

**One Teacher, One Class, Multiple Levels:  
Creating a Curriculum for a Multi-Level Adult ESL Program**

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April 21, 2003

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the  
Master's degree in English as a  
Second Language at  
the University of Minnesota.

*Accepted as A-B Paper  
E. L. Tu  
4/21/03*

## **Introduction**

In the world of teaching English as a second language (ESL), it is very often the case that teachers and students are presented with not only the difficult task of teaching or learning English without the benefit of a shared language, but also with the difficulty of doing so in a multi-level class. This happens when program structures or budgetary constraints do not allow for more accurate division of students by proficiency in English. It can also happen when diagnostic procedures, such as pre-tests and entrance interviews, are not sufficient to measure a student's ability accurately. Whatever the cause, at many institutions, especially institutions that promote adult basic education (ABE), the solution is rarely "move the student to another class." Therefore, teachers of ESL in multi-level classes need to be able to meet the needs of all their students as best as they can.

"Teaching to the middle" is a method that many instructors may employ to deal with this problem. The essence of this method is to aim the lessons at the level of the average student in the class. While this approach may work in classes where there is only a slight difference in ability, it does not solve the problem for classes with a wider range of English proficiencies. It may, in fact, leave the more advanced students rather bored and the lower-proficiency students confused and frustrated. Such feelings can be disastrous for the overall morale and efficacy of the class.

The aims of this paper, therefore, are to address the issues of creating multi-level lessons and to give examples of activities and approaches that teachers in such situations may use. I will use my own class at the Hmong American Partnership to illustrate these aims.

## **I. Overview of Functional Work English at the Hmong American Partnership**

The Hmong American Partnership (HAP) is a non-profit organization that caters to the needs of immigrants and refugees of all ethnic backgrounds. The Self-Sufficiency department at HAP focuses on helping adults obtain employment or the skills needed to obtain employment so that they may be self-sufficient in American society.

Functional Work English (F.W.E.) classes are part of that department, and therefore stress work-related issues as part of the ESL curriculum. The classes are free and open to the public, though many of the students are referred to the classes by a job counselor or other provider of the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), which is Minnesota's public assistance system. The MFIP clients are required to attend 20 hours per week of work-based English classes if they are not ready for work or Job Club, an intensive job-hunting program offered by HAP's job counselors.

There are only two F.W.E. classes offered at the St. Paul branch of HAP: a higher level class in the morning and a lower level class in the afternoon. The levels of the students are determined by the BEST (Basic English Skills Test) system of testing, which has oral and literacy components. A resulting level of zero through two ordinarily places a student in the afternoon class, and two or higher in the morning class. However, job, day care, or transportation issues occasionally make the designated class unavailable to the student, and therefore, the student must attend the other class. Every three months, the students are retested in order to mark progress, which is a requirement for state funding.

Enrollment is open for F.W.E., meaning that students may begin taking classes at anytime, so there are students who are new to the class, or possibly even new to the country, along with students who have been in the class for more than a year and possibly

in the country for more than six years. Whereas students in the afternoon class whose English improves enough “graduate” to the morning class, the students in the morning class may remain in the class as long as they want, as the only way to “graduate” from the higher level class is to find a job, start receiving Social Security Income which eliminates the F.W.E. requirement, or move on to a different institution that offers more advanced or specialized courses.

The openness to the public that is required to maintain state funding for HAP’s education department also creates some difficulty for the instructors of the F.W.E. classes because of the multi-level situation that results. Changing the system to eliminate the multi-level nature would deprive many immigrants and refugees of much-needed services. Therefore, the challenge is for the instructors to meet the myriad of needs presented by the multitudes of diverse learners.

## **II. Consideration of Resources and Constraints**

The resources available to a teacher and the constraints under which she/he must work largely affect what can or cannot be done, and thus shape the educational program. Graves (1996) suggests “problematizing: defining the challenges of one’s situation so that one can make decisions about what to do” (p. 33). Ideally, second language instruction would be entirely individualized to meet the particular needs and learning styles of each learner. However, Hiemstra and Sisco (1991, cited in Nuckles, 2000) state that “...there are concerns or practical limits for individualizing instruction” (p. 106). Acknowledging these limits and taking stock of the challenges may help an instructor better use the resources at hand.

There are three main constraints with the F.W.E. program at HAP: only two classes are offered, so each class has mixed levels; there is open enrollment; and attendance, especially for the non-MFIP students, can be very random. The first point has already been discussed in this paper, but it is worth reiterating that as HAP receives state funding for student hours, especially for MFIP clients, the education department is not in a position to turn away students who are either very advanced in their English proficiency or are pre-literate with little to no English ability. Funds do not exist to create a third class, and therefore, only the vague terms “higher” and “lower” can be used to differentiate the relative proficiency expected for the classes. The problem of multiple levels in the same class is the most pervasive and difficult challenge. The other two constraints reflect different forms that this problem can take.

The second constraint, open enrollment, becomes a challenge when a new student enters the program when the rest of the class is somewhere in the middle of the core textbook. As elements of the curriculum build upon previous knowledge or skills, it can be difficult to get the new student caught up to the class experience of the others. To remedy this problem, an instructor can give homework to the new student to review the chapters already covered in class. If possible, a tutor may be assigned to the student to prevent the student from feeling left behind. In addition, the teacher may discover the student’s strengths and highlight those in class so that s/he may gain confidence.

The third constraint, random absenteeism, can disrupt a teacher’s well-planned lessons. It is not unusual for an F.W.E. teacher to have eight or nine students one day and only three the next. When an activity requires pair or small group work, it may not be possible to go ahead with that particular lesson if there are only three students. Extreme flexibility must be called upon in these circumstances. Over-planning for the day gives

the teacher more options. If the jigsaw reading for *Working in English*, the class textbook, is not possible, then perhaps a lesson in telephone skills or filling out job applications can fill its place until more students arrive. The continuity of a lesson plan is sometimes sacrificed, but it is important for the students to understand upon their return to class that something of importance may have been missed. It is also possible for the students who were present for a lesson to help get the returning students “up to speed” with what was learned. This reduces the amount of re-teaching the instructor has to do and may help cement the lesson in the minds of the students doing the explanations.

There are two major resources that the F.W.E. teachers at HAP have at their disposal: a rather large budget for buying books and other class materials and a great deal of latitude in developing a work-related curriculum. Being able to select a textbook means that, if a decent one is found, much of the structure for the class is already determined, if the teacher decides to follow the units in the book. When dealing with multi-level classes, it is important to find a textbook that is easy enough for all the students in the class but can be exploited to be made more difficult for the more proficient students. Buying supplemental material may also reduce the amount of time a teacher has to prepare or develop materials from scratch. The freedom to create a curriculum and change it as one sees fit can be seen by some as a challenge, but to a teacher of a mixed level class it is very important to be able to mold the curriculum to the ever-changing face of the student population.

In a sense, the resources and the constraints of teaching F.W.E. at HAP are related: constant fluctuation but the ability to alter the materials or curriculum to meet those fluctuations. For any multi-level course, the two most crucial traits are the flexibility of the teacher and the elasticity of the curriculum.

### III. Needs Assessment

When developing an ESL course for adult learners of different backgrounds and abilities, it helps to have a structure on which to base the course. Graves (1996) has developed a useful framework of essential components to consider. One of the main components is a needs assessment. Graves states that the teacher and the student are not the only determiners of the needs, but "...funders, parents, administrations, and employers" may also have a deciding vote (p. 14). In fact, Graves explains that "...teachers may have to work with a conception of needs determined by their institution or other party and conduct their assessment accordingly" (p.14). With these various sources of input about needs, teachers may have to find a common denominator in order to meet the needs of all in a coherent and cohesive manner.

In order to assess the needs of the students, one must answer the question of "Who are the students?" In the morning F.W.E. class, there are approximately eleven students with six primary languages: Hmong (from Laos, four students), Vietnamese (two students), Chinese (one student), Latvian (one student), French (from Togo and Rwanda, two students), and Spanish (from Colombia and El Salvador, three students). The length of time in the United States ranges from up to 9 years, which is the case with most of the Hmong students, to just a few weeks. Most of the students are literate in their native language, but a few students, most frequently Hmong, are not. Bliatout, et al., (1988) explains the reason for this:

Some scholars have indicated that the Hmong in Laos were, on the whole, a pre-literate people. In the sense that the Hmong did not have a written language of their own prior to the end of World

War II when missionaries developed one using the Roman alphabet, this is true. Hmong has been an oral language only... (p. 28).

The oral emphasis in the Hmong language combined with the greater amount of time in the United States creates a situation where the many of the Hmong students are capable of functioning quite well with oral English but may have considerable difficulty with reading and writing English, especially if they do not possess those skills in Hmong. On the other hand, many of the other students have a high level of literacy in their L1, and thus make rapid gains in learning written English. However, those students may not be as strong in English oral skills due, in part, to less exposure to the spoken language. To add to the mix of levels and proficiencies, there are also a few students who are quite advanced in both oral and written English and a couple who are equally low in proficiency in oral and written English.

Though the students at HAP have a myriad of ESL needs, the funding from the state of Minnesota mandates a work-based ESL program entitled “Functional Work English” (F.W.E.). There are three main issues that complicate such a simple-sounding mandate: first, the issue of widely varying work interests, and second, the issue of work-readiness, which involves a student’s ability to perform basic tasks of literacy in the American workplace, and third, the students’ prior educational experience. I will discuss each of these points in turn.

First, it is not possible to focus the entire class on one type of work or field, such as light industry or healthcare, as the work experiences and interests of the students vary as much as their levels. Though assembly and restaurant work are the most popular occupational choices of the students in the F.W.E. morning class, there are also students



who are interested in and may already have experience in education, medicine, and the travel industry. However, when selecting a text or work-related field trip, a focus on blue-collar work is more practical, because nearly half of the class has some experience or hope for obtaining a job in light industry or restaurant occupations. Most of those students are also reaching their lifetime limits for MFIP and therefore must find a way to support their families soon. So as not to lose the interest of the other students, however, it is also a good idea to highlight general vocabulary or job skills that would help anyone seeking a job.

Second, the issue of work-readiness affects the interest level and immediate relevance of activities for the students. Literacy plays a role in work-readiness, too, because workers need to be able to fill out forms, such as job applications and W-2 tax forms. Therefore, until a learner is able to identify basic sight words, such as “name” and “address,” that learner may not be able to obtain or hold a job. Legal status, in terms of immigration, may also play a role in the relevance of work-related activities. For students who do not have a green card yet or may not be planning to stay in the U.S. for very long, they may not have a chance to exercise the job skills practiced in class. In those cases, the importance of the lesson for the students comes in being able to practice new English grammar or honing their existing oral and literacy skills.

Another aspect that creates different levels in this class is previous education. About a third to a half of this particular class have never had formal education, and therefore, may not be clear about the teacher’s expectations of them, just as their expectations of a teacher and a class may not be what the teacher expects. Some may believe that in a school, the teacher fills the students’ minds with knowledge (the so-called “empty vessel” theory). This belief may cause problems when pair-work is

assigned or if the teacher does not immediately give an answer to a question. In such cases, it is necessary to explain the reasons for students working together or for the teacher's expectation that students try to think for themselves. The students should be encouraged to have confidence in their knowledge of the world and see that the English words are just another way to "re-write" what they have "read" about the world (Freire, 1983). The teacher should frequently discuss with the class how they can learn from each other, as all students have valuable experiences to share. Teaching approaches vary from culture to culture and from teacher to teacher, so explaining the reasoning behind a teaching behavior can help minimize friction. Other students who are new to formal education may think of class as more of a time to socialize. Though it creates a warm, encouraging environment if the students form friendships in class, it can be disruptive if these friendships interfere with the other students' learning. A humorous approach that lets students know they should be listening to the teacher or another student instead of talking is a good way to move on with the lesson while allowing the adult learners to save face.

Finally, in the consideration of the F.W.E. students and their needs, it is important to acknowledge the importance of the fact that these students are all adults and many of them are parents, as well, so they need to be treated with respect in class. These factors influence the role of the teacher, because it is necessary to understand the need for the students to save face. That is, it is not appropriate to expose a student's weakness in English to the entire class. Though the students quickly learn who the more advanced students are and which students have trouble, it is crucial to be sensitive to feelings of shame if an adult student cannot perform.

#### **IV. Goals and Objectives**

Determining the goals and objectives of a course helps keep the instructor on target in trying to meet the students' needs. In Graves's (1996) definition, goals are "general statements of the overall, long-term purposes of the course," whereas objectives are the "specific ways in which the goals will be achieved" (p. 17). These goals and objectives can be derived from the needs of the students, as well as determined by the institution in which the classes take place.

However, it is rare that an instructor would start at this point in the Graves framework, because "[many teachers] report from experience that they cannot clearly formulate their goals and objectives until after they have taught the course at least once" (Graves, 1996, p. 19). The system of ongoing enrollment that predominates many community adult ESL courses, such as F.W.E., further complicates this issue. Though the main text of F.W.E. has a starting point and an ending point, new students may enter the class at anytime and leave anytime. As many of the students in F.W.E. have been in class for several months, the same text is not repeated. Thus, the instructor is constantly recreating the course to keep it new. Many of the goals and objectives for any group of students emerge over time, as the teacher becomes more familiar with the students and the students' needs change.

The main goal of F.W.E., however, has been clear from the start; the St. Paul Community Literacy Consortium, which is the primary funder for classes at HAP, states that the goal of F.W.E. is for the students to learn enough English to obtain employment or to improve their English skills to the point where they may attend more advanced classes at another institution.

When asked directly about their goals, many of the students state goals that are not entirely work-focused; many simply want to be able to function without major mishap in an English-speaking society. For some, that means being able to communicate with various people in their community, such as their children's teachers and doctors. For others, it means obtaining U.S. citizenship so that they may vote. A form called the Personal Education Plan (PEP) is given to the students upon registration to determine what they would like to achieve by taking the class. The goals listed on the PEP range from general, such as "improve English skills" and "be more involved in the community," to more specific, such as "obtain a driver's license" and "help children with homework."

A teacher planning this course must consider these various student goals and decide how much time to devote to each one. Stern (1992, cited in Graves, 1996) divides the concept of goals into four major types:

1. Proficiency goals, for gaining competency in reading, writing, listening and speaking.
2. Cognitive goals, such as understanding culture and general linguistic concepts.
3. Affective goals, for establishing learner confidence and positive attitudes.
4. Transfer goals, which involve learning skills that will assist with future learning. (p. 17)

In the Functional Work English (F.W.E.) programs, these four types of goals are not equally balanced, but balance is not necessarily the optimal situation, as the students will not always have an equal need for each of these elements. Institutional mandates that determine what type of course is offered reveal themselves in the kind of progress the teachers record. That is, the official documentation for the Functional Work English classes requires that the teacher mark a student's progress in the areas of "choosing a

job,” “locating a job,” “talking with supervisors, “ and “interviews” –all work-related – among other survival and classroom functions. These mandated focus areas also influence the weight given to any given type of goal.

The mission statement for the department of Education and Training at the Hmong American Partnership (HAP), which was developed through a collaboration of the three teachers and the manager, highlights two of the four types of goals (affective and proficiency):

Mission, to encourage each learner to utilize their competencies and life wisdom to succeed in meeting their literacy and professional goals. To foster mutual respect and admiration for each other and create a community of learners. To establish safe environments where being a refugee or immigrant learner is not only acceptable but also welcome. To understand that each learner is more than an English student, and to conscientiously engage the “whole person” in their learning Experience. To facilitate a respect for diversity that can be practiced in the classroom and taken out into our shared communities. To offer a curriculum within our classes that is supportive in advancing the mental, physical, and financial wellness of our clients and their families.

Though all four goals are important, and work towards each of these goals is evident, the affective goals are emphasized in this mission statement with proficiency goals mentioned at the end. In reality, the bulk of classroom time is spent on language competency, especially for job acquisition and retention, due to need of the majority of students to find work as soon as possible. In second place come affective goals, to respond to the often traumatic circumstances that the students have experienced or continue to experience as refugees, political asylees, and marginalized immigrants.

For F.W.E., the main proficiency goals break down into skills subsets with work and “everyday life” themes. The objectives for the reading, writing, speaking, and

listening goals depend on the level of the students. More advanced students can be challenged beyond survival-level proficiency. The four goal categories are addressed differently for every student, however, depending on how much native-like ability the student has. A more advanced student might be expected, for example, to aim for writing an effective business letter (proficiency), recognizing adjectives and adverbs (cognitive), and using the Internet to further their understanding of the United States or the English language (transfer). A lower level student might have such goals as filling out a job application (proficiency), recognizing verbs (cognitive), and using a picture dictionary (transfer).

English reading goals for the students in this class who tested at levels two through five involves reading employment and housing advertisements, reading safety signs, and understanding instructions for machines and medicines. Even though these goals are set for levels two through five, there are gradations within each one. For example, a level two student should be able to read a simplified and short job advertisement for an easily identifiable job, such as a cook or bus driver. A level five student would be expected to understand a longer job ad containing abbreviations. For the students above level five, the objectives are reading newspapers and employee handbooks. All students participate in all of the same activities, but the teacher's expectations for how well any particular student should understand the more difficult reading varies. Students who are not very strong in reading may be given word identification tasks, while stronger readers may be expected to be able to summarize passages. That is to say, the students may all be given the same text but have different tasks with varying levels of difficulty assigned to them depending on their level.

The goal of mastering writing in English also has objectives which are individualized depending on student proficiency. The minimum objectives for the morning F.W.E. students are being able to fill out job applications and write short sentences about their lives. The higher level writing objectives include writing a resume and using more complex sentences to write paragraphs about their lives. Perfection is not the goal, but comprehensibility is.

Likewise, the speaking goal focuses on comprehensibility, as opposed to accuracy. The objectives are for all students to be able to be understood when interacting with others in the community in English. The topics of interaction will be described in more detail in the section on conceptualizing content, but briefly the topics for Functional Work English are: work (finding and maintaining), money, health, safety (at home and on the job), running a household, transportation, citizenship, and consumerism. Examples of goals within these topics are making simple phone calls to businesses, making an appointment, and answering basic questions that might be asked in a job interview. Describing symptoms to a doctor is an important non-job-related speaking objective. At the higher level, more attention is paid to accuracy. Again, all students practice the same language functions, such as apologizing or giving advice, but the teacher's expectation of the students' performance changes to match an individual student's level of proficiency.

The last of the proficiency goals is mastering listening in English. The objectives to attain this goal are surprisingly similar throughout the class, as listening is perhaps the strongest skill area for all but a couple students. The students must be able to understand their interlocutors in a job interview or on the telephone. They must also be able to get the gist of conversation from audiocassette tapes or the ESL videos or topic-related movies shown in class. Such activities give the students an additional source of audio

input besides the familiar voice of the teacher. The visual aspect of video also helps train learners to rely on environmental clues to understand a message if they cannot hear or understand the spoken message.

The next main category of Stern's goals is cognitive goals, which are divided into cultural knowledge and general linguistic knowledge. Cultural knowledge for F.W.E. is centered on knowing about the American workplace. These objectives for reaching mastery involve knowing how to handle problems at work, how to talk to a supervisor, and how to use telephone etiquette. These cultural objectives are intertwined with lessons from the class textbook, *Workplace Plus* by Saslow and Collins, which feature such conversational functions as polite disagreement. (For more on the textbook selection, please see the materials section of this paper.) During these lessons, the teacher often discusses with the class issues of power and authority and how they differ in the various countries represented in class, because the primary cultural goal for F.W.E. is understanding the American workers' rights and responsibilities. Certain members of class also have stated an interest in obtaining American citizenship, and therefore, learning about American history and government are class objectives toward that goal. Linguistic knowledge, however, is much less emphasized. The main objective for the majority of the class is understanding verbs and nouns, in a very general sense. More advanced students may point out adjectives and adverbs, but explicit lessons about parts of speech, meta-linguistics, are somewhat rare.

The affective goals for the students in F.W.E. are profound. So many students come to HAP after suffering tragedy in their own countries or after floundering for years in an English-speaking land where their skills and accomplishments have been marginalized. Many believe that they cannot learn, that their "brain is broken." It is the



teacher's responsibility to highlight their skills and experiences and support their accomplishments in English and the outside world. Giving students a chance to express their feelings and tell their stories, whether spoken or written, is one way to acknowledge their lives. Freire (1983) states, "I have always insisted that words used in organizing a literacy program come from the word universe of the people who are learning, expressing their actual language, their anxieties, fears, demands, dreams" (p. 10). Not only does this focus on the students' worlds show respect for their diverse experiences, but it makes the language more relevant to their lives. Being enthusiastic about their successes and easy-going about their mistakes creates an environment that is helpful and supportive. The goal is student self-confidence, but the objectives are harder to define. The story-telling activity may help some students, but leave others unaffected. Exposure to a positive and caring teacher is the most effective objective.

Transfer goals are the final type of goal. These goals involve learning skills that will assist future learning and build upon existing knowledge. Learning basic Internet navigation is one objective for the F.W.E. students. After they learn how to "surf the web," they will be able to access information about any topic, anytime. Reading for gist is another skill objective that could improve their reading ability. Very often students feel overwhelmed by a page of printed English, but with training in how to skim, scan, and summarize what they do understand, they may be able to tackle reading English outside the classroom.

Now that there is a basic structure of the goals and objectives, the instructor can fill in the spaces between the goals by conceptualizing the content of the course. Based on the learners' needs and the outlined goals, it is clear that F.W.E. will have a content that has a strong work focus, but also address the practicalities of everyday life.

## **V. Conceptualizing the Content**

The act of determining the content of the second language course, or deciding what components will make up the backbone of the syllabus, is much more complicated than it used to be. In decades past, the structure of many ESL courses was based on the structures in the language. The subsequent move toward content-based teaching was, in part, an attempt to provide the learners with more meaningful language tools. The components of a content-based syllabus, however, are more complex. Graves (1996) asserts, "... the choices a teacher makes ... involve a number of factors such as who the students are, their goals and expectations in learning English, the teacher's own conception of what language is and what will best meet the students' needs, the nature of the course, and the institutional curriculum" (p. 20). To provide teachers with a graphic example of these over-lapping and interweaving components, Graves created a syllabus grid divided into sixteen different sections, with labels such as grammar, culture, and participatory processes, which teachers can use to plot the content of their own courses.

The competency portion of the syllabus grid quickly became the most predominant section of the grid for Functional Work English; therefore, it was determined that the syllabus should be based on competencies, defined as "language and behavior necessary to function in situations related to living in the community and finding and maintaining a job" (Graves, 1996, p. 20). Those that are most important for F.W.E. are in the categories of work, money, health, home, safety, transportation, citizenship, and consumerism. Within each category, there are notions, communicative situations, grammar, vocabulary, and modality skills that get emphasized. For a multi-level class, it is best to set a baseline of competencies for the students to achieve. If a

student performs the tasks easily, then more challenging activities within the same category can be presented to the student. Table One on page 20 shows the basic topics, vocabulary, skills, and other activities for F.W.E. that I have deemed important through my experience with the course. I developed it after approximately a year of teaching the same course. Over time, I was able to determine which topics came up most frequently and which skills in those topics were the most important for the average F.W.E. student during that time.

Some of the categories listed by Graves overlap. In those cases, the category names from Graves are simply combined and reduced to reading, writing, listening, or speaking. Breaking the categories down as finely as Graves does did not seem necessary. For instance, several of the items listed in oral skills (listening and speaking), such as explaining symptoms to a doctor, are also communicative situations. For the purposes of this class, it is not necessary to create a separate column for communicative situations because the over-arching goal of F.W.E. is for the students to be able to obtain work and participate as fully as they desire in an English-speaking community. This goal focuses on the types of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills that are worked on in class.

Certain competencies and activities, such as using a computer (for word-processing, Internet searches, or educational CD-ROMs) and developing telephone skills (for inquiring about a job, calling 911/Poison Control, and making appointments, among others) are not listed on this chart everywhere they might occur in class, as they could be part of several, if not all, of the listed topics. However, each topic can be broken down into possible activities, such as work in the textbook, field trips, or memory card games used for all of the vocabulary. Most of the other activities involve taking a field trip to a

place in the community that offers resources to the public or possibly the opportunity for employment, or interacting with speakers from government agencies, non-profit organizations, and the community at large who can illustrate and expand upon topics studied in the textbook. Douglas (2000) states that there are

...two essential aspects that lie at the root for the justification to undertake field trips – native materials and life situations....[T]he benefits of such undertakings outside of the class includ[e] observing a natural setting first-hand, making classroom more meaningful, providing opportunities to gain new experiences, and learning through active participation (p.7).

That is to say, these trips are not “fluff,” opportunities for the students to forget their English skills, but are opportunities for the students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to life at large.

After conceptualizing the content by forming a syllabus grid, the instructor can then find materials that support those elements.

**Table One: Topics and Functions for Functional Work English**

TOPICS and VOCABULARY	READING	WRITING	LISTENING	SPEAKING	OTHER
<b>WORK</b> *full-time/part-time *shift *benefits *manager *supervisor *employee	*job ads *employee manuals	*applications *resumes *coverletters	*instructions *telephone information	*being interviewed *speaking to boss and co-workers *calling in sick	*tour of various workplaces *visit to MN Workforce Center *speaker from MN Dept. of Labor & Industry about workers' rights
<b>MONEY</b> *checking/savings *deposit *withdrawal *deductions *paystubs	*paystubs *ATM monitors	*writing checks *using a check register *writing a deposit slip	*using automated customer service	*asking bank clerks for help	*visit to a bank *math practice
<b>HEALTH</b> *(body parts) *(illnesses) *prescription *medicine *symptom	*reading medication instructions	*filling out health insurance forms	*understanding doctors and nurses	*describing symptoms *making appointments	*CPR/First Aid training *visit to hospital or clinic
<b>SAFETY</b> *caution *danger *poison *voltage *prevent	*reading warning labels and safety signs	*writing safety instructions for babysitters	*understanding weather forecasts	*warning people of danger	*speaker from MN Safety Council
<b>HOME</b> *lease *rent *supplies *(rooms) *(cleaning implements)	*reading housing ads *instructions for household items	*signing a lease *writing supply orders for house-cleaning	*understanding callers	*talking to rental agents *complaining to landlords	*speakers who run a business from home
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b> *schedule *(car parts) *one-way/round-trip *express *mechanic	*understanding bus schedules	*writing orders for car repair	*understanding mechanics *using bus telephone service	*asking for directions *explaining car problems	*visit to the Ford Plant *using the Metro Transit website
<b>CITIZENSHIP</b> *mayor *governor *president *senator *vote *congress	*reading information about laws	*filling out the N-400 naturalization application	*understanding the INS questions	*answering INS questions for the naturalization interview	*speaker from immigration law services * visit to State Capitol
<b>CONSUMERISM</b> *produce *groceries *coupon *size *return *rain check	*reading sales brochures and warranties	*filling out a rain-check	*understanding cashiers and salesclerks	*returning items to the store	*price hunt at supermarket

## **VI. Selecting and Developing Materials and Activities**

Graves (1996) states that when choosing or creating materials and activities, teachers must consider a variety of factors, of which "... the most important are their effectiveness in achieving the purposes of the course and their appropriateness for the students – and the teacher. Appropriateness includes student comfort and familiarity with the material" (p. 26). With a mixed-level class, the student comfort level, in terms of perceived difficulty, will not be uniform. However, familiarity with the content could help bridge the gap by providing topics that the students can acknowledge as relevant to their lives.

For Functional Work English, it is important to keep a class with varying numbers of students, nearly always fewer than ten, on the same page, so that students do not feel isolated or singled out. This aim can be achieved by using a four-pronged approach to material selection and activity development, which helps the instructor make use of a wider variety of materials. The four ways to adapt materials for multiple levels are: 1) Use materials that are prepared for multiple levels (hard to find, but they do exist), 2) Use materials of medium difficulty but prepare different tasks that require different skills, 3) Make hard materials easier, and 4) Make easy materials more difficult. These categories are not mutually exclusive, however; a film may be difficult material that has been simplified for most of the class while different tasks are given to the students at the same time. Essentially, the four approaches all involve some modification for at least some of the students. The distinctions are made, however, to show instructors that they need not limit themselves to only materials that are aimed at just one level – all materials can be adjusted in one way or another. The following examples demonstrate each of these approaches.

The first approach, using multi-level material, tends to be the most difficult to achieve because the bulk of textbooks tend to aim for specific levels. However, having a multi-level text for F.W.E. is a tremendous help, because the instructors at the Hmong American Partnership are encouraged to make use of available funds by selecting a class text to be the core support structure for their classes. Though additional materials could be used and created by the instructors, a good textbook would support the syllabus and somewhat ease the burden of constant preparation that the teachers must do.

Because F.W.E. is primarily a work English course, finding textbooks that specialize in teaching work English was step one. After examining some possibilities, it became clear that not all “level one” work textbooks share the same idea about what that level means, nor do all texts easily allow for expansion or reduction of the language challenge offered the students, which is important for multi-level classes. That is, having a progression not just within the book, but within each chapter, from easy to more challenging will better meet the wider range of proficiencies and interest levels of a multi-level class than a textbook with a mostly uniform level of challenge.

After trying different texts in class, I determined that the *Workplace Plus* series by Saslow and Collins would match the morning F.W.E. class’s needs. (The needs of the afternoon class are similar, but the textbook and activities for that class are determined by the afternoon teacher alone.) The units in the index show a heavy concentration on work situations, but there are also a few units that deal with life skills, such as health and housing. Though not a perfect realization of the conceptualized content (see previous section of this paper), it does touch on at least 90% of it. The structure of text is also appropriate for a multi-level class, because it separates the units into different functions and skills that get progressively more difficult within each unit. For example, each unit

starts with a page of pictures that represent the vocabulary for the unit. After reading the words and listening to a tape of short conversations that contain the vocabulary, the students can practice the new vocabulary in a “mingle and match” activity or a memory game by using the pre-printed flashcards that have the pictures and words on separate cards. ( The “mingle and match” activity involves randomly handing out all of the cards which include one picture card and a matching word card and having the students look at their picture cards and ask each other “Do you have \_\_\_?” until they find somebody with the matching card.) The unit then progresses to short conversations that illustrate a language function, such as giving advice or complaining at a store, to lessons on specific grammar points in those functions, to longer listening passages, and finally, to more intensive reading and writing. Students who are challenged by listening may still get a feeling of competence in being able to do the writing or reading lessons well, and vice versa for students who find reading difficult. For students who have a higher all-around proficiency, there are additional practices at the back of the book which are more difficult. The content is such that it is also feasible for the instructor to bring in relevant realia, such as job applications or leases, to give more advanced students extra practice.

Having twenty hours of class per week makes it necessary to find or create additional materials instead of using the textbook exclusively. One option is to use the second approach to materials selection, which is giving different tasks or roles to students for the same material, even if their levels of ESL ability differ. Graves (1996) asserts,

Textbooks are tools that can be figuratively cut up into component pieces and then rearranged to suit the needs, abilities, and interests of the students in the course. The material...can be modified to incorporate activities that will motivate students and move them beyond the constraints of the text (p. 27).



The *Working Experience* series is just such a text that can be cut up to suit the F.W.E. students. In *Working Experience 2* by Smith and Ringel, various real-life workers present a brief (two to five paragraphs) story about one aspect of their worklife. On the pages that follow are comprehension activities and easy grammar/vocabulary exercises. Simply reading the story as-is would daunt many of the F.W.E. students. Though they would be able to understand the stories, being presented with so much to read at one time would intimidate the less proficient readers. Therefore, creating a “jigsaw” activity to handle the reading works well. Before class, the teacher crosses out about 20 to 30 words in the story. Those blacked-out lines are then numbered, and the stories with the missing words are given to the lower-proficiency students. Copies of the complete story are placed outside the classroom for the higher proficiency students to read; they then run back to their partner to tell them the missing words. The runners are not allowed to write, so if their partners do not know how to spell a word, they have to ask for the spelling. In this way, the more advanced students can practice reading and speaking while the students with less proficiency can work on writing and listening (see appendix for an example of a story).

Another way to manipulate the text is to divide the stories into sections which the students read in small groups, which gives the more advanced students a chance to read quickly and help explain the section to the others and gives the lower-ability students time to read more palatable chunks and ask questions or listen to the other students in the group. Once the group feels it has achieved understanding, the groups are rearranged so that each section of the story is represented by one student in the new group. In this second group, the students no longer have to read but they have to describe and explain

their section of the story in English to those who have not read it. (Though several of the students share a native language, they are either put in separate groups or instructed to use only English as much as possible.) After each section is explained, the students must try to figure out the order of the story. This activity involves not just reading, but discussing, listening, and logical thinking. Each student can find his/her strength in at least one part of the activity.

Movies are also a source of ideas for multi-level activities. Though many films contain quick dialogues or difficult vocabulary or slang, there are many other films that can be understood without high English proficiency. The ideal movie for beginning to low-intermediate ESL students is one that does not rely strictly on dialogue to advance the plot. The dialogue can be fast and full of slang, but as long as the physical elements can convey most of the story, it can be used successfully in a class such as F.W.E. For example, during a unit on household chores, the movie *Mr. Mom* was shown to reinforce vocabulary and provide a springboard for discussion. In the movie, Michael Keaton plays a husband who loses his job and must stay home to take care of the children while his wife works. There are several scenes depicting his difficulties in doing housework and childcare duties which involved very little language. These scenes allowed for different tasks to be developed for the different levels of proficiency in the class. I created a two-sided worksheet for the film (see appendix); one side had labeled pictures of household activities that the students checked and numbered as Jack, the main character, did them, and the other had basic comprehension questions. Working in pairs, the students were able to choose which side they wanted to do; thus they could select the side that best suited their abilities. At the end of the film, the class discussed whether or not they liked the movie and also how they felt about the gender roles that were

presented. Everyone in class was able to contribute something to the activity. Another way to manipulate this activity is to give the pictures to one set of students who cannot see the television and have the other students watch the appropriate scenes. After the scenes are shown, the students with the pictures must ask their partners if Jack did the indicated actions in the scene. The scene can then be re-shown to check their answers.

The third approach, making difficult materials easier, is often used with newspapers, of both the mass-consumption and English language learner variety. Newspapers offer more possibilities to build upon the topics discussed in class, as well as practice some of the skills that have been worked on in the main text. The student-oriented *News for You*, published by New Readers Press, contains articles on politics, current events, and world affairs, as well as human interest and work-related articles, and makes another good example of making a difficult text easier. The front-page articles, usually about current events, are the most difficult because the vocabulary is more advanced or specialized. However, student readers are assisted by in-text definitions of those terms. Stories on page three of this four-page weekly are the easiest with more simplified language and less complex issues, which make *News For You* another example of a material that already targets mixed audiences (the first approach), though its range of difficulty is not broad. There are several ways to manipulate this newspaper for a multi-level class. One way is to have small groups of students choose one article that interests them. Together they discuss the article, figure out unknown vocabulary, and practice explaining the story to each other. They then regroup with someone who read a different article and explain the article again. This time, however, the listener is expected to ask questions about the story, which the other student must try to answer. Often this activity

leads to spontaneous conversation about the subject matter and not the language, which is the primary goal.

On a more basic level, the articles can be used to exploit their language. Highlighting verbs can help students recognize one of the essential building blocks of language. More advanced students can use different color highlighters for different tenses and then explore what the different tenses mean for the article, while lower level students might highlight all verbs in the same color or be assigned to highlight only regular verbs in past or present tense. Students working in pairs or small groups could also be instructed to find all of the regular past tense verbs in an article, list them, and then decide together if the final sound is /d/, /t/, or /ɪd/.

Another published material that can be made easier for beginning to low-intermediate students is the series of video segments entitled *Culture Clips*, produced by Intelcom. The series consists of five three-minute clips about certain topics, such as job skills or American customs. The first clip on the “Job Skills” video features a woman who looks for a job, attends an interview workshop, and then goes on an interview. The pace of the dialogue and some of the vocabulary indicate that the video series is aimed at more advanced levels. However, the content of the clip is not new to most of the F.W.E. students. I developed an easier worksheet to go along with the video that most students could understand, even if they did not understand much of the dialogue (see appendix). Eliciting information from the students before viewing, isolating key words for listening, and drawing upon the students’ own experiences helped them make sense of the video despite the difficulty of the clip.

Making easy materials more difficult, the fourth approach, involves expanding the existing requirements for any given activity. A simple worksheet, for example, that

instructs students to match a job title with a picture of the profession can be left as-is for students who find it challenging, but altered for more advanced students by asking them to instead write a description of the responsibilities for each of the jobs pictured. A lesson on greetings and introductions can be made more challenging for the students who have mastered basic greetings by including more idiomatic language and varying the context in a role play so they have to consider which register is more appropriate.

It is important for the students to have fun in class, especially considering how many hours they must attend. The fun can come in the form of games, including educational board games, such as the Grocery Store game, and teacher-created games, such as a review quiz game. In the review quiz game, the students are on teams to win “money” by identifying previously studied vocabulary, answering questions about the duties of certain jobs, identifying the past tense of irregular verbs, and answering citizenship questions. The students seem to enjoy the competition and have expressed appreciation for being able to pick their own categories to prove their areas of strength. Sometimes a change of scenery is a welcome break from the classroom. Field trips to businesses, such as the Ford Plant and Anderson Windows, give the class an opportunity to explore different work environments without the stress of going there alone to apply for a job.

In general, the textbook for F.W.E. provides the framework for lessons and a source for learning new language skills. The additional materials and activities, however, reinforce the real-world relevance for the students and help them practice what they have learned. All materials should be selected with an eye to how they may be expanded for the higher proficiency students or reduced for the lower level students. Ideally, all the

students should be able to work side by side on the same material, even while working at different levels.

## **VII. Organization of Content and Activities**

In the overall organization of a course, Graves (1996) suggests there are two possible approaches: the cycle and the matrix. The cycle approach has a regular pattern of activities that can be applied to each new lesson, whereas the matrix approach has a set of activities from which the teacher can choose depending on the students (p. 29). The two approaches can be used together or separately, and they may apply to individual lessons, a day, a week, or the entire course. It is important to be flexible in order to allow for shifts in the needs and interests of the students, even with a class that follows a textbook. Graves describes such cases as "...the teacher [having] a map of the possible territory and [working] with the students to determine where it is most useful for them to go and in what order" (p. 30).

For Functional Work English, a combination of the approaches works best in order to maximize flexibility, which is important because of the frequent changes in the student roster. The textbook for the class provides the main structure, starting with vocabulary on the first day, conversational practice with functions the next day, followed by grammar, then listening, and finally reading and writing. The cycle takes approximately one to one and a half weeks to complete. Other activities also follow a weekly cycle, starting with listening and speaking practices, as those tend to be less intimidating for the majority of the students and serve as a "warm-up." Mid-week activities combine speaking with grammar or reading, such as studying citizenship.

Fridays tend to be reserved for lighter, more entertaining forms of study, such as games based on the units previously studied or relevant videos or field trips.

Attendance in F.W.E. can vary greatly from day to day, so if many students are absent on a day that more content will be covered, the plan for the day may switch to focus on areas on which the students in attendance need more attention. The matrix approach helps ease unforeseen changes in the lesson plan, as it gives the teacher a range of possible materials or activities to meet the needs of a shifting population of students. It is necessary, therefore, to have these materials at hand to be prepared for a change in the student dynamic.

Changes in daily student populations and the mix of levels that results can upset any cohesion that may have been developed within the class. There are several ways to keep the class cohesive yet save struggling students the embarrassment of not being able to perform in front of others. One way is for the teacher to choose reading passages with easier words for the students who have trouble reading and ask shorter questions to the students with lower aural comprehension skills. Allocating different roles in small group work can also give the students who have been absent or who have a harder time with the work a chance to participate at a level which may be more comfortable for them. Extra work may be assigned to help students catch up to the rest of the class, but this is not always the best option because many of the students have school-aged children or part-time jobs which take up most of their out-of-class time. However, if a student requests additional practice (usually the higher level students), individualized work can be found. For students who are new to the class or are frequently absent, I have found that doing pair-work at the beginning of a class session helps those students get adjusted to the environment and not be intimidated. Townsend and Fu (2001) assert this point: "Small

group activities are much less threatening than whole-group meetings, and pairing can be especially helpful to newcomers who can handle one-to-one exchanges more easily than many-voiced discussions” (p. 104). It is not easy to keep a group of students as diverse as the ones at HAP working together on the same lesson. To achieve that cohesion, the teacher needs to be clear on the goals and objectives of the class as a whole.

Though F.W.E. is an on-going class, the topics listed in the content section of this paper are recycled over a period of time. If a student stays in the class long enough to experience a repeat of topic (approximately every 13 weeks), fresh material should be provided to challenge the student and, hopefully, head off boredom. Easy materials can be made more difficult, if necessary, and new textbooks can be ordered if a majority of the students are repeating a course cycle. The order of topics then would follow the organization of the core text.

### **VIII. Evaluation**

In the area of evaluation, Hughes (1989, cited in Graves, 1996) states that there are four reasons for testing:

1. To measure proficiency.
2. To diagnose specific strengths and weaknesses.
3. To place students in a course or program.
4. To assess their achievement in a course or program (p. 30).

These reasons are reflected in the various tests that are given at the Hmong American Partnership. Students are placed within a class largely depending on their placement test score, are periodically evaluated by the same test to determine progress (and also for the institution to maintain state funding), are given achievement tests at the end of each textbook chapter in the higher level Functional Work English class, and, most



importantly, are assessed on an informal and ongoing basis by the teacher during class. The oral feedback given by the students about the course is also important, as it assists the teacher and managers with course improvement. However, more standardized and frequent evaluations of the students' and teachers' satisfaction with the courses are needed.

The most common form of student evaluation comes in the form of the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), which is given to new students upon registration to determine in which class the students should be placed. It is a good match for F.W.E. purposes, because it focuses on "real world" language activities, such as writing a check or reading price tickets on store merchandise. The BEST has an oral test and a written test; however, the written test is given more importance in determining class placement, partially due to lack of trained staff available to administer the oral test and primarily due to the nature of the difference between the two F.W.E. classes. That is, the level of oral ability necessary for the higher level class is nearly the same as for the lower level class, whereas the literacy level required of students for the higher level class is significantly higher than that of the lower level class. The reason for this is that nearly half of the students have lived in the United States for several years, and thus are able to express themselves in spoken English fairly well. Many of those same students, however, have difficulty with written English, and some, in fact, may even be pre-literate in their own language. The other half are new arrivals to the United States who may already know some English and are literate in their native language. Those students tend to advance quickly, even if they have not previously studied English. Thus, the lower level F.W.E. class is more appropriate for students who are either functionally conversant in spoken English but lack general literacy skills or, less commonly, who are literate in their own

language but have had little exposure to English. The latter group usually only attends the afternoon class for a few months until their oral skills improve enough to attend the morning class. A score of level 3 is considered adequate for the higher level F.W.E. class. On occasion, a student will score higher than level 6 and is then given the CASAS test, which is more difficult and better equipped to determine the level of a more proficient student. For funding purposes, HAP does not turn away students with such high proficiency, even though the high level class is geared for levels 3 and 4. It then becomes the instructor's duty to accommodate the students, so that everyone feels equally challenged and accomplished.

The formal ongoing tests administered in F.W.E. are the BEST, which is given every three months for an official mark of progress, and achievement tests that go with the *Workplace Plus* textbook series. All of the *Workplace Plus* tests follow the same format, as well as being very similar to exercises in the book, thus eliminating the performance variable of failure to understand the instructions. The achievement tests serve multiple purposes: first, the test scores can indicate how well each student understands the theme of the chapter; second, they give some further indication about the students' strengths in either listening or reading; third, taken as a whole, the tests can show how effectively the unit was taught. If the students do not do well, it is an indication to the teacher that perhaps the pace of the class is too fast, topics are not being explained well, or the students need more practice. Feedback from the students has shown that though they sometimes get nervous about these tests, the students appreciate having their progress monitored and feeling like they are in a "real school."

The daily assessment that a teacher does is often the most important form of evaluation. When students are not under pressure or nervous about their performance,

the teacher can more accurately see what they are capable of achieving. By observing interactions with other students, the teacher is allowed to see who is helping whom and who is more concerned with accuracy or with fluency. These observations can then be recorded on the monthly reports given to the job counselors of the MFIP students or written on the Personal Education Plans of the non-MFIP students. It is the assessment of the teacher that holds the most weight at HAP in deciding whether a student is ready for Job Club or for entering the workforce.

The daily assessments of student proficiency and achievement are also used as a tool for course evaluation. Though the onus of responsibility for a single student's success does not fall solely upon the instructor, the effectiveness of the course can be seen in the advancement or stagnation of students who are willing to learn. For example, when a number of students started requesting to be transferred to the lower level class, it became apparent that the textbook was too intimidating for students who were able to read but struggled with their reading. In this case, the teacher failed to accommodate those students who were otherwise doing well.

The only official evaluation of the teachers at HAP comes in the form of quarterly reviews, which are given to all of the employees at HAP no matter what their position. In light of this lack of feedback, it is necessary to create evaluation forms that give the students an opportunity to comment on their experience in class and give the teachers an opportunity to reflect on their own performance. The language of the evaluation forms for the students needs to be simple to elicit more accurate feedback. For the lower level students, it is advisable to give the evaluation orally. I therefore developed two evaluation forms: one for students to reflect on their own performance and their

satisfaction with elements of the course, and one for teachers to reflect on how effective they feel their performance has been (see appendix for sample forms).

There are three main aspects of any class that the students ought to evaluate: their own performance as a student, the performance of the teacher, and the effectiveness of the materials. The first part, student self-evaluation, is important, as it shows the behaviors that the teacher believes to be important for success in the class. It may also show the student where there is room for them to improve. For F.W.E., such a form would contain these five statements:

1. I go to class everyday.
2. I speak English to the other students.
3. I ask questions if I don't understand.
4. I do the work in class.
5. I practice English outside of class.

Under or next to the statements, the students can circle "yes," "no," or "sometimes."

Alternatively, the students can choose a percentage (0% to 100%) to mark how often they do each specific activity.

The same scoring can be used for the evaluation of the teacher and the materials. These statements focus on how the teacher does his/her job as a facilitator of learning and how valuable the materials are as learning tools:

1. The teacher helps me to understand.
2. The teacher knows what she is doing everyday. (organized)
3. I can learn a lot in this class.
4. The class is interesting.
5. I like the book.
6. I like the videos.
7. I like the games.

If new materials are added that do not fall under the general headings of "book," "videos," or "games," they can be added at the next evaluation, which would happen the

next month. Items can also be removed if they no longer apply, such as “computer activities,” which at present are unavailable due to relocation of the classroom.

At the end of the form, the students should also have an opportunity to select skills they would like to have more class-time to work on. As many of the students are motivated to learn as much as possible, the selections should be limited to the three most important of a list. Items on the list could range from specific, such as “looking for a job,” to general, such as “writing.” Other items could include “learning about health,” “talking on the telephone,” “reading the newspaper,” “citizenship,” and all of the other skills and functions that make up the syllabus. There should also be a line for the students to make their own suggestions, if desired.

The teachers’ self-evaluation would also be done on a monthly basis, and the results should be discussed with the manager. The evaluation form I have created is based upon the idea that a good teacher ought to be a responsive teacher, one who can change her lessons or even her teaching style to match the needs of the students. Knox (1986, cited in Nuckles, 2000) contends that responsiveness involves “four elements: respect, reasons, options, proficiencies” (p. 7). From these four elements I have made a list of statements to which the teachers respond that show respect for the students, show an awareness of purpose, reflect the need to prepare for multiple levels, and reveal mastery of the teachers’ duties. The statements range from the teachers’ own perceptions of how well they have been performing in the classroom and how well they have kept up with administrative duties:

1. I have prepared lessons for each day.
2. I pace the class according to the students’ needs.
3. I am aware of my students’ goals.
4. I devote at least half of the class-time to work-related topics, such as looking for a job, filling out applications, or talking about jobs.

5. I arrive on time and with class materials ready.
6. I try different approaches to teach my material.
7. I try to teach my class skills that will help them learn on their own.
8. I make calls to the appropriate parties if there is an unexcused absence.
9. I look for opportunities for field trips and speakers.
10. I keep my student files updated with attendance, Personal Education Plans, and test scores.
11. I am patient when students struggle with language or cultural concepts.

There is also a space at the bottom for the teachers to write an explanation of their answers or list concerns to discuss with the manager, either individually or as a group. It is not a professional review, such as the quarterly review, so the manager's role in discussion should be listening and offering support.

Having these evaluations be a regular part of the class gives the program participants more accountability, or at least the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and contributions to learning that happens. Taking stock of where one has been often gives rise to figuring out where one needs to go.

## **IX. Conclusion**

The creative demands of teaching ESL, even under ideal conditions, are enough to occupy the minds and time of educational professionals. When the act of teaching is complicated by having only one teacher teach two or more levels of students with different needs and goals at the same time, it can become a stressful juggling act unless a coherent system of organization is applied to the situation. The framework provided by Graves gives such an organization and raises some questions for the curriculum designer to ponder. Perhaps one of the most important question is "Is my teaching customized to the needs and abilities of my students?" Customizing a lesson to fit the students is crucial for developing an optimal learning environment. For some teachers, it may be difficult to

confront the fact that certain students in their class may be getting neglected because they are either too much above or below the average of the class. Using the morning Functional Work English program at the Hmong American Partnership as a model, I have shown the issues that arise and examples of ways to handle the reality of a mixed-level class. Future teachers of this class may opt to arrange the class differently; that is not only natural, but expected. Different eyes see different things and may find different solutions. The solutions for this particular F.W.E. class will change in time, just as the students will also change.

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## Appendix

<u>Page</u>	<u>Title</u>
i.....	“Running Dictation” from <i>The Working Experience 2</i> , by Smith & Ringel.
ii.....	<i>Mr. Mom</i> instruction sheet
iii.....	<i>Mr. Mom</i> student picture sheet
iv.....	<i>Mr. Mom</i> student questions
v.....	<i>Culture Clips</i> instruction sheet
vi.....	<i>Culture Clips</i> questions
vii-viii.....	Student evaluation form
ix.....	Teacher evaluation form

# 13

What do you do on your day off?



Kathleen Foster, Impact Visuals

## Day Off

My (1) opened our (2) in Puerto Rico at 6:00 in the morning. When he was (3), he closed the store at about (4) at (5). When he got (6) he (7) the store at about (8). (9) was our day off. We (10) the store for only (11) hours in the (12). Because we were going to (13), we stopped (14) early. Then we got (15) for church. Before we (16) we all had

(17) to eat together—some fresh (18), some special (19).

My father (20) had a little (21) on Sunday. After church he liked to (22) by the (23) with my (24) and me. He (25) and joked with us. He liked to see me in a pretty (26) on Sunday.

Sunday (27) was the time for our (28) to be (29).

—Maria Velasquez  
Puerto Rico

(24) \_\_\_\_\_

(25) \_\_\_\_\_ i

(26) \_\_\_\_\_

(27) \_\_\_\_\_

(28) \_\_\_\_\_

(29) \_\_\_\_\_

## Mr. Mom

MGM, 1983. Michael Keaton, Teri Garr. 1 hour 31 minutes.

**Subjects/Themes:** \* housework \* gender roles

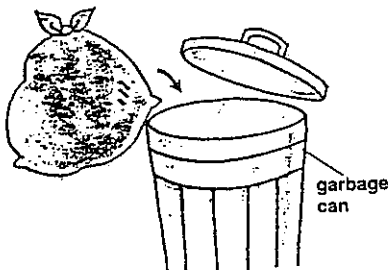
**Synopsis:** After Jack Butler gets laid off, he has a hard time adjusting to life as a stay-at-home dad while his wife works long hours in the advertising industry. Not only does Jack have to cope with learning the ropes of childcare and housework, but he has to deal with his feelings of jealousy and inadequacy.

**Teacher's Review:** Much of the plot can be understood through the actions of the characters, which helps lower proficiency students follow along. Overall, the students enjoyed it. One student didn't like it for two reasons: 1. He didn't like the idea of the man staying home while the wife worked, and 2. He thought the group of housewives with which Jack spends his time were actually Jack's girlfriends. This disapproval became a good springboard for a discussion of cultural differences.

**The Activities:** Before viewing the movie, we worked on vocabulary for doing laundry and housework. I found chapters 35-36 in English for Everyday Activities very helpful. I then photocopied and cut out pictures from the same book to make a check sheet for the students called "What Does Jack Do?" On the other side, I had questions for the higher proficiency students. I read those questions aloud at the appropriate places in the movie, so the whole class could answer the questions. Writing the answers was optional.

**Alternatives:** Only show the middle portion of the video after Jack gets laid off up to the point where he gets back into shape.

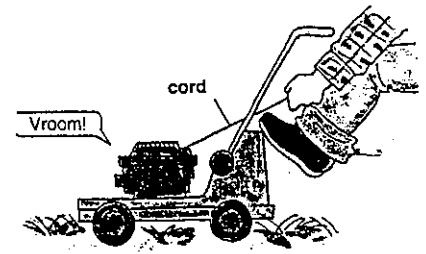
# WHAT DOES JACK DO? Check the lines by the boxes.



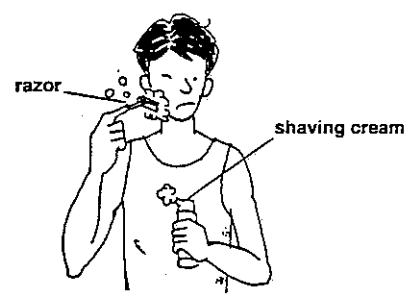
Does he take out the garbage? \_\_\_\_\_



Does he do the laundry? \_\_\_\_\_



Does he mow the lawn? \_\_\_\_\_



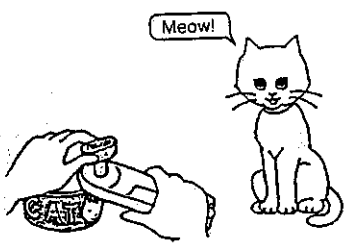
Does he shave? \_\_\_\_\_



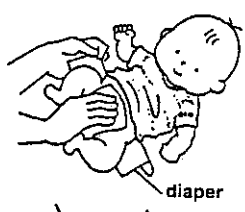
Does he iron the clothes? \_\_\_\_\_



Does he drop the kids off at school? \_\_\_\_\_



Does he feed the cat? \_\_\_\_\_



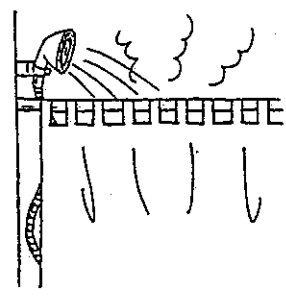
Does he change the baby's diaper? \_\_\_\_\_



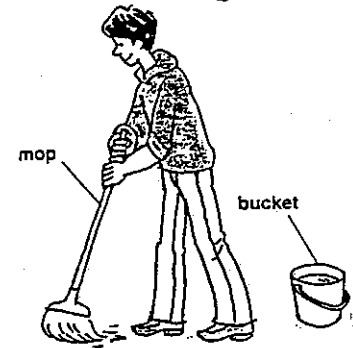
Does he go grocery shopping? \_\_\_\_\_



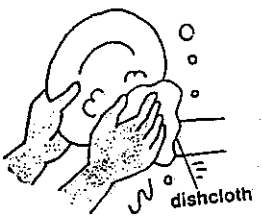
Does he vacuum the carpet? \_\_\_\_\_



Does he take a shower? \_\_\_\_\_



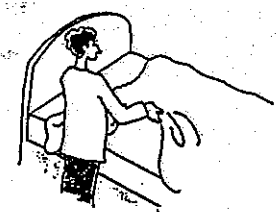
Does he mop the floor? \_\_\_\_\_



Does he wash the dishes? \_\_\_\_\_



Does he give the kids a bath? \_\_\_\_\_



Does he change the sheets and make the beds? \_\_\_\_\_

## Mr. Mom

1. What does the mother do in the morning to get her family ready?
2. Where does the father work?
3. Why are the men angry?
4. Who gets a new job?
5. Put these things that Jack does in order, starting with 1:

vacuum       grocery shopping       drop off kids  
 change sheets       give kids a bath       change diapers  
 do laundry       iron clothes       cook

6. What problems does Jack have at the store?
7. What mistakes does Jack make with the laundry?
8. What is the name of the vacuum cleaner?  
a. John      b. Jaws      c. Jack      d. Jar

9. How does Jack melt the cheese sandwich?  
 on the stove       in the microwave       with an iron

10. How does Jack fix the blanket?

11. Why is the wife angry with Jack?

12. Check the ways Jack tries to be better:

He burns the shirt.       He shaves.       He paints the kitchen.  
 He exercises.       He buys a car.       He cleans the house.  
 He becomes a school patrol.       He goes to the doctor.

## Culture Clips: Job Skills

### Clip 1: Finding and Interviewing for Jobs

#### Teacher's Guide

1. If your students have difficulty with reading, you can ask the questions instead of giving them the paper.
2. Before you start, ask the students how they look for jobs. Write their ideas on the board. After showing the beginning of the video, check the items off the student list that are featured in the video.
3. Ask the students about how to dress for an interview. Ask what colors are appropriate. Watch the video and check off the colors mentioned. Discuss what the applicant in the video is wearing. Explain the word "conservative" in terms of dress.
4. Ask the students what body language is appropriate for job interviews. ( Note: In some cultures, it is considered rude to make direct eye contact. If the students suggest things that are okay in their countries, but not in the U.S., be sure to explain the cultural difference. Ask what the applicant does at the end of the interview.)
5. Write the words "strength" and "weakness" on the board. Ask the students if they know what they mean or if they sound like other words they know (strong, weak) and what that means in an interview. Give examples of how to answer the questions, especially the weakness question, which is trickier.
6. After you have finished showing the video, give the students magazines and ask them to cut out two pictures: one of clothes that are appropriate for an interview and one of clothes that should not be worn to an interview. Ask the students to find pictures of their own gender.
7. After the pictures have been cut out, have the students explain why the clothes they selected are either appropriate or inappropriate.

Technique: Elicit as much information from the students about interviewing as you can before watching the video segments. That way, the information on the video will not seem too overwhelming or confusing because they have already started thinking about the topic. The students will be watching and listening for information that they already know or for key words/phrases. Combining this with visual clues will assist understanding.

## Culture Clips: Job Skills

### Clip 1: Finding and Interviewing for Jobs

1. Name 5 ways to find a job:
  
2. What colors are good to wear to an interview?
  
3. Name 3 things you should do during an interview:
  
4. Name 2 of your **strengths**:
  
5. Name 1 of your **weaknesses**:
  
6. Find 2 pictures: one of good interview clothes (**conservative**), the other of bad interview clothes.

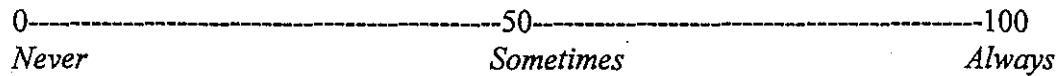
GOOD

BAD

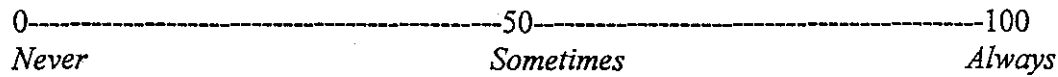


## Student Evaluations

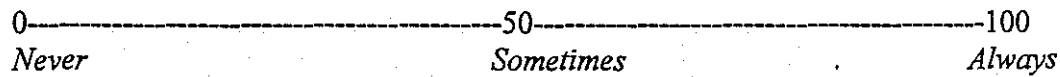
1. I go to class everyday.



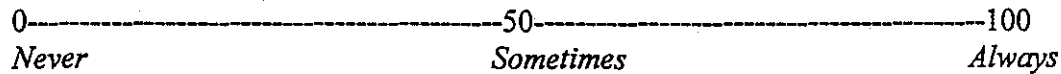
2. I speak English to the other students.



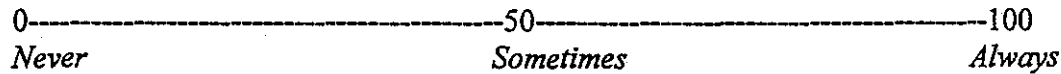
3. I ask questions if I don't understand.



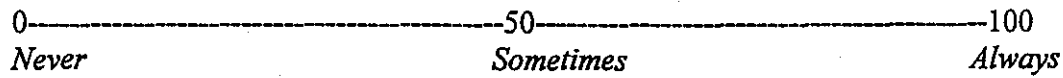
4. I do the work in class.



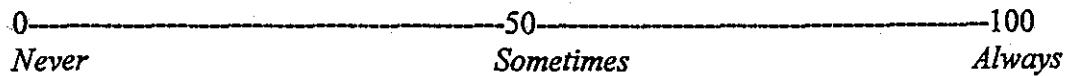
5. I practice English outside of class.



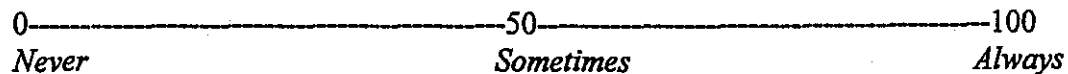
6. The teacher helps me to understand.



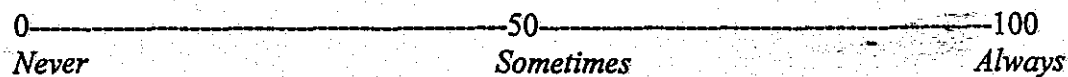
7. The teacher knows what she is doing everyday. (organized)



8. I can learn a lot in this class.



9. The class is interesting.



10. I like the book.

0-----50-----100  
*Don't like.*                      *It's okay.*                      *Very good.*

11. I like the videos.

0-----50-----100  
*Don't like.*                      *It's okay.*                      *Very good.*

12. I like the games.

0-----50-----100  
*Don't like.*                      *It's okay.*                      *Very good.*

13. I like the computer activities.

0-----50-----100  
*Don't like.*                      *It's okay.*                      *Very good.*

14. How can we make the class better?

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### Teacher Self-Evaluation

1 = not good at this. 3 = okay, needs improvement. 5 = I do this well.

1. I have prepared lessons for each day. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I pace the class according to the students' needs. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I am aware of my students' goals. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I devote at least half of the class-time to work-related topics, such as looking for a job, filling out applications, or talking about jobs.  
1 2 3 4 5
5. I arrive on time and with class materials ready. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I try different approaches to teach my material. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I try to teach my class skills that will help them learn on their own.  
1 2 3 4 5
8. I make calls to the appropriate parties if there is an unexcused absence.  
1 2 3 4 5
9. I look for opportunities for field trips and speakers. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I keep my student files updated with attendance, Personal Education Plans, and test scores. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I am patient with students who struggle with language or cultural concepts. 1 2 3 4 5
12. How can I make the class better?  

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