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LESLLA aims to support adults who are learning to read and write for the first time in their lives in a new language. We promote, on a worldwide, multidisciplinary basis, the sharing of research findings, effective pedagogical practices, and information on policy.

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ADULT LITERACY AND EMPOWERMENT: DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF A PROGRAM IN TURKEY

Aydin Yücesan Durgunoğlu
University of Minnesota Duluth

IYOP team*
Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV)
Istanbul, Turkey

IYOP is the Turkish acronym for our adult literacy program. The past and present members with contributions to this work (in alphabetical order) are: F. Aslan, M. Cantürk, H. Gençay, Ö. Karakulak, H. Kuşcul, B. Öney, Ö. Şahan, N. Ural, M. Yasa, and F. Zengin.

Higher educational levels in individuals are associated with multiple positive outcomes such as better health, better earning potential, higher achievement of children, stronger civic participation (Kabeer, 1999, 2005; Kutner, Green-berg, Jin, Boyle, Hsu, & Dunleavy, 2007; National Research Council, 2011; Wagner, 1986; Education for All, 2006). Given these positive outcomes, it is especially important to reduce the achievement gaps in education that are mostly due to cultural and socioeconomic factors (Kutner, et al, 2007; Rogers, 2008; Sirin, 2005) and to reach those who have remained at the fringes of the formal educational systems. In many places around the world, women are overrepresented

among those for whom education remains inaccessible, as indicated by the persistent gender gap in educational attainment and literacy levels (Sabri, 2004). Gender disparities are especially exacerbated by poverty (Education for All, 2009).

Despite the multitude of adult education initiatives around the globe, it is challenging to teach individuals with very little formal schooling, because in a vicious circle, one of the predictors of success in adult literacy classes is previous educational experiences (Condelli, Wrigley & Yoon, 2009; Durgunoğlu, 2000; Fitzgerald & Young, 1997). In addition, as the LESLLA community have been discussing, learners with limited schooling in their first language (L1) who are developing literacy in their second language (L2) face even more challenges (e.g., Bigelow & Schwarz, 2010; Bigelow & Tarone, 2004). In general, adult education initiatives, especially programs focused on learners with limited formal education, suffer from scarcity of evaluation data and a clear understanding of the factors that make a program effective. In this paper, we discuss a program that we have developed in Turkey for adults with no or very limited levels of formal schooling and very low levels of literacy, some with Turkish as their L2.

Although the literacy rate is increasing rapidly in Turkey, there are still major gaps between genders as well as between regions. Literacy needs are especially acute for people migrating from rural areas to the cities. Faced with this challenge, since 1995, Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) has been offering an intensive program to develop the basic literacy proficiencies of individuals, mostly women. Using the practices that have been shown to be effective by recent educational research (Öney & Durgunoğlu, 2005), we wrote three textbooks for the program: Participant Textbook, Instructors' Annotated Edition and the Theoretical Guide to Literacy (Durgunoğlu et al., 1995) and revised it several times (Durgunoğlu, Öney, Kuşcul, Dağıdır, Aslan,

Cantürk, & Yasa, 2003). We have also developed a more advanced course for the graduates of this basic level course (Durgunoğlu, Öney, Dağıdır, & Kuşcul, 2000) and revised it (Durgunoğlu, Gençay, Yasa & Ural, 2010). The program has now reached over 120,000 participants in 17 provinces and won a UNESCO literacy award in 2005. The philosophy and the curriculum are described in detail in Durgunoğlu, Öney, Kuşcul (2003) and in Öney and Durgunoğlu (2005). Here we will provide a brief overview of the program components and some evaluation data.

One of the major goals of our program is to create a learning community that involves mutual respect and support. We emphasize that although the adults who come into the program may not know how to read and write, they still have extensive and valuable world experiences and their interactions with other learners and their teacher are the foundation for a supportive and effective learning environment (Prins, 2006; Prins, Toso, & Schafft, 2009). Informal observations and interview data indicate that not only encouraged learning in creating an atmosphere that not only encouraged learning but also provided a social support system for the participants.

We have developed a structured program focusing on the facilitators of literacy that have been identified in the past three decades of educational research. Given the systematic orthography of Turkish, the program includes explicit training in spelling-sound correspondences and syllabication. In addition, there is a strong focus on critical thinking and analysis of what is read or heard by including activities such as discussion of texts, reactions to newspaper articles, and prediction of story endings. We emphasized that reading is not only word recognition. It requires comprehension, thinking, reasoning, inferencing as well as activating prior knowledge on a topic. There are also numeracy activities, which started with the second cohort when it became obvious that literacy cannot develop without some numeracy. Contrary to the recommendations by some adult educa-

tors to develop a learner-led, flexible program, in a clearly non-school-like atmosphere, we have discovered that our learners want an atmosphere that is school-like, one that includes a formal teacher, books, assignments. This perspective, which may seem surprising, has been reported by other observers of adult education programs around the world (Mitchell, 1994; Papen, 2005). It was easy to understand this perspective once we heard the longing to go to school reported by the majority of learners in our program across the years (Durgunoğlu, 2000).

Teachers are the life force of any program. Our teachers are volunteers who join the program after an intensive three-week seminar. This seminar covers not only the curriculum but also sociocultural and cognitive bases of literacy as well as communication skills and strategies. Once the volunteers start teaching, the quality of the program is monitored through a continuous observation and feedback system. Instead of providing some training and then leaving the teachers on their own, we start with a relatively short training period but provide constant support. This also helps to create a community of teachers who keep in touch with each other with the help of their team leader. Having a well-structured program and the continuous support system in place enables us to work with volunteers. In addition to reducing the cost of the program, the volunteer system also provides a creative outlet for those individuals who are looking for a way to contribute to the development of their society.

A typical class starts with putting the date on the board, and reading the newspaper headlines and discussing the news of the day. If an historical event had taken place on that day, it is discussed. Teachers use this occasion to model reading a newspaper, as well as to encourage the participants to decode certain new words such as names of the days and months. After this discussion, the teacher checks any homework that had been assigned. The next component is

discussing the reading passage. With the help of the picture above the passage in their textbooks, the participants discuss what the passage might be about and volunteer any relevant experiences of their own. Then the teacher reads the passage aloud and asks listening comprehension questions. Next are the decoding exercises in which letters, syllables and words are decoded and spelled. There is explicit teaching of spelling-sound correspondences to exploit the transparent orthography of Turkish. After the decoding exercises, the participants read the passage several times to each other in pairs, or as a whole class, depending on the level of the class. After reading the passage, they answer more comprehension questions about it, writing their answers during the later stages of the course. Afterwards, they either complete functional exercises, such as filling out forms, or read a poem, short story or an expository text. They are encouraged to keep a journal and do free writing on their own, and to share those with the teacher and the class if they wish.

The interconnectedness of the functional, cognitive and affective aspects of literacy is important to note. As literacy skills develop and are used in everyday functioning (e.g. taking a bus without someone's help), they empower and enhance the self-confidence of the participants. Therefore, we assume that an effective program not only improves certain literacy and numeracy proficiencies, but also builds self-efficacy, confidence and joy of learning. The effectiveness of our program in developing both cognitive and affective aspects has been evaluated in several studies (Durgunoğlu, 2000; Durgunoğlu, et al., 2003; Kağıtçıbaşı, Gökşen & Gülgöz, 2005). After the first few cohorts, it became obvious that the program would be even more effective with an additional change: explicitly discussing empowerment topics related to health, legal rights, citizenship and to prepare and encourage the learners to join the formal education system.

One of the underlying assumptions of adult literacy programs is that they can empower individuals to function

on their own, access information and participate more fully in the practices of their community. Our previous research has shown that independent functioning and self-confidence do indeed develop in participants who have completed the course (Durgunoğlu et al., 2003). However, access to information and participating more fully in the practices of the community may require more explicit knowledge about one's rights and available resources. Therefore, we decided to augment our adult literacy curriculum by including reading and discussion materials on legal rights, community resources, as well as preventive and reproductive health issues. The topics for empowerment were selected after extensive interviews with potential participants, educators, NGO members, doctors and other stakeholders in the region. We have asked these stakeholders to list the possible topics that they thought would be useful to include in our curriculum. We also had several focus groups in which the same question was discussed in more detail. The topics that were suggested by a wide group of stakeholders were integrated into the curriculum.

As articulated by Freire (1998), literacy is not a set of skills but also a way to build an awareness of the societal forces, and to question systemic inequalities that hinder everyone's equal entitlement to the resources in the society. This relatively abstract empowerment and liberation view has been criticized for not considering the realities of learners' (especially women's) everyday lives, or in Unterhalter's (2005) words "the 'patriarchal bargain' that women need to strike in order to survive and flourish." In other words, the attempts to advance women's rights also has to address the complex power imbalances in their cultural milieu and the debilitating effects of poverty (Durgunoğlu, 2000; Kabeer, 2005; Moller Okin, 1999). It is clear that literacy by itself cannot alleviate poverty, inequality and marginalization. However as Sabri has expressed eloquently (2004, p. 83) "On the other hand, poverty and the dynamics of poverty and marginalisation will not be

alleviated without a literate population. The dynamics that sustain poverty and impoverishment will not be effectively impacted unless those most directly affected are able to access information, communicate their aspirations and claim their entitlements effectively." In our program, our goal is to not only provide the basic information on topics of human rights, but also to facilitate the discussion of these issues among the learners in a safe and nonjudgmental environment, and to consider the realities of the learners' lives. Before any attitudes and behaviors can change, there needs to be a reliable knowledge base and an awareness. Our courses attempt to address the need for this first step.

As described above, our original curriculum included newspaper reading and discussion in every class period. We have replaced every other newspaper exercise with the empowerment readings. This way, the program could be augmented with minimal impact on the overall curriculum. In addition, the established habits of discussing and voicing opinions on news items could be carried into the empowerment component seamlessly. The empowerment topics included importance of a civil wedding—which is the only legal one giving the wife certain rights—women's right to work, prevention of domestic violence, child labor laws, preventive health practices (such as immunization, hygiene), among others. When implementing this component in the classroom, the teachers start by first posing a question and asking the learners to give examples from their lives and express their thoughts and feelings. For example, before discussing the legal right to inherit properly, teachers ask, "How is inheritance distributed? Describe what has happened in your own or in others' families." (To give some context, according to the Turkish civil law, all siblings are equally entitled to inheritance regardless of their gender. However, because of cultural and religious constraints, women usually report that the men get the inheritance and it would be shameful for women to ask for their share when they have brothers.) The class then has a reading

selection on how, in the eyes of civil law, men and women have equal rights to their families' inheritance. Following this reading, there is more discussion with participants generating ideas about how to handle this situation in a family, as well as frankly discussing the cultural barriers that can hamper their efforts. To summarize, during this component, learners get informed of their legal rights, but they also discuss their own experiences and constraints. They listen and support each other, provide suggestions for striking the "patriarchal bargain" and express their thoughts and concerns. Our classes now have this empowerment component fully integrated into the curriculum.

Evaluation Study

In this study, we report the data from one of the first cohorts that have implemented the empowerment activities within the standard curriculum, and evaluate both the literacy and empowerment outcomes.

Participants:

The new program was first implemented in two southeastern provinces of Turkey: Diyarbakir (DB) and Sanliurfa (SU). These two provinces have a very high rate of illiteracy among women. In addition, many individuals speak another language (Kurdish or Arabic) at home. The program was also implemented in Istanbul (IST) which had a more homogeneous participant population, because it was important to see how the empowerment program will also work in this bigger city where women may have more access to resources. In the evaluation study, there were 109 participants from these three provinces (see Table 1). At the end of the study, there were 88 participants who had complete pre and post data and the following analyses were conducted on those 88 participants. (The comparison of the characteristics of the participants with complete and incomplete data showed no differences in the initial literacy performance, age, marital status, and

Table 1
The number of classrooms and participants as a function of province

	Province			
	DB	IST	SU	total
Number of classrooms	5	4	2	11
Number of participants	40	41	28	109
Number of participants with complete data	27	34	27	88
Number of participants with incomplete data	13	7	1	21

DB=Diyarbakır, IST=Istanbul, SU= Şanlıurfa

attitudes of the two groups. The single exception was that the incomplete group had lower vocabulary scores).

Tasks:

In a short interview, data were collected on the participants' age, schooling experiences, language(s) they know and their self-ratings of linguistic proficiency; marital status, number of children, and why they were attending the literacy classes. In addition, the participants were given the same battery of tests before (pre) and after (post) they completed the course.

Cognitive battery

(1) Letter naming: The Turkish alphabet has 29 letters. The participants were asked to identify the 29 upper case and 29 lower case letters in mixed order on a single page. The number correct was the measure.

(2) Word recognition: The participants were given 12 short words, reflecting the variety of vowel and consonant combinations found in Turkish and asked to read them. If participants did not recognize more than 10 letters, this test was not given. The number correct was the measure.

(3) Spelling: The participants were asked to write 12 words, ranging from 3 to 5 letters. However, if a participant did not recognize more than 10 letters or read more than 5 words, this test was not given. The spelling was scored by giving two points for each letter in a word, including its location. So for example one item fidan (seedling) had a correct spelling score of 10 (5 letters x 2 points=10). If the spelling was fdan the score was 8, indicating the missing vowel i. The maximum possible score was 84.

(4) Listening comprehension: The participants listened to two short passages. The first passage was a narrative about a woman getting wet while going shopping in the rain. The second was an expository passage about the required tax ID number. The participants answered 4 questions about each passage, with 10 as the maximum score across the two texts.

(5) Vocabulary: The participants were given 5 words, each in a sentence and asked to define the words. The quality of the definition was scored between 0-2, with 10 as the maximum score.

(6) Number writing: The participants were read 8 numbers ranging from 1-4 digits and asked to write them. The total score reflected both the correct writing of the numeral and its location. For example 58 written correctly had a score of 4 (2 digits x 2 points) whereas 85 got 2 points only for the numerals but not the digit placement. Maximum score was 40 points.

Attitude battery
The participants were also given an attitude battery to evaluate

the effects of the empowerment curriculum. This battery was a series of connected vignettes describing a problem in a person's life and asking the participants for their suggestions and to describe what they would do if they were in that person's shoes. For example, the character in the vignette wanted to work, but her husband did not give her permission. Each answer was scored on a 4-point scale. Four points meant that the following three parts are present in the answer: It is a right + some description of the right + proposed action; 3 points = 2 of these parts are present; 2 points = an awareness of the right but indication of hopelessness/passivity; 1 point = no awareness of the right. 0 = "I don't know"). The maximum score was 28. This battery had an internal reliability of .60.

Results

Table 2 presents the demographic data (means and standard deviations) on the 88 participants. Overall, the SU and DB groups were younger and they were more likely to be unmarried.

Table 2
Demographic characteristics of the 88 participants with complete data

| | Province | | | |
	DB (n=27)	IST (n=34)	SU (n=27)	Significant?
Age (Mean and Standard Deviation)	29.85 (11.3)	39.70 (10.1)	25.52 (9.0)	DB=SU<IST
Number who attended school	6	1	4	
Percent married	56%	91%	41%	DB=SU<IST
Number of living children (Mean and sd)	3.75 (2.2)	3.19 (1.6)	5.18 (1.8)	DB=IST<SU

ried. However, the SU group had more children. Although 11 out of 88 participants had previously attended school, it must be noted that the average length of school attendance was only 1.8 years for these 11 learners.

Table 3 presents the linguistic background of the participants. The majority of the participants in DB and SU spoke

Table 3
Percent of participants who rated themselves in each category of language proficiency.

| | Self-ratings | Province | | |
		DB	IST	SU
Percent speaking another language at home		89	38	96
Proficiency in understanding Turkish	very poor/poor	0	0	0
	medium	26	3	11
	good/ very good	74	97	89
Proficiency in speaking Turkish	very poor/poor	7	0	4
	medium	22	3	15
	good/ very good	70	97	82
Proficiency in understanding Language 1 (L1) (n=63 with a different L1)	very poor/poor	0	3	4
	medium	11	0	0
	good/ very good	78	35	93
	No other language	11	62	4
Proficiency in speaking L1 (n=63 with a different L1)	very poor/poor	0	3	4
	medium	11	0	7
	good/very good	78	35	85
	No other language	11	62	4

a different home language (Kurdish or Arabic). However, 70-90% rated themselves as speaking and understanding Turkish at good/very good levels. The pre-test listening comprehension and vocabulary scores supported the self-ratings. Therefore, these women were able to follow the instruction in these courses delivered in Turkish.

The tasks in the cognitive battery were analyzed by 2 (time of test: pre and post) x 3 (province: DB SU and IST) Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs). Table 4 presents the mean scores (and standard deviations) on the cognitive battery as a function of time of test (Pre vs. Post) and Province. An interaction between Time of Test and Province implies that participant growth from pre- to post-tests differed among the provinces. Lack of an interaction, and only a Time of Test main effect indicates that there is a significant growth from pre- to post-testing but these changes are similar across provinces.

On Letter Recognition, Listening Comprehension, Word Recognition and Spelling tasks, there were main effects of Time of Test on Letter Recognition $F_{(1,85)} = 83.02$; Word Recognition $F_{(1,85)} = 100.14$; Spelling $F_{(1,85)} = 196.04$ and Listening Comprehension $F_{(1,84)} = 34.37$. The means in bold in Table 4 (collapsed across all provinces) indicate that all participants in the three provinces showed similarly significant improvement. Describing the raw data in Table 4 in percentages, it is notable that after only three months of instruction word recognition improved from 42% to 79% accuracy, and spelling improved from 33% to 82%.

On the remaining two tasks, Number Writing and Vocabulary, there were interactions of Time of Test x Province: Number Writing $F_{(2,85)} = 4.19$; Vocabulary $F_{(2,85)} = 4.19$. Although all groups showed significant improvements from pre- to post-testing, the improvements were more pronounced when the participants had lower pre-test levels. For example, participants from all three provinces reached a similar level of number writing (approximately 80%).

For Letter Recognition, Word Recognition, Spelling, and Listening Comprehension tasks, there were main effects of Time of Test on Letter Recognition $F_{(1,85)}$... all F's <2.12. However, there were main Test interactions, all F's <2.12.

However, because IST and DB groups started at significantly lower levels, their improvement was greater compared to the SU group. Likewise DB and SU groups had lower scores on the vocabulary pre-test, which is not surprising given that Turkish is not the first language for a majority of participants in those groups. However, at post-test, SU group had similarly high vocabulary scores as the IST group, but the DB group had lower vocabulary scores than both SU and IST.

Table 4
The means (and standard deviations) of the tasks across the three provinces and the two times of testing

	max					Post-tests			
		DB	IST	SU	All provinces	DB	IST	SU	All provinces
Letter recognition	58	27.37 (25.5)	41.03 (19.7)	40.00 (16.8)	36.52 (21.5)	52.00 (9.8)	55.44 (4.1)	57.78 (0.7)	55.10 (6.4)
Word recognition	12	3.41 (4.5)	5.68 (5.1)	6.04 (4.7)	5.08 (4.9)	7.63 (5.1)	9.53 (3.5)	11.33 (2.4)	9.5 (4.0)
Spelling	84	14.00 (24.6)	31.38 (31.2)	38.15 (29.7)	28.13 (30.2)	55.52 (27.9)	69.32 (16.9)	81.00 (4.6)	68.67 (21.2)
Listening comprehension	10	5.41 (2.3)	6.82 (1.5)	7.19 (1.6)	6.49 (1.9)	6.70 (1.8)	7.79 (1.9)	8.27 (1.3)	7.60 (1.8)
Vocabulary	10	3.52 (2.0)	5.59 (2.2)	4.0 (1.8)	4.47 (2.2)	4.74 (2.0)	6.35 (2.1)	6.41 (1.7)	5.88 (2.1)
Number writing	40	14.93 (14.6)	11.74 (13.6)	22.78 (11.5)	16.10 (14.0)	29.56 (12.3)	32.91 (10.2)	34.44 (4.2)	32.35 (9.7)
Attitude	28	19.37 (3.6)	21.94 (1.8)	19.00 (2.6)	20.24 (3.0)	21.03 (2.5)	22.38 (2.1)	22.03 (2.2)	21.93 (2.3)

Why DB and SU groups showed different levels of improvement in defining Turkish words is not clear. One possible explanation that has to be explored further is that the SU group self-reported stronger proficiencies in both their L1 and L2 (Table 3).

Attitude battery

The last row of Table 4 presents the mean scores (and standard deviations) in the attitude battery as a function of time of test (Pre vs. Post) and Province. On these attitude items, there was a significant improvement across all provinces, but the interaction of Province x Time of Test indicated that the groups showed differences in how much they changed, $F(2,81) = 6.91$. Post hoc tests indicated that at the beginning of the course, the scores of the DB and SU groups were significantly lower than that of IST group. However, on the post-tests, SU group had caught up with the IST group, and DB group was at a lower level compared to the IST group, although still showing a significant improvement.

Conclusion

In this new evaluation of the literacy program we have developed in Turkey, the learners showed significant improvement in literacy skills assessed by the cognitive battery, thus replicating previous results (Durgunoğlu et al., 2003). The learners also showed significantly higher scores on the attitude battery, indicating that the new empowerment component is also effective. The next challenge for future research is to observe how the developing knowledge and awareness levels lead to behavioral changes at both individual and community levels.

Overall, we believe several interrelated characteristics of the program working together make it successful: There is a safe and respectful environment acknowledging the rich life experiences of the learners. The teachers and the learners get to know each other well and create a community of learning

through intensive discussions. There is a structured and well-designed program based on the research on literacy and numeracy development. The structure enables the volunteer teachers to understand the philosophy of the program and to use the framework to help learners of different levels and abilities. The curriculum includes not only basic skills of literacy (decoding, spelling) but also listening and reading comprehension, critical thinking, and real world applications, thus making the content relevant for the learners' lives. Finally, the empowerment component explicitly informs the learners' of their rights, but also allows them to discuss their experiences, acknowledge the cultural constraints and to share their frustrations and solutions. However, it must also be acknowledged that the learners assessed in this study were either monolinguals or had relatively good (self-reported) oral proficiencies in Turkish. Therefore, the results from this study can apply to other low literacy individuals, but with some existing oral proficiency in their L2.

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SUPPORTING DIGITAL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN LESLLA LEARNERS

Stephen Reder
Portland State University

Jenifer Vanek
Minnesota Literacy Council - Consultant

Heide Spruck Wrigley
Literacywork International

Abstract

Low print literacy skills have been one of the defining characteristics of the Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition (LESLLA) population. In our increasingly digital world, the acquisition of second languages and literacies encompasses online materials and activities that require digital literacy. This paper considers the issues of digital literacy for second language learners and the ways in which these issues broaden the LESLLA framework.

We begin with a justification for inclusion of digital literacy in the range of literacies central to academic success for LESLLA learners. Next we present a description of an innovative learning technology called Learner Web and a Learner Web project designed to support digital literacy. The Learner Web project, part of the national U.S. Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), is a large multi-state project that is exploring ways of supporting digital literacy development in LESLLA