

Knowledge Bank

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Welcome

Introduction

Vocational education and trade qualifications on a par with university graduate certificates and graduate diplomas are a relatively recent addition to the VET sector's stable of offerings. They have emerged as industry demands workers with more than just technical skills and more than just theoretical knowledge.¹

Graduate Diploma qualifications enable people whose work involves applying a body of knowledge, in a range of contexts, to undertake professional or highly skilled work. This level of qualification can also be a pathway for further learning.

This Knowledge Bank contains five topic areas:

- the VET system
- learner characteristics
- theories
- ACSF and English language systems
- monitoring and evaluation.

Each topic area has information, research activities and readings to support you in building or validating your existing knowledge about aspects of delivery of language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) in the VET sector.

The information in the Knowledge Bank is directly connected to the practical application of the knowledge outlined in the Participant Workbook for each unit.

A fine line exists between information and knowledge. It is not intended that you memorise the various pieces of information in each topic area for its own sake. Rather, the intention of the Knowledge Bank is to:

- provide you with an opportunity to build a powerful set of perspectives and practical knowledge that you can apply in your particular practice environment
- enhance your capacity to deliver quality teaching and assessment services.

Sections in this Knowledge Bank

Research and reflective practice

Each topic has a set of background information and related research and reflective practice activities that you can use to deepen your understanding of the underpinning knowledge.

The research activities can be used as formative assessments and to provide evidence for the portfolios in some of the Assessment Tasks for particular units.

You will be referred to the Knowledge Bank from each Participant Workbook.

¹ Priest, A., 2009, *Getting the knowledge-skills mix right in high-level vocational education and training qualifications*, NCVET

Readings

Each topic has a set of reading material linked directly to the research activities and an additional reading list to support your own learning about a topic. Your facilitator may lead discussions around some of these readings, or you may want to discuss them with colleagues or other learners, or reflect on them in relation to the work you carry out in your own training organisation.

If you do not feel the readings represent your practice environment or experience you are encouraged to seek your own relevant readings to support your development of applied knowledge.

Appendices

This section provides specific reading material linked to the learning topics. Your facilitator may lead discussions around some of these or you may use them to work through the activities.

Using the Knowledge Bank

References

Throughout the Knowledge Bank you will be directed to websites for additional information. Given that web addresses can change you may need to check the link and use search tools to find updated links.

Context

The environment in which you are delivering education and training services is called the practice environment.

If you are already employed in an organisation that delivers training or assessment, your workplace will most likely be your practice environment. If not, your facilitator can help to find you a suitable practice environment.

If you do not have direct access to a practice environment your facilitator may need to help you by providing simulations or case studies that meet the assessment requirements for this unit. Throughout this workbook these environments will be referred to as your practice environment.

Compiling your own resources

As you use this Knowledge Bank, compile a resource kit (electronic or paper-based) to use for your work and help with your learning. This could include, for example, information that you print out or 'bookmark' from websites, resources you download, specific reports about your industry, or specific policies or procedures.

What you decide to put in your resource kit is up to you. Over time, it can become your resource companion containing information about current work practice and ideas.

The resource kit is for your own professional development and is different from any portfolio or file that you might keep for assessment purposes, although some resources may be included in both.

Recommended resources

In order to access the various readings and websites referred to in the Knowledge Bank topics you will need access to:

- an internet connection (preferably with bandwidth to support audio and video)
- a registered training organisation (RTO) library that preferably has subscriptions to academic journals and specialist LLN books.

Research and Reflective Practice

Topic 1: The national VET system

It's not what the vision is, it's what the vision does.

– Robert Fritz

Note: At the time of writing (May 2015) the Australian VET system was in a state of change. Where possible direct links to current information sources have been included however this has not been possible in all cases.

Whether you are a practitioner delivering accredited training outcomes in a stand-alone LLN program, a practitioner delivering integrated LLN support in relation to a vocational training package, or a practitioner delivering integrated LLN support in a community-based project, it is critical that you understand the basic elements of the VET system. Like any system, VET has rules and structures that can impact on the day-to-day work of delivery.

Understanding the VET system is covered in the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. If you have completed this qualification, then you may not need to complete the activities suggested here. If you have been working in the VET sector but are not familiar with LLN provision as a field of practice you may benefit from completing the readings and activities in that section.

As an LLN practitioner in VET your key role is to identify the critical language, literacy and numeracy content in a training specification and to help your learners by showing the level of skill required. You may also be asked to help a learner with the language, literacy and numeracy demands of their course of study, or the language, literacy and numeracy demands of their job.

Specific Participant Workbooks will require you to examine accredited course content and workplace documentation to extract the relevant LLN skills. But the dominant form of training specification used in VET is the training package so there is a specific section covering how to identify and analyse the LLN content within a streamlined unit of competency.

This topic covers the following content:

- Introduction to VET structures
- The National Skills Framework
- LLN provision in VET
- Unpacking LLN from training packages.

A brief history of VET

Prior to 1994 Australia had eight separate training systems operating independently of each other, and there was no recognition of qualifications between each state and territory.

Australia's national vocational education and training system was initiated with the establishment of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). Over a ten-year period, in consultation with the state and territory training authorities, ANTA established a number of national vocational education and training policies to improve training in Australia. Many of the elements – industry-led, competency-based, nationally recognised and quality assured – remain as features of the VET system today.

On 1 July 2005 the responsibilities and functions of the ANTA were transferred to the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), previously known as the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

Following a change of government in 2013, responsibility for the management of VET at a Commonwealth Department level moved from the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIICSRTE) to the Department of Industry. In late 2014 it moved again to the Department of Education and Training. The structures and mechanisms for the management of VET may change in the future depending on the configuration of federal government departments and agencies assigned responsibility for education and training.

A history of VET in Australia can be found on the VET Development Centre website:

<http://www.voced.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/Apprenticeships_and_Traineeships_chart.pdf>

For a discussion on recent challenges faced by the VET sector read through the transcript of a Radio National program *The Cinderella sector: Vocational Education and Training in Australia*,

<<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rearvision/vocational-training/4864820#transcript>>.

VET policy bodies

Department of Education and Training

The Department of Education and Training was established in 2014. It is responsible for national policies and programs for early childhood education, school education, higher education, vocational education and training, international education and research.

Information about the Department's portfolio is currently available at:

<<https://education.gov.au/>>.

The COAG Industry and Skills Council

In 2014 the COAG Industry and Skills Council replaced the former Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE). It is chaired by responsible Australian Government Minister and comprises membership of all State and Territory Ministers with portfolio responsibility for education and training.

Further information is available at <<https://www.coag.gov.au/coag-councils>>.

National VET Regulator

The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) is the national regulator for Australia's vocational education and training sector. ASQA regulates courses and training providers to ensure nationally approved quality standards are met. ASQA's functions include:

- registering training providers as 'registered training organisations' (RTOs)
- registering organisations as CRICOS providers—providers that can enrol international students
- accrediting vocational education and training (VET) courses
- ensuring that organisations comply with the conditions and standards for registration, including by carrying out compliance audits.

ASQA may also collect, analyse and publish information on the VET sector and VET providers.

One of the core conditions of registration is that relevant applicants and RTOs comply with the requirements set out in the *VET Quality Framework*. The VET Quality Framework comprises:

- the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015
- the Fit and Proper Person Requirements
- the Financial Viability Risk Assessment Requirements
- the Data Provision Requirements, and
- the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Further information on the VET Quality Framework is available from ASQA: <<https://www.asqa.gov.au/about/australias-vet-sector/vet-quality-framework>>.

State and Territory Training Authorities

Each Australian state and territory government has a training authority that administers vocational education and training (VET), allocating funds, registering training organisations and accrediting courses.

The state and territory training authorities (STAs) are accountable to their minister, who is a member of the COAG Industry and Skills Council.

It is the responsibility of each STA to:

- plan and report on VET strategies
- purchase training on behalf of their government
- administer Australian Apprenticeships and VET in Schools programs
- administer funding and financial incentives for VET in the state or territory
- support training organisations, employers and the community on VET issues.

Research task: Currency of key agencies

A number of ministerial companies and regulatory agencies act as support mechanisms for the VET system. Recent reforms have seen changes to existing entities.

Access national and state advisory sites to find current information about the structure of the VET system including:

- the national VET regulator
- the body responsible for endorsing training packages
- the quality assurance framework and mechanisms including Standards for RTOs
- industry advisory bodies and organisations responsible for the development of training packages
- responsible government departments at Commonwealth and State/Territory level.

Training packages

A training package is a set of nationally-endorsed standards and qualifications for recognising and assessing people's skills in a specific industry, industry sector or enterprise. Training packages ensure the quality, consistency and industry relevance of training products.

Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) are responsible for developing the training package qualifications in consultation with the employers, unions and professional associations of an industry, who help define the outcomes that are required from training. The *Training.gov.au* site records all training package qualifications and their units of competency, and accredited courses.

Training packages describe the skills and knowledge that individuals need to be able to perform effectively in the workplace. They do not describe how a person should be trained. Teachers are called trainers in the VET system; trainers develop learning and assessment strategies – the 'how' – depending on learners' needs, abilities and circumstances.

When a training need is not addressed by an existing training package, an accredited course may be developed in response to that need.

In April 2015 a new model for training product development was announced by the Australian Government. New arrangements have commenced from 2016.

Further information on structures and processes for training package development and maintenance is available from the Department of Education and Training <<https://education.gov.au/news/new-arrangements-training-product-development-australian-industry>>

Standards for Training Packages

New Standards for Training Packages were introduced in 2012, with a final implementation date of 31 December 2015.

It is critical that you are familiar with the structure of all the components of the training package that you are delivering, and not just single units of competency. In particular, training package implementation guides and other companion volumes can provide essential information that will shape your practice.

Note: Later in this topic, there is a chapter named *Unpacking LLN from training packages*, dedicated to locating LLN content from streamlined units of competency.

Research task: The structure of a training package

1. Access information on the training packages that you use for delivery. Are they in the new Standards for Training Packages format? What Companion Volumes are available that include information on implementation (particularly of foundation skills)?
2. What mechanisms exist for you to provide feedback on the continuous improvement of training packages?
3. Discuss any issues arising from this investigation with colleagues.

Accredited courses

Accredited courses are developed to meet training needs that are not addressed by existing training packages. A course will not be accredited if it duplicates existing endorsed training package qualifications, or if the outcome can be achieved through the contextualisation of a training package qualification.

Accreditation is the responsibility of the Australian Skills Quality Authority or, in Victoria and WA, the state or territory course accrediting body.

There are two types of accredited courses.

1. Courses that result in an AQF qualification – referred to as *Certificate II in...* or *Diploma of...*
2. Courses that result in an AQF Statement of Attainment and are not complete qualifications – referred to as a *Course in...*

Accredited courses can cover specific industry content or they can cover general adult education – including stand-alone adult language, literacy and numeracy and preparatory vocational courses.

Accredited courses are listed on *Training.gov.au*, but course details are not always available on this site. State Training Authorities (STAs) or RTOs responsible for developing the course manage access to course content.

Research task: Stand-alone LLN courses

1. Locate the source of your state or territory's accredited course information.
2. Locate a copy of a stand-alone LLN course relevant to your delivery context.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is a system of nationally-recognised qualifications in schools, vocational education and training and higher education. It ensures the quality, consistency and portability of training outcomes across Australia. There are 10 levels in the framework.

Research task: Working with the AQF

1. Locate a copy of the AQF: <<https://www.aqf.edu.au/aqf-levels>>
2. Locate the description of each of the AQF qualifications, including the one for Diploma.
3. Compare the description of the Diploma level and the Certificate IV qualification level that you plan to deliver. What are the key differences?

Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)

New regulatory standards for training providers and regulators were introduced in 2015. These replace the Standards for NVR RTOs 2014.

The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) uses the Standards to ensure nationally consistent, high-quality training and assessment outcomes across Australia's vocational education and training system. Compliance with the Standards is a requirement for all ASQA registered training organisations and for applicants seeking registration.

Research task: Implications of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations on LLN practice

1. An explanation of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations is available at <<https://www.asqa.gov.au/standards>>.
2. Read through the Standards.
3. What information can you find through a web search or individual analysis on the key implications for your teaching and assessment practice?

Types of registered training

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) are providers and assessors of nationally-recognised training. Only RTOs can issue AQF qualifications and Statements of Attainment.

Training organisations must register with ASQA, or in some cases with their relevant state or territory registration authority, to provide nationally-recognised training within an approved scope of delivery.

In order to become registered, training organisations must meet the Standards for Registered Training Organisations. This ensures the quality of vocational education and training throughout Australia.

Registered Training Organisations may include TAFE colleges and institutes, private providers, adult and community education providers, community organisations, schools, higher education institutions, commercial and enterprise training providers, industry bodies, and other organisations that meet the Standards for Registered Training Organisations.

Research task: Supporting a working knowledge of VET

1. How is the training system administered in Australia and in your state or territory?
2. Identify and research your own state or territory government accreditation authority to see what information they provide and what support and resources they offer you as a practitioner interested in language, literacy and numeracy provision.
3. In a constantly changing policy and implementation environment, what steps might you take to keep in touch with VET news? Create a professional development plan.

LLN provision in VET

Adult language, literacy and numeracy provision has a long history in the Australian education and training environment.

If you are new to the field of LLN, you may be interested to read a number of papers that provide some context for current models of provision and some of the broad socio-economic political agendas that drive them.

Recommended reading

- Perkins, K., 2010, *Adult literacy and numeracy: Research and future strategy*, NCVET, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/adult-literacy-and-numeracy-research-and-future-strategy>>
- McKenna, R. and Fitzpatrick, L., 2005, *Integrated approaches to teaching adult literacy in Australia: A snapshot of practice in community services*, NCVET, <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1601.html>>

Foundation Skills

Definitions of language, literacy and numeracy skills and ways to describe them are in constant flux, but since 2010 the term 'foundation skills' has been used increasingly in a number of policy environments. The term is generally used in VET contexts to describe the combination of 'core' and 'employability' skills, although there is general agreement that there is synergy and overlap between the two lists of skills.

The National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults, the *FSK Foundation Skills Training Package* and the foundation skills sections in training package use the term 'foundation skills' to the combination of language, literacy and numeracy skills described by the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) and employability skills described by the Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework.

Although foundation skills can be viewed as those that ‘underpin’ other vocational learning and skills, they cannot be interpreted as only low-level or single-level skills. In a summary of research on adult literacy and numeracy, NCVER stated that:

...there is a growing recognition that the challenge is... not confined to those with poor basic skills, but extends to all people trying to understand new forms of communication and information as they take on different roles in life and work.²

You will need to develop an understanding of LLN in the Australian adult learning context that takes into account the diversity of adult learners. Unpacking language, literacy and numeracy skills and recognising how these link to notions of employability will involve developing an understanding of each of these separate terms, and of how they interact. This understanding will be an ongoing activity throughout your professional teaching life. It is important to be aware of the debates, both locally and internationally, and how these impact on approaches to teaching.

National Foundation Skills Strategy

In November 2011, the COAG Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE) agreed to a National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults (the National Strategy). Australian governments have worked in partnership to develop the National Strategy that outlines a shared vision to be implemented across a 10 year period.

The National Strategy focuses on improving outcomes for working age Australians (aged 15-64 years) with a view to moving more people to higher levels, but with a particular focus on those with low levels of foundation skill proficiency.

The National Strategy:

- identifies national priorities for improving adult foundation skills
- provides a consistent and coordinated framework of approaches to improving foundation skills across all levels of government for the period 2012–2022
- consists of both systemic and program level responses to identified issues in the area of foundation skills
- complements national initiatives that aim to build foundation skills in the early childhood, schools, VET and higher education sectors.

² National Centre for Vocational Education Research, (2005), *Adult Literacy Resource* (archived on VECED site), <<http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv52962>>

Foundation Skills Training Package

The *FSK Foundation Skills Training Package* makes foundation skills units of competency and qualifications available for use in vocational education and training (VET) programs to support vocational outcomes and provide vocational pathways. Units and qualifications in the *FSK Foundation Skills Training Package* are generic but are designed to be contextualised to suit the vocational needs of the learner or the vocational focus of the learning program.

There is an increasing number of resources and implementation case studies available about the use of the package to deliver both the standalone qualifications and the use of single units within other training package delivery.

The expanding role of the LLN practitioner

Building the capacity of the education and training workforces to deliver foundation skills is a national priority area in the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults.

In 2006 and NCVET report *Current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce*³, Mackay et al. found the opportunity for formal professional development for credentialed and non-credentialed practitioners was rare and that there had not been a formal replacement for the Adult Literacy Teaching and Adult Numeracy Teaching courses that were developed by the National Staff Development Committee in 1995.

In their report Mackay et al interviewed key professional development providers who predicted the following professional development needs and issues for their target audience:

- upskilling of language, literacy and numeracy teaching practitioners in meeting the needs of disparate groups of learners, with emphasis on learners from equity target groups
- keeping teachers abreast of national and state language, literacy and numeracy policy and curriculum in a constantly changing education and training context
- developing skills in flexible delivery to enable offering a variety of delivery modes and to assist in the development of multiliteracies in language, literacy and numeracy learners
- covering aspects of teaching practice
- updating knowledge of theories of language and learning
- training for leadership and management roles

³ Mackay, S., Burgoyne, U., Warwick, D., and Cipollone, J., *Current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce*

- taking a cyclic approach to professional development to cater for changes in personnel that will continue to occur due to the retirement of an ageing workforce and the high numbers of part-time and casual employees.

IBSA has developed courses to provide credentials and professional development opportunities:

- for practitioners from the vocational training field who may require upskilling in adult language, literacy and numeracy as a requirement of their job, and
- to provide pathways for existing LLN practitioners who may want to move into leadership positions that require additional expertise in assessment systems, research methodology or resource development.

Unpacking LLN from training packages

The term 'foundation skills' is used in training packages to refer to the combination of language, literacy and numeracy (or core) skills and employability skills. The term describes reading, writing, numeracy, and oral communication along with employability and learning skills.

Language, literacy and numeracy skills have long been included in training packages, however they have not always been 'unpacked' into the separate core skills.

As a VET practitioner interested in supporting learners' to develop their core skills, your role is to use your knowledge of the particular industry and its requirements and then make a professional judgement about the specific core skill required as well as the level required of that skill. You will be representing both the core skill demands of the tasks described in the unit as well as the core skill demands of performance in the workplace.

There are currently two ways that foundation skills are represented in training packages depending on when the unit was developed.

1. Explicit reference in the foundation skills section of all vocational units developed using the new Standards for Training Packages.
2. Integrated LLN and employability skills in elements and performance criteria in older units.

Unpacking a training package unit: three steps

Step 1: Identify the core skills

1. Review the elements and performance criteria in the unit to identify the critical technical skills to be demonstrated (unless the unit is about demonstrating a core skill in itself, for example, *BSBWRT301 Write simple documents*, in which case note that a core skill or combination of skills underpins the demonstration of a larger technical task) and then, using a tool like the 'Trigger words' tool, list the core skill demands that underpin those critical technical skills.
2. Check the assessment requirements for that unit, including both the performance evidence and the knowledge evidence, to see if there are any core skill demands additional to those detailed in the unit's elements and performance criteria.
3. Review these findings against the content in the foundation skills section of the unit and note any discrepancies, for example, is there a critical core skill in an element or performance criteria that has not been listed in the foundation skills section?

Step 2: Analyse the complexity of the skill required or the ACSF level

1. Decide on the exact nature of the core skill required, for example, using your industry knowledge you might know that the term 'appropriate documentation' means the use of a particular checklist.
2. If you are familiar with the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) you may wish to assign an indicative level.

You may wish to complete the activities on the ACSF in Topic 4 of this guide before continuing to Step 3.

Step 3: Evaluate the core skills and/or ACSF information

1. Review the previous two steps and consider whether you agree with the representation of the nature and scope of core skills in the various sections of the unit.
2. Note any ways that the ACSF or references to foundation skills could be strengthened in the unit.

A template for this analysis may be found in Appendix 2. Using *MSAPMSUP303A Identify equipment faults* as an example, one core skill (oral communication) has been unpacked for you.

Research task

1. Locate a training package in a work area that suits your practice environment, and look at the unit titles, noting any that seem to indicate a likely language, literacy and numeracy component.
2. Choose two units:
 - a. one that seems to have LLN content, for example, *BSBWRT301 Write simple documents*
 - b. one general vocational unit, for example, *MSAPMSUP303A Identify equipment faults*.
3. Print out the two units and following the *Unpacking a training package unit: three steps*, above, fill out the table in Appendix 2.

Training packages have a continuous improvement cycle and each Industry Skills Council has a feedback register where practitioners can register anomalies, omissions and suggestions for improvement in future editions of a training package. Locate the feedback register for the training package you are analysing and submit your feedback (with an emphasis on what could be done to improve the product in relation to the ways LLN concepts are communicated).

Assigning ACSF levels to unit content

Once you have identified the critical core skills required in a unit you need to analyse them against the five levels of performance of the ACSF. Topic 4 in this guide contains detailed information about the ACSF.

A decision on the ACSF level of a required skill should include consideration of the performance variables with particular emphasis on the complexity of the text and the task.

Remember that variables interact to determine the level of difficulty of literacy tasks, for example:

- application of language in variety of settings, including personal communication, social communication or workplace communication
- familiarity of context
- length and complexity of text language and structure
- degree of inference the reader is required to make, or how explicit a text is
- kind of information in a text, for example concrete compared to abstract
- extent of support required to respond to a text.

You should review the identified core skill content in the unit, against the core skill grids and with reference to the Sample Activities, to make a professional judgement about the ACSF level.

The ability to assign ACSF levels requires practice and moderation of views among a number of practitioners. As you practise and gain confidence you are more likely to feel capable of mapping ACSF levels to units on your own.

Research task

Industry Skills Councils have mapped a selection of units from training packages to the ACSF. This work may appear in companion volumes of training packages or be available directly from individual Industry Skills Councils.

1. Watch the video on the ACSF mapping work by Community Services and Health ISC:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AO6F3ewO8ww&list=PLD1VjDGwGl3anVTEw49J_0_34SjbaDGJ0>
2. Is it possible to make a clear judgement on the ACSF level of a core skills described?

Topic 2: Learner characteristics

...the most universal quality is diversity.

- Michel de Montaigne

In any teaching environment, the teacher or trainer must consider the individual characteristics that learners bring to the delivery. This is even more significant in an adult environment, where the learners come equipped with a wealth of experience. This Knowledge Bank topic looks at some of the aspects of a learner's background and how these may affect attendance, participation, learning and progress. Learners bring a variety of experiences from their personal circumstances and previous study or work that may be an asset or a barrier to their current learning.

This topic covers the following content:

- Literacy and numeracy levels and the Australian population
- Factors in an adult learner's background
- Learning styles.

International surveys

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the Adult Literacy and Life Skills survey (ALLS) were large-scale, internationally comparative assessments designed to measure the skills and characteristics of individuals within and between participating countries. The ALLS survey was conducted in Australia in 2006 and the data sets on Australian literacy and numeracy levels derived from the survey have formed the basis of many policy documents and discussions over the past 5 years.

In 2011 Australia participated in a further international survey of adult literacy and numeracy, the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), conducted in 33 countries.

PIAAC in Australia

PIAAC in Australia was administered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on behalf of the Australian Government. The survey measures adult skills and competencies. These competencies include literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills, with a particular focus on skills needed for success in the information age. PIAAC has an emphasis on the skills used by people in their jobs and includes information on the use of reading and numeracy at work as well as other workplace skills including team work, communication, presentation and information and technology skills. Twenty-four countries are participating in PIAAC including Australia, the USA, the UK, Canada, Japan and Korea.

The survey in Australia involved a random sample of private dwellings in which one person per dwelling participated in the survey. The sample included people aged 15 to 74 years in all states and territories, excluding very remote areas. Major sub-populations, such as working and non-working populations, people born overseas, those from low socio-economic backgrounds, and those with low self-perceived health status, can be identified in the survey. While an important aim of the survey is to identify populations whose performance in terms of skills places them at risk, release of Indigenous estimates is subject to restrictions because the ALLS sample size and coverage was not designed to be representative of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. Furthermore, the content of the survey would need substantial redesign to accommodate cultural differentiation.

Readings and resources

Below are some examples of reports generated through analysis of survey data. Most of those currently available are based on the ALLS, but more will emerge from the PIAAC data over time.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS),
<<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/%20Lookup/4228.0main+features992011-2012>>
- Department of Industry,
<<http://www.innovation.gov.au/skills/ResourcesAndPublications/ProgrammeForTheInternationalAssessmentOfAdultCompetencies/Pages/default.aspx>>
- Australian Council for Educational Research, *Adult literacy and numeracy – what’s the story?*, Juliette Mendelovits,
<<http://rd.acer.edu.au/article/adult-literacy-and-numeracy-whats-the-story>>
- Duncan, C., and Adhikari, P., 2006, *Adult literacy and lifeskills survey 2006: Selected findings*, National Centre for Education and Training Statistics, ABS.

This is a PDF of a PowerPoint presentation by ABS statisticians on elements of the data related to particular cohorts.

- Satherley, P., Lawes, E. and Sok, S., 2008, *The Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) Survey: Overview and international comparisons*, Ministry of Education, New Zealand.

This document from New Zealand provides some comparisons of data from countries in the first and second rounds of ALLS.

- Tout, D., 2008, *Population measures and the ALL Survey: It’s not just about numbers – numeracy and Australian training*, Australian VET Research Association (AVETRA), Crows Nest, NSW.

This is a paper concentrating on specific implications for numeracy.

- Shore, S., and Searle, J., 2008, *Literacy and lifeskills in Australia: Implications for policy activism*, AVETRA, Crows Nest, NSW.

This paper outlines the implications for funding and practice.

- Ryan, C. and Sinning M., *Literacy and numeracy skills and their use by the Australian workforce*, Australian National University, NCVET, 2009.

This paper uses the ABS data to make some specific findings on skills used in the workforce.

Factors in an adult learner's background

Learner's background

Because Australia is a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) society, as a VET practitioner your learners will come from a variety of English speaking and non-English speaking backgrounds.

This section considers the broad range of factors that may impact on a learner and their approach to learning. These include personal circumstances, background and learning preferences as well as learners' reasons for studying, attitude to study and what and how they expect to learn.

Education background, age, gender, culture, ethnicity, religion, education in first language, ability, disability, personal and family circumstance (which may include trauma, financial circumstance, balancing work, family, study or caring for dependants), learning styles and personality, can all affect a learner and their approach to learning.

According to their background each learner will have a range of factors that may affect learning, and progress and participation in education. While some factors may impede learning, others may contribute to or support learning.

As you consider how these factors may impact on your learner group you are encouraged to consider how they may impact on you and your own learning experiences. Refer to your own assessment of your core skills in the ACSF section.

Barton et al. researched a number of adult learners and their motivations for seeking out learning as adults. Barton states, 'each person has a particular combination of practices and identities, with a history behind them and an imagined future towards which they are travelling, situated within a set of current life circumstances and events'.⁴

Barton's work provides an overview of the factors impacting on learning that people bring to the learning setting, and includes some learner profiles. Although this article does not refer to EAL learners, it covers many aspects that are common to all adult learners.

⁴ Barton, D., et al., 2006, *Relating adults lives and learning: Participation and engagement in different settings*, NDRC, UK

Your delivery context

You will be asked to reflect on characteristics of your learner group in the Participant Workbooks linked to specific units.

According to the type of provision you are working in, or intending to work in, your learners' backgrounds will differ. It is crucial to consider learner's backgrounds as a factor that will contribute to a person's sense of themselves as a learner, but not to stereotype them based on your own assumptions. You will need to consider this information in light of any equal opportunity and ethical considerations and responsibilities related to your employment contract.

Research task: Examining participation and engagement

Read: Barton, D., Appleby, Y., Hodge, R., Tusting, K., and Ivanic, R., 2006, *Relating adults lives and learning: Participation and engagement in different settings*, NDRC, UK, <<http://www.nrdc.org/?p=363>>, Chapter 3, pp. 11–22.

1. Consider their findings in light of your own learner group.
2. What insights can you derive about the implications for program design and delivery from your analysis of the readings?

Learning styles

In this section learning styles are introduced with consideration given to both the learner's and the teacher or trainer's learning style. Participants should be aware of these factors and, where appropriate, modify their teaching or training and classroom activities to help the learner and accommodate difference.

Identifying your own learning style

There are many theories related to learning styles. As a practitioner it is important for you to understand your own learning style and how this impacts on your choice of delivery and assessment activities as well as considering how you can cater for the wide range of learner styles.

Research task: Exploring learning styles

1. Complete your own *Visual auditory kinaesthetic (VAK) learning styles survey*, found at
<<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/styles/vak.html>>
2. Do you have one dominant learning style?
3. What effect might your learning style have on how you teach and how you might accommodate the different learning styles of your learners?
4. Read through Julie Coates' short article on generational learning styles at
<http://www.generationalllearningstyles.com/book_intro.cfm>
5. Do you think learning styles change with age? Compare young children with teenagers and mature adults.
6. What affect might the age group of your learners have on how you teach and how you might accommodate their different learning styles?

Implications of learning styles for delivery and design

There has been a deal of research in Australian VET on learning styles, strategies and preferences. In their report *Getting to grips with learning styles*, Smith and Dalton found that:

...typically, VET learners are inclined to be:

- *more visual than verbal, in that they like to watch and see rather than read and listen*
- *hands-on learners who prefer to learn by doing and by practising*
- *characterised by socially contextualised learning where they like to learn in groups with other learners*
- *not self-directed learners, but like to have instructor guidance and a clear understanding of what is required of them.*⁵

⁵ Smith, P., and Dalton, J., 2005, *Getting to grips with learning styles*, NCVER

Research task: Digging deeper on learning styles

1. Read through the NCVET report, *Getting to grips with learning styles*, available at <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/getting-to-grips-with-learning-styles>>
2. Identify an aspect of the report that interests you and has implications for your work that you would like to research further.
3. Find and access a relevant piece of research on learning styles using:
 - a. a website
 - b. a YouTube video
 - c. a text of your choice.
4. Document the findings of your research for use in your evidence portfolio.
5. Share and discuss your research with a colleague.

Accommodating learner style differences

Many factors in a learner's background can be accommodated by providing a variety of learning activities, providing facilities for learners with disabilities and an understanding of how all the factors discussed might affect a learner. However, there are some factors that may not be able to be accommodated, for example, learner preferences for the gender of the teacher or trainer, or the other participants in the class.

There are also factors that may require the learner to modify the ways they learn. Some learners will expect that learning as an adult will be similar to learning at school and therefore may expect you to direct and correct them in all activities. Others may resent old ways of learning and demand full independence. As a practitioner you will need to balance out the constraints of the learning environment, your own preference for delivery and the varied needs of your learners.

Cultural considerations

It is important for teachers and trainers, and also other personnel dealing with a second language learner, to understand some of the cultural differences that a learner may be facing and acknowledge them. It is important for staff to respect other cultures while at the same time helping the learner to adapt to the culture in which they are now living. It is important for participants to understand that teachers and trainers need to acknowledge differences and to explain to learners why certain teaching techniques and activities are used.

Essential reading

- Reid, J. M., (ed), *Learning styles in the ESL/EFL classroom*, Heinle and Heinle Publishers, Florence, Kentucky.

Topic 3: Adult language, literacy and numeracy teaching theories

In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. But, in practice, there is.

– Jan L. A. van de Snepscheut

This topic outlines the main theories and methodologies underpinning adult LLN teaching and the readings and activities encourage you to explore how these might translate into practice.

This topic covers the following content:

- Adults as learners
- An examination of cultural and social functions of LLN
- Choosing and applying theory to practice – a ‘bower bird’ approach.

The purpose of this section is not to have you learn the theory for its own sake but to examine the theories and decide which ones you will use – in light of the learners you are interacting with and challenges you face in your practical day-to-day work.

Your delivery context

Depending on the cohort of learners you teach and the delivery context, the information and readings presented in each part will be useful to you in a variety of ways. The individual Participant Workbooks will refer to aspects of theory and may ask you to analyse one or more theories for a particular practical reason.

Adults as learners

Like children, adults bring a range of knowledge, experience and skills to learning. They also have a concept of themselves as learners. However, the life experiences of adults mean they bring considerably more to the learning experience – more knowledge, more experience, more skills, more opinions and a clearer view of themselves as learners. This may facilitate or hamper learning depending on the types of experiences, skills, knowledge and so on; they bring to the learning experience. Adults also have a number of competing demands on their time – such as family, work or community commitments, which may interfere with learning.

Adult learners in the Australian context

Adult learners in the Australian context bring to the classroom a diverse range of language backgrounds, educational experiences and purposes for learning. This diversity can include learners from backgrounds including those listed on the next page.

- Adults from English-speaking backgrounds who have grown up speaking only Standard Australian English (SAE) or a regional variety of SAE with little formal education, including those who may have a negative view of 'education' or limited literacy skills and learning skills.
- Adults who are speakers of Aboriginal English, and Indigenous speakers for whom English is an additional language.
- A range of adults with language backgrounds other than English. The dimensions of diversity in this group include: recently arrived migrants and refugees; people from settled communities which have been in Australia for some years; varying levels of literacy from people who are highly literate in their first language to those who are from mainly oral cultures, and those who initially develop English literacy skills that are stronger than their English oracy skills; varying levels of education in Australia and overseas; age; gender; intergenerational language issues; aspirational and motivational differences.

These learners will have different starting points, different needs in relation to learning, different language and literacy needs and focus. Each will bring cultural understandings about language and learning and the social practices of reading, writing, using numeracy and working with text.

The adult learning principles outlined here underpin adult education, whether the context is adult literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) skills or horticulture.

Adult learning principles and practice

Malcolm Knowles pioneered the field of adult learning and interprets the term 'andragogy'. He identified the following characteristics of adult learners:

- Adults are *autonomous and self-directed*. They need to be free to direct themselves. Their teachers must actively involve adult participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators for them.
- Adults have accumulated a foundation of *life experiences and knowledge* that may include work-related activities, family responsibilities, and previous education. They need to connect learning to this knowledge and experience base.
- Adults are *goal-oriented*. On enrolling in a course, they usually know what goal they want to attain.
- Adults are *relevancy-oriented*. They must see a reason for learning something. Learning has to be applicable to their work or other responsibilities to be of value to them.
- Adults are *practical*, focusing on the aspects of a lesson most useful to them in their work. They may not be interested in knowledge for its own sake.

- As do all learners, adults *need to be shown respect*. Instructors must acknowledge the wealth of experiences that adult participants bring to the classroom.

An assumption in Knowles' work is that self-directedness is an innate characteristic of adults. But practitioners working in adult language, literacy and numeracy contexts recognise that they need to actively assist many adults to move from being dependent to independent learners. See the information on Metacognition in Appendix 6.

Research task: From pedagogy to andragogy

Knowles' work has been critiqued and extended by other theorists, such as Brookfield and Mezirow, in order to clarify his ideas and bring practical application to them.

Read the article *Research for planning adult learning: An overview*, in Appendix 4.

1. What practical tips can you derive from this analysis of adult learning theory that you might apply in your practice? How might you assist learners to develop self-directed learning skills?
2. How do each of his points relate specifically to learners seeking to improve their LLN skills? How do they relate to your learner cohort?
3. If you are working with recently-arrived adult English language learners or with Indigenous learners of English as an additional language, how do these adult learning theories apply to these groups of learners?
4. What other considerations if any need to be made – are there other dimensions to learning influenced by cultural understandings or settlement experiences? How may these learners' languages help in development of English language skills?

Essential reading

- Brookfield, S.D., 1986, *Understanding and facilitating adult learning*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

Developing a perspective on teaching adults

In her article, *Four adult development theories and their implications for practice*, Baumgartner explores the relevance of adult development theories and models on the practice of adult basic education. She contends that each practitioner's theory or philosophy of adult development informs their teaching practice. For example, she says:

...if we believe that people mature by passively absorbing knowledge and reacting to their environments, our instruction differs from that of teachers who assume knowledge is constructed and that development depends on active participation with the environment.⁶

Baumgartner discuss several approaches to adult development and their related implications for instruction. The four adult development theories she examines are:

- behavioural/mechanistic
- cognitive/psychological
- contextual/sociocultural
- integrative.

Research task: Where do you stand?

Read Baumgartner, 2001, <<http://ncsall.net/index.php?id=268.html>>.

1. Examine each of the four adult development theories outlined in Baumgartner.
2. Which one best matches your own philosophy of teaching?
3. What are the implications of your alignment with this approach to your teaching and assessment practice?
4. Does the context in which you practice affect the philosophy you adopt and practice?
5. Discuss with colleagues.

⁶ Baumgartner, L. M., 2001, *Four adult development theories and their implications for practice*, p. 1, <<http://www.ncsall.net/index.html?id=268.html>>

Developing a perspective on teaching adult learners of English as an additional language

In light of the four development theories outlined in the article Baumgartner, discussed above, consider the following.

According to Paton and Wilkins:

It is important to value multiculturalism as an asset to learning and cognitive development, and to recognise the complexity of the process involved in acquiring an additional language with its implications for motivation, self-esteem and identity as well as for personal development and growth in confidence.⁷

Mitchell and Myles point out that there is:

A mismatch in power relations between any teacher and his/her learners and the way in which this may be accentuated by the ability of those who control the classroom discourse through language, simultaneously acting as 'gatekeepers' to the social goods and services of the dominant society.⁸

Consider some of the ways in which you may 'value multiculturalism' in the adult classroom.

Consider the power relations in the adult language classroom. How do you see your role in meeting the cultural and linguistic needs of English language learners?

Essential reading

- Baumgartner, L.M., 2001, 'Four adult development theories and their implications for practice', *Focus on basics*, vol. 5, Issue B, October, <<http://ncsall.net/index.php?id=268.html>>

Further reading for this section

- Foley, G. (ed.), 1995, *Understanding adult education and training*, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, NSW.
- Knowles, M. S., 1980, *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy*, 2nd edn, Cambridge Books, New York.
- Mackeracher, D., 1996, *Making sense of adult learning*, Culture Concepts, Toronto, Ontario.
- Merriam, S. B., and Caffarella, R. S., 1991, *Learning in adulthood. A comprehensive guide*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Brookfield, S., 1989, 'Myths and realities in adult education', *RaPaI Bulletin*, no. 10, Autumn.

⁷ Paton, A., and Wilkins, M., 2009, *Teaching Adult ESOL: Principles and Practice*, McGraw-Hill, Berkshire, UK.

⁸ Mitchell, R., and Myles, F., 1998, *Second language learning theories*, Arnold, London.

- Conner, M.L., 'How adults learn', *Ageless Learner*, <<http://www.agelesslearner.com/intros/adultlearning.html>>
- Fenwick, T., and Tennant, M., 2004, 'Understanding adult learners' in Foley, G. (ed.), *Dimensions of adult learning: Adult education and training in a global era*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, pp.55–73.
- Smith, M.K., 2002, 'Malcolm Knowles, informal adult education, self-direction and andragogy', *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*, <<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-knowl.htm>>
- Niks, M., Allen, D., Davies, P., McRae, D., Nonesuch, K., and Rogers, A., 1986, *Teaching adults*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes.

An examination of cultural and social functions of literacy

Literacy, or literacies as social practices, as developed over time, have taken different focuses and emphases in response to societal demands. The growing significance of cultural and linguistic diversity and new communications technologies requires a responsibility to consider carefully and precisely what the job of literacy now can be, in a multicultural, multilingual and multiliterate society, increasingly characterised by movement – of people, capital, labour and communications in a variety of languages.⁹

As a practitioner providing stand-alone or integrated language literacy and numeracy services in the VET sector you will be faced with a variety of interpretations of what language, literacy and numeracy might mean. Depending on your employer, your funding source, the needs of the learner group and your delivery context there may be multiple interpretations and demands in place at the one time.

In each domain of life – work, study or everyday life – there are a range of LLN demands. These take shape in different ways in each domain. Certain types of texts are more prominent in some domains than others.

Each individual will come with their own set of life experience and reasons for engaging in LLN practices. They also come with an existing set of reading, writing, speaking and listening and numeracy skills, and capacities to learn as an adult.

Your role is to work with them to tease out the LLN practices they need to develop so they can fulfil their aspirations, be they personal, social, vocational or community-related.

⁹ Ludwig, C., Queensland Studies Authority, 2003, 'Making sense of literacy', *Newsletter of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association*, February, <<http://www.alea.edu.au/documents/item/53f>>

Multiliteracies

The New London Group coined the phrase 'multiliteracies' in the 1990's to describe what constitutes literacy in today's world. The group questioned notions of literacy that were wholly 'centred on language' and paper-based texts. The New London Group called for an expanded notion of literacy that took into account the use of new technologies and visual texts into work, study and everyday life. Their claim was that we now encounter, use and interpret multiple kinds of literacies which are embedded in multimodal texts and therefore literacy education needs to take account of this.

For an overview of multiliteracies you can access a multiliteracies mapping study from the Government of South Australia,

<<http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/Staff/SueHill/MMevalfinal6.pdf>>.

Research task: Working lives, public lives, private lives

In the article, *Pedagogy of multiliteracies*, The New London Group states that:

The languages needed to make meaning are radically changing in three realms of our existence: our working lives, our public lives (citizenship), and our private lives (lifeworld).¹⁰

They examine the three realms in the chapter of the article titled, *The changing present and near futures: Visions for work, citizenship, and lifeworlds*.

1. What are some of the practical implications for literacy practitioners delivering in community and workplace or VET training environments?
2. Discuss with colleagues.

Essential reading

- Cazden, C., Cope, B, Fairclough, N., Gee, J. et al., The New London Group, 1996, 'A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures', *Harvard Educational Review*, Spring, <http://newarcproject.pbworks.com/f/Pedagogy+of+Multiliteracies_New+London+Group.pdf>

Additional reading

- Pullen, D., and Cole, D. (eds.), 2009, *Multiliteracies in motion: Current theory and practice*, Routledge, London.

¹⁰ Cazden, C., et al., The New London Group, 1996, 'A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures', *Harvard Educational Review*, Spring, http://newarcproject.pbworks.com/f/Pedagogy+of+Multiliteracies_New+London+Group.pdf

Digital literacies

Emerging from the notion of multiliteracies is the study of digital literacy and the shift away from paper-based to multimodal texts. In our personal lives, our learning and work environments, we are faced with a multitude of information presented to us on paper, on film, on billboards, on hand-held devices, on phones, on screens, on radio, on the telephone (the list goes on). Social networking is becoming a new form of literacy with new modes and language forms to learn, for example, the 150 character constraints of Twitter or the privacy protocols of Facebook.

Workers are often required to adapt quickly to new forms of communications technology and many learners are expected to access and navigate online learning spaces with limited training opportunity.

In *Using information and communication technologies in adult literacy education*, Snyder, Jones and Lo Bianco state:

In exploring the relationship between adult literacy practices and the use of information and communication technologies, the research suggested that they are inextricably linked. By this we mean that it makes little sense to speak of the 'impact' of technology 'on' literacy. The association between literacy and technology is far more complex than a one-way, causal explanation might suggest.¹¹

Literacy today depends on understanding the multiple types of media that make up our high-tech reality and developing the skills to use them effectively.

As an introduction to the issue, read through:

- Jones-Kavalier, B., and Flannigan, S., 2006, 'Connecting the digital dots: Literacy of the 21st Century', *Viewpoint, Educause Quarterly*, No. 2, 2006, <<https://er.educause.edu/articles/2006/1/connecting-the-digital-dots-literacy-of-the-21st-century>>

There are a multitude of articles about the use of digital literacies in adult education. The following three outline different aspects of the issue but you may find that you are interested in a particular aspect of the topic and seek out your own articles.

In the article, *New literacies for new times: the convergence of the internet and literacy instruction*, Donald J. Leu explores what the convergence of literacy, literacy instruction, networked information and communication technologies like the internet mean for adult educators.

Elizabeth Schmar-Dobler explores the particular reading skills required for reading digital texts in *Reading on the internet: The link between literacy and technology*.

¹¹ Snyder, I., Jones, A. and Lo Bianco, J., 2005, *Using information and communication technologies in adult literacy education: New practices, new challenges*, NCVER.

Essential reading

- Leu, D. J., 'New literacies for new times: the convergence of the internet and literacy instruction', *FinePrint*, 2001, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237113686_New_Literacies_for_New_Times_Preparing_our_Students_for_the_21st_Century>.
- Schmar-Dobler, E., 2003, 'Reading on the internet: The link between literacy and technology', *International Reading Association's Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, September 2003

Additional reading

- Snyder, I., Jones, A. and Lo Bianco, J., 2005, *Using information and communication technologies in adult literacy education: New practices, new challenges*, NCVET, <<https://www.google.com/search?q=2005%2C+Using+information+and+communication+technologies+in+adult+literacy+education&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b-ab#>>>
- Technology Explained, Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), <<http://www.abc.net.au/techexplained>>

Frameworks for exploring texts

*In order for an individual to make meaning from and generate their own meaning using texts they need to be able to 'develop questions around values, identity and power as a part of the construction and deconstruction of multiliteracies in texts.'*¹²

Texts can be written, visual and spoken, and can come in many forms. The 'four literacy resources' model and the 'three literacy dimensions' model are two frameworks that are used to conceptualise contemporary notions of literacy, both in school and adult literacy contexts. These are explained in greater detail below.

The four literacy resources model

Freebody, P., and Luke, A., 1990, 'Literacies programs: Debates and demands in cultural context', *Prospect: Australian Journal of TESOL*, no. 5, vol. 7, pp.7–16.

The four resources model works on the premise that effective literacy draws on a repertoire of practices that allow learners, as they engage in reading and writing activities, to achieve the following.

¹² Cazden, C., et al., *The New London Group*, 1996, 'Pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures', *Harvard Educational Review*, Spring

- **Break the code of texts**

By recognising and using the fundamental features and architecture of written texts including alphabet, sounds in words, spelling, conventions and patterns of sentence structure and text.

- **Participate in the meanings of text**

By understanding and composing meaningful written, visual and spoken texts from within the meaning systems of particular cultures, institutions, families, communities, nation-states and so on.

- **Use texts functionally**

By traversing the social relations around texts; knowing about and acting on the different cultural and social functions that various texts perform both inside and outside school and knowing that these functions shape the way texts are structured, their tone, their degree of formality and their sequence of components.

- **Critically analyse and transform texts**

By understanding and acting on the knowledge that texts are not neutral, that they represent particular views and silence other points of view and influence people's ideas and that their designs and discourses can be critiqued and redesigned, in novel and hybrid ways.

The four resources model recognises that the four roles of a reader are 'necessary, but not sufficient'. It is expressed in various ways: repertoire of practices, family of practices, map of possible practices, and the idea that there are no 'magic bullets'.

...we do not view how to teach literacy as a 'scientific decision, but rather as a moral, political and cultural decision about the kind of literate practices that are needed to enhance people's agency over their life trajectories...

Any program of instruction in literacy, whether it be in kindergarten, in adult ESL classes, in university courses, or any points in between, needs to confront these roles systematically, explicitly, and at all developmental points.

- Comber, B., 2002, *Critical Literacy: Maximising children's investments in school learning*

The three literacy dimensions model, Green, B., 'A literacy project of our own?', *English in Australia*, AATE Journal, vol. 44, no. 3.

Green's model suggests that the most worthwhile, robust understanding of literacy is one that brings together the **operational**, **cultural** and **critical** dimensions of literate practice and learning.

Challenges of learning to read and write in another language

De Jong and Harper describe some of the ways in which the needs of English language learners (ELLs) differ in their article on the gap between language minority and language majority students. Some of their findings in relation to reading and writing are summarised below:

- ELLs do not have the depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge and knowledge of structure of the English language.
- They need many more scaffolding opportunities.
- Cross-linguistic differences such as word order and text organisation can limit the use of important cuing systems in reading in English.
- ELLs do not have same control of the sound system.
- Orthographic differences influence the way learners transfer reading skills from their first language (L1) to English.
- Student knowledge of L1 writing conventions affect all areas of students' second language (L2) writing, for example, rhetorical patterns and punctuation.
- Opportunities for brainstorming and discussing topics in L1 help development of L2 skills.
- Teachers need to provide different and more specific types of feedback and instruction to English language learners.
- English language learners need extensive scaffolding in grammar and discourse.
- Cultural scaffolding – teachers need to build their own awareness of the implicit and explicit rules of the classroom and how to build on the students' background knowledge and experience.¹³

Research task: Making the models work

1. Which of the roles described in this model do you see as most critical for your learners in interacting with the dominant text types in your delivery contexts? Do the role requirements differ in work, learning or personal domains?
2. How might the two models be applied to teaching both English speakers and non-English speakers?
3. What new insights does Green's model contribute to your own evolving theory of literacy learning?

¹³ De Jong, E., and Harper, C., 2005, 'Preparing Mainstream Teachers for English Language Learners: Is Being a Good Teacher Good Enough?' *Teacher Education Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp.101-124.

Critical literacy and numeracy

Both the four resources and the three dimensions models contribute to the notion of critical literacy and numeracy.

Critical literacy sees language as being socially and culturally constructed as well as political. It attempts to provide a set of tools to enable us to critically look at written, visual, spoken, multimedia and performance texts – including those we create. Critical literacy involves going beyond surface meaning of texts by analysing and critiquing the interaction between texts, language, power, social groups and social practices.

Critical literacy includes:

- examining meaning within texts
- considering the purpose for the text and the composer's motives
- understanding that texts are not neutral, that they represent particular views, silence other points of view and influence people's ideas
- questioning and challenging the ways in which texts have been constructed
- analysing the power of language in contemporary society
- emphasising multiple readings of texts (because people interpret texts in the light of their own beliefs and values, texts will have different meanings to different people)
- having students take a stance on issues
- providing students with opportunities to consider and clarify their own attitudes and values
- providing students with opportunities to take social action.

Critical numeracy uses a similar model to the four resources model of critical literacy (Luke and Freebody) to build the learners' capacity to ask questions about the meaning, validity and usefulness of texts containing mathematical concepts or information.

Research task: Towards critical literacy and numeracy

1. Watch the two online videos of Dr. Allan Luke talking about critical literacy and the new literacies at
<<https://thelearningexchange.ca/projects/allan-luke-the-new-literacies>>
 - a. Luke, A., 2008, *Critical literacy webcast*, The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat Webcast Professional Learning Series, Curriculum Services Canada, Toronto.
 - b. Luke, A., 2007, *The new literacies*, The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat Webcast Professional Learning Series, Curriculum Services Canada, Toronto.
2. Locate a number of key texts that your learners need to 'read'. Examine the texts in light of your research on critical literacy and numeracy.
3. Consider your practice environment and delivery context (in a community program, in a WELL program, in an integrated VET program). How might you utilise the principles of critical literacy and/or numeracy in your practice?
4. Discuss with colleagues (preferably from different delivery contexts).

Critical literacy readings

- Brown, K., 1999, *Developing critical literacy*, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University, Sydney.
- Freebody, P. and Luke, A., 2003, 'Literacy as engaging with new forms of life: the 'four roles' model' in G. Bull and M. Anstey (eds.) *The literacy lexicon*, 2nd edn, Prentice Hall, Frenchs Forest, NSW.
- Misson, R., and Morgan, W., 2005, 'Beyond the pleasure principle? Confessions of a critical literacy teacher', *English in Australia*, no. 144, Summer 2005, pp. 51-56.
- Van Duzer, C., and Florez, M.C., 2001, 'Critical literacy for adult literacy in language learners', *ERIC Digest*, <www.ericdigests.org/2001-1/critical.html>

Sociolinguistics in action

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society and examines the social dimensions of language, how the social context affects language, the particular linguistic forms individuals use, and how a specific social situation or role relationship influences communication.

Understanding the social context of language is important for adults learning a new language. In VET contexts it is important to note that ‘language learning’ is not exclusively about those learners who come from non-English speaking backgrounds. All learners will be faced with the demands of using language in new and different ways. The specific set of vocational terminology related to a field of study or ways in which people speak to each other in the workplace, as opposed to personal environments, will confront all learners.

It is likely that your learners will come from a variety of English speaking and non-English speaking backgrounds.

Depending on the context in which you are teaching you may have homogeneous or mixed groups of learners. Either way, you will need to be aware of the ways in which culture – that is, region, race, age, level of education and other factors such as settlement experiences – underpin language development and use.

Working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) learners

Awareness of social factors and varieties of English is particularly important for teachers in planning specific language learning activities for learners from non-English speaking backgrounds.

There is a strong and complex link between cultural identity, language use and proficiency in two languages.¹⁴

Understanding the socio-psychological foundations of second language learning is important for teachers so that they can respond to a range of student attitudes motivations and behaviours.¹⁵

An important aspect of helping learners to develop spoken English skills is developing their awareness of language in context and scaffolding grammar and discourse of spoken language. Developing awareness of varieties of English used in the Australian context as well as the different registers used in different social situations is also important.

An example of this in practice is to help learners to observe the correct way to formulate and ask a question in a job interview, and to help them to construct and practise asking questions and answering questions for this purpose. This may be contrasted with the types of questions you might ask in an informal social situation. It is important for learners to become aware of the need to shape their spoken and written language so that it is ‘fit for purpose’.

¹⁴ Brisk, M.E., 1998. *Bilingual education: From compensatory to quality schooling*, Mahwah, New Jersey.

¹⁵ De Jong, E., and Harper, C., 2005. ‘Preparing Mainstream Teachers for English Language Learners: Is Being a Good Teacher Good Enough?’ *Teacher Education Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp.101-124.

Research task: Adult learners and pronunciation

Refer back to the list of points under the section *Challenges of learning to read and write in another language*, above.

One of the challenges in learning to speak in a second language for adult learners includes the sound system. Pronunciation is a component of communicative competence and includes:

- suprasegmental features of speech (stress, rhythm and intonation, voice quality)
- segmental features of speech (individual sounds: Australian English vowels, consonants and consonant clusters, syllables).

Refer to Appendix 5 for a view on adult learners and pronunciation, as well as Chapter 5 of *The spoken language*.¹⁶

Consider the importance of modelling the 'right way to say things' to your learners. Is this exclusively an issue for second language learners?

Research task: Standard and non-standard English

In her 2006 article in *Fine Print*, *See youse later: Teaching English literacy to Australians*, Rosemary McKenry explores how to teach the difference between standard and non-standard English in a way that respects learners' language and culture, and at the same time raises their awareness about the uses and contexts for standard English.¹⁷

¹⁶ Paton, A., and Wilkins, M., 2009, *Teaching Adult ESOL: Principles and Practice*, McGraw-Hill, Berkshire, UK.

¹⁷ McKenry, R., 2006, 'See youse later: Teaching English literacy to Australians', *Fine Print*, vol. 29, no. 2, Winter 2006, pp.3-5.

Research task: Standard and non-standard English

In *Literacy as translation*, Margaret Somerville quotes from Kalantzis that:

...the most important skill students need to learn is to negotiate regional, ethnic, or class based dialects; variations in register that occur according to social context; hybrid cross-cultural discourses; the code switching often to be found within a text among different languages, dialects or registers; different visual and iconic meanings; and variations in the gestural relationships among people, language and material objects. Indeed, (they say) this is the only hope for averting the catastrophic conflicts about identities and spaces that now seem ever ready to flare up.¹⁸

Somerville explores a range of literacies by examining the practices of Aboriginal artists, coal miners, and a Scottish migrant.

1. Read the McHenry and Somerville and use the additional readings supplied below and your own research methodology to clarify an understanding of:
 - a. sociolinguistics
 - b. code switching and use of non-standard Australian English.
2. How might you apply these understandings to your own practice?

Research task: Working with Aboriginal English

The voices of Aboriginal people have, until recently, been largely unheard by non-Aboriginal people. The stigma associated with Aboriginal English has often meant that what Aboriginal people have to say has only been listened to when it has been expressed in Standard Australian English.

Most service provision is heavily dependent on spoken and written communication. Clients and service providers on both sides of the cultural divide often find each other's ways of communicating strange and alienating. This frequently leads to judgments of the other group as uncommunicative, uncooperative, impolite, evasive, ignorant or even devious.¹⁹

¹⁸ Cope, B., and Kalantzis, M. (eds.), 2000, *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*, Routledge, New York.

¹⁹ Department of Education and Training (DET), 2007, *Ways of Being, Ways of Talk*, Government of WA

Research task: Working with Aboriginal English

The *Ways of being, ways of talk* materials developed by a collaborative team of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers from the WA Department of Education and Training and from Edith Cowan University provide a research-based explanation of why the communicative patterns of each group (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) may not correspond to the expectations they have of the other.

The support resources that were developed to accompany a set of videos have a rich set of background papers that are designed to assist:

- teachers wishing to engage students in the critical analysis of language difference and literacy
- presenters wishing to facilitate professional development in Aboriginal English
- non-Aboriginal service providers who work with Aboriginal clients and Aboriginal service providers who work with non-Aboriginal clients.

As a VET practitioner working with diverse learner groups you need to examine the ways in which language, culture, worldview and identity are inextricably linked.

The *Ways of being, ways of talk* videos on CD are available from the Western Australian Department of Education.

1. Access and watch the videos and using the support materials – particularly the background papers for each video – expand and clarify your understanding of:
 - a. sociolinguistics
 - b. code switching and use of non-standard Australian English.
2. How might you apply these new understandings to your own practice?

Essential reading

- McKenry, R., 2006, 'See youse later: Teaching English literacy to Australians', *Fine Print*, vol. 29, no. 2, Winter 2006, p.3-5.
- Somerville, M., 2007, 'Literacy as translation', *Fine Print*, vol. 30, no. 1, VALBEC, <http://www.valbec.org.au/05/fineprint/archive/2007/fp_07-au_body.pdf>
- Department of Education and Training (DET), 2007, *Ways of Being, Ways of Talk*, Government of WA.

Additional resources on sociolinguistics

- Eble, C., 2005, 'What is sociolinguistics? Basics of sociolinguistics', *Do you speak American?*, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), <<http://www.pbs.org/speak/speech/sociolinguistics/sociolinguistics>>
- ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 1992, 'What is Linguistics?', *ERIC Digest*, <<http://www.ericdigests.org/1992-1/what.htm>>

Additional resources on code switching and the use of non-standard Australian English

- Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL), 2009, *Conference papers on delivery to Indigenous learners*, 32nd Annual Conference, <<http://www.waalc.org.au/09conf/presentations.htm>>
- Indigenous learners and language, 2003, *What is Aboriginal English?*, Australian Council of TESOL Associations, <<http://www.tesol.org.au/esl/whatis.htm>>
- What Works, *The deadly ways to learn project: Aboriginal English and bidialectal classroom practices*, <<http://www.whatworks.edu.au/dbAction.do?cmd=displaySitePage1&subcmd=select&id=154>>

Key underpinning theories in curriculum and training specifications

In your work with adult LLN learners you will usually be required to use LLN accredited curriculum or training specifications that will reflect a number of theoretical understandings of LLN or adult learning.

A training specification is a detailed statement of the items to be addressed when designing a block of training, which may be a program, course, module or unit.

In VET, training specifications can be a formal document that is part of a national credential in a training package or accredited course, or an informal document – such as an operating procedure in an enterprise – that is used as a basis for training.

The training specification helps you consider your training aim, objectives and approach; the equipment or materials to be used; the type of records to be kept; and, where required, the assessment and certification system to be applied.

Research task: Key underpinning theories

Access two accredited curriculum documents for LLN, one that focuses on skills for learners of English and one that focuses on literacy and numeracy. For example, do a keyword search for Victorian curriculum documents (Certificates in General Education for Adults; Certificates in ESL).

What are the key underpinning theories of LLN outlined in each curriculum?

Refer to the theories outlined above and examine how the curriculum documents incorporate them, for example,

- what is the view of 'pronunciation' in the ESL certificates?
- is there a stated view of Standard Australian English? Are other Englishes acknowledged?

You may wish to access the specific state-based course material that you are likely to use in your practice environment.

Choosing and applying theory to practice

Leading British linguist, Michael Halliday, said:

*The value of a theory lies in the use that can be made of it, and I have always considered a theory of language to be essentially consumer oriented.*²⁰

As a practitioner delivering language, literacy and numeracy in VET contexts you need to become familiar with a number of theories and decide which ones help you in developing effective teaching approaches that are suitable for your learners.

The following research activities, in which you are asked to examine theories, are not based on the assumption that theories can be applied in mutually exclusive ways. Instead they illustrate how particular theories have application to language, literacy and numeracy provision. Articles from Australian practitioners are presented as a platform for your own research about the ways in which theory can support and enrich your practice.

²⁰ Halliday, M.A.K., 2004, *An introduction to functional grammar*, 3rd edn, Oxford University Press, New York, p. 7.

Does one size fit all?

In his article, *Good teaching: One size fits all?* Pratt asks practitioners to resist the trend to accept one dominant theory over a number of possible alternatives. He presents transmission, developmental, apprenticeship, nurturing, and social reform perspectives and invites the reader to revisit assumptions and beliefs they hold regarding learning, knowledge, and teaching in light of their examination of these additional perspectives.

A perspective on teaching is an inter-related set of beliefs and intentions that gives direction and justification to our actions. It is a lens through which we view teaching and learning. We may not be aware of our perspective because it is something we look through, rather than look at, when teaching.²¹

Research task: Refining your perspective

1. Access Pratt's article via
<<http://www.readcube.com/articles/10.1002/ace.45>>
2. Search on the web for articles about constructionist theory and constructivism in learning and teaching.
3. Taking your findings from the research activity on developing a perspective on teaching adults, in the previous section, into account, how might Pratt's additional five perspectives further inform your teaching and assessment practice?
4. What further information might you need to seek out about constructivism, positivism and teacher versus student centred instruction methods for you to be clear about how these theories may inform your delivery practice?

Applying a 'bowerbird' approach

In her article for Fine Print, 'Teaching literacy – the bower bird approach', Judith Newcombe, an experienced literacy teacher, explores the range of theories and concepts that have influenced her teaching practice over a number of years such as phonics, psycholinguistics, systemic functional linguistics, genre theory and metacognition. She explains how various theories have shifted and shaped her thinking about her practice.

In the article she discusses the interplay between 'bottom-up' features such as a graphophonics and syntax as well as 'top-down' features such as the reader's knowledge about the subject.

²¹ Pratt, D.D., 2002, 'Good teaching: One size fits all?', in Ross-Gordon, J. (ed.), *An Up-date on Teaching Theory*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Research task: Theory and literacy provision

1. Read *Teaching literacy: The bower bird approach*.²²
2. Access the information on a selected number of adult literacy and language theories and associated readings in Appendix 6.
3. In light of Newcombe's observations, follow up with at least one of the listed readings for each of the listed theory topics and document how you might apply your understanding of each of these to your own teaching practice.
4. How does the developmental level of your learners influence which literacy learning theories you will employ most frequently in your classroom instruction?
5. Discuss with colleagues.

Research task: 'Principled pragmatism' and English language teaching

*Given the range and complexity of contexts of ESOL teaching and learning, there is no one best or right way to teach the language ... the hallmark of principled pragmatism is that theorising should be done by teachers from the classroom itself.*²³

Baynham et al. report on effective ESOL practice and describe the 'bricoleur' teacher who can pull together whatever is at hand to make the class work. These 'bricoleur teachers are eclectic in designing materials and activities to be highly learner responsive, and this eclecticism is underpinned by a clear professional vision'.²⁴

Consider these observations specific to teaching adult English language learners. Do you agree with Cook and Simpson's view?

Essential reading

- Cooke, M. and Simpson, J., 2008, *ESOL: A critical guide*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Baynham, M., Simpson, J., Ananiadou, K., Callaghan J., McGoldrick, J., and Wallace C., 2007, *Effective teaching and learning: ESOL*, NRDC, <<http://www.nrdc.org.uk/?p=175>>

²² Newcombe, J., 1999 'Teaching literacy: The bower bird approach', *Fine Print*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 3-6

²³ Cooke, M. and Simpson, J., 2008, *ESOL: A critical guide*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

²⁴ Baynham, M., et al., 2007, *Effective teaching and learning: ESOL*, NRDC, <<http://www.nrdc.org.uk/?p=175>>

Social theories and language

In his article for *Fine Print* titled *Cultural theories of language*, Nick Gadd presents a historical overview of the relationship between culture and language. He examines a number of theorists' work and outlines some of the implications of social theories for teachers of language.

Gadd espouses a need for teachers to adopt a sociolinguistic approach to teaching language and challenges the functional grammar notion that learning language is merely a matter of absorbing the appropriate rules and conventions. He states that 'people do not learn languages because of the way their brains are wired... but because of the society they find themselves in'.²⁵

He also claims that 'language is most effectively taught in a context, and that context needs to be something of significance to the learners' and that one of the most important roles of a language teacher is to help learners to recognise that different types of text are structured in particular significant ways.

The teacher must help learners to not only deconstruct the literal meaning of a text within its immediate context but also its placement and broader meaning in society.

*Students, especially those who are not familiar with literate conventions or who come from another culture, need to be taught these structures explicitly if they are to gain mastery of them, for we cannot expect people to simply 'pick them up' by common sense.*²⁶

A number of research papers have been written for NCVET focusing on learners from a non-English speaking background. These can be found by searching publications on the NCVET website, <<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>

Research task: A language perspective

1. Read Gadd's article with an emphasis on the final section 'Implications for teachers of language'.
2. Access and read one additional NCVET report focusing on CALD learners in VET.
3. What implications for your own practice can you draw from Gadd's observations and the findings from your chosen NCVET report?
4. To what extent do you explore the literacy practices of learners who use another language as part of your classroom activity?
5. What role do the learner's first and second languages play in classroom learning?

²⁵ Gadd, N., 1999, 'Cultural theories of language', *Fine Print*, vol. 22, no. 3, p.3-7, Spring 1999, <<http://www.valbec.org.au/05/fineprint/archive/1999/99SP%20TOC.pdf>>, p.6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Essential reading

- Gadd, N., 1999, 'Cultural theories of language', *Fine Print*, vol. 22, no. 3, p.3–7, Spring 1999, <<http://www.valbec.org.au/05/fineprint/archive/1999/99SP%20TOC.pdf>>, p.6.

Numeracy and constructivism

One of the major influences in mathematics education over the last few decades has been around alternatives to the traditional perspectives on what it means to learn and know mathematics, centred largely on the philosophy of constructivism as opposed to positivism (and variations and interpretations such as critical and social constructivism).

Some interpretations of the key implications of constructivism for classroom practice are described below.

- Mathematical knowledge is acquired by construction; therefore, learners should be given the opportunity to actively participate in the learning process rather than be forced to swallow large amounts of information.
- Cognitive restructuring is necessary to advance mathematical knowledge; to that end, instruction should induce successive restructurings of mathematical knowledge.
- Mathematical knowledge is constrained by internal factors (cognitive, such as innate and early understandings and previous knowledge) and external factors (sociocultural, situated in contexts, such as peers, teachers, tools, and artefacts); it follows that each collection of factors may either facilitate or limit mathematical learning.²⁷

Additional reading

- Hatano, G., 1996, 'A conception of knowledge acquisition and its implication for mathematics education', in L. Steffe et al. (eds.), *Theories of mathematical learning*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., New Jersey.
- Tout, D. and Motteram, G., 2006, *Foundation numeracy in context*, ACER Press, Melbourne.

²⁷ Hatano, G., 1996, 'A conception of knowledge acquisition and its implication for mathematics education', in Steffe, L. et al. (eds.), *Theories of mathematical learning*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey, pp.211–213.

Topic 4: The English language system and the ACSF

English usage is sometimes more than mere taste, judgment and education – sometimes it's sheer luck, like getting across the street.

– E. B. White

Halliday (1979) suggests that learners need to be engaged in:

- the learning of language and literacy – the learning of language and literacy strategies and skills
- learning through language and literacy
- learning about language and literacy – learning to talk about language.

As an LLN practitioner working in VET you need to have a working understanding of the English language system and its structures, be able to talk about language in a way that is useful and relevant to your learners and to help them in using English language and literacy to achieve their set goals (in community, learning or workplace contexts). You will need to recognise the varieties of English language spoken in Australia and consider how they can be used in the adult English language classroom.

Your role is to recognise particular ways that language is used in a range of contexts, the expectations of the learning environment and the expectations of the environment in which your learners will be using language.

You will also need to be able to use the specialised vocational texts of the LLN field to identify LLN content within training specifications and then to speak about the complexity of both written and spoken text and to assess the skills of your learners. The Australian Core Skills Framework is the tool most widely used to provide a common language about LLN in VET contexts.

While the focus in this topic is on the science or structure of language, this does not mean that an approach based solely on a knowledge of structures is adequate for developing the language, literacy and numeracy skills of others. This topic needs to be considered alongside *Topic 3: Adult language, literacy and numeracy teaching theories*, with specific attention to the broader sociocultural applications of language in different contexts.

This topic covers the following content:

- the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)
- self-assessment of your core skill competence using the ACSF
- the structure of English language.

The Australian Core Skills Framework

The Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) provides a consistent national approach to the identification and development of the core skills in diverse personal, community, work and education and training contexts. It offers:

- shared concepts and language for identifying, describing and discussing core skills
- a systematic approach to benchmarking, monitoring and reporting on core skills performance.

The ACSF provides a rich, detailed picture of real-life performance in:

- Learning
- Reading
- Writing
- Oral communication
- Numeracy.

The ACSF describes each of the five core skills across three interactive dimensions.

- Five levels of performance ranging from 1 (low-level performance) to 5 (high-level performance).
- Four sets of performance variables that may influence a person's performance at any time.
- Three broad contexts within which the core skill may be used:
 - personal and community
 - workplace and employment
 - education and training.

The five levels of the ACSF are not comparative with the levels of qualifications in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). If the ACSF is to be compared with any other scale, then the five-level scale used in the International Adult Literacy Survey is the closest. See information on IALS in the *Learner characteristics* topic of this Knowledge Bank.

History

The ACSF is based on the National Reporting System (NRS), a validated tool for reporting outcomes of adult English language, literacy and numeracy provision that had been used by Australian English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) specialists since 1995. Until 1998, the NRS was used exclusively by LLN practitioners to report against outcomes from Commonwealth funded LLN programs.

While the NRS was primarily designed as a reporting tool, the ACSF has been designed as a generic framework with applications in a range of contexts.

The Australian Core Skills Framework was created in 2008, and since its development there has been a growing acceptance that use of the framework has value beyond literacy specialist programs. With the advent of training packages and the expanding awareness of the importance of language, literacy and numeracy skills as key underpinning skills in technical units and Employability Skills, the ACSF has also been used informally in the VET sector as a way of talking about LLN 'competence'.

The ACSF provides a common language for talking about core skill content and levels and is becoming widely used in the VET sector. There has also been some uptake in the senior secondary and higher education arenas.

Purpose

The ACSF has been designed with a broad set of uses in mind. Depending on your practice environment you may need to use the ACSF formally for reporting purposes.

Some of the possible uses within the VET sector are to:

- benchmark core skills performance
- map core skills requirements in education and training
- tailor approaches to teaching and learning
- describe core skills relevant to the workplace and employment
- inform decisions regarding funding and referrals.

Structure

In keeping with contemporary theory and practice, and in order to provide the richest possible picture of competence, the Australian Core Skills Framework is structured to reflect as closely as possible real life performance of language literacy and numeracy skills across three domains: work, personal, and training and education.

While the framework describes competence in reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy and learning, referring to features of linguistic and mathematical systems (for example, grammar, vocabulary and understanding of basic mathematical functions) and metacognitive theory, it also focuses on the ability to shape language and numeracy use according to a range of purposes and contexts and develop agency as a learner. As you examine the ACSF you will recognise many of the 'top-down, bottom-up' features described in *Topic 3: Adult language, literacy and numeracy teaching theories*.

Five skills – five levels

The levels of performance in each of the core skills are described using:

- Indicators
Statements that provide an overview of performance at each level.

- Focus areas
Strands, within each indicator against which performance features are organised.
- Performance features
Detailed descriptors of what an individual is able to do at each level
- Sample activities
Specific examples of what a person may be able to do at a particular level of performance in each of the *Contexts of communication*. Note that the *Contexts of communication* have replaced the *Aspects of communication* from the previous version of the ACSF, and are a critical feature of a learner's flexibility of skill to produce a repertoire of texts for differing purposes.

Performance variables

The ACSF also describes performance variables that affect individual performance. These include:

The nature and degree of support available

All learners require a high degree of support when they learn something new, but as confidence and competence improves, individuals become more independent and autonomous. At the lower levels of the ACSF a high level of support is appropriate throughout the learning process; however this support decreases at higher levels of the ACSF.

Consistent with the assessment of any competency, the ACSF assumes that an individual at any level will be able to demonstrate competence without support if the context, text complexity and task complexity are appropriate for the level. If support is still required, this should be taken into account when benchmarking performance.

Familiarity with context

Drawing on the work of Halliday and Hasan²⁸ the ACSF acknowledges that the prior knowledge or experience a person brings to a situation, including familiarity with text, task and topic, can make a significant difference to performance. This is reflected across the five ACSF levels of performance, as an individual applies knowledge and skills with increasing confidence and competence in familiar contexts, and learns how to transfer and adapt existing skills to new contexts.

The complexity of text and task

The use of the term 'text' in the ACSF acknowledges the use of new technologies and visual texts into work, study and everyday life. Drawing on the work of The New London Group the ACSF recognises that we now encounter, use and interpret multiple kinds of literacies that are embedded

²⁸ Halliday, M. A. K., and Ruqaiya Hasan, 1976, *Cohesion in English*, Longman, London.

in multimodal texts but do not include the performance features for decoding purely visual languages such as film.

The components of task and text complexity in the ACSF are derived from the work of Kirsch and Mosenthal²⁹ who argue that a number of variables interact to determine the level of difficulty of information-processing tasks. In their construct, task difficulty increases as:

- the length and complexity of the text increases
- the type of process required to respond to a question about a text increases in complexity, for example, straight location of information compared with integration of several pieces of information
- the kind of information required to respond to a question about a text increases in complexity, for example, concrete compared to abstract
- the lack of correspondence between the information in the text and in a question about that text increases
- the degree of inference the reader is required to make increases.

Contexts for communication

Drawing on the concept of ‘lifeworlds’ – the three realms of existence described by the New London Group as ‘our working lives, our public lives and our private lives’ – the ACSF looks at three contexts for communication to provide a way of describing performance across the breadth of contexts with each core skill.

Personal and community

Related to expressing personal identity and achieving personal goals, and understanding and interacting within the wider community.

Workplace and employment

Refers to activities that occur as part of a job. It also includes those related to seeking employment, entering a new industry, or taking on a new role.

Education and training

Refers to any form of structured learning, including:

- learning towards a formal qualification at any level of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) in any sector (senior secondary, vocational, higher education)
- learning in an LLN program such as the LLNP or SEE (Skills for Education and Employment)
- learning in a community-based program with no formal qualifications
- formal or informal on-the-job learning.

²⁹ Kirsch, I.S., Mosenthal, P.B., 1990, ‘Exploring document literacy: Variables underlying the performance of young adults’, *Reading Research Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 5–30.

Research task: Getting your head around the ACSF

1. Access a copy of the ACSF,
<<https://www.education.gov.au/download-acsf>>
2. Read through the document and familiarise yourself with each of the structural features of the document.
3. Review the 'purpose' section above. How might you use the ACSF in your practice environment? Discuss the use of the ACSF with colleagues. What are the benefits and limitations of such a tool?

Self assessment of your core skill competence using the ACSF

You now need to consider your own core skills in relation to your role in the vocational education and training sector.

As an LLN practitioner you will be working with learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and assessing their level of skill on a regular basis. As a preparation for this, you are going to review your own reading, writing, speaking and listening skills and numeracy knowledge.

There's a possibility that this may feel a little uncomfortable, but it is critical.

You need to use your core skills to identify, comprehend and generate information and ideas using a range of texts, discuss concepts with colleagues and ask critical questions. This will often require core skills at ACSF levels 4 and 5, so it may be helpful to clarify your areas of strength and identify any areas where you may want to enhance your skills.

You also need to be able to apply your own skills to help others to improve their own language, literacy and numeracy skills.

In this section, you will consider:

- What reading, writing, speaking and listening skills and knowledge do I have?
- What numeracy skills and knowledge do I have?
- What are my current strengths and skills gaps?
- What learning strategies do I need to address the skill gaps I have identified?
- How can the gaps be addressed?

Review your reading, writing, speaking and listening skills and knowledge

Some of the skills and knowledge an adult language and literacy practitioner requires are those to:

- analyse texts for teaching and learning purposes

- read and interpret complex texts, analyse theories and form judgements
- write complex texts that meet audience needs
- facilitate discussions to encourage the sharing of strategies and exploration of solutions to problems
- give clear explanations, present concepts clearly and respond to questions effectively
- use teacher talk to adjust to the English language skill level of others.

Check your skills

In the ACSF document at each level of each core skill, the performance features describe what a person should be able to do are grouped against Focus areas. The best way to appreciate the progression from one level to another is to look at the performance grids.

To review your skills follow this process.

1. Access a copy of the ACSF. Look at each of the core skill performance grids for reading, writing and oral communication.
2. For each of these core skills examine each of the Focus areas and related Performance features to identify:
 - a. language or concepts that you are unsure about. Circle words or concepts that you are unsure about and that will require clarification or further research.
 - b. your personal ability to demonstrate that particular aspect and level of skill.
3. For levels 3, 4 and 5, make short notes about your ability to demonstrate the relevant performance features and give examples.

At these three levels remember that you need to be able to demonstrate skills across a number of contexts of communication and text types.

4. Where are your greatest strengths? Make a note of the skill gaps you have – this will include the technical vocabulary and concepts requiring additional research and any areas where you are unsure about whether you can demonstrate the level of skill required.
5. Assign yourself an ACSF level for each of the core skills of reading, writing and oral communication. Remember that these may be at differing levels. Any difference in skill level across core skill can be demonstrated visually as a ‘spiky profile’.

Review your numeracy knowledge

You now need to consider your own skills in relation to the core skill of numeracy:

- What numeracy skills and knowledge do I need?
- What are my current strengths and skills gaps?
- How can the gaps be addressed?

Applications of numeracy in vocational contexts and within the community can often require ACSF level 4 or level 5 skills. You need mathematical knowledge to analyse and articulate a problem at ACSF levels 4 and 5, to be able to:

- identify which operations are necessary
- give possible approaches without necessarily being able to successfully solve the problem.

An adult numeracy practitioner requires skills and knowledge to deliver numeracy at a minimum of exit ACSF level 3.

There is also an expectation that practitioners can recognise and talk about mathematics at higher levels than those at which they can actually solve problems, and can 'seek out expert help' from mathematics experts where appropriate.

Check your skills

To review your skills, follow the process you used to identify your reading, writing and oral communication skills.

1. Access a copy of the ACSF.
2. Look at the core skill grids for numeracy.
3. At each level examine each of the focus areas and related performance features to identify:
 - a. language or concepts that you are unsure about. Circle words or concepts that you are unsure about and that will require clarification or further research.
 - b. your personal ability to demonstrate that particular aspect and level of skill.
4. For levels 3, 4 and 5, make short notes about your ability to demonstrate the relevant performance features and give examples.

At these three levels remember that you need to be able to demonstrate skills across a number of *Contexts of communication* and text types.

5. Where are your greatest strengths? Make a note of the skill gaps you have – this will include the technical vocabulary and concepts requiring

additional research and any areas where you are unsure about whether you can demonstrate the level of skill required.

6. Assign yourself an ACSF level for numeracy. Remember that this may be at a different level from your other core skills. This difference in skill level is called a 'spiky profile'.

Reviewing your learning skills and knowledge

You will have identified some gaps in knowledge in the core skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening and numeracy that you will need to address. To do something about addressing the gaps you will first need to assess your own learning to learn skills and then identify the strategies you will use in your own professional development.

To do this:

1. Look at the core skills grid for Learning and identify:
 - a. language or concepts that you are unsure about
 - b. your personal ability to demonstrate that particular aspect and level of skill.
2. Underline any strategies that you will need to use to address any of the skill gaps identified in your core skills.

Your spiky profile

This process of identifying your own core skill strengths and weaknesses can now be applied to the reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy and learning demands of the learning, and also to the demands of your professional practice. You will be asked to use this information in a number of ways in the Participant Workbooks.

You may have identified that you need to become more familiar with the text features in more than one domain, or to revise your own ability to generate documents across a number of text types.

You may have identified that you are more comfortable and proficient at oral communication for personal purposes rather than for the purpose of giving presentations or discussing ideas in a formal way.

If you have identified a number of key terms from the ACSF that relate to the various structures of the English language that you are unsure about, then the next section of the Knowledge Bank and related research activities may be of use.

Research task: Identifying your skills gaps

1. Using the process described above, collate a list of skills gaps that you need to address through research, targeted professional development activity or peer discussion.
2. Identify the ways in which you plan to address your skills gaps.

The structure of English language

In order to be able to talk about language to your learners, discuss language with colleagues and undertake the readings and research required for this qualification you need to understand the basic structures of the English language. If your first language is not English you may have a better understanding of this already through learning English as a second language. Many native speakers of English will have tacit knowledge of the structure of English but may not have learned much of the terminology related to the structure of the English language.

Just as in any vocational area there is specialist terminology that relates to a particular field, the study of the English language requires that you know some specific technical terminology about language (metalanguage).

The structure of language has specific terminology ascribed to it. For example:

Terminology	Structure of language
Parts of speech	Classes of words
Semantics	Meanings of words
Syntax	How words are organised in relation to each other – ‘the study of sentence structure’ ³⁰
Morphology	How words are formed
Phonemes	The sounds of letters
Phonology	The sounds of words
Lexicography	How written forms represent the sounds of words

Parts of speech: A summary

Traditional grammar classifies words based on the eight ‘parts of speech’ (classes of words). When it comes to learning language a student needs to know what to call various types of words. But knowing what they are called and how they work does not necessarily mean that an individual has a full grasp of how language works in application.

³⁰ Crystal, D., 1997, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, Cambridge University Press, UK.

Part	Definition ³¹
Noun	A noun is a name for someone or something. It can be someone or something in particular, or someone or something in general.
Pronoun	A pronoun is a substitute for a noun or a noun phrase.
Verb	A verb is the action word in a statement. Some verbs link the subject to a noun, pronoun, or adjective.
Adjective	An adjective is a modifier. Usually it modifies, or makes more exact, the meaning of a noun or pronoun.
Adverb	An adverb is a modifier. Usually it modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.
Conjunction	A conjunction is a connector. A coordinate conjunction connects words or groups of words that are grammatically the same. A subordinate conjunction connects a subordinate, or dependent, clause to a main clause.
Preposition	A preposition is a connector that introduces a prepositional phrase. It usually connects a noun or noun phrase to the part of the sentence modified by the whole prepositional phrase, and it shows the relation between the two.

Research task: Parts of speech

Using the link above or through your own research find examples of English words that provide examples against each of the 'parts of speech'.

Reflect on what new distinctions about parts of speech you learned from this activity.

Semantics and syntax

Semantics is a wide-reaching subject within the general study of language and is about the construction of meaning and how meanings alter over time. The shift from traditional paper-based literacies to digital forms means that the study of semantics is constantly changing. New forms of language (such as SMS) produce new forms of meaning making, for example LOL means laugh out loud.

³¹ Learning English Online, *Parts of Speech and Sentence Structure*, <<http://www.learning-english-online.net/areas/grammar/parts-of-speech-and-sentence-structure>>

Semantics focuses on the relation between signifiers, such as words, phrases, signs and symbols, and what they stand for. Therefore semantics has a role in both the language of texts (both spoken and written) and in the language of mathematics (the words and symbols that carry mathematical meaning).

As part of the study of linguistics, semantics is devoted to the study of meaning at the levels of words, phrases, sentences, and larger units of discourse (referred to as texts).

This three-part model of English shows how smaller elements of meaning are combined to form longer stretches of language.³²

Morphology	Syntax	Discourse
Morphemes ↓ Words	Phrases ↓ Clauses ↓ Sentences	Relationships between sentences in longer stretches of language.

Register refers to the kind of language selected for particular functions in particular situational contexts. A language user may select features of language, such as tone and degree of formality in syntax and pronunciation, in relation to audience and purpose. Different styles of speech and writing are related to register variables that may include power relations, social distance and shared knowledge between participants, and the purpose, setting and mode of discourse.

*The register is the set of meanings, the configuration of semantic patterns that are typically drawn upon under the specified conditions, along with the words and structures that are used in the realization of these meanings.*³³

Research task: Terms
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through your own research, examine the terms used in the <i>Three part model of English</i> (table above) and document examples of each term. 2. Reflect on what new distinctions about the structures of English language you have learned from this activity. 3. Consider what it is to have knowledge of English morphology and syntax and to have knowledge of register. How important is the interplay between the two teaching English language learners?

³² Teachit.co.uk, *Semantics – Meanings, etymology and the lexicon*

³³ Halliday, M.A.K., and Hasan, R., 1976, *Cohesion in English*, Longman, London.

The language of mathematics

It is possible to analyse mathematics as a language with reference to the symbols and signifiers, grammar and 'sentence structure'. Just as with the English language, a focus purely on the technical construction will not always provide a learner with a holistic understanding of how to use mathematics for a particular purpose. As a practitioner who will need to 'talk about' the language of mathematics it is important that you have at least an overview of structure.

Research task: Language of maths

Access the following site on the language of mathematics for an overview:
<<http://www.mathsisfun.com/mathematics-language.html>>

Phonemes and phonology

An alphabet is a standardised set of letters – basic written symbols or graphemes – each of which roughly represents a phoneme in a spoken language. Phonemes are the sounds that are made use of consonants and vowels.

The phonological system of a language includes:

- an inventory of sounds and their features
- rules that specify how sounds interact with each other.

Phonology is concerned with the pronunciation of English. Teaching of pronunciation can focus on phonemes, the individual vowel and consonant sounds of English. It is important to make sure that learners can perceive the sound you want them to work on before you ask them to produce it. Some phonemes are more important than others for particular first-language speakers.

The placing of stress is also important. This includes word stress and sentence stress. Intonation links closely with stress. It has a role in conveying function (for example, whether something is a question or a statement) and attitude.

A full understanding of phonology and its role in English language teaching will require specific study of language theory and it is only expected that you develop an outline knowledge of what it includes.

Lexis development and discourse

Lexis can be considered in two ways – both of which are important when considering the needs of VET learners. Lexis is both the collection of words – the internalised dictionary – that every speaker of a language has, that they draw on to communicate. But it can also be considered to be a stock of terms used in a particular profession, subject, or style.

Each vocational area will have its own lexis – that is a set of terms that carry specific meaning that is unique to a particular context. For learners who are new to a particular vocational area it may take time to develop knowledge of the lexis of their chosen profession. You can help learners to become proficient in using the terms of their chosen field by introducing them to new terms and showing how to use them in context. For example a ‘cookie’ in the IT profession is not the same thing as a ‘cookie’ in hospitality.

To be able to understand and recall new lexical items learners need a lot of information about them. This information includes:

- meaning
- use
- pronunciation
- grammar
- common collocations (strings of words that are remembered as wholes and often used together).³⁴

Research task: Teaching from a technical point of view

The question of how effective it is to teach the English language from a purely technical point of view has been raised by a number of theorists. Surprisingly, approaches to teaching that involve the need for attention to context and culture have been around longer than Halliday or The New London Group.

Gertrude Buck was an associate professor of English at Vassar College from 1897 to 1922. Buck was a pioneer and model among women educators attempting to bend a rigid system. Buck encouraged a clearer understanding of how language and society are interdependent and challenged educators to recognise that social factors are inextricably bound to individual expression, that writing is a social action and communication is a community experience.

Read her essay, *Make-Believe Grammar*, at
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1076719?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

In light of your own investigation of the structure of the English language, how do Buck’s century-old views help you to put your technical learning into context?

Read Chapter 7, *Developing accuracy*, of *Teaching Adult ESOL: Principles and Practice* and complete the suggested tasks.

Essential reading

1. Paton, A., and Wilkins, M., 2009, *Teaching Adult ESOL: Principles and Practice*, McGraw-Hill, Berkshire, UK.

³⁴ Paton, A., and Wilkins, M., 2009, *Teaching Adult ESOL: Principles and Practice*, McGraw-Hill, Berkshire, UK.

Topic 5: Monitoring and evaluation

We may be very busy, we may be very 'efficient', but we will also be truly 'effective' only when we begin with the end in mind.

– Steven Covey

Monitoring is the process of checking the progress or quality of (something) over a period of time and can involve informal observation and judgements about progress.

Evaluation is generally a more formal process of making judgments of merit, worth, and significance of something, or someone, based on criteria against a set of standards and evidence.

An understanding of the function and value of monitoring and evaluation is important because as a VET practitioner you need to be able to make, and stand by, your formal and informal judgements and take part in strategic conversations with others about the value of particular ideas and approaches relating to LLN delivery and assessment practices and program design. You need to know how to collect valid evidence and present compelling arguments based on qualitative and quantitative data.

You will be asked to 'apply and evaluate strategies for teaching literacy skills and knowledge' and 'use formal and informal monitoring to evaluate effectiveness of teaching strategies'.

In order to demonstrate this knowledge within the context of a unit, you will need to examine the ways in which 'monitoring and evaluation' are used in multiple ways in VET contexts and ways in which you can use the concepts to track your own learning and progress through this qualification.

This topic covers the following content:

- Formative and summative assessment
- Qualitative and quantitative data
- Developing an evaluation plan.

Formative assessment and summative assessment

Assessment can be applied to the evaluation or estimation of the nature, quality, or ability of someone or something and so the act of assessment can be applied very broadly. For the purposes of clarity, the focus for assessment in this section will be on assessment of learner progress towards agreed outcomes in a VET learning environment (with an emphasis on LLN skill development).

Generally assessment of a learner's LLN skill development takes place:

- before taking part in an education program (initial or diagnostic assessment)

- during the program (formative)
- at the completion of a sequence of learning or program completion (summative).

Formative assessment

Formative assessment most closely aligns with the concept of monitoring in that it allows for judgments to be made over a period of time about progress in skill development or the efficacy of an approach.

Formative assessment can help inform the instructional process because it is a way of answering the questions.

- Where are my learners now? How can I assess the learners' current LLN skill levels?
- What do they need to know? How can I develop a clear picture of the LLN skills required by the accredited course or training package content or benchmarks?
- What do they need to learn to get there? What is the gap between the assessment of current skill and what is required in the training specification? What increments of learning do learners need to be able to demonstrate these outcomes?
- How will I know when they have got there? What evidence do I need to meet the formal requirements of assessment?

The value of formative assessment is the use that the practitioner makes of the 'results', that is, the form of instruction that follows. It's not about teachers just collecting information or data on student learning; it's what they do with the information they collect.

You can use the information from formative assessment to make a 'deliberate act of instruction' about a particular LLN concept. For example, you might realise that, in order for a learner to demonstrate that they can write an incident report, they need to revise the concepts of order, sequence and cause and effect. So you might design a specific sequence where you introduce those concepts to a learner group and have them practise writing an incident report.

Basically, formative assessment can be seen as a form of practice. Once a formative assessment is complete both the learner and the teacher can reflect on:

- Are we doing well?
- What can we do better?

The answers to the questions can help to determine the next steps of the learning process. From this point, both parties can make adjustments without the need for a sense of failure.

Formative assessment methods

For formative assessment to be effective you need to build the following features into your practice.

- Outline the criteria for assessment and goal setting with the learners in a way that creates clear expectations but is not overwhelming.
- Develop a keen eye for observation to see if all learners are on-task or need assistance. If a high percentage of learners are 'off-task' this can indicate the need for additional instruction.
- Embed questioning strategies into each lesson or unit to check for learner understanding. Asking better questions allows an opportunity for deeper thinking and provides teachers with significant insight into the degree and depth of understanding.
- Introduce self- and peer- assessment to create a learning environment and lessen the fear associated with assessment. Learners begin to take responsibility for their own learning and develop increasingly sophisticated learning strategies.

Formative assessment is about the negotiation between a tutor or teacher and the learner and tracking progress in a number of ways.

You can help learners to reflect on their learning by asking them:

- What was the biggest bit of learning for you?
- How did you learn it and what worked best for you?
- What did you enjoy?
- What has been most useful?
- What has been difficult?

Together you can assess progress with learners by:

- asking whether the goal, or part of the goal has been reached and how the learner knows this
- looking through recorded work which shows evidence of this, or asking the learner to demonstrate a skill on which they have been working, for example, reading and carrying out instructions
- asking what difference the learning has made in the learner's life (education and training, community life and working life, as appropriate)
- discussing what is left to be done to achieve the goal.³⁵

³⁵ An adult literacy and numeracy curriculum framework for Scotland, *The Scottish Government*, <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Life-Long-Learning/17551/curriculumframework>>, p. 86.

Research task: Assessment for learning

1. Read *Working inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the classroom*.³⁶
2. Are the concepts described here transferrable to an adult learning environment? Discuss with colleagues.

Recognising competence

One of the most important outcomes from engaging learners in formative assessment is that it strengthens a learner's metacognitive (or learning) strategies. Refer back to the topic *Adults as Learners*, in Topic 3.

If the learner can receive some descriptive feedback of what they are doing well and what they need to improve they can become more effective agents in the learning process. Using formative assessment so that learners become involved both as assessors of their own learning and as resources to other learners can be a powerful way to introduce learners to the concept of 'competence' and the gathering of their own assessment evidence.

Research task: Developing a core skills inventory

1. Read *Part 4: Are we there yet? in From the ground up – Addressing core skills in the agrifood industry*.³⁷
2. Examine the methodology for the creation of the Core Skills Inventory.
3. How does the Core Skills Inventory support the assessment process?
4. How might this concept be adapted for use in your own practice?

Summative assessment

The national VET system is competency-based, built around nationally – endorsed industry standards. Competency-based training provides learners with the skills, knowledge and understanding to demonstrate competence against standards and performance criteria in an applied context.

Summative assessment is about using evidence at a particular point in time to assess an individual's learning relative to content standards.

As a practitioner operating in a VET context you will need to make judgements about whether competency has been achieved.

³⁶ Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., and Wiliam, D., 2002, *Working inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the classroom*, The King's College 'Black Box' Series, Nelson, London.

³⁷ Agrifood Skills Australia, *From the ground up – Addressing core skills in the agrifood industry*

The Assessment Guidelines of the training specification you are using will guide your approach to summative assessment. Secondly, you will need to follow the advice in the Evidence Guide for the unit you are assessing to identify the critical aspects for assessment and evidence required to demonstrate competency in the unit.

Summative assessment evidence

Summative assessment in VET is intended to show that learners have reached a certain standard of performance. Where the learner and teacher or tutor have been regularly reviewing progress against the required standards through formative assessment processes, summative assessment will normally be a natural culmination of the learning process, rather than a separate 'event'.

Where the learner has been working with a tutor on a specific aspect of underpinning knowledge for which they need to demonstrate competence in a broader context, for example, working on transposing formulae in order to pass a maths test in an Electrotechnology unit, then the learner and tutor will agree – based on work produced by the learner – that the learning goals of understanding transposing formulae have now been met and that the learner is ready to demonstrate that skill in a formal assessment.

Some training packages allow for summative assessment to be a process in which the assessor reviews a portfolio of work produced by the learner to confirm that it meets the required standards. In other cases, particularly where there are licensing or regulatory requirements a 'test' or 'exam' may be mandated.

Evidence is information on which an assessor makes a judgement of competency.

If you are working with an accredited course or a training package unit that has a clear language, literacy or numeracy title and set of performance criteria it will be easier to design the appropriate assessment task.

For example, in BSBWRT301 *Write simple documents* the entire unit is about the outcomes required to plan, draft and review a basic document before writing the final version. The entire content of the unit is about the process of writing and so the entire assessment and evidence can be about the various processes and stages in producing relevant workplace documents.

Where you are providing integrated LLN support in a VET program, working with the LLN content integrated into a vocational unit then the assessment of the LLN skills required would only be part of the assessment of a unit.

For example, in MSAPMSUP303A *Identify equipment faults* the unit requires the application of planning, technical knowledge and skills to check and isolate routine and non-routine equipment faults used in production and report on the status of equipment. The reporting part is dealt with in two specific performance criteria in the unit:

4.2 *Record proposals for equipment repair based on faults found, cost/time implications and workplace approval systems*

4.3 *Explain report to relevant workplace personnel including any options and recommendations.*

In this case the reporting process is both written ('record proposals' in 4.2) and verbal ('explain report' in 4.3). The use of numeracy is required to collect data and analyse it in relation to cost and time implications. The assessment of these skills would be part of the overall assessment of this unit.

Depending on your role as an LLN practitioner you may be wholly responsible for designing and managing an assessment process or you may be working in collaboration with another VET practitioner and contributing to an assessment process.

Either way you should be able to make confident judgements about the appropriate amount of evidence required in a summative assessment by following these steps.³⁸

1. Unpack the unit/s of competency, including elements and performance criteria as well as the foundation skills information, to develop a picture of competence.
2. Check the assessment requirements for specific assessment advice.
3. Identify where the evidence will come from (that is, the workplace or off-the-job).
4. Identify the evidence required to demonstrate competence.
5. Map the proposed evidence against the performance criteria for the relevant unit of competency or cluster of units.
6. Check that the evidence complies with the rules of evidence.
7. Validate assessment strategy.
8. Validate assessment tools.

Research task

Standards for Registered Training Organisations require that assessment must be based on what is termed the 'rules of evidence' – validity, reliability, fairness and flexibility. This is also good teaching and assessment practice, and ensures the best learning outcomes for learners.

³⁸ ANTA, 2001, *Training Package assessment materials kit*.

Validity means that the evidence relates to the unit competency, addresses essential skills and knowledge, dimensions of competency and employability skills.

Reliability means that the assessment tool and process will produce consistent outcomes when applied by a range of assessors in a range of contexts.

Fairness means that the assessment will not disadvantage any person and will take into account the characteristics of the person being assessed.

Flexibility means that the assessment tool and process allows for assessment in a range of assessment contexts.

- Download BSBWRT301 *Write simple documents* and MSAPMSUP303A *Identify equipment faults* from <Training.gov.au> (TGA) and examine the units for explicit and implicit LLN content.
- What types of evidence would be sufficient in both units to cover the LLN content and to comply with the 'rules of evidence'?

Qualitative and quantitative data

Qualitative and quantitative data collections are ways of gathering evidence in order to make a case for, or demonstrate the value or quality of a particular process or approach.

They are a part of the research methodology used in a range of social science related fields such as health, education and business.

Action research is the name given to research that uses data collection and analysis while a particular 'course of action' is taking place. Using this model, practitioners in any field can take an active role in formulating solutions to problems that they encounter in their everyday work.

In the process result of doing the research and identifying and implementing change practitioners can gain a deeper insight into their own practice and broader workplace environment.

As a practitioner working in VET you will need to provide evidence of compliance with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations in order for your RTO to maintain its registration. You may need to provide data to funding bodies as part of your reporting requirements. You may need to present a case to management for a proposed change to ways of working in and across teams, or pitch ideas for professional development or resource development.

In order to be able to make a strong case or judgement about the efficacy of an idea or program you need to gather some evidence. Evidence is generated through the collection of data and its subsequent analysis.

Data can be generated using a number of evaluation instruments, such as:

- surveys
- structured interviews
- questionnaires
- observations.

Evidence based wholly on qualitative or quantitative methods can result in a weakened argument for a number of reasons. Some audiences prefer the power of numbers and some prefer the power of a good narrative. To guard against bias in judgement from your intended audience it is best to use a 'mixed methods' approach – a combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

Features of qualitative and quantitative data

Qualitative	Quantitative
Deals with descriptions Data can be observed but not measured Analysis of data such as words, images or objects The aim is a complete, detailed description	Deals with numbers Data that can be measured time, cost, attendance, ages, etc. The aim is to classify features, count them, and construct statistical models in an attempt to explain the trends observed
Researcher may only know roughly in advance what he/she is looking for	Researcher knows clearly in advance what he/she is looking for
Recommended during earlier phases of research projects	Recommended during latter phases of research projects
The design emerges as the study unfolds	All aspects of the study are carefully designed before data is collected
Researcher is the data-gathering instrument	Researcher uses tools, such as questionnaires or equipment to collect numerical data
Data is in the form of words, pictures or objects	Data is in the form of numbers and statistics

The viewpoint can be overly subjective because it relies on individuals' interpretation of events, e.g., uses participant observation, in-depth interviews, etc., but an over emphasis on certain viewpoints can skew the result	The use of objective number and precise measurement and analysis of target concepts, e.g., uses surveys; questionnaires, etc., without any qualitative balance can result in a list of numbers that have little independent meaning
Qualitative data is more 'rich', time-consuming and less able to be generalised	Quantitative data is more efficient, able to test hypotheses, but may miss contextual detail
Researcher tends to become subjectively immersed in the subject matter	Researcher tends to remain objectively separated from the subject matter

Reading

- Neill, J., *Analysis of Professional Literature*, Outdoor Education Research & Evaluation Center, <<http://www.wilderdom.com/OEcourses/PROFLIT/index.htm>>
- For an overview of the main types of quantitative research and the tools to gather data, read the following notes and books.
- Wadsworth, Y., 2011, *Everyday evaluation on the run*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW.
- Wadsworth, Y., 2010, *Do it yourself social research*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW.

Research task: Generating learner feedback

1. Read *What do learners really want from their EFL course?* by Alun Davies, <<https://academic.oup.com/eltj/article-abstract/60/1/3/357145>>.
2. Analyse the methods for generating learner feedback and the way in which the writer used it to adapt his teaching.
3. Discuss.

Evaluation

*Evaluation is the systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about some object.*³⁹

In this definition the term 'object' is used to refer to a program, policy, technology, person, need or activity. This is the case so that the evaluation of 'said object' is kept as open as possible and evaluation activities used for a variety of purposes.

Some of the purposes covered in units in this qualification are to:

- evaluate strategies for teaching literacy skills and knowledge
- evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies
- evaluate the effectiveness of an assessment process.

You may also use evaluation to:

- identify need for a program or project
- identify need or development of a resource
- identify need for a professional development program
- identify need for research into new practices
- identify need for a change to business models within the RTO relating to LLN support delivery
- assess the likelihood of a planned program or project meeting the particular objectives
- investigate what's really happening in a program or project to see how well it is working and to identify what could be improved
- measure the outcomes and impact of a program or project, in order to make a judgment about its effectiveness or value.

Formative and summative evaluation

Summative evaluation is a method of judging the worth of a program at the end of the program activities. The focus is on the outcome.

Leaving an evaluation to the end of a process is a little like ignoring the need for formative assessment and only relying on summative assessment. Unless you build in some form of iterative evaluation during the planning and execution of a process, you may be surprised or disappointed to find out that it didn't work, although issues could have been rectified much earlier if you had known about them.

³⁹ Trochim, W., 2006, *Introduction to Evaluation*, Research Methods Knowledge Base, <<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intreval.htm>>

That is why formative evaluation should be part of the process of program or resource development to allow for the identification of issues before the completion of a process. Just as formative assessment allows for the identification of issues within the teaching-learning cycle, formative evaluation can help to ensure continuous improvement within a project or process.

Developing an evaluation plan

Whether you are carrying out a formative or summative evaluation, effective evaluation requires effective planning. No matter what you are evaluating it is recommended that you use a planning tool such as the example below to guide you.

Focus The focus is driven by what you want to achieve or change. It could be as a result of work you are doing on a unit, but should be linked to a real workplace need. For example:

- a particular learning technique
- a group of learners or staff
- a course or program
- a response to policy.

Provide a brief description of the focus and which aspects of the focus the evaluation will be examining.

Purpose What is the purpose of the evaluation?
This will probably be something like:

- *To determine whether the course of action you have taken (or technique, program, different way of working) has achieved its objectives.*
- *To identify what impact the project has had on learners, staff, completion rates and pathways.*

Audience Who is going to use the findings of your evaluation and for what purpose?

The audience may be people such as:

- other teachers/trainers
- management
- industry/employers
- funding bodies
- you.

They may use your evaluation findings for things like:

- learning how to implement a particular activity or technique
- deciding whether to further implement or fund an activity or program or improving an activity, course or program.

Key questions

What questions need to be answered by the evaluation?

For example:

- What have been the impacts of the ‘course of action’? (that is, what has changed as a result of what I/we have done?)
- Were any of these impacts unexpected?
- Have I achieved the intended objectives?
- What worked well and what didn’t work?
- What would I do differently if you were to do this again?

Information sources

What information do I need to collect to answer these questions and who do I need to collect it from?

The type of information you collect will be very much dependent on the outcomes you are expecting. The important thing to remember is that you are not collecting data for its own sake but using your findings to improve the processes, practices, systems or outcomes.

You should consider a ‘mixed methods’ approach of quantitative and qualitative data to inform you evaluation.

You might:

- administer a questionnaire or survey before and after the particular ‘course of action’ to measure change, for example, to learners to see what they thought was useful about your approach
- conduct interviews with relevant people at the end of the project
- interrogate data sets collected elsewhere (research agencies, for example, ABS, NCVET, administration sections of the RTO, for example, enrolment and completion figures)
- test any products developed through the project with a control group (that is, a group of people who haven’t been involved in the project)

- observe a new practice being used by a team member and make notes
- make personal reflection and observation about process and outcomes
- discuss observations about change with team members and colleagues.

Reporting In what form are you going to present your evaluation findings, and when?

Reporting on your evaluation findings will most likely take place at the end of a course of action, but it could also be done during a project to report on progress to date, or to identify opportunities for improvement.

The form in which you present your findings will vary according to the purpose of your evaluation and the audience for which it is designed. For example, it could be:

- a report to management
- a report to a funding body
- a case study or 'how-to' guide for other teachers/trainers
- a self-reflection for your own practice
- an article for a journal to share your practice with others.

Reading

- Owen, P.M., and Rogers, P., 1999, *Program Evaluation: Forms and approaches*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW.

Research task: Generating data for compliance with Standards for Registered Training Organisations

Download a copy of the Standards,
<<http://www.asqa.gov.au/about/australias-vet-sector/standards-for-registered-training-organisations-%28rtos%29-2015.html>>

Think about how each RTO needs to manage the risk associated with LLN against Standards 1.2, 1.3 and 5.1 according to their learner profile and scope of registration.

Brainstorm with colleagues a list of qualitative or quantitative methods that could be used to gather information on how effectively the RTO is managing Standards 1.2, 1.3 and 5.1 in regard to language, literacy and numeracy.

Use the evaluation plan template to outline an approach to evaluation of the RTO's response to Standards 1.2, 1.3 and 5.1.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Trigger words

Reading	Writing	Numeracy	Speaking and listening
according to signs, barcodes and labels appropriate documentation check comply with directions follow written procedures identify interpret and monitor legislative requirements marked out obtain information from written instructions policies and procedures receipt of recording system understanding written reporting	chart complete reports document is completed identify inventory label maintain records marked monitor notes outline record data report tagged written reporting	according to signs, barcodes and labels adjust allowance calculate collect data computations convert determine value estimate formula interpret charts and graphs levels measuring techniques perform proportion quantity size time tolerance	access relevant information allocate clarify meaning or advice contribute discuss delegate explain feedback follow verbal instructions or procedures identify inform liaise make suggestions monitor negotiation recommend refer to relate supervise team discussions use questions verbal reporting

Appendix 2: Unpacking the core skill demands of a unit of competency

Three steps to unpacking the core skill demands of a unit of competency					
	STEP 1			STEP 2	STEP 3
	Identify core skills (using the Trigger words tool)			Analyse complexity/ACSF level	Evaluate the representation of the core skills and ACSF in the foundation skills section
Core skill	Elements and performance criteria	Assessment requirements performance and knowledge (or critical aspects of a unit that pre-dates the Standards for Training Packages)	Foundation skills (or required skills section of a unit that pre-dates the Standards for Training Packages)		
Unit code and title: MSAPMSUP303A <i>Identify equipment fault</i> (worked example of one core skill: oral communication)					
Reading					
Writing					

<p>Oral communication</p>	<p>1.4 Explain the operating principles of hydraulic, pneumatic, mechanical and electrical/electronic systems related to workplace equipment.</p> <p>1.5 Implement measures to control identified hazards. (in this small business, it involved talking)</p> <p>1.8 Discuss test procedures and obtain necessary permission.</p> <p>2.4 Make arrangements for additional resources.</p> <p>4.3 Explain report to relevant workplace personnel including options and recommendations.</p>	<p>Implement appropriate action in the case of potential situations requiring action (again, in this small business, appropriate action involved talking with colleagues)</p>	<p>No oral communication or language skills listed in required skills section</p>	<p>The candidate will have to engage in a range of conversations exploring issues to do with equipment failure, explaining the outcomes of systems and equipment, and problem solving to identify and implement solutions.</p> <p>The systems explained in PC1.4 and the test procedures discussed in PC 1.8 require specialised vocabulary.</p> <p>It is likely that the candidate would be operating at ACSF level 4 in oral communication.</p>	<p>Oral communication is embedded in several performance criteria which are listed as 'critical aspects'.</p> <p>While specific reference is made in the required skills to the core skills of reading, writing and numeracy, no specific mention is made to oral communication or language skills.</p> <p>This unit would benefit from more explicit reference to oral communication demands, such as: oral communication skills to explain options and recommendations regarding equipment operating systems to colleagues.</p>
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Numeracy					
Learning					
Unit code and title:					
<i>Reading</i>					
<i>Writing</i>					
<i>Oral communication</i>					
<i>Numeracy</i>					
<i>Learning</i>					

Appendix 3: Summary analysis of adult literacy and life skills survey data

Note: This Appendix remains because much of the discussion in policy documents in the last five years references ALLS. Readers should keep a watching brief on emerging discourse on the PIAAC study and its analysis.

Below is an outline of key data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 4228.0 – *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, Summary Results, Australia, 2006*. This summary outlines the key shifts in performance between the 1996 and 2006 surveys.

These studies have now been superseded by the Survey of Adult Skills - an international survey conducted in 33 countries as part of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).

References to table numbers in the summary below refer to the tables in the ABS summary document, available from the ABS website,
<<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4228.0>>

General

In 2006, between 46% and 70% of adults in Australia had poor or very poor skills across one or more of the five skill domains of prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and health literacy. This means they did not attain skill level 3, the level regarded by most experts as a suitable minimum for coping with the increasing and complex demands of modern life and work.

There has been some upward movement in performance from the lowest skill levels since 1996. In regard to prose literacy, there has been a significant 1–2% percentage point decrease in the proportion of adults with a skill level of 1 and a corresponding 2–3% increase in the proportion of adults with skill levels 2 and 3. In regard to document literacy, there has also been a significant decrease in the proportion of adults with a skill level of 1.

The number and proportion of adults with low skills in the other countries surveyed to date have been similar to those in Australia. Australia's results across all domains were ranked in the middle. Australia's skill levels are generally higher than Italy and the United States, about the same as Canada and Bermuda, and lower than Norway and Switzerland.

Age

Age and skills are inversely related. Younger cohorts tended to score higher on average and also had larger proportions at higher skill levels (Tables 1 and 2).

The literacy skills of people aged 45 years were lower than younger age groups. Compared with the older age cohorts, larger proportions of people aged 45 years and under had skill levels of 3 or more. The exception to this was in relation to people aged 15–19 years (Tables 1 and 2).

Comparison of document and prose literacy skills levels in the 1996 and 2006 surveys reveal similar distributions. There were however, significant changes across the older population, with decreases in the proportion attaining level 1, and an increase in the proportion attaining level 3 (Table 2).

Sex

The proportion of females with prose literacy skill levels of 3 or higher was slightly greater than that of males, while the proportion of men with document literacy skill levels of 3 or higher was greater than for females (Table 1).

Males outperformed females on numeracy (Table 1).

Males and females performed similarly on problem solving and health literacy (Table 1).

In most ALLS participating countries, males performed better than females in numeracy, and slightly better in document literacy. Females generally performed better in regard to prose literacy (Table 6).

States and territories

In 2006, there were no major differences in the skill levels of people by state/territory, except in the ACT, where proportionately fewer people were at skill levels 1 and 2 across all the skill domains (Table 4).

There has been little movement in the skill levels of people by state/territory since 1996. However, in NSW, there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of people with a prose skill level of 1, and in Victoria, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of people with a prose skill level of 2 (Table 4).

Educational attainment

The number of years of formal education has an impact on an individual's skill levels. The majority of those who had completed 10 years or less of formal education attained skill levels of 1 or 2 across all scales (Table 10).

Conversely, the majority of those who had completed 21 or more years of formal education achieved a skill level of 3 or more across all scales except problem solving (Table 10).

Persons whose highest qualification was a Bachelor Degree or above consistently outperformed those whose highest qualification was an advanced diploma/diploma or below, particularly on the problem solving domain (Table 10).

Persons without a qualification who had completed school to Year 12, achieved higher skill levels than those who had completed school to Year 11 only, and similarly those who had completed to Year 11 achieved higher skill levels than those who had completed school to Year 10 or below. Such findings, however, are likely to be related also to the age of respondents (Table 10).



Employment

Employed persons had higher literacy levels on average than those who were unemployed or not in the labour force (Tables 12 and 13).

Regardless of full-time or part-time status, a greater proportion of employed persons had a skill level of 3 or higher across all scales, than either unemployed people or those who were not in the labour force (Tables 12 and 13).

On the problem solving and health scales, the majority of employed people still achieved poor or very poor results, that is, scores lower than 3 (Tables 12 and 13).

In general, 'knowledge-intensive' industries (for example, professional, scientific and technical industries) have higher proportions of workers with high literacy levels (Table 14).

Between 1996 and 2006, the relative proportions of older workers with lower levels of literacy have decreased (Table 16).

Participation in education and learning

Those with lower literacy levels were less likely to have participated in course-based learning over the last 12 months (Table 11).

Income

There is a strong association between prose skill level and median personal gross weekly income. For example, those with a skill level of 1 had a median income of \$205 less per week than those with a skill level of 2. This gap in income potential remained fairly steady as people moved up the skill levels. For example, the difference between those with a skill level of 2 and 3 was \$192 (Table 8).

Over 50% of workers with prose skill levels of 3 and above were in the top two personal income quintiles, whereas for those with skill levels of 1 or 2, over 50% were in the 1st to 3rd income quintiles (Table 16).

There has been little change in the distribution of income of workers by literacy level between 1996 and 2006 (Table 16).

Information communication technology

There is a relationship between high literacy levels and greater computer and internet use, as well as the range of computer/internet skills that people have (Table 24).

However, regardless of skill level, a very high proportion of 15–24-year-olds used the internet, particularly for browsing, on a daily basis or a few times a week. Also regardless of skill level, few people aged 55 years and over used the internet on a daily/weekly basis (Table 24).

Appendix 4: Research for planning adult learning – an overview

Reproduced with permission from:

- Keenan, D., 2010, *Research for Planning Adult Learning: An Overview {Adult Learning}*, Developing Education.

Malcolm Knowles

Malcolm Knowles began where few in the educational field had trodden when he began to conceptualize his theory of andragogy in the 1950s. His belief that adult learners were inherently different than child learners, and his theories surrounding that belief, have informed much of the research surrounding andragogy to this day.

Knowles' five assumptions about adult learners seem simple in some respects, but only because so much of our modern concepts of adult learning are built on and presuppose the work of Knowles. If we plan learning activities for adults which do not consider self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn⁴⁰ we are immediately falling short of our responsibility.

Also of note in Malcolm Knowles' work, is the importance of his work on informal adult education, and how it has informed even formal roles within the educational community in modern times. Many of the outcomes present in now formalized documents for continual professional improvement can be linked to outcomes for adult learning developed in Knowles' book *Informal Adult Education*.⁴¹

- Adults should acquire a mature understanding of themselves.
- Adults should develop an attitude of acceptance, love and respect toward others.
- Adults should develop a dynamic attitude toward life.
- Adults should learn to react to the causes, not the symptoms, of behaviour.
- Adults should acquire the skills necessary to achieve the potentials of their personalities.
- Adults should understand the essential values in the capital of human experience.
- Adults should understand their society and should be skilful in directing social change.

While the responsibility for achieving these outcomes of learning lies in the individual learner in Knowles' theory of informal education, it seems logical that adult learners will gain much more from their professional learning if we can provide materials as presenters that facilitate interaction with these outcomes.

⁴⁰ Knowles, M.S., et al., 1984, *Andragogy in Action: Applying modern principles of adult education*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

⁴¹ Knowles, M.S., 1950, *Informal Adult Education*, Association Press, Chicago.



Stephen Brookfield

What Stephen Brookfield has brought to the research is a clarification and practical application of the ideas Knowles' had developed, with specific insight into the realities of adult education that Knowles did not explicate nearly as thoroughly in his theoretical discussions. Brookfield tries to break away from the traditional 'myths' of adult education that it is:

*inherently joyful, that adults are innately self-directed learners, that good educational practice always meets the needs articulated by learners themselves and that there is a uniquely adult learning process as well as a uniquely adult form of practice.*⁴²

What Brookfield puts forward in his overview of adult learning, is four major areas of research in the post-war study of adult learning. These four areas include: Self-Directed Learning, Critical Reflection, Experiential Learning and Learning to Learn. In contrast to the work of Knowles, these areas of research have links to the teaching of children as well, and Brookfield makes no attempt to disassociate his theory from the teaching of children. Instead, he develops his ideas to display how these research areas have social and political implications for adults that are minimized or less apparent in child learning.

Self-directed learning There may be a political dimension to self-directed learning, as often self-directed projects are serendipitous to larger overall goals and initiatives of those in authority roles over the adult. In addition, Brookfield notes that research is needed into the roles of assessing effective adult learning, as even the assessments may result in a loss of autonomy for the adult learner in choosing and engaging in learning.

Critical reflection This is an area in which Brookfield devotes a great deal of effort, as the conceptualization of 'Critical Reflection' in adult learning may be wrongfully seen as reflecting in a negative way an individual's learning or practice. Brookfield offers this explanation:

As an idea critical reflection focuses on three interrelated processes:

- 1. the process by which adults question and then replace or reframe an assumption that up to that point has been uncritically accepted as representing common sense wisdom*
- 2. the process through which adults take alternative perspective on previously taken for granted ideas, actions, forms of reasoning and ideologies*

⁴² Brookfield, S., 1995, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

3. *the process by which adults come to recognize the hegemonic aspects of dominant cultural values and to understand how self-evident renderings of the 'natural' state of the world actually bolster the power and self-interest of unrepresentative minorities.*⁴³

Unfortunately, because this self-reflective process is steeped in the language of the psychoanalytic tradition, it can be a difficult area for educators to gain insight readily.

Experiential Learning

Brookfield believes that learning from practical experience is an essential component of effective adult learning. However, he does note two pitfalls of exclusive reliance on experiential learning: First, learners must realize that we do not objectively reflect on experience, and that our learning is still framed by contextual and historical perspectives; Second, that the richness of the learning is not directly linked to the quantity or length of experiences reflected upon. We must critically affirm the experiences of adult learners to ensure that the learning is not based on a romanticised or idealised version of the experience.

Learning to Learn

This concept functions in some ways as a catch-all term for many of the processes adults undertake to understand their learning styles and approaches. While the concept of learning to learn has suffered from a lack of formal study in adult education, Brookfield contends that it is an essential component of adult education, and should be seen as part of a lifelong learning strategy as opposed to something to be taught to children in school. It can also be seen as the area of research that can have the broadest impact on adult lives outside of academic boundaries, as it can inform many of the activities adults are involved in daily.⁴⁴

Brookfield goes on in his overview to discuss emerging trends as of his writing. From these emerging trends, the concept of practical theorizing seems particularly relevant to professional learning today, as it is based on the learner's careful consideration of their experience and informal theories that guide their practice. The process by which practical theorizing is borne out of critical reflection, is the sharing of the theory with colleagues leading to refinement of the ideas, and then bending the theory back to their own practice by using it as a lens through which they may assess their teaching. If teachers engage in this process, formal theory can help educators identify areas of their practice that they prior may not have been able to envision or attend to.⁴⁵

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*



Jack Mezirow

Jack Mezirow has formalized many of the issues raised with the previous two researchers into functional frameworks of andragogy that also consider ethical questions present when educating adults. Often we consider ethical questions far more readily when working with youth, as the fiduciary responsibility of the teacher for a student requires that we do so. However, Mezirow raises a number of issues in *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* that he claims are ethical in the role of an adult educator, which include allowing the educator to:

- Intentionally precipitate transformative learning without making sure that the learner fully understands that such transformation may result.
- Present his or her own perspective, which may be unduly influential with the learner.
- Make educational interventions when psychic distortions appear to impede a learner's progress (even) if the educator is not trained as a psychotherapist.⁴⁶

These statements make it apparent that the responsibilities of the educator to an adult learner are significantly different than the responsibilities toward a child learner. With different responsibilities comes a different methodology to teaching process. Mezirow also outlines the following 12 goals he created that he believes practitioners of andragogy must fulfill:

1. Progressively decrease the learner's dependency on the educator.
2. Help the learner understand how to use learning resources, especially the experience of others, including the educator, and how to engage in reciprocal learning relationships.
3. Assist the learner to define his/her learning needs, both in terms of immediate awareness and in terms of understanding the cultural and psychological assumptions influencing his/her perceptions of needs.
4. Assist the learner to assume increasing responsibility for defining learning objectives, planning his/her own learning program, and evaluating progress.
5. Help the learner organize what is to be learned in relationship to his/her current personal problems, concerns, and levels of understanding.
6. Foster learner decision making, select relevant learning experiences that require choosing, expand the learner's range of options, and facilitate the learner's taking the perspectives of others who have alternative ways of understanding.
7. Encourage the use of criteria for judging that are increasingly inclusive and differentiating in awareness, self-reflexive and integrative of experience.
8. Foster a self-corrective, reflexive approach to learning – to typifying and labeling, to perspective taking and choosing, and to habits of learning and learning relationships.

⁴⁶ Mezirow, J., 1991, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

9. Facilitate posing and solving of problems, including problems associated with the implementation of individual and collective action, and recognition of the relationship between personal problems and public issues.
10. Reinforce the self-concept of the learner as a learner and doer by providing for progressive mastery and for a supportive climate with feedback to encourage provisional efforts to change and to take risks; by avoiding competitive judgment of performance, and by appropriate use of mutual support groups.
11. Emphasize experiential, participative, and projective instructional methods and use modelling and learning contract where appropriate.
12. Make the moral distinction between helping the learner understand his/her full range of choices and the ways to improve the quality of choosing and encouraging the learner to make a specific choice.⁴⁷

In this comprehensive list, we see a synthesis of the ideas of Malcolm Knowles and Stephen Brookfield that were presented earlier. Mezirow goes back to Knowles' assertion that adult learning is inherently different than the learning of children, not that the teaching process has to be different, but rather that we must be aware of the different role that we have as educators and the ethical implications of that role. Also, Knowles outcomes for adult learning are present in the background of Mezirow's goals, as teachers work toward independent practice, change and reinforcement of learning. Brookfield's more practical approach to analysis of adult learning is also represented in Mezirow's goals, as elements of his four identified research areas in adult learning, self-directed learning, critical reflection, experiential learning, and learning to learn, are all represented within the goals in Mezirow's list.

What these three authors represent to me is a tradition and focus on adult learning that is becoming ever more essential today. Each of these writers speaks of future development in research and learning about adult education, showing a continuing need (as teachers have) to rethink, revise and rework our learning and continue improving for all adult learners.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*



Appendix 5: Pronunciation

Reproduced with permission from:

- Pawlikoska-Smith, G., 2002, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Theoretical Framework*, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, pp.28–29.

There is no systematic, one-to-one relationship between learners' clarity of pronunciation and their proficiency levels.

Several experimental studies have shown that accent does not seem to be closely associated with an individual's ability to function in a language. For example, the validation study for The Cambridge Assessment of Spoken English (CASE) demonstrated that pronunciation relates highly to grammatical competence but not to discourse competence, strategic competence or general task achievement.⁴⁸ The common experience is that some highly proficient ESL speakers have a 'heavy accent', and there are also ESL learners with less accented pronunciation who do not necessarily achieve high levels of proficiency.

Accent is determined by L1, age of learning, motivation and aptitude, all of which vary in any given ESL setting. There is no one-to-one relationship among accentedness, comprehensibility or intelligibility of speech.

Accentedness is a subjective judgement by a listener on the 'heaviness' of the speaker's accent, that is, the extent to which a learner's spoken productions are judged to differ from the accent of the community. Comprehensibility is also a perception-based judgement by a listener of the relative difficulty or ease in understanding a speaker's accented speech. Intelligibility is an objective measure based on actual listener's comprehension (answering comprehension questions, for example).

Intelligibility of speech depends on many factors, including lexical choice, grammaticality, and fluency as well as pronunciation features. Some of the factors may relate to specific differences in various accents.^{49 50} Having a noticeable or even 'heavy' accent is not considered a significant factor in oral proficiency as described by the CLB unless it affects the intelligibility of the speaker's speech (i.e. the listener's comprehension).

Although some features of accent (such as pronouncing {th} in a non-native way) are noticeable, they do not have a major impact on intelligibility. Accented speech does require, however, more processing time on the part of listeners as compared with native speaker speech. For example, it takes longer to react to the statements by ESL speakers as true/false than it does when responding to native speaker statements in the same way.

⁴⁸ Milanovic, M.N., Saville, A., Pollitt, A., and Cook, A., 1996, 'Developing Rating Scales for CASE: Theoretical Concerns and Analyses', *Validation in Language Testing*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon.

⁴⁹ Derwing, T.M., and Munro, M.J., 1997, 'Accent, intelligibility, and comprehensibility: Evidence from four L1s', *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, no. 19, pp.1–16.

⁵⁰ Munro, M.J., and Derwing, T.M., 1995, 'Processing time, accent, and comprehensibility in the perception of native and foreign-accented speech', *Language and Speech*, no. 38, pp.289-306.

Contemporary research indicates that intelligibility is more strongly related to the prosodic elements of speech (e.g., stress, rhythm, and intonation) than to individual sounds. Traditionally, language instruction methodologists and teachers maintained that clarity in pronunciation was ensured by the correct articulation of individual sounds of a language.

Recent studies show that the pronunciation features that influence intelligibility the most are the global prosodic features (e.g., intonation, stress, rhythm), rather than individual sounds as thought previously. Second language pronunciation in adult learners depends on the first language (mother tongue); with different L1 learners there will be different pronunciation learning needs and syllabus objectives. It has also been established that typologically related languages are generally easier for L2 learners to pronounce than unrelated languages.⁵¹ Second language pronunciation depends on age. Learner age in L2 acquisition has a significant impact on accent. It may be one mechanism in SLA which is age-dependent; after puberty, the acquisition of 'native-like' accent is extremely rare.⁵²

Implications for teaching

The goal of the pronunciation syllabus is to address each learner's clarity of speech in view of:

- the learner's specific needs (specific intelligibility problems, goals)
- empirically identified factors which affect intelligibility most, and the teaching of which has been shown by research to be most effective and efficient in meeting the goal
- socio-cultural appropriateness.

The general direction of the pronunciation syllabus should be from a wide-angle global view to zooming in on specific local elements as needed. The starting point is the learner's general speaking habits (mumbling, eye contact, volume, etc.), followed by 'suprasegmentals', followed by 'segmentals'.⁵³

Ethical issues in the teaching of pronunciation in adult ESL

There is the point of view that certain individuals are held back in the pursuit of their goals by an 'accent ceiling'. For those individuals, special pronunciation classes may be helpful. For the majority of adult ESL speakers, however, 'accent reduction' classes will not eliminate an accent, according to the research evidence. Accent should not be treated as 'pathology'; it is perfectly acceptable to have an accent (everybody has one), as long as speech intelligibility is not impaired. While remedial classes teaching global prosodic features of speech do make a difference in better intelligibility evaluations of learners' speech over time, selling adult ESL learners on the idea that an 'accent' is and will continue to be a problem and an obstacle in achieving their goals may be, in some cases, ethically unclear.

⁵¹ Bongaerts, T., 1999, 'Ultimate attainment in L2 pronunciation: The case of very advanced late L2 learners', Birdsong, D. (ed.), *Second Language Acquisition and the Critical Period Hypothesis*, Lawrence Erlbaum, New Jersey, pp.133-159.

⁵² Flege, J., Munro, M., and Mackay, I., 1995, 'Factors affecting degree of perceived foreign accent in a second language', *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, no. 97, pp.3125-3134.

⁵³ Firth, S., 1992, 'Pronunciation syllabus design: A question of 'focus'', Avery, P., and Ehrlich, S. (eds.), *Teaching American English pronunciation*, Oxford University Press.



Appendix 6: A range of theories

Skills-based approach

This approach perceives literacy as a set of skills that remain constant and can be learnt and used in all contexts.

Phonics is a method of teaching beginners to read and pronounce words by learning to associate letters or letter groups (graphemes) with the sounds they represent (phonemes).

When applied to reading the phonics view is that novice readers acquire a set of hierarchically ordered sub-skills that sequentially build toward comprehension ability.

This method is often contrasted with the *Whole language* method of teaching reading and writing that emphasises that teaching methods should focus on meaning and strategy instruction.

A combination of 'whole language' and 'skills-based' features form the basis of the features of the ACSF.

Essential reading

- Hempenstal, K., 1999, 'The role of phonics in learning to read: What does recent research say?' *Fine Print*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp.7–12, <<http://www.valbec.org.au/05/fineprint/archive/1999/99AU.PDF>>

Additional reading

- Anstey, M. and Bull, G., 2004, *The literacy labyrinth*, 2nd edn, Pearson Prentice Hill, Frenchs Forest, NSW, Chapters 5 and 7.
- Burton, M., 2011, *Phonetics for phonics – Underpinning knowledge for adult literacy practitioners*, NIACE, England.
- Reyhner, J., 2003, *The reading wars: Phonics versus whole language*, North Arizona University.

Systemic functional linguistics

This theory suggests that language can only be understood in relation to the context in which it is used. It accounts for the syntactic structure of language and also places the function of language as central (what language does, and how it does it). It focuses on language at the level of the whole text.

A key concept in Halliday's approach is the 'context of situation' which obtains 'through a systematic relationship between the social environment on the one hand, and the functional organization of language on the other.'⁵⁴

In practical terms the application of Halliday's work assists the learner to see that there is a direct connection to the 'text and the context'. That is, we read and write and speak for particular purposes and we do so differently according with whom we are interacting.

⁵⁴ Halliday, M.A.K., 1985, *An introduction to functional grammar*, Edward Arnold, London, p.11.

This work introduces the affect that status and various power relationships have on the way an individual might structure their language (both spoken and written).

Functional linguistics establishes the concept of 'purpose' in actively choosing the words we write or speak to fulfil a particular goal. Sometimes the goal is explicit and pragmatic such as filling in a form to 'sign up' for something we want. Sometimes the goal might be less tangible in purpose but equally as important for the individual, such as having a yarn and offload about the week over Friday night drinks with friends.

Essential reading

- Chapelle, C.A., 1998, 'Some notes on systemic-functional linguistics', *English/Linguistics*, no. 511, October 28, <<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~carolc/LING511/sfl.html>>
- Eggins, S., 2004, *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics*, 2nd edn, Continuum International Publishing Group, London

Additional reading

- Feez, S., 1995, 'Systemic functional linguistics and its application in Australian language education: A short history', *Interchange*, No. 27.
- Halliday, M.A.K., 1985, *An introduction to functional grammar*, Edward Arnold, London.
- Hammond, J., Burns, A., Joyce, H., Brosnan, D., and Gerot, L., 1992, *English for Social Purposes: A handbook for teachers of adult literacy*, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University, Sydney, pp.1–13.
- The Pennsylvania State University, *A brief introduction to the work of M.A.K. Halliday and systemic-functional linguistics*, Pennsylvania State University.

Psycholinguistics

Psycholinguistics is the study of the relationship between linguistic and psychological behaviour. It is an attempt to describe the mental processes involved in language acquisition, comprehension and production.

When applied to the teaching of reading, the psycholinguistic model and the top-down model share the same features and philosophy. The model places the reader at the centre of the reading process acknowledging the strong relationship between language, thought, and culture and the reader's prior experience and knowledge as a factor in gaining meaning from text.

Essential reading

- *Theories of reading*, BBC website, <<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/theories-reading>>
- ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 1992, 'What is linguistics?', *ERIC Digest*, ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Washington DC, <<http://www.ericdigests.org/1992-1/what.htm>>



Additional reading

- Chomsky, N., 1965, *Aspects of a theory of syntax*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MASS.
- Steinberg, D. D. and Sciarini, N. , 2006, *Introduction to psycholinguistics*, 2nd edn, Longman, London.

Genre theory

Genre theory aims to teach learners how to create and analyse spoken and written genres so they can use language to participate fully in their culture. Genre refers to culturally-specific text types that are written, visual or spoken for specific purposes and situations.

According to genre theory texts are socially constructed and serve particular functions in a social context. A text has a specific schematic structure – a distinctive beginning, middle and end. It will use predictable language structures, depending on its social function, and will conform to certain established patterns. Genre theory emphasises this predictability and seeks to identify the characteristics of different texts.

A practical application of genre theory involves the teacher helping the learners to recognise the various texts that they need to navigate their personal, learning and work lives and to understand the particular features of certain text types. Once a learner can recognise the expected features of certain text types they can begin to develop mastery over reading and creating texts of their own.

Essential reading

- Cope, B., and Kalantzis, M., 1993, 'Introduction: How a genre approach to literacy can transform the way writing is taught', *The powers of literacy: A genre approach to teaching writing*, Falmer Press, London, pp.1–21.

Metacognition

Metacognition is about 'being in control of your learning, monitoring your learning, knowing what you know and what you still don't know'⁵⁵ and about how you have learnt it. It's also about selecting strategies that will help you to learn. The capacity for a learner to actively develop their own set of learning strategies is critical to their ability to expand their LLN repertoire of skills (this concept is explored in the ACSF).

The metacognitive view, as it applied to reading, combines the top-down and bottom-up processes so that the reader brings together everything they know in order to 'read' the text. Metacognition involves thinking about what one is doing while reading.

The metacognitive view accepts that both English (L1) speakers and speakers of English as a second language (L2) bring different sets of background knowledge to a task and will be selecting from menus of 'skills' and experience to make sense of text.

⁵⁵ McCormack, R., and Pancini, G., 1990, *Learning to learn: Introducing adults to the culture, context and conventions of knowledge*, Division of Further Education, Ministry of Education, Melbourne.

Essential reading

- BBC, *Theories of Reading*,
<<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/theories-reading>>
- 'Learning strategies' section of the *Australian Core Skills Framework*, DEEWR, 2011.
- McCormack, R., and Pancini, G., 1990, *Learning to learn: Introducing adults to the culture, context and conventions of knowledge*, Division of Further Education, Ministry of Education, Melbourne

