Appropriate Topic Content

Alan Williams
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Learning to live in Australia

Appropriate topic content project teaching materials

The ideas
These teaching ideas and materials were developed by teachers participating in two AMEP Research Centre research projects conducted in 2005–2006. The projects connected two broader themes: the use of content-based language teaching to and meeting the needs of two groups of AMEP learners – younger learners aged 16–24 with limited previous schooling and older learners with limited previous education and literacy.

The teachers developed these materials after workshopping ideas for content-based teaching materials that would expand the learners’ language and literacy needs. The teachers worked collaboratively and in their own time to produce materials for their learners. They then documented the use of these materials with their classes and shared their materials with another project teacher. The ideas for the units came from needs expressed by learners or from the teachers’ awareness of the needs and interests of their learners.

The learners
The target group of learners for the materials all have limited experience of schooling before coming to Australia, and usually limited literacy skills in their first and other languages. One project focused on the needs of younger learners aged 16–24, while the other materials were developed for older learners.

These learners were interested in learning more about life in Australia and needed to develop literacy skills in association with their learning of English as a second language in the AMEP.

The materials
The materials are focused on areas of content that relate to the needs of the learners in adjusting to life in Australia. They were developed by the teachers in the projects and reflect the learning needs of students in AMEP classes in different parts of Australia. The materials sometimes have a local focus and require adaptation for application in other localities and in other cases include content that is more easily related to most localities.

The materials have been developed, used and refined by a variety of teachers, and therefore reflect the different teaching styles and approaches of those teachers. They all involve attention to the development of content understanding and development of English language and literacy skills.

The teachers
The teachers work for a range of service providers in different parts of Australia. They bring a variety of professional skills, experiences and approaches to the materials. On this website they present their materials and report on how they developed, used and shared them.

Dr Alan Williams (Project coordinator)
Dr Lynda Achren (Project researcher)
AMEP Research Centre
La Trobe University
Australia

Elena Baron, Kate Heggie, Eva Muthaya and Anna Salamanca: Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT), Preston, Victoria

Introduction

Summary of the topic and materials

‘Australia’ is the umbrella topic of this unit of work which is comprised of the sub-topics Australia and My Country, Melbourne, Australian Animals and Birds and two stories about life in Australia entitled Blackie and Healthy Snacks. The unit of work utilises class texts, print and PowerPoint, hands-on activities and excursions.

The teachers

The four of us in this project team have extensive experience in both the design and delivery of Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) courses in the AMEP. We have experience in teaching students with literacy needs including high-oracy/low-literacy learners and those with non Roman script backgrounds. The impetus for embarking on this project arose because of the new emerging communities and their needs. While previously aware of the topic-content approach, this project led to our developing a more consistent and collaborative approach to integrating language and content within a unit of work.

The classes

Many of the students in trial classes were Sudanese with little or no literacy skills in their first languages (Moro, Dinka and Nuba) and, therefore, minimal, if any, exposure to the Roman script. The first language of other students included Arabic, Vietnamese, Spanish, Portuguese, Cantonese, Mandarin and Turkish. While many of the students had minimal or no formal education, there were a few students with post-primary education levels.

Three classes were involved in the trials: one Pre-CSWE class and two CSWE I classes. The CSWE I classes were of similar low education background but differentiated in terms of International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR) level. In one, the students were ISLPR 0+ in reading and writing. In the other, students were ISLPR 0+/1- in reading and writing. The number of students in a class ranged from twelve to twenty and student ages ranged from 20–78 years.

The unit of work

Developing the unit

During interviews, and anecdotally, a number of learners stated their interest in knowing more about Australia in general, and Melbourne in particular. Some learners thought that learning about Australia would enhance their sense of belonging. We realised that whereas
a number of topic areas relating to Australia have been identified, such as learning about Australian society, consumer issues and strategies, and computing and technology, (Williams 2004:3), there are few units of work available for literacy students. Consequently, we thought that developing a unit of work around this topic could usefully fill the gap.

Having decided on the topic for the unit of work, we brainstormed sub-units, or sub-topics, that could be developed individually while keeping the whole unit of work cohesive. We decided on the sub-topics of Australia and My Country, Melbourne, Australian Animals and Birds and two stories, Blackie and Healthy Snacks, about life in Australia. We also decided that each sub-topic would have a core text. The text for the class with the highest literacy level (ISLPR 0+/1-) is shown in the worksheets at the end of this report. Australia and My Country and Animals and Birds both also have an audio recording. This can be used with the whole class or by individuals for independent learning.

A key element of Melbourne and Healthy Snacks are the PowerPoint shows. Initially the PowerPoint shows were intended to be support material for the unit, but this changed during the development of the materials such that the key text is the PowerPoint and the supporting text is the print copy. Each story has two versions. In the first version, the learners view the coloured slides on the overhead data show, discuss and predict the written text. The talk and discussion in this stage is really important because it comes before the reading. These two types of slides are illustrated below.

In addition, the Melbourne unit contains a second and more difficult level of text. In the second version, learners view PowerPoint 2 which has the same photos as PowerPoint 1 but also includes the written text.
Mindful of the importance of oral interaction for literacy students (Slikas Barber 2003) and students from high-oracy cultures (Nicholas and Williams 2003), we developed each sub-topic so that speaking, pronunciation, listening and discussion have an integral role.

This is covered by three broad and overlapping areas:

- learners need to be able to say and hear a sound in order to do basic sound and print matching (Gunn 2003: 49) so we planned a lot of aural-visual matching to underpin the language in the worksheets and the PowerPoint shows
- each sub-topic used a bank of vocabulary to create an ‘oral language pool’ (Kalantzis [1987] quoted in Gunn [2003])
- since our students’ oral skills were typically higher than their literacy skills, we used speaking as a springboard into exploring the topic-content more fully.

We planned hands-on activities to engage the learner. These included:

- participating in cooking sessions where the menu involved hot porridge, fruit fritters or pancakes and yogurt
- reproducing the animals on a 50 cent coin by putting the coin under a piece of paper and ‘rubbing’ over the top with a pencil
- making fridge magnets decorated with native creatures
- using templates to create wall posters of animals, birds and the states of Australia.

These activities involved such things as cutting, pasting, drawing and/or folding to assist in the development of the fine motor skills required for literacy.

We also planned excursions to provide shared experiences that would encourage learners to use and extend language and content. Using photos from the excursions would provide a stimulus for follow-up activities back in the classroom. For example, Australian Animals and Birds included an excursion to the Healesville Sanctuary, which is set in natural bushland. The photos were used to stimulate a class recount of the excursion. The photos and recount were then put into an album to be recycled in other lessons.

In keeping with our initial aim of contributing to the availability of content-based units of work for this target group, we have packaged the key texts and worksheets in a Students’ Book for each sub-topic. Some sub-topics also have a Teachers’ Book with suggestions for delivery, group activities and excursions. The material can be readily photocopied.

**Trialling the unit**

Each of the sub-topics was introduced through pictures and/or realia. Australian Animals was introduced using a passport, 50 cent coins, a citizenship certificate, a picture of the Australian emblem, and picture books of Australian animals. Students liked handling these objects and talking about the animals they had already seen. This introductory session also included the coin-rubbing activity described earlier, which students very much enjoyed. Melbourne was introduced using photos, postcards, pictorial calendars and the PowerPoint without text. This promoted discussion about the places and whether learners had visited there. Healthy Snacks was introduced over morning tea, followed by the use of empty food packets, which prompted discussion. In the following lesson, the class searched for key items in advertising brochures as we discussed food items, prices and shopping and eating habits.

Map reading was included in two sub-topics, Australia and My Country and Melbourne. This led to tasks involving numeracy. The materials on Australia the country and Melbourne, the
city, led to further work on countries and cities of origin. This was highly successful as the students were proud to talk, read and write about their previous homelands.

Three of the sub-topics included excursions. In the second lesson of Melbourne, after reviewing pictures of buildings, the class went on a ‘mini-excursion’ to the highest point in the TAFE to view the Melbourne skyline. Students enjoyed this short trip out of the classroom. Later, the group went on an excursion to the city where they saw the landmark buildings they had been discussing in class. For Healthy Snacks, the students visited Ceres Environment Park in Brunswick, which has a community farm with vegetable gardens and farm animals.

Healthy Snacks also included several cooking activities. Before the actual cooking, new vocabulary was introduced using the items needed to cook, for example, pancakes. From previous class work, the students had the vocabulary for the ingredients and could recognise the words in written form and so now they were introduced to the names of the utensils such as ‘frypan’, ‘bowl’ and ‘spoon’. The class group then read the recipe and discussed the steps involved, the quantities and serving ideas. The students were enthusiastic about the cooking process, especially tossing the pancakes and inviting another class to join them in eating these culinary treats for morning tea. Throughout the process, photos were taken and these became an attraction for the learners involved as well as the wider community.

All the sub-topics contained much literacy work. The key vocabulary of each topic was looked at phonically to build learners’ word attack skills. It was read from flash cards and used in matching games. It was recycled with such activities as ‘Word Find’ and alphabetical ordering. The worksheets Animals and Birds Word Find and Healthy Snacks Alphabetical Order have been included at the end of this chapter.

With both print texts and PowerPoint shows, the reading strategies used were consistent across all classes. These allowed for much recycling of the text in varied ways, with decreasing teacher support as students gained in skill. These strategies included:

- the teacher reading the text in salient chunks and students repeating
- the teacher reading half the sentence which students then complete
- students searching for words starting with a particular first letter
- students counting the number of times a key word appears in the text
- gap reading where the teacher pauses as she reads the text and students fill in the missing word
- sequencing cut-up texts.

A number of the assessment tasks are included throughout the unit. Assessment tasks in the sub-topic Melbourne, have been through the stages of moderation by teachers from various NMIT campuses and are currently being used for assessment at CSWE I level.

**Trialling the sub-topics in other venues**

Unfortunately, we received no feedback on the trialling of Australia and My Country as the trial materials did not fit the needs of the partner teachers’ class at the time of trialling. Feedback on the other units was as follows:

**Melbourne**

Because all of the visuals and text for this sub-topic relate to places in Melbourne, it was important that it was trialled by another Melbourne-based class. An AMEP teacher working
in the southeastern suburbs of Melbourne, was interested in doing so. The class were youth, rather than a mixed age range of adult learners. They had made trips to the city prior to involvement in the trial, and students recognised the places introduced in the Melbourne PowerPoint show (without text) and so the teacher felt that it was unnecessary to actually take the class on an excursion.

This sub-topic has two student workbooks, a Stage 1 which contains tasks such as ‘Read and Copy’, and a Stage 2 workbook with more complex literacy tasks such as cloze passages. The teacher commented that the Stage 1 tasks were better suited to a beginning CSWE level I class. However, the Stage 2 workbook was suitable for her class, who, although studying at CSWE I level, were beyond its beginning stages. She considered the students’ engagement with the tasks in the Stage 2 level was high.

The teacher was highly complimentary about the layout of all the materials and commented that the Teachers’ Notes were a valuable guide to implementing the unit of work. However, she found that she had to devise additional activities for some of the Stage 2 numeracy and grammar tasks and suggested that the Students’ Books could contain more tasks. This would be a useful extension for classes where learners who can complete the existing tasks without too much difficulty.

The teacher observed an interesting literacy phenomenon in that students found the use of ‘we’ in the Stage 2 core text difficult to relate to because they (ie their class group) had not personally been on the excursion. She suggested that a more impersonal ‘some students’ and ‘they’ might overcome this. This suggests that materials developed specifically for one group of low literacy learners are not transferable, without modification, to another group of low literacy learners.

**Animals and Birds**

This sub-topic was trialled by an AMEP teacher working in Western Sydney. The trial group were low literacy learners, some without formal education and a few with only a couple of years of schooling. Most were from Afghanistan and others in the class were from the Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sri Lanka and Iraq.

This teacher did not have enough time to cover all the material available. Nevertheless, she found that the overall level of engagement of the learners was high with the aspects facilitating most learning being an excursion to the zoo, a video about animals, and the use of overhead transparencies and visuals. Learners were able to read names of animals, identify the alphabet and spell some words. They were able to use the third person singular and learn the difference between ‘has’ and ‘have’. Writing and spelling practice helped them to become more fluent and adept in their writing. However, the teacher also suggested making the following changes: inclusion of an activity matching pictures with names of animals; inclusion of a crossword or word search task; reduction of the reading material because she found some of the texts were too long and, consequently, learners lost interest. The NMIT team, however, intended the *Animals and Birds* material as a reading bank from which teachers can select what they consider to be most appropriate or appealing. One recommendation is for the teacher to allocate different readings to different learner groups. After working with the tasks related to their own reading, the group then exchanges information with another group. Another recommendation is for the material to be used as extension work or for learners in an independent study setting.

**Healthy Snacks**

An AMEP working in Canberra trialled this sub-topic). Most of the students in the trial group were from the Sudan with one from Burma and one from Afghanistan. Six of the 12 students
in the group could not hold a pen sufficiently well to form letters. A few students had been in
the program for only a few days. The others had been at the centre for over a semester and
coped well with the information in the unit of work. This teacher began the unit with a discus-
sion about fast foods such as hamburger and fried chicken outlets. Those with some English
interpreted for those with no English but it was still rather confusing for those who had only
very recently arrived and had not yet encountered these fast food outlets. This suggests that
when class changes result in new student joining a class, they will need additional support
in accessing content-based materials. Many amongst the other students were amazed at how
fatty the fast foods were.

With this particular learner group, the teacher considered the pictures and repetition to have
facilitated the most learning. The food pyramid and the core text itself were rather complex
for the group at the time of the trial. She found that more basic literacy activities, such as
worksheets relating to language patterns were needed for her learners. As a result, another
worksheet was created and the ‘Teachers’ Notes were updated to include recommendations
on how to use and extend the material by including such activities as matching games with
vocabulary cards. This teacher, who is experienced at developing digital resources for this
target group, also suggested relocating the speaker symbol on the PowerPoint show to the
left-hand side of the words and sentences so students are consistently reading from left to
right. This advice was also incorporated into the revised materials.

Reflections of the unit developers

Since being involved in this project, our approach to teaching low-level classes has changed.
As a result of developing and implementing the *Australia* unit of work, we can see the benefits
of working with topics that learners themselves have identified as relevant. Consequently,
there has been a shift towards incorporating more topic content and an improved integration
of topic content and language. As a team, we are now applying a more collaborative approach
to developing a unit of work. We discuss the language and content at the beginning of the
unit including possible excursions or hands-on activities. We prepare materials with a core
bank of task types in mind, so learners establish learning strategies and familiarity with task
types. In addition, we regularly run classes where classes combine and teachers co-teach. The
larger group provides more energy and shared life experience within the group. Moreover,
the larger group has a broader diversity of skills and knowledge and this encourages group
activity across this range of skills. The project has been invaluable in enabling us to re-evaluate
teaching and learning.

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Worksheet

Animals and Birds Word Find

Word Find

Look across and down to find these words:

- kookaburra
- platypus
- emu
- koala
- sleep
- kangaroo
- wombat
- eggs
- birds
- fly
- walk
- lays

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Worksheet

Healthy Snacks Alphabetical Order

**Highlight** the first letter of each word

**Highlight** the same letter on the alphabet list

Now use the alphabet list to put the words into alphabetical order.

**Alphabet Order**

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a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
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\[
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
\]
Worksheet

Practice Assessment Task

Student Name: ____________________________________________  
Date: ____________________________________________  
CSWE I  
Module B: Beginner Communication Skills  
Learning Outcome 3: Can write a short note or message

Write a postcard to a friend. Tell her/him about some interesting places to visit in the city of Melbourne.

[Blank postcard space provided]
An introduction to the Australian hospital system

Yania Attala: The Australian Centre for Languages (ACL), Auburn, New South Wales

Introduction

Summary of the topic and materials
This unit of work introduces students to the Australian hospital system through an excursion and a series of worksheets and activities to build understanding of emergency services and hospital services. In so doing, it extends the topic of ‘health’ beyond the usual ‘visit to the doctor’ focus of many AMEP classes.

The teacher
My first experience as an ESL teacher in Australia was teaching in a primary school where the focus was to enhance the reading and writing skills of a group of students from different backgrounds. After that, I moved to teaching in the AMEP where I have now been teaching English to migrants for seven years. During this time, I have often had low-level classes with many of the learners having virtually no formal education, and some being illiterate in their own languages. Teaching literacy was always the main focus in these classes.

My experience in content-based teaching prior to this project was in teaching the Australian Citizenship course (Harris and Hague, 2001). This course introduced learners to the political system in Australia as well as the rights and responsibilities of Australian citizens. The course was supported by visual materials and listening tasks that emphasise learning the content. I found it very useful even for low-level students. The course is no longer available, but teaching the citizenship course made me realise the value of integrating language and content in a unit of work. I was particularly keen to develop a unit of work associated with survival skills so that the content would help the students settle in their new society.

The class
I developed these materials for a CSWE I class of 17 female students and three male students whose ages ranged between 20 and 60 years. Most learners were from Afghanistan, a few were from the Sudan and one was from China. Most had little or no previous education and low literacy skills in their own language. None had any previous exposure to Latin script. Their mother languages were Arabic, Dinka, Dari and Chinese. Bilingual assistance was provided by a support teacher who spoke Dari and Dinka.
The unit of work

Developing the unit

Since most of the learners in the AMEP are newly-arrived migrants, their needs are focused on settlement issues because they want swift access to their new society. I thought that content-based units of work would be suitable for assisting their access. AMEP classes regularly teach units of work on ‘health’. At beginners level this usually involves teaching the vocabulary of common ailments and dialogues associated with visits to the doctor. However, the Australian health system does not consist of only general practitioners and, therefore, I think it is important for students to gain knowledge about Australia’s health system so that they can more easily access it. Many learners come from impoverished countries with rudimentary health systems vastly different from the system they will encounter in Australia, and, therefore, understanding the Australian system is important to their settlement.

The unit has been developed so that the content is supported by pictures and learning activities with an emphasis on developing all four macro-skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening. By integrating the content and the language, learners not only gain understanding of the system and the services but also gain skills in using the related oral and/or written language. The unit of work covers four interrelated aspects of the Australian hospital system:

- How do you find your way around a hospital?
- What do you do in an emergency?
- What happens when you are admitted to hospital?
- What is the difference between private and public hospitals?

Trialling the unit

I began the unit with a tour of a local hospital to contextualise the learning. At the hospital, we read and discussed the meanings of the signs and directories around the hospital, for example, ‘Information’, ‘Admissions and bookings’. Having bilingual assistance for this was invaluable, especially with some of the most difficult terms, such as ‘Pathology’ and ‘Physiotherapy’. Photographs of each of the signs were taken during the tour and later put onto overhead transparencies (OHT). I think the excursion to the hospital increased the students’ motivation to read and talk about these signs when they encountered them again in the classroom on the transparencies.

We had also seen and taken a photograph of an ambulance during our hospital tour, and so having put this onto an OHT it was easy to lead into the next section of the unit which dealt with developing an understanding of when and how to call an ambulance in an emergency. This section dealt with telephoning, that is, what number to dial, what service to ask for, and what questions the operator will ask you – and therefore what answers you will give. This section of the unit included a variety of listening, speaking and reading activities to build students’ language skills in this area. It involved much recycling of personal ID – name, telephone number, address – as students took part in such activities as listening to telephone dialogues and role-playing the telephone call. It also involved the parts of the body but it was important that students understood that calling an ambulance relates to an emergency. Not only does an emergency differ from a visit to the doctor or health centre, but so too does the language. While the unit of work can introduce some of the language typically associated with describing symptoms, for example, ‘vomiting’, it also includes
language, such as ‘unconscious’ that would not usually be part of a consultation with a GP. Establishing this difference involved much discussion and reflected the students’ previous experience with ambulances.

It is also important that students understand about the costs involved in phoning for an ambulance and that if you have a healthcare card it is free. Examination of healthcare cards leads to further reuse of personal ID and to reading this information in authentic texts.

The third section in the unit of work deals with what happens when the patient arrives at the hospital. Again personal ID is recycled as an authentic text but this time on a Medicare card. The use of the Medicare card was also discussed, so once again oral and written health-related vocabulary was reused and extended. This section of the unit also included discussions and worksheets relating to what to take to hospital and some of the services that are available, for example, meals, interpreters and places of prayer. This is important cultural information because such services may not have been available in the students’ home country where, for example, a patient’s family may have been required to bring in the patient’s daily food. Not only is this not required in Australia but in some cases may be detrimental to the patient’s recovery. On the other hand, if a patient or their family is concerned, for religious or ethical reasons about the meals, it will help to allay their fears if they are aware that they can request, for example, halal or vegetarian meals.

The unit concludes with raising awareness of the differences between public and private hospitals in Australia. I thought it would be relevant for students to include this in the unit of work because this differs from the systems in their own countries where they have private hospitals but they do not have the private fund system.

The students’ engagement with this topic was high because it provided them with a combination of language and knowledge. I think that the tour to the hospital prior to the classroom work was invaluable because, without it, the pictures and activities through which the content was taught in the classroom may have seemed too abstract to totally engage the students’ attention. Beginning with the tour, however, ensured that the students understood the purpose and relevance of the learning and consequently their level of engagement was high throughout the unit of work. A few of the learners have been in Australia for four or five years. Their oracy is good in comparison those in the class who had arrived more recently, but they lack literacy. A couple of the students had been to the hospital in the company of relatives but had been unaware that there was a system (that is, the directories and signs) by which they could find their way around the hospital. Consequently, the hospital tour was relevant to all learners who were highly motivated and keen to learn. All were interested in reading signs in the hospital and asked for an explanation of the difficult words. This was greatly facilitated by the presence of the bilingual support teacher.

Much unplanned, incidental learning occurred as we progressed through the unit of work. For example, some of them leave their Medicare card and Healthcare card at home. They were advised that they should carry these cards with them in case there is an emergency. The learners were interested in the topic because they are living in a new country and keen to learn about the new society. I believe it is important to know how the health system works even if they are going to depend on their relatives or friends when they need it. When I came to Australia I did not know how the private system worked until I got a job.
Trialling the unit in another venue

Trialling teacher

The unit of work was trialled at the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT), by an AMEP teacher. This teacher has been teaching in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) since 1993.

Response of the trialling teacher

I trialled the unit of work about the Australian hospital system with a Pre-CSWE group, so their language and literacy skills were lower than those for whom Yania had developed the materials. The class group was very mixed, both in terms of their cultural background and their educational background. Some of the students were educated Chinese who were well able to form the letters of the Roman alphabet. Others were from the Horn of Africa and had little or no education. A couple of these were struggling to shape letters.

Because the language and literacy levels of the students in this group were lower than in the target group, I had to select from the materials in Yania's unit of work rather than use them as a whole. I decided to focus on emergency situations, calling an ambulance, Medicare card information and what to take to hospital with you. The hospital admission procedures and other aspects of the unit were too difficult, especially as the class did not have access to bilingual assistance. The parts of the unit I selected facilitated a lot of learning and the students’ level of engagement was high because the topic is so relevant.

The unit of work combines the development of language and literacy skills with the information students need. For example, the information part is concerned with raising understanding of what an emergency is, what the triple zero number is for, and when to use it. Phoning for an ambulance, that is, understanding and answering the operator’s questions, is an example of the language part. At the same time attention is paid to the development of literacy skills through such activities as matching word and picture exercises.

Spending time on the Medicare card was very useful in terms of both knowledge and language/literacy skills. Some students have difficulty differentiating between the different cards they carry around and the purposes of each. Spending time on reading and talking about their Medicare cards helped with this. In addition, both reading the Medicare cards and telephoning the ambulance were excellent opportunities for rehearsing personal ID. Both of these parts of the unit, that is, the focus on the Medicare cards and the phoning for the ambulance, helped to raise students’ awareness of how this information is put to use in ‘real life’ outside the classroom.

In terms of developing literacy skills in general, I focused on word-attack skills, such as using the first letter of the word to guess the meaning. Using this strategy, students were able to identify new vocabulary such as ‘ambulance’. I think the relevance of the topic greatly enhanced this. Everything was done orally first and the vocabulary was used in context so that students could understand its meaning and use it orally. After that we looked at its written form. I adapted the materials to my lower level class by including more oral activities before attempting the reading activities in the unit. I would like the unit to have included a short text of perhaps only three or four sentences so that the individual words the students had been reading and writing could then be read in context. Nevertheless, I think developing a unit of work about the hospital system is a great idea and one that should be taught as well as the more ‘traditional’ focus on going to the doctor.
Reflections of the unit developer

This was the first time our centre had taken students to the local hospital for educational purposes. It was so successful that we intend to organise other visits to the local hospital for other levels. Visiting a hospital is different from visiting a medical centre. There are different procedures for patients that everyone should know before being admitted to a hospital.

I agree with the trialling teacher that the level of the materials was higher than Pre-CSWE, and I appreciate her efforts in adapting them to suit the level of her class. Since I intended to teach the materials within three days, I tried to limit the number of activities. If I were going to teach this unit again I would, as she suggested, add a short reading passage including some of the information the students learned through this topic.

Reference

Unit 3

Op-Shopping

Meredith Hill: TAFE SA English Language Service (ELS), Adelaide, South Australia

Introduction

Summary of the topic and materials
The unit of work aims to assist students to manage their household budgets by introducing them to a local opportunity shop (‘op-shop’). While the central focus is an excursion, the unit of work includes preparatory activities, an activity to complete while at the op-shop, as well as follow-up activities.

The teacher
I began my work in the English as a Second Language (ESL) field when I worked as a home tutor for TAFE SA ELS when I was studying. I have been an ESL teacher for five years now and have worked mainly with low-level literacy students.

My interest in this particular project stems from the fact that ELS has a large literacy team and we focus on content-based topics. Teachers in this team generally create their own student-centred materials as many resources are not suited for low-level literacy students. I have always created my materials and tailored them to the students’ needs. More specifically, as an organisation, we had been aware for the past twelve months of the need to address the issue of budgeting as the African students seemed to have problems dealing with costs and bill paying.

At ELS, we had held some information sessions, for example ‘Saving Energy’, ‘Centre Pay’ and ‘How to Save Money in Summer’ to help students deal with budgeting. As well, individual teachers incorporated the topic into their teaching. The staff decided that the project was an opportunity to focus on the topic and develop materials related to it. Natalja Sustrova and I volunteered to be involved. Natalja’s unit of work ‘Budgeting’ is also included in this publication. While we both aimed to contribute to the same theme, we developed separate units of work in order to contribute a greater diversity of materials to the resources available at our centre.

The class
The class involved in this unit of work comprised approximately 15 Sudanese and Afghani students who were predominantly women with minimal education. They were studying in a CSWE I literacy class because, although their oracy was International Standard of Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR) 1/1+, their literacy skills were only ISLPR 1/-1. All students were extremely keen to improve their reading and writing. The women were highly motivated to learn as they felt an education was something denied them in their former country.
The unit of work

Developing the unit

After brainstorming the issue of budgeting with Natalja, I decided on ‘Op-Shops’ as content within content. It appealed to me as it incorporated relevant and interesting aspects of budgeting. ‘Op-shopping’ is a culturally acceptable norm for most (although not all) Australians and helps many low income families meet living costs. However, many of our students are unaware of this source of clean but cheap clothing and household goods. Whilst the Sudanese students had some experience with second-hand shopping, the Afghani women and men had little, if any. Exposure to clean but cheap clothing and household goods would, I thought, open up new avenues for these students. Students also need orientation skills and familiarity with the community, and an excursion to an op-shop would provide an excellent opportunity to include these aspects of settlement. Once the decision to focus on op-shopping was made, I began to plan the unit of work. Foremost in my planning was to use a scaffolding approach (Hammond and Gibbons 2005) and to try not to assume prior knowledge (Achren 1991).

I began by researching op-shops in general and, in particular, those that would be possible for the class to get to by public transport. I chose one that fitted my criteria (clean and fresh with staff supportive of minority groups). My next step was to plan the texts we would use in the unit of work. First I wrote a short information text about op-shops. I then looked at the timetable for the bus we would be catching, and because it was very complex, I decided to modify it. I cut the timetable up to show just the headers and the relevant bus times they needed to choose from, that is, not the whole list of them.

I thought it would be useful for students to have an actual task to do while at the op-shop, and so, using illustrations from Doherty and Searle (2001), I decided to develop ‘shopping lists’ of items that could be found at the op-shop. The idea was for students to choose one or two lists prior to the excursion, take them to the op-shop, find the articles on the list, and write the price next to it. I decided that categorising the items (for example into ‘kids’, ‘kitchen’ or ‘men’s’ items) would simplify the shopping lists and the task. I also decided to develop dialogues that would feed into the ‘shopping list’ task so that students would have a chance to practise the language before using it in their ‘real world’ task at the op-shop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men’s Shopping List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 jumper $ ..........
| 1 jacket $ ..........
| 3 shirts $ ..........
|                 ($ ........ each) |
| 1 suit $ ..........
| 2 belts $ ..........
| 1 pair of jeans $ ..........
|               ($ ........ each) |
| Total $ ............

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Trialling the unit
I began the unit by discussion of shopping venues, prices/costs/packaging, all things which, from past discussions, I know have most surprised students after coming to Australia. Questions such as the following were discussed:

- What is the difference in the way food is sold in Australia and in your country? Which way is better?
- Are there benefits in having different types of items all together in one big shop, or do you prefer smaller shops?
- In what ways are shop assistants different in Australia than in your country?
- In what other ways is shopping different in Australia than in your country?
- What new skills have you needed to shop in Australia?

This introductory discussion led into the reading text about op-shops that I had prepared. After introducing key vocabulary, I asked students to circle new words as I read the text aloud. Following more discussion, we read it as whole class, keeping the pace slow. I then asked for volunteers to read two to three sentences each aloud to the class. Even though individuals were called upon to read, students helped each other, with stronger students calling out the word if the reader stumbled. The whole text was read by individuals in this collaborative manner. Finally, pairs read to each other.

The text was recycled again the next day. I read again, students listened, students read in pairs. This time, a short set of written comprehension questions followed the reading. I realised that whilst they understood the oral questioning, they found the written questions more difficult, even though the language was similar to the oral questions. While this appears obvious in hindsight when one is teaching a literacy class, it is something I need to remind myself, again and again: that more time needs to be spent analysing the written questions, and formulating the written responses, that is, that the ‘comprehension’ questions themselves are a complex literacy activity.

After trialling the text in this way, I came to the conclusion that it was too complex and contained ‘non-essential’ information. Therefore, I have since ‘pared down’ the text so that it is ready for when I teach the unit again. To contextualise the reading and so aid comprehension the revised text (below) includes photographs. I have further simplified the activity by putting the comprehension questions on a separate page, so that each page is less dense and students can thoroughly concentrate on reading the text before they turn their attention to writing answers to questions about it. In addition, I think that students would have benefited from further involvement with the text and I could incorporate a variety of activities, such as sequencing, or a cloze activity so that they get to reread the text a number of times.

New Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>opportunity</th>
<th>trained</th>
<th>volunteers</th>
<th>popular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>donate</td>
<td>furniture</td>
<td>poor</td>
<td>... are run by ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>budgeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Op Shopping

Many people like to shop in “Op Shops”. They are called Op Shops because “Op” is short for “Opportunity”.

There are many different types of Op Shops. Most Op Shops are run by the church. St Vincent De Paul (Vinny’s) Op shops are very popular.

The people who work in these shops are trained volunteers.

Many families donate clothes and furniture they don’t need any more. The volunteers wash the clothes before selling them.

These Op Shops also help with budgeting. Sometimes they give food, clothing and furniture to very poor families.

On the third day we worked with the dialogue. I used an overhead transparency (OHT) of the activity to introduce it. The overhead is always a good teaching tool, as we can work through things as a whole class before students attempt them individually (cf Ramm 1994). However, I believe that it needs time to then focus on the handouts to re-absorb the meaning, that is, to work through it again. In other words, I think it needs layers of ‘doing’. Finally, the students practised in pairs, taking turns to be the shopper and the shop assistant. Again, after the trial I simplified this task.

When I introduced the bus timetable, I discovered that while students used the bus, they did not read the timetable to do this task. They get told where to wait to catch a certain bus, and where to get off. Not understanding that is a timetable and that buses come at particular times may explain why some students arrive late to class. Consequently, we needed to have spent far more time on developing this skill. I kept the original look of the bus timetable as ‘realia’ is of great benefit to students’ learning, especially for something as important as reading bus timetables. During the class activity each student worked with an authentic timetable and I used an OHT to draw attention to points that needed clarification. Whilst the students struggled with this activity, it is something which I build into each term course outline. ELS is currently working collaboratively with other agencies to get students ‘job ready’,
and ‘skills’ such as using and reading street directories and bus timetables not only provide tools that assist with this, but they also contribute to the development of numeracy skills.

The final preparatory task for the excursion was the shopping lists, which I explained and read to students. This task worked well in the initial trial, so I have left it unchanged. However, more time should have been spent on the shopping lists to ensure students’ understanding. The excursion itself was held on a fine and sunny day. I observed that whilst students were not confident reading the timetable, they were much more comfortable in the ‘doing’ and seemed to know a lot about catching buses. In fact, they were much more confident than I was!

A few students seemed to be indifferent to the op-shop itself but others seemed genuinely interested in the low prices, variety and opportunity to bargain. It would have been good to have had a tutor for support at this point, as they seemed to say whatever came into their head. All that choral rehearsal to no avail! Nevertheless, these students gathered many bags full of stuff and were chatting to other students about the low price. As I looked around, I saw certain students, diligently completing their shopping lists, seeking out each item on the lists. These were the students who always did their homework, arrived on time and applied themselves to lessons. Other students just browsed, enjoying the shopping and marvelling at the cheap prices with all thoughts of the class activities gone!

Once back in the classroom the next day, we finished off the unit of work on op-shopping with a well-scaffolded gap fill and recount.

**Reflections of the unit developer**

There is a lot more that could be done with this unit of work. The four days I devoted to it were insufficient for either student reflection or building confidence with the topic. I have already incorporated some reflections about this when I described how I would, for example, spend more time reading both the information text and the bus timetable. In addition, I would spend more time developing the vocabulary associated with the shopping lists by recycling it in activities such as spelling tests, short dictations and discussions. This is because the vocabulary for some of the items on the shopping lists was new to students and this may have contributed to their forgetting the dialogue practice once they were in the ‘real life’ situation.

As described previously, since trialling the materials, I have revised the reading text. I have also redeveloped the materials accompanying the dialogue so that they have a less ‘crowded’ look. Through classroom experience, I have come to realise that ‘one task’ per page suits literacy learners best. In addition, the more I work with literacy students, the more I realise that it is important to minimise the amount of paper we hand our students, and this is a comment often made by students during student surveys. Consequently, I now produce ‘booklets’ for topics at the beginning of term. The pages are stapled, numbered and typed in Comic Sans size 14 or 16 font. There is only one task to a page, questions are numbered and instructions boxed. This familiar format aids the literacy students’ navigation through the text. I also make each front cover a different colour so that during the term I can say, ‘Get out your blue/pink/green booklet and turn to page six’. I also include activities at the back for extra practice for the keen students. Anyone who has looked at a CSWE Certificate I literacy student’s folder knows how chaotic they become over the term, and I feel the booklet helps them keep the folder in order.

Finally, if I were to teach this unit again, I would include post-excursion discussions to explore students’ responses and opinions. In addition, once the students have visited the op-shop it
may be possible to extend the cross cultural exploration that was included in the introductory discussion. These could perhaps be incorporated into a whole class construction of a recount of the excursion, which could then also be recycled in a variety of ways in order to further develop the students’ literacy skills through the content of the unit.

References


Unit 4

Budgeting

Natalja Sustrova: TAFE SA English Language Services, Adelaide, South Australia

Introduction

Summary of the topic and materials
The unit was planned with the aim of helping students to cope on a low income. It included tips for reducing the household budget, reading bills/accounts, using an automatic teller machine (ATM) and an excursion to an opportunity shop (op-shop).

The teacher
Like our students, I am a migrant to Australia, having arrived two and a half years ago from Latvia. I have over 25 years of professional English teaching to people who speak other languages. Before arriving in Australia, I worked at the Latvian Teaching Academy where I taught English to education degree students with a focus on general English and grammar. I also taught English to adult students with a focus on Business English and Correspondence at the Higher School of Economics and Culture.

Since coming to Australia, I have been teaching students with low literacy and have tended to structure the learning around specific ‘survival’ content such as health, work and study, shopping, housing and accommodation, personal identity and such like.

I believe these survival topics to be very important and joined this project because I was interested in expanding my own professional development in teaching literacy in conjunction with such topics in order to better assist our students.

The class
The CSWE I literacy class consisted of seven men and 11 women from Africa, Afghanistan and China. Their ages ranged from 20 – 50 years and their educational backgrounds from 0 – 11 years of schooling. They were also diverse in their literacy needs as the three Chinese students had basic familiarity with the Latin script, four of the others who had attended school were literate in Arabic but the majority (11 students) were not literate in any script.

The unit of work

Developing the unit
From class discussions I understood that money management was a big issue for my students. Having only recently settled in Australia, I have learned first-hand what a migrant to Australia would be experiencing: we share a common perception. Looking back at what I started with, at what was challenging for me and is still challenging in settling into life in Australia, I find that managing money and dealing with budgets is one of the most important issues that arise on arrival in Australia. It is a survival topic.
I was convinced that teaching a unit of work around household budgeting would contribute towards making students’ settlement in Australia easier. Consequently, in developing the unit of work around the topic of budgeting, I hoped to help them develop strategies for avoiding unnecessary expenses. The unit I developed included four main sections:

1. Cutting general household costs
2. Op-shopping
3. Paying bills/accounts
4. Using an automatic teller machine (ATM).

The materials I used were a mixture of authentic texts and self-developed resources. Preparation for the excursion to the op-shop included reading an authentic bus timetable, authentic bills were read in the third section of the unit used, and the ATM section involved reading and responding to the texts on the screen. For the other resources I used existing visuals photocopied from a variety of sources to which I added texts to make worksheets, matching activities and sequencing activities. The visuals for the first section about saving money on household costs were taken from a range of readers by Sue Bottomley with illustrations by Ben Phillips. The complete list of titles can be seen in the reference list. *Fresh start, reading and writing help* (Tristram and Kebby 1990) was a useful resource for the third section about paying bills, and *Listening to Australia* (Nicholson and Butterworth 2000) was useful for the final section about using the ATM.

**Trialling the unit**

I taught the topic over eleven days, during which time the students’ engagement with the topic remained high. I think this was because the content was so relevant to their daily activities. To begin the unit I gave the students a handout of pictures to prompt discussion about money management in general and the students’ main expenditures.

I then introduced a reading text (supported by pictures) about tips for saving money. We read the text together, discussing each tip as we read it.

We discussed such things as whether or not students thought the tip was useful.
The students responded very positively to this reading and discussion. Most of the information was new to them and they were quite excited to get information on how to save money. Much discussion arose in regard to the use of cold water in washing machines. I brought various types of light globes into the class in order to explain what was meant by energy efficient light globes and this discussion extended to the expense involved in using high wattage heaters. We talked about take-away meals and how to be healthy by eating such foods as green salads. I was amused when some of the Burundians asked me how much alcohol they could drink and still remain fit and healthy!

Over the next couple of days, I recycled the information through activities specifically aimed at developing the associated vocabulary in spoken and written form. This involved more whole class and small group discussions and written worksheets such as ‘fill-the-gap’. In a computer session, students copied a tip (or tips, depending on their skills level) from the board and typed it/them into their word document and then added a picture. For example, after typing ‘Use cold water in the washing machine’, the students searched the Google website for a picture of a washing machine, copied the image they found and pasted it into the word document. Students were immensely satisfied with this achievement. The ultimate aim was for students to be able read each tip and so match it with its picture. For this, I made sets of picture cards and tips cards for students to match while working in groups, pairs or individually, depending on their literacy skills levels.

In preparation for the next section of the unit of work – the excursion to the op-shop – we discussed why people use op-shops and what the students might be able to buy there. I devoted a lesson to reading the timetable for the bus we would be catching. Because the chosen op-shop was in a large shopping centre, the students were familiar with the route and knew the bus number. I made an overhead transparency (OHT) of the timetable and demonstrated to the students how to read it by pointing out the relevant stops, that is, the one at the shopping centre and the one in the city close to our centre. I showed them how to read the times of the buses associated with these stops. We also looked at differences between the timetables for the week and for the weekend. After this guided oral reading of the OHT, I distributed timetables and students worked in pairs to answer the following questions in writing:

1. How long does it take if you go from our class here in the city to Unley Shopping Centre?
2. Which stop do you catch the bus from? What stop do you get off?
3. If you catch the 10 am bus from the city, what time does it get to Unley Shopping Centre?
4. If someone wants to catch the 8.27 am bus but misses it, how long will they have to wait for the next bus?
5. If you catch the 11.30 am bus from the city, what time does it get to Unley Shopping Centre?
6. How frequent are the buses on weekdays?
7. How frequent are the buses on weekends?

When we were at the op-shop, I noticed that some students were rather squeamish about second-hand goods. However, other students were happy to buy things there, with some buying kitchenware and others, clothing. Some said that now that they had been here once it would be easy to bring their families there.
Back in the classroom after the excursion, we did a group-constructed recount of the excursion. We then moved on to the next section of the unit of work about reading bills/accounts. We started by matching logos with their organisations and the function of the organisation, for example that Telstra is a telephone company. As well as logos of companies that issue the bills, the activity included the logos of places where bills can be paid, such as the Post Office and Coles supermarket. We did this orally first, then students worked in groups to match the logo with its function. Next we looked at some authentic bills and students identified what type of bill each one was, that is, whether it was a telephone bill or a gas bill. I directed them to look for the logo to assist with this. We also talked about how students usually paid their bills and it turned out that most paid them at the Post Office, which is also the cheapest way. We then looked at each of the options on the ‘How to Pay’ section of the bill. This part was very challenging for many students and involved a lot of new vocabulary.

In the next session we focused on three bills – an electricity bill, a gas bill and a phone bill. I showed them that the important information such as how much they have to pay and the date stands out in some way, that is, it is printed in bold or in colour or in bigger letters. Students identified the amount and the due date on each of the bills. Then students did the same with their own bills. Interestingly, while reading authentic bills was one of the hardest aspects of the topic for students, it was also one that facilitated the most learning, and through a lot of practice in reading their own bills, students were eventually able to locate the important and relevant information.

To finish this section of the unit, we practised dialogues for what to say at the Post Office if you go there to pay your bill. First the students listened to three short conversations that I had recorded on audio tape. I elicited the language of each dialogue from the students and then the students practised the dialogues. I recorded the students role-playing these dialogues and then played the recordings back to them. They enjoyed listening to their own voices and were motivated to get their dialogues ‘right’.

The final part of the unit involved using an ATM. For this I used a picture of an ATM and made sets of the text (cut up into sections) that appears on the screen as the user withdraws money from the ATM. I used the picture to raise discussion about using the ATM and how you do it. As we discussed each step of the process, I wrote the text up on the board. Next, students followed the text while I read it. Then as a whole class activity, the students read the text from the board. Finally, in groups, the students re-sequenced the text I cut up and read the whole text themselves. These activities involved a lot of cooperation and a lot of discussion, but through this scaffolding the students were able to collaboratively read the text in their groups. The unit of work finished with another excursion to the nearest ATM. Students who already knew how to use an ATM were able to demonstrate to others how to operate it. They appeared to be proud of being able to help others in this way. I emphasised the need for security, by telling students to look the other way when someone was entering their pin number. Those who were unfamiliar with ATMs had the opportunity to practise and appeared to find this useful. Like the reading of the authentic bills, I think this practical demonstration facilitated a lot of learning.

**Trialling the unit in another venue**

**Trialling teacher**

The unit of work was trialled by an AMEP teacher working in Canberra.
Response of the trialling teacher

I trialled Natalja’s materials in a part-time evening class. In a number of significant ways the class group was not the same as the target group for whom Natalja had designed the materials. Firstly, this was a CSWE II group and so their language levels (ISLPR 0+ to 1) were higher than those of students in Natalja’s class. Secondly, while some were new arrivals, others had been attending classes for over a year and were relatively more familiar with, and capable of managing, their ‘real-life’ tasks in Australia. Thirdly, all had had prior experience of learning although some had had minimal formal education, that is, not more than primary school, and none had completed more than secondary school.

I did not have time to modify the materials so that they would be more suitable for the students, and moreover, I found it difficult to trial the whole unit because of the class being held in the evening. This made it impossible to go on the excursions. Consequently, I had to select only two of the elements to trial – the tips for saving money and paying bills at the Post Office.

I conducted the discussion about money saving tips by first handing out the worksheets and answering questions on vocabulary problems. The actual discussion was carried out with volunteer tutors in small groups. The learners engaged with the topic (as did the tutors) and while the conversations started by focusing on the handouts, they tended to quickly move on to their own ideas and explanations. It was a popular topic and I think it facilitated the most ‘real life’ learning with the handouts serving as a good springboard for discussing ideas, but for my students there was little literacy development.

Although Natalja had intended the paying of bills at the Post Office section as a listening and speaking task, I decided to do it just as a listening task as this seemed more appropriate for my students. I used two tasks from *Listening to Australia*, one for beginners (Nicholson and Butterworth 2000), which was specifically about paying bills at the Post Office, and one for post-beginners (Butterworth and Nicholson 2001) which was about paying bills by phone. The students completed the tasks in the language lab. The beginners task was very easy for them and none of the students needed to listen more than once. The second task was more difficult and a more appropriate task for the class level.

With such a limited trial, it is difficult to really evaluate the effectiveness of this topic. I think the content would have been appropriate for the group of learners if I had had sufficient time to modify them and increase the level of language difficulty to suit the learners.

Reflections of the unit developer

I was disappointed that it was not possible for my unit of work on ‘budgeting’ to be fully trialled as I would have appreciated the feedback. However, with my own group, I thought that through the topic of budgeting, the students not only improved their English but also gained important practical skills and knowledge. It was very rewarding for me to be able to share my ideas on budgeting and very interesting to discuss these things with the students. Through these discussions, I came to understand much more about them and the problems they faced.

Based on the students’ feedback and their active participation, I would rate the topic as having been effective, even though some students were not enthusiastic about the op-shop. In contrast, I heard from other students that they had later returned to the op-shop with their families or friends, and so, clearly, for them this was a very useful component of the unit.
If I were teaching it again I would take photos of the excursion and put them on CD to provide visual prompts for a discussion and question-raising session on the day following the excursion. I would also use these photos as prompts for the follow-up group construction of the recount of the excursion, with the students suggesting the text to accompany each photo. I would recycle that recount in various ways, such as matching text and photos, and resequencing the text in order to maximise the literacy development possibilities that come out of the excursion. I also think that if there is time, putting the worksheets for the unit of work into a booklet would be very useful because the students tend to lose individual worksheets.

**References**


Unit 5

The Stay Safe readers

Christine Adby, Laura Chapman and Leanne Zuvich: Institute of TAFE Tasmania

Introduction

Summary of the topic and materials
The unit of work is aimed at developing an understanding of, and so preventing, potential safety hazards in the home. At its core are three readers about safety in the home: one about the kitchen, one about the bathroom and laundry and one about the living room and bedroom. However, rather than a simple set of readers, we developed this resource to be a comprehensive collection of materials that could be used in a variety of ways to create a unit of work for different learner groups.

The teachers
All of us have extensive English as Second Language (ESL) experience in migrant, refugee and international Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) teaching and are currently working at AMES in TAFE Tasmania, where there is a high proportion of refugee and humanitarian entrants. The nature of this client group demands a strong emphasis on content-based approaches across a variety of modes of delivery. Due to the nature of the client group and the special needs of preliterate learners we are constantly developing our own materials with much emphasis on settlement content and guided individual learning. We share an interest in developing more focused and accessible materials to enable a greater level of content to be delivered to preliterate and low-level clients. We were all interested in taking a collaborative approach to action research and through this establishing a community of practice to facilitate a more comprehensive approach to integrating language, literacy and content.

The classes
The materials were developed for two Pre-CSWE classes and a mixed pre-CSWE/CSWE I classes, which led us to create materials that were appropriate for use across different levels. While this is reflected in the variety of activities, the classes also had different modes of delivery and different levels of exposure to the materials. The trial period of this project was conducted over four weeks during October and November 2005.

Class 1, taught by Leanne, was the lowest level of the three classes and was held on campus. The trial was carried out over two days per week for 3.5 hours per day over three weeks. There were 12 students in this Preliminary class, nine women and three men. The women ranged in age from 30 – 71 years old (the majority being in their mid-forties to mid-fifties). The men's ages ranged from early forties to late sixties. The students were refugees from Ethiopia, Burundi, the Sudan and Sierra Leone. All had ISLPR ratings of 0 0 0 0 and none had any previous education and were, therefore, fitted the CSWE classification of
Band A students. Moreover, various teachers had noted that this group were particularly slow learners, even for a preliminary class. At the commencement of the trial, the majority of the students had been studying in the AMEP for around ten months, with three students having only attended for one month.

Class 2, taught by Laura, was also on campus and all students were enrolled in a Pre-CSWE. The trial was carried out over four days a week at 3.5 hours per day for three weeks. This class consisted of 12 refugee and humanitarian students, eight women and four men. The ages of the students ranged from 23 – 70 years. None of these students had received any previous schooling before coming to Australia from Ethiopia, the Sudan, Eritrea or Iran. As in Class 1, all students were CSWE Band A learners, with one student having an ISLPR of 0 0+ 0+ 0, and another 0 0+ 0 0. The remaining 10 students were all 0 0 0 0. The length of time that the students had been studying in the AMEP ranged from three to 14 months at the commencement of the trial.

Class 3, taught by Christine, was a combined Pre-CSWE and CSWE I class and was taught off campus. The trial was held over three days a week for 3.5 hours per day over two weeks. The class consisted of nine women, six in their mid-forties and three in their early- to mid-twenties. They were all refugees from the Sudan, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia or Kenya. Two students had attended school for three years in Africa. One of these had an ISLPR of 0+ 0 0+ 0, that is, CSWE Certificate I, while the other rated zero in all four skills and was thus classified as Pre-CSWE. A third student had attended school for five years and had an ISLPR rating of 0+ 0+ 0+ 0+. The remaining six students had not previously been to school and were rated as zero in all four skills. Therefore, they were all Band A students with two being considered CSWE I and the remainder Pre-CSWE. The majority of the students had been attending English classes for approximately 12 months, with one student having been in the class for only two months.

The unit of work

Developing the unit

Our staff strongly identified a need for recently-arrived migrants and refugees to learn about safety in their new environments. This was primarily because students were suffering the consequences of minimal awareness of safety in the home; there were cases of people sustaining cuts, burns and various injuries – both minor and severe emergency cases. There were at least two incidents of asphyxiation due to misuse of gas appliances, and reports of faulty electrical appliances or fittings causing sparks and flames. Community groups and service providers working with newly-arrived refugees had also identified education around home safety as a significant settlement need. Due to the winter climate in Tasmania, home heating brought a range of safety issues for these clients, many of whom had limited experience with heating appliances and equipment. We also recognised that most of our students had children and that the resources we developed could be valuable at a family and community level. We hoped that by ‘identifying potential target situations for the learners ... a more socially contextualised learning (could) take place’ (Sangster 2002: 11). We felt there was a lack of content-based materials suitable for this target group, both in terms of skill level and cultural appropriateness.

In order to develop the materials, we first brainstormed the specific content knowledge needed by the client group, drawing on our experiences in the classroom and anecdotal evidence from students and support groups. We then researched existing resources such as community information brochures, internet sites and educational resources for schools.
The next step was to consider the language and literacy elements of the resources that would be required. We aimed to identify target language that would reflect students’ real life experiences and therefore provide the context and motivation to learn that language (Sangster 2002). After that we wrote rough drafts of the texts and planned the format and the visuals.

Images were to be instrumental in conveying the content and became integral to the materials. In considering the visual literacy aspect of the materials, we thought that photographs were the clearest and most practical means of expressing the visual content. Obtaining the images was difficult because there were none available that specifically related to what we needed, or that provided appropriate cultural role-models. We set up a photo shoot in a private house, with our lead characters being a woman and her son from the Sudanese community in Hobart. That process provided visuals that were as close as possible to what we wanted: clear and uncluttered so that they supported the text rather than presented any ambiguities. With no professional experience in photography and editing images, this was a time-consuming task which required us to overcome the many technical obstacles relating to using digital images. We enlisted the assistance of TAFE Learning Media Services for whom this was also a learning process as they had very little experience in creating this type of resource.

There are highly specific considerations in designing materials for preliterate, non-roman alphabet literate and special needs learners, which are magnified when having to deliver complex content. These learners often have difficulty identifying abstract graphic representation and culturally-bound imagery (Achren 1991; Ramm 1994; Allender 1998; Sangster 2002). Therefore, we had to ensure that visual aids were appropriate and transparent (Allender 1998) and all graphics were simple, clear, contextualised and realistic (Ramm 1994). In creating worksheets to accompany the readers, we relied heavily on photographs, put minimal information in worksheets, and used an enlarged Comic Sans font as it is clear and similar to handwriting. We also incorporated colour to highlight safe and unsafe practices by the use of green ticks and red crosses. We linked this into other uses of green with ‘safe’ or ‘go’, such as with a ‘Walk’ symbol, and red for ‘danger’ or ‘fire’.
In addition, we wanted to engage learners through a more ‘hands-on’ methodology (Allender 1998; Nichols and Sangster 1996) and so we created a lot of matching activities with cards and pictures and involved students in manual dexterity activities such as manipulating realia or cutting and pasting pictures and sentences. We planned activities to recycle skills and support the students’ language and literacy across the levels of the three classes. We also developed a range of materials to provide an initial introduction to activity types for the newer arrival learners. Accompanying resources included worksheets, flash cards (pictures and words), surveys and vocabulary matching card sets (pictures and vocabulary or sentences), Language Master cards and an audio CD. There are numerous activities that can be carried out with these resources including:

- snap, bingo, ‘go fish’ and memory games with card sets
- using picture cards as prompts for question and answer activities, spoken procedures
- joint construction of oral texts and discussions
- word attack activities focusing on syllables and spelling/sound relationships
- pronunciation activities, especially focusing on syllables
- cut up sentences for reconstruction and syntax activities
- cut up texts such as procedures for sequencing
- cross and tick/unsafe and safe matching activities with pictures
- cloze activities with whole texts and procedures
- formulaic spoken language of asking for and giving information through surveys and spoken Q and A
• completing surveys with simplified ticks and crosses or words
• vocabulary activities such as picture/vocabulary matching, and cut up or jumbled words
• individual learning of vocabulary and pronunciation with Language Masters
• listen and repeat activities and listen and read with the audio CD
• pre-reading activities involving prediction, building vocabulary and oral texts based on images.

Concepts for materials arose during the trial as the teaching and learning cycles fed an evolving process of materials development. Needs arising from the classroom led to the development of more individualised resources for each class, such as simplified or personalised texts and various extension activities. Our individual teaching experiences led to a sharing of activities and methods that were proving successful with our classes. Materials also arose out of the photographs from the practicum sessions held in the kitchen.

One of the strengths of these materials is that while they are structured to provide scaffolding of language and literacy, they offer the flexibility to be used in a variety of ways in the classroom. Because of low-level students’ lack of confidence, we wanted to ensure that the resources were ‘presented in a way which built in success’ (Badenhorst 1994: 69). Our preliterate and low literacy learners need constant revision and recycling of language, skills and content. This resource enables our students to revise language and content and through this assists learners with retention, developing formal learning skills, recognising language patterns and building confidence (Huntington 1992; Badenhorst 1994; Hajncl 1994; Ramm 1994).

**Trialling the unit**

We commenced our teaching unit with the ‘Safety in the kitchen’ materials because they related most closely to student experience at home and as students had access to a student kitchen, the concepts were more easily demonstrated. Students reacted very positively when we first introduced the images because the photos are of situations the students are familiar with, such as the interaction between a mother and child in the kitchen. The students could compare the house scenarios in the materials with their personal experiences. All the objects were of things that they used at home or recognised, but for which they really wanted to know the names. They were also very interested in the characters in the books who were played by members of the local Sudanese community. The familiarity and relevance was hugely motivating and promoted a lot of discussion, so students’ engagement was high from the beginning of the trial. The students also seemed to enjoy the range of resources and activities and when a new resource was introduced, such as the audio CD, the students were very motivated to extend their language.

With content teaching it is important to do practical, experiential lessons, if possible, to make the learning concrete, particularly so with students with little formal education (Allender 1998). In addition, language experience approaches have proven highly successful with preliterate learners (Huntington 1992) and so, after introducing the materials and vocabulary, we took Classes 1 and 2 to a kitchen set up by Access Programs at TAFE. We recycled and introduced vocabulary within the kitchen environment and then demonstrated the safety risks and dangers. As we demonstrated ‘what to do’ and ‘what not to do’, we constantly reinforced this with spoken language. In this ‘real life’ context students were able to demonstrate their understanding and we could see ‘lights go on’ for many students. The teachers could identify both levels of practical knowledge and needs in relation to language development.
The practicum in the kitchen lent itself to much oral/aural work, as students were very keen to talk about their experience. They then contributed to a class-composed recount and written procedures. Another important literacy event grew out of the practicum when students did extension work on the signs we had seen in the kitchen. Students were thrilled that they were able to read and gain meaning from signs ‘for Australian people’ and so the unanticipated inclusion of these authentic texts really enhanced the content of the unit of work.

Informal learners learn through observation and imitation (Ramm 1994) and therefore the explicit demonstration of safety procedures with the use of realia and photographs was very effective. During the process of demonstrating procedures and activity types we focused on developing the language of instruction in context. This follows Hood’s (1990) findings that preliterate learners relate most strongly to context-embedded oral language. However, as Class 3 had no access to a kitchen, their learning had to rely more heavily on the use of realia and photographs. This worked well with this class as they were at a slightly higher level and could be thought of as emergent to beginning readers rather than preliterate readers.

The extent to which materials were used and the manner in which they were used, varied across the three classes. All classes used the kitchen materials but because of the time limit the higher classes then continued with different books to ensure all three books were trialled, and to cater to the different needs of the students. Leanne used various activities based on pictures and vocabulary to introduce the topic to Class 1, the lowest level preliterate students. The kitchen safety book itself was not introduced until the end of the second week and even with extensive scaffolding, the book was more of an extension of the unit of work as many of the students were not even emergent readers at this stage. However, the students really enjoyed handling the books and supporting each other to read some words or remember whole sentences. Class 2 did a lesson of content building, vocabulary and procedures and then a practicum session before working on the first book and by the end of the three weeks had trialled two of the readers with accompanying materials and various extension activities. With Class 3, Christine used the books from the first day because of the slightly higher level of their students and their relative familiarity with texts. She commenced with the images and did a lot of pre-reading activities and discussion before leading into the books. We found with the higher classes that, when we moved on to a second reader and accompanying materials, the students’ motivation remained high and the students picked up the concepts and vocabulary much more quickly. The students were able to predict the text content and participate in discussions – however simple – about specific safety issues and the general topic. The students’ capability and willingness to do these activities demonstrated the extent of the learning that had already taken place with the first materials. This also showed that after extensive scaffolding the students were able to transfer skills across the different topics,
which as Badenhorst (1994) and Ramm (1994) noted, is something that students with minimal schooling often find difficult to do.

In all classes, we encouraged students to support each other through working in a range of groupings such as pairs, small groups, independently or in combined classes. We allowed students to use their first language to explain content or procedures to each other as a foundation for language work. As these students were generally from highly oral cultures, we found they responded well to various speaking activities involving repetition and rhythm (Sangster 2002) and joint construction of oral texts (Nichols and Williams 2003).

We observed a significant level of achievement across language, literacy and learning skills in all classes. Achievement was measured according to group and individual need, as even the recognition of key vocabulary was a major achievement for the lowest level learners. The following are some of the language skills and knowledge that we felt were developed during the trial of these resources:

- highly relevant key vocabulary
- word attack skills focusing on spelling/sound relationships, syllables and contextual clues
- pronunciation of key words
- syntax/sentence structure
- giving and following oral instructions and reading procedural texts
- recognising the meaning of the tick and cross symbols
- prediction of vocabulary and content through pictures
- formulaic spoken language of asking for and giving information through surveys
- grammar: positive and negative imperatives, question and answer forms, prepositions, adjectives
- completing surveys with simplified ticks and crosses or words
- listening for key words and specific information
- speaking fluency: relating experiences
- speaking in whole sentences memorised from procedures
- reading a whole text in the form of a book for the first time
- handling a book, reading left to right and top to bottom of the page.

A subsidiary goal was to assist students to become familiar with activity types, procedures, processes and resources. Through this unit of work the students used a range of resources and participated in a variety of activity types that were repeated across the books to enable transfer and consolidation of skills. We also developed various activities that could be used independently and so contribute to the broad range of materials needed to fulfil individual students’ needs and preferences in independent learning arrangements (Brandon 2004). We noted that many students selected the ‘Stay safe’ materials in their independent learning time. Leanne found it very rewarding to enter the classroom and find the slowest paced, highly teacher-dependent students using Language Masters to revise ‘Stay Safe’ vocabulary through word and picture cards.

The feedback from the learners in relation to content was very positive, with many students giving examples of content they had learned during an evaluation of the trial.
Low-level students were able to differentiate between safe and unsafe situations in photographs and to demonstrate safe practices by use of realia. With bilingual support, the students were able to discuss how this content was relevant to their lives. The discussions that arose within each class indicated a high level of engagement with both the concepts and the language. The materials had elicited a lot of anecdotes from students about accidents in their homes and even past experience in their countries of origin. Being able to identify how these incidents could be prevented shows how much they had learned about content. They were now putting their learning into practice and looking for solutions to safety issues. An equally important achievement was that many students were now using English to communicate these ideas.

This learning has also enabled people to overcome unreasonable fears that they had from past experiences or other people’s stories. For example, students learned that most smoke alarms do not have active currents and, therefore, their batteries can safely be changed without fear of electrocution. We felt that addressing safety content explicitly was reassuring for the students. So the teaching extended beyond the ‘language of safety’ to helping students overcome concerns by bridging gaps in their knowledge about their new environment. Several students asked if they could take the books home to read and demonstrate to their children. They reported back that the books were very helpful in reinforcing safety concerns around the house.

We felt that the students’ ability to read authentic texts and to recognise the relevance of this learning in their personal lives contributed immensely to their sense of achievement. No doubt such achievement with quite extensive language was a large factor in the continued high level of motivation across the different sub-topics. Other teachers and AMEP researchers noted that these students labelled ‘preliterate’ could actually read complex words such as ‘electrocute’ and ‘appliance’, and were reading quite extensive texts both individually and collaboratively by the end of the trial. We felt these achievements were made possible through the various ways in which teachers scaffolded both individual tasks and the unit of work as a whole (Hammond and Gibbons 2005). We also felt that placing a strong emphasis on an integrated skills approach allowed students to capitalise on their skills strengths to support weaker areas.

**Reflections of the unit developers**

Because of the time line we had for the project, each class trialled these resources over different time periods within a three week block. However, in the future we would like to use the materials more flexibly and have the freedom to extend them over a longer period of time. New arrival preliterate classes could work with the materials less intensively over a whole term. This would allow time for other integrated themes or separate language and literacy skills, and provide more opportunity to recycle and extend the language and content. It was very effective working with the readers so intensively, so it would be interesting to find out how students responded over a longer period of time.

At the time of the trial, we had minimal access to bilingual support. The centre now has a register of bicultural assistants who are regularly timetabled into the low level classes. We feel that it would be beneficial to deliver the materials with bilingual assistants to enable students with minimal English oracy to voice their safety concerns, and to discuss their experiences in more depth. More use of bilingual assistance would also give the students further opportunities to clarify understandings of content, language and learning processes, and to evaluate their learning throughout the trial.

Overall, the materials exceeded our expectations in regard to students’ interest, motivation and both knowledge and skills development. We felt that it was a combination of the relevance
of the topic, the accessibility of the images, and the scaffolding of the learning through all the surrounding activities that enabled significant learning achievements to take place. The materials offered the flexibility to be used in a variety of ways across a range of teaching contexts and learner levels. The success of the trials emphasised the importance of integrating relevant settlement content into appropriate language and literacy materials. This is also achievable if really low levels are provided appropriate scaffolding and support.

References


Unit 6

The World of Work

*Alex Dodgson: AMEP ACT, Canberra Institute of Technology, Australian Capital Territory*

Introduction

Summary of the topic and materials

In the unit *The World of Work*, intensive literacy work is embedded in the content, and enhanced by custom-made interactive computer materials for independent learning.

The teacher

I have been teaching literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL) for over twenty years and have been interested in content-based teaching for much of that time, having always prepared my own materials for low-level English language and literacy students. I am also very interested in developing Digital Coaching Aids (DCAs) for this particular group of students. The term DCA was coined in 2004 by Marcus Ragus and a Learn Scope team based at TAFE Tasmania. It refers to teacher-designed Computer Assisted Language and Learning (CALL) materials developed using MS PowerPoint. I have found that these tailor-made DCAs are beneficial in the development of both the English language and the reading process with preliterate students. To date there are very few commercially developed packages suitable for students at this preliterate level. The software materials available on the market are quite dense and contain too much information on each page, causing confusion for this group of students. I use the DCAs for half an hour, twice a week in the computer lab. They are loaded onto individual computers where each student can use headphones and work at his or her own pace. The DCAs contain sound, basic phonic activities, vocabulary, simple sentence and question formats and colourful visuals with animation. There is also an element of interactivity which provides immediate feedback. Worksheets and short booklets can also be printed from the DCAs so that the students can continue practising their reading and associated writing and oral activities both in class and at home. Some students used the short booklets for reading with their children.

The class

Most of the students who completed the unit of work *The World of Work* in term four had already completed ten weeks of intensive English language and literacy classes with me. None of the students had had any education in their countries of origin, being Sierra Leone and the Sudan. They were all females ranging in age from 19 to 47. Three of them could manage to copy and read their names when they initially began classes, but the remainder had never held pencils and had to be taught how to form letters and hold the page the right way up. In addition, all of the students in the class had very limited oral English (ISLPR was 0 0 0 0). Through interpreters, usually students in higher classes, the students emphasised that their priority was to learn to read and write. At the beginning of term four, a few new students arrived in the class. One, aged 47, had never held a pencil nor had she ever been in a
classroom. Both she and another new arrival could only speak two or three words of English. The other student could, however, copy letters but did not know what they meant. In both terms three and four I was fortunate to have the help, for three hours a week, of two volunteer home tutors, to work with the students (in class) who had difficulty holding pens and forming letters.

**The unit of work**

**Developing the unit**

The original group of students who had completed ten weeks of term three with me had also participated in the following units of work:

- the classroom
- places of interest, eg bank, Post Office, hospital
- the markets, food and drink
- Wattle Day in Australia, with maps of Australia, seasons, months and comparison of maps from their countries of origin.

This was done in combination with the following:

- practising writing and memorising names and addresses for 10 to 15 minutes a day (for form filling)
- using the computer room for half an hour twice a week, where they used DCAs to practise sounds, phrases, questions and answers and new vocabulary – all in context
- practising new vocabulary in written exercises and oral activities
- reading small repetitive booklets
- discussing new units, topics and vocabulary
- comparing new English words to oral Dinka and Krio
- going on small excursions.

*The World of Work* was designed to continue the students’ language and literacy development in the manner to which they were becoming accustomed to learning, that is, through intensive literacy work embedded in the content of each unit of work. Having taught the majority of the group for the previous term, I was aware of their needs and interests and this seemed like the appropriate topic to follow up with. Intensive literacy work was always integrated within the content of each of the units covered. The custom-designed DCAs were an important aspect of this.

**Trialling the unit**

Initially, I introduced the unit *The World of Work* by using visuals on an overhead transparency (OHT) to elicit the job names the students knew and introduce those they did not (note that some of the students could not speak any English at all). The students were taught the correct pronunciation of each job name as well as individual sounds within each word. They then moved on to using these newly acquired words in short answers and questions and short sentences.
As part of the overall literacy and language process for the introduction to this unit the majority of the students in the class engaged in these activities:

- using the new words and phrases orally in pairs and small groups
- syllabification practice, where the students clapped each syllable
- choral reading of questions and phrases
- individual reading of words and simple sentences
- copying job names
- drill exercises and cloze exercises
- locating initial and final sounds

- locating groups of letters in words, for example, or as in work, world
- onset and rhyme practice in individual words
- reading simple booklet What’s his job?

The students needing practice with either holding a pen or forming letters worked with a tutor who helped them trace over job names which were written in large letters and light-coloured font.

The second lesson began with a revision of the previously introduced English language and vocabulary but this time there was a grammatical emphasis on pronouns, that is, ‘What’s his/ her job?’ and ‘He’s/she’s a …’. This lesson was introduced and taught using similar activities to those listed above. All of the vocabulary was recycled through additional activities involving:

- alphabetical order
- picture and word matching
- using new vocabulary in sentences
- cloze exercises
- oral work in pairs.

Where possible the words were seen and used in context and the written word was supported by a visual on the worksheets. Each worksheet was modelled as a whole class exercise before the more capable of the students completed the worksheets individually.

The remaining two lessons followed the same format as above but this time with a greater focus on questions and sentence construction.
Integral to the overall learning process in this unit were the DCAs I developed for these students to use in the computer laboratory. For this unit I developed four separate DCAs, which were tailored to the students’ needs and contained simple graphics, limited text and, most importantly, audio. As mentioned earlier, during the unit of work, the students spent two half-hour sessions per week in the computer laboratory where they worked individually and at their own pace reading, listening and practising the words, phrases and short sentences. Warschauer and Healy (1998) discuss similar advantages for using computers for language instruction and add that computers are also beneficial for:

- self-paced learning
- different types of practice with immediate feedback
- real-life skill building in computer use.

A print version of the first DCA for this unit can be seen below.
In order to see how the students progressed in this unit of work, the last DCA is also included. When students press the speaker symbol they can hear the words, phrases or questions associated with the screen they are looking at.
I found that introducing computers to this particular group of students was important in that being able to use a computer individually helped them regain some control of their lives and also gave them much needed confidence. Let’s face it, having to be shown how to hold a pen and laboriously trace and copy words for any length of time must be quite disheartening. On the other hand, being able to tell your daughters and sons that you can use a computer (even if in the simplest of ways) would be uplifting.

The students’ engagement with this topic was very high and I think there are a number of reasons for this. Apart from the relevance of the topic, the lessons were scaffolded (cf Hammond and Gibbons 2005) to provide maximum support for the challenges facing adult preliterate learners with little or no previous formal education. For example, I deliberately introduced a limited number of jobs and related phrases at a time so that the learning was presented in manageable chunks. The constant recycling of vocabulary and the intensive literacy work was also beneficial for the students’ learning due to their unfamiliarity with the English language, lack of previous literacy skills and lack of experience in a formal learning environment. Like Ramm (1992), I have also found overhead transparencies to be a useful way of ensuring students with little formal education know what to do when faced with a worksheet. From my experience of working with preliterate adult female African students, I have found that they enjoy learning through drill exercises and chanting, as is similarly suggested by Nicholas and Williams (2003).

The aspects discussed above, combined with the DCAs I developed for individual use by students in the computer laboratory, ensured that the students were exposed to a wide range of teaching strategies. The DCAs allowed for much needed repetition and also allowed the students to work at their own pace. Some students completed all of the DCAs while others focused on areas of the DCAs where they felt most comfortable.

The fifth and final session was an excursion to Parliament House, where we went to see where the Prime Minister works. This coincided with the launch of the report of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (formerly the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs) entitled Australia’s support for humanitarian entrants 2004–05. I took photos and out of these developed a reader with text and pictures for future classroom use.

A range of reasons contributed to the students being able to cope with this unit of work. Not only were a variety of teaching strategies used, but most of the students had already had a thorough introduction to the world of the classroom and other basic elements such as holding a pen, tracing and copying. The earlier groundwork ensured that the students’ literacy and language development continued to strengthen while proceeding through the unit The World of Work. At the conclusion of the unit, three quarters of the students in the class could read simplified texts associated with jobs (three or four sentences) and could answer simple comprehension questions using the interactive DCAs and reading from a hard copy. All but one of the original group of students could read approximately 100 to 200 words. They could also:

- hold their papers the right way up
- read short sentences and small booklets
- produce short sentences using flash cards as a guide
- fill out a very basic form without copying
- organise their worksheets into folders
- recognise social sight words.
As a result of the teaching strategies and the students’ learning their confidence levels increased significantly. Alongside the knowledge the students gained, I gained knowledge of the Dinka world and I also acquired some Dinka vocabulary.

**Trialling the unit in another venue**

**Trialling teacher**
The materials were trialled by an AMEP teacher working in northern Melbourne. This teacher has many years of experience teaching in the AMEP and is particularly well equipped for computer-assisted learning for students with low literacy.

**Response of the trialling teacher**
The students responded really well to this unit of work especially the computer-assisted learning, not only because all of them are very keen on using this technology but also because the DCAs Alex developed for the computers were visually very stimulating. For example, syllables ‘fly’ across the computer screen to form the names of each of the jobs depicted. At the same time, the DCAs were also clear and easy to use, with even the weaker students able to navigate through the package well. Throughout the computer session the students were all very engrossed, so much so that I had to remind them that class was about to finish. Towards the end of computer classes they are usually packed up and heading off to pick up children from school! Language-wise, through both the computer work and the class work, students learned the names of jobs and some simple questions and answers relating to jobs. In terms of their literacy development, the unit of work contributed well to their learning to match print to sound. For this reason they found the worksheets challenging but their design (layout, presentation of language in small chunks) supported the learning well as did the recycling of language in a variety of contexts. The unit of work generated a lot of associated language from my class because one student had just done a week of fruit-picking – a job with which many were familiar from their own countries. The students were very interested to know more about this job because of its relevance to their previous experience (and possibly their future employment in Australia). The discussion recycled a lot of previous language, for example, the names of fruit and numbers (in relation to wages, accommodation and transport costs) – and also generated new language. I typed out the discussion into a text for additional classroom work. It added a personal dimension to the topic, which may not have been possible if the introduction of the unit of work had not timed so well with the student’s fruit-picking experience.

Overall, I think *The World of Work* is a great example of what can be done at this low level, particularly the digital material because there is very little commercially available for this language level.

**Reflections of the unit developer**

Upon reflection I think that if I were to do the unit again I would perhaps produce a few more easy readers and also focus on more work with phonics and vocabulary. I am pleased to see that the trialling teacher’s students enjoyed the DCAs and accompanying materials as much as my preliterate students did. I believe that the DCAs allowed the students to regain a certain level of independence and control. This independence and control had been taken away from them during the traumatic events which they endured before coming to Australia.
A technical term, sometimes also rime, referring to the nucleus and the coda or final element of a syllable.

References


Healthy nutrition and fast food

Nic McLean: Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT), Preston, Victoria

Introduction

Summary of the topic and materials
Using the popular documentary Super Size Me as a springboard, the unit of work uses a range of literacies for developing students’ capacity to make critical choices.

The teacher
I have worked as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher for the past nine years in a variety of contexts. This includes two and a half years in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic as an Australian volunteer with the Lao Government, as well as two years in the Northern Territory delivering programs both in Darwin and in remote communities. I have also worked on a variety of programs with newly-arrived migrants and people with refugee backgrounds in Melbourne. I have worked on the Young Adult Migrant Education Course (YAMEC) for the past 18 months at NMIT. This targets students aged between 17 and 24. The majority of them have refugee backgrounds and have experienced disrupted learning.

I chose to become involved in the project because I am a big advocate of incorporating materials in the classroom that have immediate resonance with the students. This is even more important with young ESL students because they often carry the torch of popular culture and have a strong desire to belong to contemporary society. Many materials I encounter are either not relevant or are too difficult to access for a young ESL student in CSWE II. I attempt to redress this by developing a lot of my own materials for the classroom. As a result, I wanted to contribute some of my own ideas and experiences to a project that targets this very interesting and important group of students.

The class
I developed this unit of work about fast food and health for a mixed gender group of young adults aged 17–24 with reading and writing proficiencies of International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR) 1- to 1. The majority have refugee backgrounds with severely disrupted learning. The remainder of the group were migrants usually with intact education up to year 9. Their countries of origin were Somalia, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Vietnam, Iraq and Vanuatu.

The unit of work

Developing the unit
I chose this topic after observing my students’ eating habits and reflecting on the impact this had in the classroom. As well, I was considering the long-term impact these habits might have on
their health. I also reflected upon my students’ behaviour and how many of them clearly wanted to feel assimilated within ‘mainstream’ Australian culture.

I had previously developed some units of work on diabetes and diet for a group of Indigenous students I worked with in the Northern Territory. I could see the impact an unbalanced, high sugar diet was having on some of these students; in particular their capacity to learn and function effectively within the classroom. I wanted to develop these units further and raise the YAMEC students’ awareness of the relationship between diet and health. Health would cover both physical and emotional wellbeing. I also felt it was important to look at how popular fast food companies affect our eating habits.

A number of texts have been influential in developing my own views about what needs to be taught in an ESL class for young people. These include texts about critical literacy, for example Fehring and Green (2001) and Benesch (2001); and texts about content-based teaching, for example Snow and Brinton (1997) and Williams (2004). In part because of these influences I wanted to find a text to use as a springboard for unpacking diet, fast food and health. I decided to use the documentary Super Size Me as the central text for integrating all of these issues. The documentary is about a man who decides to eat nothing but fast food from a well-known multinational fast food chain for 30 days. The effect on his health and wellbeing is monitored and recorded on film over this 30-day period. It is essentially a critique of the fast food industry using one company as its model. Therefore, I was also hoping to build a critical awareness in my students of the persuasive power of multinational food companies within our day-to-day lives.

In using the film, I did not want to unpack too much of its more challenging language. I mainly wanted to use it for introducing the issues and ideas into the classroom. It was used primarily as a springboard for discussion and as a context for other texts to be introduced. These texts were designed to meet the language levels of the students and the requirements of the certificate they were enrolled in. The purpose of these texts was to enhance:

- Diagrammatic and numerical literacy by the use of Nutrition Australia’s ‘Healthy Eating Pyramid’ and their weight in relation to a height chart, called ‘Aim for the Healthy Weight Range’ (see reference list website). Diagrammatic and numerical literacy was also enhanced by the use of the ‘Nutrition Information’ chart available from the multinational fast food company’s website (see reference list), nutritional labels on various foods and a diagram of the internal organs of the body.
- Computer/internet literacy through teacher-developed worksheets to be completed after navigating to a particular website in order to find specific information (see reference list).

The majority of the tasks accompanying these texts were teacher-developed. However, some of the tasks came from the teaching resource of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, HealthWize (2004) and required minimal change.

Through the use of these developed materials and authentic texts, the content of the unit was able to address the specific competencies in the CSWE such as understanding spoken texts, participating in interactions involving explanation, reading information texts and reading tables, graphs and diagrams. They also gave the teacher a chance to increase students’ capacity to apply critical thinking skills to their everyday world.

**Trialling the unit**

A teaching guide for implementing the unit of work and some selected worksheets can be found in the appendixes. This is a revised version following the trialling of the materials with my class.
While the content is essentially the same, some of the sequencing was changed as a result of post-teaching analysis, reflection and editing. As the procedure shows, the unit is divided into ten stages. The DVD was not actually viewed until Stage 3 although interest in the topic was raised in Stage 1 through the use of advertisements for junk food and the poster for Super Size Me (available through the website). Stage 2 introduced the idea of nutrition and included a talk by a nutritionist. In this way the students were gaining key vocabulary and were becoming aware of the issues before viewing the DVD. The difficulty of the language in the film meant only certain scenes were selected. These selections were shown in four of the ten stages of the unit with the stages in between being devoted to further unpacking the issues and developing the competencies from the certificate. Each of the four viewings has a follow-up worksheet that tracks the decline of the man’s health over the 30 documented days of his fast food diet.

The students’ engagement with the topic was high because of the relevance of the issues raised in the DVD. When the unit of work was first introduced in Stage 1, the students had a lot to say about well-known fast food chains, and in fact many were more aware of the low health value of the food they served than I had anticipated. However, the students were very interested in the premise of the film and showing the DVD (or parts of the DVD) in separate stages also maintained their interest because they wanted to know the outcome of the story.

Apart from the DVD itself, the use of Nutrition Australia’s weight/height chart facilitated the most learning. This is perhaps partly because the activity was physical and dynamic with students working in groups to measure each other and then labelling each other in accordance with the chart. However, students had more difficulty with abstract concepts such as ‘nutrients’ and found it difficult to decipher the nutrition labels on food items. Nevertheless, students’ awareness was raised of both the content and purpose of these nutrition labels and they were able to think more critically about their own diet and health. They were also beginning to think critically about the role of fast food companies in our society.

**Trialling the unit in another venue**

**Trialling teacher**

The unit of work was trialled by an AMEP teacher working in Brisbane.

This teacher has been teaching English as a second or foreign language for seven years and has taught in the AMEP for two years.

**Response of the trialling teacher**

The students in the youth group with whom I trialled Nic’s unit of work about fast food and health were in a CSWE II class. None were refugees with interrupted education although some were struggling with written literacy. Some were fee-paying students.

The students found the topic very relevant and were stimulated by the media resource. They were extremely interested to learn about the nutrition guide and recommendations and also found it very interesting to hear the statistics and see the footage of overweight Americans used in the film Super Size Me. I think the information about why people in the US (and Australia) are getting fatter was truly illuminating for some students. As were the discussions about what actually constitutes junk food and what the recommended serves of each food group are. My students, like Nic’s, were very interested in the results of the experiment of eating only fast food for a month. As the documentary showed, the heath loss and weight gain of the man in the documentary was dramatic. Students concluded that it was better to eat fast food only now and again and to order a smaller size rather than ‘super size’.
I think if I were teaching it again I would get the students to write a food intake diary for a day or two so that they could compare themselves with the recommendations. Nevertheless, the topic was very effective because the students felt that it was important for their lives and they loved the DVD input and the personality of the man who undertook the experiment.

**Reflections of the unit developer**

A lot of background teaching needs to be done to make the facts alluded to in the DVD decipherable to students. This is partly why, after trialling it with this class, I would more carefully select the scenes I used in future classes. In contrast, the message itself was easy for students to understand.

If I were to develop this unit further then I would spend more time mapping the texts and tasks across to the competencies of the certificate level in which the students are enrolled. I would make it clearer which competencies I am teaching to and which tasks develop these skills. I would also include some assessment tasks at the end of the unit so that students would be able to gain a clearer understanding of their achievements. However, I would not want this to detract from the broader aim of developing critical thinking in my students.

There were a few illuminating moments for me as we worked through the unit. For example, the students found it more difficult to use measuring tapes and scales than I anticipated and suggests that the unit of work would benefit from a stronger focus on developing numeracy skills. Students also found the concept of a crossword more difficult than I anticipated. This suggests that I should include more opportunities for such activities in the future or determine which activities develop crucial skills and focus on these. I also found that the students had a very limited knowledge of organs in the body and their function. This suggests a whole new unit of work!

**References**


**Other websites:**

- [http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/Food-Facts](http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/Food-Facts)
- [http://www.blubberbuster.com](http://www.blubberbuster.com)
- [http://www.supersizeme.com (no longer active)](http://www.supersizeme.com (no longer active))
Appendix

Teaching learning guide and selected worksheets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Set the Topic:</strong></td>
<td>Fast food / Junk food / Advertising / Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Resources:**   | Advertisements from newspapers or magazines for fast food & junk food  
|                  | An advertising poster for *Super Size Me*  
|                  | (available from http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0390521/posters) |
| **Activities:**  | **Discussion:** |
|                  | Are these foods good or bad for you?  
|                  | Do you see these ads a lot on TV and in magazines?  
|                  | Do people buy this food because they see the ad? |
|                  | Draw out students’ knowledge of the topic and create a vocabulary list |
|                  | Introduce the idea of seeing movie *Super Size Me* |
|                  | Look at the poster:  
|                  | What might the movie be about?  
|                  | What is different about the way the poster presents the fast food company’s character?  
|                  | Note: Not made by a fast food chain but made about a fast food chain |
## Stage 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Topic:</strong></th>
<th>Introduce idea of nutrition &amp; why all food products have nutrition information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources:</strong></td>
<td>Class set of dictionaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrappers from a fast food restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The facts about our food (brochure from a fast food restaurant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Each student needs to bring a food label from home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Healthy food chart <a href="http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/Food_Facts/Fact_Sheets/Healthy-Living-Pyramid-Fact-Sheet.pdf">http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/Food_Facts/Fact_Sheets/Healthy-Living-Pyramid-Fact-Sheet.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Butcher’s paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pictures of some different foods from each of the food groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong></td>
<td>Talk by a Dietician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion and vocabulary generation/review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the definition of nutrition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary – what do these words mean? fat, sugar, carbohydrate, protein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raise awareness of the fact that different foods have different ingredients in them and they do different things to our body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Groupwork:</strong></td>
<td>In small groups students use the pictures to make a list of the different foods they ate on the weekend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look at the food pyramid and discuss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compare the pyramid to the food groups handout.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students put a number from 1–6 next to each item on their list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do they have too much of one group?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is that OK?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use butcher’s paper and write everything you had to eat last weekend. Put the food into food groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stage 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
<th>Part 1 of DVD <em>Super Size Me</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources:</td>
<td>Teacher-developed movie review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DVD <em>Super Size Me</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up worksheet: <em>Super Size Me</em> Part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Read movie review of <em>Super Size Me</em> / Discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watch Part 1 of the DVD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of Part 1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why did he eat McDonald’s for 30 days?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete follow-up worksheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Movie review: *Super Size Me*

Morgan Spurlock has made a movie documentary about a large fast food company and fast food. He decided to only eat fast food from this company every day for 30 days. He must eat it for breakfast, lunch and dinner. It was a big challenge.

The rules were:

1. Must eat only what is available over the counter
2. Must 'super size' when offered
3. Must eat every item on the menu when offered.

He also decided to reduce his exercise. He got doctors and dieticians to check him every few days.

The movie is very interesting because it looks at the effect of fast food on our health. It also looks at why fast food is a very big business and why it is so popular. What do you think will happen to Morgans health after 30 days? Watch his documentary and find out!
Follow-up worksheet

*Super Size Me*

**Before**
How many doctors did Morgan see?
Does Morgan have any health problems?
Are his blood tests OK?
Are his fat levels high?
Is he obese?
Is he fit?
Will he exercise a lot?
Why?

**Day 1**
What is he going to do for 30 days?
What are the 3 rules?
1. ______________________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________________

**Day 2**
What happened after he ate a Super Size meal?

**Day 3**
Was it easier or more difficult to eat the fast food after three days?
Why?
### Stage 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
<th>What is Healthy Eating?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources:</td>
<td>What is healthy eating? (from <a href="http://www.blubberbuster.com">http://www.blubberbuster.com</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher-developed worksheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Reading/discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete worksheets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Stage 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
<th>Using the Internet to find information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources:</td>
<td>Internet access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Navigate to websites:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete teacher-developed worksheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go to: <a href="http://www.vx4.com/misc-games/supersize-me-game.html">http://www.vx4.com/misc-games/supersize-me-game.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Play the Burgerman Game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go to <a href="http://www.blubberbuster.com">http://www.blubberbuster.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete teacher-developed worksheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Stage 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
<th>Part 2 of DVD Super Size Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources:</td>
<td>Pictures from HealthWize Unit 1 (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture [2004])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Super Size Me DVD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up worksheet: Super Size Me Part 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Look at the pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which pictures are about physical health?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which pictures are about emotional health?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which one is more important?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does one affect the other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watch Part 2 of DVD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete DVD follow-up worksheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Follow-up worksheet

Super Size Me

Day 5
After 5 days Morgan’s dietician says minimise / maximise your meals.
Is she worried? Why?
Has Morgan put on weight yet? Yes / No

Day 6
Chicken Nuggets
Do they use fresh chicken? Yes / No
Which part of his body is Morgan worried about?

Day 9
How does Morgan feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OK</th>
<th>happy</th>
<th>sad</th>
<th>depressed</th>
<th>bored</th>
<th>hungry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How many large hamburgers did Dan Gorske eat last year?
### Stage 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
<th>Using the Internet to Find Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources:</td>
<td>Internet access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worksheet: Super Size Me Facts (attached)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>Go to <a href="http://www.supersizeme.com">www.supersizeme.com</a> (no longer active)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete the worksheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Stage 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
<th>Obesity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tape measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class set of dictionaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow Post-it notes for writing name, height and weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worksheet: Weight for height chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Find a definition of obese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is another word for obese?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion:</td>
<td>Why is obesity a health problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What causes it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair work:</td>
<td>Measure and weigh each other, write down on a Post-it note, locate position on chart and write name on chart.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Worksheet: Super Size Me Facts

1. Go to www.supersizeme.com (no longer active)
2. Click on the line Supersize me by the lb
3. Fill in the missing words.

These facts? Uh, not so fun.
Each day, one in four Americans visits a fast food restaurant.

In 1972, Americans spent three _____________ a year on fast food – today Americans spend more than 110 billion dollars.

McDonalds feeds more than _____________ million people a day – more than the population of Spain.

French fries are the _____________ eaten vegetable in America.

In the US, Americans eat more than _____________ animals an hour.

___________ % of all Americans are either overweight or obese.

Obesity will pass smoking as the main reason people die in America.

The average child sees _____________ TV advertisements a year.

Only _____________ items on one fast food chains menu contain no sugar.

Willard Scott was the first Ronald McDonald – he was fired for being too fat.

McDonalds gives away _____________ toys per year than toy companies.

McDonalds calls people who eat a lot of their food ‘Heavy Users’.

McDonalds has more than _____________ restaurants in more than 100 countries on six continents.

Most nutritionists say ‘Do not eat fast food more than once a month’.

McDonalds represents _____________ of the total US fast food market.
Teacher’s Resource: Super Size Me Facts

1. Go to www.supersizeme.com (no longer active)
2. Click on the line Supersize me by the lb
3. Fill in the missing words.

These facts? Uh, not so fun.
Each day, one in four Americans visits a fast food restaurant.

In 1972, we spent three billion dollars a year on fast food – today we spend more than 110 billion dollars.

McDonald’s feeds more than 46 million people a day – more than the population of Spain.

French fries are the most eaten vegetable in America.

In the US, we eat more than 1,000,000 animals an hour.

60% of all Americans are either overweight or obese.

Obesity will pass smoking as the main reason people die in America.

The average child sees 10,000 TV advertisements a year.

Only seven items on one fast food chain’s menu contain no sugar.

Willard Scott was the first Ronald McDonald – he was fired for being too fat.

McDonald’s gives away more toys per year than toy companies.

McDonald’s calls people who eat a lot of their food ‘Heavy Users’.

McDonald’s has more than 30,000 restaurants in more than 100 countries on six continents.

Most nutritionists say ‘Do not eat fast food more than once a month’.

McDonald’s represents 43% of the total US fast food market.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up worksheet: Super Size Me Part 3 (see next page)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete follow-up worksheet 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Follow-up worksheet 3

**Super Size Me – Part 3**

**Day 9**
How does Morgan feel?
Which part of his body is he worried about?

**Day 10**
**Nutrition**
Is the nutrition information easy or difficult to find at the fast food restaurant he is going to?

**Blood test**
The dietician says the calories he is eating are 200% over / under what his body needs.
She says ‘cut out’ (stop) all the food / drinks at the fast food restaurant.

**Day 13**
Which is the fattest city in Texas?

**Day 14**
**Exercise and education**
Brian, the sports teacher, says that 45 minutes a week are enough / not enough for kids.
He says people should exercise __________ minutes a day.

Dr Gerald says physical education, nutrition and health are cut by schools so they can have more time for tests. True / False

**Day 17**
Morgan’s girlfriend says he has more / less energy now.

**Fast food and sugar**
The nutritionist says he’s eating too much sugar / carbohydrates / vitamins.

What are two things at fast food restaurants that do not have sugar?

1. 
2. 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Resources:** | *Super Size Me* DVD  
Diagram of organs in the body  
Follow-up worksheet: *Super Size Me* Part 4  
Butcher’s paper |
| **Activity:** | Label diagram of the internal organs of body  
Discuss organ functions and health maintenance  
Watch Part 4 of DVD  
Complete follow-up worksheet 4  
Put butcher’s paper on walls with two days per sheet.  
Students add one thing from their worksheet to each sheet of butcher’s paper. |
Follow-up worksheet 4

Super Size Me – Part 4

Write ONE thing that happens for each day:

eg The doctor said Morgan was OK.

eg Morgan felt very tired

Day 18

Day 21

Day 22

Day 25

Day 26

Day 27

Day 28

Day 29

Day 30
Neighbours

Renée Newling: Southbank Institute of TAFE, Brisbane, Queensland

Introduction

Summary of the topic and materials
The unit of work is aimed at raising cultural awareness through excerpts from the popular television series, Neighbours.

The teacher
I worked in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) from 1999 to 2002 and then taught English in Mexico in 2003. Since then I have been working in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). In every AMEP class I have had some Special Preparatory Program (SPP) students but never a class solely made up of those students, as I have now that I am working on a program specifically for youth.

I was interested in being part of this project because I wanted to learn new skills and learn how to develop materials with greater real life relevance for my students. I felt that this would increase their motivation and understanding of their new country.

Prior to the project, I had previously developed four units of work to accompany readers, a number of worksheets specifically to accompany video-based learning, as well as numerous, more general, worksheets for classroom use. However, I had never specifically developed content-based materials.

The class
I developed this unit of work for a CSWE Certificate II class of youth aged 18–22 years old. There was a wide diversity of cultures in the class with students from Thailand, Japan, Korea, the Sudan, Sierra Leone, China, Brazil, Poland, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Their education levels were also very diverse, ranging from very limited and interrupted primary school education to tertiary level education.

The unit of work

Developing the unit
Although I had never previously specifically included ‘culture’ in my teaching, I had been interested in the idea of doing so for some time. The participation of migrants or refugees in Australian society – socially, politically, academically – would, I thought, be enhanced by an explicitly cultural focus in the language classroom. However, my perception is that ‘culture’ is often not taught explicitly. Instead, students are expected to just absorb it.
While I was interested in exploring the idea of Australian culture as a topic for a unit of work, I was unsure how to narrow it down to something specific. To clarify my thinking, I discussed the idea and how it could be approached with others. In order to gain a deeper understanding, I also read some of the literature and teacher reference books on the teaching of culture. I read Fantini (1997), Gill and Cankova (2002) and Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), and from these I made a list of relevant ideas and possible activities.

Tomalin and Stempleski (1993: 7) suggest that some of the goals in teaching culture are:

- To help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviours.
- To help students to become more aware of conventional behaviour in common situations in the target culture.
- To help students to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalisations about the target culture.

They describe ‘culture’ as being made up of the elements of products, behaviours and ideas, as shown in the diagram below.

As I was a regular viewer of the television series *Neighbours*, I thought it could be a good way of looking at the ‘Behaviours’ part of ‘Aussie’ culture in order to raise consciousness of the ‘Ideas’ part.

My next step was to request that our library record the episodes over a one-week period, that is, a total of five episodes. I watched these numerous times in order to determine ways to extrapolate meaningful examples of Australian life. From these repeated viewings, I was able to select short segments from each episode to illustrate different aspects of ‘Aussie’ culture. I edited these and taped them onto one video.

As well as this video, the unit of work I developed included reading a television guide for finding out information about the program, photos of the characters or scenes from the section as pre-viewing aids, and the self-developed materials that, along with the video segments themselves, were the core of the unit of work.

**Trialling the unit**

I trialled this topic in two different CSWE II youth classes. My approach took the form of an action research project, with observations of the first trial informing my actions before and during the second trialling.
As I trialled the materials the first time, I made notes for improvement based on the students’ feedback and on my own observations and reflections. I observed that the students were initially stimulated and engaged with the topic but over time they became less motivated.

I considered there to be a number of reasons for this:

1. When we started the unit I had given the students a handout that contained all the questions for all the segments. This meant they could see what was coming and any possible suspense or motivating curiosity was lost.
2. The handouts themselves were too dense with too many questions and a repetitive layout.
3. I found that the hour-long sessions I had planned were too tiring for the students.
4. The format of watching the section from *Neighbours* first meant that students only tuned in to discussing what they had seen on the video and were not motivated to discuss their own culture.

As a result of the observations and feedback from the students, I made revisions to both the materials and some of the procedures before trialling the unit of work again with the second group of students.

### Discussion Card 9

How do women greet each other and say goodbye in your country?

How do young men greet each other in your country?

How do older women and younger men greet each other in your country?

What title do you use (eg first name, Mrs Jones, Aunty, etc)?

(Men) If you have a female friend in your country who has received bad news, how do you show that you care for her?

(Women) If you have a male friend in your country who has received bad news, how do you show that you care for him?

Let’s look at the next four scenes and look for answers to the same questions.

### Discussion Card 3

In your family who does the housework?

Who is the lazy person in your family?

If you feel angry with an older family member, what do you do?

Let’s look at this next scene and answer the following questions:

1. Whose house is it?  
   Father-in-law  
   Son-in-law

2. Who is doing the housework?  
   Father-in-law  
   Son-in-law

3. Who is lazy?  
   Father-in-law  
   Son-in-law

4. Who gets angry first?  
   Father-in-law  
   Son-in-law

5. Who is watching TV?  
   Father-in-law  
   Son-in-law
Discussion Card 4

After a wedding, what traditions are there in your country for the husband and wife when they move into their home together?

Generally, do husbands and wives touch each other in front of their children?

Let’s watch the next scene and answer the following:

1. What are the relationships between these people?
2. What are they doing? Why?

1. I changed the format of the materials from a handout to discussion cards. I found that these worked very well as they related to only one segment at a time so that the cultural point in that particular segment of *Neighbours* was brought out much more effectively. Having the questions on coloured card rather than on paper handouts clearly differentiated the activity as a discussion activity and meant that students were not tempted to write answers instead of talking as the students in the first trial had been.

2. The discussion cards were also more effective than the handouts had been because they had fewer and more selectively focused questions. This made it easier for the students to talk. It also made the discussions as a whole, more interesting because I structured the questions in such a way that the types of responses students could give were more varied.

3. Having separate discussion cards per ‘Neighbours’ segment meant that I could choose how much time I wanted to spend on teaching culture, because I could more easily control how long each discussion went for and when the students would move on to the next one. This kept the discussion and session punchy and stimulating. The ‘punch’ of these sessions was also enhanced by cutting them back from the original hour to a half hour slot in the teaching day.

4. As well as these changes to the materials themselves, I changed the format of the lesson structure so that students discussed their own culture first before viewing the *Neighbours* segment. I found that this worked far more effectively. They were motivated to discuss the questions and ask each other about their cultures. Effectively, this meant that at this point in the lesson, students were now exploring a range of cultures as they found out about similarities and differences in the cultures represented in the room. I think these discussions were really important in helping students understand that there was a variety of cultural responses possible to various different situations as well as their own and that of the culture they now found themselves in. After this discussion, they were more focused when it came to viewing the Australian scene on the video because numerous intriguing points of comparison had been raised in their minds. Consequently, the viewing was more purposeful and they watched keenly to find out more about Australian cultural norms and behaviours.
To finish off the unit, the students completed a comparative checklist of cultural behaviours.

**Checklist: Aussie Culture**

Use words such as **often, not often, sometimes, occasionally** and **never**, to complete your answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Australia</th>
<th>Your country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family members touch in public.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It’s OK to joke with an older family member.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It’s OK to be angry with an older family member.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Husband and wife touch in front of their children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Men cook for their family.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. People often get home delivery for dinner.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Bring flowers to someone sick in hospital.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Brothers and sisters touch each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Men and women usually have a relationship with, or marry, people of a similar age.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Women often hug and kiss to greet each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Young men shake hands or even hit each other in fun when they greet.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Younger people often use an older person’s first name when they greet.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Male and female friends may touch each other to show they care.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teaching procedure I used with the revised materials in the second class can be seen in the appendix to this chapter. The students really engaged with these revised materials and procedures and were highly motivated to participate in the discussions. Their feedback and comments showed me that they were able to perceive, verbalise and compare cultural differences. Perhaps more importantly they were able to see cultural differences through less judgmental eyes and react with more objectivity and greater acceptance. From my point of view, one of the most important and interesting aspects to come out of this unit of work was that viewing these excerpts of Neighbours generated discussion in the class of the misinterpretations students had had of certain ‘Aussie’ behaviours. Student feedback indicated that they appreciated gaining a deeper understanding of aspects of ‘Aussie’ culture that were difficult or confusing for them.

Reflections of the unit developer

The process of developing and trialling this unit of work confirmed for me that teaching ‘culture’ is possible and that a popular Australian soap opera is an effective stimulus. I had previously often thought it could be but I did not know how to tackle it. From being involved in this project, I learned that it is worth going out on a limb to explore a new aspect of teaching because the end result was effective and satisfying even though I initially felt unsure about how to approach it, and at times, discouraged, or overwhelmed.

From the workshops and readings (for example Williams 2004) I learned about the value of teaching topic content and found the challenge of developing the materials rewarding and extending. It has affected my teaching approach in that I have seen how topic content motivates students and stimulates them, because of the relevance of the content to their lives. Trialling the materials was invaluable! It showed me that it was the best way to work out what was good and what needed to be altered.

The whole process of choosing short segments from five episodes of Neighbours made me analyse what aspects of culture lent themselves to discussion more easily than others. One of the most interesting aspects of these discussions was that I also learned new and interesting things about culture along with my students. I became more aware of the differences within a culture because students from the same cultural backgrounds did not agree about everything. I realised that while generalisations are helpful, those differences are also important to discuss. In addition, the informality of Australian culture was made very clear to me through the discussions and through the students’ reactions to the video segments.

I learned from the students’ feedback that teaching culture is of great interest to them and that it helps them gain understanding of their new country. My aim was that students would feel empowered by an understanding of why people behave the way they do and to some extent I believe that was achieved.

I guess the challenge remains to develop a more generic formula which could be applied to a recording of any Neighbours episode so that teachers could tape a current episode and have students discuss cultural differences without too much extra work on the part of the teacher.

References


Appendix:

Teacher’s notes

To introduce the unit of work:

1. Ask students ‘What is culture?’ Students will probably suggest things like food, religion, music, dance, language, customs and traditions. Explain that culture affects every area of our lives. It affects how we act in regard to friendships, relationships, families, age, place, time, activity, food and body language, (for example touching, eye contact, smiling). The following examples are suggested:
   - In your culture you might not use your teacher’s first name in adult education but in Australia it is not unusual.
   - In your culture men might not cook for their family but in Australia men do cook or help out with the cooking (not all but it is not unusual).
   - In your culture a husband and wife might not hold hands in public, but in Australia it is not unusual.

2. Explain that the class is going to explore Australian culture and the students’ cultures through watching Australian TV. Not all Australian families are the same and Australians are not all like what the students will see on the television show but that by watching it we can learn general things about Australian culture.

3. Play the introduction (theme tune, credits) to Neighbours and ask students if they watch it or have heard of it? If so, what do they think of it?

4. Distribute TV guides. Students find Neighbours in the TV guide:
   - What time is it on?
   - Which days is it on?
   - What channel is it on?
   - What is the rating?
   - Who can watch it?

To view each segment from Neighbours

1. Pre-viewing
   Have students form pairs or small groups each with a discussion card related to the segment they will be watching. Go through the questions together to make sure students understand them. Students discuss for approximately five minutes. After the discussion, explain that the students are not to worry too much about following all the language in the segment of Neighbours they are about to watch. The aim is to look for answers to the same questions as those on the discussion card. Show students pictures from the scene they will be watching to prepare them.

2. Viewing
   Play the scene twice.
3. **Post-viewing**

   In their pairs or groups and using their discussion cards as prompts, students discuss what they have understood about ‘Aussie’ culture from the segment they have just watched. Conduct whole class follow-up discussion. Issues such as previous misinterpretations could be raised and examined.
Unit 9

What’s out there?: A guide for choosing a career through the Internet

Chris Spiteri: Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT), Broadmeadows, Victoria

Introduction

Summary of the topic and materials
This extensive unit of work was developed to assist students to make realistic career choices. It incorporates narrative texts and information texts, including electronic texts related to occupations. The unit is structured around the story of a refugee who wants to be a beautician. This career provides the jumping-off point for students to explore their own career interests. The main aim of the unit is to provide a process for gaining information, that is, how to find out about a specific type of work, where to find a course and how to make enquiries by telephone.

The teacher
In the 18 years I have worked in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), I have taught on a variety of different courses, including English for Interpreting, mainstream English as a Second Language (ESL) classes as well as Youth classes. I also have experience working in the mainstream TAFE sector where I worked in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes delivering English for the hospitality industry and English for the tourist industry. I am also very interested in computers and have delivered a computer skills course to Australians, that is, a course which was not language focused, and which focused on computing skills. I am committed to a content-based approach and have used it extensively for both my TAFE ESP work and in AMEP classes. For example, when teaching the English for the tourism courses, which were based in Werribee, Victoria, I developed a unit of work about the history of Werribee (including oral histories) and its places of interest. Another unit I developed for that course was about bar skills – making cocktails. I have also always used a content-based approach with AMEP classes, borrowing extensively from CHAMES, but also contributing to it. For example, I once developed a kit around the theme of using the Post Office, which was then available through CHAMES.

The class
This particular unit of work, What’s out there?: A guide for choosing a career through the Internet, was developed for a CSWE II class group of mainly Iraqi and Turkish youth.
There was a mix of males and females aged between 16 and 24 years. All had little or no previous formal education, with none having completed primary school and some with less than three years of education. Most of the students in the group were unaccompanied minors and were traumatised from their experiences of separation from their families, escape from their countries of origin and their years in refugee camps in Syria or Jordan. Some had worked since they were seven years old, for example one worked as a jeweller. All were very focused on getting a job.

The unit of work

Developing the unit

Many of us involved with the students in the Youth classes at NMIT have observed that they have unrealistic expectations for their future, so after discussions with my co-teacher, a youth worker from the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) based at the local Multicultural Resource Centre (MRC), and with personnel from the Managed Individual Pathways Scheme (MIPS), I began to plan a unit of work to help students understand some of the issues involved. Firstly, I accessed the My Future website (http://www.myfuture.edu.au) and navigated to the ‘occupations’ section. I wanted to break down the process of using this jobs resource into a series of steps that the students could follow in order to investigate any jobs of their choice. Once I had done that, I developed texts and visuals for the unit of work and then developed language exercises associated with the texts and activities.

The language used on the website is quite difficult so much of it would need to be pre-taught but I also wanted students to know that they did not have to understand everything in order to get the information they needed. I decided that the best way to achieve these aims was by first creating a reading text (with associated activities) about a refugee who, after arriving in Australia, set about finding out information about a particular occupation. The text would help to build students’ competency in reading narrative texts and the main character in the narrative would be the link throughout the whole unit of work. I knew that amongst the group of students, most of the boys wanted to be hairdressers or mechanics and most girls wanted to be hairdressers or beauticians. As it happened, the daughter of a colleague was studying to be a beautician, and was willing to not only talk to the class about her experiences but also practise giving facials and other beauty treatments to staff so that I could take photographs to use as visuals. The opportunity was too good to pass up and so the character, ‘Sandi the refugee who wanted to be a beautician’, was born.

This narrative text (see Appendix 1) formed the basis of the first section of the unit of work, after which the process that ‘Sandi’ used in order to find out information about the tasks, earnings, training and so on associated with being a beautician would be the generic model for students accessing their own information. I developed worksheets so that the students could navigate to the website and access specific information at their own pace (see Appendix 2). This also worked towards building the students’ competency in following procedural texts. The website itself is a good example of maths in context and useful for building the students’ mathematical understandings.

The next part of the unit was developed to help the students know how to get information about training courses. It included using the Internet to find out which colleges had courses and then using the street directory to locate colleges. After that, the students would practise dialogues in which they phoned the colleges for information. Finally, they would listen to recorded information about the courses such as they might hear at an information session given by the college. Using this generic model, the students would then follow the same procedures in order to find information about a job of their choice. Finally, they would give an oral presentation accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation to the class.
Trialling the unit

The unit of work took about 20 hours to complete. In the first lesson, after introducing the topic, we read the text about Sandi the refugee. The students were stunned that I had written a story that reflected their own experiences. It generated a lengthy discussion about parts of the text that were not quite accurate and about the situation in Iraq. The students were so motivated by reading a text to which they could relate so closely that they suggested that they write their own stories about coming to Australia.

In the second lesson, a week later, I recycled the text by giving it to the students as a cloze passage. We then did some more grammar work based on the text before students wrote their own sentences using sentences from the text as a model. The purpose of this was to focus on their grammatical needs and provide scaffolding for writing their own stories as they had suggested in the last lesson.

The next day I recycled the narrative again by presenting it as a practice assessment task. Students then began drafting their own stories using the text about Sandi as a model. While they were writing their stories, there was more discussion about the similarities and differences between Sandi’s story and their own experiences.

After this extensive introduction, we were ready to look at the duties and tasks (see Appendix 3) of a beautician. My colleague’s daughter, the trainee beautician, came to talk about her course and she brought along some of her ‘kit’ to initiate discussion. This was an enjoyable session as the youth could easily identify with another young person. The photographs I had taken of her working on a ‘client’ were very useful to the development of understandings in this section of the unit of work.

I had been a little worried that the males in the class would think the topic to be just for ‘girls’ but they enthusiastically joined in the discussions and other activities. To some extent this was due to the use of humour, which I find to be a very powerful tool to use in any classroom, and particularly when working with youth classes. It energises, relaxes and motivates students and teacher and the sharing of laughter can transform an atmosphere. Learning a second language can be very stressful for students with interrupted schooling and humour relieves the stress. Humour can be introduced through telling jokes, funny stories such as anecdotes from your own life, mime, exaggerated body language or word plays. This was particularly important when actually doing the section about manicures and pedicures. I deliberately encouraged students to mime and have fun with the language. When they did this, the boys barely noticed that they were doing a ‘girl’s thing’. In fact, such activities and associated worksheets prompted much discussion, with students extending discussions of what to do about hairy legs, dry skin or short nails, to what to do about pimples and from there, to relationships.

This section of the unit of work ensured that the students were familiar with the key vocabulary, after which they again followed written instructions to navigate to the website to find out about the duties in an authentic text. It was also important that students understood that not only do particular jobs have particular duties and tasks but that they also have particular personal requirements associated with them. To assist in building this understanding the students were then required to use the same website in order to access information about the personal requirements of a beautician.

We then turned to the next section of the unit, which was about how to choose a college. Students were again directed to the appropriate information on the website and from there the students were taken through the process followed by Sandi making choices about the most appropriate venue. This included looking up colleges in the street directory in order to determine if it were possible to travel there. The students found this difficult as using the
street directory is very complex. In fact, they could not do this independently, so we had to do it as a whole class exercise. I also found that when the unit of work required them to role play telephoning colleges of their choice for information, their telephone skills were very poor. They were, however, able to extract a lot of information from listening to a recorded information session, because the language they needed had been built up throughout the unit.

Using the skills and knowledge that had been built up through engaging with the content of this unit of work, students were able to research information about their own chosen career. Using this information, they produced a PowerPoint presentation. Students at the exit CSWE II level produced reasonable presentations but entry CSWE II students found this difficult.

We were fortunate in being able to conclude the unit with a talk by a Youth Worker (see Appendix 4). This tied the whole unit together because the Youth Worker told how, as a teenager he had had to leave Kenya without his family and come to Australia. He told of his educational journey from high school to university via TAFE. The students found this very inspiring because it showed them how, with effort, they can make successful lives for themselves in Australia.

Reflections of the unit developer

Overall, I think the unit was very successful. All the component parts – from the initial narrative text to the final presentation by the Youth Worker – worked together to assist the students to make informed choices. Having so much of the unit of work based around using the Internet was also a significant factor in its success, because of the students’ engagement with this technology. However, when I teach this unit again I will break some sections of it down into smaller components. The street directory, for example, is extremely complex and needs to be broken down into a series of steps that build towards the whole, in the same way as using the website was scaffolded in this unit. It would also be necessary to include a lot more work aimed at building students’ telephone skills.

I was also pleased, and a little relieved, that the choice of career to use as a model was so readily accepted by all students. While I had initially thought of using a more ‘uni-sex’ occupation, such as a shop assistant, it is unlikely that this would have enabled us, as a class group, to have had some very valuable discussions about gender issues that emanated from the tasks of a beautician. I feel it is important for a group of unaccompanied teenagers to be able to have such discussions with their peers and with a ‘trusted elder person’, in this case, their teacher.

References

The website: http://www.myfuture.edu.au
Appendix 1

The narrative

Sandi Hermiz was born in 1986 in Mosul in Iraq to an Assyrian family consisting of her mother, Mariam, her father, Daniel, her older sister Evelyn and two older brothers Robert and George. She spent the first five years of her life there. Life was hard for her family. They suffered a lot because they were Assyrian. They were not allowed to own their own homes in Iraq. There were other laws that made their lives very difficult. They did not feel comfortable and safe living in Iraq. Her family was scared for their future there.

In 1991 when the Gulf War started, her family fled to Syria where they lived for 12 years. Sandi was unable to go to school because her family had little money. She spent her time in Syria helping her mother with the housework.

Sandi and her family came to Australia and arrived in Melbourne to start a new life in 2003. Sandi was 17 years old and enrolled to learn English at Broadmeadows Language Centre. After a year, she decided she wanted to continue learning English at a TAFE to get a good job. She knew she had to study hard to pass CSWE III or higher.

Sandi spent her spare time doing make-up for family and friends and spent her spare money on make-up. Her dream was to be a beautician. Sandi decided she needed to have a plan and set about finding out as much information as she could about this career.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sandi is Assyrian.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There are seven people in her family.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sandi has lived all her life in Iraq.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Gulf War started in 1986.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sandi fled to Syria in 1991.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sandi had a good education.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In Syria, Sandi had a job.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

situation  fled  unable  enrol  continue  chance  career
spare     make-up  dream  beautician  plan  set about
Appendix 2

Navigating the website

Go to the computer room and follow the instructions the career adviser gave Sandi to get to Duties and Tasks of a beautician.

1. Turn on the computer

2. Double click Internet Explorer


4. Click the cursor on pages from Australia.

5. Type occupations in the search box and press enter.
6. Click on Occupations-Alphabetically

7. Click on B

8. Finally click on Beautician

9. If you do not arrive at the Beauty Therapist Fact Sheet go back to number 1.
Appendix 3

Tasks of a beautician

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>skin</th>
<th>face</th>
<th>body</th>
<th>massage</th>
<th>exercise</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>treatment</td>
<td>remove</td>
<td>sell</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>refer</td>
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<tr>
<td>manicure</td>
<td>pedicure</td>
<td>nail</td>
<td>eyelash tinting</td>
<td>eyebrow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Parts of the body</th>
<th>Body treatment</th>
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</table>

What’s your problem?

1. My nails are too short. What should I do?
   I think you should have ________________________________

2. My eyebrows aren’t dark enough. What should I do?
   ________________________________

3. My legs are hairy. What should I do?
   ________________________________

4. I feel really stressed. What should I do?
   ________________________________

5. My skin is too dry. What should I do?
   ________________________________
6. My toenails don’t look nice. What should I do?

7. I want my hands to look pretty. What should I do?

8. I’m going to a wedding and I want to look beautiful. What should I do?

9. My eyelashes are too light. What should I do?

10. I don’t have any make-up. What should I do?

11. I have a moustache and I’m not a boy. What should I do?

12. I think my face is looking too old. What should I do?

13. I think _________________________________
    
    What should I do?
Appendix 4:

Aden Abdi’s story

Abdi’s personal story was a moving one. He went out one day when he was 12, and when he came home his house was burned to the ground and his family had disappeared. Neighbours encouraged him to flee to Kenya with them. Abdi didn’t know for seven years what had happened to his family. He spent two and a half years in a refugee camp in Kenya before being accepted to come to Australia. He came by himself, at 15.

There was no such thing as a Language Centre for him and he went straight into Brunswick Secondary College. He stayed there for two years and then left to work. In the meantime, he had managed to contact his mother and brothers and sisters. His father had died. He brought the seven of them to Australia.

Abdi continued working and studying in Australia. He did VCE at Victoria University, and then went on to study Community Development. He is currently doing a Masters Degree and then wants to do a PhD. He is 28 years old now.

He encouraged us to go to TAFE first, as it was much easier for him to do this and then go to university later. TAFE helps you more with your study. He suggested to take less subjects than other students, and just do them again if you fail, it doesn’t matter. He said that making friends with people who didn’t speak his language really helped him to develop his English.

He also said that we all speak other languages already, and so we have an advantage, especially with Arabic, which is in high demand in the community sector for jobs. He also explained what Community Development workers do. He told us they help young people, people from other countries, people with problems and Aboriginal people. The subjects he studied were: politics, counselling, history, social work and communication skills. He does this work because he loves working with people. He doesn’t want to sit at a computer all day in an office.

Abdi works at Hume Council two days a week, in Broadmeadows, and also at Banksia Gardens Community Centre running After-School Programs, Holiday Programs and other recreational programs for young people.

He was inspiring because he was so happy with his life in Australia and said that nobody needs to feel frightened here. Everybody tries to help you here. It is not like the countries we come from, where the teachers are scary. Anybody can study, and the government can help you out with money if you can’t afford it. He made us laugh so we weren’t bored, and we felt like we could ask him any questions.
Unit 10

Understanding mobile phones

Winlita Gonsalvez, Geoff Tout-Smith and Marg Wilson: Holmesglen College of TAFE, Chadstone, Victoria

Introduction

Summary of the topic and materials
The unit was developed with the aim of assisting students make informed choices about purchasing a mobile phone and a phone plan. The unit covers the features and uses of mobile phones, the costs of using a mobile phone and some of the safety issues.

The teachers
We are all experienced English as a Second Language (ESL) and literacy teachers, and Marg and Winlita have previously worked with youth groups in the literacy area. Content-based teaching is an important focus of literacy teaching and also has a role in ESL teaching. We became involved in this project because we were interested in furthering our knowledge of content-based teaching and materials development.

The classes
Holmesglen doesn’t actually have separate youth classes but in the group we were teaching when we developed these materials the students were mainly between 17 and 25 years old with only a couple older than that. They were quite a mixed group, in that they were mainly migrants, but there were some international students. They were from a range of different places – four were refugees from the Horn of Africa, a few were European and the rest were Asian. Most would have had at least some high school education and there were a couple of university graduates. But the African students had spent time in refugee camps and had interrupted schooling. Like the rest of the group, their oracy skills were about International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR) 1 or 1+ but their literacy skills were low in comparison to the other students.

The unit of work

Developing the unit
We used a number of steps in developing the unit of work. First, we brainstormed possible topics and chose ‘mobile phones’ because of its relevance to the students. We had to find a topic that would be relevant to both the migrants and the international students. Sometimes this is hard to do. But we thought they would all relate well to mobile phones and so they would be motivated. We hoped they would find it interesting and useful and would already know something about the topic. Next, we did a mind map of the topic and found that it lends itself to so many different kinds of exploitations – you could, for example, look at the
etiquette of using mobile phones and investigate any cultural differences there may be in this. You could look at the health issues, at stories of rescues involving mobile phones. However, we had a limited time frame and we had to also limit our focus. Consequently, we decided on a consumer education angle because it is important, for example, to understand the different mobile phone plans and be able to choose what is best for one’s own needs.

After deciding our specific focus for the unit, we looked for information and authentic materials that we could use. We found the Web a really good source of information and materials from mobile phone companies and consumer organizations provided authentic texts and information. We also decided to incorporate parts of the pamphlets and instruction booklets that come with mobile phones. Because of our specific focus – consumer education – we also planned to use phone bills to raise awareness of, and discussion about, costs involved in using mobile phones. Once we had selected a range of texts, we looked at each text to determine what sort of reading, writing listening and speaking skills it lent itself to, that is, is it an instructional, factual or opinionative text and what vocabulary and grammar is involved? Lastly, based on the authentic texts, we developed activities and worksheets focusing on all four macro skills which we sequenced into a coherent unit of work. Activities such as talking about the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones allowed us to focus on language functions such as expressing opinions.

**Trialling the unit**

Our focus was on personalising the topic, that is, using people’s own experience of their mobile phones. We were fortunate because every student in our class had their own mobile and they loved to talk about it! So, they already knew a lot about mobile phones and were very enthusiastic about the topic. The content aspect was exciting and interesting for them and it had this personal relevance – they could bring along their own brochures about their own phones and they had lots of anecdotes and things to talk about. But they also liked the parts of the unit where it moved from content-based to more straight language skill focus, that is, they liked it when something emerged that was more explicit, for example, when we focused on the language of comparison for a discussion about the different types of phones. They could see grammar as part of real life, not just something in a book. Contextualising the grammar within the content worked very well.

In terms of their literacy development, there was a lot of recycling of language involved. The students did a lot of talking about the topic and knew a lot about it before they had to write anything. It was the ideal situation where the students are interested in what they were writing and they had acquired a lot of the language through the previous activities. Consequently, the errors they made showed us what we needed to focus on grammatically. This was done within the context of ideas that the students had produced, so it was interesting for the students. They saw it as more than just a grammar or error correction exercise. We found that the students really liked to have their errors corrected as a class group on the board because the errors they were making were in a controlled range and had relevance to them all. After using the examples on the board, we were able to get the students to do their own correction of the same type of errors in their own work.

**Trialling the unit in another venue**

**Trialling teacher**

The unit of work was trialled in a youth class by Chris Spiteri at Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT), Broadmeadows, Victoria. The students, who were mostly Iraqi, were 16–19 years old and all had less than seven years of formal education.
Response of the trialling teacher

The topic was certainly of interest to the students but the vocabulary was difficult for these learners who were at a beginning CSWE II level. Some of the activities, such as the functions of the phone and safety issues, were extremely difficult because they involved a lot of new vocabulary. For the unit of work to be really effective for the trialling class, it needed to be adapted and supplemented because of both the language level of my students and their educational background. As a result, while trialling the unit with this class, I placed more emphasis than the original unit on literacy development. In order to do this, I simplified the texts and made more literacy activities, such as cloze passages, to accompany them. I developed texts for each part of the unit for students to practise reading, writing and spelling. This meant, for example, spending a lot more time in lesson one on the uses of mobile phones in order to develop a written text as a model before students wrote their own text. Because of the literacy level of the students I omitted any of the particularly dense texts and associated activities such as reading a mobile phone plan. For students with such low educational backgrounds as these, it is better to include more concrete and hands-on activities and so I omitted some of the more dense and technical reading texts for sessions involving texting.

Over all, I think the approach taken by the unit developers reflects the difference in educational background of the two classes and was consequently too technical for a group in which none of the students had had more than primary schooling. However, I think the topic is very relevant, and with adaptation the unit of work worked well.

Reflections of the unit developers

Two of us have worked in this way before and we think it is a great way of working and highly effective in terms of learning outcomes. But it is also very time consuming. Administrators have to understand that if teachers are going to develop content-based materials, they need an adequate time frame to do it in. If that were to happen, it would be possible to prepare something lasting which could be used in class after class and transferred to other teachers.

Nevertheless, as the trial demonstrates, other teachers would not necessarily be able to just pick the unit up and use it because it may need adapting for the specific needs and interests of the particular class group. Even if the class groups were very similar in terms of language level and educational background, it is possible that the authentic materials had to be updated before the unit of work could be used.