

# Tips & Hints for Focus Groups with Adult ESL Students

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Focus groups with students make it possible to get a rich sense of what matters to language minority adults in a particular area. They help you see when and where students need to use English and help you understand their hopes and dreams. Focus groups can be conducted in single classrooms or across classes to provide a program-wide picture of student perceptions.

Explain that the purpose of the focus group meetings is to find out what students want to know and be able to do. Explain that their participation will help to create programs that are responsive to student needs.

If conducting a focus group across programs, ask teachers to invite three or four students from each class to participate, choosing students who tend to speak up or who have interesting lives. Each focus group should be no larger than 8 to 12 people.

## **Announcing Focus Group Meetings**

Create student friendly flyers that list the place and time of the focus groups. Ask teachers to encourage students to participate and provide them with enough background information so they can be enthusiastic about the process. Designate focus group facilitators and select translators if facilitators are not bilingual. If you find that only classes from more advanced levels are signing up, consider having a bilingual person visit the beginning ESL classes to encourage students to participate.

In groups where students don't share a common language, you may need to consider alternatives. These may include inviting smaller groups of students (3-4) to talk with a translator. Most programs have intake workers who are bilingual or are able to invite staff from a local community-based organization such as a mutual assistance or a resettlement agency.

## **Paying Students to Participate?**

If you are asking students to participate in focus groups on their own time outside of class, consider paying them (\$ 10 is common as a courtesy for their time). Have

receipts ready for students to sign, as well as cash to give to students once the discussion is over.

## **CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS WITH STUDENTS**

Bring refreshments (coffee, sodas, fruit, cookies, and chips work well) but realize that students may not want to eat anything until the discussion is over. Invite students to take. Bring name tags or ask students to write their names on large pieces of folded construction paper so that the facilitator can refer to participants by name. Offer to write their names for them in case you have non-literate students who are embarrassed about their handwriting.

Ideally, there should be two people doing the focus group, one person who facilitates, another who takes notes. If there is only one person, a tape recorder or video camera can be used. Be sure to ask student permission to tape. Let them know that the tape is for your use only and will not be shown to anyone else, unless each person gives permission.

### **Capturing Participant Information**

Have focus group sheets ready for the facilitators to fill out. These should include the program's name, time and place of the focus groups, and the number of students who participated. If you conduct focus groups on a program-wide level, the sheet should also list how many students participated from which class to help you get a sense of the degree of participation from different proficiency levels. Have sheets ready that allow the note taker to capture answers to the questions that are being asked.

### **Note Taking**

If you are the note taker, make a chart that shows students names and where they are sitting around the table and write down what individual students have to say. Note gender and guess at students' ages if they don't volunteer that information. You want a sound impression of who the students are who are answering the questions. Explain that you would like to audio tape or video tape the session and ask if anyone does not want the tape on. If students object, do not use the tape recorder.

### **Welcoming the Students**

Greet the students and introduce both the facilitator, and an interpreter if using. (Use an interpreter if you don't speak the language of the students). Be sure to direct your questions directly to the students and NOT to the interpreter. Bring name tags or ask students to write their names on large pieces of folded construction paper so that the facilitator can refer to participants by name.

### **Introductions**

Ask students to introduce themselves briefly, saying their names (first names are ok), where they are from, and how long they've been in the United States. Let students

know that they can share as much as they want about themselves, including their age, how many children they have or where they work.

### **Explaining the Purpose of the Focus Group**

Using a language that all students understand, explain again that the purpose of the meeting is to hear what students have to say. You want to gather first hand information on what students want to know and be able to do. This information will be used to compare information from different groups around the state and improve programs. Ask if students have any questions. Stress that this is not an evaluation of the program, of their classes or of their teachers. This is merely a way to find out what students need and want out of the program.

### **Assuring Confidentiality**

Stress that the report to the program will not include the names of individual students.. The report will merely say “the group on Tuesday said” or “the students from the xyz program said...” Explain no personal information about a student will be shared.

### **Explaining the Rules of the Game**

Make it clear that that you will be asking questions and want to hear from everyone. Students don't have to raise their hand to speak and can just speak up if they have an idea. This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers but every opinion counts. Ask students to please speak one person at a time, so we can all hear what is being said.

Students can answer either in English or in the native language. Native language will need to be translated if facilitators or students don't share the same language. As you take notes on answers, be sure to capture specific quotes in the language the students use.

### **Asking questions**

You should have your questions ready ahead of time. The questions that have worked will in other projects where we have conducting focus groups with ESL students.

1. How well would you say you speak English or read and write in English (not at all; just a little; I do ok; I'm pretty good) -
2. Where do you use English or English literacy right now? Look for open-ended answers but then probe for situations such as –
  - in school with students from other countries
  - going to the doctors or a clinic
  - at home watching TV or at the movies when there's a film in English

- to get things done at bank, government office and social service agencies (at the post office; get a license; meet with social worker)
  - in the community (talking with neighbors, asking directions etc; conversations with other people on the bus or at parties; talking with shop clerks; dealing with landlords or managers)
  - at work (doing my job; talking with other workers during break)
  - finding your way around the larger community using buses and other forms of transportation
  - getting information over the phone or understanding what people say
3. Are there situations where you would really like to speak English but you can't? What do you want to say or talk about? *Probe for contexts and situations similar to the ones above.*
  4. What languages do you use in your family? Do your children and grandchildren use (the home language) or do they prefer English? Is that a problem for you?
  5. Have you ever been in a situation where you had problems because you did not speak English or understand English? *Probe for interactions with the police (traffic tickets), with landlords, at a school, or with sales people. If the conversation veers into the problems, guide it gently back to language issues.*
  6. When do you read or write in English? Is that a problem for you? Do you ever try to read newspapers in English or magazines (probe, what kind)? How about making sense of your bills and the other things in your mailbox (probe what kind)? Do you get notes from your children's teacher in English? Do you have to fill out forms in English or write notes for other people?
  7. Imagine that you wake up tomorrow morning and by some miracle, you speak perfect English. What would you say? What would you do? How would your life change if you could speak English no problem?

## Evaluating Classes

Explain to students that you would like to hear from them about their experience taking classes. Encourage them to be honest and reassure them that their answers will be kept confidential. Let them know that you are asking the questions so that other people in Texas can create classes that help students like them learn English and use English in their daily lives.

**NOTE:** By now you probably know the names of the students, so you can call on them and encourage them to share information. If students give only short answers, encourage them to expand by saying “tell me more” and giving them a chance to think before you go on.

- Are all of you in an ESL class right now? How long have you been taking classes?
- Congratulations! All of you are spending time trying to learn English and improving your skills. Why are you taking classes? What are you hoping to learn?
- Are you able to attend the class regularly? (Probe: If not, why not?)
- What would help you come to class more often (Probe for circumstances, such as lack of child care, but also program or instruction related issues).
- What do you like about the classes? Is there something that may-be could be better?
- In your class what does the teacher do that helps you a lot? What happens in the class that helps you **not** so much?
- Is the English you learn in class helping you to **use English** in different places in the community and talk to people in English (refer back to earlier questions about where they need English. Probe for examples if it does help them – probe for what’s missing or what is keeping them from using English)
- Is there something (else) that the teacher does NOT do that you think would help you? (Rephrase until students get the point)
- Tell us 3 things that you can do now with English that you couldn’t do before (something that you learned in class).
- We want your opinion: If the program here could only teach 3 things to all students, but teach them very well, what 3 things should they teach?
- At school or at home do you use computers and other technology? What should this program do to help you learn English with technology? What should they do more of or less of?
- What other ideas do you have to make this a better program that works for all the people in the community?

## Bringing the Focus Group to a Close

After the final question, thank students and ask if anyone wants to make a final comment regarding “what students need to know and be able to do.” Thank students again for their participation. Let them know that you will share their answers with other teachers from your program and with other teachers in the area.



## **REPORTING AND ANALYSIS**

As soon as possible after the focus group, the note taker should listen to the tape and write up the notes from the group. Answers should then be tallied to show how many times students mentioned particular contexts such as shopping, banking, clinics etc. Comments that students made in each area, should be presented verbatim so that student voices can be heard.

### **Reporting Out**

Prepare a simple report on the findings of your focus group, using the attached report as an example. Yours will be much shorter, of course. Be sure to include the exact wording of some of the things that students had to say.



# **EL/Civics Needs Assessment: Report on Focus Groups with Learners**

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## **Needs Assessment Process**

This document is an analyses of four focus groups conducted with elderly Assyrian, Bosnian, Chinese, and Vietnamese immigrants in June 2000 to identify English language usage, needs, and interests.

## **Description of Participants**

The majority of the participants were current and former ESL and citizenship students although a few were not involved in class at all. The Chinese, Assyrian, and Bosnian focus groups each had ten participants; the Vietnamese focus group had eleven. All of the Bosnian focus groups participants were students in the program's ESL/civics class. The Assyrian and Vietnamese groups each had only one female while the Bosnian group had only one male. Only the Chinese group was an equal mix of male and females. (Detailed background information about the participants in each group is included in Attachment B).

## **Language Usage During Focus Groups**

Participants were given the choice of responding in English or their native language. A number of participants responded largely in English to the personal information questions. Most participants answered other questions in their native language.

The focus group began with questions about background information and then proceeded to questions regarding current English usage and perceptions of English usage with a high level of fluency.

**Are you using English right now anywhere? Do you ever listen to English or look at things written in English, signs, mail, magazines newspapers, officials at an agency?**

**If all of a sudden you knew English well, how would your life change?**

The most frequently mentioned topic in all four groups was shopping. Watching television, getting directions and using public transportation, making friends and talking to neighbors, and using the telephone were also stated many times. The Vietnamese in particular talked a lot about making friends while the Bosnians and Assyrians focused more on talking with neighbors and people they met on their walks. The Chinese talked a lot about wanting to answer the telephone and go to the post office. Several elaborated on their inability to communicate with their grandchildren.

Following is a description of how one participant described her current English usage.

“I speak a little English in the store and when I go to the doctor and the pharmacy. I say, ‘hi’, ‘bye’ and ‘how much?’. At the pharmacy I say, ‘I need my medicine’. On the telephone I answer ‘I speak no English, I from Bosnia’. Very little understand. Walking I say, ‘Hi, how are you?’ with my neighbors. I watch everyday the soap opera ‘Married with Children’. I like action moves, Channel 13, comedy, ‘Wheel of Fortune’, ‘Who Wants to Be a Millionaire’, and the weather channel.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

The categories participants identified are listed below along with the number of times they were mentioned in the four focus groups when asked about current and desired English usage. Following this is a detailed description of the nature of the comments made in each category with some sample quotes.

Shopping:	25
Watching TV	12
Directions/Using Transportation	11
Friends/Neighbors	10
Telephone	10
Doctor/hospital	7
Read mail/paperwork	7
Post Office	5
Speak to grandchildren	4
Read the newspaper	3
Citizenship/voting	3
Access help/information/benefits	3
Work	3
Bank	1

### **Shopping**

Shopping was the most frequently mentioned area in which participants use English or want to learn English regardless of whether they live in a community with many ethnic stores. Several participants stated their desire to conduct more complex interactions in the stores.

“I buy cigarettes in English, ‘menthol’.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

“I don’t know English so I use pictures to help me with my shopping.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

“My expectations are not high. [If I knew English well], I would like to go to the store and buy something and then return it on my own.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

### **Watching TV**

A large number of the participants watch television, although some said they had difficulty understanding. The kinds of programming most frequently mentioned were quiz shows, action and cowboy movies, soap operas, animal shows, the weather channel, and soccer. Some participants also said they watch comedy, romantic movies, and cooking shows.

“I liked to watch soap operas, soccer, handsome men, President Clinton, romantic movies, and comedy. I don’t like to watch anything violent. I had enough violence in Bosnia.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

“I like to watch TV, but I don’t know English. It’s hard to understand.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

“I would understand every word from TV and other people. I would feel much better.”

*Assyrian focus group participant*

### **Directions/Using Public Transportation**

Participants shared many stories of trying to take transportation or ask for directions. Several told stories about getting lost.

“I get lost and don’t know how to ask people for help. On the bus, I say something and people don’t understand. I take the wrong bus to the wrong place.”

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

“I would like to know English so I can take the train to different places in Chicago.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

### **Friends/Neighbors**

Participants expressed their desire to make more friends and to develop current relationships.

“We will have more opportunities to make friends.”

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

“It will be easier to communicate with friends. I have an American friend in my building but I have problems understanding him.”

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

I will get an American wife.

*Bosnian focus group participant*

### **Telephone**

Many participants expressed their frustration at not being able to understand people talking on the telephone.

“When the telephone rings I don’t pick it up. When I hear English, I don’t know how to respond. I always ask my grandchildren to pick it up. They tell me I am stupid. My heart beats fast when I hear a voice I can’t understand. I know it’s not polite to others.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

“I feel embarrassed that I need to call someone to understand what they are saying on the telephone.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

### **Doctor/Hospital**

Participants spoke about the challenge of communicating with English speaking health personnel, their embarrassment at needing a translator, and the difficulties of trying to find a good doctor who spoke their language.

“Last week I went to the doctor, and I had a very big problem. I needed a translator. I felt like I inconvenienced people. If I knew English, I could tell the doctor everything.”

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

“I would like to use English at the doctor to explain my problems.

*Bosnian focus group participant*

### **Read mail/paperwork**

Many participants rely on agency staff to read their mail.

“I don’t know what to do with my mail—what to keep or what to throw away.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

### **Post Office**

Only Vietnamese and Chinese focus group participants stated that the post office is an important place they need to use English.

“You need English to buy stamps at the post office.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

### **Speak to Grandchildren**

Several Chinese focus group participants told heartbreaking stories about their inability to speak with their grandchildren.

“I would like to talk to my grandchildren. I can’t communicate with them. They don’t study enough. I want to tell them about the Chinese tradition of study, but I can’t.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

### **Read the Newspaper**

A few participants said they could better understand what was going on in the world by reading English newspapers.

“I could read a newspaper when I felt like it.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

### **Citizenship/Voting**

According to several focus group participants, English would enable them to pass the citizenship test, to vote, and to participate in democracy.

“I would become a U.S. citizen. I would have the right to vote.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

“I wouldn’t fail the citizenship test.”

*Assyrian focus group participant*

“I will enjoy the U.S. system: freedom and the democratic process.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

### **Access Help/Information/Benefits**

Several participants said that they viewed English as a vehicle through which they could learn critical information and share it with others.

“We will have the ability to get more help and assistance and also to help others.”

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

“If I have a problem at Public Aid, I will use English and be independent of translators, and family.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

### **Work**

Several participants spoke about either finding a job or working in the profession they had practiced in their native country.

“Learning English is very important, because I’m looking for a job now. Companies will not hire me because I don’t know English. If I get a job and can support my family, I will be free.”

*Assyrian focus group participant*

“I would go back to work. I was a CPA in China.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

## **Bank**

One participant talked about cashing her SSI check.

“I go to the bank to get my SSI check cashed. I understand it when they ask me to sign the check, but I can’t speak.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

**When asked about their dream if they could speak English well, twelve participants spoke about themes related to independence and happiness.**

“I won’t need to ask for help. I can be independent.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

“If you know English you are like a bird that flies. You can do anything you want. You can understand others and they can understand you.”

*Assyrian focus group participant*

“I am unhappy and sometimes angry because I have to ask for help. In Bosnia I was independent and took care of myself. Now I need help. I feel very bad.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

“I would not be afraid. I would be totally free.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

“I would be very happy. When I’m walking, if people ask me something, I will be able to answer them.”

*Assyrian focus group participant*

“I will be independent from my children. I will not need a translator.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

The next question was intended to elicit what participants had learned in class.

**Many of you have been in ESL or citizenship classes. What have you learned? What do you know now that you did not know before, and what can you now say or understand in English that you could not do before?**

In three of the groups students were quite specific in what they gained from the classes. Most shared specifics like the “96 citizenship questions”, dictation questions, and personal information. Those with few classes described learning to say and write their name, address, and other basic information. In addition, many Chinese described learning to write the alphabet and distinguish between letters. In two of the groups, participants elaborated extensively on their frustrations with learning.

**Here are the responses of two participants when asked what they had learned that they didn't know before.**

“Before I couldn't recognize the difference between the letters. Now I see the difference, but I can't pronounce them. I write in Chinese a similar sound and that's how I learn. Now when I watch TV, I recognize words like Coca Cola and 7Up.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

“Who the government is, the flag, the Constitution is the supreme law of the land, how many branches, the Supreme court, three colors of the flag, the fifty states, the fifty stars.”

*Assyrian focus group participant*

The last three questions were designed to elicit recommendations for effective ESL and citizenship program design and instruction.

**When you take the citizenship test you have to know a lot of things. What does your teacher do in the class to help you learn and remember these things. What does the teacher do that helps the most?**

**What is good about having a teacher who speaks your language? If you had a teacher who speaks only English, would that help you or not?**

**If your program had a lot of money, what would make a difference in helping you learn better? For example, computers, textbooks, video, pictures, field trips, tutors, English conversation?**

Focus group participants shared what they liked about their current classes and also made a wide range of recommendations to improve instruction. The Vietnamese group in particular had lots of specific recommendations. The Chinese group was most enthusiastic about teaching through real life activities and field trips. Assyrian focus group participants were particularly interested in videos and other instructional materials. The Bosnians had few specific recommendations, they largely focused on how difficult it was to learn English. The other groups also spoke about challenges but also had numerous recommendations. Challenges and difficulties are elaborated on following the recommendations.

### Participant Recommendations to Improve Instruction

* use video	
**Teach through real life activities	9
***Use audiotapes	8
Incorporate conversation practice	5
Get more instructional materials	4
Include all students	3
Repetition	3
Make slow and fast paced audiotapes	3
Use/draw pictures	3
Computers	3
Speak slowly	2
Students share knowledge/experience	2
Teach phonetics	2
Survival vocabulary	2
Speak clearly	2
Help students relax	2
Side by Side Books 1-5	1
Speak loud	1
Teach ESL	1
Translate meaning of vocabulary	1
Sequence material easy to difficult	1
Teach vocabulary	1
Group similar civics questions together	1
Use real life objects	1
Demonstration	1
Speak slowly then more rapidly	1
Build self-confidence	1
Use body gestures	1
Sing for relaxation	1

\*Students said they liked the idea of videos because they are visual and they would be good to practice with at home.

\*\*go to the store, take public transportation, visit Springfield, and Washington, DC)

\*\*\*Students wanted their own audiotape for home study.

The participants' responses reflected the research on instruction of the elderly. They focused largely on the importance of hands-on instruction incorporating real life experiences, using a lot of visual mediums, and making accommodations for age-related impairments. Students were particularly enthusiastic about having videos and audiotapes because they allow home study. While some programs have had success coaching family members to tutor elders, several participants said their family members were not available to help them or made fun of their attempts to learn. A Chinese participant said, "My children work long hours in the restaurant and don't have time to help me."

**These are some of the participants' recommendations to improve instruction.**

“The teacher needs to teach by example.” We need to ride a bus and do things. This will make it easier to remember. It’s very hard to remember in the classroom. You need to take students on outings and field trips.”

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

“I watch movies about the bible--Moses, Adam and Eve, Jesus. You can learn well from movies.

*Assyrian focus group participant*

“For each new word you need a picture or a real object.”

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

“You can’t teach something only one time. Demonstrate and show the students, “this is the president” Show them a picture of Mr. Clinton.

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

“We need informal English conversation. This is better than a regular class.”

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

“I think the teacher should pick on everyone and include them even if they don’t know.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

“The teacher should not only teach government and history, but also ESL.”

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

“There used to be a guy Touma who sang to us during class. This helped us to forget our problems and study.”

*Assyrian focus group participant*

“The student can become a teacher and talk about what he knows. This helps with self-confidence.

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

“If I could listen to a cassette on the way to work, it would help a lot.”

*Assyrian focus group participant*

Some of the students recommendations related to program design issues. These included having classes two or more times per week, having small group tutoring, and having special class for conversation practice.

## Program Design Recommendations

Class 2x plus per week	3
Small classes	3
Tutoring	3
Conversation practice class	2

## Learning Problems/Challenges

Participants also shared a range of problems with learning even though the question was not posed directly. The most frequently mentioned problems were related to health followed closely by memory issues. Some participants were very specific about their health problems including high blood pressure, diabetes, vision, and hearing problems. The next category is a loosely grouped range of problems that students said preoccupied them making it difficult to concentrate in class. Three Assyrians shared detailed stories about their geographically dispersed families who they wanted to see and/or help through a petition filed once they were citizens. Pronunciation was a particular concern of Asian participants who expressed difficulty both learning how to pronounce words and also being understood by Americans. Three participants said they had learning difficulties or were confused. Two stated they were challenged by lack of money and benefits. Age-related problems were also of concern. One participant asked the focus group leader for assistance in getting more money. Lastly, participants shared a range of concerns including lack of confidence, discomfort, emotional pain and feeling ashamed and shy. In addition to specific recommendations, these questions also elicited many issues that the participants struggle with in learning English.

The following chart lists the issues and the number of times they were mentioned.

<b>Health Problems</b>	<b>10</b>
Health Problems (general)	3
Hearing Difficulties	2
Vision Difficulties	2
Diabetes	2
High blood pressure	1
<b>Memory Difficulties</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Preoccupations</b>	<b>7</b>
Miss family members	3
Worried	2
Feel silly and crazy	1
Depressed	1
<b>Pronunciation</b>	<b>5</b>

<b>Learning Difficulties</b>	<b>4</b>
Confused	3
Learning Difficulties	1
<b>Age</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Not enough money/benefits</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Ashamed and shy</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Lack confidence</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Uncomfortable</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pain</b>	<b>1</b>

**These are quotes from some of the participants regarding their problems in trying to learn English and citizenship.**

“I try to speak but my pronunciation is bad and it’s hard for others to understand me.”

*Vietnamese focus group participant*

“My memory is not good. It takes a long time for me to remember. I sometimes say something 50 or 60 times but still don’t remember.”

*Assyrian focus group participant*

“I think about my children all the time. They are in Australia, Canada, Detroit, and Chicago. My thoughts are not here. I have grandchildren I’ve never seen. I’m worried I will die and never see them.”

*Assyrian focus group participant*

“Sometimes I feel like I can’t understand English. I feel silly and crazy.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

“It’s very hard to leave your country and come to another country at this and. It’s very hard to learn.”

*Bosnian focus group participant*

“I really want to learn English, but because of my age I have poor vision and when I read I become blind.”

*Chinese focus group participant*

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Many elderly want to learn English and their lives would benefit in many areas if they were able to gain proficiency. While many students have achieved success in preparing for citizenship, it is clear that the quality of instruction would improve if these recommendations were systematically implemented:

- Make accommodations for the particular physical and emotional challenges faced by elderly learners as well as the specific issues affecting a particular population. For example, many Assyrians are preoccupied with geographically dispersed families and many Asians need special assistance with pronunciation. Get outside assistance as required.
- Provide time and activities to help students get their attention off of personal problems. This may include singing, talking about problems, jokes, etc. Groups may have different preferences. For example, during the Bosnian focus group students would sometimes start talking about a personal tragedy and cry for a little while about it and then go on to the task at hand.

- Ask students about their particular language usage needs. While one might assume that in an ethnic enclave, English is not needed, there are specific niches in which learners' perceive a need.
- Incorporate ESL content relevant to learner's lives into the classroom, not just what is expected on the test.
- Instruction for elders should use different learning modalities: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile. Elders expressed a preference for kinesthetic and visual learning.
- Elderly students want both formal and informal opportunities to use language.
- Elderly students want and need instructional materials, especially those that can be used easily at home such as videos and audiotapes.
- Elders from three of the four focus groups expressed concern that their classmates be given needed assistance to learn English. Several said that they appreciate it when special attention is given to slower learners.
- Elderly students express a preference for a bilingual instructor at the beginning levels.
- Incorporate real life type experiences into instruction through real objects and actual visits to locations outside of the classroom.
- Learn about students' lives and experiences and incorporate them into the classroom.
- Elderly students need assessment measures that demonstrate their progress both for the students and teachers benefit. to meet their needs.

## ATTACHMENT

### Chinese American Service League Focus Group Participants

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Native Country</b>	<b>ESL/Citizenship</b>	<b>Main Activity</b>	<b>Formal Education</b>	<b>Time in U.S.</b>
Male	65	China	1 year citizenship	Senior companion	16 years	3 years
Female	62	China	2 years citizenship	Care for grandchildren	6 years	6 years
Female	61	China	1 mo. citizenship	Care for grandchildren	6 years	6 years
Female	71	China	2 years citizenship	Housekeeping	none	10 years
Female	65	China	2.5 years English 1 year citizenship	Homemaker	6 years	9 years
Male	73	China	2 years citizenship	Sell groceries	None	7 years
Male	85	Hong Kong	None	Chinese teacher	13 years	4 years
Male	70	Hong Kong	New citizenship	Worked at restaurant. Just stopped	5 years	5 years
Male	70	China	2 years citizenship	Nothing	4 years	9 years
Female	66	China	none	Care for grandchildren	none	8 years

### Vietnamese Association of Illinois Focus Group Participants

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Native Country</b>	<b>ESL/Citizenship</b>	<b>Main Activity</b>	<b>Formal Education</b>	<b>Time in U.S.</b>
Male	78	Vietnam	Studied English in Vietnam. Also studied at U.S. college. Worked in bank.	Volunteer at VAI and writer.	Has law degree from Vietnam. Studied about 18 years.	26 years
Male	64	Vietnam	ESL Level 2 at Truman College Was in citizenship class but naturalized.	VAI volunteer.	12 years	7 years
Male	68	Vietnam	ESL for 4 years citizenship for 1 year	VAI volunteer	4 years	15 years
Male	70	Vietnam	ESL 8 months at Truman College	VAI volunteer and takes care of grandchildren, goes to school	12 years has high school degree	9 months
Male	63	Vietnam	6 months Truman College ESL student	ESL student	5 years	6 months
Male	76	Vietnam	In Vietnam 1 year, Truman College ESL, citizenship. Now a citizen.	VAI Senior companion	12 years	7 years
Male	73	Vietnam	ESL and citizenship at VAI for 6 months	VAI volunteer	19 years an M.D.	9 years
Male	83	Vietnam	ESL 1 year citizenship class	VAI volunteer	10 years	13 years
Female	62	Vietnam	Citizenship 3 years	VAI volunteer	3 years	11 years
Male	73	Vietnam	4 years ESL and citizenship	VAI volunteer	9 years	15 years
Male	67	Vietnam	3 months ESL	ESL student	9 years	11 months

### Assyrian National Council Focus Group Participants

Gender	Age	Native Country	ESL/Citizenship	Main Activity	Formal Education	Time in U.S.
Male	63	Iraq	Used to come to class. Knows the questions. Can't walk. no driver so no longer studies	Nothing	11 years	15 years
Male	71	Iraq	Worked with foreigners in Iraq	Goes to ANC 2 days a week for adult program	4 years	3 years 6 months
Male	72	Iraq	Studied ESL 2 years in Iraq as a boy. Worked with foreign country	ANC volunteer. Fills out INS forms. Cares for granddaughter	6 years	8 years 4 months
Male	75	Iraq	Was a soldier in the British army 12 years. Failed test two times. When asked if know English, said "no". Just reads and write a little but forgets a lot.	Nothing	2 years	8 years 3 months
Male	65	Iraq	Worked with foreign company but just reads and writes a little English. In citizenship class 2-3 weeks.	Watches TV, walks in streets, sleeps	2 years	6 years
Male	53	Syria	Has studied ESL and citizenship for 8 months 3 days cit./2 days ESL.	Nothing. Watches TV. Worked 2 ½ years	8-9 years	6 years Arabic school
Male	70	Iraq	None. Worked at oil company 32 years. Reads and writes English	Nothing. Watches TV	none	8 years
Male	68	Iraq	4 months in citizenship class	Walks outside/exercise for high blood pressure, Reads a lot in English/Arabic	4 years	1.5 years
Male	61	Syria	3 months in ANC English class.	Works second shift in Elgin production work	5 years	5 years
Female	75	Born Iraq from Lebanon	2 years in ANC ESL/citizenship class can read and write but doesn't understand English	Cooking, cleaning, shopping	French about five years	11 years

### World Relief Focus Group Participants

Gender	Age	Native Country	ESL/Citizenship	Main Activity	Formal Education	Time in U.S.
Female	61	Bosnia	Truman College for 6 mo. WR for 3 months	Cook, wash dishes and clothes, clean, talk to neighbors	12 years Bosnian and Russian	5 years 3 months
Female	71	Bosnia	One year at WR	Cook, clean, walk around, knit	6 years	6.5 years
Female	67	Bosnia	Ten months at WR	Nothing sit sometimes walk	none	1 year
Female	74	Bosnia	1.5 years at WR	Cook, clean house	none	1.5 years
Female	61	Bosnia	2 years WR	Knit, cook eat, walk, drink coffee, shop, a lot of things	none	3 years
Female	70	Bosnia	1.5 years almost 2 years WR	Same thing. Cook, clean, go to see grandchildren, walk around.	4 years	2 years
Female	65	Bosnia	Almost 2 years WR	Cook, clean house, walk around neighborhood	none	2 years
Female	51	Bosnia	8 mo. At WR	Cook, clean, walk, ride bicycle	none	1 year 2 months
Female	68	Bosnia	2 years, 2 mo. WR	A lot of things: rest, walk around, cook special desert, visit two grandchildren	4 years	6 years
Male	68	Bosnia	9 months at WR	I was a baker, Nothing. I walk to the park. After that I go home, eat lunch, and rest.	7 years	1 year

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