# LESLLA Symposium Proceedings

### Recommended citation of this article

Vinogradov, P. (2012). Defining the LESLLA Teacher Knowledge Base. LESLLA Symposium Proceedings, 8(1), 9–24. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8021806

### Citation for LESLLA Symposium Proceedings

This article is part of a collection of articles based on presentations from the 2012 Symposium held at University of Jyväskylä in Jyväskylä, Finland. Please note that the year of publication is often different than the year the symposium was held. We recommend the following citation when referencing the edited collection.

Tammelin-Laine, T., Nieminen, L., & Martin, M. (Eds.) (2013). Low-educated second language and literacy acquisition (LESLLA): Proceedings of the 8th symposium. Jyväskylä University Printing House.
https://lesllasp.journals.publicknowledgeproject.org/index.php/lesllasp/issue/view/473

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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.

### LESLLA Symposium Proceedings

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# 1 DEFINING THE LESLLA TEACHER KNOWLEDGE BASE

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**Abstract**

The following article summarizes the complex knowledge that LESLLA teachers need to do this unique and challenging work. The author asserts that LESLLA teachers tap into four main domains of knowledge in the classroom: knowledge of teaching, knowledge of the refugee and immigrant experience, knowledge of language and language acquisition, and knowledge of adult learning. As LESLLA learners are new to print literacy, a critical fifth area of knowledge seeps into every aspect of this work: early literacy instruction. The author begins with a brief summary of what has been previously published about the LESLLA teacher knowledge base before outlining her proposed model as supported by current research. She concludes with suggestions for building adaptive expertise in LESLLA teachers.

Keywords: LESLLA, teacher knowledge, professional development

## 1.1 Introduction

What do LESLLA teachers need to know and be able to do? Teacher educators and professional developers continue to grapple with this important question, as the LESLLA context is unique and complex. LESLLA learners are distinct from other adult L2 learners[1] in that they are learning to read for the first time. Therefore, LESLLA practitioners focus much of their efforts on literacy

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1 L2 learner = second language learner

development. However, the knowledge base for LESLLA cannot stop with early literacy instruction. As Vinogradov and Liden point out; this is but one area of importance in LESLLA work (2009). While early literacy instruction is at the core of this work, I propose that it necessarily interacts and finds its way among four additional areas of knowledge: 1) teaching, 2) the immigrant and refugee experience, 3) language and language acquisition, and 4) adult learning. Figure 1 below illustrates how we might conceptualize the overarching role of early literacy and the four domains of the LESLLA teacher knowledge base. This article works to unpack and define this model for the LESLLA teacher knowledge base.

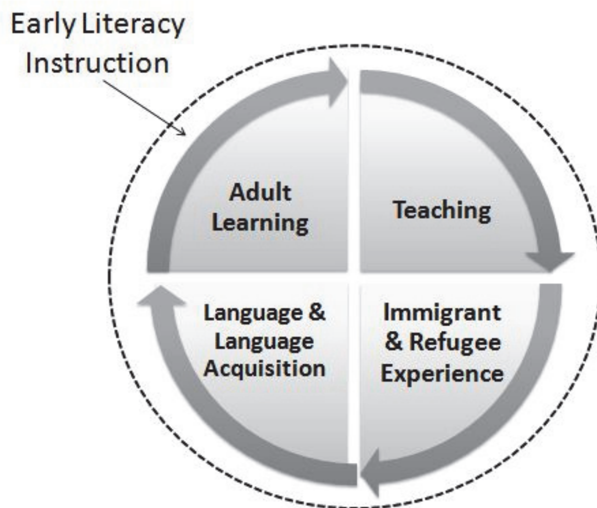


FIGURE 1 Knowledge base for LESLLA teachers.

First, a brief definition of early literacy instruction is provided as it is viewed in current scholarship. Next, this early literacy knowledge base is connected with four critical areas of knowledge for LESLLA: teaching, the immigrant and refugee experience, language and language acquisition, and adult learning.

We begin with what has already been put forth in the literature that is specific to LESLLA teachers' knowledge. However, as this area of research is quite limited, the discussion broadens to draw from the larger scholarship in education, literacy development, language acquisition, and adult learning.

## 1.2 Current LESLLA Teacher Knowledge Base

In response to the growing but still limited research on LESLLA teaching and learning across relevant disciplines, a recent source of new knowledge for

LESLLA educators is an academic symposium (see www.leslla.org), where LESLLA scholars from around the world come together to share their work. However, even in this scholarly community, LESLLA teacher preparation and professional development (PD) have not been a focus in the symposium's eight year history. LESLLA presenters have taken it upon themselves to produce a body of literature, refereed articles from presenters at the symposia that are important and valuable, but not widely distributed. In the seven published symposia proceedings to date, only three articles have directly addressed PD for LESLLA teachers, and none of these has reported on research specific to LESLLA teacher preparation. In the inaugural LESLLA symposium proceedings volume, Faux describes the range of knowledge and skills LESLLA teachers should possess (2005). The following year, Peyton and her colleagues describe a statewide systemic process in planning and implementing professional development for adult ESL teachers that may assist in identifying and meeting LESLLA teachers' needs, although it does not concentrate on them specifically but rather PD for adult literacy professionals in general (Peyton, Burt, McKay, Schaetzel, Terrill, Young, & Nash 2007).Vinogradov and Liden later build on Faux's initial outline and describe a specific workshop they designed for LESLLA practitioners (Vinogradov & Liden 2009). They outline, based on their experiences with LESLLA learners and teachers (but not based on empirically grounded research), the knowledge base of effective LESLLA instructors in ten key elements, as listed in Table 1. Regarding skills that LESLLA teachers require, Vinogradov & Liden (ibid.) place LESLLA classroom skills into three areas: assessment, course design, and materials development.

TABLE 1 Knowledge base for LESLLA teachers (Vinogradov & Liden 2009)

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. The refugee experience | 6. Key research |
| 2. Types of literacy-level learners | 7. Components of reading |
| 3. Literacy in childhood vs. adulthood | 8. Balanced literacy |
| 4. Emergent readers | 9. Approaches to teaching literacy |
| 5. Second language acquisition | 10. Connections L1/L2 literacies |

The knowledge base described by Vinogradov & Liden (ibid.) in Table 1 is a place to start thinking about what LESLLA teachers know and what areas of knowledge inform their practice.

## 1.3 Enveloping Teacher Knowledge for LESLLA in Early Literacy Instruction

While schools, curricula, and individual teachers may vary greatly in their exact approaches to developing early literacy, there is much agreement in the field around what should be included in effective early literacy instruction, at least for children. In 2000, the National Reading Panel (NRP) released its large and

influential report, emphasizing five areas of reading instruction: *phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary*, and *comprehension* (National Reading Panel 2000). While there is widespread agreement that these five elements are indeed essential, "they are by no means a magic bullet that will lead to successful literacy achievement by all students," (Gambrell, Malloy, & Mazzoni 2011: 15). Reading scholars Morrow & Gambrell argue for a more comprehensive literacy framework that pays attention to *motivation*; opportunities to read and write; differentiated assessment and instruction; and reading, writing, listening, and speaking for wide, authentic, and varied purposes (Morrow & Gambrell 2011). Early literacy instruction forms the grounding layer of the LESLLA teacher knowledge base proposed in the model on page 1. Early literacy instruction and specific strategies for teaching the five NRP components are readily available for teachers of children and enjoy a vast research base (see Pressley 2006 for summary).

LESLLA teachers require complex knowledge for their work, and a defining role they play is that of early reading specialist, albeit often without a formal credential. No other adult L2 instructors have to teach alphabetic print literacy from square one. However, adult educators are not always prepared to provide the early literacy instruction that is paramount in their daily lives in the classroom. In addition to this knowledge of early reading instruction that LESLLA teachers require, they must also have a general knowledge of teaching. Knowledge of the components of reading and instructional techniques for literacy does little good in the hands of an incapable teacher. We move to the pedagogical knowledge LESLLA teachers need next.

## 1.4 Knowledge of Teaching

A strong assumption about teacher knowledge undergirds the proposed model: teachers possess a strong and evolving knowledge base that encompasses their prior experiences, formal knowledge, and personal beliefs and thinking. This assumption represents current thinking in the field and is the result of many years of development. Research in aspects of teacher knowledge emerged in the mid-1970's as scholars explored what had come to be known as *teacher cognition*, the thought processes that teachers engage in as they plan and deliver lessons (Borg 2003; Freeman & Johnson 1998). In the 1980's, more and more attention was given to teachers' prior experiences as students (Lortie 1975). Teachers were now thought to have 'mental lives' (Walberg 1977) that guide their work as constant decision makers in the classroom. The field began considering classrooms as unique and powerful social contexts where teachers work (Clandinin 1986). The work of Shulman (1987) teased out the distinction between content knowledge and teaching knowledge and introduced the concept of PCK, or pedagogical content knowledge. Also in this same time period, reflective practice (see Schön 1987) came to be seen as a crucial part of teacher preparation and ongoing professional development. Complex

frameworks for observing and evaluating teaching became widely used in the mid-1990's, largely in response to the Danielson framework (1996). In the U.S., a similar movement has led to the compilation of standards for adult educators' teacher effectiveness as well (American Institutes for Research 2012). This evidences the field's turn toward a more nuanced understanding of how classrooms operate and how teachers vary in how they plan for and implement instruction, assess learning, and grow as professionals. Attempts at isolating and strengthening the act of teaching date back to the previously mentioned work of Lee Shulman and the concept of PCK. This discipline-specific teaching knowledge lens is one way to explore the 'knowledge of teaching' LESLLA teachers require.

Moving more specifically to adult second language learners, TESOL, the international professional organization of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (www.tesol.org), created set of standards for adult ESL teachers. TESOL's list is specific to the teacher knowledge required of adult ESL practitioners, and specifically those working with adult learners (TESOL 2008). These eight standards are listed in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2 Standards for ESL/EFL teachers of adults (TESOL 2008)

1. Planning
2. Instructing
3. Assessing
4. Identity and Context
5. Language Proficiency
6. Learning
7. Content
8. Commitment and Professionalism

TESOL's standards include much of the general standards and frameworks, but they also give special attention to language proficiency. Additionally, the TESOL standards cast a separate standard for 'learning,' which focuses attention on tenets of *adult* learning and *adult* language learning. These differences underscore the more specific knowledge and skills needed for teachers of adults and for teachers of language. It should be noted that while the TESOL standards appear thorough and have ample vignettes and research-based references to support their choices, this is the work of a handful of professionals; the standards are not the result of original research and impact on student learning and teachers' possession of these practices have not been studied. One notable study from Ontario is quite possibly the only published work on the preparedness and self-efficacy of graduates from a TESOL program specifically for teachers of adults. The program in question is TESOL-accredited through the provincial TESOL affiliate specifically for teachers of adults. Faez & Valeo (2012) conducted a mixed-method study that included an online survey with 115 graduates of this program and interviews with eight focal participants. The focus of the research was to pinpoint teachers'

preparedness immediately after completing their TESOL course of study and after three years' teaching experience, and to explore what aspects of their preparation program were the most useful. Findings show that the practicum experience and 'real' teaching experiences had the most impact on their preparedness, a result that while not new for K-12 contexts had yet to be determined for adult ESL teachers. This adult ESL teacher research from Ontario faced some limitations: the use of an online survey for participants to self-report their preparedness upon completion of the program and currently, and much depended on their memories, self-perception, and cohesion between their preparation and subsequent teaching assignment. Even so, this is important new research that indicates that knowledge of teaching develops in similar ways across teaching contexts.

The fourth TESOL standard listed in Table 2 above, identity and context, describes the adult ESL teacher's need to understand learners and their communities, backgrounds, goals, and expectations for learning, all of which inform planning, instruction, and assessment. As adult immigrants and refugees, LESLLA learners' backgrounds and communities are particularly diverse and distinct and play a pivotal role in how teachers might approach instruction. Teachers need a deep understanding and appreciation for learners' experiences before coming to the U.S. and of their current lives in our communities. The impact of these factors is further explored in the next section.

## 1.5 Knowledge of the Immigrant and Refugee Experience

This article has already presented two areas of the proposed LESLLA teacher knowledge base: early literacy instruction and knowledge of teaching. The next area is knowledge of our learners as newcomers to our communities. Many LESLLA learners are refugees who have fled extreme violence or long stays in refugee camps with little or no access to schooling (Vinogradov & Bigelow 2010). They come from many countries. In Minnesota, U.S.A., for example, LESLLA learners are commonly (but not exclusively) from Ethiopia, Laos, Liberia, Mexico, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, and Thailand. In several cities in Belgium, immigrants from Morocco fill adult Dutch as a Second Language classes; and in Finland, large numbers of Somali and Iraqi refugees have resettled and are acquiring literacy for the first time in Finnish (Tammelin-Laine 2011; van de Craats, Kurvers, & Shöneberger 2011). Across the globe, political, social, and economic circumstances drive families from their homes to continue their lives in far off places, often in communities where literacy is paramount to daily living. While their home languages and cultures are extremely diverse, LESLLA learners do share some common characteristics (Burt, Peyton, & Schaetzel 2008), and they are present in adult education programs across the globe.

Serving LESLLA learners well requires serving immigrants and refugees well. Refugees and immigrants are managing a great deal of personal upheaval

as they adjust to a new country and city, find work and schools, and take care of daily personal and family needs. All of this adjustment happens for LESLLA learners as they acquire the local language and begin to acquire print literacy. Of the eight standards for adult ESL teachers, established by TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), one is devoted to identity and context:

> Teachers understand the importance of who learners are and how their communities, backgrounds, and goals shape learning and expectations of learning. Teachers recognize how context contributes to identity formation and therefore influences learning. Teachers use this knowledge of identity and settings in planning, instructing, and assessing. (TESOL 2008: 65)

TESOL elaborates on the role of learners' identities and cultures in the learning of English, and they describe how teachers must be savvy about cross-cultural differences to establish an equitable, respectful learning environment. In K-12[2] contexts, issues of culture are equally prominent in teacher-preparation and are considered paramount in the know-how an ESL teacher requires (Staehr Fenner & Kuhlman 2012). While there is much more to share about culture and context that affects adult L2 teaching and learning, the scope of this article allows only this brief reminder of their importance.

Issues of language and language acquisition cannot be divorced from LESLLA teachers' work as literacy instructors, and the following section explores this crucial aspect of LESLLA teaching: LESLLA teachers as language teachers.

## 1.6 Knowledge of Language and Language Acquisition

> A major part of research in language teaching and teacher learning over the last 15 or 20 years has involved the rediscovery of the basic truth that in language teaching, it is the teaching that is most important, not the language: that language teaching is first and foremost an educational enterprise, not a linguistic one. (Johnston & Goettsch 2000: 439)

Following the scholarship that established a *general* teacher knowledge base, language educators and language teacher-educators worked to clarify the knowledge base of *language* teachers in the 1990's and early 2000's. While previous to this period the knowledge base may have prioritized an in-depth knowledge of the target language and linguistics, the scholarship of the 1990's and 2000's moved the language teacher knowledge base to be re-conceptualized (Freeman 2002; Freeman & Johnson 1998; Johnston & Goettsch 2000; Woods, 1996). Freeman and Johnson, in what they call their "professional position" (1998: 405) propose that the language teacher knowledge base needs to address three main areas: the teacher-learner, the social context, and the pedagogical process (ibid.). This view moves away from the binary of 'subject matter' and

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[2] K-12 refers to Kindergarten – 12th grade in the U.S., the public school system for children.

'learners' with methodology as the means from one to the other. Departing from this transmission view of language teaching, the Freeman & Johnson model sees the three domains (teacher-learner, social context, and pedagogical process) as interdependent (ibid.). 'Teacher-learners' are individuals with prior experiences as teachers and students, and their practice of teaching changes and develops over time. The 'social contexts' of language teaching vary greatly, and schools and schooling contain powerful currents of socialization, power, and access that cannot be ignored. The 'pedagogical process' draws from second language acquisition theory, but Freeman and Johnson suggest that it is in fact *not* at the core of language teaching: "Teaching is an activity cannot be separated from either the person of the teacher as a learner or the contexts of schools and schooling in with it is done. Each domain is contingent on the other" (ibid.: 410). Language teaching is much more than a matter of knowing a language and knowing a bit about teaching.

Using general education teacher knowledge as a starting point, the language teacher knowledge base recognizes that "learning to teach is affected by the sum of a person's experiences, some figuring more prominently than others, and that it requires the acquisition and interaction of knowledge and beliefs about oneself as a teacher, of the content to be taught, of one's students, and of classroom life" (Freeman & Johnson 1998: 401). Each language teacher brings a great deal of him/herself to the language classroom, including, as unpublished Borg's 1997 model points out, his/her schooling and professional coursework (as cited in Borg 2003). These experiences interact with the teaching context and the classroom practice itself in complicated ways, all contributing to how teachers think and act as language teachers (ibid.). He states, "Teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choice by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs," (ibid.: 81). A key research study by Woods (1996) was conducted with ESL teachers in Canada and explored their planning and decision-making processes. Woods found it difficult to divorce belief and knowledge in his findings, and instead proposed the concept of BAK: beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge. BAK, he writes, "seemed to underlie everything that the teachers did and said," (ibid: 282). Such empirical findings suggest that teaching is a deeply personal endeavor, as it is work conducted by individuals with varying beliefs, assumptions and knowledge.

In addition to findings such as Woods' (1996), much has been written specifically about language teachers' previous experience as language learners as paramount in their practice. As Borg writes, "Teachers' prior language learning experiences establish cognitions about learning and language learning which form the basis of their initial conceptualizations of L2 teaching during teacher education, and which may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives," (2003: 88). This fact, that a teachers' own language learning experience is paramount to his/her teaching, presents a complication for LESLLA teachers. LESLLA instructors (unless they themselves were once LESLLA learners, which is unlikely) enter the language teaching endeavor as

literate adults. Even if a LESLLA teacher is multilingual and learned an additional language as an adult, he/she cannot know what it is to learn that language and at the same time be acquiring first time alphabetic literacy as an adult learner. LESLLA teachers are necessarily guessing at what will work best for their learners based on how their students respond to their instruction, their own language learning experiences, and what they know of early literacy instruction. Their memories of learning to read reach back to their childhoods, and likely to learning to read a language they already knew how to speak, and in a school and with teachers who spoke their home language. For LESLLA instructors, there is less 'common ground' with her students that with other language teachers. It is possible that this disconnect of experience blurs and perhaps hinders how literacy and language development is implemented for learners.

Building L2 literacy is a formidable task. Given the dearth of available materials and research for LESLLA students specifically, LESLLA educators often reach to resources developed for young new readers. As argued above, a person, regardless of age, must still develop the same five components of reading (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension), progress through common stages of readers, develop oral skills, and be sufficiently motivated to read in order for reading to grasp hold. LESLLA educators are not wrong to look to the years of experience and expertise in the field of early literacy development in children. But how we teach phonics to a five year old may look different than how we might teach phonics to his 55 year old grandmother. Furthermore, the motivation present in a nine year old as she devours the Harry Potter series will differ from and call for different instruction for a 40 year old father looking for work to support his children. While the components of reading and the stages of becoming a reader may hold their consistency across age groups, knowledge of adult learning provides a vital piece of the LESLLA teacher knowledge base.

## 1.7 Knowledge of Adults as Learners

In 1968, Malcolm Knowles altered the playing field for adult educators by offering "a new label and a new technology" of adult learning (1968: 351). Knowles introduced the concept of andragogy, defined as the art and science of helping adults learn. While this term is not widely used, Knowles was instrumental in causing adult learning theory to emerge as a distinct field of study. Many adult educators join the field after first working with children, and much of the work of adult learning theorists has centered on contrasting adult learners with younger learners. *Does age matter, and if so, how? How does the nature of learning change over the lifetime? Is teaching adults inherently a different task than teaching children? How can teachers best approach their work with fellow adults?* These questions have caused much debate and discussion in the field in the past thirty years. In this section, first the basic tenets of adult learning

theory are presented. Then I connect this scholarship to literacy instruction, as the work of LESLLA is the specific work of teaching adults who are new readers.

Knowles' early work in andragogy has persisted, as have the pillars underlying his theory. Drawn first from his 1980 text and then evolving through his work in the 1980s, Knowles contends that the adult learner is someone who 1) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning, 2) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning, 3) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles, 4)is problem-centered, interested in immediate application of knowledge, and 5) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (Knowles 1978). These assumptions of adult learning have not persisted without encountering criticism, particularly as to how they constitute a 'learning theory' and to what extent these pillars really differ from working with children (see Merriam 2001).

In the early 1990s, Knowles and his colleagues continued to tweak and re-package the basic assumptions of adult learning. The most current way of presenting them is duplicated below in Table 3, along with a brief explanation of each assumption (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson 2005).

TABLE 3 Assumptions of adult learning (Knowles et al. 2005: 64–68)

1. The need to know.
   *Adults need to know why they need to learn something before setting out to learn it.*
2. The learners' self concept.
   *Adults believe they are responsible for their own decisions and lives. They need to be seen by others and treated by others as capable of self direction.*
3. The role of the learners' experiences.
   *Adults come into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from that of youths. Teachers can expect a wider range of individual differences among adult learners than among younger learners.*
4. Readiness to learn.
   *Adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations.*
5. Orientation to learning.
   *Adults are life-centered, task-centered, and problem-centered in their orientation to learning. They are motivated to learn to the extent that they perceive that learning will help them perform tasks or deal with real problems. They learn best in the context of application to real-life situations.*
6. Motivation
   *Adults are responsive to some external motivators (better jobs, promotions, higher salaries, for example), but the most potent motivators are internal pressures (the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life, etc.)*

The assumptions of adult learning above describe a context that prioritizes contextualized, responsive, respectful learning environments where instruction is transparent, intentional, and relentlessly relevant to learners. These tenets refer to all adult learners, and they have informed the work of teaching adults in settings as varied as corporate training, community education, and preparing professionals across any number of fields.

In the next section, focus is narrowed to adult literacy instruction, a fairly young and underresearched area. Highly informed by research and professional wisdom in teaching young people to read, adult literacy scholars draw heavily from colleagues in K-12 contexts.

### 1.7.1 Connections between Adult and K-12 Literacy Instruction

While there is much more research and attention paid to children learning to read, two recent reviews of research have focused squarely on adult literacy. The first is from the National Institute for Literacy: *Adult Education Literacy Instruction, A Review of the Research* (Kruidenier, MacArthur, & Wrigley 2010). The second is from the National Research Council: *Improving Adult Literacy Instruction, Options for Practice and Research* (National Research Council 2012). Both groups of scholars found far more research with children than with adults improving their literacy, and in the end both groups drew from this body of research when compiling its recommendations. The National Research Council writes:

> In the absence of research with adults whose literacy is not at high levels, the committee concluded that it is reasonable to apply finds from the large body of research on learning and literacy with other populations (mainly younger students and relatively well-educated adults) with some adaptations to account for the developmental level and unique challenges of adult learners. (National Research Council 2012: 2.)

Almost in chorus, the National Institute for Literacy writes:

> Those practices based on a strong, carefully synthesized K-12 research base may provide the best source of promising ideas for instruction with adults. The skills necessary for successful reading are the same or, at least, very close to being the same in adults and children…A priority for research with AE learners should be to evaluate the use of promising approaches developed at the K-12 level with adults. (Kruidenier et al. 2010: 14.)

These statements support the idea that as adult educators, we indeed we have much to learn from the work of literacy instruction with young learners, and adaptations are absolutely necessary. Early literacy instruction with young learners has promise for older learners, but LESLLA instructors need to first identify and adapt these practices before taking them into their classrooms.

This act of learning about and carefully and thoughtfully adapting practicing from one teaching context to another is not an endeavor to be undertaken lightly. It requires what has been termed "adaptive expertise," an objective for teaching practitioners that has gained recognition of late and is one

of the central pieces of teacher education efforts nationwide ("Teacher Education Redesign Initiative, University of Minnesota" n.d.). *Adaptive experts*, as opposed to *routine experts*, are teachers who have high levels of both efficiency and innovation and are flexible and responsive to their learners (Hatano & Inagaki 1986). They are lifelong learners who continually expand the breadth and depth of their expertise (Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2007). Because of their high level of innovativeness, adaptive experts can "move beyond existing routines and…rethink key ideas, practices, and even values in order to change what they are doing" (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford, Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald, & Zeichner 2005).

For LESLLA teachers, adaptive expertise is critical; LESLLA learners are unlike any other group of adult ESL students, and previous teaching experience and preparation are insufficient. LESLLA teachers need to not only understand a great deal about language, literacy, pedagogy, and adult learning, but they must also be able to act on this knowledge in a complex learning environment. This expertise can develop only when LESLLA teachers know the 'whether and why' of what they are teaching and have moved beyond 'knowing that' and 'knowing how.' In 1981, Elbaz conducted an in-depth one-teacher case study of a high school English teacher (1981). While Elbaz does not use the term "adaptive expertise" it seems the initial seeds surrounding today's term are planted here. Elbaz uses the term "practical knowledge" (ibid.) almost synonymously with how Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2007) would talk about "adaptive expertise" 20–25 years later. In her case study, practical knowledge is "the autonomous decision-making function of the teacher in adopting, adapting, and developing materials appropriate to his or her situation" and "complex type of action and decision making" stressing that teachers are "decision makers" and problem solvers (Elbaz 1981: 43). While Elbaz's study was quite limited and only described her one participant's adaptive expertise and decision making processes, her case no doubt echoes that of many teachers' experiences.

LESLLA teachers who are adaptive experts address the dearth of published materials available specifically for this level as well. While there is certainly more available now than 10 years ago (see CAELA: ESL Resources n.d.), LESLLA teachers still have to hunt for good, appropriate books and classroom aids. But an adaptive expert is able to work with what's available and respond with efficiency, flexibility, and know-how to make materials meant for other contexts work for her students. LESLLA teachers use materials originally meant for children, for English-speaking new readers, and for literate adult ESL students and may find that they can be adapted creatively and used effectively in LESLLA classrooms. Instead of despairing at the lack of available materials for our LESLLA learners, adaptive experts can respond with innovation.

## 1.8 Conclusion: Building the LESLLA Teacher Knowledge Base

LESLLA learners are adult second language students who are learning to read for the first time in a new language, a process that follows the same general path for a child learner but with some important differences for an adult. As Durgunoğlu & Oney (2002: 247) point out, "Adults have more experience and background knowledge about the world and have proficiencies that enable them to function in a society even though their literacy skills may be limited. However, experience and background knowledge may not be very useful in the initial stages of literacy acquisition". New readers begin with emergent skills and move through beginning and transitional stages of literacy before becoming able readers and writers. Teachers assist in the process by providing a motivating learning setting for instruction in alphabetics, vocabulary and academic language, fluency, and comprehension. In the case of L2 learners, effective instruction includes a great deal of support of oral language and general English development while building background knowledge that makes texts comprehensible. LESLLA learners need all of these components as well, and they bring to the endeavor vast life experience, as well as a need for literacy to be relevant to their lives outside of the classroom. Researchers continue to uncover how LESLLA learners are similar and different from other new readers, as such students are acquiring literacy in a particularly complex cultural, social, linguistic, and educational context. But with time and dedicated teachers, literacy in English can ease learners' resettlement, and LESLLA learners can participate more fully in their communities.

LESLLA learners offer educators a rich constellation of qualities. They are new readers, and they are (im)migrants and refugees. They are adult language learners, learning to read for the first time in a language that many do not yet speak well. While they are learning to navigate a new community and discovering the alphabetic principle, they are also acquiring a new language. LESLLA educators must pull together knowledge from many areas to do this work well. The LESLLA teacher wears many hats; she is a teacher, a resettlement worker, an adult learning expert, and a language instructor. These four areas of expertise all interact with her critical role as reading specialist, as early reading instruction is at the core of LESLLA education. To balance these many roles gracefully is no small feat. To date many teacher preparation programs have ignored these learners, and few professional development opportunities are available (Vinogradov & Liden 2008; Vinogradov 2012). How does a LESLLA instructor learn what she needs to know to carry out her work effectively? How can teacher educators address these specific needs? While there are no easy answers, and the field of LESLLA continues to explore these topics to improve LESLLA teaching and learning worldwide.

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