

NATIVE LANGUAGE LITERACY SCREENING DEVICE



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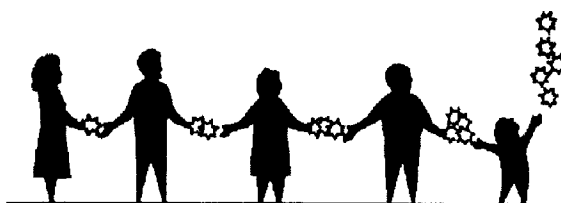
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is to the credit of many talented and dedicated individuals that the Native Language Literacy Screening Device is now available as a valuable resource to adult educators and learners. First, adult educators and learners themselves are commended for their preliminary work on the original translations of the screening device. Dick Mazziotti and the Translation Company of America, Inc. supplemented this work by producing, checking, and double-checking many of the pages of this document. Colleen Dowd, Kay Peavey, and Barbara E. Smith, Ed.D. of the Hudson River Center for Program Development, Inc. all contributed their respective expertise to the project. Finally, appreciation is extended to Pat Mooney Gonzalez, Ph.D., Linda Headley Walker, and Barbara Shay, Ph.D. of the New York State Education Department for their direction and guidance.



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Funds provided by:
The University of the State of New York, The State Education Department
Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education
under Section 353 of the Adult Education Act.
Project #0039-98-0064

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Albanian	Hindi	Punjabi
Arabic	Italian	Russian
Bengali	Japanese	Spanish
Chinese	Khmer	Tagalog
Croatian	Korean	Tigrinya
Farsi	Lao	Ukrainian
French	Pashto	Urdu
Haitian Creole	Polish	Vietnamese

Welcome!

In response to recent immigration trends and the emergence of a new adult learner profile, the New York State Education Department presents a valuable new assessment tool, the Native Language Literacy Screening Device.

BACKGROUND

Immigration to the United States is at its highest level since the beginning of this century. Over seven million documented immigrants came to this country in the decade ending in 1990, contributing to the 7.9 percent of U.S. population that is foreign born.ⁱ And, it is expected that this trend will continue. The U.S. Census Bureau projects between nine and twelve million immigrants will have entered the United States during the last decade of the twentieth century.ⁱⁱ

A natural result of this tremendous increase in U.S. immigration is a greater demand for English language instruction services. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are an estimated 12 – 14 million people who have serious difficulties in speaking, understanding, reading, or writing English.ⁱⁱⁱ

English proficiency is necessary for day-to-day interaction, but also for immigrants seeking citizenship. With the recent passage of tough immigration laws making sponsorship of new immigrants more difficult and the threat of government benefit cutbacks for some immigrants, a rudimentary command, at least, of the English language has become critical for survival in this country.

Consequently, the demand for English language instruction services is great. Unfortunately, the availability of such services is not great. Large metropolitan areas such as New York City, Los Angeles, and Miami all report having huge waiting lists for classes of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

To complicate an already over-burdened educational delivery system, many immigrants are in need of more than English language skills. There has been a substantial increase in the number of limited English proficient (LEP) adults who also have limited literacy skills in their native language. According to New York State Education Department (NYSED) data, approximately 27 percent of adult learners enrolled in New York City's ESOL classes are non-literate in their native language.^{iv}

A COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE

In response to the statewide ESOL trends of the past and present decades, the Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education of NYSED has provided increased technical assistance to agencies providing English language instruction. In addition, several major initiatives were developed, including:

Basic Education in the Native Language (BENL)

This program is based on the philosophy that adult learners are more effective in learning a second language if they first have some degree of literacy in their native language. All BENL programs funded by NYSED are required to have an English oral component.

ESOL Literacy

These programs are specifically designed to assist learners who have little or no literacy skills in their native language. Conducted entirely in English, the programs assist learners in acquiring basic literacy skills while at the same time developing their oral proficiency.

To further assist low-literate LEP adults, a third project was undertaken. The Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education is pleased to unveil the Native Language Literacy Screening Device (NLLSD). This assessment tool allows ESOL practitioners to gain a sense of the native language literacy levels of their learners. Historically, ESOL programs have relied on learners for assessing their own native language literacy. NLLSD can supplement such self-assessment, providing even greater insight into the adult learner's ability to read and write in their native language.

The screening device is presented in 27 primary languages (see box) which represent the most common spoken in New York State. The protocol for administering the device is explained in the next section of this binder.

WHY MEASURE LITERACY LEVELS?

When learners have had limited schooling in their first language, instructional strategies used in an ESOL class must be tailored to meet the needs of those learners. The goal must be to make language learning accessible to all students. If classroom teachers know that some or all of their students have difficulty reading printed material or writing, they can utilize a curriculum and plan instruction that relies less on printed text and more on oral communication.

Beyond making oral English instruction accessible to learners, programs will want to make reading and writing instruction available to those who need it. Some programs have selected a bilingual model where students develop their literacy skills in both their first language and in English; other programs have selected a model where literacy instruction is done in the ESOL class. The latter is particularly appropriate when working with students from many diverse language groups.

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| NLLSD
LANGUAGES
Albanian
Arabic
Bengali
Chinese
Croatian
English
Farsi
French
Haitian Creole
Hebrew
Hindi
Italian
Japanese
Khmer
Korean
Lao
Pashto
Polish
Portuguese
Punjabi
Russian
Spanish
Tagalog
Tigrinya
Ukrainian
Urdu
Vietnamese |
|---|

The purpose of the Native Language Literacy Screening Device is to give intake personnel, counselors, and teachers a tool to informally observe the native language literacy of learners coming into their programs. While this screening device should not be the sole measure, it can provide an indicator as to the native language literacy level. Regardless of the measures used, it is important to understand that literacy ability in any language is not static. It can be better represented as a continuum that is influenced by factors such as the amount of formal schooling learners have had, the age of the learners, and the amount of reading and writing learners do on a daily basis.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

The Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education is confident that this means of assessment will assist practitioners in appropriately placing adult learners in ESOL programs and designing instructional strategies appropriate to their skill levels. Questions or comments about the Native Language Literacy Screening Device should be directed to the contact listed below.

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ⁱ Statistics from United States Immigration & Naturalization Service's website, <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/stats>. Last updated 6/22/98

ⁱⁱ United States Department of Commerce News (Economics and Statistics Administration: Washington, D.C., CB93-78)

ⁱⁱⁱ *ESL and the American Dream: A Report on an Investigation of English as a Second Language Service for Adults* by F.P. Chisman, H. Spruck-Wrigley, and D.T. Ewen (Southport Institute for Policy Analysis: Washington D.C., 1993), pg. 1

^{iv} Data from an informal NYSED survey of administrators and staff of 60 programs conducted in 1992.