

# 2

## WHAT TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT TO PLAN INSTRUCTION FOR ADULT LEARNERS

### Questions for Discussion and Application

- 2.1.** If you were to write a language learning autobiography, what would be some of the key experiences you would want to explore? Have your students written of their own language learning experiences? What did they share about? What do those experiences suggest to you about learning new languages in adulthood?
- 2.2.** Think of an adult English learner you know well. How would you describe this learner with the characteristics that are detailed on pp. 12-14 (cultural background, schooling, responsibilities, social capital, goals, self-direction, “funds of knowledge”, linguistic capital, language use)? Explore the opportunities and challenges of this learner for developing advanced proficiency in English. How could a teacher draw on the learner’s strengths for instruction?
- 2.3.** Chapter 2 discusses how adults learn best (pp. 14-15). How can classroom instruction support these needs of adult learners? What can you do in your classroom to serve these needs?
- 2.4.** Can you think of examples where you observed adults solve cross-cultural communication challenges in creative, resourceful ways? How did they use their different languages? How did they adjust their communication style to relate to their conversation partner(s)?
- 2.5.** How can you plan instruction to assure that all of the necessary conditions for second language acquisition are consistently met?
- 2.6.** How do you match your teacher language to the English language functioning of your students?
- 2.7.** How do you identify texts that are manageable for your adult English learners for language instruction and for independent reading?

- 2.8.** Compare several English learners you know. How are these learners the same or different in terms of what research shows to be beneficial for second language learning?
- 2.9.** Which of the beneficial conditions of second language learning could you incorporate into the instructional environment and lessons you are creating?
- 2.10.** What are your experiences with the challenges described on pp. 18-19? How did they impact learners and learning outcomes? What did you do to mitigate them? Which of these challenges would you like to learn more about?
- 2.11.** In what way should literacy instruction for adult English learners differ from teaching reading and writing to children and youth whose primary language is English?
- 2.12.** Which standards document is applicable to the program where you teach? Have you read and used this standards document? How does this document describe language use at different levels of English language proficiency? How does your program use the standards document to place students into different classes? What other uses does your program have for the standards document?
- 2.13.** Does your program make available to you data that can show how individual students made progress with English language functioning over time? If so, what patterns have you noticed about the way individual learners progressed over the time that they participated in the language program? What does this tell you about the functioning level descriptors, the growth of different language skills, and the time it takes for adult learner to develop functional proficiency in English?