

Demographics, Needs, and Programming for ESL Literacy Learners

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Table of Contents

<i>Section I: The Literacy Situation Among Immigrants in Calgary</i> _____	5
Introduction _____	6
The International Adult Literacy Survey _____	6
Literacy Figures for Calgary and Alberta _____	7
Table 1.1: Immigrants Arriving in Alberta* _____	8
Table 1.2 Refugees and Family Class Immigrants that Reported Calgary as Their Intended Settlement Location, 1994-1998 _____	8
Literacy Programs Currently available in Calgary _____	10
Number of Programs Available _____	10
Types of Programs _____	10
Instructional Delivery _____	10
Funding _____	10
Student Numbers _____	11
Comments Regarding Programs and Students _____	11
Table 1.3 ESL Literacy Programs in Calgary: 1999-2000 _____	12
Regular LINC or General ESL Programs that are Currently Accommodating Literacy Learners _____	13
Comments _____	13
Table 1.4 Regular ESL/LINC Programs Accommodating Literacy Students in Calgary: 1999-2000 _____	14
Literacy Learner Profiles _____	15
Female _____	15
Male _____	15
Other comments _____	15
Table 1.5 Characteristics of the Majority of Literacy Learners in Programs in Calgary _____	16
Conclusion _____	17
Are current literacy programs meeting the demand? _____	17
Who are the programs not reaching? _____	17
Why are some immigrants with literacy needs not accessing literacy programs? _____	17
What types of literacy programs are needed? _____	18
Literacy Situation in Calgary: Bibliography _____	20
<i>SECTION II: Individualized Literacy Instruction Program: Observations and Interpretations of Results</i> _____	21
General Program Information and Highlights from Data Interpretation _____	22
Table 2.1 Breakdown of Literacy Learner Types in the ILIP _____	24
Table 2.2 Percentage of Learners in the Program with Perceived Learning Disabilities _____	25
Table 2.3 ILIP Learners: Country of Origin _____	25
Table 2.4 ILIP Learners: First Language _____	26
Table 2.5 ILIP Learners: Years of Education in Native Country _____	26
Table 2.6 ILIP Learners: Period of Residence in Canada _____	27
Observation and Interpretation of Results _____	28
Types of Literacy Learners: Demographic and Background Information _____	28
Non-literate/Non-Roman Alphabet Learners _____	28
Table 3.1 Non-literate/Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Country of Origin _____	28
Table 3.2 Non-literate/Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: First Language _____	29
Table 3.3 Non-literate/Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Years of Education in Native Country _____	29
Table 3.4 Non-literate/Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Period of Residence in Canada _____	29

Semi -literate Learners	30
Table 4.1 Semi-literate Learners: Country of Origin	30
Table 4.2 Semi-literate Learners: First Language	30
Table 4.3 Semi-literate Learners: Years of Education in Native Country	31
Table 4.4 Semi-literate Learners: Period of Residence in Canada	31
Functionally non-literate learners	32
Table 5.1 Functionally non-literate learners: Country of Origin	32
Table 5.2 Functionally Non-literate Learners: First Language	33
Table 5.3 Functionally Non-literate Learners: Years of Education in Native Country	33
Table 5.4 Functionally Non-literate Learners: Period of Residence in Canada	33
Non-Roman Alphabet Learners	34
Table 6.1 Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Country of Origin	34
Table 6.2 Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: First Language	34
Table 6.3 Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Years of Education in Native Country	35
Table 6.4 Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Period of Residence in Canada	35
Demographics and Background Information: Conclusion	35
Progress Comparison: Classroom Literacy Instruction versus Individual Instruction	37
Table 7.1 Pre-test and Post-test Comparisons: Classroom versus Individualized Instruction	38
Table 7.2 Benchmarks Level Increases: Classroom versus Individualized Instruction	39
Observations and Conclusions	39
Individualized Literacy Instruction Program Results: Key Observations and Recommendations	41
Demographics	41
Individualized Literacy Instruction or Classroom Instruction	41
<i>SECTION III: Literacy Types and Instruction: A Study</i>	42
Introduction	43
Types of Literacy Learners	43
Illiterate Learners	43
Non-literate learners	43
Pre-literate learners	43
Semi-literate learners	43
Functionally non-literate learners	43
Non-Roman alphabet learners	43
Literacy Instruction: Approaches and Strategies	44
Competency-Based Instruction	44
Whole Language Instruction	44
Language Experience Approach	45
Participatory Instruction (Freirian)	45
ESL literacy learning: Stages of learning	46
Relation of Type of Literacy Learner to Instructional Approach	48
Pre-literate and Non-literate learners	48
Semi-literate and Functionally non-literate learners	49
Non-Roman alphabet learners	49
A combination of instructional approaches	50
Meaningful material and learner involvement	50
Relation of Literacy Learner Type to Progress in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program	51
Table 8.1 Literacy Progress by Type	52
Observations and Conclusions	53

Relation of Type of Literacy Learner to Potential Literacy Proficiency	54
Conclusions: Effective ESL Literacy Instruction	55
Recommendations	56
Conclusions: Rate of progress and Potential Proficiency	56
Recommendations	57
Bibliography	58
<i>SECTION IV: Individualized Literacy Instruction Program: Conclusions and Key Recommendations</i>	60
Literacy Programs in Calgary	61
Results of the Pilot Project	61
Literacy Types: Instructional Methods, Rate of Progress and Potential Proficiency	62

SECTION I:

The Literacy Situation Among Immigrants in Calgary

Individualized Literacy Instruction Program and Research Project: Demographics, Needs and Programming for ESL Literacy Learners

The Literacy Situation Among Immigrants in Calgary

Introduction

Every year, thousands of immigrants arrive in Alberta to begin a new life here. According to the 1996 census, 42.2% of Alberta's immigrant population resides in Calgary. (Statistics Canada, *Census 96*) Due to economic and social conditions in their native country, some arrive with a low level of formal education and literacy skills, making it difficult for them to contribute and participate fully in the Albertan workforce and society.

This study examines national, provincial and local information regarding literacy among immigrants in an attempt to determine: literacy training needs in Calgary; the types of literacy programs available in Calgary; and a general profile of literacy needs immigrants in Calgary.

The International Adult Literacy Survey

In 1994 seven countries, one of which was Canada, conducted the International Adult Literacy Survey. The purpose of the survey was to determine the literacy levels of the residents of each country. The International Adult Literacy Survey defined literacy as: "the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community, to achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential."

(National Literacy Secretariat, *Background Information on the International Adult Literacy Survey*)

In Canada, adults (both immigrants and non-immigrants) were assessed in three categories of literacy: prose, document and quantitative. The participants were then classified into one of five literacy levels, depending on their assessment score. Level three is considered "the minimum desirable threshold in many countries but some occupations require higher skills." (National Literacy Secretariat, *Background Information on the International Adult Literacy Survey*)

In Alberta, 36% of the participants (including both immigrants and non-immigrants) scored into level one or two in the prose and document literacy categories. 35% scored into level one or two in the quantitative literacy category. Participants scoring into these two categories have very low literacy skills. They have difficulty understanding simple written instructions such as the dosage on children's medicine bottles, or they can only deal with material that is simple and clearly laid out. (National Literacy Secretariat, *Background Information on the International Adult Literacy Survey*)

The 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey does not provide a separate set of scores for the immigrant population, but some patterns appeared in the test results of immigrants who did participate in the survey. (In the 2002 survey, data will be collected regarding literacy among immigrants for those provinces that request this data.) It appears that “a significantly larger population of immigrants across the country have level 1 literacy skills than the non-immigrant population.” On the other hand, “the proportion of immigrants with level 4/5 skills is higher than the proportion of non-immigrant Canadians.” (National Literacy Secretariat, *Background Information on the International Adult Literacy Survey*)

According to the National Literacy Secretariat, the larger proportion of immigrants to non-immigrants at both the high and low ends of the literacy scale reflects Canada’s immigration policies. Business class immigrants are more likely to have high literacy skills, while the refugee and family class immigrant groups are likely to include more people with low literacy skills. (*Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada. Highlights from the Canadian Report; telephone interview with a representative of the National Literacy Secretariat*)

Literacy Figures for Calgary and Alberta

According to the 1996 census figures, Calgary’s total population was 815 985. Calgary had 42.2% of Alberta’s immigrant population residing in the city. 170 875 people, or approximately 21% of Calgary’s population were identified as immigrants, and approximately 18% of Calgary’s population listed their mother tongue as a non-official language. (Source: Statistics Canada, *1996 Census*)

Refugee and family class immigrants have represented between 40% and 45% of all immigrants to Alberta over the past three years (see Table 1.1). This means that almost half of the immigrants that come to Alberta pertain to immigrant classes that are likely to include people with low literacy skills. Calgary is home to 42% of all immigrants to Alberta, and we can assume that immigrants with low literacy skills make up part of that 42%.

A report prepared for Alberta Learning by Nichols Applied Management in January 2000 referred to the IMM 1000 database, stating that 668 refugees and 1801 family class immigrants reported Calgary as their intended settlement location in 1998(12% and 31% respectively of all immigrants who reported Calgary as their intended settlement location). 21% of these refugees and 25% of the family class immigrants had less than 9 years of education. These numbers point to a need for literacy programs in Calgary. It will exist as long as immigration patterns continue as they are.

Table 1.1: Immigrants Arriving in Alberta*

	1997		1998		1999	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Family class immigrants	4063	31.4	3767	33.7	4171	34.7
Refugees	1153	8.9	1266	11.3	1281	10.5
Skilled workers / Business class immigrants and their dependents	7394	57.2	5769	51.6	6061	50.4
Other categories	321	2.5	371	3.3	522	4.4
Total	12931	100	11173	99.9	12035	100

(Source: IMM1000 1999, Citizenship and Immigration Canada)

*Use of this data by CIC and The Government of Alberta is allowed, but release of this information to the public is restricted.

According to the IMM1000 database, the number of refugees and family class immigrants that reported Calgary as their intended settlement location from 1994-1998 are the following:

**Table 1.2
Refugees and Family Class Immigrants that Reported Calgary as Their Intended Settlement Location, 1994-1998**

Year	Refugees	Family Class Immigrants
1998	668	1801
1997	568	1939
1996	686	2164
1995	671	2433
1994	675	3366

(Source: IMM1000 Database, Citizenship and Immigration Canada)

*Use of this data by CIC and The Government of Alberta is allowed, but release of this information to the public is restricted.

If we make a very rough, conservative estimate, and use the lowest of these figures for each category to represent The years not included in this table: 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1999, we could say that the number of refugees and family class immigrants arriving in Calgary over the last 10 years may be in the area of 5500 and 18900 respectively. If we take 1998 as an example, and assume that approximately 21% of the refugees and 25% of family class immigrants over the past ten years have had less than nine years of education, then we would be dealing with 1000+ refugees and 4500+ family class immigrants with literacy needs who have settled in Calgary over the past ten years. These figures do not take into account immigrants who have moved to Calgary from other locations within Canada, so the numbers could be even greater.

The initial contact for new immigrants to Calgary who need language training is the Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment-Referral Centre. They shared the following figures regarding immigrants that they have seen over the past three years:

- From January 15, 1997 - Jan. 15, 2000, 11 635 immigrants were tested at the Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment-Referral Centre in Calgary.
- 557 of these immigrants, or 4.8%, were identified as having 5 years or education or less in their native country.
- 581 of these immigrants, or 5%, were assessed at the Pre Benchmark level in reading and/or writing.
- The Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Assessment tool, developed in 1996-1997, was put into use at ILVARC in October, 1998. From January 1, 1999 to Dec. 31, 1999, 250 immigrants were assessed at the literacy level using the Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Assessment.
- Data was not available for the number of students who have been referred to literacy programs over the past year.

Counselors at the Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment-Referral Centre were asked to share their impressions of the current trends in literacy needs in their respective client groups. The Afghani and Somali communities were identified as groups with high literacy needs. Clients, especially women, from other African countries, Southern Asia and Arabic-speaking countries were also recognized as having literacy needs. One counselor commented that his/her clients generally have better listening/speaking abilities than literacy skills and therefore are more interested in reading and writing. Another counselor noted that clients with high literacy needs usually come from the Family Class category of immigrants, are usually about 50 years old and account for about 10% of this counselor's clients. Three of the counselors commented that the demographic profile of their clientele has changed and that they are seeing more educated, skilled professionals coming in who do not need literacy training.

When asked if they felt that there are immigrants with literacy needs who have slipped through the cracks or who have not come forward to receive training, three groups were identified:

- Elderly members of the community
- People who had to start working immediately after arriving in Canada and couldn't afford to take time to go to school.
- Women who are not able to attend literacy training programs because they need a full time program with daycare seats. They are often put into general LINC programs that are not suitable for them.

When asked if they have come across students who took LINC training in the past but are coming back with literacy needs now, two counselors said that they have come across

this type of client. It was mentioned that these people often have other issues (financial/settlement) that impede their learning literacy skills.

Finally, it was noted that there is also a need for literacy support programs directed at individuals who have Reading and Writing Benchmarks 2 and 3 with demonstrated limited literacy in their first language. Although these clients are somewhat proficient in English, due to their limited literacy in their first language, they struggle more than other ESL learners in acquiring literacy skills.

Literacy Programs Currently available in Calgary

(See Table 1.3)

Interviews were conducted with program coordinators and instructors involved with the various ESL programs in Calgary that offer literacy support. The following results came out of the interviews:

Number of Programs Available

From September 1999 to March 2000, eight programs designed to meet the needs of ESL literacy learners were running in the city of Calgary and one more was due to begin in April. Eight of the nine programs running or scheduled to run at the time of the study responded to questions regarding their programs.

Types of Programs

- Four of the eight literacy programs were designed solely for literacy learners.
- One was a regular LINC program with special classes designed for different levels of literacy learners within the LINC program.
- Three programs placed literacy learners in the regular ESL classes, but offered them extra individual support.

- Five of the eight programs consisted of part time classes.
- One program consisted of full time classes.
- One program had both full time and part time classes running.
- Another full time literacy program was scheduled to begin in April, 2000.

Instructional Delivery

- Three of the eight programs offered classroom instruction.
- Four of the programs offered a combination of classroom instruction and one-on-one or small group volunteer tutor support.
- One program offered one-on-one instruction by a teacher.

Funding

- Three of the eight programs were identified as LINC funded.
- Two programs were funded by Alberta Learning
- One program was funded by a combination of private and government funds (exact sources undisclosed)

- One program relied on funds from the National Literacy Secretariat, Calgary Community Adult Learning Association, The Alberta Advanced Education Language Training Program and the Rotary Club of Calgary.
- One program was privately funded through a church.

Student Numbers

Programs ranged in number of available seats from 8-20 per session, while in some programs the number of seats available for literacy learners was dependant on demand. In 1999, these eight programs filled an approximate total of 424-429 literacy seats over the course of their sessions. (This is looking at the number of students per term. Some students may have registered for successive terms, so the actual number of individuals served would be somewhat lower.)

Comments Regarding Programs and Students

Almost all of the program coordinators seemed to feel that the programs available are still unable to reach many of the immigrants in Calgary who need literacy training. The following comments were made by program coordinators regarding the literacy situation in Calgary:

- “There are a lot of people out there who are hidden and don’t know how to access programs. Many seniors stay within their own community because they lack the literacy skills to find programs and they lack the confidence to get out there.”
- “There are more people out there who we are not reaching. There are also more students who should be assessed with the literacy benchmarks test.”
- “Childcare is a huge factor. There are many women under the age of 35 who need training but have 2 or more children under the age of 5.”
- “There are many seniors and housewives with kids in school who need literacy training but we’re not reaching them.”
- “ We are seeing a lot more EI clients who have good oral skills but very low literacy skills.”

**Table 1.3
ESL Literacy Programs in Calgary: 1999-2000**

Program	Full Time	Part Time	Delivery				Approximate number of literacy seats filled Jan 99-Jan 2000*	Classes filled to capacity? Y / N	Source of funding
			Classroom	One on One	Volunteer Tutors	Other			
A	✓		✓		✓		N/A Info. Unavailable	N/A Info. Unavailable	Private + government sources
B		✓	✓	✓	✓		15	N/A Depends on demand	Private source
C	✓	✓	✓				20-25	N	LINC
D		✓	✓	✓	✓		12	N	Alberta Learning
E		✓	✓		✓		172	N/A Depends on demand	LINC
F		✓	✓				48	N/A Depends on demand	NLS, C-CALA, AAELTP, Rotary
G		✓		✓			40	Y	Alberta Learning
H	✓ (low oral + low lit.) ✓ (high oral / low lit.)		✓		✓		59 (low oral+lit.) 58 (high oral/low lit.) 117 total	Y	LINC
I	Information unavailable. Did not respond to survey								
Totals	3	6	7	3	4	-	424-429	Y: 2 N:2 N/A:5	Private:1 Combined:2 Alberta Learning: 2 LINC:3

* Approximate number of literacy seats filled Jan 99 - Jan 2000 is based on the number of students per term. Some students may have registered for successive terms, so the actual number of individuals will be somewhat lower.

Regular LINC or General ESL Programs that are Currently Accommodating Literacy Learners

(See Table 1.4)

A questionnaire was sent out to 10 ESL institutions in Calgary identified as providing LINC training and/or General ESL training to immigrants in Calgary. The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out the number and general profile of literacy learners that are being accommodated in ESL programs not designed specifically for literacy learners. It focused on the same information that was gathered from the literacy training programs: number of literacy learners; type of program delivery; general literacy learner profile.

Unfortunately, only four institutions responded to the survey, but their responses indicate that they are serving literacy learners who for one reason or another, are not accessing literacy specific programs. Their comments show that location and childcare are issues among students who need literacy training and that volunteers are being relied upon to help meet the needs of these learners.

Comments

- “(We have been) unable to find funding to date (for a literacy program) as all students are part of the LINC program. However, we rely on volunteers to meet the needs of these learners.”
- “We encourage students to enroll in literacy programs (elsewhere), but they come to us due to location and childcare.”
- “Childcare has been a barrier to our students who might otherwise attend literacy classes at other institutions.”
- "Literacy students that enroll in these classes wind up in classes with some literacy students, some low level ESL students, some people with learning difficulties and some people who have been here for a long time but have never studied before. It is very hard to meet so many diverse needs in one classroom. We need to use more volunteers and use the teacher as a facilitator for the different groups."

**Table 1.4
Regular ESL/LINC Programs Accommodating Literacy Students in Calgary: 1999-2000**

Program	Number of literacy students enrolled in programs: winter 2000		Delivery				Approximate number of literacy seats filled Jan 99 - Jan 2000*	Source of funding	Classes filled to capacity? Y / N
	Full Time	Part Time	Classroom	One on One	Volunteer Tutors	Other			
J	3	44	✓	✓	✓		50	LINC	Y
K	N/A	3	✓	some	some	Teaching assistants	7-8	LINC	Y
L	N/A	2			✓		10	LINC	N
M	N/A	4	✓		✓		20	Combination: Government funded / student fees	N/A Depends on demand
Totals	3	49	3	2	4	1	87-88		Y-2 N-1 N/A-1

* Approximate number of literacy seats filled Jan 99 - Jan 2000 is based on the number of students per term. Some students may have registered for successive terms, so the actual number of individuals will be somewhat lower.

Literacy Learner Profiles

(See Table 1.5)

When asked to provide a profile of the majority of the types of literacy learners that they work with, most program coordinators and instructors said that they have learners from many different backgrounds and situations, but there is usually a predominant group in each class. General observations demonstrate the following characteristics: women are usually unemployed, poorly educated in their first language, and focused on family responsibilities; men have some education in their native language and are unemployed; many literacy learners have been here for some time and have developed their oral language, but lack literacy skills. The following comments by ESL program coordinators and instructors highlight the types of literacy learners that are appearing in literacy and ESL programs in Calgary.

Female

- Single, unemployed female family caregivers
- Female family caregivers who haven't had the opportunity to get much education
- Female, not educated or poorly educated in first language, learning disability, unemployed, family caregiver
- The majority are female family caregivers who are uneducated in their native languages.
- Unemployed females who are uneducated in their native language, and have never had the opportunity to work in their home country or in Canada
- Unemployed females with some education in their native language; They have been here for a long time, but haven't had the opportunity to learn and practice, so their reading and writing skills are lacking.

Male

- Unemployed males who have some education in their native language, but have trouble with our alphabet
- Males who have been educated in their native language and have no trouble speaking in English, but have great difficulty with the Roman alphabet
- Men - old, not educated or little formal education in first language
- Employed males with little education in their first language who have high oral skills and have been here for a while, but were unable to study long enough to build literacy skills

Other comments

- Seniors who have been here for a long time, but haven't taken the opportunity to attend classes
- People who have been here for a long time, but didn't get enough literacy training when they first arrived, and are still having lots of troubles
- Many of the students are at benchmarks 2-3 orally, but lack reading and writing skills.
- Some of the students have been here for less than a year. The rest have been here three years or more. They have never worked in Canada or in their own country before.
- Students have received 9 years of education or less in their native country
- Many of the students have been here for a long time but for various reasons, did not have a chance to study before now. Their spoken English is good, but reading and writing skills are not good.

Table 1.5
Characteristics of the Majority of Literacy Learners in Programs in Calgary
(as Identified by Program Coordinators and Instructors)

	Female	Male	Employed	Unemployed	Family Caregiver	Family Breadwinner	Educated in Native Language	Not Educated in Native Language	Other
A	Information unavailable								
B	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		Many seniors
C	✓				✓			✓	
D	✓			✓	✓			✓	
E	✓			✓	✓		✓		
F	✓			✓			some	some	
G	✓	✓	some	✓	✓	✓	some	✓	
H	✓	✓	some	✓	✓	some	some	✓	Men are older
I	Information unavailable - did not respond to survey								
J	✓	some	some	some	✓			✓	
K	✓			✓	✓		some	some	
L				✓	✓				
M	✓	some	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Totals	10	5	4	13	10	3	6	10	

Conclusion

The national results from the International Adult Literacy Survey have determined that literacy needs must be addressed across the country, and that these needs are even higher among immigrants. Alberta is a growing province. Almost half of Alberta's immigrants live in Calgary. Data from programs that involve literacy clients in Calgary, and the number of family class immigrants and refugees that have arrived over the past three years further emphasize this need for literacy training.

Are current literacy programs meeting the demand?

The rough estimate that 5890 immigrants with literacy needs have settled in Calgary over the past ten years is a sizeable number. The fact that the majority of the students in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program were not new immigrants to Calgary, but immigrants that had been in Calgary for 5 years or more suggests that many of these immigrants still have literacy needs. Existing programs are working hard to address the different literacy needs among immigrants in Calgary. Eight programs designed specifically to meet the needs of literacy learners ran in the winter and spring of 2000. Half of these programs had a limited number of seats and half of them accepted learners according to demand. It is difficult to determine whether or not there are enough seats for literacy learners in Calgary as half of the programs did not limit the number of seats available. Only one of the programs that had a limit on the number of seats available filled its seats to capacity. This does not appear to demonstrate a lack of need however, but a difficulty in reaching literacy learners. In the majority of programs, coordinators expressed frustration over their inability to reach literacy learners that they know are out there.

Who are the programs not reaching?

The following three groups were identified by people involved with literacy programs as high literacy needs groups that are not accessing programs:

- Unemployed females with childcare responsibilities
- Seniors that lack the confidence to venture out on their own
- People that began working upon arrival in Canada and have developed oral language skills

Literacy programs should attempt to reach these women, seniors, and working immigrants. It has been suggested that to access these learners, programs should advertise through elementary, junior high, and high schools that have a high ESL concentrations among their students; employers with large immigrant populations on staff, social services and Canada Employment Centres; community service organizations; and by word of mouth through other students. Some people involved with immigrants and literacy learners feel that there is a need for literacy training among a fourth group of immigrants identified as having higher oral, reading and writing skills than the typical literacy learners have.

Why are some immigrants with literacy needs not accessing literacy programs?

Childcare is a major factor that affects whether or not many students with literacy needs attend programs that are designed for their specific needs. Many learners with childcare issues are attending regular non-literacy focused ESL classes where childcare is available instead of literacy programs. Another issue that appears to influence whether or not people with literacy needs are accessing programs is transportation. Many learners are hesitant to venture out beyond their community, and will not attend programs that require travel or bussing to get to classes. Time constraints and scheduling also affect whether or not immigrants with literacy needs access programs. If these people are working, they are often unable to attend classes at regular times. Another factor is program

eligibility. Students who are LINC eligible are referred to LINC programs. They attend full time or part time programs that are not necessarily designed to meet their specific literacy needs. A final factor is lack of awareness. Immigrants with literacy needs are either unaware of the literacy programs available to them and hesitant to search them out, or they have developed coping skills to get by in their daily routines and do not recognize that they need literacy training.

What types of literacy programs are needed?

In order to meet the diverse needs of the literacy population in Calgary, a variety of literacy programs are suggested:

- In order to meet the needs of the unemployed, uneducated women with childcare issues, programs that focus on basic literacy learning strategies and skills and employ materials relating to childcare, schooling and literacy skills in the community should be available. On-site childcare is necessary to overcome one of their major barriers to learning. This program reaches a group similar to the one addressed by the LAPS program, but the focus would fall more on reading and writing skills development than on parenting skills.
- An assessment should be performed to determine which cultural communities have seniors that are motivated and recognize the need to improve their literacy skills. If a particular group is identified, a program should be set up in the community close to their homes so that they do not have to deal with travel and transportation issues.
- Immigrants with literacy needs who are currently in the workforce should be accessed through their employers. A program that deals with their needs for language on the job should be established. Employers with high ESL populations should be contacted regarding literacy programs for their employees.
- Multi-level literacy components or classes could be set up within the LINC training program to deal with newcomers to Canada who have arrived with diverse literacy needs. This type of a program would address literacy needs at many different levels for a variety of learners, including those identified by ILVARC as having literacy needs at higher benchmark levels. Different level literacy learners are currently being accommodated in this manner at Bow Valley College.
- Part time literacy training programs for people who have been in Canada for a number of years and have developed their oral skills but have poor literacy skills could address their needs. Focus in these programs could address literacy for employment or for improving their positions, and life skills literacy such as personal finance skills and investing, and home maintenance among others.
- Culturally sensitive programs should be set up to address the literacy needs and cultural adjustment for groups with high literacy needs such as members of the Afghanistani and Iraqi community, or Sudanese women..

Key factors in the success of all of these programs will be: assessment and consideration of target learner location, willingness of learners to participate, scheduling availability; childcare needs; learner involvement in the planning of objectives and course focus; and material that is relevant to the needs and interests of the learners.

A final issue that should be addressed is that of the number of literacy learners that attend regular ESL programs instead of programs designed specifically to address literacy needs. This presents a challenge for both instructors and learners which often results in frustration.. If more literacy programs that meet the needs of the learners are available and well-advertised, this issue may diminish.

Perhaps programs that deal with this problem on a regular basis need the resources to adapt curriculum to include literacy components in each unit and then they can utilize the assistance of volunteers in the classroom to try and meet the needs of these learners. In addressing this issue for LINC programs, the suggestion is noted above: literacy classes that run parallel to regular LINC programs and address literacy needs at different benchmark levels.

The above noted literacy programs will address a number of existing literacy needs in the city of Calgary. There are a large number of immigrants with literacy needs already established in Calgary that need access to literacy programs to improve their current situation. As immigrants continue to arrive in Calgary from countries where there is little or no formal education available to many, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sudan among others, the need for literacy training will continue. Another trend in literacy programs that appears to be increasing is the need for literacy training at higher benchmark levels.

On a final note, we can look toward the future with the following thoughts:

In *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada*, it is stated that “Canadian workers in future will require high literacy skills. Industries that have experienced growth are the ones whose employees have relatively high levels of skills, those industries in decline are characterized by workers with lower skills.” It also states that “literacy programs for individuals receiving income support would meet a significant need as employment growth is occurring in occupations and industries with higher skill demands.”

The need for ESL literacy programs in Calgary is apparent. With the level of literacy skills rising in employment positions, it is important that immigrants receive the literacy training that they need to prepare for the future.

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SECTION II:

**Individualized Literacy Instruction Program:
Observations and Interpretations of Results**

Individualized Literacy Instruction Program: Observations and Interpretations of Results

Purpose

The research portion of the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program (ILIP), was implemented to determine the demographics and educational backgrounds; needs; and effective instructional / learning strategies of four identified literacy learner types through a pilot program of individualized literacy instruction, literature research, and interviews with literacy coordinators in the city of Calgary.

Process

Literacy learners at Canadian Language Benchmarks Levels one or two in reading and writing were accepted into the program. They were assessed before beginning their program and upon completion of 36 hours of individualized instruction. Throughout the program, instructors documented learning methods and competencies mastered. Data from each learner was collected and interpreted to determine how the following factors relate to literacy type (non-literate, semi-literate, functionally non-literate and non-Roman alphabet):

- demographics
- educational background
- effective instructional methods
- potential progress
- instructional setting

Literacy learners in a full-time classroom setting were also tested at the beginning and end of their program, and their test results were compared to those of the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program. Interpretations were made as to how the different instructional settings influence progress.

Interpretations and observations made in all of the above areas were documented and noted in this section of the report. Literature research regarding literacy instruction and effective methods, investigations and surveys into the literacy situation in Calgary were also conducted, and their results are noted in sections I and III of this report.

General Program Information and Highlights from Data Interpretation

The Individual Literacy Instruction Program involved learners from four identified literacy learner types: non-literate, semi-literate, functionally non-literate, and non-Roman alphabet. There were no pre-literate learners represented in the program as any learners who may have come from a background with no written form of language had also learned another language with a written form, such as Arabic. The highest concentration of a literacy learner type was the functionally non-literate group, followed by the semi-literate learners. (see Table 2.1) The number of strictly non-Roman alphabet learners involved in the program was quite small, making it unreasonable to look at related figures as an accurate representation of this type of learner. In all literacy type categories, the majority of learners were non-Roman alphabet learners combined with their literacy type.

53% of learners in the program were perceived as having some type of learning disability through demonstrated behavior (see Table 2.2). The highest percentage of learners with perceived learning disabilities fell in the functionally non-literate type, learners with some educational background who have basic literacy skills, but avoid tasks that involve reading and writing. This avoidance could be a factor in their previous literacy struggles in ESL classes. Due to the individualized nature of the program, instructors were able to work with these students at developing strategies to assist them in their learning.

60% of participants in the program were female, and 40% were male. The higher female percentage was most likely a result of the focus on family roles, responsibilities and little or no education being available to females in some countries. Participants in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program came from a wide variety of countries, with the highest concentration of students coming from Iraq, representing 20% of participants, followed by Lebanon, with 14% of program participants originating there. The remaining 16 countries had less than 10% representation in the program (see Table 2.3).

The native language that had the greatest representation in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program was Arabic, with 29% (see Table 2.4). This language group stands out as a high literacy needs group with specific literacy needs focusing on cultural understanding and adaptation. Arabic native speakers had the highest representation in each literacy type group. A multi-level literacy program to address the specific needs of these learners may be in order. Punjabi, Kurdish, and Chinese follow in representation percentage, each with 9%. The representation of these four language groups at the top of the chart explains the high number of non-Roman alphabet combined literacy types noted previously. There were fourteen other native languages represented as outlined on Table 2.4.

The number of years of education in the learners' native countries ranged from 0 to 12. The highest concentration of learners fell in the 4-6 year range with 32%, followed by 0, then 7-9, and finally, 1-3 and 10-12 with the same concentration of learners (see Table 2.5). 80% of the learners had had some type of previous ESL training in Canada, either full time or part time.

It is interesting to note that 44% of the learners in the literacy program have been here for over 10 years, followed by 26% for 4-6 years, 18% for 7-9 years and finally 12% for 1-3 years (see Table 2.6). These figures suggest that many literacy learners either did not access programs when they first arrived in Canada, or that initial programs were not effective in addressing their literacy difficulties. It also suggests that an effort should be made to access immigrants with literacy needs who may have slipped through the cracks in earlier language training, and are no longer actively seeking learning programs.

The fact that none of the learners in this program have been here for less than a year does not mean that there are no literacy needs among new immigrants to Calgary, but rather that new immigrants to the country usually attend full time language programs. In section I of this report, ILVARC reported testing 250 learners from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 1999

with the Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Assessment tool. Most of these learners were referred to LINC programs, and not to programs that focused specifically on literacy training.

Another interesting but indirectly related point to note here is that the full time ESL LINC program at Bow Valley College is currently experiencing a sizeable increase in the number of literacy learners entering the program. Bow Valley College has been able to adapt the program to accommodate these learners, but other institutions with less manpower may not be able to adapt their programs to effectively meet the needs of these literacy learners.

Literacy learners need a great deal of individual attention, programs focused on their immediate individual needs, and time to develop and reinforce their literacy skills. Many of the learners in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program received LINC training upon arrival in Canada, but were unable to keep up with the program. Now, 10-20 years later, they are still having difficulties with English literacy skills. Some of them have mentioned that only now, through the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program, have they found a program that meets their needs. The question arises as to whether or not established LINC programs are effectively meeting the needs of literacy learners. Perhaps their needs would be better met if a special LINC literacy program were put into place, or if literacy learners could be referred first to a literacy program to develop their literacy skills, after which they could access LINC and truly benefit from the program.

Table 2.1
Breakdown of Literacy Learner Types in the ILIP

Non-literate/Non Roman alphabet learners	24%
Semi-literate learners/ Semi-literate non-Roman alphabet learners	32%
Functionally non-literate learners/ Functionally non-literate non-Roman alphabet learners	35%
Non-Roman alphabet learners (strictly)	9%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 2.2
Percentage of Learners in the Program with Perceived Learning Disabilities
(by Literacy Type)

Non-literate/Non Roman alphabet learners	12%
Semi-literate learners/ Semi-literate non-Roman alphabet learners	15%
Functionally non-literate / non-Roman alphabet learners	7%
Strictly Non-Roman alphabet	19%
<hr/>	
Total percentage of learners in the program with perceived learning disabilities	53%

Table 2.3
ILIP Learners: Country of Origin

<u>Country</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>
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Iraq	20%
Lebanon	14%
China	9%
Pakistan	6%
India	6%
Canada	6%
Afghanistan	6%
Ethiopia	3%
Algeria	3%
Italy	3%
Cambodia	3%
Chile	3%
Cambodia	3%
Tanzania	3%
Nepal	3%
Sudan	3%
Vietnam	3%
Slovenia	3%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 2.4
ILIP Learners: First Language

<u>First Language:</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>
Arabic	29%
Punjabi	9%
Kurdish	9%
Chinese	9%
Farsi	6%
Vietnamese	3%
Cambodian	3%
Somalian	3%
Slovanian	3%
Spanish	3%
Italian	3%
Malingula	3%
Urdu	3%
Herere	3%
Kache	3%
English	3%
French	3%
Nepalese	3%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 2.5
ILIP Learners: Years of Education in Native Country

<u>Number of Years</u>	<u>Percent of Participants</u>
0	26%
1-3	12%
4-6	32%
7-9	18%
10-12	12%
12+	0%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 2.6
ILIP Learners: Period of Residence in Canada

<u>Period of Residence</u>	<u>Percent of Participants</u>
Up to 1 Year	0%
1 to 3 Years	12%
4 to 6 years	26%
7 to 9 years	18%
10 years +	44%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Observation and Interpretation of Results

Types of Literacy Learners: Demographic and Background Information

Non-literate/Non-Roman Alphabet Learners

Non-literate learners come from countries where a written language exists, but the learners do not read or write at all. These learners often lack the background skills necessary to learn a language. Combination non-Roman alphabet learners also come from a background where the native language is not based on the Roman alphabet.

Non-literate / non-Roman alphabet learners made up 24% of the population of the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program. All of these learners were *combination* non-literate/non Roman alphabet learners. The majority spoke Arabic as their first language and the largest group came from Lebanon (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2). 75% of the non-literate/non-Roman alphabet learners were women, and 25% were men. All learners had received three or fewer years of schooling in their native country, with 50% of them having had no schooling whatsoever (see Table 3.3). 75% of them had had previous ESL training before attending sessions in the ILIP program. 25% exhibited learning behaviors which could be a sign of learning disabilities. Half of these learners had been in Canada for over 10 years before attending the program (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.1
Non-literate/Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Country of Origin

<u>Country</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>
Lebanon	38%
Algeria	12.5%
Cambodia	12.5%
China	12.5%
Nepal	12.5%
Sudan	12.5%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%

Table 3.2
Non-literate/Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: First Language

<u>First Language:</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>
Arabic	62.5%
Chinese	12.5%
Cambodian	12.5%
Nepalese	12.5%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 3.3
Non-literate/Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Years of Education in Native Country

<u>Number of Years</u>	<u>Percent of Participants</u>
0	50%
1-3	50%
4-6	0%
7-9	0%
10-12	0%
12+	0%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 3.4
Non-literate/Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Period of Residence in Canada

<u>Period of Residence</u>	<u>Percent of Participants</u>
Up to 1 Year	0%
1 to 3 Years	12.%
4 to 6 years	38%
7 to 9 years	0%
10 years +	50%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Semi -literate Learners

Semi-literate learners have had some formal education in their own language, but not enough to become literate in this language. They may have a basic understanding that written text relates to spoken language. Combination non-Roman alphabet learners also come from backgrounds where the native language is not based on the Roman alphabet.

Semi-literate and semi-literate / non-Roman alphabet learners made up 32% of the population of the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program. 82% of these learners were *combination* semi-literate / non-Roman alphabet learners. 55% were women and 45% were men. The two largest language groups represented spoke Arabic or Kurdish as their first language and came from Iraq. (See tables 4.1 and 4.2). 47% of them had received some type of schooling in their native language, with 46% having received 4-6 years, and 36% having received 7-9 years of schooling (see Table 4.3) 18% of these learners exhibited learning behaviors which could be a sign of learning disabilities. 36% of these learners had been in Canada for 4-6 years and 36% had been in Canada for 10 years or more before attending the program (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.1
Semi-literate Learners: Country of Origin

<u>Country</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>
Iraq	55%
Pakistan	9%
Canada	9%
Ethiopia	9%
Chile	9%
Vietnam	9%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 4.2
Semi-literate Learners: First Language

<u>First Language:</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>
Arabic	36%
Kurdish	18%
Spanish	9%
Somalian	9%
Punjabi	9%
French	9%
Vietnamese	9%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 4.3
Semi-literate Learners: Years of Education in Native Country

<u>Number of Years</u>	<u>Percent of Participants</u>
0	18%
1-3	0%
4-6	46%
7-9	36%
10-12	0%
12+	0%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 4.4
Semi-literate Learners: Period of Residence in Canada

<u>Period of Residence</u>	<u>Percent of Participants</u>
Up to 1 year	0%
1 to 3 years	18%
4 to 6 years	36%
7 to 9 years	9%
10 years +	36%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Functionally non-literate learners

Functionally non-literate learners have had some literacy training in their native language, and have the basic literacy skills needed to function in society. They understand basic literacy concepts, but avoid tasks that require reading and writing. Combination non-Roman alphabet learners also come from backgrounds where their native language is not based on the Roman alphabet.

Functionally non-literate and functionally non-literate /non-Roman alphabet learners made up 35% of the population of the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program. 82% of these learners were *combination* functionally non-literate/non Roman alphabet learners. 67% of these learners were women and 33% were men. 50% of these learners had been here for more than 10 years before attending the program (see Table 5.4), and 92% of the learners had had some type of previous ESL training in Canada before attending the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program.

The two main first language groups represented among these learners were Arabic and Chinese. The largest representation from a single country in this group is from Lebanon (see Tables 5.1 and 5.2). 82% of these learners had received more than 4 years of education in their native country, with 55% of them having received between 4 and 6 years of education (see Table 5.3). 36% of these learners exhibited learning behaviors which could be a sign of learning disabilities.

Table 5.1
Functionally non-literate learners: Country of Origin

<u>Country</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>
Lebanon	18%
Cambodia	9%
Pakistan	9%
India	9%
Iraq	9%
Italy	9%
Afghanistan	9%
Tanzania	9%
Hong Kong	9%
China	9%
Slovenia	9%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 5.2
Functionally Non-literate Learners: First Language

<u>First Language:</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>
Arabic	18%
Chinese	18%
Italian	9%
Kurdish	9%
Farsi	9%
Slovenian	9%
Malingula	9%
Urdu	9%
Kache	9%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 5.3
Functionally Non-literate Learners: Years of Education in Native Country

<u>Number of Years</u>	<u>Percent of Participants</u>
0	18%
1-3	0%
4-6	55%
7-9	18%
10-12	9%
12+	0%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 5.4
Functionally Non-literate Learners: Period of Residence in Canada

<u>Period of Residence</u>	<u>Percent of Participants</u>
Up to 1 Year	0%
1 to 3 Years	0%
4 to 6 years	17%
7 to 9 years	33%
10 years +	50%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Non-Roman Alphabet Learners

Strictly non-Roman alphabet literacy learners come from a background in which their native language is not based on the Roman alphabet. They must learn the alphabet and writing directionality among other things before they can become literate in English. Many of them are fairly well educated in their native language and can apply the skills and strategies that they developed when learning their first language to learning English.

Non-Roman alphabet learners made up 9% of the population of the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program. 66% were women and 33% were men. The sample size was not large and representative enough to come to any conclusions about this type of learner. Data is included in the report to remain consistent with the program numbers.

Three first language groups were represented among these learners: Punjabi, Farsi and Herere. Learners in this category came from India, Afghanistan and Ethiopia (see Tables 6.1 and 6.2), and all of them were well educated. 66% of them had received some type of ESL training before attending the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program. The period of residence in Canada was spread out evenly among the three learners, but all of them had been here for over a year. Instructors identified learning behaviors which could be a sign of learning disabilities in 66% of these learners.

Table 6.1
Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Country of Origin

<u>Country</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>
India	33%
Afghanistan	33%
Ethiopia	33%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 6.2
Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: First Language

<u>First Language:</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>
Punjabi	33%
Farsi	33%
Herere	33%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 6.3
Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Years of Education in Native Country

<u>Number of Years</u>	<u>Percent of Participants</u>
0	0%
1-3	0%
4-6	0%
7-9	0%
10-12	100%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Table 6.4
Non-Roman Alphabet Learners: Period of Residence in Canada

<u>Period of Residence</u>	<u>Percent of Participants</u>
Up to 1 Year	0%
1 to 3 Years	33%
3 to 5 years	33%
5 to 9 years	0%
10 years +	33%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Demographics and Background Information: Conclusion

Literacy learners in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program represented a number of different countries and languages, and each one had an individual background and educational history. Upon analyzing the data however, the following trends stand out:

- The most notable trend is the population of Arabic speakers in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program. Arabic speakers are represented in all of the four literacy types. In three of the four types, Arabic speakers make up the largest group.

Arabic native speakers seem to have trouble acquiring and developing English literacy skills no matter what their educational background is. Their non-Roman alphabet background further intensifies their difficulties. Their noticeable representation in each literacy type group suggests a need for a multilevel literacy-focused program aimed at this group of learners. A need was demonstrated for literacy training at all literacy benchmark levels: at the very basic level, focusing on letter-sound recognition and an introduction to the Roman alphabet and print; at a slightly more advanced literacy level focusing on recognizing basic words, sounding

out words, and survival language; and at an even more advanced level, a literacy program that focuses on reading texts, spelling, writing, and more involved, academic literacy skills.

- In each literacy type, a large percentage of the learners had had previous ESL training in Canada before beginning the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program. This suggests that either the initial ESL programs did not meet their needs, or that they have not integrated into society and have not been using their English language skills on a regular basis. Maybe they lack the literacy skills to fully benefit from regular ESL programs. Perhaps immigrants that enter the country with identified literacy needs should receive training that focuses on their literacy needs before attempting regular ESL programs.
- In each literacy type except the non-Roman alphabet literacy type, the largest representation of learners has been in Canada for more than 10 years. Literacy programs need to access learners that are already established in Canada and have been here for a number of years. This is a challenging task as this type of learner has usually developed some type of coping skills and does not always recognize that they need literacy training. In many cases, they have given up and are not actively searching for English classes. Some learners mentioned that they felt that the system had failed them, and that there was nothing out there that addressed their needs until they attended sessions in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program.
- Women had a much higher representation than men did in the non-literate type. This is most likely a result of the family role of women in many cultures, and the lack of education available to them. Women in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program at the non-literate level tended to be dealing with family and childcare issues, and needed language and support that addressed these aspects of their lives.

Progress Comparison: Classroom Literacy Instruction versus Individual Instruction

In this part of the research study, test results and benchmarks levels of learners in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program were compared to the test results and benchmark levels of learners in two full-time literacy classes in Bow Valley College's LINC program. Each group of learners was pre-tested at the beginning of term and post-tested at the end of term with the same test. Test results were used to determine literacy benchmarks levels at the beginning and end of term. Learners in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program received approximately 36 hours of individualized instruction. Each session lasted between one and a half and two hours. Learners in the full-time LINC program received approximately 210 hours of classroom instruction. Each session lasted 4.5 hours (3.25 hours on Wednesdays).

Both groups of learners included representation from the four literacy types: non-literate, semi-literate, functionally non-literate and non-Roman alphabet , although the number of representatives in the non-Roman alphabet type was too low in each group to draw any conclusions. The full-time literacy classroom group included 21 learners. When terminations and test absences were factored in, data was collected for 12 students. The Individualized Literacy Instruction Program group included 35 learners. When terminations and test absences at the time of data collection were factored in, data was collected from 26 learners.

Table 7.1
Pre-test and Post-test Comparisons: Classroom versus Individualized Instruction

	Classroom Instruction Approximately 210 hours of instruction per term		Individualized Instruction Approximately 36 hours of instruction per term	
Literacy Type	Average increase in reading	Average increase in writing	Average increase in reading	Average increase in writing
Non-literate/non-Roman alphabet learners	0% This could be due to a lack of confidence or the fact that these non-literate learners came in at a lower benchmark level than those in the Individualized Program	8% (Range: from 0% to 20%)	10% (Range: from 0% to 25%)	28% (Range: from 16% to 42.5%)
Semi-literate & Semi-literate / Non-Roman alphabet learners	22.5% (Range: from 0% to 45%)	6.5% (Range: from 5% to 8%)	38% (Range: from 0% to 80%)	26% (Range: from -6% to 54%)
Functionally non-literate & Functionally non-literate Non-Roman alphabet learners	17% (Range: from 0% to 30%)	8.4% (Range: from 0.5% to 13.5%)	15% (Range: from -10% to 60%)	41% (Range: from 2% to 75%)
Non-Roman alphabet learners *Please note: the sample size in both groups was too small to be an accurate representation of all Non-Roman alphabet learners	40% Only one learner is represented here	17% Only one learner is represented here	32% (Range: 20% to 45%)	36% (Range: from 39% to 51%)
Overall average All learner types combined	8% (Range: from 0% to 45%)	10% (Range: from 0% to 20%)	17% (Range: from -10% to 60%)	34% (Range: from -6% to 75%)

Table 7.2
Benchmarks Level Increases: Classroom versus Individualized Instruction

	Classroom Instruction Approximately 210 hours of instruction per term		Individualized Instruction Approximately 36 hours of instruction per term	
Literacy Type	Percent of participants that moved up into the next benchmark level		Percent of participants that moved up into the next benchmark level	
	Reading	Writing	Reading	Writing
Non-literate/ non-Roman alphabet learners	0%	0%	17%	33%
Semi-literate & Semi-literate / Non-Roman alphabet learners	0%	0%	64%	73%
Functionally non-literate & Functionally non-literate Non-Roman alphabet learners	20%	40%	9%	42%
Non-Roman alphabet learners <small>*Please note: the sample size in both groups was too small to be an accurate representation of all Non-Roman alphabet learners</small>	100% <small>Only one learner is represented here</small>	100% <small>Only one learner is represented here</small>	66%	100%
Overall average <small>All learner types combined</small>	15%	15%	31%	44%

Observations and Conclusions

On the whole, learners in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program demonstrated a greater level of improvement in a noticeably shorter number of instructional hours than students receiving literacy instruction in the classroom. This is a result of a more tailored, focused program which met the individual needs of each learner in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program as opposed to a more general classroom program.

The number of hours per class or session were much shorter in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program (1.5 - 2 hours) than in the full time classroom setting (4.5 hours / Wednesdays 3.25). This may be another factor in the amount of progress made. Many literacy learners are not used to being in a classroom environment and have difficulty staying focused for long periods of time. There is also a limit to the amount of material that a literacy student is able to absorb at one time. The shorter, more focused individual sessions may lend themselves to higher retention levels. Individualized Literacy Instruction Program learners demonstrated a higher level of progress through fewer, shorter classes.

These observations are in no way intended to question the merit of classroom instruction, They are simply an observation that perhaps individualized literacy instruction has a higher degree of effectiveness. Literacy students in both programs benefited from their respective instructional mode. When talking with students in the classroom instruction program at the end of term, it was quite obvious that they had made improvements in their language levels, and that they were more confident when reading and writing as a result of their classes. Classroom instruction also provides students with the opportunity to learn from other learners' experiences, and with a network of new friends and acquaintances in their new country.

As far as rate of learning is concerned, individual instruction appears to be very effective. When literacy students are given the opportunity to learn in a program that focuses on their specific learning needs and that uses material related to their personal interests and areas of motivation, they progress rapidly. Students who had a specific reason for improving their literacy skills such as applying for Canadian citizenship, entering a job training program, or applying for a job progressed more rapidly than students without this motivation. When students in the individualized instruction program were provided with one-on-one instruction and literacy materials directly related to their areas of interest, they put a great deal of effort into improving their reading and writing skills. It can be assumed that when the students are presented with a program tailored to their individual situation instead of focusing on general topics, they are more interested in the program and put more effort into learning. Students also commented that the individual attention from the instructors helped them to stay on task and thus helped in retention of materials.

The majority of instructors in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program commented that their students' confidence levels rose as a result of the individual instruction that they received. This increase in confidence resulted in more risk taking and enthusiasm in their learning and thus more results more quickly. Other comments from instructors in regards to student learning in the one-on-one setting suggest that students in this type of setting are more challenged to learn; that students take a more active role in the learning process when it's one-on-one; and that students attend more frequently with a schedule that is tailored to their availability.

It is valuable to note that the difference in level of progress between the two programs seems to level out and, in some areas, switch in the functionally non-literate and non-Roman alphabet types. Learners from backgrounds with less literacy exposure or the non-literate and semi-literate types demonstrated a greater level of improvement in the Individualized Literacy Instruction program. Learners with more literacy exposure in

their native language, or the functionally non-literate and strictly non-Roman alphabet types demonstrated similar or more noticeable improvement in a classroom setting. We could make the comparison here to the way that children learn their first language. In the early stages of language development, children benefit from the individual attention of their parents or caregivers. As they progress in their learning and have a basic foundation of language skills, they benefit from a classroom setting and learn in a group environment with less individual attention. Perhaps the non-literate and semi-literate literacy learners need the individual attention to solidly develop their basic skills. Literacy learners in the other two type groups have at least some of these skills, and are able to benefit from a group environment.

Individualized Literacy Instruction Program Results: Key Observations and Recommendations

Demographics

Learners with literacy needs come from a variety of different countries and educational backgrounds. Two groups which can be identified as having a noticeable representation in almost all literacy type groups are Arabic speakers and women.

Arabic speakers seem to have difficulty developing their literacy skills in English no matter what their educational background. A multi-level literacy program that addresses literacy skills from the very basics to more academic reading and writing skills is in order.

The noticeable female population in these literacy groups, especially at the lower levels calls for special consideration of the following aspects of program planning when designing programs: interests and needs of the learners, (will they be utilizing these literacy skills to deal with community and family related issues, or are they heading out into the workplace?); childcare and transportation; cultural barriers and expectations.

The majority of the learners in all literacy types had received some ESL training in Canada previous to this program and had been in Canada for over five years, with many residing here for periods of over 10 years. This suggests a need to access students who may not be actively learning or searching out learning programs at present. Careful consideration must also be made as to the type and length of training that learners with literacy needs receive initially so that they can get the most possible out of their ESL training.

Individualized Literacy Instruction or Classroom Instruction

Literacy Learners in an individualized program tend to make more progress in a shorter number of instructional hours than literacy learners in classroom settings. The individual focus provides them with material that is interesting and relevant to them and helps them stay focused. Classroom learning is more cost-effective however, and provides the students with the opportunity to share with and learn from other classmates. Non-literate and semi-literate literacy learners demonstrated equal or more progress when provided with individualized instruction. Functionally non-literate and non-Roman alphabet literacy demonstrated more progress in a classroom setting.

SECTION III:

Literacy Types and Instruction: A Study

Literacy Types and Instruction: A Study

Introduction

When dealing with the question of how to teach ESL learners effectively, one is faced with many issues such as literacy type, personal and educational history, and different instructional methods and settings. This study sets out to identify different ESL literacy learner types and instructional approaches and to determine the most effective way to aid ESL literacy learners in improving their literacy skills.

Types of Literacy Learners

Literacy learners are commonly categorized into four groups, according to their literacy knowledge and educational background. Combinations and subdivisions of these categories also exist, as outlined below:

Illiterate Learners

Illiterate learners may or may not have had some schooling in their native language. They may be able to copy or form some letters on their own. However, illiterate learners do not understand the concept of sound-symbol correlation. Illiterate learners can be grouped into two more specific categories, depending on their native cultural / societal background.

Non-literate learners

Non literate learners come from societies that have a language with a written form, but the learners do not read or write at all.

Pre-literate learners

Pre-literate learners come from oral cultures where there is no written form of their language. These learners have no reading and writing skills at all. They may have difficulty understanding that pictures represent real-life objects.

Semi-literate learners

Semi-literate learners have had some formal education in their own language, but not enough to become literate in this language. Education was usually disrupted for some reason. They may understand that written text relates to spoken language, but their reading and writing skills are too limited to put this understanding to use with new words.

Functionally non-literate learners

Functionally non-literate learners have had some literacy training in their own language and have the basic literacy skills needed to function in society. They understand basic reading and writing concepts, but avoid tasks that require reading and writing. They may be able to understand some written English as well as have some spoken English skills.

Non-Roman alphabet learners

Non-Roman alphabet learners come from cultures with languages that do not use the Roman alphabet. They must learn the Roman alphabet and writing directionality, etc. in order to be literate in English. A learner of this type may be a combination non-Roman alphabet learner with one of the other types listed above. A combination non-Roman

alphabet learner who has some literacy skills in his/her first language may be able to apply learning strategies used in acquiring his/her first language to learning English.

(Adapted from: Bell, Jill and Burnaby, Barbara, 1984 and Crawford Hutt and Young, 1994)

Literacy Instruction: Approaches and Strategies

Literacy instruction is as individual as the instructors who teach literacy, but in an effort to identify commonly accepted methods that are currently used in the ESL literacy instruction field, five different approaches are listed below:

Competency-Based Instruction

This approach stresses functional literacy and life skills. An assessment is made of the learner's needs. A set of competencies (instructional objectives described in task-based terms) is identified based on the learner's needs. Instruction is then focused on the identified competencies. At the end of the program, the learner is evaluated on his/her performance within these competencies to see if he/she has mastered them.

“Within a competency-based program the most common approach to teaching reading is first to teach the small components: sight vocabulary, word families, grammar. The instructor then gradually introduces more difficult reading material over time” (Crawford, Hutt and Young, 1994).

In her article *Literacy Through a Competency-Based Educational Approach*, K. Lynn Savage states that competency-based instruction can be used successfully with all types of learners. "The CBE approach is applicable to students with academic, employment and self-enrichment goals as well as to those with 'survival' goals. It is applicable to students with a high level of English proficiency as well as to those with limited or no English proficiency. It is applicable to students who have had a rich education as well as to those who have had no education in their home country" (Savage, 1993). She goes on to explain that there are no limits to the number of competencies that can be included in a competency based program, and that the competencies should be based on the needs of the students. Competency based education can also be used to address skills needed by students moving from a focus on survival English skills to a more academic focus. Learners who have some literacy skills in their first language, but need to focus on improving skills at the sentence and more complicated structure level benefit from competency based activities which include dialogues and language experience stories.

Whole Language Instruction

Whole language instruction is based on the idea that, in order to be understood, language should not be broken down into parts such as grammar, writing, vocabulary, etc. but should be taught as a whole. Both students and instructors are involved in the planning and development of student written materials and the evaluation of student work and program success.

“In a Whole Language program, the reading material naturally develops from the oral material. It supports and is supported by the material of the other skill areas. The finer points of grammar and spelling are dealt with as they arise” (Crawford, Hutt and Young, 1994).

Components of Whole Language literacy instruction can be outlined as the following: daily reading and writing; prepared oral reading as a social activity; language experience texts; reading, rereading and retelling published texts; strategy instruction based on reading, writing, speaking and listening activities; and self-evaluation. (Rigg and Kakemuk, 1993). It has been stated that whole language is necessary in literacy instruction to make it relevant to the learners' lives. "...instruction must build on and connect to an individual's life and language experiences. Unless students can make the bridge between their own language and experiences and those in the texts they are attempting to read and write, they will encounter difficulty and frustration" (Rigg and Kakemuk, 1993).

Language Experience Approach

Language experience stories can be used in programs that employ different approaches to literacy instruction. They are especially good for learners who have strong oral skills, but very low literacy skills because they utilize learners' strengths to improve their areas of weakness (Taylor, 1993; Peyton & Crandall, 1995). The material presented is relevant to the learner(s) because it is student generated and focuses on personal experiences.

The Language Experience Approach is a teaching technique that allows the learners to use their own experiences as reading material and follow up activities. The learner or learners dictate a personal or group experience to the instructor. The instructor writes the experience down, and it is then used as reading material for the class. The instructor reads the text back to the learner(s) a few times, pointing to the words as he/she goes along. The learner(s) then read through the story. Follow up activities (cloze exercises, vocabulary activities, etc.) are built around this text created by the learner with the help of the instructor. It gives learners "...the opportunity to see an entire text being formed, rather than working exclusively on the development of isolated word-attack skills...students begin to feel that reading and writing can become as easy and natural as speech" (Taylor, 1993).

"In the Language Experience Approach the reading material comes from a transcription of the learners' own words, and again there is a close relationship between the spoken word and the word in print." (Crawford, Hutt and Young, 1994)

Participatory Instruction (Freirian)

This type of instruction is based on the idea that "...people learn best when learning starts with what they already know, builds on their strengths, engages them in the learning process, and enables them to accomplish something they want to accomplish" (Auerbach, 1992). Participatory instruction revolves around the learner's personal life

experiences and issues for course content (parent-teacher interviews, fighting a traffic ticket, etc.). Discussions arise from these events, and then key vocabulary is explained. This vocabulary is then used in follow-up exercises. The following concepts are central:

1. Generative words and themes are the basis for conversation, reading and writing activities. Activities begin at a basic level (decoding) and move on to more complex tasks.
2. Collaboration and dialogue among equals: Teachers and learners discuss issues in groups together as equals.
3. Problem posing. Teachers and learners describe what they see in pictures, texts and objects, examine relationships, and talk about how what they see makes them feel.

(Adapted from: Peyton and Crandall, 1995 and Crawford, Hutt and Young, 1994)

This type of instruction works well with groups of students who have the same language background.

“In the Freirean approach, the reading material is relevant to the problem under consideration and, therefore the reader becomes motivated to read and understand.” (Crawford, Hutt and Young, 1994)

ESL literacy learning: Stages of learning

Although learning happens on a continuum, the following five stages of literacy development as described in the Draft Literacy Component for Draft LINC Curriculum Guidelines outline one interpretation of ESL literacy skills development. (adapted from “Five Stages of Reading for ESL Students” by Savage and Mrowicki) The majority of students in basic literacy programs fall within stages 1 or 2, with some students possessing various Stage 3 skills. Students will not necessarily master a stage completely before beginning to develop the skills involved in the next stage.

Stage 1: Mechanical Skills Development

- This is the starting point for pre-literate, non-literate and non-Roman alphabet learners.
- The focus here is on developing visual and motor skills.
- The learner must learn to understand that a two-dimensional diagram can represent a three dimensional object.
- Tasks at this stage include: learning how to hold a pencil, learning pencil strokes, learning left-to-right and top-to-bottom progression, discriminating between same and different shapes, letters and numbers, and copying.
- Stage one tasks may be presented without a theme, but should be recycled and practiced within the context of themes later on.

Stage 2: Connecting Oral Language with Written Language

- This stage requires some understanding of spoken English.

- The purpose of this stage is to create an awareness of the relationship between spoken word and written language.
- This stage is the starting point for semi-literate learners.
- Activities at this stage include: reading and responding to social sight words using TPR, matching words to pictures, filling in simple forms, writing numbers and sequencing a short series of sentences with pictures.
- The outcome of this stage is minimal survival literacy.

Stage 3: Obtaining Meaning From Print

- This stage is necessary if the learner is to get beyond minimal literacy skills.
- In this stage the learner begins to obtain meaning from the written word and begins to put meaning into personal writing.
- Activities at this stage are presented with theme based material.
- Activities at this stage include: reading comprehension with true-false statements, questions, sentence sequencing, cloze exercises, Language Experience Approach stories, and guided composition.

Stage 4: Obtaining Meaning from a Variety of Print Materials

- Students at this stage have gone beyond the level of basic literacy instruction.
- This stage involves the development of strategies such as skimming, scanning and reading documents for real life reading, prose and non-prose.
- Activities at this stage include: scanning a phone book for information, reading labels for instructions, reading the classified section of the newspaper for specific information, filling in complex forms, writing short compositions and reading and writing messages.

Stage 5: Independent Reading and Writing

- This level is beyond the scope of regular LINC classes.

Relation of Type of Literacy Learner to Instructional Approach

One of the purposes of this study was to identify literacy learner types and approaches to teaching literacy, and to evaluate which approach is most effective for each type of literacy learner. Little or no research commits to identifying one specific effective instructional approach for each literacy type. What came out of the study however, is that each learner is individual, no matter what literacy type they are classified under, and that there is no "one correct teaching approach" that is perfect for each type.

Some observations can be interpreted from the results of the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program. Instructors in this program employed a variety of approaches when working with their literacy learners to achieve results. When approaches were compared to literacy type, only a small correlation could be made between type and effective instructional approach. On a general level, instructors found the following approaches to be effective with their literacy students: a combination of approaches; whole language; competency based instruction; language experience approach; participatory approach; and phonics based instruction. Selection of approaches used stemmed from an observation of the individual learner's needs, background, focus and learning style instead of their literacy type.

Pre-literate and Non-literate learners

When addressing different types of literacy learners and material presented in the classroom, the pre-literate and non-literate learners stand out as groups with special needs. Due to a lack of literacy skills in their native language and often lack of any English language whatsoever, these learners need to begin with survival language that will enable them to function at a very basic level in Canadian society. Gunderson states that "they must be introduced to survival reading to equip them to recognize and read important vocabulary...direct observation and instruction are superior activities...the teacher must take the students out of the classroom and bring them into 'the field' " (Gunderson, 1991).

Allender supports this need to present students with real material, suggesting that "learning sequences need to begin with concrete experience and slowly build up to more complex and abstract concepts" (Allender, 1998). She quotes Ramm from an article in 1994, stating that Ramm "...recommends using real objects to set an immediate and meaningful context, gradually replacing them with photos or realistic pictures, then substituting these with more abstract diagrams or graphics" (Allender, 1998). Thus, pre-literate and non-literate learners benefit from a combination of approaches including whole language and competency-based instruction which moves from very basic competencies and language levels to slightly more complicated ones.

The majority of instructors in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program found that a combination of instructional approaches was most effective when teaching non-literate learners. The approaches they employed were Whole Language , Language Experience Approach and some Competency-based Instruction. The fact that most of the learners in

the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program had some oral skills made it feasible to use language experience stories with them.

Semi-literate and Functionally non-literate learners

Semi-literate and functionally non-literate learners have at least a few years of education in their native language, can make the connection between pictures, print and objects, and recognize that there is some meaning in print. These learners benefit from encouragement that learning to read and write will make a difference in their lives, that people are interested in what they can put in print, and that they can develop literacy skills and become fully literate members of society. Allender also suggests focusing on organizational and study skills and keeping classroom activities varied. "These learners benefit from instruction in techniques for study management, problem solving, memorizing, categorizing, the use of reference tools such as dictionaries, and the explicit transfer of skills to other contexts. Instructors need to continually recycle language and skills, include physical activities and make frequent changes of activities" (Allender, 1998). These learners also benefit from a Whole Language Approach combined with a competency-based program and the Language Experience Approach which allows them to build on the few language skills that they have already established.

Almost all of the instructors working with the semi-literate and functionally non-literate learners employed a combination of instructional approaches with these learners. The Language Experience Approach worked well, allowing the learners to build upon previous knowledge and reading and writing skills. Many of the instructors combined this with a Competency-based program focusing on the Canadian Language Benchmarks literacy competencies. Some instructors used whole language techniques as well, utilizing the learners' oral skills to develop reading and writing skills. A few instructors adapted the participatory approach to fit the individualized setting.

Non-Roman alphabet learners

Strictly non-Roman alphabet learners usually have the language learning skills from their own native language which they can apply to learning English. These skills assist them in learning English more rapidly than other literacy learners. They often get frustrated however, at the fact that they have gone from being literate in their native language to needing a great deal of assistance in English. Constant encouragement and recognition of progress will deter them from getting frustrated and giving up. Reading material that is directly to their situation, relevant, useful to them, and in no way childish will help to maintain interest. These learners can build on their existing knowledge in their native language to develop their literacy skills in English. A combination of Competency-based instruction and the Language Experience Approach can be used to make the material more personal.

Instructors in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program working with this type of learner employed a combination of approaches focusing around a competency-based approach, with some success.

Many of the instructors commented on the effectiveness of employing the following strategies when working with all types of literacy learners:

Use student centered lessons that focus on the specific needs of the student.

Repeat and recycle information learned in previous lessons to reinforce learning.

Move at a pace appropriate for the attention and retention abilities of the learner

A combination of instructional approaches

Each approach has its merits and can benefit literacy learners in some way, thus the "best approach" appears to be a combination of approaches and variety of tasks. Auerbach states that "...studies of the real-world uses of literacy and literacy acquisition in different settings have revealed that the ways people read and write vary according to the task, the situation, the purpose, and the relationship between reader, writer, and setting" (Auerbach,1992).

In a study of what makes literacy programs effective, Shirley Brod quotes Shank and Terrill saying that: "Programs that use a variety of strategies and techniques to address the differing learning styles, previous educational experience, and multiple skills levels present in most adult ESL classes will have a greater chance of meeting the educational needs and expectations of the individual learners within the class." (Shank and Terrill, 1995). Including different approaches and tasks in literacy instruction gives learners the opportunity to experience these different situations, purposes and relationships. One of the key points listed in Holt's techniques for working with adult literacy learners is to "include a variety of techniques to appeal to diverse learning styles. For example, merge holistic reading approaches such as language experience with discreet approaches such as phonics" (Holt, 1995).

Meaningful material and learner involvement

Two ideas central to effective literacy instruction that literacy researchers agree on are that the material presented to the literacy learner must be meaningful, 'real-world' material related to the learner's immediate personal experiences and needs and that learners must be involved in the direction that learning takes. (Allender, 1998; Auerbach, 1992; Bell and Burnaby, 1984; Gunderson,1991; Holt, 1995; Peyton, 1993; Wrigley, 1993).

When planning literacy program materials and instruction, instructors must take into consideration the learner's reasons for wanting to improve his/her literacy skills and use these reasons as the focus for materials and content. Throughout the learning period, connections must be made relating lesson materials to the learner's life outside the classroom so that he/she can see the relevance and is encouraged to continue learning.

In a Canadian study of what makes a literacy program effective for language minority adults, Alister Cumming of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education included the following program characteristics in his list of elements common to successful ESL literacy programs:

- Curriculum content and instructional materials based on participants' own immediate experiences, personal knowledge, perceived problems, and social interests and aspirations.
 - Participatory approaches to program planning, development, and evaluation that include the learners themselves.
- (Cumming, 1992)

Relation of Literacy Learner Type to Progress in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program

Very little, if any research is published on this topic. Many researchers identify literacy types and discuss progress in general relating to literacy learners, but the focus is on learning strategies, instructional methods, and using learner-centered materials. Observations from the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program provide some results, however due to the individualized nature of the program, it is hard to compare learners' progress. All learners had a different program focused on their individual needs. Some general observations are noted below, but perhaps more reliable conclusions could be made in a program in which all learners are focusing on similar skills and are receiving the same instruction.

To gather the data used to measure increases in literacy skills and abilities, three areas of results were considered. First, pre and post-test scores were compared to measure the percent of increase from pre-term to post-term. Next, the number of initial benchmarks competencies observed by the instructors at the start of term were compared to the number of competencies mastered by the end of the term. A percent of increase was determined from these numbers to measure their improvement based on observation of their daily literacy activities. Finally, the number of students that moved from one Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Level to the next was determined. It is important to take into consideration with the benchmark level numbers however, that students can improve on their literacy skills within a level without showing up on these figures. Please note that only students who completed an entire term in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program are included in this data.

The most accurate representation of what the students mastered over the course of the term is the Average Percentage Increase in Benchmarks Competencies. These figures come from daily observation of the students' mastery of certain competencies and include the more subtle improvement in each learner's language. They also factor out variables such as test anxiety and lucky guesses on tests.

**Table 8.1
Literacy Progress by Type**

Type of Literacy Learner	Percentage of ILIP Population	Average Increase in score from pre- to post-test		Average Percentage Increase in Benchmarks Competencies		Percent of participants that moved up into the next benchmark level	
		Reading	Writing	Reading	Writing	Reading	Writing
Non-literate/non-Roman alphabet learners	24%	10% <small>(Range: from 0% to 25%)</small>	28% <small>(Range: from 16% to 42.5%)</small>	17% <small>(Range: from 0 % to 38%)</small>	14% <small>(Range: from 2% to 29%)</small>	17%	33%
Semi-literate & Semi-literate / Non-Roman alphabet learners	32%	38% <small>(Range: from 0% to 80%)</small>	26% <small>(Range: from -6% to 54%)</small>	21% <small>Range: from 10% to 43%)</small>	19% <small>(Range: from 9% to 38%)</small>	64%	73%
Functionally non-literate & Functionally non-literate Non-Roman alphabet learners	35%	15% <small>(Range: from -10% to 60%)</small>	41% <small>(Range: from 2% to 75%)</small>	23% <small>(Range: from 7.5% to 50%)</small>	22% <small>(Range: from 6% to 65%)</small>	9%	42%
Non-Roman alphabet learners <small>*Please note: the sample size was too small to be an accurate representation of all Non-Roman alphabet learners</small>	9%	32% <small>Range: all 20%)</small>	36% <small>(Range: from 39% to 51%)</small>	36% <small>(Range: from 23% to 48%)</small>	40% <small>(Range: from 38% to 41%)</small>	66%	100%
Program average All learners types combined (total of 26 students, 2 of 28 in the program were absent for scoring when data was collected)	100%	17% <small>(Range: from -10% to 80%)</small>	34% <small>(Range: from -6% to 75%)</small>	23% <small>(Range: from 0% to 48%)</small>	20% <small>(Range: from 6% to 65%)</small>	31%	44%

Please note: Percentages in this study have been rounded off and will fall between 99 and 101%.

Observations and Conclusions

The individualized nature of this program meant that each individual learner's needs were met, and thus measurable progress was achieved by all. The one-on-one instruction provided a setting that demonstrated the value of personalized learning for all literacy types. The result was that personal focus and motivation, not literacy type, appeared to be the key factors to success, therefore it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding literacy type and rate of progress. The following program observations as to type of literacy learner and learning are worth noting however.

Progress was made by all literacy type groups, with noticeably more progress demonstrated by the strictly non-Roman alphabet learners (although this sampling is too small to make any final determinations). Non-literate learners in the program tended to demonstrate a somewhat lower percentage increase in benchmarks competencies. This can no doubt be attributed to their low level of transferable basic language learning skills and a much lower awareness of literacy in their native language than other types upon entry into the program. As they are building up from the very basics, their progress will be demonstrated at a slower rate than other literacy types. As a result, non-literate learners would benefit from more time in programs that provide them with the opportunity to first develop their language learning strategies and then to develop literacy skills. Semi-literate and functionally non-literate learners demonstrated a similar rate of progress, somewhere in between that of the non-literate learners and the non-Roman alphabet learners.

Although the sample size was very small and can not be taken as an accurate sampling of all learners of this type, the strictly non-Roman alphabet learners in this program demonstrated a greater increase in benchmarks competencies than the other types. This can be attributed to the fact that they are up against fewer obstacles than other literacy types, and have more language learning strategies to call upon.

Semi-literate and functionally non-literate learners demonstrated a similar rate of progress to one another. They fell in the middle of the chart, much like their placement on the literacy types scale. This may be a result of their similar language backgrounds: some type of education in their native language, enough to make some connection between oral language and print, but not enough to provide them with strong literacy skills.

Based on the results of the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program, rate of progress appears to increase with the learner's literacy knowledge and experience in their native language. Those with very little native language literacy skills progress more slowly than those with literacy skills in their native language. The more literacy knowledge in the native language, the better the rate of progress.

In an individualized instructional setting, all types of literacy learners can be expected to make noticeable, measurable progress in a relatively short period of time. After approximately 36 hours of individualized instruction, all types of literacy learners in this

program demonstrated improvement. Once again, the overall improvements among all literacy types in this program are a direct result of the individualized nature of the program. When literacy learners are given the opportunity to study in a program that focuses on their immediate individual needs and provides them with hands-on materials that are relevant to their interests and needs, the progress is noticeable, regardless of literacy type.

Relation of Type of Literacy Learner to Potential Literacy Proficiency

Once again, no research was located that focused on this comparison. Observations from the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program identified that amount of progress or literacy proficiency outcomes depend more on individual motivation than on literacy type, but the following general observations can be made:

- The progress demonstrated by many of the Non-literate literacy types seems to level off once they have achieved the skills necessary to function in their daily lives. Mastery of more academic literacy skills is not as prevalent among these learners as it is among other types. As this type of literacy learner must acquire language learning strategies as well as literacy skills, many of them focus on what is needed to function in their daily routines and do not go beyond this point. A highly motivated non-literate learner may go further, but many of the non-literate learners in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program demonstrated a great deal of progress in the early stages of literacy development and then appeared to level off.
- The basic literacy familiarity that semi-literate learners possess appears to be enough to give them the edge to achieve literacy proficiency. Once again, however, the key factor appears to be motivation. Many of the semi-literate learners in this program had identified concrete goals and reasons for improving their literacy skills. They were highly motivated, and demonstrated incredible progress, many of them reaching a higher proficiency than the functionally non-literate and strictly non-Roman alphabet types did. Some of these learners reached benchmarks 3 in reading and writing, or stage three of the ESL literacy stages of learning outlined previously in this report (page 47). With further instruction, there is no reason why these learners could not achieve literacy proficiency and function at least at a level 3 or 4 in the ESL literacy stages of learning outlined previously in this report (page 47).
- While the functionally non-literate learners in this program progressed, motivation appears to be a factor here as well. Perhaps the motivation in this group was not as high as with the semi-literate learners, or perhaps the high number of learners with perceived learning disabilities was a factor, but they did not achieve the same level of proficiency as some of the semi-literate learners. Some progress was demonstrated however, and there is no demonstrable reason why this type of learner, if given enough instruction, couldn't go on to achieve literacy proficiency and function at a level 3 or 4 in the ESL literacy stages of learning outlined previously in this report (page 47).

- Learners of the non-Roman alphabet type have the background language learning knowledge and skills to assist them in understanding literacy in a new language. With the proper motivation and a reasonable amount of literacy instruction, this type of learner could achieve full literacy proficiency in English and function at stage four or higher in the ESL literacy stages of learning outlined previously in this report (page 47).

Conclusions: Effective ESL Literacy Instruction

After reviewing research into the field of ESL literacy instruction and considering the observations made in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program at Bow Valley College, the following conclusions can be made regarding effective ESL literacy instruction:

Literacy learners have very unique and individual needs and although they can be classified according to their educational background and personal history into literacy types, no homogeneous groups exist within these types. There is no one instructional method that works all individuals.

Literacy learners benefit from a program that focuses on their immediate needs and reasons for learning and presents them with authentic meaningful material. Literacy programs should have some type of interview in place at the beginning of a program to determine these needs. Connections should be made relating lesson material to everyday life on a regular basis throughout the course to keep learners focused.

A combination of instructional approaches based on the task at hand and the needs of the learner is the most effective way to ensure that the material is reaching the learner.

Material presented to ESL literacy learners should be adult in content, student-centered and it should be recycled and reinforced throughout the course.

Language experience stories and related activities benefit all ESL literacy types as a regular part of a program. The material presented in these activities is directly relevant to the learner, can be developed at a level specific to the learner, and ties real life experiences, listening, speaking, reading and writing together in the classroom.

All ESL literacy learners benefit from increased self-confidence. If they feel that they are achieving something important, then they are more likely to progress rapidly and take more risks at trying new things in their learning and in daily life.

Pre-literate and non-literate learners learn best when they are taught using 'hands-on' authentic materials in their original settings before moving into picture representations and print.

Individual instruction is beneficial to literacy learners in that it motivates the learners through material directly related to each learner's individual situation. The individual attention and encouragement helps the learner stay focused and helps to increase his/her self-confidence level. Learners in an individual program tend to progress rapidly and claim to remember more of what they have learned.

Regardless of literacy type, learners who have identified a specific goal or reason for improving their literacy skills tend to progress more rapidly than those who have not.

Recommendations

Effective ESL literacy programs must consider the specific needs of literacy learners in the program; encourage the learners to identify their goal; and use a number of different teaching approaches that employ authentic and relevant materials and tasks. Learners should be provided with some level of individual attention in the learning process.

Conclusions: Rate of Progress and Potential Proficiency

The following conclusions can be made regarding literacy type related to rate of progress and potential proficiency:

Literacy learners in the non-literate type group tend to progress somewhat slower than other literacy types. This can be attributed to the need to develop basic learning strategies before they can focus on developing language literacy skills. On the opposite end of the scale, strictly non-Roman alphabet learners tend to demonstrate progress at a noticeably faster rate than other literacy types. This can be attributed to their background language knowledge in their native language and their already developed learning strategies. Semi-literate and functionally non-literate learners can be expected to progress at a moderate rate, somewhere in between these other two types. Non-literate learners would benefit from extended periods of instruction.

All learners demonstrate progress when the instructor focuses the program on the individual learner and when material presented to them is relevant to their needs and interests.

All literacy types have the potential to achieve a reasonable level of literacy proficiency. The length of literacy training necessary gets longer and the level of potential proficiency decreases somewhat as we move down the literacy type scale from strictly non-Roman alphabet learners to non-literate learners. Non-literate and pre-literate learners face the greatest challenge, and many will level out once they have achieved the literacy level necessary to function in their daily routine. With the right motivation and length of instruction however, all literacy types should be able to function at least at stage three in the ESL literacy stages of learning outlined previously in this report (page 47).

Recommendations:

All literacy learners will require more learning time in programs than regular ESL learners to reach a reasonable level of English proficiency. Literacy programs should also allow for the extended period of learning necessary for non-literate and pre-literate learners. These learners should be provided with some instruction in learning skills and strategies and the very basics of reading and writing before moving on to develop their English literacy skills. As we move up the scale of literacy types, from semi-literate to functionally non-literate to strictly non-Roman alphabet, the literacy learners can be expected to progress at a somewhat faster pace.

Literacy programs should strive for a survival level of proficiency among non-literate and pre-literate learners, and higher levels of proficiency as one moves up the scale of literacy types. No learner should be limited in their expectations however, as all literacy learners, depending on their motivation, can achieve a reasonable level of English proficiency that will allow them to function in society, reading and writing simple texts.

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SECTION IV:

**Individualized Literacy Instruction Program:
Conclusions and Key Recommendations**

Individualized Literacy Instruction and Research Project: Conclusions and Key Recommendations

Literacy Programs in Calgary

Calgary has been and continues to be a popular city for immigrants to settle in. The number of family class immigrants and refugees that have settled here and may need literacy instruction merits attention. There also appears to be a large number of already established immigrants here that have literacy needs.

Programs are needed to address the varying literacy needs of these immigrants arriving in and established in Calgary. Recommendations for programs which address the needs of the following learner profiles have been made:

- Uneducated, unemployed women with childcare needs
- Immigrants with long-standing literacy needs who are currently in the workforce
- LINC eligible learners at a variety of different benchmark levels that have identified literacy needs.
- Immigrants that have been here for a number of years and have developed their oral skills but missed out on initial ESL training and have literacy needs.
- Arabic speakers who have literacy needs at various benchmark levels.

Attempts should be made to access individuals who are not actively learning at present, but have literacy needs, and to address the needs of individuals who for whatever reason are attending regular ESL programs that do not specifically address their literacy needs.

Results of the Pilot Project

Demographics: When demographics and educational background data from the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program was analyzed, the following trends appeared: Arabic speakers made up a large part of the population of each literacy type. These learners had a variety of educational backgrounds, ranging from none at all to 9 years. Their sizeable presence in each language group and motivation to improve their literacy skills suggests a need for a program aimed at this language group. This program would need to address different levels of literacy skills and interests. Many of the men want to improve their literacy skills to obtain better employment or to take employment training programs. The majority of the women spend a lot of time in the home with their children. A literacy program based on lifeskills and parenting would help them.

In each literacy type, the majority of learners had received some type of literacy training prior to the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program and a large group of the participants in each group had been in Canada for over 10 years. This points to the need for literacy training for individuals who have already attended ESL classes and have established themselves in Canada. These individuals may not be actively looking for language training courses, and may be hard to reach. Possible access to these learners may be made through contact with employers of large numbers of second language speakers; social services or employment insurance offices; elementary, junior high and

high schools in areas with large immigrant populations; and through word of mouth by students enrolled in literacy programs and active in their ethnic communities.

Women had a noticeably higher representation in the non-literate category. These learners have more than likely received little or no education in their native language, and have not had the opportunity to use print in their native countries. They are very high needs literacy learners, and are often dealing with childcare and family issues as well. A program to address their needs is in order, but must consider scheduling, childcare and location very carefully in order to ensure maximum participation by the learners.

Individualized Literacy Instruction Compared to Classroom Literacy Instruction

For the most part, individualized instruction results in more progress in a shorter period of time. Classroom instruction is more cost effective, however, and provides the students with more social contacts. When progress among the different literacy types was compared to instructional delivery, the non-literate and semi-literate learners benefited more from an individualized learning approach. Functionally non-literate learners and non-Roman alphabet learners were able to benefit from the classroom approach. It appears that the more background literacy skills and strategies that the learners have, the better able they are to function in a classroom setting. Learners with only very basic literacy skills benefit more from individualized instruction.

Literacy Types: Instructional Methods, Rate of Progress and Potential Proficiency

When working with literacy learners in general, all types benefit from an instruction which focuses program material on individual interests and needs, employs authentic, hands-on material, uses a variety of instructional approaches and involves the learner in the planning process.

Non-literate learners benefit from a combination of the Whole Language Approach, Language Experience Approach and some Competency-based Instruction. Instructors in the Individualized Literacy Instruction Program found that semi-literate and functionally non-literate learners responded well to a Language Experience Approach combined with Competency-based Instruction and some Whole Language. They found that Non-Roman alphabet learners benefited from a Competency-based approach combined with others.

Non-literate literacy learners tend to demonstrate a slower rate of progress than other literacy types due to their need to develop learning strategies as well as improve their literacy skills. This type of learner would benefit from extended programs of literacy instruction.

Non-Roman alphabet learners at the other end of the scale demonstrate a faster rate of progress than other literacy types probably because of the number of language learning strategies that they are able to transfer from their native language.

Semi-literate and functionally non-literate learners tend to progress at a rate somewhere in between the other two types, depending on their motivation.

All literacy types have the potential to achieve a functional level of literacy proficiency, depending on their motivation. Strictly non-Roman alphabet learners are most likely to demonstrate the highest level of proficiency because they have the most transferable language learning skills to assist them in their learning. Functionally non-literate and semi-literate learners follow respectively with less background knowledge to assist them. Non-literate learners are also capable of achieving a reasonable level of literacy proficiency, depending on their motivation. However, this group is more likely to level off at a lower proficiency level than the rest of the literacy types. This type of learner may only develop enough literacy skills to function in their daily routine.

Programs designed for literacy learners should employ a number of different teaching approaches using authentic relevant material, should provide non-literate and pre-literate learners with more time to complete their studies, and should expect and encourage all literacy students to achieve a reasonable, at minimum survival, level of English literacy proficiency.