Year 8. They simply had not written anything on their papers. I was doing my master's degree, working on the theories of Vygotsky with Allan Luke and also I had been introduced to Lindamood, an American system of teaching literacy to people who were struggling. We taught the kids using this approach and the results were quite amazing. At the end of the twelve month program some of the Year 10s left school and got apprenticeships, a couple went straight to work and the rest stayed on at school.

But I thought, what will happen to these kids? We taught them some literacy skills but they'll never be truly fluent readers and writers. They'll always find it difficult. What happens to them when they get to the workplace? As I explained before, I had already come in contact as a child with men who couldn't read or write and they managed to work and earn an income. I thought I would examine the case of adults in the Australian workforce who didn't believe that when they started work they had the right degree of literacy for the job they were taking on.

How did you find the participants for your study?
It took me a long time to find participants. I was aiming for twenty but thankfully I only got nine! I got them in two states and a whole range of industries, some through the unions and most at a conference. There was a young woman presenter who was doing her masters on just the sort of people I was thinking about. Eventually five of her participants came to my study. All were wonderful.

The youngest was a cabinetmaker and he was working for a kitchen installation company. He was in his late twenties. The two oldest, in their late fifties, were process workers, in heavy industry. They worked in different parts of the same company. They had been with that company for twenty plus years. There was a meat worker who was renowned in the industry for his skill and knowledge. There was a union official in his thirties. He had progressed up the ranks.

Many had done apprenticeships. The meat worker had got special permission from the Department of Education to leave school and start work at thirteen.

Can you describe some of their literacy difficulties and if and how these were managed in the workplace?
The cabinetmaker was extremely reluctant to read. He was very much into the physical side of life. Before being a cabinetmaker he'd been on the professional cycling circuit.

I spoke to his wife who, as his girlfriend, was training to be a nurse in a capital city. He was in a rural town, so he used to write letters to her, which were full of spelling errors. Her response was to ignore the spelling and focus on the meaning. I was blown away by the maturity of this attitude.

Another man was a non-reader and I think he just accepted that he couldn't read. However he was on all sorts of committees at his workplace. He could not write well so he had developed his own coding system to record the information so he could go back and talk to his colleagues about the issues. He was promoted three times in the eighteen months of data collection for this study. He was training all sorts of people and he was a brilliant trainer.

I had another non-reader, who relied on his social network. He was an interesting case because in his family he was the first boy born in generations. His sisters just adored him and, as children, they would read to him and do all his homework. He had no need to learn to read and write. Another one of the process workers was sent to special schools for reasons that neither he nor I understand. There he was taught to read very well. He was very fond of Roman history but didn't learn comprehension. So he could read stuff and not understand what it was about.

Most of the men had relatively long periods of hiding their difficulties at work. But the ones who seemed to, in my mind, successfully navigate through the workplace were the ones who decided well, this is me, you're going to like it or lump it. They let people know that they were struggling with literacy. They expressed absolute surprise about the way that information was received. For the most part it was positive.

There was one man who had been working in the same job for twenty years. He started trembling when he was telling me what it was like when he realised his boss had found out about his literacy problem because not even his nephews and nieces knew and he was just terrified. But what he also found out was that they'd known for twenty years that he couldn't read or write. He was such a lovely person and such a good worker that it didn't make any difference to them.

What impact did the study have on the men?
In the last interview, I asked them how important the study had been to them. They said it had opened their eyes. They'd realized that they weren't the only ones who had a problem with literacy, which is vitally important for people feeling the stigma of low literacy. Some said they realized they were much better off than others. And others said they had never sat back and thought about how well they coped. So doing this study was affirming for them.

Did any of the men have experiences of getting help with their literacy?
One man, who was a migrant, started classes. For the first year those classes were at his home. He said that was terrific. He was feeling really positive about work. After the first year he had to go to classes at the work site with other colleagues. At that stage he wasn't prepared to let other people know that he had a literacy problem. So he just could not make any progress. Another man who tried classes felt they were a waste of time because, in his mind, they were trying to teach the same sort of 'ABC' skills that he failed at in school.

One of the plumbers had done a lot of trade courses at TAFE. He kept going back, because he said the teachers were really supportive. They gave him tips and clues with spelling. He kept going back because he felt that they cared enough about him by understanding and they wanted him to succeed.

What were the factors that made a difference?
The big difference is one of those things that I think makes it really hard these days; people who did well and achieved had spent a long time working with one employer. They knew the workplace; they knew their team that they had been with for long periods. The team gave them courage and rewards for performance. It was one of my major findings.

All the successful people found a mentor of their own volition. Some worked together for many years and one of the mentors said to me, "Working with this bloke was just so painful. It was so hard but you didn't just

tell him something once you had to tell him something twenty, thirty times." All the mentors, they were people who were not teachers, but they had the most amazing teaching skills. They knew when to reward and they didn't push the particular man they were working with to finish in a certain time frame. The men were given all the time they needed to improve their skills.

How are changes in the workplace affecting these kinds of workers today?
There are fewer low entry-level long-term jobs in heavy industry. The casualization and the gig economy notion of the workforce is destroying that long term association. The increased globalization and digitization of industry is making jobs very hard to get. There's also an expectation that workers be job ready, resulting in less funding for training on the job and workplace literacy training. I think that if you have low literacy and manage to get a job you'd be keeping very quiet about it because it's so hard to get a job. We have removed the agency of the worker to seek help. That's not there anymore. Also, with the emphasis on private providers, there's no guarantee that those providers have the skills that TAFE teachers do in recognising and responding to literacy problems.

How did the workers manage digital literacy and what do you think this means for people with literacy difficulties in general?
The plumbers and the union executive were quite happy using computers but everybody else was very scared of them, particularly the older men. Everyone talks about using computers in terms of typing and reading text messages. But these days, because of US law, computers have to be designed to cope with a whole range of disabilities including vision impairment. Everything on a computer can be read out loud. Once someone with low literacy learns how to do that, they can use it quite freely. When I look at my iPad and my iPhone all I see is icons – not words. I think that given the support of children and grandchildren all of these men can actually start to become quite fluent in the use of computers and smart devices. I think this notion that people with poor literacy are going to struggle in the computer age has never been tested. We don't have empirical evidence and given time and patience they can become familiar with the useful parts of modern digital technology.

Can you tell us how you think definitions of literacy are used to determine policy and practice?
Functional literacy is actually pretty poorly named. It should be more instrumental literacy. It's about how people use the letters of the alphabet to encode and decode. And that's the basis of tests like PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study). As I say to people, knowing 'C A T' will not give you cat. It never will and it never has. There's no link between what you hear when you spell out 'C A T' and when you read the word 'cat'.

Policymakers seem to think this is the measure of literacy. It's not. Very interestingly I was listening to Radio National and I heard Dr Pasi Sahlberg, the newly appointed professor of education at the Gonski Institute for Education at UNSW. He was saying that the definitions of literacy and literacy assessment practices only consider instrumental aspects of literacy. If your ideology is how to have people turn letters into words you can rely on this definition, but it's very instrumental.

Personally I believe the definition of literacy is about what individuals do with it and how they negotiate everyday literacy problems and situations. I looked at literacy as a social practice because that's what I believe it is. For example I can give you a pen but it has no meaning until you do something with it. I can give you words and phrases but they mean nothing until you do something with them. Here's an example: One of the plumbers said that one of the times he got most stressed was when he was writing birthday cards to people. In his mind a spelling mistake in a card meant that the reason you're writing

the card wasn't conveyed. In his mind it was offensive for a person to get a greeting card with a spelling mistake in it. For him using the words to convey his heartfelt feeling was really superior to anything else. Usually he got his wife to write it out and he'd copy it so that he knew he got it right. So while we contest the technical aspects of literacy, until we start looking at the really functional stuff that people do with literacy then we won't get the true measure.

As the meat worker said, if he wants to buy lunch he'll go to a take away shop and what he's learned is that almost all take away shops have fish and chips. He asks for fish and chips because he can't read the menu at all. When he goes out to dinner he looks at the menu listening to other people on the table ordering and he orders the same thing as somebody else because he can't read the menu. It's the way we function so that we're not making ourselves look stupid in society all the time.

Government reports tell us that one in three people can't function in society because of poor literacy. But real social life tells us they do. Essentially I think we need to focus on how people function and how we can help them use their existing skills and strengths to bring them back to literacy.

The functional definition has led to very simplistic labelling and defining of people. We're told that people who are functionally literate can do anything and they are happy and they always succeed. And then we've got the people who are not functionally literate and they're either over represented in jail or social services. They get ill more often. I've never seen the data that actually proves that. But it's a mantra taken up by politicians, that if you can't read then

you're going to have a terrible life. Ask Richard Branson if he has had a terrible life. I suspect he hasn't. But that's what's driving policy. They don't have the fundamental skills so we'll start with fundamental skills.

Working from a social practice level, these people have got tons of other skills. I want to start with their other skills and bring them around to literacy. Let's look at what other literacy type skills this person is bringing, not necessarily reading and writing but the negotiation, the oral, the storytelling skills. I think that's where you've got to start.

What is your view of the definition of literacy found in the Foundations Skills Strategy?
I thought that the two-pronged definition is good:

> English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) – listening, speaking, reading, writing, digital literacy and use of mathematical ideas; and

> Employability skills, such as collaboration, problem solving, self-management, learning and information and communication technology (ICT) skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life. (SCOTESE, 2012, p. 2)

But then they go on to say this stuff about people who've got the skills will be happy and have fulfilling lives and they'll have wonderful families and make progress. But the assumption from that is that if people don't have those skills they won't be happy, and won't progress through the workplace, which is rubbish.

So everything they've designed after that is based on those assumptions that we've got to have the benchmark in our testing of where people are. I think in this area that the benchmarks become quite elastic. I'd be happier to look at how people were talking, reading and writing over a period of time instead of saying "in six months I must have achieved this". It happens in other things. People recover from surgery at different rates. They recover from childbirth at different rates. Kids progress through the early stages at different rates. But literacy must happen at a particular stage. Why?

The other great anomaly is that I think we don't put enough emphasis on numeracy. People are proud that they can't do maths, that they failed at it. It's like a badge

of honour. Why? Why can't we say that about literacy? Why can't they say "I just don't get this literacy and I really need some help." Why is that unacceptable in our society?

What can we do as practitioners and advocates to improve policy?

I think you should start living by a mantra that should be in every classroom and every office. And it is that literacy defines a social skill not a person. As teachers you need to remember that adults who struggle with literacy have their own history. They know what's been successful and unsuccessful. I asked the men in my study if I'd come in and wanted to give them a test in the first interviews would they have stayed? About half said they would excuse themselves. They've failed so many tests they don't want to be tested anymore. So it's important to treat each as an individual. For some people with literacy problems it will take a long time to convince them that they actually can read something.

And my last comment is that we need to go to the politicians. Why do state and territory governments award contracts without a firm commitment to improve work and literacy skills? If we can guarantee that these people are going to get some work and some assistance with their literacy then I think we'll see literacy improve.

Reference

SCOTESE (Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills & Employment). (2012). *National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults*. Retrieved from https://www.industry.gov.au/AboutUs/Documents/COAG-Industry-and-Skills-Council/Former-SCOTESE/National-Foundation-Skills-Strategy-for-Adults.pdf

Dr Marilyn Kell was interviewed by Sarah Deasey, Further Education Coordinator at Carlton North Learning Centre. Sarah oversees the coordination, recruitment and training for the one-to-one volunteer tutor program.

Refugee and migrant women stepping towards economic empowerment

By Elizabeth Gunn

Small-scale micro-enterprises currently constitute major employers and drivers of economic activity in Australia, and this trend is likely to expand in the future as entrepreneurs emerge from unexpected groups like women from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Furthermore, learning small business skills positively impacts individuals' language and literacy development.

Heat radiates off the roads as I head out on a warm day in January to meet Meredith Budge, who oversees the Stepping Stones to Small Business program for BSL (Brotherhood of St Laurence). The cool, comfortable atmosphere of Epping Community Services Hub (the new home of BSL's Multicultural Communities team and the Stepping Stones program) is a welcoming oasis. I glide around with Meredith as she leads me on a tour of the site; a co-location of a range of programs and organisations designed to facilitate cohesive responses to the needs and aspirations of people in the expanding northern suburbs of Melbourne. Stepping Stones to Small Business is one such program.

Stepping Stones is a micro-enterprise program that offers mentoring, training and support to women from refugee, migrant and asylum seeker backgrounds to develop new skills and increase participation in business and community. It grew from earlier BSL programs like Women on the Move, Bead by Bead and A New Life that uncovered a need for formal business training for women who were already running informal businesses. Stepping Stones is not a language or literacy program as such, but literacy and language learning are definitely by-products of the program. For example, financial literacy, one of the program's strengths, has been recognised by Financial Literacy Australia which is funding the program's expansion over the next two years. Stepping Stones has received positive attention from social economists such as Jock Collins of University of Technology Sydney, who believes that micro-business programs that support refugees, such as Stepping Stones, "should be rolled out in urban and regional centres across Australia" (Collins, 2015). Other researchers in the field of migrant settlement have concluded that although the program does not necessarily turn all participants into fully-fledged entrepreneurs in the short-term, Stepping Stones is transformative on many different levels (van Kooy, 2016; Bodsworth 2014).

I wanted to find out more about Stepping Stones; its structure and participants, and the incidental literacy practices that occur when women participate in a training program focused on developing knowledge and experience of small business practices. For Stepping Stones participants, it seems that improvements in foundational literacy skills – such as financial literacy and written and spoken English – are just some outcomes of the program. Other gains include increased confidence and empowerment in navigating business environments, advanced status in their community, expanded social networks, and aspirations to use newly acquired skills to help other women in financial hardship. Talking to Meredith and researching more about Stepping Stones expanded my ideas about how students and teachers might benefit from applying some of this practical, project-based approach to basic education and literacy development.

Necessity is the mother of invention for refugee women entrepreneurs

According to the Reserve Bank of Australia (2015)[1], small businesses contribute substantially to the Australian economy. There are more than two million small businesses in Australia which constitute around 95% of the total number of enterprises in the economy. Most of these are micro-businesses, two-thirds have no employees (i.e. the 'self-employed') and a further quarter have one to four employees. Around 10% of small businesses have between five and nineteen employees.

The small business sector represents significant opportunities for building Australia's economy in terms of employment, productivity and export earnings, and entrepreneurs with backgrounds and experience gained from countries outside Australia possess certain linguistic and cultural advantages as small business owners. However, within the broader category of overseas-born Australians, refugee and some migrant women represent a group of entrepreneurs whose members are likely to be starting a small business not out of competitive advantage or opportunity, but out of necessity. Research behind the Stepping Stones program reveals that "(r)efugee women, in particular, face barriers to being part of the workforce that relate to language, culture, gender and family, and employer attitudes and practices" (van Kooy, 2016, p. 72). Australian employers often disregard educational qualifications earned overseas, which means women from refugee, migrant and asylum seeker backgrounds access to jobs at their ability level is drastically limited. There are many other challenges that migrant women are likely to face in setting up businesses compared to their locally-born counterparts, such as a lack of established family or friends to provide capital or mentorship, and scant knowledge about Australian business culture and local business opportunities. Apprehension about English-language fluency also erodes the confidence of migrants wanting to start micro-businesses. For these reasons, Stepping Stones was set up to provide targeted business training, networking opportunities and mentoring to specifically support women who, despite being marginalised from the structures that assist traditional business start-ups, possess other important attributes such as passion, tenacity, resourcefulness and belief in new beginnings. These attributes, according to Meredith Budge, are as important for business success as theoretical knowledge.

Empowerment to business: the Stepping Stones course

Meredith explains to me that Stepping Stones is an extremely popular program with many applicants. Participants are supported by the program for three years, said to be the time it takes to establish a successful small business. To differentiate applicants with firm business ideas from those needing other career options, the course starts with the Empowerment Program. According to Meredith, the Empowerment Program, a more recent addition to the program, is a space "where women get a chance to really explore what their passions, their strengths, their interests are, and from there to kind of really work out if their small

business is what they really want to do". Initially, around twenty-five to thirty women join the Stepping Stones course at the Empowerment Program stage, and roughly twenty continue on for the next ten-day small business course of the Stepping Stones program. The program training occurs weekly and spans about fifteen weeks. The women who don't continue with the small business training are supported through alternative BSL employment pathways or referred on to other career options.

Whilst the program is funded by the AMP Foundation and partnering local councils, the ten-day small business training course has been devised through a partnership between the BSL and Small Business Victoria. Small Business Victoria provides facilitators who work with BSL trainers to deliver the Stepping Stones small business program. The tailored training resources reflect many of the business experiences relevant to migrant women. These resources owe a significant debt to the alumnae of Stepping Stones who have contributed case studies, examples and images which make the training handbook an engaging document. Following the training courses, participants are partnered with small business mentors. There are two types of mentors; those who provide specific support such as bookkeeping systems and industry advice, technical expertise, leadership skills and social media workshops; and others who develop a supportive relationship with the budding entrepreneur, like being a critical supportive friend and helping develop knowledge, skills and confidence over the three years of the program. Participants are also encouraged to attend relevant small business seminars throughout the three years on topics such as setting up a website, digital photography and presentation of products and many other inspiring and practical workshops.

Implications for literacy development

Language and literacy development are life-long processes for all people, regardless of language background. Literacy needs change as society changes. We are all constantly learning and honing new literacy skills. The variables lie in the opportunities and contexts we might be exposed to which will inspire us to learn and refine new language. In terms of adult literacy and language learning, Stepping Stones could be characterised as a PBL (project-based learning) approach to language development (Nunan, 2016). In PBL, links are made between in-class and out-of-class learning through the planning and development of projects with concrete outcomes. PBL recognises that language is used to negotiate complex situations, and

develops within these environments based on multiple and diverse social relationships.

Learning through projects enables people to bring different strengths and identities into the learning context. English literacy education often focuses on language development to the exclusion of other important aspects of learners' lives. In her exploration of immigrant small business owners' construction of agency in relation to language use in the US, Miller (2014) cites evidence that some language-focused approaches actually limit language development when learners disengage from the 'deficit' identities that frame their participation within such approaches (McKay and Wong, 1996, cited in Miller, 2014). Miller studies the ways immigrant entrepreneurs characterise their own use and learning of English within the situated contexts of the small businesses they operate in their multilingual communities. She finds that "[r]ather than orienting to an ambiguous native-speaker-like standard in evaluating their English, they seemed to orient to local valuations of good-enough English" (Miller, 2014, p. 139). The small business owners of Miller's study evaluated their language capabilities positively when orienting themselves to their local environments. The implications of Miller's work for language teachers is to understand that there is not one single intervention in the learners' environment that affects their impetus to develop language. Miller cites Mercer's (2012) suggestion for language teachers to "work at creating momentum by attending to a range of conditions and learning environments (in and out of class) designed to enhance and facilitate learner agency" (p. 56) in relation to language learning.

Not everyone has the desire to embark on the project of starting up a micro-enterprise. However, there are many other relevant projects that engage learners' passions and skills and help them to develop new skills and language in the process. Vocational education and training settings provide fertile environments for activating different ways to cross-pollinate practical projects with language learning, and many successful project-based language programs have been featured in *Fine Print* over the years (most recently, Karen Manwarring's article about the Voices of the South Side local history project in Vol.40 no.3).

Communicating confidence

"So much of it is about confidence," says Meredith Budge, "and the thing that we've always done with Stepping Stones is to focus just on women, and women for whom English isn't their first language, because they're far more

willing, then, to open up and talk to each other." Although participants start the course with a good level of English, Meredith mentions an occasion when they opened up a session to a wider range of women. "We actually found that the women for whom English is their first language just dominated the conversation, and it takes a really skilled facilitator then to be able to manage that. So, you really see the difference in the confidence that the women gain from doing it that way." Some of the women get very emotional while telling their stories and Meredith highlights again the amount of confidence they gain by sharing these stories, which impacts in turn on their confidence to speak and use the English language. Facilitators of the program have described to Meredith the progression in the women's language skills that they see over the fifteen weeks, "because they feel more confident, and they have to use English because it's such a multicultural space where English is the common language." It seems that, in relation to language and literacy development, Stepping Stones affords many confidence-building opportunities in which participants practice English while developing other aspects of their life based on their passions and business ideas.

This synchronous building of language and confidence reminds me of Suresh Canagarajah's (2014) study of skilled migrants' handling of multilingual communication in this current era of late modern globalization, in which "migration, diaspora relationships, superdiverse urban settlements, digital media scapes and transnational economic and production relationships" (p. 78) create social and linguistic environments where people master new forms of communication. Canagarajah observes that

> [i]n many cases, [migrants] don't go to school to learn a new language, but develop their confidence as they engage in their work. They seem to bring certain dispositions and resources that help them develop competence in new communicative genres and codes in their adult life. (p. 81)

Canagarajah identifies cooperative dispositions as an important characteristic of multilinguals' use of English and posits that "all multilinguals have to negotiate their conflicting and hybrid subject positions, with the mix of limitations and advantages they enjoy in diverse communicative situations, for voice." (p. 81)

In the same way that Stepping Stones participants' stories, experiences and businesses exist as a resource for the small

business training materials and course publications, the new communicative genres and codes Stepping Stones alumnae develop in their online business communications could be seen as resources for literacy teachers and students. The women use a range of print and multimodal texts to promote, add value and provide digital spaces for themselves and their customers to communicate with each other. In the next section I explore this variety of texts used by Stepping Stones entrepreneurs to promote their businesses on the internet and suggest ways that these texts could inform adult literacy education.

Micro-enterprise and digital literacy

As background to this article, I had hoped to talk face-to-face with participants from the program alongside Meredith Budge at the Epping Community Services Hub. But Stepping Stones alumnae are busy women; they manage businesses, network with customers, help other women in their communities, raise families and run households. It was no surprise to me that they would have difficulty finding time to give me their perspectives on the small business training program. This absence in my research presented me with an opportunity to gain insights into participant literacy practices from a different angle, through the words and images for and about their businesses posted on the Internet. Stepping Stones alumnae communicate with the world just like other businesses, through email and mobile phone contacts, on websites, blogs, Facebook pages, in local newspaper articles, Instagram profiles, Etsy stores, Zomato and Google listings, and the list goes on. In addition, the BSL hosts a directory of some of the businesses that have been established through the program. Through this directory I was able to explore some of the digital pathways that micro-entrepreneurs take to connect with customers.

The BSL directory lists hospitality, craft, beauty and homeware businesses, and there is considerable variety in the written and multimodal genres that the women use in their online presences. Here I focus briefly on some of the Facebook Pages listed on the BSL directory, and discuss the writing and images used by the women to populate their business profiles and communicate with customers. I hasten to add that Facebook is just one of many different online channels used by the women and their customers for business communication, and I am not endorsing Facebook in any way here. However, Facebook provides a uniform method for formatting and uploading text and engaging with new audiences that could be helpful for fledgling business owners. The Facebook Pages promoting

Stepping Stones businesses abound with authentic texts that demonstrate some of the different literacy functions used by multilingual entrepreneurs in their micro-business communication. These texts form a resource that could be used by literacy teachers to introduce these writing genres to beginner English students.

The business of social media literacy: About Facebook Pages

Facebook offers six types of page for entrepreneurs to promote their micro-enterprises, including pages for local businesses, and product brands. Once a page type has been chosen, users are prompted to enter details, upload images, invite friends, publish posts, create promotions, and write short descriptions to promote their businesses. Sections within the Facebook Page, such as 'About', 'Community', 'Reviews', and 'Posts' can be filled with visual and written texts to refine the business profile further and help customers locate and understand precisely what the business has to offer. One of the entrepreneurs uses the 'About' section of their Facebook Page to convey a wealth of information about their business, including a map, opening hours, multiple means of contact, and a few sentences telling their story, concluding with the invitation to "kindly message us through the page, email or mobile number" (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Abbreviations and brevity for efficient communication

Language shortcuts and abbreviations are a huge benefit for busy entrepreneurs to keep up to date with customers enquiries. Using different languages and

codes in collaborative texts such as chats is a way to engage with customers on multiple levels, mirroring communication styles and learning new words and abbreviations from them along the way, just as one would through face-to-face communication. Although written communication has certain advantages over spoken communication in that it can be edited and checked before sending, writing can be a time-consuming mode of communication. In Figure 2, the business owner uses English to communicate with a customer about a biscuit order:

> Customer: Wow…using butter?
> *Entrepreneur: Yes!*
> Customer: 2 pls from Malaysia…delivery end March...
> *Entrepreneur: No problem! (wink emoji)*
> Customer: Make it 3 instead but this design (kiss emoji & upload photo of design)
> *Entrepreneur: Can!*

The entrepreneur uses words sparingly but accompanies them with punctuation, emojis and 'likes' to generate an encouraging and enthusiastic tone. She uses far fewer words but loses no communicative content in the process.

Figure 2

Showcasing visual literacy

Visual literacy is arguably more important than print in promoting a business on Facebook Pages. There are many instances when entrepreneurs use photos, videos, images and logos to tell their stories, create identity and add value to the business. These multimodal texts are commonly

uploaded in the 'Posts' section of the Page. Posts constitute the central chronological core of a Facebook Page and are assigned to followers' Facebook feeds (presumably via the notorious Facebook algorithm). Some posts feature family and friends, others celebrate business milestones or cultural festivals. The multimodal texts create an atmosphere of excitement and convey the entrepreneur's passion for the products and services on offer to customers. However, the central aim of a post is to advertise the business and keep it alive in the public domain. Conveying information about new products, markets and allied activities is the most common function of the multimodal texts used in posts (Figure 3).

Figure 3

This brief analysis of Stepping Stones alumnae Facebook literacy practices raises many more questions that could be followed up with the women themselves as they tell their stories about the different literacy practices they perform to set up and promote their businesses. What is relevant here, ultimately, is that the women of Stepping Stones have valuable stories to tell and resources to share, in particular with teachers and learners working in adult English literacy and foundational education spaces.

Possible literacy activities inspired by Stepping Stones entrepreneurs:
- Students start up their own Facebook Page or Group promoting a business idea or social cause. Before they unleash their Page onto the world, they can select Page Unpublished within the Page Visibility of the Settings Menu (top right corner).
- Students research the 'About' section of different businesses on the Internet and discuss which approaches

they prefer and which they think are effective. Discuss questions such as: What is the purpose of an 'About' page? What is the appropriate tone, register and style of this section? How does it differ from other elements of a Facebook Page? What are the essential details? What is a business story? Why might customers be interested in this information?

- Beginner students often abbreviate the communicative content of their message using one or two words. Alongside our attempts to extend their vocabulary, teachers could also compliment students and draw their attention to their successful lexical choices when their truncated communication effectively communicates the message they meant to convey.
- Students read a few model text message chats, invent and brainstorm their own abbreviations, and then practice chatting with different interlocutors.
- Students design and develop a series of visual stories using appropriately sourced images and photographs to be displayed in various formats, for various digital or analogue platforms.

For more information about Stepping Stones, its evaluation reports and alumnae business directory, visit www.bsl. org.au/steppingstones and www.bsl.org.au/services/refugees-immigration-multiculturalism/stepping-stones/business-directory/

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Notes

1. The ABS defines small businesses as all entities that are independent and privately owned, are managed by an individual or a small number of persons, and have less than 20 employees.

Adult literacy out of the classroom and into our community

By Natalie Nawrocki and Marcella O'Connor

Adult literacy teachers have incredible under-utilised expertise. In search of the next activity or resource to use in the adult language classroom, they often resort to developing their own material from scratch to ensure that it is relevant, current and engaging for their students.

After many years of modifying text and creating engaging tasks that are easier to read and interesting to our adult students, as well as considering pedagogy and assessment requirements, expertise on 'what works' in adult literacy develops. This expertise and many years of teaching experience lend themselves to being applied outside the classroom to benefit the community. The 'Welcome to the Library' project provides an insight into how this expertise was put to good use.

Adult literacy innovation program funding

In July 2015, State Library Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network delivered *Reading and literacy for all: strategic framework for Victorian public libraries 2015–18* as part of the READ program in the Statewide Public Library Development Projects. This strategic framework recognises the unique role of public libraries to support literacy development and lays out the role public libraries can play in promoting and supporting reading and addressing low levels of literacy in Victoria.

The Framework encouraged Victorian public libraries to examine their current approach to supporting people with low literacy in their local communities and to consider how best to match resources and programming with local community needs. It focuses on public libraries strengthening their strategic capability to support adult literacy outcomes through program design and delivery and building partnerships with adult literacy agencies. Provisions for grants were made to fund public libraries' development of innovative programs and services.

The Welcome to the Library project

In December 2016, Melton City Library partnered with Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services to apply for Adult Literacy Innovation Program funding to create a resource for adults with low levels of literacy. The application was prepared by Melton City library manager Troy Watson with input from Djerriwarrh's LLN (language, literacy and numeracy) Manager Patricia Sacco.

Melton is an area of high socio-economic disadvantage with a high proportion (16.9%) of adults with low literacy (State Library Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network, 2016, p.10). As the fourth fastest growing municipality in Victoria, there is an increasingly diverse CALD (culturally and linguistic diverse) community in need of language, literacy and numeracy skills.

The funding application proposal was to develop an adult reader and teacher resource with the purpose of raising awareness of and familiarity with library services amongst local people with low literacy. Through a relatable and narrative-style reader, the learner would be actively introduced to and engaged in the library experience whilst improving basic reading, writing, listening and speaking. The reader and teacher resource were to be used by both library staff in the library's induction experience and teachers of local providers' LLN classes who visit the library and access the resource.

Project delivery

The application was successful and the project received funds to develop a reader and teacher resource with an accompanying video. The project scope also included training for the library staff, including an introduction to the resource and a workshop on identifying and supporting low literacy library users.

The project commenced in May 2017 and we were engaged by Djerriwarrh to develop the material. A steering committee was also established with representatives from the library including the manager and key librarians,

a local community centre, a council staff member, and managers of Djerriwarrh to provide guidance and expertise. A timeline was developed with a November completion date.

We began the project by researching to find out who the library users in the Melton area were and doing an audit of the services and activities on offer at the Melton City Library. With this data we were better able to recognise the needs of the community and what they had access to in the library, which informed the ideas for the development of the reader.

The Welcome to the Library reader

In the reader we wanted to dispel the perception that the library was only about books and to focus on the myriad activities it had to offer. We also wanted to capture all of the different groups in the community and how they could potentially use the library. Essentially we wanted low level literacy readers to see themselves in the reader.

The decision was made to have photographs instead of illustrations for the images to go with the story line. We felt that the use of photographs was a more powerful way for low level literacy learners to find and retain information. Adult students from Djerriwarrh LLN classes as well as library patrons and staff were selected as 'characters' for the reader and they were photographed using a variety of services and activities in the library.

The layout of the reader shows a double page spread with the 'character' and their need followed by what they are doing to help themselves, that is, how their needs were met through an activity at the library.

For example, Michelle and her son William come to the library for story time. Jim is looking for a job and is helped by the librarian on the computer. There is also a student who needs a quiet place to study and connects to the free WiFi. Hagas, who is learning English, attends a conversation class to practice speaking; and George, who wants to get out of the house, finds a DVD to watch at home. Each of the characters aims to present someone in the community so someone who picks up the reader can see themselves in the reader and think about how they can use the library.

The purpose of the reader is to provide information about the library that is visually interesting, clear and in plain English. The reader can be used in the library and in an

The cover of the Welcome to the Library reader

Michelle and William visit the library every Monday for story time.

A single page from the reader

English language classroom. It can also be downloaded from the Internet for individual use. Importantly, the reader was designed to be generic so that it can represent any local library.

After many hours of refining the layout and design with the graphic artist, the reader was finally ready to be published. Hard copies were printed for class sets at Djerriwarrh and distribution to all Victorian public libraries. The reader was also published online accompanied by the teacher resource and a short video, and promoted through the learning and literacy portal on the library website that also links to other adult literacy material available.

The 'Local library' rap song and video

While the reader was being developed we were also working on creating a video to accompany it. The video would help to improve awareness and perception of the library with low literacy learners by helping them understand that the

library experience is inclusive, equitable, collaborative and a trusted place where staff are responsive.

Recognising that song and music can be an effective medium to engage adults and enhance language we decided to create a rap song to be presented visually in a video. The rap song video aimed to present the benefits of the library in a fun, relaxed and a playful way. It was also another opportunity for students from Djerriwarrh to be involved. Another LLN teacher, Ama Omran, embraced the opportunity to write the lyrics and Joe Motley, an experienced music composer provided the music for the rap.

Once recorded, we engaged the services of Yum Studios to create a short video of the rap. At our initial meeting we articulated our concept for the video production to be inclusive, accessible, light hearted and humorous. One of the most challenging aspects of the project was organising the logistics of scheduling filming of students singing the rap across the two Melton City libraries: Melton and Caroline Springs. The students participating in the project took a great deal of pride in and ownership of the rap video and felt honoured to be involved, particularly as they knew that this would help others to become acquainted with the library services.

The teacher resource

With the reader and rap video now completed we turned our attention to the teacher resource. This was an integral part of the project as it tied all the components together and provided the tasks for teachers to use in language classes to develop adult literacy.

A variety of activities was created aimed to cater to a range of lower literacy levels. The activities included a vocabulary matching exercise, a Facebook

Recording the rap song with Joe Motley and students from Djerriwarrh

post reading task, a text message reading task, a scavenger hunt for the library, a 'what's on at the library' comprehension activity, grammar activities and lots more.

The project launch and showcase

In October the Welcome to the Library reader, teacher resource and video were launched at the Melton Library. The resources were uploaded onto the City of Melton website and the Djerriwarrh website shortly afterwards. The launch was well attended and the students and other people involved with the project were invited.

In November, we were invited to attend the 'Innovation in adult literacy, Victorian public libraries in action' launch at the State Library Victoria where all the successful 2017 grant recipients presented their projects. It was interesting to see how other libraries had used the funding to improve literacy. The launch provided useful information and was a source of inspiration to those considering applying for the upcoming grants in 2018.

After the launch

Since the launch the Welcome to the Library reader and teacher resource has been well received and the video has received many 'likes'. An evaluation was conducted with various classes on the suitability of resources with a range of teachers and students at Djerriwarrh with overall positive feedback. Our hope that teachers would be able to use the reader and teacher resource without the need to make modification was realised.

The final component of the project was to plan and deliver a workshop for library staff which would help to improve their capabilities to provide services to and engage with low literacy learners.

In our first discussions with the library management on the focus for the workshop, the need for additional resources for library staff to be used in their library orientation was also identified. As a result, we have been working on an additional resource, which offers guidance and suggestions for library staff when conducting their orientation sessions with adult literacy/English as an additional language classes.

What we learnt

The project was a new experience for both the Melton City Libraries and Djerriwarrh and a great deal of learning

took place. We both feel that it was a very rich experience, although at times exhausting, as we undertook the project while continuing with our regular teaching roles. Participation in such a project demonstrates how the skills and expertise of adult literacy teachers can be utilised for greater benefit in the community.

At a local level, Melton City Libraries and Djerriwarrh have not partnered before in relation to adult literacy so this is an innovative program for the library service. The program brought together adult education experts, library staff and other community organisations to develop a resource that meets the learning needs of the community. Whilst the library service currently provides some English conversation classes, the offering in the adult literacy space was limited until now. With a focus on adults, this program addresses a gap in the library's approach to literacy, where much of the focus has been on early years.

The library is one service in the community that has recognised the need to provide access to those who have low levels of literacy. There are many more services in the community that can benefit from working with literacy experts to ensure that their information is accessible for those with lower reading proficiency. Those with low levels of literacy often miss out on information and activities because information by service providers is written for those with high reading proficiencies.

Adult literacy teachers have a lot to offer outside of the classroom. They have the skills to modify and structure text and incorporate support such as visuals to assist those with low literacy to access information. The lessons learnt in the library project are only the beginning of an idea that can be developed and expanded into other areas.

To access the resource go to: http://www.melton.vic.gov.au/alr

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Pragmatic language skills for CALD carers working in aged care

By Pip Mackey

It's hard to pick up a newspaper or turn on the radio these days without being told about the impending crisis in the provision of aged care in Australia. In 2050, when at least *some* of us will be in our 80s and 90s and require care, the Aged Care Sector Committee (2016) predicts that the demand for a place in an RACF (residential aged care facility) will be three times what it is now. The number of people working in that field will also need to triple.

According to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA, 2013) two-thirds of the current workforce in Australian RACFs are PCAs (personal care attendants). In Australia, as in many western countries, that PCA workforce is heavily and increasingly dependent on migrants from CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) backgrounds (King et al., 2013). In fact, almost 90% of Australian RACFs currently employ PCAs from CALD backgrounds and just under half of Australia's RACFs have a CALD PCA workforce of between 34 and 100% (Mavromaras, K. et al., 2017).

While nearly all RACFs can identify the benefits of employing carers from CALD backgrounds, such as enhanced cross-cultural understanding within the facility, over 30% of RACFs also noted some difficulties in employing PCAs of CALD background. Communication between CALD PCAs and residents was identified as a difficulty by 88% of those respondents (Mavromaras, K. et al., 2017).

As the name suggests, a PCA is required to assist with the personal care and day-to-day activities of people in an aged care setting (ASQA, 2013). The often intimate and intrusive routine care tasks performed by PCAs primarily occur in a relational context with residents. Negotiating a face-threatening task such as helping with the toilet or shower or addressing a resident's grief over the loss of a partner can be difficult for care workers from any language background, including people who share their first language with the resident they are caring for. In order to manage these complex situations, a PCA needs to have strong pragmatic communicative competence, i.e. understand the rules of communication particular to a given culture.

These rules govern what we say and how we say (or don't say) something to convey meaning in any particular situation. LoCastro (2003, p.15) defines pragmatics as:

> ... the study of speaker and hearer meaning created in their joint actions that include both linguistic and non-linguistic signals in the context of socioculturally organized activities

Pragmatics is concerned with the *appropriateness* of what is said according to specific contexts such as what is being communicated, to whom and in what circumstances (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998).

PCAs who come from a CALD background need to develop a high level of L2 (second language) pragmatic skill specific to their workplace. L2 pragmatic language competence differs from a person's grammatical accuracy in that it involves developing an understanding of the sociopragmatic, or cultural rules of that particular community, whilst also acquiring the necessary pragmalinguistic, or linguistic tools to communicate within those cultural expectations. This can take time and, as Yates (2015) explains, is not really something that can be learnt on the job, as pragmatic language use is not always something the native speaker is aware of and would feel comfortable pointing out to a non native speaker. They may just assume these language failings are symptomatic of deliberate rudeness rather than a mistake in language use. Problems with grammatical skills or pronunciation, on the other hand, tend to be more easily identified by native speakers as issues connected with developing language use, and tend to be more readily pointed out and forgiven. Furthermore, adults from CALD backgrounds who have come to work as PCAs will come with their own set of cultural assumptions about what constitutes politeness in their culture and the transfer of those assumptions may well be inappropriate in the L2.

Despite these difficulties, there are clearly CALD PCAs who have been working in this field for a long time and who

are recognised in their workplaces as being highly skilled carers. The research described below is an investigation of how a select sample of CALD PCAs use L2 pragmatic language skills in their work and how this compares with native English speaking PCAs.

The research

Applied linguistics research using qualitative methods was conducted to find best practice examples of pragmatic language that PCAs of NES (native English speaking) and NNES (non-native English speaking) backgrounds used to negotiate care tasks with older people in Australian, predominantly English speaking, RACFs. From that data, the study sought to identify how the PCAs from both NNES and NES backgrounds successfully used pragmatic language to negotiate with a resident and where there may be differences or issues with the developing pragmatic language skills of NNES PCAs as compared with NES PCAs.

Data collection process

Initially, ethnographic data was collected through interviews with RACF staff including PCAs and senior staff members as well as family members of RACF residents. These interviews helped identify what is involved in a PCA's typical day, where some of the most pressing communication events commonly occurred and how some issues with L2 pragmatic language use occurred.

Next, face-to-face interviews and role-plays were conducted with nine people who worked as PCAs (three NES and six NNES). These participants were mostly identified by senior staff as being PCAs who had a good rapport with the residents and were leaders in the workplace.

These interviews and role plays were digitally recorded, transcribed and coded to identify themes and features of the pragmatic language they used. All participants have been given pseudonyms.

The interviews took a conversational approach and focused on what they would normally say and not what they think they should say. The focus of the interview was to learn from participants how they would speak to a resident and why they would do it that way.

In the role play scenarios, participants demonstrated how they would negotiate typical transactions with an RACF resident (played by a trained interlocutor) such as waking a resident, offering her a cup of tea or a meal, encouraging her to take a shower and to participate in a social activity. These scenarios were chosen as they emerged from the ethnographic research conducted by both this researcher and similar studies (e.g. Grainger, 1993; Jansson & Plerjet, 2014; Marsden & Holmes, 2014)

Key findings

This study followed the work of Marsden and Holmes (2014) whose data was drawn from the New Zealand Language in the Workplace Project (de Bres, 2009). They categorised the language used in an RACF as falling into two predominant categories: *transactional* and *relational language.* Transactional language, used to negotiate a task, is largely made up of the speech act of directives including commands, instructions, requests, suggestions and offers. In personal care work, these directives are typically made in the context of a relational aspect with that resident. The language used to demonstrate that relational aspect is, unsurprisingly, referred to as *relational talk*, which appeared both interwoven with the transactional talk and on its own.

Language used to get a task done

There were no directives (the language used to get someone to do something) in the data which were not softened, mitigated or attenuated in some way. Both NES and NNES PCAs used a variety of politeness strategies to present those directives. They also delivered those directions and the task-focused language in the context of a personal relationship. The most common strategies are outlined below.

Deals, promises and incentives. The most common supporting move used to back up the negotiation of a given task was for the PCA to promise some sort of reward, provide an incentive or propose a deal or compromise. Approaches by NES and NNESs alike in negotiating with the resident to take a shower, for example, included:
- keeping it quick
- promising to help
- the incentive of being ready for a visitor
- having a reward at the end such as a doing her hair in a special way, a hand massage etc
- negotiating a delay, such as coming back in ten minutes
- 'sweetener' adjectives such as 'a nice, warm shower'.

Offering choices and making suggestions. The PCAs of both NES and NNES backgrounds were very conscious of using this strategy. They commonly offered limited choice in the context of *when* to get a task done. Other choices ranged

from getting the residents to choose the clothes they would wear through to whether or not they even did that task at all. There were no greatly discernible differences between how the NNES and NES made suggestions or offered choice. Encouraging the resident to participate in making a choice was commonly used as a distraction from their concerns or objections to the main task at hand.

Use of voice to soften or modify a directive. Strategies included:
- a soft, gentle tone to offer encouragement
- rising intonation at the end of a sentence to appear less direct and invasive
- pauses and hesitations to maintain a gentle interaction rather than issuing a constant stream of directions
- a lively pitch to appear friendly and encouraging.

Use of little words. Discourse markers included:
- 'Now', 'Right' or 'Okay' used to flag a suggestion or introduce a request
- 'Sure', 'Ah ha', 'Hmm', 'Yeah' to respond to the resident's requests and concerns and demonstrate active listening
- 'Well' or 'Mmm' to begin a negative response and avoid direct contradiction.

Minimisers and other adverbs or adjectives were commonly used to play down the imposition such as 'a little bit', 'just', 'only', 'a tiny bit', 'for a sec(ond)'.

How PCAs attended to the relational dimension in the context of care tasks

Relationship-building between the PCA and resident was identified as a priority by all PCA participants in the interviews and demonstrated in the role plays. The most common ways of attending to the relational aspect in this data by both NES and NNES PCAs are outlined below.

Establishing a connection with the resident. Many of the participants stressed the importance of getting to know the individuals they cared for by discussing the resident's family, personal interests, culture and other aspects of their personal lives as 'Jasmine' explains:

> You're dealing with a person, ... they have their own dignity, they have their own personality. So you better learn to ... what kind of personality they have, what kind of a person they lived before ...as well as their well-being, and probably their culture.

Strategies used by NES and NNES PCAs to attend to the individuality and background of the resident included:

- knocking on the door and introducing themselves as they enter to acknowledge and explain why they are entering the resident's space
- using the resident's preferred name
- paying attention to special items or photos in the resident's room to get an idea of and talk about his or her interests and key people
- knowing who and what the resident likes and dislikes in the RACF itself
- taking an interest in the resident's cultural background, including trying to learn a few words of the resident's first language (this method was demonstrated by NNES PCAs in particular)
- the PCA talking about his or her own life – showing the resident photos of their own families or pets, telling stories about their life or background.

Showing concern for the well-being of the resident. The immediate context of the resident's life, that is how they are feeling at the time, how they slept the night before, their particular concerns or pleasures were all seen as important issues to address in order to maintain the relational aspect of their care.

Strategies used by NES and NNES PCAs to attend to the well-being of the individual included open questions, active listening, use of voice, body language and discourse markers (e.g. 'Hmmm', 'Yeah', 'Uh huh') to show empathy.

Use of voice. All participants mentioned how important they believed the tone, volume, stress, intonation and pitch of their and other PCAs' voices were in communicating with residents. There has been plenty of research (e.g. Gumperz, 1999; Tannen, 2005) that discusses how important the voice is in conveying meaning. To demonstrate a relational aspect with the resident, both NES and NNESs commonly used:
- rising and falling intonation and word stress to demonstrate engagement
- pauses to avoid imposition and show respect
- variations on pitch and volume to show enthusiasm, care and engagement.

Solidarity. Many of the participants in this study pointed out that mutual respect was important in their relationships with the residents. They emphasised the need to show social equality, maintain a minimal power imbalance and to

demonstrate a sense of shared goals between themselves and the residents. This was demonstrated in the following ways:

- addressing the resident by her/his first name (when directed to by the resident or care plan)
- keeping the language informal
- using the collective pronoun 'we' to demonstrate that the PCA and resident are going to perform a task together, or to show that the PCA is going to be there to help the person she is caring for. e.g 'How about we+ VERB'

Differences demonstrated by NES and NNES PCAs to build the relational aspect

The use of *small talk* and *social talk, humour* and *endearments* (e.g. dear, love, darling) have been described in previous research (e.g. Holmes, 2007; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Yates & Major, 2015) as primary ways of showing friendliness, solidarity, demonstrating inclusion, and developing relationships in the workplace. In this study, these three aspects were where the main differences lay between the pragmatic language use of NES and NNES PCAs.

Small talk and social talk

Previous studies (e.g. Holmes & Marra, 2002; Yates & Major, 2015) have found that small talk and the jokes that accompany it are important aspects of workplace communication in Australia and New Zealand. While the NNESs in this study did use some small talk as part of a greeting routine with the residents, they spent less time than the NESs on purely relational social talk before getting into their discussion of the given task. While some of the NNES PCAs indicated that they do spend even a minute or two just chatting or making small talk, they didn't demonstrate it in the data.

Equally, the NESs were much more likely to weave humour and social talk into the transactional talk they engaged in with the resident than the NNES PCAs. This is not to say there was no social talk that went on between the NNES PCAs and the residents, but the NESs did use small talk more freely and take more risks than the NNESs.

On the other hand, some of the NNES PCAs described exchanges of language and cultural knowledge that occurred between themselves and the residents, this included the resident teaching the PCA aspects of English or the NNES PCA learning key features of a NNES resident's first language, showing a clear relational dimension. 'Mira' described it this way:

And we try to learn their language. Yeah. It's a kind of respect for elderly people. For us, we are young, you know, we have a lot of things (to learn). It's so good, actually, to learn about other people culture.

This aspect of cross-cultural exchange did not occur in the NES data.

Humour

Humour was frequently used by the NESs but it only occasionally appeared in the NNES data. Humour relies on shared background knowledge and can be very effective in creating relationships. However, it is a complex strategy for NNESs to use (Bell & Pomerantz, 2015). These higher risk strategies tend to be more culturally specific with the speaker needing to have a good knowledge of those cultural norms in a specific context to work well. 'Rosie', a NES PCA, pointed out that she uses humour frequently but she emphasised the need to 'suss out' the person she's talking to before using strategies such as endearments and humour, as they run the risk of offending the hearer.

Endearments

The use of endearments such as 'love' or 'darling' with residents can be controversial, with authors such as Backhaus (2009) describing them as condescending. However, Marsden and Holmes (2014) point out that when used in particular contexts, such as mutual use by both the resident and PCA, or if there's a genuine relationship in place, endearments can operate as positive relational indicators. While most of the NESs in this study used endearments freely in the role plays, only one of the NNESs demonstrated the use of endearments at all, although some of them reported in the interviews that they would normally use them despite their use being frowned upon in most RACFs.

Teaching drawn from this research

Predominantly, attention needs to be drawn toward the aspects of pragmatic language use discussed above. Previous research into the instruction of L2 pragmatics has pointed to the benefit of direct instruction on the use of pragmatic language in general (see Taguchi, 2015) and more specifically, in the workplace (e.g. Riddiford & Newton, 2010; Yates & Major, 2015). This research has found that many of the cultural rules and the language tools used to follow those rules need to be taught explicitly. They are not features of language we pick up simply by being exposed to them in daily life, or by asking a NES to explain these features because, as previously explained, native speakers

of any language are often unaware of all the tools we use at any one time to appear polite and establish relationships.

To this end, PCAs of NNES backgrounds would benefit from some instruction on the intercultural communication skills they can use to establish relationships with the people they are caring for and to handle delicate, or face-threatening situations. NESs would also benefit from training in this area as RACFs in Australia become increasingly multicultural workplaces with more residents and staff at every level coming from different cultural backgrounds. The potential for cross-cultural misunderstandings is only going to increase.

Pilot language training course for PCAs

In response to this research, at Farnham Street Neighbourhood House we ran a pilot course offering cross-cultural communication training as part of a pre-accredited 'Prepare for work in aged care' course for people from CALD backgrounds who want to work in aged care. Several of these students were planning to do the accredited training required for aged care work, however more than half already held a relevant aged care qualification but had not been able to find suitable employment. One of the main reasons they gave for not having found work was that they felt their English wasn't good enough.

The training tools used in this course were developed from the role plays and other data taken from predominantly naturally occurring interactions. The use of authentic conversation for training is ideal (Riddiford & Newton, 2010) as it is often the small, subtle features of language we use unconsciously, and the adjustments we make according to the context that can make all the difference as to whether we come across as polite or not. We hope, in the future, to collect more naturally occurring workplace talk to continue to develop more training materials based on these authentic interactions. This study has shown that there are many PCAs of both CALD and NES backgrounds currently working in residential aged care who can demonstrate a high level of pragmatic communication skills which would serve as excellent models for others who wish to develop their L2 pragmatic skills in the future.

Clearly, we can never teach every aspect of pragmatic language, as Gumperz (1982) pointed out: pragmatic aspects of language, in contrast to the core grammatical aspects, are subject to change over time. Equally, no course can teach a learner all the pragmatic permutations they will encounter either in the workplace or in the community. As Yates and Major (2015) pointed out, any training program that teaches these cultural communication rules and tools needs to primarily equip the participants to begin to notice where these rules and tools are at play and to continue to learn them for themselves.

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Image by Matt Collamer (p.22) from unsplash.com

Practical Matters

Using spelling knowledge as a framework to improve students' writing

By Lee Kindler and Jan Hagston

New research has challenged a number of established theories around how people learn to spell and provided us with more effective evidence-based strategies to assist learners. This article looks at some of the latest research and some practical ways to apply it.

Consider the writing sample on page 25 (Figure 1). What might be the most effective feedback that you could provide to this student? What activities might you give this student to build their knowledge of words and improve their spelling?

Drawing from current research, a number of literacy experts have advocated an approach to spelling instruction that draws on a range of linguistic skills.

This idea is summarised well by Adoniou (2014): "An effective speller draws upon the entire rich linguistic tapestry of a word to spell it correctly." And also by Daffern (2015): "Students need to become linguistic inquirers if they are to become autonomous and critical spellers."

One of the ways to encourage this holistic approach to spelling is by helping students to develop a range of spelling knowledges. Adoniou (2014), for example, identifies five different spelling knowledges that competent spellers utilise: morphological, etymological, orthographic, phonological and visual knowledge. This approach has also informed the design of spelling components in the English Learning Area of the Australian Curriculum.

These spelling knowledges are a useful framework for teachers to assess students' strengths and weaknesses in spelling and identify areas where students can improve their spelling by building their linguistic know-how.

Let's have a look at these five spelling knowledges and then think about how we might use them to provide feedback to the writer of this writing sample.

Morphemic knowledge

Morphemes are the smallest meaningful linguistic units of a word. They include base words, suffixes and prefixes and indicate changes in verb tense, possession and plurality. For example, the word 'reacted' has three morphemes. The prefix, 're-' meaning to repeat, withdraw or return, the base word 'act', and the suffix '-ed' which makes the word past tense.

While letter-to-sound correspondences can be tricky in English (for example the long 'e' sound can be made by the letters ea, ee, ie, ei, e, ey, or y), morphemes are much more consistent. Understanding how a prefix or suffix can change the meaning of a word can be a powerful tool. A good example is the suffix '-ed' which can have the sounds /id/ as in 'blasted', /d/ as in 'seemed' or /t/ as in 'jumped'. Knowing that the suffix '-ed' makes a word past tense can eliminate errors made by sounding out.

Etymological knowledge

English has adopted spelling patterns from a range of languages including French, German, Latin, and Greek and words with similar origins often can have similar spelling patterns. Understanding etymology can help students make generalisations, identify the meaning of word roots and account for silent letters and irregular spellings.

Phonological knowledge

Phonological knowledge relates to the sounds of language and letter-sound relationships (phonics). It includes the ability to hear and manipulate individual phonemes

(phonemic awareness) as well as the knowledge of the different ways that letters go together to make different sounds. It also includes knowing how to chunk parts of words into sound segments.

While phonics is a valuable tool for students, there are twenty-six letters and forty-four sounds in English so knowing which letters or letter combinations make which sounds can be difficult. Only about 50% of all words can be spelled using phonological knowledge (Devonshire, Morris, & Fluck, 2013) so other strategies need to be used for some types of words.

Orthographic knowledge
Orthographic knowledge includes an understanding of which letter combinations are possible, how letters are used in particular ways and other spelling conventions. For example, when you add a suffix that starts with 'e' (-ed, -er, -es, -est) to a word that ends in 'y', change the 'y' to an 'i'. There is a strong overlap with this knowledge and phonological, morphemic and etymological knowledge.

Visual knowledge
Visual knowledge involves thinking about whether a word looks right – that is, observing, memorising and recalling the appearance of words or parts of words.

Using visual knowledge can include memorising a word as a pattern, letter sequence, or shape, or remembering part of a word and using other strategies to spell the other parts. It also involves checking that a word 'looks right' after it is written.

Applying the spelling knowledges
Let's look at the example of work above using the framework of these five spelling knowledges. When you are working with a student you will gain a more comprehensive understanding of the spelling strategies they use by looking at multiple pieces of work and discussing with them the strategies they use, including for words that are spelled correctly.

Phonological knowledge
The student is strongly reliant on phonological knowledge, which is shown in the spelling of the words 'people' (peeple) 'dinner' (dina), 'sausages' (sosages), 'every' (evry), 'salad' (salid), 'seemed' (seemd), 'photographs' (photigrafs). They show an ability to analyse the sounds in words correctly and a good understanding of sound-letter relationships.
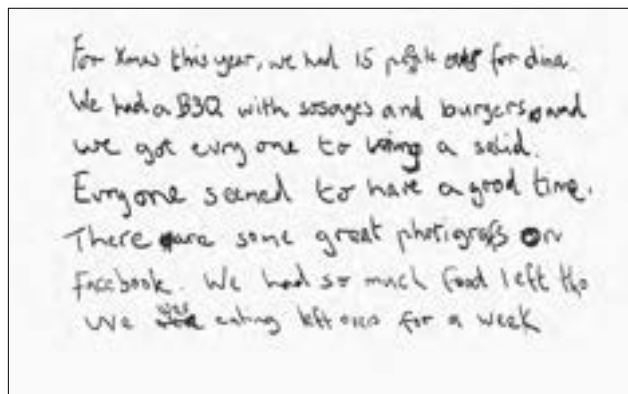

Figure 1

However, they have not always chosen the correct letter combinations, such as in 'though' (tho).

There are letters in these words that we can't hear and sounds that follow irregular patterns, so the student could benefit from using other types of spelling knowledge alongside their phonological knowledge.

Orthographic knowledge
The student has shown knowledge in this area, representing sounds in letter combinations that are correct.

Morphemic knowledge
The student could benefit from building morphemic knowledge. There are several examples where this could have helped to spell words correctly:
- 'dinner' (dina) – it would be useful to know that dinner is related to the word dine. The student could then add the suffix '-er'. *This is a tricky one because 'diner' is very close and often confused with 'dinner'.* The student may be able to add their orthographic knowledge, knowing that when there is a short vowel before the consonant, the consonant is doubled. Alternatively, the student might use phonographic knowledge and make an analogy with rhyming words like 'winner', 'sinner' and 'beginner'.
- 'everyone' (evry one) – identifying the base word 'ever' would be useful here and then adding the suffix 'y'. The student would also benefit from knowing that words can be put together to make compound words.
- 'seemed' (seemd) – again, it would be useful for the student to find the morphemes in the word (the base word 'seem' and the suffix '-ed'). It is important for the student to know that the suffix '-ed' makes a word past tense.

Etymological knowledge

The student could have benefited from using etymological knowledge with these words:

- 'salad' (salid) – this word can't be spelled using only phonological knowledge. Etymological knowledge might help to spell it correctly. It comes from the French word 'salade' and there are lots of other English words that come from French that have this ending like 'esplanade', 'charade', 'facade', 'balustrade'. *The student will need to remember to drop the 'e'.*
- 'photographs' (photigrafs) – this word has the Greek roots 'photo' meaning light and 'graph' meaning to draw or write. Knowing this might help students to make connections with other words with the same roots and pay attention to the two morphemes in the word.

Visual knowledge

There are some frequently used words in this writing sample that are spelled incorrectly e.g. 'people' (peeple), 'though' (tho) and 'were' (wer). Memorisation techniques that build visual knowledge could be used to spell these words correctly. While there are limitations to using only visual knowledge, forming a memory-bank of frequently used words will improve fluency.

What learning activities would this student benefit from?

In the writing sample, the student has shown that they could improve their spelling by building their morphological and etymological knowledge. Research shows that adult literacy learners often have morphological knowledge but may need assistance to apply it when they are producing texts (Binder et al., 2015). Some activities that could help to do this might include:

- introducing the concepts of prefixes, base words and suffixes
- investigating how words can be built from base words using prefixes and suffixes
- investigating sounds that '-ed' can make and looking at how this suffix changes the meaning of a word
- using base words to make compound words
- identifying spelling rules that can be used when joining morphemes
- observing the spelling patterns of words from different origins
- investigating everyday words that have Greek and Latin roots
- finding the meaning of word roots.

Using visual knowledge and memorisation strategies might also help to build the student's recall of frequently used words. These could include:

- using the 'Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check' technique
- repeated use of the words
- including the words in games
- using a mnemonic for the tricky letters in a word e.g. people eat oranges for the word 'people'
- overenunciation e.g. saying "p-e-o-ple" when spelling the word.

These ideas are taken from a very small writing sample and to get a better understanding of student needs, it would be best to look at a range of their work. It is also crucial to engage in discussions with students about the strategies and types of spelling knowledge they are using.

The ideas presented in this article are taken from the book Spelling – a strategic approach *developed by Lee and Jan and which is available through Multifangled Publications.*

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Jan Hagston has broad education experience having worked in secondary schools, TAFE institutions, adult and community education providers, universities and workplace programs undertaking teaching, product development, professional training and development and research. Much of this work has been in adult literacy. Jan can be contacted at jan@multifangled.com.au

In developing *Spelling – a strategic approach*, Lee and Jan have attempted to marry their knowledge of educational theory and research with instructional design skills to produce a user-friendly evidence-based resource.

Image by Jason Leung (p.26) from unsplash.com

Show me the money

By Marc Brierty

The challenge: combine a number of Level III and IV assessment modules into one assessment task that runs over a semester. The solution: Project Based Learning

'Show me the money' is a unit based on PBL (Project Based Learning) principles in which pairs of students are assigned to research one side of an Australian banknote; then two pairs assigned to the same banknote combine to present their findings to the class. The unit enables students to successfully complete a number of EAL (English as an Additional Language) Framework Curriculum units simultaneously. It is an example of how teachers can incorporate theme-based project activities into their learning programs.

The curriculum and real-life context

The oral presentation modules in Certificates III and IV in EAL (Further Study) are compulsory core units that students normally complete in Semester 1 each year. The modules are:

- VU21499 Give straightforward oral presentations for further study (Cert III)
- VU21508 Give complex presentations for further study (Cert IV)
- VU21510 Take notes from complex aural texts for further study (Cert IV)
- VU21503 Listen and take notes for research (Cert III)
- VU21473 Investigate Australian art and culture (Cert III)

(State of Victoria, 2014)

The emphasis is on establishing an active group-learning environment and providing a springboard from which to develop the key employability skills of teamwork, planning, organising, communication, self-management and computer research. Realia – Australian banknotes and coins – are used in class to stimulate interest and maintain authenticity. The activity also covers elements of Australian Art, Culture and History, numeracy and Workplace Integrated Learning.

Students are encouraged to go beyond the classroom into their communities, to their families and friends. The project gives them a topic of everyday interest to talk about with native speakers and this gives them confidence in conversation that they frequently lack.

There are so many examples of idioms, proverbs, clichés, and jargon about money to keep conversation flowing! Furthermore, students have commented that they have felt proud to be able to teach their family and friends about the famous people on Australian currency.

Planning and delivery

Students are given prompts to guide their research, such as finding out the reason the person on the banknote is famous, how the symbols and artwork on the banknote relate to the person featured and what the security features of the banknote are. The Reserve Bank of Australia page www. banknotes.rba.gov.au/banknote-features/ is a great place for students to start. They are also encouraged to give their own opinions about what was the most interesting aspect of their research subject's life and to be prepared to answer questions from classmates about their research.

Students are given clear guidelines about presentation length and format (no more than ten slides and a maximum of twelve minutes presentation time; use bullet points; include a bibliography) and reminded to practice their presentation in their group of four before the formal presentation. They are also given some useful phrases for introducing and linking parts of their presentation (opening, giving background information, referring to slides, moving on, giving examples, concluding). During the presentations, audience members are given a task page to provide feedback on content, body language, eye contact and voice modulation and to record what they learnt and questions they could ask.

The assessment activity incorporates speaking, listening, reading, writing and researching. Once it is established, the project runs on a weekly basis throughout the semester. Students learn that Melbourne is the home of plastic notes (known formally as polymer notes) and appreciate that money really does make the world go round and is a theme that permeates so many facets of life.

Making PBL work

PBL has strong theoretical and practical foundations, and there are a number of essential elements that should be followed to ensure the success of the project and maximize student learning. Larmer and Mergendoller (2015) point out that teachers and students need a challenging problem or question that will be meaningful for students. Inquiry needs to be sustained and not just 'looking something up' in a book or online. Projects need to include different information sources, mixing the traditional ideas of research with field-based interviews with experts and users. The authors explain that PBL needs to be authentic as this increases student learning and motivation.

Teachers and students need to find projects that involve the use of real world processes, tasks and tools. In this way, a project can speak to the students' concerns, interests, cultures identities and issues in their lives. The student voice and choice creates a sense of ownership and ultimately this motivates students to go further. PBL should also involve reflection which needs to go on throughout the process of the project. This is possible both formally and informally as part of the setting up phase, the assessment phase and the final debriefing phase between students and teachers. A planning calendar and details need to be carefully discussed so that all students are fully aware when milestone dates need to be met.

From the beginning of a project students need to be informed clearly about how the assessment will take place between the learner and the teacher. Students will need to be directed on how to give and receive constructive feedback from fellow classmates as well as the teacher involved, and to be aware that self-assessment is a valuable tool for reflection and revision. This also helps students to evaluate the results of their learning.

PBL projects also lend themselves to being exhibited in the school community and with the public at large. Projects displayed in hallways and on display boards in

'STRAYA CASH', the invention of Australian artist Aaron Tyler, could be used to prompt further discussion about Australian culture and humour. View at www.aarontyler.com.au

schools share the fruits of learning and build a greater understanding of PBL. Other students, teachers, administrators and members of the public have the opportunity to see the work that is being done and this opens up new conversations among the learning community as well as providing models of acceptable standards of work.

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Open Forum

Sharing museum practice with adult learners

By Liz Suda

When we think of the role of museums, the words 'heritage' and 'learning' invariably appear. The learning part of museums usually relates to the content of the museums' collections and the stories told through exhibitions, websites and seminars. Museums pride themselves in creating experiences that inspire awe and wonder and communicate important information. The learning that happens in museums is generally associated with the acquisition and consumption of knowledge through visiting an institution and experiencing its collections or temporary programs *in-situ*. Adult learners, in particular, are keen to absorb the knowledge that is presented in museum exhibitions and appreciate the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the collections of a respected cultural institution. The concepts and prior work that have led to the creation of museum experiences, however, are not often considered as part of the learning process to be shared.

Museum practitioners, just like adult educators, are readily interested in the 'technical' aspects of their work, the theory and the practice, and regularly gather to compare and share that knowledge across their professional community. Rarely would we see, however, museum practitioners engaging in shared professional learning with educators from the adult learning field, even though learning is central to the role of the museum, even though the key audiences in museums are education groups and families. I think there are many areas of potential cross fertilisation that could occur between museums and the adult education field and would like to relate an account of how such cross fertilisation occurred in a project undertaken with a Melbourne primary school to suggest a model of what might be possible.

A museological approach to learning

Working with a local primary school in Melbourne, museum staff assisted young learners to acquire the concepts, skills and content that would enable them to create, and open to the public (for a short while), a museum devoted to their own school and surrounding community. In 2016, the Museums and Galleries National Awards (MAGNAs) recognised the Building Our School Museum project, with an award for interpretation, learning and audience engagement. In 2017, Museum Victoria was invited to present this project to The Best in Heritage conference held annually in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Of the forty-three presentations from twenty-five countries, this project was distinctive because of the innovative approach evident in facilitating the students' interaction with the museum as a site for learning about concepts of design and interpretation of knowledge as well as its final presentation. The presentation at Dubrovnik then attracted interest back in Australia with requests for more information (Suda 2017). Such interest in the project suggests the approach has merit and is worthy of further exposure and discussion.

With the support of experienced museum practitioners, young learners were able to deconstruct museum practices and apply these to their own inquiries. The aim of such an approach was not necessarily to create the museum workers of the future, but rather to use museum practices as an alternative pedagogical approach for learning within the classroom environment of a school, an approach which had students working on a collaborative project that required a broad range of cross disciplinary skills and knowledge.

How might museums support the learning of adults in the community and more formal settings? Is there a place for adult learners to apply museological approaches, such as those used with this primary school, in their own learning? Might adult educators adapt museological approaches as a pedagogical model to enhance the practice of their classrooms?

The project

In 2015, after a year of research and development, 120 Year 3 and 4 students from Princes Hill Primary School (PHPS)

installed their PHPS Museum as a pop-up at Melbourne Museum for two days to seek feedback from museum professionals. This was crucial to realising early ideas in a professional environment and gaining some critical reflection in that context. It led on to the end product – The Princes Hill Primary School Museum – which was realised through five classrooms at the school being transformed into a museum (complete with specialised galleries). The final outcome was a testament to the value of sharing museological practices with young learners.

As with many projects, the evolution of this idea was both serendipitous and iterative, building on the good will and enthusiasm of a creative primary school teacher, an innovative museum educator, and previous initiatives undertaken by the museum education team. The Year 3 and 4 teachers at PHPS posed a big question for their students to explore as their inquiry question for the year: *What makes us part of the community?*

The students brainstormed this question over a number of lessons. The concept of museums as institutions that are involved in cultural production and preservation emerged from this inquiry. For the students to be able to test their theories about what museums are and what they do, the learning process required them to have close contact with museums and the people who work in them. From those first contacts, a desire to replicate the practices of the museum in curating and presenting knowledge took shape.

The young students visited each of the three museums of Museum Victoria – Melbourne Museum, Immigration Museum and Scienceworks – to gain an understanding of how Museum Victoria's institutions tell the stories of their world, ranging from the sciences to the humanities, and from technological innovation to the deep knowledge systems of the First Peoples of Australia. Cameron Hocking, then Museum Victoria Digital Education Co-ordinator, supported the school on site and via Google hangouts. Princes Hill Primary School had visits from architects to talk about the process of building design, and an exhibition designer from Museum Victoria to talk about his approach to visual storytelling.

The students went out into the community and looked at the cultural organisations in their local area; they researched other museums in the world through Google Cultural Institute; and they began to think about what they wanted to research in their own learning teams. Each

group identified an aspect that they wanted to explore in their community: topics as diverse as technology, plants, minerals and rocks, parks, sports, architecture, Italian culture, fashion, the arts, conservation, and the history of their school. Each topic finally selected was based on the interest and aptitude of the students.

The students constructed displays to tell the stories gained through their research, using some of the ideas they had studied in other museums. Before long, they wanted to know what museum people might think of their creations, and so the idea of a pop-up museum was conceived.

To facilitate this idea, the 120 students were divided into two groups, with each research team responsible for carrying their precious cargo on a tram-ride to Melbourne Museum. Two pop-up museums were then created over consecutive days. Many museum staff engaged deeply and critically with the students' ideas and provided constructive written feedback on the sheets provided by the student curators. The generous support of museum staff encouraged the students to tackle a second draft of their ideas.

Classroom teacher Melinda Cashen reported:

> It was such an authentic experience for the children. They have built up a great relationship with the museum over the year and they felt that the effort they have put into building their own exhibits was worthwhile and valued. They really appreciated the feedback they received, making changes to their exhibits when they returned to school.

The work of museum scientists, historians, designers, creative producers and curators provides a model of cross-disciplinary collaboration that few organisations can offer. As a workplace, Museum Victoria is home to a diversity of job descriptions that range from the practical and creative to the scholarly. It has the potential to model significant vocational skills and make connections to project-based learning skills currently in favour in schools.

Engaging adult learners

One of the participants at the Best in Heritage conference in Dubrovnik in September asked: 'How can such an approach be leveraged into a more sustainable and broadly applicable approach to learning in museums?' A good question!

It's not possible here to fully explore answers to this question, except to affirm that there are many ways in which museums can usefully share their practices with learners.

Over the years Museum Victoria has attempted to do this through a number of channels: providing online resources for how to use objects in the history classroom (Small Object, Big Story); providing 'expert' videos (Making History) to guide classroom practice; and by making museum collections available online as a general resource for learning. More recently we have explored approaches that engage students in gathering stories for museum research projects in the Australian Research Council funded Invisible Farmers Project, with student works being presented on display in the museum alongside museum-curated exhibits.

I can well imagine engaging adult learners in research projects that extend their language and literacy skills as well as a whole range of other skills, including critical and creative thinking, team work, problem solving, project planning and design, communication skills and so forth. It might not be possible to build a museum that opens to the public, but it is certainly possible to introduce students to the role that objects can play in making meaning, telling stories and presenting information. The three-dimensional approach employed in museum exhibitions offers an experiential approach to the acquisition of knowledge which lends itself very well to the diversity of adult learners we might encounter.

Taking students out of the classroom and into the community to enhance their life experience and develop knowledge and skills is essential to making their learning relevant to participation in work and the broader community. Museums have a lot to offer in this regard. Deconstructing the practices and approaches used in the museum provides students with a whole new set of tools with which to extend their learning. Any kind of project based learning engages students in 'real work' and develops a whole range of skills, including language and literacy. This is perhaps the most important lesson to learn from the Princes Hill Primary School and Museum Victoria project.

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Beside the Whiteboard

Seeing the bigger picture

An interview with Kathrin Colgan

Kathrin Colgan was awarded the Excellence in Language, Literacy and Numeracy Practice Award at the Australian Training Awards in November 2017. The award recognises innovation and excellence by an individual involved in improving language, literacy and numeracy skills in an educational, community or workplace context. We asked Kathrin to tell us about the path that led to her success and to share some of her experience.

I am originally a secondary Drama and Dance teacher.

After graduating, I found it hard to find a teaching job that had the right fit for me. I applied for the JET (Japan Exchange Teachers) program and was posted to an amazing high school teaching their conversational English subject. I stayed for three years and loved teaching English so much I did my Masters in Education (TESOL) through Deakin University mostly while I was in Japan. When I returned to Australia I looked in the VET sector for English teaching work. I started as a sessional teacher and worked my way in to contracts and ongoing positions by saying yes to almost every idea and project that was offered to me. I've worked in the workplace as an LLN (Language Literacy and Numeracy) teacher and coordinator, in literacy youth classes, within industry, in independent learning centres and in rural and international locations. I'm currently an EAL (English as an Additional Language) teacher at Chisholm Institute.

The Australian Training Awards have been a wonderful, career affirming experience for me.

The thing about the ATA is that it's direct entry. You don't have to go through your State awards and you don't have to be nominated by anyone. I was nominated by peers in my department, so it was really affirming that someone would do that for me but you can nominate yourself. I think that's fantastic because in our industry a lot of us are casual or sessional workers, often working between different places and different providers so you might be the only one who knows what kind of teacher you are and how good you are.

When I became the nominee, it got me thinking about how I could contribute to the industry as a whole. I realised I should start thinking about the bigger picture so I joined VALBEC and I went to conferences and gave presentations. I used to see people doing presentations at conferences and think, 'Why can't I do that?' So being nominated and becoming a finalist was a good boost for me to get the confidence to go out there and do those things.

Applying for an ATA is also a way for people to document and think about what they've achieved so far in their career. EAL and literacy teachers are very flexible, we take on many different kinds of roles all the time and sometimes we forget about what we've done, what we've achieved and it's really incredible what we do. So I just think it's a great way to give yourself a little pat on the back and even if you don't become a finalist it means you sit down and think about what you've done and congratulate yourself.

The application process took a long time because we had to collect evidence of outcomes and decide what to use.

You have to demonstrate that you have shown leadership, that you collaborate, and that you're able to share things with other teachers. I had to really think about all the projects that I had done and what would be the most relevant.

In 2016 we won a grant to do a technology showcase. I put that in the application to highlight that I like to see projects through from the beginning to the end. I also talked about my WELL (Workplace English Language and Literacy) projects to show that I had skills outside the EAL classroom. Being in the workplace is very different to working in a TAFE. You need to be very flexible and you need to have great negotiation skills to be able to talk to everyone from the cleaner all the way up to the boss, to the line supervisor, to the union rep.

Once the application was in we just had to sit and wait. I hadn't heard anything for a long time, then one day I was home with my kids having a particularly bad day and they called me and told me I was a finalist. I burst into tears! After that it was really a waiting game for Canberra where I had an interview and finally the excitement of the night. It was absolutely terrific.

One of the biggest changes I've seen in my career is the impact of information and communication technology.
I was teaching a class full of Afghani boys between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five; they all had phones and they would be looking at them all the time. That started my journey recently of using the phone more in class. I had to think about what the students do with the phone rather than what I think they should be doing with it. With that group it was things like looking up YouTube videos and fast-paced quizzes like Kahoot.

Edmodo is another useful ICT tool; it's like a Facebook for your classroom. My Certificate IV Further Studies class was doing a goal-setting unit focussing on study. I wanted to engage them out of class because even though they're great students, none of them do homework. So I sent them a message on Edmodo at six o'clock at night saying, 'OK everyone, I want you to go and take a picture of where you study and send it back on Edmodo so we can all see it.' Then the next day in class we could look at their pictures and ask 'Is this a good place to study?', 'Have you got that set up well?' It was a really good organic activity that came out of using Edmodo. I don't use just one thing; it's what's going to fit with the students.

As a teacher you shouldn't have an expectation that something you've found is going to work straight away.
The students need to be prepared for that as well. Students like things to be instant and if it's not, there's suddenly chaos in your room. And then there's all the other things like somebody doesn't have a phone or someone's got the wrong device or there's not enough broadband in the place where you're working. One of the main things is that you use technology with an expectation of having a Plan B. You've got to make sure that things don't go awry just because one thing doesn't work.

In Japan I learned that team teaching can be the most rewarding aspect of teaching.
It really developed my team work, humility and problem solving skills. I had to teach with another teacher because the whole point of the program was to support the local teachers to use English in spoken communication. I found that it was such good professional development for me and the other teacher to sit down and talk about what we were going to do. It's really good to sit down and reflect on what has worked in the past and plan for what you're going to do next and you really *have* to do that when you're team teaching.

It was a great way to get to know someone else and get some perspective on the way they teach that might be different from you but just as effective. You also build confidence getting up there and sharing the space with someone else and knowing that the class is going to work with that person.

Teachers need to be given the opportunity to sit back and think about the bigger picture.
Sessional teachers are running from one to two to maybe three places to teach so it's really hard to think beyond the immediate. The casualisation of the industry makes it very intense for sessional teachers but it's also intense for people with contracts because they have extra duties on top of their teaching. So there are a lot of issues in regard to how we can let people be innovative about what they do.

You can get very stressed about things that happen but when you get into the classroom you should be able to enjoy it. Slow the pace down and think about what you're doing with the students and let them guide you.

Listen to what they want and that takes the pressure off as well. It can be very cyclical and you just have to be wise about what to get stressed about and what not to get stressed about. But that's very hard for people who don't have ongoing jobs. I was a sessional for a long time, trying really hard to get my job, I know what it's like.

The more you teach the more you realise that your lessons need to be about the students and what they need to know to feel seen, heard and successful.
You have to drill down and focus on what they need to know the language for and try to put that in a context that's going to be a good experience for them.

I was teaching in Pakenham when a Sudanese gentleman came into my class who had only been in Australia for three weeks after being in a refugee camp in Kenya for ten years. When he came in to see me we started talking and when I looked at his writing I just couldn't believe how good it was. He wanted to do nursing so much that when he was in the camp he taught himself first aid. He worked closely with the workers at the camp so he could go and help people with their first aid and he taught himself English.

So I totally changed what I was teaching to help him get into nursing. I got him practice tests for VET Assess and the OET (Occupational English Test) to give him a feeling for what those tests were like and we did practice interviews. He got into nursing after only being in Australia for about eight weeks. I don't take credit for his skills because that's all on him but I was just glad that I was there to guide him through to the next step of what he wanted to do.

People coming to LLN teaching with other skills shouldn't be scared to use those skills as part of what they do.
I'd come from a background of theatre which is all about scrounging for things and making your own luck. When I finished high school I started a production company with a group of friends. We'd make clothes and sell them at Camberwell Market to raise enough money to put on

our productions in the Fringe Festival. We'd make our own costumes and do our own printing. We learnt all about being self-sufficient but beyond that it was also thinking about what people want. I really developed my head for business thinking about who is going to come and see you do this and why. When you come to do EAL teaching it's the same thing. It's all about being innovative, trying something new, doing something differently, doing it with confidence and not thinking about failing. In theatre you're always criticized by the director and by the people who come and see it and you have to take it on the chin and try to change and grow. That's the way I approach what I do; there's nothing wrong with failing.

I'm always thinking of the things we could do and the way we could do things differently or change things because I'm a person who really likes change, I don't like things to stay the same. I think that's why I took on ICT so quickly because it was something new that made life a little bit more exciting for me as a teacher.

If you would like to nominate yourself or a colleague for an Australian Training Award, visit https://www.australiantrainingawards.gov.au/

Kathrin was interviewed by Fine Print editor, Deryn Mansell

Images courtesy of Chisholm Institute and the Australian Training Awards

What's Out There

Ways of Being in Teaching: Conversations and Reflections

Edited by Sean Wiebe, Ellyn Lyle, Peter R. Wright, Kimberly Dark, Mitchell McLarnon and Liz Day

Reviewed by Lynne Matheson

We carry so much of ourselves into the classroom. While the stories differ, there is unity in sharing them, community in dialogue about them, and possibilities that are always present with them (p. vii).

In twelve chapters this new collection from Sense Publishers draws together a group of contributors who share with great compassion what is the essence of their being as teachers. They come from a range of contexts and from across several continents, including Australia. The tone of the writing is refreshingly honest and there is no pontification about the right way of teaching, but rather insightful, and at times frank, reflections about their teaching journey.

It is encouraging that this collection comes from a firm belief in 'celebrating humanness' in teaching and the spirit of vocation in teaching, as a counter perspective to the corporatisation of education. The writing covers personal experiences that expose the essential nature of teaching. In the various chapters there are elements of self-love and acceptance; the importance of relationships; bringing out the best in ourselves; and appreciation of how dialogue can bring about new ways of being and doing.

The editors contend that by sharing and listening to each other's stories, there is an intrinsic benefit of developing empathy and understanding in relational spaces, whether the classroom or the staffroom, or indeed, in life. The reader can enter into a conversation with the various contributors, with each individual voice speaking with authenticity and heart.

The editors work from a perspective based on Freire's notions of dialogue and praxis underpinned by other contemporary thinkers such as William Pinar and bell hooks. They invite the reader to enter into scholarly conversation as a means to explore one's own identity and practices as a teacher. It is one of those collections that you can read in any order, dip into, read and reread at leisure.

In the chapter *Ways of being, belonging and becoming,* Peter R. Wright reflects on his experiences with an arts-based program for young people in a remote region of Western Australia. He presents insights into how more creative ways of being in teaching point to how *possibility thinking* can be enhanced for learning that can have wider social and cultural reach.

He, along with some of the other writers, contends that, 'all good pedagogy depends on relationship before anything'. Whether it is in the context of a university with trainee teachers or with young students, the role of the teacher is critical in creating a safe space for learning. A fellow Australian contributor, Helen Ferrara, in the chapter titled *Authentic teaching,* presents a case for teachers to recognise in themselves when they are being genuine, to allow for their own inherent curiosity and creativity to thrive with their students and to seek a truly authentic style of teaching.

John J. Guiney Yallop and Carmen Shields in the chapter, *The art of teaching rests in connection,* address questions about the 'milieu' of the classroom using poetry and letters. They describe how instrumental the teacher is in creating a classroom space for learning that is meaningful and has lasting impact. Honouring the importance of establishing personal connections and building relationships and the overarching premise of the humanity of teaching are evident in their writing.

In the final chapter, *A teacher's credo,* Carl Leggo takes an alphabetic approach to construct his credo and offer words of advice. This comes from years of experience and could be used as the basis of an individual or a group activity to reflect on valuable lessons from learning and teaching and, more broadly, for life.
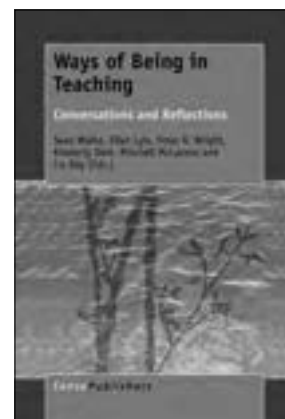
The editors express their intention 'that this book invites you to reflect critically on your identity and what it means to your teaching self'. This is a collection worthy of sharing with colleagues and perhaps using as a starting point for individual reflective practice to further develop relationships and connections between who we are when we teach and who we are becoming.

Available from www.sensepublishers.com

Lynne Matheson has worked in education and professional development for many years. She currently works at Melbourne Polytechnic as a Learning and Development consultant. She is a member of the VALBEC committee.

The Sea: in the sea, on the sea, at the seaside

By Hazel Davidson with illustrations by Dorothy Court

Reviewed by Marj Sjostrom

I have always found the reading materials by Sugarbag on Damper Publishing very effective in the classroom so I was pleased to see that they have brought out another package (reader, workbook and CD). *The Sea: in the sea, on the sea, at the seaside* (2017) didn't disappoint and the stories provided timely discussion just before the summer break and the beginning of peak beach-going season. As described on the publisher's website the new package '…aims to encourage students to enjoy the beach and surf safely. It shows interesting sea creatures and also alerts students to some of the dangers and how to avoid them'.

The package consists of:
1. A reader with sea-themed stories, each written at what are described as 'easy', 'medium' and 'hard' levels. The texts deal with such things as swimming between the flags and attracting help in the surf; poisonous sea creatures and advice on basic first aid; and interesting information about sea creatures, birds and coral reefs.
2. A CD of the stories read by an experienced Australian EAL teacher (Lyndal Reid). This makes it easy to provide detailed listening activities in the classroom, or for individual 'read-along' practice at home. There are coloured images which can be used as prints or slides to introduce the texts or stimulate discussion and also a song.

3. A workbook to accompany the texts with such things as word searches for vocabulary reinforcement, spelling, grammar, crosswords, comprehension exercises, phonics and pronunciation, writing and detailed listening. These are also graded for difficulty according to the levels of the texts and are accompanied by suggested answers. The workbook also includes additional background information on the topics for the teacher.

My Certificate I in General Education for Adults (Introductory) class found this resource to be interesting, informative and fun. It was the perfect topic for them as there were many stories about drownings and people getting hurt when walking along the beach. One of my students didn't know what to do when her child was stung at the beach.

We brainstormed the topic and found the students knew lots about the fun at the beach but very little about the various safety issues connected with going to the beach. We read the 'Easy' section of the book together and then we

read it again and discussed each section. From the outset the students were involved, asking questions, clarifying information and giving their opinions of Australian beaches. The pictures aided student understanding of many of the words.

We also listened to the text to help students practice reading and pronunciation. They enjoyed the challenge of listening to the story and filling in the missing words.

The students thoroughly enjoyed singing the song (to the tune of Jingle Bells) over and over using the CD. They were amazed how many words from the song were in the story. By the end of this topic, they were able to recognise and read the words in the song throughout the story.

The students enjoyed the variety of exercises in the kit as these reinforced their knowledge. They completed the multiple choice, opposites, missing letters, the word searches and the 'yes/no' questions. I found I could easily add questions to complete a CGEA task.

For me this resource was great as it allowed me to give appropriate work to my more advanced students without doing hours of extra preparation; the work was all in the workbook. Three of my advanced students read the 'Medium' level of the book which they enjoyed and then they completed three exercises from the workbook, which was quite challenging for them, but they were so proud when they completed the exercises.

This resource also opened my students' eyes to the various dangers at the beach, how they could help someone by using CPR and the role of the lifesavers. As a result, they requested to learn CPR in 2018 and this has been added to my program.

This resource is very user-friendly and a great help especially for teachers who have multi-levels in their classroom. Teachers can decide to use all the exercises in the workbook or just use some of them. It gives teachers a variety of ideas to do with texts which can be built on if needed. It also includes background information to increase teachers' understanding of the topic before they read the book.

The only niggling point was the word 'seaside' which my students didn't understand. However, this was easily overcome as we used 'beach' instead.

This is a great resource and an excellent addition to all our libraries.

The Sea: in the sea, on the sea, at the seaside is published by Sugarbag on Damper Publishing.

Marj Sjostrom has worked in the field of adult language and literacy as a teacher and teacher educator and mentor at Keysborough Learning Centre for many years. She was the Learn Local Practitioner of the year in 2016 and currently teaches Certificate I in General Education for Adults (Introductory).

What's the Law? Australian Law for New Arrivals produced by Victorian Legal Aid

Reviewed by Debbie Mpisi

This terrific free resource, which deals with common legal issues in Australian life, has been designed for teaching newly arrived migrants about Australian law. It is also aimed at adult EAL (English as an additional language) learners undertaking CSWE (Certificate in Spoken and Written English) Level 2.

The education kit includes:
- a DVD containing fourteen photo stories in basic English
- topics such as renting a house, family issues, dealing with fines, discrimination and Centrelink
- information for educators about how to use the kit, how to deal with legal questions, and how to assist learners to get free legal advice
- learner activity sheets for each story to test comprehension and reinforce key messages in the stories
- educator answer sheets for each story, a complete script of the story, and key legal messages.

Presentation of the material

The font used in this resource is very clear and easy to read. Sufficient space has been provided to allow students to write their responses and the layout is consistent throughout the kit. The tasks are presented in a logical order.

The worksheets could have been made more visually appealing by adding a few graphics or pictures to engage the EAL learner and enhance the learning experience. There is also a lot of material on any given page. The text is quite dense and consequently can be quite daunting for an EAL learner to read. However, for more advanced leaners and those with a high educational background from other countries, this would not be an obstacle.

The language used in this resource is quite complex for EAL learners but it can be modified by the educator according to the learners' proficiency. It is, however, authentic. This is the language that learners will encounter in the real world. For example when renting a house they will encounter words such as 'bond', 'lease' and 'condition report'.

Testing the resource

The topic of 'Renting' was covered in my CSWE Level 1 class when students were close to completing the certificate.

This topic was taught over several lessons at a very slow pace to ensure that learners were adequately prepared to proceed in a step-by-step way to cover the content. Below, I describe how I went about introducing the topic.

Pre-teaching activities

We discussed different types of houses/homes (flats, apartments, town houses etc.) and learners described where they lived. We then added adjectives to the vocabulary that we had identified (*small* bathroom, *old/new* bathroom, *modern* kitchen etc.). Learners listened to conversations and completed several exercises on descriptions of houses. They used the newly acquired language to give a spoken description of their homes and finally wrote a description of their homes.

Instructions were also incorporated in this unit of work. Learners gave spoken directions to where they live in relation to public transport, shops and parks. Prepositions of location were used to describe where they live.

Teaching activities

After sharing prior knowledge about the topic, learners conducted a class survey about rental experiences and discussed their results. They looked at properties advertised for lease, compared prices and calculated the monthly rent payable. Relevant vocabulary (lease, bond, property etc.) was pre-taught.

The class watched the DVD on renting and completed the activity sheets, which consisted of comprehension questions, a matching activity, true or false statements, and ordering sentences to check for understanding. The

key messages were reinforced and learners were given information about where to go for free assistance if needed. We then went on an excursion to the Legal Aid offices to see where legal assistance can be obtained and to overcome any fears they might have about the legal environment.

Implications for teaching

By linking the acquisition of new vocabulary with practical everyday life problems that learners of EAL encounter when coming to Australia, the kit offers a great incentive for learning and remembering. Learners typically see this information, the new vocabulary and the new expressions as relevant to their everyday life needs. Therefore, they are more motivated to learn, understand and remember.

The kit also has several important social-learning features that make it especially useful to new arrivals. Specifically, for people who come from countries where authority cannot be challenged and where the rule of law is weak, contact with the legal system is often feared

and is associated with punishment, futility or even oppression. For such people it is vital to understand that in Australia they have recourse to legal aid, they have rights and such rights are respected and protected. My personal experience as a victim of Apartheid in South Africa has made me particularly aware of the importance of such education and perception. Thus, I feel passionate about this new method of both social and linguistic education. I recommend its use in the classroom as a tool to facilitate the learning of English and also as a means of assisting new arrivals with integration into our society.

The education kit is available at http://www.legalaid.vic. gov.au/find-legal-answers/free-publications-and-resources/ whats-law-australian-law-for-new-arrivals-education-kit

Debbie Mpisi is an experienced and passionate EAL teacher who works at Olympic Adult Education. She enjoys creating and discovering innovative ways of imparting the English language to learners.

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