



RETURNING MATERIALS:

Place in book drop to
remove this checkout from
your record. FINES will
be charged if book is
returned after the date
stamped below.

271		
-----	--	--

**ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT AMONG ADULT LEARNERS STUDYING
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL): A FIELD STUDY**

by

Bereket Habtemariam

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Teacher Education

1988

5368807

ABSTRACT

ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT AMONG ADULT LEARNERS STUDYING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL): A FIELD STUDY

by

Bereket Habtemariam

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors related to reported high rates of absenteeism and dropping out among adult learners attending English as a Second Language (ESL) evening classes, as perceived by the learners. This critical educational problem has concerned adult educators and adult education curriculum planners.

This study employed participant observation as a method of inquiry. Participant observation is a field research technique which requires long-term observation of a given population in a research site. The setting of this study was a public elementary school in a small town in the Great Lakes region. The data collected for this study consisted of extensive fieldnotes, transcriptions of formal open-ended and informal interviews, and on-site documents. Hunches, triangulations to cross-check results, and key linkages between patterns of recurring events and the research questions were used in interpreting the data.

The study revealed that the following factors were perceived by ESL adult learners as related to absenteeism and dropping out in the class they were attending:

1. age
2. fatigue
3. family obligations
4. the weather
5. lack of interest or motivation

The study also indicated that two of the factors (age and family obligations) were influenced by the cultural backgrounds of the ESL adult learners.

The results of the study have implications for how ESL adult educators and curriculum planners can minimize the factors related to absenteeism and dropping out, by developing educational programs for ESL adult learners through careful planning and within the andragogical principle of teaching. Further research is recommended to see if the findings of this study can be generalized.

Copyright by
Bereket Habtemariam
1988

Dedicated to
my dearest and loving parents, my father Habtemariam
Tesfazgy and my mother Leteab Habtezion who instilled in me
the values of education and hard work during my early years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my sincere appreciation to the many individuals who made it possible for me to complete this study.

First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Dissertation Guidance Committee for their continued support and professional guidance. I thank Dr. Kenneth Neff, my advisor and chairman of the Guidance Committee for his special assistance and for his willingness to offer direction. I also wish to thank the other committee members, Dr. Charles Blackman, Dr. Ben Bohnhorst, and Dr. Max Raines, for their friendly advice, inspiration, constant encouragement, and constructive suggestions. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Douglas Campbell, who willingly accepted a request to direct the study, for his friendship, for his prompt and careful reading and comments of each chapter, for his continuous feedback in the writing process, and for spending a great deal of time showing me how to use the word processor and for helping me in the interpretation of the data.

I am also indebted to Mrs. Matienzo (pseudonym), the ESL adult learners' teacher and to all other participants who took part in the study whose names must remain anonymous, for sharing their information and precious time with me.

I express my appreciation to my wife, Lynne, my three and a half year old son, Beniam, and my nine month old daughter, Tigiste, for their prayers, love, understanding, encouragement, support, patience, and for all the sacrifices they have made, and for allowing me to be away many late nights and weekends working on my dissertation. Beniam has been a very good companion. Many days he sat with me for hours at the "Nunion" computer lab. One Sunday afternoon, after patiently waiting for six hours, he said, "You are wasting my time dad, let's go." I could not help laughing. I am most grateful to my dearest parents for teaching me to love and respect others, for supporting me, and for giving me the opportunity to excell. I would not be where I am now if it were not for their continued moral and financial support as well as spiritual guidance. Special thanks are extended to my brothers Solomon and his wife Maeza with the children, Debessay and his wife Zion, Kibreab and his wife Ghenet, Ephriem, and my sisters Mehret and her husband Teklehaimanot with the children, and Berekty for their support and encouragement.

Finally, I owe a special word of thanks to my colleagues and friends for their valuable and insightful comments, and for their support. I thank Mr. Jack Keyes, Mrs. Ruth Brunke, and the other staff members at my school for giving me a word of advice and encouragement. I extend my gratitude to Dr. Kebede Daka, a long-time friend, for his

advice, encouragement, and for taking the fear of a computer away from me by showing me how to use it. The following people also deserve a word of appreciation for their moral support: Dr. Yacob Fiseha and his family, Dr. Richard Powell (TMC, Andrews University), Esaias Girsha, Dr. Alemu Beeftu and his wife Ghenet, Mama Giorgis, Habte Dafa and his wife Alganesh, Zerezghi Eiasu and his wife Alganesh, Andemariam Teklemariam and his wife Almaz, Yerusalem Nephtalem (Dr. Kebede Daka's wife), Kiflu Ghebremichael and his wife Lisa, Dr. James Otieno, Dr. Meshack Sagini, Gideon Asmerom, Ogbazgy Asmerom and his wife Zaid, Daniel Ghebrelul, Ghebrelul Ghebre and his wife Kibra, Alem Beshir and his wife Woredesh, Bereket Ogbamichael (Mekusi) and his wife Zion, and Fesehaye Haile and his wife Zaid.

Most of all, I am thankful to the almighty God for giving me good health, courage, and strength to go this far.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES.....	xii
Note to the Reader	xiii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	
The Problem	1
The Purpose of the Study	3
Research Questions	3
Definition of Terms	4
Limitations and Delimitations of the Study	6
Significance of the Study	6
*Organization of the Study	7
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Adult Education: Historical Background	9
Immigrant Education and the First ESL	
Adult Learners	13
Adult Education: Philosophy	18
Liberal Adult Education	19
Progressive Adult Education	20
Behaviorist Adult Education	21
Humanistic Adult Education	23
Radical Adult Education	25
Adult Education: Theory	27
The Role of the Adult Educator	28
Characteristics of Adult Learners	30
Related Studies	33
Summary	39
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	
Participant Observation: What Is It?	42
Types of Participation	43
The Rationale for Using Participant Observation ...	46
The Design and Procedure for Data Collection	47
The Population for the Study	50
Sampling for Interview	52
Summary	56

CHAPTER IV: REVIEW OF THE SETTING

Introduction	57
Entry Negotiations	57
The Community	59
The School	60
The ESL Program	62
The ESL Adult Education Classroom	63
The ESL Adult Learners	65
Mrs. Matienzo: The ESL Adult Education Teacher	77
What is Going on in Mrs. Matienzo's Classroom?	80
Schedule of Activities	80
Greetings, Attendance, and Getting Started ..	81
Conversation and Listening Drill	82
Written Exercises	84
Break	85
Reading and Spelling	85
Listening in the Language Lab	87
Staying after Class for Extra Help	87
Summary	87

CHAPTER V: DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction	89
Absenteeism in Mrs. Matienzo's Class	89
What Do ESL Adult Learners Perceive to Be the Factors Related to Absenteeism and Dropping Out of This Class?	90
Age	91
Fatigue	95
Family Obligations	97
The Weather	102
Lack of Interest or Motivation	104
Other	107
What Influence Does Cultural Background Have on ESL Adult Learners' Perceptions of Factors Related to Absenteeism and Dropping Out?	110
Cultural Beliefs and Age as a Factor	111
Cultural Beliefs and Family Obligations as Factors	113
The Teacher as a Factor Associated with Absenteeism and Dropping Out among ESL Adult Learners	116
Her Personality	116
Her Teaching Style	117

The Classroom Physical Environment as a Factor Related to Absenteeism and Dropping Out among ESL Adult Learners	118
Sitting Arrangement	118
Other Classroom Environment Factors	120
Summary	121

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Summary	122
Alternative Explanations	127
Course Not Sufficiently Organized	127
Lack of Compulsory Attendance	128
Lack of Strong Culture Within the Group	129
No Tuition Charged	130
Recommendations for Further Research	131
Implications for Curriculum in Adult Education ...	132
Concluding Reflections	137

APPENDICES

A. Consent Form for the Program Coordinator	139
B. Consent Form for the Teacher	140
C. Consent Form for the Adult Learners	141
D. In-depth Interview Sample Questions	143

LIST OF REFERENCES	144
--------------------------	-----

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Table	Page
1. ESL Adult Learners Who Dropped Out of the Program	52
2. Number of In-depth Interview Participants by Region	54
3. Characteristics of ESL Adult Learners	67
4. Mrs. Matienzo's Class Schedule	80
5. ESL Adult Learners' Absence Record	91
6. ESL Adult Learners' Perceptions of Factors Influenced by Cultural Background	115

Figure

1. Mrs. Matienzo's Classroom	64
------------------------------------	----

Note to the Reader

To protect the privacy of those involved, pseudonyms have been used throughout the study. The names of not only the teacher and the adult learners but also the school and the community have been changed to guarantee confidentiality.

The following abbreviations have been used in this study:

- 1) FN = Fieldnotes
- 2) FI = Formal Interview
- 3) IFI = Informal Interview

A notation such as (FN 10-15-87) means that the quotation was from fieldnotes taken on October 15, 1987. Long quotations and narrative descriptions in the form of vignettes are indented and single-spaced.

Census information and statistical figures used in Chapter IV were obtained from city and school officials through informal interviews (over the phone in most cases) and direct face-to-face interviews.

Bereket Habtemariam

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

"In contemporary times in the U.S.A., education is seen as vital to both society and the individual, since it is considered to be the key to future success" (Burdick, 1987, p. 1). The civic and economic welfare of the nation is dependent upon a universally high level of educational attainment (Lenning, 1980).

Educators generally agree that increase in knowledge and changes in intellectual behavior occur through continuity of effective educational effort. Dropping out of an educational program can result in discouragement, and a lowering of drive toward further educational work (Zahn and Phillips, 1961).

The focus of this study is factors related to absenteeism and dropping out from an English as a Second Language (ESL) class as perceived by its adult participants. Teachers of ESL adult learners continually report irregularity of attendance and high dropout rates as among their most serious problems. Dropout rates of 25 to 50 percent among ESL adult learners have been reported (Wilson, 1980; Zahn, 1964). Robinson (1969), who studied Mexican immigrants in the Los Angeles area, reported that educators are concerned about "The extremely wide variation in

attendance pattern exhibited by new arrivals..." (p. 2). Adult educators are disturbed by the continuous declining of attendance and high dropout rates in ESL adult evening classes (Berrol, 1976; Weidman, 1985).

The national magnitude of this critical educational problem has become an important issue and has caused concern among adult educators and policy makers, and among ESL adult educators in particular. This concern is based on the prediction that serious economic and social consequences can result for those who fail to obtain an adequate level of education (Moreira, 1985; Watkins, 1985). ESL adult learners must not only acquire the necessary language skills, but also should pursue further knowledge in order to function in the society.

When a significant number of ESL adult learners continue to miss classes or quit before completing their program, is it because of lack of commitment and seriousness on the part of the learners or a failure on the part of institutions to provide qualified teachers and the necessary facilities? The better we understand the various causes for absenteeism and dropping out, the more constructively we can work to reduce their numbers.

Adult educators seem to have finally realized that the problem of absenteeism and attrition is very much alive in ESL adult education centers. Yet little is known as to what factors contribute to this problem. Significantly more

needs to be known about the environmental conditions surrounding ESL adult education programs.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors related to high rates of absenteeism and dropping out among adult learners attending English as a Second Language (ESL) evening classes, as perceived by the learners. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, specific research questions were formulated, answers to which will be used as a basis for the final conclusions from this research.

This study is also intended to provide information that could be used to modify ongoing progress, to develop planning of new ESL adult education programs, and to increase the effectiveness of carrying out these programs.

Research Questions

The study will seek answers to the following specific questions:

1. What do ESL adult learners perceive to be the factors related to absenteeism and dropping out in the classes they attend?
2. What influence does cultural background have on ESL adult learners' perceptions of factors related to absenteeism and dropping out?

3. How do ESL adult learners perceive the teacher's personality as a factor associated with absenteeism and dropping out?
4. How do ESL adult learners perceive the teacher's teaching style as a factor associated with absenteeism and dropping out?
5. How do ESL adult learners perceive the physical environment of the classroom as a factor related to absenteeism and dropping out?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this study.

1. Absenteeism: The extent to which ESL adult learners fail to attend classes.
2. Adult Education: Education provided for ESL adult learners. In this case, English classes.
3. Adult Learners: ESL adult students who attend English classes for various reasons. It also refers to non-traditional adult students attending community colleges.
4. Attrition: Dropping out from a program of study by ESL adult learners and adult learners attending community colleges.
5. Cultural Background: Refers to cultural beliefs or values of people as members of a group. It has to do

with the ways of thinking and living of a group of people (Spradley, 1980, p.86).

6. Dropout: An ESL adult learner who fails to complete a course of study.
7. English as a Second Language (ESL) : English language program offered to non-English speaking adult learners as a foreign language.
8. Field Study Research: A research technique that necessitates long-term, continual observation of a given population or site.
9. Hunches: Intuitive feelings or guesses.
10. Participant Observation: A research technique for studying the behavior of small groups from the inside as a participating member (Rowntree, 1981, p. 209).
11. Perception: ESL adult learners' opinions and attitudes of factors related to absenteeism and dropping out in the classes they attend.
12. Persisters: ESL Adult learners who deliberately attempt to pursue their education without interruption until they complete their program of study.
13. Retention: Continuing an ESL program of study without interruption.
14. Triangulation: The use of multiple sources of data to gather new kinds of information by cross-checking results (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 11).
15. Vignettes: Narrative descriptions of events (Erickson, 1986).

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Research questions for this study were specifically developed for ESL adult learners. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalized to other populations, for example, for regular elementary and/or secondary students or for other adult learners. However, lessons can be drawn from the findings for ESL programs with similar circumstances. The accuracy of the findings may be partially dependent upon the learners' honesty in responding to the interview questions. However, it is unrealistic to assume that all learners are dishonest in responding to the interview questions. Despite stated limitations and delimitations, it is hoped that the present study will provide baseline data and will serve as a model for similar investigations.

Significance of the Study

High rates of absenteeism and dropping out among ESL adult learners has become a significant issue among today's educators, and adult educators in particular. The demand for a lasting solution to this serious educational problem will continue to be a major concern to adult program coordinators, adult educators, and educators in general.

This study is intended to contribute to the body of literature in the area of ESL adult education. Moreover, the information gained from this study is anticipated to provide more knowledge and insights into the nagging

question of why many ESL adult learners miss a lot of classes and eventually drop out. Furthermore, it is hoped that potential dropouts among ESL adult learners will benefit from this study as a result of the recommendations made, provided they are implemented. Limitations of past research on ESL adult learners' perceptions of the factors related to high rates of absenteeism and dropping out also add to the significance of this study.

Organization of the Study

This chapter discusses the background of the study, the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the definition of terms, the limitations and delimitations of the study, and the study's significance. The remainder of the study will be presented as follows: In Chapter II, the historical background of adult education is presented and the literature related to the study is reviewed. This chapter also includes sections on the philosophy and theory of adult education. Finally, the role of the adult educator and the characteristics of adult learners are described.

Chapter III presents the method for the study. This chapter also provides the rationale for the method and describes the design, the procedures for data collection, and the population. Chapter IV discusses the setting, which includes entry negotiations, the community, the school site, the ESL program, the ESL adult learners' classroom, the ESL adult learners, the teacher, and the schedule of activities.

Chapter V presents the description and interpretation of the data. The factors related to absenteeism and dropping out as perceived by ESL adult learners are described and interpreted. The influence of cultural background on some of these factors is also discussed in this chapter. Chapter VI presents the conclusions which include the summary, alternative explanations, recommendations for further study, and implications for curriculum development.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter discusses the historical background of adult education, immigrant education, and the development of ESL evening schools in the United States. It also presents the philosophy and theory of adult education, the role of the adult educator, and characteristics of adult learners. Finally, it presents a review of related studies.

Adult Education: A Historical Background

It is not the intent of this study to trace the history of adult education in detail. The author feels, however, that a brief summary of the beginning of adult education should be included here to give the reader background information.

According to Hudson (1969), the exact period when adults were first admitted as students into the "English Charity Schools" is not known. It is known, however, that several entered the "Welsh Circulating Schools" as early as 1700 in order to learn to read the Welsh Bible. Students of all ages were attending these schools. Many of them who were as old as sixty were very anxious to read the scriptures in their native Welsh. They attended these schools daily.

Hudson also gives an account of the first school established in Great Britain exclusively for the instruction of adults in 1811. So many adults flocked to Sunday schools in crowds to learn to read that shop-keepers could not keep up with the increasing demand for eye glasses. To alleviate this problem, the "City of London Society for the Instruction of Adults" was established in 1816 and received the support of the Lord Mayor (Hudson, 1969; Devereux, 1982).

Adult education in other European countries began at about the same time. In Germany, public lectures were provided for the instruction of adults as early as the seventeenth century. "At Hamburg, a Mechanics Institute (Bildungs-Verein) was formed in 1848, for the instruction of laborers, by means of evening classes" (Hudson, 1969, p. 214). Hudson further reports that in the early nineteenth century lectures and seminars for adults were popular education (Volksbildung). In France, Mechanics Institutions were established between 1800 and 1820 and were attended by workingmen.

In the Scandinavian countries of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark the Folk High School (a residential adult college, mainly for liberal arts students) is the most famous adult education institution. The Folk High School began in Denmark as early as 1840 as part of a Christian tradition (Johansson, 1973).

According to a report prepared by the Nordic Ministries of Education Council (1976), these countries have together developed a comprehensive and highly integrated system of adult education. The basic features of adult education in these three sovereign nations is essentially the same. The differences, if any, are differences of emphasis, not of principle. The implementation, of course, may depend on each country's national characteristics and needs. Like that of the British tradition, the liberal element of the curriculum is emphasized. Since the movement was born out of the "underprivileged" group, adult education is of vital importance to this very group itself.

The establishment of adult schools in England led to the formation of similar institutions in various cities in the United States (Hudson, 1969). Knowles (1962) traces the history of the adult education movement in the United States to the colonial times during which the seeds were sown. He emphasizes the fact that the church played an important role in making education available to adults. "The single most universal instrument for intellectual activity in these times was the church...; it was probably the most influential institutional force for the education of adults..." (pp. 8,9).

Many forms of adult education programs began to appear in the early and mid 1800's. "Friends" and "Freemasons" of New York and Philadelphia opened both male and female schools in the center of those cities and another one in

Philadelphia for "men of color of the African race." A similar school was opened in New York and was attended by "one hundred and twenty of the Ethiopian race." Furthermore, "The Franklin Institute of Pennsylvania" and "The Maryland Institute in Baltimore" offered weekly evening lectures for adults in miscellaneous subjects as early as 1826. These institutions had also libraries and museums, and held annual exhibitions (Hudson, 1969; Knowles, 1962). Knowles goes on to say that agricultural societies began to emerge in many places to promote agricultural education and disseminate new knowledge among farmers. Moreover, Mechanics and Mercantile libraries and institutes were founded in Boston and New York in 1820 and adult evening schools started at about the same time.

Knowles (1962) summarizes the different forms and characters that adult education programs have taken in different countries:

In England and Sweden, adult education evolved essentially as national movements for the education of workers. In Denmark a network of folk schools was created for the express purpose of refashioning a national culture. In most underdeveloped countries adult education has been used primarily as a means for eliminating illiteracy. In the Soviet Union adult education has served as an instrument of state policy directed at producing loyalty to the state and developing technical competencies required by national plans... In the United States, on the other hand, the national adult education program has proliferated... in response to myriad individual needs and interests, institutional goals, and social pressures (p. v.).

Immigrant Education and the First ESL Adult Learners

Public evening schools in New York City started as early as 1825. Several other American cities also began to provide evening education shortly thereafter. Their clientele were mostly young adolescents who were working during the day and were, therefore, unable to attend regular school. The reason for such a great interest in evening schools was the increasing number of immigrants coming into the United States. Between 1840 and 1850 over a million immigrants arrived in the City of New York. Many of the earlier immigrants came from France, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland and needed to learn not only the English language and vocational skills, but also had to acquire knowledge of the laws, customs, and ways of living of their new land. The heaviest immigration in American history was in the earliest part of the 1900s (Berrol, 1976; Ernst, 1965; Seller, 1978). Berrol (1976) depicts the situation in terms that reflect the attitudes of the times:

There was a tremendous increase in evening school classes in direct response to the "immigrant invasion"... Between 1905 and 1908 alone almost a million newcomers arrived in the United States. By 1910, 48% of New York's almost five million people had been born abroad... The hordes of Italians, Slavs and Eastern European Jews who poured into the city of New York in the 1900's were alarmingly foreign and needed to be assimilated into the mainstream as soon as possible (p. 210).

The newcomer had to be "Americanized" -- brought into the mainstream of American life through English classes.

Fear of wartime sabotage and subversion by non-English speaking immigrants helped to step up demands for immigrant education by organizations like the "North American Civil League for Immigrants," the "Immigrants Protective League," and the "Daughters of the American Revolution." Attendance at English for foreigners classes was a way that the foreign born could demonstrate loyalty (Berrol, 1976; Seller, 1978).

There was a special concern to reach the foreign born in large cities like New York and Chicago because they were home to millions of immigrants. Thousands of these foreign born were young adolescents who in their homelands were forced to discontinue their education to earn a living. When they immigrated to the United States with no education at all, they had to attend evening schools.

Even though a massive enrollment campaign was launched by schools, churches, clubs, and many different agencies, attendance of immigrants in night schools was very low because the dropout rates were very high. "The great majority of public evening school classes in English and civics for adult immigrants, though they start with a large enrollment, dwindle to small proportions or die out altogether" (Daniels, cited by Seller, 1978, p. 86). Some of the reasons for the failure of the campaign to reach the adult immigrants were: "immigrant fatigue, inappropriate materials, inconvenient locations and scheduling, inability of instructors to speak immigrant languages, lack of understanding of immigrant cultures and patronizing

attitudes of many American educators toward their prospective students" (Seller, 1978, p. 87).

One of the founders of "the Polish University" in Chicago gave the following account:

Some Americans think... that we immigrants can comprehend only such thought as "I see a cat; the cat is black" -- as the teachers in the evening schools make grown men repeat. But the minds of most immigrants are not as feeble as that. For the poor man, America is work, work, work. We believe in work, all right, but we want thought and education to go along with it..." (Seller, 1978, p.90).

It is obvious that adult immigrants felt their teachers did not expect much of them and gave them easy stuff. They wanted to do more challenging work. Evening schools placed too much emphasis on learning basic English and Americanization and the adult immigrants did not seem to like that. In addition to learning English they wanted to learn about mathematics, accounting, and other subjects that would help them become upwardly mobile.

Some of the immigrant students harshly criticized the system for the failure but others like Edward Steiner, who later became a well known author, thought the teachers were to blame:

If our teacher had met us as men and not as children, if into that weary hour he had thrown a grain of humor to relax us, if somebody would have sung a tune in English, more might have remained after a week than fourteen out of a class ten times that number (Berrol, 1976, p. 213).

Religious, political, and ideological factors also played a part in the failure to reach the adult immigrants; for instance, war-time hysteria and fear of sabotage kept people apart. Furthermore, Jewish immigrants distrusted education efforts of Protestant churches and agencies like the Salvation Army (Hartman, 1949; Seller, 1978).

Another weakness of the program was scheduling. Attendance was very poor partly because classes started at seven p.m., which meant that some adult students who worked the whole day did not have time to eat supper before starting class and were very tired. Some of the teachers were also tired from teaching or doing some other work during the day. They had neither patience nor desire to motivate their students (Seller, 1978).

The materials used for instruction were not adequate and did not meet the needs of the immigrants. The same materials were used again and again. As a result, many bright students, although they looked forward to their evening classes, found the instructional activities to be boring and left to attend private evening schools. Evening school teachers had to spend a lot of time working with students who were not homogeneously grouped. In "The Education of Hyman Kaplan," author Leo Rosten (cited by Berrol, 1976) depicted a vivid picture of what took place in these evening classes:

The earnest instructor labored mightily to correct the spelling and pronunciation of his students while at the same time calling their attention to

cultural matters and current events. In addition to having to deal with highly individualistic students like Mr. Kaplan, who insisted on spelling his name with an asterisk after each letter, the evening school teacher generally had a very difficult task... (p.212).

The classroom atmosphere was not conducive to learning. Students had to sit in child-sized seats and study using inadequate gas light (Berrol, 1976; Smith, 1969). Strook (quoted in Berrol, 1976) explains:

The immigrants will be pushed into school benches intended for eight year old children, their knees reaching to the very desks. They will be uncomfortable and sorely puzzled... The students will lose heart... One by one they will cease to come until barely a third of the original number is left (p.213).

Despite its problems, the evening school system in the City of New York received high marks and was thought of as being a model for immigrant education programs in the whole country. Many educators and agencies agreed with this evaluation even though the Boston Superintendent of Schools did not and argued that Boston offered a much better program because they provided baby sitters for children of immigrant mothers so that they could attend day classes.

The New York evening school program became a forerunner to many similar programs throughout the country. Immigrants began to organize themselves and started their own community services which included education. For instance, there was the "Polish University" founded by 50 Polish socialists in Chicago in 1910; the "Settlement House" on the Lower East

Side of New York; "The Educational Alliance" funded by the German Jewish community in New York, etc. Even though all these programs emphasized Americanization above all else, they also recognized the fact that adult immigrants cherished their culture and did not want to give it up altogether. They began to offer classes in Yiddish and Hebrew language and literature, cooking, sewing, Greek and Roman history, and music (Berrol, 1976; Seller, 1978; Smith, 1969; Carlson, 1975).

Adult Education: Philosophy

Philosophies of adult education originate within particular socio-cultural contexts. The development of philosophers' thought is influenced by particular problems, issues, and challenges which exist in their culture. The various philosophies of adult education are concerned with the problem of the relationship between theory and practice. Some of the major philosophic issues in the field of adult education are the definition of adult education, the needs and interests of adults, method and content, programs and objectives, the teaching-learning process, and education for social change (Elias and Merriam, 1980; Hirst, 1983).

Some of the important philosophies of adult education will be discussed briefly in the following paragraphs. Program planning and instructional methods for each of the different philosophical thoughts will also be reviewed. Although each one of the different schools of thought has

its own theory, program design and development, and method of instruction, they do tend to overlap in many ways.

Liberal Adult Education

This is the oldest philosophy of adult education. It has its historical origins in the philosophical theories of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. This philosophy emphasizes liberal learning and organized knowledge (Broudy and Palmer, 1967; Paterson, 1979; Kallen, 1962).

The liberal arts tradition in education became enriched through its encounter with the early and Medieval Christian Church. It was Augustine of Hippo who brought about the union between Christian education and the intellectual education of the Greeks (Elias and Merriam, 1980). Developments in European thought influenced educational thought and practice in the colonial United States. The liberal tradition of learning was transmitted to colonial colleges such as Harvard. The curriculum at Harvard included the traditional trivium (the three philosophies) -- natural, moral, and mental (Cremin, 1970).

Liberal adult education programs developed by churches began to emerge after the Civil War, for example, Chautauqua, a program which emphasized systematic, guided reading of books and materials, mixed religious and liberal education. Another one, established by a Scottish socialist, was the Bread Winner's College in New York City to bring liberal education to working men and women. Liberal adult

education programs were also developed as extension programs at the Universities of Wisconsin and Chicago (Knowles, 1977). In Horace Kallen's view, "The aim of adult education is to liberate the mind... Education should be a liberating experience. And the way to achieve this sense of liberation is through liberal studies" (Kallen, 1962, p.62).

According to Elias and Merriam (1980), probably the best known program for the liberal education of adults was the Great Books Program which was developed at Columbia University and the University of Chicago to provide liberal education to both college students and adults.

Progressive Adult Education

This approach to educational philosophy which started in the progressive movement in politics, education, and social change, emphasizes such concepts as the relationship between education and society, experience-centered education, vocational education, and democratic education. The leading progressive educators were Dewey and Kilpatrick (Elias and Merriam, 1980, p. 10). The United States was undergoing social, economic, and political changes, including mass immigration in urban areas and industrialization. Many American thinkers turned to education as an answer to these problems. Some of the educational practices in adult education that were inspired by this philosophical orientation were Americanization education, English as a Second Language (ESL), community

education, learning by experience and university extension, and vocational education (Perkinson, quoted in Elias and Merriam, 1980).

Progressive adult educators argue that education should be a life-long process, experience-centered, and vocationally oriented. Progressives attacked the rigid methods of study and recitation of traditional or liberal education. They put more emphasis on problem-solving methods (Knowles, 1977; Elias and Merriam, 1980). According to Bergevin (1967), adult education should be problem-centered or situation-centered. He further argues that adult education programs should be adjusted to the situations confronting them. He calls the subject-centered approach a "wasteful procedure" (p. 149). Knowles (1970) has embraced the progressive concept of the role of the teacher. He characterizes the role of the adult educator as that of a "helper, encourager, consultant, and resource, not that of transmitter, disciplinarian, judge, and authority" (p.27). This is why he describes the adult educator as an "andragogue" rather than a "pedagogue" and adult education as "andragogy," rather than "pedagogy."

Behaviorist Adult Education

Behaviorism in adult education emphasizes such concepts as control, behavioral modification and learning through reinforcement, and management by objectives (MBO). Early behaviorists include Thorndike, Pavlov, Watson, and Skinner.

Watson argued that the way to understand humans is through observing their behavior, not exploring their mind. Skinner also firmly believed that humans are controlled by their environment, the conditions of which can be studied (Elias and Merriam, 1980; Herman, 1977).

Behaviorists de-emphasize competition and individual success. They feel that education should reinforce cooperation and interdependence. Competency-based education or instruction, which is flexible and dependent upon individual ability, is recommended for adult learners. Knowles (1970) asserts that planning a program for adult education should begin with a needs assessment.

Ralph Tyler, a prominent behaviorist, had a major influence on adult education curriculum design and development. According to Tyler, "Education is a process of changing the behavior of patterns of people... The teacher's method of controlling the learning experience is through the manipulation of the environment in such a way as to set up stimulating situations -- situations that will evoke the kind of behavior desired" (quoted in Elias and Merriam, 1980, p. 100).

The impact of behaviorism on education has resulted in the development of several instructional methods, some of which are mastery learning, contract learning, and Individually Prescribed Instruction (IPI). These methods are also applicable to adult education. Competency-based education has been widely used in adult vocational

education, continuing education, and adult basic education. Whatever the method, the responsibility for learning lies with the learner (Herman, 1977).

Humanistic Adult Education

The development of humanism as a philosophy dates back to Confucius and Greco-Roman thinkers like Aristotle. However, the Italian Renaissance is responsible for its full expression. Humanists place great value upon education to develop the individual into a well-rounded citizen and to promote the well-being of humanity (Patterson, 1973).

Humanistic adult education is very much related to liberal adult education. Humanistic educators put more emphasis on the freedom and dignity of the individual person. They are concerned with the development of the whole person. Important thinkers with great interest in education and humanistic values include Comenius, Rousseau, and Pestalozzi. Moreover, psychologists such as Rogers and Maslow have been responsible for developing this approach to education. Among adult educators, Malcolm Knowles and Allen Tough were prominent in applying this orientation. Adult education practices connected with this philosophical approach include group dynamics, group relations training, and self-directed learning. Competition is very much discouraged by humanist educators. They believe that motivation is intrinsic. Most adult learners engage in learning activities not because they are compelled to, but

because they want to (Knowles, 1970; Elias and Merriam, 1980; Tough, 1971). As the self-concept of adult learners develop, learning becomes self-directed and self-initiated and adults participate in the planning and evaluation of their learning (Bergevin, 1967; Rogers, 1969; Broudy and Palmer, 1967; McKenzie, 1978). In one of his surveys, Tough (1971) found that 73% of adult projects were self-planned.

Humanistic adult education has several components. Self-actualization, which is a continuous striving by men and women towards personal growth, is very important. Individuals should also feel a sense of responsibility both to themselves and to others. Interaction with others is essential because humans are social beings and need others. In humanistic adult education, the learner is the center of the learning process and identifies his/her own learning needs. Responsibility is placed with the learner, who is free to choose what he/she wants to learn. A teacher acts only as a guide or a facilitator and learning is by discovery (Maslow, 1976; Rogers, 1969; Elias and Merriam, 1980).

The term "humanities" has been used to include philosophy, literature, history, ethics, language, and social sciences. In humanistic education, curriculum becomes a vehicle for achieving goals. Content is selected to assist learners to grow according to their needs and interests. Studying the social, political, religious, and philosophical values of other ages and cultures becomes

essential to examining one's own values and attitudes (Cross, 1981).

Evaluation is an important part of the learning process in humanistic adult education. According to Elias and Merriam (1980), "Self-evaluation is the only meaningful test of whether learning has taken place. Students themselves are thought to be the best judges of whether learning has met their needs and interests" (p. 127).

Knowles (1970) asserts that the best sources for learning are the adults' experiences. Furthermore, he argues that adults will learn only if what they learn is relevant to their stage in life. What is relevant generates needs and interest, which give rise to an intrinsic motivation to learn. Knowles' concept of andragogy is very much related to meeting the needs of adults at the moment.

Radical Adult Education

Progressives and humanists use education to reform society. On the other extreme, there are those who propose a radical change of society. Educators who advocate radical approaches to education include George Counts, Theodore Brameld, Ivan Illich, and Paulo Freire (Gutek, 1970; Elias and Merriam, 1980). Radical adult educational philosophy has a number of sources. The anarchist tradition opposes public or national systems of education because these are considered to be destructive of individual autonomy. Anarchists believe that the state uses education to serve

its political interests at the expense of individual freedom. Ivan Illich is one of the contemporary educators influenced by this tradition. According to Illich, schools must be eliminated from society to free people from oppression. He believes that education should promote human freedom, equality, and close relationships between people. Illich's ideas can be applied to adult education in which a person supposedly freely consents to participate. He contends that compulsory education is harmful for the individual as well as for the society (Illich, 1978; Youngman, 1986). Another critic, John Ohlinger, visiting professor of Education at the University of Wisconsin, bitterly argues that adult education programs have been institutionalized. He warns that adult education is becoming compulsory more and more and that adults are told what to study (Kozol, 1972).

The Marxist tradition has opposed education as a form of alienation. "Marx considered education too closely tied to the interests of the dominant class" (Elias and Merriam, 1980, p. 142). A prominent philosopher of adult education in the Marxist tradition is a Brazilian educator who spent many years in exile, Paulo Freire. In his recent writings, Freire tries to combine Marxist thought with radical Christian theology and argues that Christian theology in Latin American countries should be radicalized. Through his educational philosophy he tries to bring oppressed people to literacy and political consciousness. His philosophy and

methodology seem to be relevant to any group that is concerned with oppression and liberation. He criticizes traditional education from the point of view that the teacher exercises authority and control over the students, thus preventing them from making their own decisions and being more creative (Freire, 1970).

The third tradition is the Freudian Left, which emphasizes changing personality traits, family structures, and the way children are brought up as the first step in radical education (Spring, 1973; Freire, 1970).

Adult Education: Theory

It might be helpful to first look at the difference between two important approaches to learning -- "pedagogy" and "andragogy." Pedagogy is derived from Greek and literally means the art of teaching children. In pedagogy the teacher assumes full responsibility for making all decisions about not only what will be learned, but also how and when it will be learned. This type of education is teacher-directed and the learner has no choice but to follow the teacher's instructions. The learner also is motivated to learn by external motivators such as grades, the teacher's approval, and parental pressures. Andragogy, on the other hand, is teaching adults. It is assumed that unlike children, adults know the need to learn before they undertake learning. They are responsible for their own decisions. As adults experience needs and interests that

can be satisfied by learning, they become motivated to learn. Experience is the richest source for adults' learning (Knowles, 1970; Elias and Meriam, 1980; Broudy and Palmer, 1967).

Crandall and others (1982) argue that adult learning theory should emphasize the importance of meeting adult needs, learners' setting their own objectives, and treating the adult learner as someone who has many responsibilities and needs outside the classroom which must be met. According to Knowles (1984), theories of adult education are based upon the following assumptions:

1) Adults need to know why they need to learn; 2) Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions; 3) Adults' experiences play an important role in learning; 4) Adults are ready to learn; 5) Adults are oriented to learning; 6) Adults are motivated to learn (p. 61).

Adults are easily motivated to learn partly because their learning is task-oriented or problem-oriented. Furthermore, they become highly motivated to learn because of external pressure to grow.

The Role of the Adult Educator

According to Rogers (cited by Knowles, 1984), the aim of education must be to facilitate learning. He defines the role of the teacher as that of "facilitator of learning." "The critical element in performing this role is the personal relationship between the facilitator and the learner" (p. 75). The facilitator should possess such

qualities as genuineness, caring, trust, and listening. The facilitator is the one who sets the climate for the group experience. He/she should try to be available to be utilized by the group as a resource, a counselor, or an advisor. The facilitator should also be a participant learner. He/she must share feelings and thoughts with the learners. Furthermore, he/she has to be alert to the feelings and needs of the learners. Finally, as a facilitator of learning, the leader should endeavor to recognize and accept his/her own limitations.

Tough (1979) has a very similar view of the teacher or "other resource person":

... The ideal helper is warm and loving. He accepts and cares about the learner and about his project or problem, and takes it seriously. He is willing to spend time helping. He is approving, supportive, encouraging, and friendly. He regards the learner as an equal. As a result of these characteristics, the learner feels free to approach this ideal helper, and can talk freely and easily with him in a warm and relaxed atmosphere. ... The ideal helper has confidence in the learner's ability to make appropriate plans and arrangements for learning. The helper has a high regard for the learner's skill as a self-planner, and does not want to take the decision-making control away from him. The ideal helper views his interaction with the learner as a dialogue, a true encounter in which he listens as well as talks. ... The helper listens, accepts, understands, responds and helps. The ideal helper is probably an open and growing person, not a closed, negative, static, defensive, fearful, or suspicious sort of person. He himself is frequently a learner, and seeks growth and new experiences (pp. 195-197).

Tough's characteristics of the ideal helper fit well into Knowles' conception of the andragogical teacher. The teacher provides physical conditions that are comfortable (seating, temperature, ventilation, and lighting). Moreover, he/she accepts all students as persons and respects their feelings. He/she seeks to build relationships of mutual trust among the students by encouraging cooperative activities. The teacher also helps the students to organize themselves in working as teams or doing independent studies. He/she helps the students exploit their own experiences as resources for learning (Tough, 1979).

Characteristics of Adult Learners

Who is an adult learner? According to Tough (1979), 98% of a sample that he surveyed were engaged in some kind of a project. Similarly, Peters and Gordon (cited by Jarvis, 1983) discovered that 91% of their sample of 466 had conducted learning projects. This argument appears to be supported by other research findings and it may be safe to say that every adult is a learner.

From his investigation, Tough (1979) found not only who adult learners are, but also what and how they learn. He summarizes his findings this way:

Almost everyone undertakes at least one or two major learning efforts a year and some individuals undertake as many as 15 or 20... It is common for a man or woman to spend 700 hours a year at learning projects (p. 1).

The result of Tough's survey conducted to investigate the day-to-day planning of adults' learning also shows that "about 20% of all learning projects are planned by a professional, ...3% by a nonhuman resource such as programmed instruction or T.V., 73% by the learner himself or herself and 7% by a friend and peers" (p.5).

It had been assumed for many years that adults learn in the same way as children do. It was only at the beginning of World War II that adult educators came up with scientific evidence which supports the notion that adult learners possess unique characteristics, interests, and abilities different from those of children (Knowles, 1984). In the words of Hudson (1969), "The adult attends school from his own desire to learn, and he understands the value of the work in which he is engaged, keeping its end in view, and therefore, assiduously applying the means for its attainment" (p.9). Gessner (quoted in Knowles, 1984) asserts that:

Adult education is a cooperative venture...in informal learning, the chief purpose of which is to discover the meaning of experience. In an adult class the students' experience counts for as much as the teacher's knowledge. Both are exchangeable at par. Indeed, in some of the best adult classes it is sometimes difficult to discover who is learning most, the teacher or the students... In conventional education the pupils adapt themselves to the curriculum offered, but in adult education, the pupils aid in formulating the curricula (p.30).

The adult learner brings quite different views to the classroom from those held by the teacher. The teacher may perceive this difference as undesirable, which may result in conflict. However, this difference may also be the basis for effective learning.

Unlike children adults have a different conception of time. They can internalize long-range goals and work toward them. The adult's view of himself/herself and his/her adequacy is very much linked with his/her view of time (Kidd, 1973).

Another distinct difference between adult learners and younger students is that adult learners bring to the learning situation their own self-confidence, self esteem, and self-perception. It is very important that adult educators always be sensitive to the humanity of the learner.

Why do adults learn? Some researchers, like Jarvis (1983), claim that the question of why mature people wish to attend educational institutions remains unanswered. They argue that research in this area has been rather sporadic. However, a careful review of the literature has revealed that quite a few studies have in fact been done in this area.

Houle (1984) contends that adults learn for a variety of reasons and every person has his/her own unique reasons. Some people want to learn because they want higher-paying and more satisfying jobs. Others want to learn how to be

good husbands or wives, good parents, good homemakers, or good citizens. Furthermore, they want to know how to get along with other people, or how to enrich their leisure time by more rewarding hobbies and amusements. Some people also want to learn because they enjoy learning and they want to know more. They want to keep up with new developments.

Jarvis (1983) classified adult learners as "goal-oriented learners, activity-oriented learners and those whose main orientation is learning for its own sake" (p. 66). Johnstone and Rivera (1965) also classified the motives of adult learners as: "prepare for a new job, help with the present job, to become better informed, spare time enjoyment, home-centered tasks, other everyday tasks, meet new people, and escape from daily routine" (pp. 159-160). Their research findings further indicate that motives to participate in adult education may vary with the age, sex, and socio-economic position of every participant.

Related Studies

Research on ESL adult learners and the factors related to high rates of absenteeism and dropping out is very limited. Studies on ESL adult learners' perceptions of factors related to absenteeism and dropping out are also almost nonexistent. The problem is compounded further when one realizes that the existing body of knowledge addressing the issue has primarily been limited to traditional quantitative techniques of inquiry.

One of the earlier research studies in this area is that by Robinson (1969), who investigated Mexican immigrants from the Los Angeles area. The study reported the following:

Those students who attended classes each night achieve maximum benefit from the sequentially developed educational program. For many reasons, some students are unable to sustain a continuing attendance pattern of four nights a week. They challenge administrators and teachers to provide the best instructional program possible for a highly mobile group of volunteers, non-credit students (p.1.).

Robinson listed some of the reasons for missing classes. They were: "lack of motivation, changes in work schedule, frequent trips to Mexico and return, student perceptions of instructional program, and the general atmosphere of the classroom" (pp. 1, 2).

Berrol (1976), who traced the history of the New York City ESL evening schools for immigrants, reported that... "A great number of students enroll when school begins but that number declines very rapidly... Whatever the causes, the gap between enrollment and attendance in the evening schools was very troublesome to the school authorities" (p. 213). Seller (1978) also gave an extensive account of evening schools for adult immigrants in other large cities like Chicago, Buffalo, and Cleveland in the early 1900s and before. Both of these authors have provided a detailed discussion of the various kinds of programs offered by many agencies and the reasons for their successes and failures.

Moreover, they argue that absenteeism among adult immigrants in the evening schools was very high because American instructors did not understand their background and their needs, students were too tired or not motivated to come to class, and schools did not have adequate teaching materials.

ESL adult learners come with very different educational backgrounds, cultural patterns, learning styles, and reasons for learning English. In an attempt to meet the diverse needs of these learners and help minimize absenteeism and dropping out, Crandall and others (1982) identified six program models for ESL adult learners. They are summarized below:

- 1) Survival/coping skills ESL: the English an adult needs to be able to survive in the United States; the English of getting a job, enrolling children in school, managing a bank account, buying food and clothing for the family, taking care of medical needs, and so forth. It is essentially the language that is needed to function in the various settings in the U. S. Survival ESL attempts to teach only minimal skills, or the minimal competencies in an effort to help adults to cope at a basic level. The emphasis is on getting by, not on producing grammatically perfect and descriptive sentences. (Instead of "I need ten pounds of rice," just "rice, please" or "big bag rice" are sufficient.)

- 2) Literacy ESL: These programs also teach survival skills, but with an important distinction; they first address what it means to be a student, and what it means to read, write, and compute. Many adult ESL programs realized that in grouping students, previous education was a more critical factor than the level of English proficiency. Having been students,

knowing what is expected of them, and being able to read and write are more important criteria for placing people in the ESL classroom than the amount of English they know.

3) Prevocational ESL, also called General Occupational ESL: It teaches the English which people need to get a job, to keep a job, and to advance in a job. These...generalizable skills; being able to read want ads, to understand signs on windows that say "Help Wanted," to ask and answer basic questions about a job, to identify one's qualifications, to fill out a job application form, and finally to understand fringe benefits, pay checks, time clocks, work and safety rules, etc. In addition to teaching the necessary English skills, this program also provides an introduction to the world of work and the American work ethic and clarifies concepts such as upward mobility and the American tradition of working and studying simultaneously.

4) Basic Skills GED ESL: This is preparing people to go beyond their limited formal education, generally to get a GED, or to get into a two-year college. Basic Skills ESL provides adults not only with the reading, writing and oral language skills necessary to compete as students, but also with computational skills.

5) Vocational ESL (VESL), or Occupational-specific ESL: The focus is on semi-skilled or skilled occupations. These include electronics assembly, welding, carpentry, auto-body repair, upholstery, clerical, cosmetology, and some of the health care para-professional areas such as practical nursing or respiratory therapy. VESL tries to do two things: to teach the English which is needed for vocational training and also the English needed to do the job.

6) Home Management ESL: This is intended for women or the elderly (of both sexes) who are homebound. The

purpose is to help answer the telephone, report an emergency and do some other tasks (pp. 275-277).

Crandall and his associates further argue that "ESL adult learners require relevance in their language classes or they display their dissatisfaction by ceasing to attend" (p. 274). The models listed above can serve as guidelines to help ESL professionals recognize the curriculum as well as develop new texts and other teaching materials. The availability of improved, adequate instructional materials would certainly facilitate learning, and thus retain more ESL adult learners in the classroom.

Moreira (1985) did a study of 12 Azorean Portuguese men ranging from 16 to 32 in age who dropped out of school. He was interested in their perceptions of reasons for leaving school. His study revealed that some of them left because they felt they were not learning; several wanted to help their parents financially; others were victims of peer pressure.

Most of the other studies were on adult students attending community colleges. According to Cross (1981), the community college is a learning center for non-traditional students or adults who work during the day and enroll in different classes at night to expand their present knowledge and obtain a diploma or degree.

Haggerty (cited by Weidman, 1985) did a study on retention among traditional adult students to explore the difference in achievement between persisters and non-

persisters between the ages of 24 and 74. The author was interested in some of the problems adult students face in coping with personal and financial problems in addition to the burden of academic course work. The study indicated that persisters (those who continued the program) had received an award or some kind of financial aid, had higher grade point averages, attended school full time, and were younger (p. 5). Haggerty argues that "The significance of financial aid and full time attendance for retention among these adults suggests the importance for institutions of providing financial resource for non-traditional students" (p. 6). Needless to say, adult students have responsibility for family expenses in addition to tuition. A similar study was conducted by Hollins (1985) of adult students who dropped out from John Tyler Community College (JTCC) after one quarter. Findings from the study indicate that the attrition rate at this college was about 40-45 percent each quarter. The reason for this high dropout rate can be attributed to the fact that non-traditional students chose to drop out due to "family commitments, when their goals are uncertain, when they receive little or no attention from significant college personnel, and when personal and academic problems go unsolved" (p. 15). The study also showed that males tended to drop out more than females.

Brum (1983), did an investigation to find out why adult students withdrew from the Business Administration curriculum at Fayetteville Technical Institute. He surveyed

30 dropouts and examined 26 responses. The reasons given by the students for not returning were classified as societal or non-societal. In this study societal factors were defined as elements of influence that the institution could not control; e.g., change in job requirements or change in career plans. A good example of a non-societal reason (one that can be controlled by an institution) is a financial problem. Brum recommends that every effort be made to reduce non-societal factors and assure maximum retention of qualified students.

Friedman (quoted in Weidman, 1985) argues that "the performance in school may be affected by the students' ability or inability to cope with problems at home as well as in other community settings in which they are involved" (p. 10). Many researchers seem to agree that institutions should provide adequate support for students who fail to fulfill their requirements because of personal problems. Furthermore, they underscore the importance of interaction between faculty and students and the support they get from their teachers. To prevent non-traditional students from dropping out, teachers should strongly be encouraged to orient themselves to the particular problems of students.

Summary

It is very important for the reader, as well as anyone who deals with adult learners, to understand that adult educators who have gained knowledge in the various areas

discussed above will be better prepared to help learners succeed. For instance, knowing about the characteristics of adult learners would help in planning and developing a curriculum which is geared only toward adult learners. Likewise, learning about the philosophy of adult education, which is concerned with the "why" of education, and the curriculum of adult education, which deals with the "what" and "how" of teaching, would help the teacher or adult educator enhance learning.

Mrs. Matienzo, the ESL adult education teacher in this study, appeared to be a progressive adult educator. As will be shown in chapter IV, not only did she try very hard to adjust her lessons to the situations confronting her students, but she also became their friend. She constantly encouraged them to study and do their best. She helped them with their work when necessary and provided a lot of counseling. She fits the definition of an andragogue teacher.

The primary goal of the institution which runs the ESL adult education program in this study is to help learners develop proficiency in written and spoken English. In order for the educational program to accomplish this important task it must be based on a certain philosophy. It appeared that two of the philosophical thoughts discussed in this chapter were applied by this institution. The ESL program seemed to be closely related to the progressive adult education orientation because it was situation-centered,

i.e., it was adjusted to the situations of the learners in some cases, for example, scheduling. ESL classes were normally offered during the day; evening classes were scheduled to accommodate those who could not attend the day classes because of work. In spite of this, many of the adult learners still complained about the evening schedule because they were tired after coming home from work. This contributed to absenteeism and dropping out. It was situation centered because no fee was charged. The financial situation of the learners was taken into consideration. Adult learners were not penalized for coming to class late or for being absent from class. Finally, the content of the material used in the class appeared to be suited for their level even though some of them complained that it was too hard. The ESL program was also humanistic adult education because most of the learners felt the need for learning English and initiated their own learning. They were not compelled to attend classes. The program seemed to involve little or no competition. They were responsible for their own work and the teacher provided help.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participant Observation: What Is It?

This study used participant observation as a method of inquiry to investigate and describe the factors related to absenteeism and dropping out among ESL adult learners. Participant observation is part of a broader concept known as qualitative research. Other phrases associated with qualitative research include: "... inner perspective, case study, ethnography, interpretive, and descriptive. The exact use and definition of these terms as well as words like field work and qualitative research varies from user to user and from time to time" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 3).

Participant observation is a field research technique that necessitates continual, long-term observation of a given population in a research site. It is generally assumed that the researcher using this methodology shares in the life and activities of those under study (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). "While the initial phase of this kind of field work research consists primarily of general observations, later phases consist of continually testing the relevance of a large number of hunches and guesses through more careful focus on specific events and through asking particular questions to key informants" (Burdick, 1987, p. 15).

In his book "Participant Observation" (1980), Spradley talks about the ordinary participant and participant observer: "The participant observer comes to a social situation with two purposes: (1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and (2) to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation" (p. 54).

Types of Participation

Makaula (1986), summarizing Gold's description of the types of participation, identifies four possible roles the researcher can assume in observing:

1) Complete Participant: The researcher's true identity and purpose of the study are not known by those observed. The researcher interacts as naturally as possible so his/her true identity is not discovered... While this role offers possibilities of learning aspects of behavior that might otherwise be kept away from an outsider, it raises ethical questions about studying people without their consent and knowledge. Several other methodological problems are also involved. First, the researcher stands the risk of exposure and failure of the study. Second, because it is a pretended role, the researcher may be so self-conscious about revealing self that he/she is handicapped in collecting data needed. Third, the researcher may perform the new role so well that he/she may "go native" and no longer be sensitive to data he/she otherwise would have been sensitive to, therefore collecting and reporting no data and findings;

2) Participant-as-Observer: The researcher participates as well as observes, but the identity and intent of the researcher is known to those

observed or studied. The researcher observes formally and informally and tries to develop relationships with the observed so as to understand them. The researcher may sometimes try to identify with the observed. There is still a danger of "going native" if the researcher over-identifies with the researched;

3) Observer-as-Participant: The researcher in this role is involved only in short-term, formally-arranged observation periods. Because the visits are brief, there is a danger of being superficial, the likelihood of misunderstanding informants and of being misunderstood by informants. The brevity of the visits also introduces a lot of room for bias; and

4) Complete Observer: The observer attempts to observe those studied in ways which make it unnecessary for them to take him/her into account. Those observed would not know the researcher is observing them. This role is identified with eavesdropping and reconnaissance in which the researcher is removed from sustained interaction with the informants. Ethnocentrism is the danger that might result from this approach as the researcher may reject an informant's views without ever getting to know them.

My role as a researcher in this study was that of number two above. I participated in most of the activities adult learners were engaged in, and observed what was taking place in the social situation formally and informally. The purpose of my presence in the class was explained to the participants so that they knew what was going on.

According to Erickson (1986), participant observation or fieldwork research involves the following:

1) intensive, long-term participation and detailed narrative description of

everyday activities in a field setting;
 2) careful recording of what happens in the setting by writing fieldnotes and collecting other kinds of documentary evidence, e.g. memos, records, examples of student work, audiotapes, videotapes;
 3) subsequent analytic reflection on the documentary record obtained in the field and reporting by means of detailed description, using narrative vignettes and direct quotes from interviews, as well as by more general description in the form of analytic charts, summary tables, and descriptive statistics. Interpretive fieldwork research involves being unusually thorough and describing everyday events in the field setting, and attempting to identify the significance of actions in the events from the various points of view of the actors themselves (p. 121).

Burdick (1987), who has gone through the same process herself not long ago, and Geer (cited by Burdick, 1987) have similar interpretations of participant observation and the role of a participant observer.

A participant observer watches the people being studied to see what situations they meet and how they define, react, and behave. A participant observer is at once a reporter,... and an interviewer. On the scene he gets the story about an event, questioning participants about what is happening and why. He fills out the story by asking people about their relation to an event, their reactions, their opinions and its significance. As an interviewer, he encourages the informant to tell his story... Participant observation enables the researcher to get close to the action; see, hear and record member actions and reactions and gather data otherwise unavailable from a distance (pp. 15-16).

Wilson (1977) contends that "Ethnographic inquiry is a systematic research process... Ethnographic researchers

methodically plan the forms of data they will collect, the setting in which they will gather the data, the participants with whom they will interact, and the questions they will ask" (p.257). A researcher who uses participant observation as a method to collect data from the field should not only record events in detail, but must also do it right away. "Researchers take part in the daily activities of people, reconstructing their interactions and activities in field notes taken on the spot or as soon as possible after their occurrence" (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984, p.109).

The Rationale for Using Participant Observation

The choice of participant observation as a research process was primarily because of personal interest in this method, and an experience acquired three years ago when I was involved in a project with a similar group of adult learners. The choice was also based on the research questions and goals developed for this study. The major goal was to gain a better understanding of why many of the participants (ESL adult learners) missed classes and eventually dropped out. Only qualitative research and participant observation in particular, "enables the researcher to describe events and behaviors as they are witnessed, record the participants' words, describe their interactions, and analyze their meanings" (Burdick, 1987, p. 11). Quantitative research methods do not offer the researcher an opportunity to gain a first hand experience

of the situation. Participant observation brings the researcher and the participants close together. As time goes by, the relationship becomes stronger and stronger, making it easier for both sides to interact freely. According to McCall and Simmons (1969), the role of a participant observer stresses openness. The researcher spends a large portion of his/her time building a good relationship with the clients. As the researcher, assuming the role of a participant observer, gains rapport, he/she can get closer to the situation and his/her job becomes a lot easier.

The Design and Procedure for Data Collection

Actual fieldwork research started with class observations in the middle of September 1987 and continued for about 12 weeks. ESL adult learners met at a local elementary school building four days a week -- Monday through Thursday from six thirty to nine in the evenings. I attended three sessions a week with a total of 35 sessions or 88 hours altogether. Each session lasted for two and a half hours. Participant observation took place in the following settings: the classroom, the hallway, and social situations inside and outside the building such as parties and potlucks. These occasions gave me a chance to talk and interact with the participants and their family members, the teacher, the program coordinator, and teachers and adult

learners from the other classes. These were more or less informal interview sessions.

Data were collected over an extended period of time using interpretive participant observational techniques -- participant observation, fieldnotes, interviews, and site documents and records. Since audio recording was not allowed, I tried to be as accurate as possible in recording their responses in writing. Phrases which may have been used incorrectly, e.g., "I were here" or "I studying English" were recorded as direct quotes uncorrected. Fieldnotes mainly focused on verbal interactions among participants, between participants and me, between the teacher and me, and nonverbal behavior. Fieldnotes were gathered from the observation of classroom experiences, informal group gatherings such as quarter-end parties and potlucks, and interactions that occurred in the hallway during breaks. Fieldnotes were recorded as direct quotes, writing everything observed in detail as much as possible, in order later to be able to write narrative descriptions in the form of vignettes.

Interviews were an important source of data which helped to validate the information gathered during class observations. In-depth interview questions were used to gather more information from the teacher as well as from the participants. The interviewees were asked questions related to their home and school background, employment, and absenteeism and dropping out. Also known as "open-ended,"

"unstructured," "non-directive," and "flexibly structured," this kind of interview helps the researcher to understand in considerable detail how the respondents think and how they came to develop the perspectives they hold (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). According to the same authors:

In-depth interviewing leads the researcher to spend considerable time with subjects. Open-ended approach allows the subjects to answer from their own frame of reference rather than from one structured by prearranged questions. Most often, the researcher is the only instrument, and works at getting the subjects to freely express their thoughts around particular topics. Because of the detail sought most studies have small samples (p. 138).

To obtain more information and to elicit further clarification needed to meet the objectives of the interview (Gorden, 1980), I used additional questions known as "probes." Probes were not developed in advance. They were used only when inadequate information was given during the interview sessions. An in-depth interview sample is included in Appendix D.

Some of the adult learners who dropped out from the program before the end of the quarter were located with the help of the teacher, the program coordinator, and their friends. In-depth interviews were also conducted with these adult learners formally and informally. The program coordinator, administrators, and other teachers also acted

as key informants to provide background knowledge of the participants.

A process called "triangulation" -- the use of multiple sources of data to gather new information and cross-check results -- played an important role in this study. Information gathered from: 1) observing in the different settings, 2) interview sessions, and 3) site documents were triangulated. In the words of Burdick (1987), "Triangulation is accomplished when two or more distinct methods are found to be congruent and yield comparable data. Triangulation enables the researcher to turn multiple sources of data into evidence when drawing inferences" (p. 14). In addition to using data collected in one way to cross-check the accuracy of data gathered in another way, triangulation can also assist in correcting biases that occur when the researcher is the only observer of the phenomenon under investigation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goetz and LeCompte, 1984).

This study also involved hunches as part of the finding's interpretation. Patterns of recurring events which provided answers to the research questions formulated at the beginning of the investigation played a major role in the analysis.

The Population for the Study

This study involved adult learners attending ESL evening classes at an elementary school building owned by a local school district. Access into the research site was secured

by negotiating with the program coordinator; written consent was also obtained from the program coordinator, the teacher, and the adult learners. Samples of these consent forms are found in Appendices A, B, and C. Since none of the adult learners withheld their consent for participation, none were eliminated from the study. Participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time without fear of recrimination or penalty, and all confidentiality was maintained. Pseudonyms were used throughout the study to protect the privacy of individuals and institutions. This group was comprised of immigrants and/or refugees from different parts of the world, college or graduate students, and students' spouses. Each member of the group represented a unique cultural background and brought an international flavor into the classroom. Since this group was at the intermediate level, I did not experience any problem with communication and it was not necessary to arrange for a translator. Initially, there were twenty adult learners enrolled and participating in this study. Seven of them dropped out before the completion of the 12 week period. As indicated in Table 1, two of the seven left the program after attending for only three weeks. Two others quit after five weeks. And finally, three dropped out during the ninth week.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Week they dropped out</u>	<u>Contacted</u>
1.	Carmen	after 3 weeks	no
2.	Wang	after 3 weeks	yes
3.	Sarina	after 5 weeks	yes
4.	Yonas	after 5 weeks	yes
5.	Alberto	during the ninth week	yes
6.	Yasha	during the ninth week	yes
7.	Elena	during the ninth week	no

Table 1. ESL adult learners who dropped out of the program

Sampling for Interview

In conducting a research study, the selection of a sample is a very crucial step. The representativeness of the sample determines the generalizability of the findings. Many ethnographers select a sample that resembles the larger population as much as possible. In the words of Goetz and LeCompte (1984):

Ethnographers and other qualitative researchers develop parameters for populations and select and sample from these populations throughout the research process. Sampling and selection are crucial to establishing the authenticity of descriptive analysis because... they are the means by which the researcher systematically seeks and discards alternative descriptions or explanations of the phenomena observed. They also are critical to constructing the logical inferences that support comparability and applicability. Ethnographers aim for translatability (pp.71,72).

Likewise, selecting a representative sample for an in-depth interview is very important. To draw a sample from the population for the in-depth interview, "purposive" (also known as "convenience") sampling, which is criterion-based selection, was used. "Criterion-based selection requires that the researcher establish in advance a set of criteria or list of attributes that the units for study must possess" (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984, p. 73). Some qualitative researchers argue that sampling procedures may cost more time, money and effort, and therefore, it might be easier and cheaper to include every member of the population in a study. However, the opposite may also be true, i.e, including every member of the population in a research may take more time, effort, and money.

I used half of the ESL adult learners in this study as a sample to participate in responding to the in-depth interview questions. The sample was selected using the following criteria:

a) Knowledge of English Acquired

Through informal interviews with each member of the group I was able to determine who was in a better position to understand and answer questions. Even though all of the participants had a basic understanding of the English language, some of them were more articulate, were more confident in themselves, and felt at ease to talk than others.

b) Geographic Representation

In an effort to make it more representative, I had to see to it that at least one participant from each of the five regions of the world represented by the ESL adult learners took part in the in-depth interview sessions. Getting a representative sample was particularly important because one of the research questions developed for this study had to do with what influence cultural background may have on factors associated with absenteeism and dropping out in the ESL class. The following table shows how many ESL adult learners from each region were selected to participate in the interview.

<u>Region</u>	<u>Learners</u> <u>selected</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>from</u> <u>each</u> <u>region</u>
a) Asia	5	10
b) Latin America	2	4
c) Africa	2	2
d) Europe	1	4
	-----	-----
Total	10	20

Table 2. Number of in-depth interview participants by region

How many participants from each region should be included in the sample depended on the number of countries in each of these regions which were represented by ESL adult learners. For example, one adult learner from each of the Far Eastern countries of China, Japan, and Nepal were

interviewed. Although Korea is also in the Far East, the Korean adult learner could not fit the other criteria and was eliminated from the sample group. The same was also true in Latin America. There were ESL adult learners from Mexico, Columbia, and Bolivia but only two adult learners, one from Mexico and another one from Columbia, were interviewed. For the same reason, adult learners from Iran and Saudi Arabia were interviewed but none from Egypt. In the case of Africa and Europe there was no problem because there were only two countries from Sub-Saharan Africa (The Sudan and Mali) and one from Europe (Poland) that were represented by ESL adult learners. One adult learner from each of these countries participated in the interview.

c) Attendance Record

I was able to gain access to the attendance record through negotiations with the teacher. In order to get a good mix, I picked some participants with good attendance records and others with poor attendance records. This enabled me to hear what each of these two groups had to say about the factors associated with absenteeism and dropping out. It was designed this way so that one-sided information that may contribute to a biased interpretation could be avoided.

Summary

This chapter discusses five topics: 1) participant observation, 2) the rationale for using participant observation, 3) the design and procedure for data collection, 4) the population for the study, and 5) sampling for the interviews.

Participant observation, a qualitative research method, was used in collecting data for this research. The population for this study was comprised of ESL adult learners who attended evening classes at a local elementary school building four times a week. The focus of the study was on factors associated with absenteeism and dropping out among ESL adult learners.

The sample for participating in the in-depth interview sessions was selected using convenience or purposive sampling. The criteria for selecting the sample were: 1) knowledge of English, 2) geographic representation, and 3) attendance record.

CHAPTER IV

REVIEW OF THE SETTING

Introduction

This chapter describes the procedures used in negotiating entry into the research site where the study took place, and the various problems encountered in securing the site. Described in this chapter are also the community in which the school is located as well as its socioeconomic background and ethnic distribution, the school itself, the ESL program, the ESL adult education classroom, the ESL adult learners, and the ESL adult education teacher and her schedule of activities.

Entry Negotiations

Negotiating for entry into a field site to conduct any kind of research must be thought of and planned for early enough if one is to succeed in securing a site and starting the study on time. I learned this the hard way. Obtaining a site in which to play the role of a participant observer was not an easy task. I came to learn that local school districts were tired of working with university students conducting all sorts of studies.

I began to negotiate for access into an ESL adult education program at the beginning of Spring 1987. After failing to secure a site in a nearby community college I

began to feel frustrated, but I did not give up altogether, and began to explore other options. After talking to some friends, I decided to contact another person in charge of adult education programs at a local school district. This time it was a lot easier; the director himself, rather than the secretary, answered the phone and agreed to see me the following day. After listening patiently to what I had to say, he said, "We will be glad to help you in any way we can, but I don't think what we have here is what you are looking for. Our program is strictly enrichment -- nonacademic courses such as sewing, photography, computers, etc." (IFI 4-17-87).

Since summer was approaching very fast, I had to either postpone my search for a site until the fall or try one more place. A program coordinator for another local school district was contacted and the purpose of the study was discussed with her. She assured me that there would not be any problem and said she would do everything she could to help. The request was tentatively approved at this time. Final approval to conduct the study with the ESL program was given at the beginning of Fall 1987 after she consulted with her superiors. After a research site was secured, I was able to get the teacher and the adult learners to agree to participate in the study. Each participant had to sign a consent form. Copies of these forms are included in Appendices A, B, and C.

The Community

Sloan Elementary School, where the ESL program is offered, is in Norsetville, a small town with a population of 52,064 (1980 census) adjacent to a major university in the Great Lakes region. While the area not very far from the school is occupied by university students, mostly foreigners, the neighborhoods about four miles north and six miles east of the school are residential areas for middle and upper middle class people respectively, the majority of whom are whites. The breakdown of people by race in the town where the school is located is 47,103 (90%) whites, 2,535 (5%) Blacks, 964 (2%) Hispanics, 1,322 (3%) Asians and 140 (0.3%) Native Americans (IFI 9-12-87).

Many of the professors and administrators who work at the university, and other professionals in the neighborhood, live in an affluent part of the community which is close to a shopping mall and send their children to some of the best school districts in the area. Many students from one district in particular have consistently been scoring over the 90th percentile on the Stanford Achievement Test and MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program). MEAP is given in grades four, seven and ten every fall (IFI 9-15-87).

About six miles west of the school lies a larger industrial city of 130,600 people (1980 census). Whites make up 80% of the population and the rest are Blacks (13%), Hispanics (6%), Asians (0.6%), and Native Americans (0.8%).

This city is home to one of the largest automobile plants in the Midwest. Thousands of the city's residents are employed by this plant and other industries and factories in the area. This city has also the largest school district in the county (IFI 9-20-87). It ought to be mentioned here that many of the ESL adult learners in the study came from this city. This was especially true with Polish and Southeast Asian refugees.

Like any other large city, this city has gone through economic ups and downs -- business shutdowns, layoffs, and unemployment over the years. About 15,000 households are at or below \$10,000 a year income and many are on welfare. Crime has also taken its toll (IFI 9-25-87). In spite of the fact that the city has many of the state government jobs, the situation has continued to deteriorate. To make matters much worse, the 1987 stock market crash has prompted the governor to freeze all new state government employment.

The School

The school is a one story building with ten classrooms (five on each side of the hallway) plus offices, a library, a music room, and a gym. There is also a community center attached to the school building. A highway and a railroad track pass right by the school, making it almost impossible to concentrate sometimes because of the noise.

Sloan Elementary seems to be a center for many outside activities. Because of its proximity, many students from

the university use the school for special projects such as student teaching and class observations. This study was one of them.

The school building was clean and well kept thanks to the team of custodians who constantly worked hard to make this possible. Many times, the night custodian was heard reminding ESL adult learners who occasionally came to class with their children to make sure that the children did not throw papers on the floor.

The school is mainly intended to cater to children of students, mostly foreign, who attend the university. All students who are enrolled at Sloan Elementary live in the university apartment complex and do not have to walk far to go to school.

There are more than one thousand apartments in this complex and over 60 percent of them are occupied by foreign students. More than 75 percent of the students who attend Sloan are children of these foreign students.

Since the students at Sloan are not the focus of this study, nothing more will be said about them. It should be mentioned, however, that the international nature of the student population at the school is very important. There are many ethnic groups and cultures represented at the school, with different languages, customs, and religions. As many as half of the ESL adult learners in this study were mothers and/or fathers of children who went to Sloan.

The ESL Program

The English as a Second Language (ESL) program is designed to help adults whose first language is not English learn English. The program is run by a local school district as part of its community or adult education activities and it has been in operation for over fifteen years.

Classes are offered at three levels -- beginning, intermediate, and advanced throughout the school year between September and June, four times a week (Monday to Thursday). This study was conducted in the intermediate class.

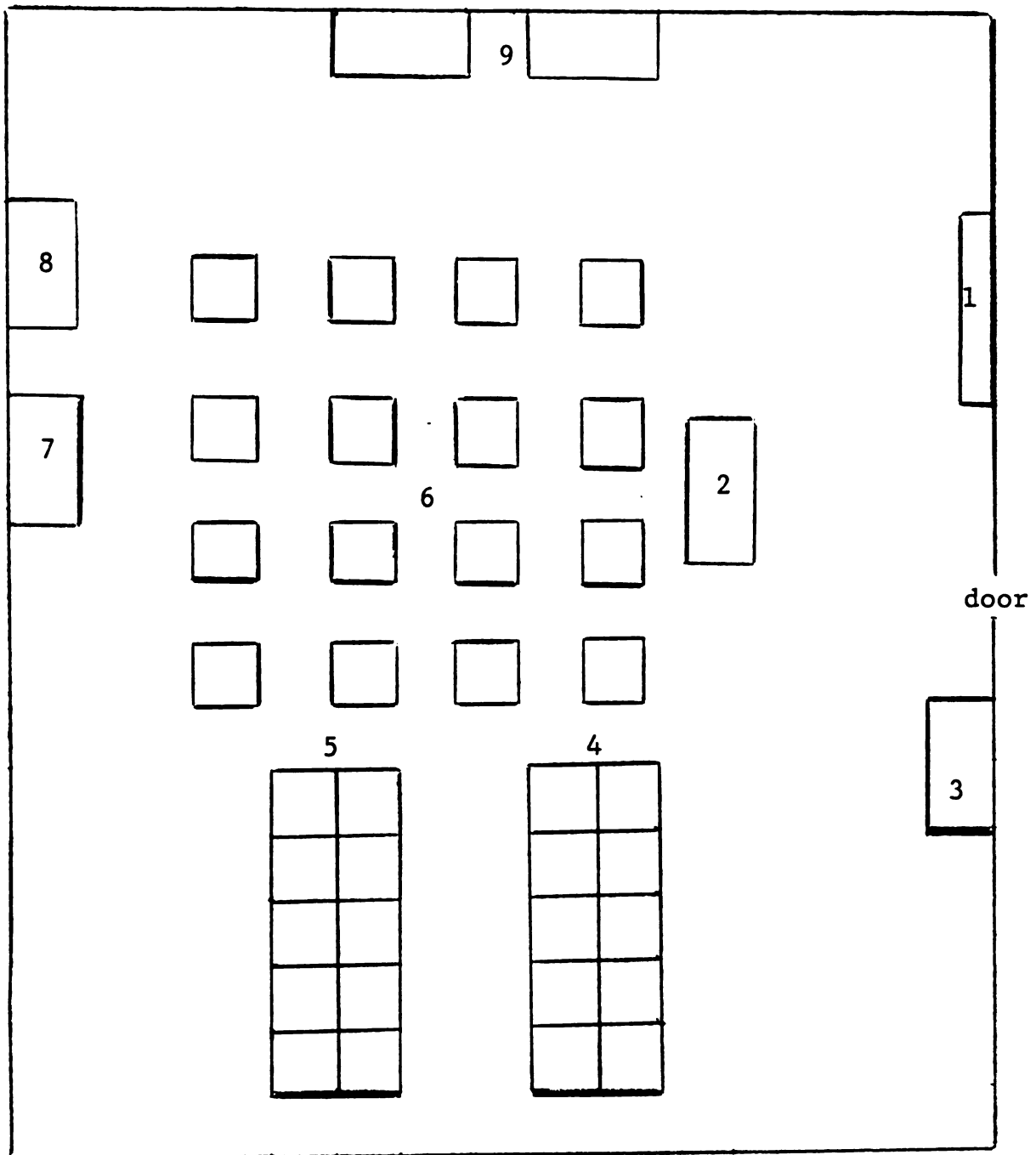
There are two sessions, one in the morning from 9:00 to 11:30 and another one in the evening from 6:30 to 9:00, followed by a lab session for those who want to stay after class and listen to cassette recordings. The evening classes are intended to accommodate adults who cannot attend the morning classes because of other responsibilities such as other classes, work, or personal business. Participants are expected and encouraged to attend classes regularly and take part in class discussions and activities.

News about the program offering gets around by word of mouth, and announcements are also made at local churches on Sundays. Moreover, at the beginning of every quarter, the program coordinator puts an ad in the school district's newsletter.

The ESL Adult Education Classroom

Each of the three ESL adult education classes (Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced) were held at Sloan Elementary, in classrooms that were intended for elementary students. The intermediate level, which was the focus of this study, had its classes conducted in a third grade classroom. Perhaps it would have been better to use one of the upper grades' classrooms, for instance fourth or fifth, but teachers did not cooperate and were not willing to let someone use their classrooms for fear of losing some important teaching materials (IFI 9-23-87). ESL adult learners had to sit on tiny chairs with their legs crammed under small desks for two and half hours. Many of them complained about this but it seemed nothing could be done to correct the situation.

The ESL adult classroom where the study took place was adjacent to the gym and the community center. The bathrooms were just around the corner. There were no bathrooms in the classroom. The room had only one door and a long window on the west side (see Figure 1). There were a wide chalkboard, two bulletin boards, a teacher's desk and a chair, a file cabinet, a closet, a long shelf, and students' desks attached to chairs. There were also charts on the wall. Two of the charts had to do with short and long vowels, which were also used by ESL adult learners. Another chart was used to motivate third grade students to turn in their homework every day. Each student got a star sticker for



1. Blackboard
2. Teacher's desk
3. Closet
4. & 5 Adult learners' desks
6. Kids' desks
7. Windows
8. Cabinet
9. Bulletin boards

Figure 1 Mrs. Matienzo's Classroom

every homework handed in. A big world map was hanging from the north wall of the room. On this map were pictures and names of students showing the home country of each with colored strings. ESL adult learners were able to identify with this since they were international students too.

There were no tables in the room. Students' desks had to be pushed together to serve as a long table. Ten small desks (five on each side) formed one long table for ten ESL adult learners. The other ten desks were used in the same manner.

The room was decorated with kids' stuff -- art work and drawings that third grade students did during the day. The walls were filled with these decorations. One of the bulletin boards contained family pictures that kids brought from their homes as part of their assignment on family history. These pictures were also used by students for show and tell to share their experiences with friends and classmates.

The room was sufficiently lighted and well-heated. None of the adult learners complained about either of these even though some of them kept their coats on through the entire session during some of the cold evenings in December.

ESL Adult Learners

In this section the characteristics of the participants will be presented. This information is summarized in Table 3 on page 67. The ESL adult learners

came from a great diversity of backgrounds. The wide range of age, educational experience, and cultural and linguistic background in this group made the study interesting. They were in the United States for many different reasons and joined English classes for a variety of purposes. The majority of them had student visas (F-1) status. Some of them came to the United States as immigrants and others were refugees who fled their home countries because of political unrest and/or economic crises. At the time of the study, the average length of time adult learners had stayed in the United States was one year.

At the beginning of the program there were 20 participants (13 women and 7 men), most of whom were married. Thirteen countries were represented by these adult learners who came with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. 1/2 of the participants were from the Middle East, and South and East Asia. Close to 1/4 of them came from Europe, and the other 1/4 came from Latin America and Africa.

About 1/2 of the participants were in the age range of 23 to 30 years, 1/4 of them were between 32 and 45 years old, while the last 1/4 fell in the 50 - 65 year age range. Most of the younger participants were planning to attend the university at the college or graduate level after learning English first. Others were already enrolled in some courses. Even though they had done college work in their

<u>Name</u>	<u>C.O.O.</u>	<u>N.L.</u>	<u>L.S.U.S.</u>	<u>E.L.</u>	<u>M.S.</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>
Alberto	Bolivia	Span.	8 months	College	S	M	23
Monica	Columbia	Span.	1 year	College	S	F	25
Carmen	Mexico	Span.	1 1/2 yrs.	H.S.	W	F	63
Tony	Mexico	Span.	1 year	College	S	M	24
Hamar	Sudan	Ara.	2 years	Ele.	W	F	56
Mardi	Mali	Fre.	1 year	Grad.	M	F	28
Nadia	Egypt	Ara.	1 year	College	M	F	26
Ahmed	Saudi A.	Ara.	1 1/2 yrs.	Grad.	M	M	26
Sophia	Iran	Farsee	1 year	Grad.	M	F	45
Sarina	Iran	Farsee	1 year	Ele.	W	F	65
Fatma	Nepal	Nepali	1 1/2 yrs.	H.S.	M	F	27
Wang	China	Chin.	1 year	College	M	F	51
Tang	China	Chin.	1 year	Grad.	M	F	32
Kim	Korea	Korean	1 year	Grad.	M	F	38
Shizu	Japan	Jap.	1 year	College	S	F	24
Yasha	Japan	Jap.	1 1/2 yrs.	Grad.	M	F	28
Karsov	Poland	Polish	2 years	Jr. Col.	M	M	42
Yonas	Poland	Polish	2 years	Grad.	M	M	35
Elena	Poland	Polish	2 years	H.S.	M	F	50
Kristle	Poland	Polish	2 years	Grad.	M	F	27

Key

C.O.O.	Country Of Origin
N.L.	Native Language
L.S.U.S.	Length of Stay in the United States
E.L.	Educational Level
M.S.	Marital Status
W	Widowed

Table 3. Participants' characteristics

home countries, they were not able to transfer all the credits they had earned. Mardi had this to say:

I finished college in my country, you know. We have a different educational system there. After studying "economy" (economics) for four years, I came here to do my M.A. but I haven't started yet. They said I must take other courses first. I am spending time. I don't know... well,... (IFI 10-14-87)

Mardi happened to be from a French-speaking country whose educational system is very structured and centralized. Although she had already earned an undergraduate degree, she was told to take some college level courses before she started her graduate work. She seemed to be angered by this and was somewhat frustrated.

Most of the older participants were widowed women who lived with their children. Their educational level was high school or below. It seemed like these adult learners were enrolled in the ESL program against their will. It did not seem to make any difference whether they attended the classes or not. Sarina had lost her husband and immigrated to the United States from Iran to live with her daughter. The daughter came to class with her almost every evening and helped her with the work. Sarina said:

I don't know why my daughter is worry, worry, for me. I know a lot of English now. I think I have learned enough to talk with friends. Why do I learn more? (IFI 10-19-87)

It appeared that her daughter was literally "pushing" her to attend the ESL classes. She would always sit by her and make sure that her assignment was done right. When

asked why she was so persistent, she replied: "I don't want my mother to be isolated because of the language barrier. I want her to learn the language, and learn it right. Speaking is not enough, she has to learn how to write it too" (10-22-87).

Many of these participants were professionals such as teachers and accountants, skilled workers like electricians, plumbers, and mechanics in their home countries. Some of them were able to get the job they were trained for and were experienced in, but others ended up doing odd jobs like cleaning and working as a waiter or waitress in restaurants partly because of the job market, but also because of the language barrier. Nadia, who was trained to be an accountant, explains:

After graduating from college I were working in the Ministry of Finance for one year. I had a very good job. Now I am working at a restaurant as a waitress. I don't think I have any choice, so I have to do it. I must support my husband who is a full time student at the university. He also works part time and we get some help from our parents, but it is not enough. Everything is expensive here, you know (IFI 10-14-87).

Many of the participants were enrolled in the ESL classes because they believed that they could not conduct simple day-to-day personal business properly. According to Nicholls and Naish (1981), "It is often only when students become aware of how they are hampered by inadequate English that they seek help. They may want English for very specific reasons: to get on a training course, ... to

improve their job prospects, ... and to deal better with the paper work of a family business ..." (p. 9). Monica, who lived in the United States for only one year at the time of the informal interview, shared her experience this way:

I feel very embarrassed when I go shopping or to the bank and people say to me "what?", any time I ask them a question or say something. This also happens at work. I need these classes to improve my English. I really do. It may also be a lot easier when I start my graduate work (IFI 10-19-87).

Frustrations like this forced Monica and others in similar situations to seek some kind of help. After talking to friends, they decided to enroll in an intensive English program (ESL).

Those who were working, part time or full time, attended ESL classes because they wanted to communicate better with workmates and supervisors and thus become effective workers. Others did so in order to converse reasonably well with their friends. Still another motive was so that they could prepare for their college or graduate courses, or do a better job if they were already enrolled at the university.

Tang, who was a graduate student at the university, decided to continue attending ESL classes, and this was why:

These classes have really helped me prepare for the harder work - graduate program. I am going to keep on coming every evening if I can, because if I learn more English, I can understand my assignments better (IFI 10-20-87).

During the first year, Tang did not take any graduate course. He concentrated all his effort and time on learning English, which seemed to have helped him so much. His decision to attend ESL classes, even after he started graduate school, was probably wise since it seemed he needed to learn more writing skills.

The following is a brief description of each of the 10 participants who took part in the in-depth interviews. For further information, the reader may refer to Table 3 on page 67.

1. Tony

Tony was a 24 year old young man who came from Mexico to visit his relatives in Texas but decided to stay in the United States. His uncle happened to be a migrant worker who came to Michigan during the summer months to work in the farms and moved back to Texas for the remainder of the year. This was how Tony found himself in Michigan. Tony was almost done with his college work in computer science when he was in Mexico. He worked as a part time librarian while attending college there. At the time of the interview, Tony was working at a furniture store. After learning English, he planned to enroll at the university. His reason for taking ESL classes was:

Even though I knew some English when I came to the United States, it was not good enough. I wanted to communicate better at work and prepare myself for the university (FI 10-26-87).

2. Monica

Monica was a 25 year old Columbian young woman who loved to talk a lot despite the fact that she always felt people did not understand what she said. She seemed to be very sociable and friendly with almost everyone. Her hobbies included dancing, meeting people, and traveling. Monica had an undergraduate degree in history and worked as a teacher for one year before she came to the United States. During the day, she was working at a grocery store not far from where she lived and attended ESL classes in the evenings. When asked why she was taking English classes, she replied (laughingly):

It's obvious, don't you listen the way I talk? I have to improve my English, otherwise it will be very hard for me when I start my graduate study. I also want to understand people when they talk, and I want people to understand me too (FI 10-27-87).

3. Mardi

Mardi was from Mali -- a French-speaking country in West Africa. Mardi was 28 years old, married and a mother of one girl. She graduated from college in her country majoring in economics and worked for two years in the National Bank of Mali. Mardi stayed at home taking care of her two year old daughter while her husband was going to the university. They lived on personal savings and a scholarship from their government. This was what she had to say about her reason for taking ESL classes:

I want to do a good job in graduate school. Some people tell me that it is hard-- writing a lot of papers, researches and a lot of reading. Is it true? The fact that I went to a different educational system for my undergraduate degree makes it more difficult for me (IFI 10-28-87).

4. Hamar

Hamar was an older woman who was born and raised in the Sudan. Because of political unrest in that part of the world, she came to the United States as a refugee over two years ago. Hamar's formal education did not go beyond the primary or elementary level. Hamar worked in government offices cleaning desks and windows for many years before she came to the United States. At the time of the study, she did not do any work. This was why she was taking ESL classes:

Maybe it will help, I don't know. It is hard for those of us who are a little ...(paused and looked somewhat shy) older to learn English, you know. But, perhaps it will help me to exchange ideas with people and talk with my neighbors more..., a little more than what I am able to do now (FI 10-29-87).

Hamar did not seem to be sure about why she was taking the classes. She was somewhat pessimistic about the outcome, at least at the beginning. The fact that she was from the older group seemed to have contributed toward this feeling. It was as if her feeling was "You cannot teach an old dog new tricks."

5. Ahmed

After a year and half in the United States as a graduate student, Ahmed did not seem to have any problem with English. He came from Saudi Arabia to do his M.A. in educational administration. Before coming to the United States, Ahmed was a high school social studies teacher. Despite the fact that he did not have to work when he was studying for his graduate degree because his government paid all his expenses, he was frequently heard complaining of not having enough time to study. When I asked him why he was enrolled in ESL classes, his answer was:

Even though I consider myself good in English and I really don't have that much problem, I still want to learn some skills that may make my graduate work a little easier. I want to learn not only how to speak properly, but also how to write and spell right. Well, "Ensh-Allah"... God's will (FI 10-28-87).

Since Ahmed was a teacher in high school, he seemed to feel very confident of himself. He spoke fairly good English -- a lot better than many others in the group. Nevertheless, he still wanted to learn more.

6. Sophia

Sophia was an Iranian woman who was sponsored by her company to do graduate work in electrical engineering. Her husband was also working on his PhD. in math. Sophia worked for a telephone company in Iran after graduating with a in electronics. She did not work at the time she was

attending graduate school. When asked why she needed to take ESL classes, her answer was:

I have been here only for one year. My husband came earlier. I still need to learn how to read with understanding and how to write, My conversation may not be that bad, but I am supposedly in graduate school you know! I can use some help to do graduate work (FI 10-29-87).

7. Karsov

The political unrest in Poland forced Karsov, his wife and two daughters, and his friends to leave the country they love so much. Karsov was a member of the Solidarity labor union movement in Poland. After they fled their homeland they stayed in West Germany for over six months preparing their documents to emigrate to the United States. After earning a diploma from a two-year vocational institution, Karsov worked for a shipping company for several years. At the time of the interview, Karsov was working for a factory that makes auto spare parts. He was not planning to attend college. Why was he attending ESL classes? His answer:

I studying English not because I plan to study in college or graduate school like the many others here, but because I want to improve my conversation ability. I need it very bad. My two daughters help me at home sometimes, but that is not enough. Learning more English will be help me a lot (IFI 10-27-87).

8. Fatma

Fatma was a 25 year old energetic young woman from Nepal. She accompanied her husband who was working on a PhD. degree in agricultural economics. Fatma had a high school diploma before she came to the United States. Although she expressed her desire to get a degree in home economics sometime in the future, she did not know when she was going to start taking college courses. Before they came to the United States, Fatma worked as a secretary in a government office for about three years. She was not working at the time she was taking ESL classes because she had to take care of her two boys. Her reason for enrolling at the ESL program was:

I want to learn the language so that I can speak with people easily. Also, what would my parents and friends at home say if I go back without learning English after living here for some years? That would be a shame! (FI 11-2-87).

9. Tang

Tang was a 32 year old young man from the Peoples' Republic of China. After earning a B.S. degree in electrical engineering, he worked for a private company for about six years. At the time of the interview, he was taking graduate courses in the same field as his undergraduate major. He had an assistantship from the university working in a lab, helping first and second year college students. His reason for taking ESL classes was not different from many others:

This program is a tremendous help for me. It is very difficult for me to pronounce some words. This will help me in my job and for the graduate courses I am taking. I plan to keep on coming at least for this year (FI 11-3-87).

10. Shizu

Shizu was a brilliant and hard-working young woman from the island nation of Japan. After graduating from college with a B.A. degree in marketing, she decided to pursue a graduate degree in the United States in the same field. While going to college, Shizu worked at a hardware store part time. When she was attending the ESL program she worked at a department store. Shizu seemed to be eager to learn and help others learn. She always turned in her assignments on time and did extra work. The reason she was taking ESL classes was:

When I first came to this country one year ago, it was somewhat difficult for me to understand everything people were saying. Through a friend I found out about this program and was enrolled immediately. Now, I feel more confident about myself and can communicate better. I am still in the program because I want to learn as much English as I can before I begin taking graduate courses at the university (IF 11-10-87).

Mrs. Matienzo: The ESL Adult Education Teacher

Mrs. Matienzo was a woman of forty-five years who gained the respect and admiration of her students and her colleagues, as well as her boss. She was very warm and soft-spoken and did not seem to get angry at any of her

students, no matter how often some of them were reluctant to participate in class discussions, forgot to bring their homework, or were talking in class in their own language while she was lecturing. She was so friendly to her students that some of them would tease her about almost anything, like "O...h! Mrs. Matienzo, I saw you walking with a young guy yesterday afternoon at the mall." She would just laugh and say "Oh you did?" (FN 10-15-87). She never embarrassed any of her students in class when they did not give the right answer to a question or did not want to give an answer at all. She always listened to what they had to say.

Mrs. Matienzo seemed to enjoy her job a lot, and was happy in what she was doing. She was the kind of a person who loves to help other people and seems to be very good at it. She would always go an extra mile to help someone learn the English language. She made herself available for help at all times and was concerned about not only their learning, but also other aspects of their lives -- social and psychological. During an informal conversation she once said to me "I feel very sad when some of them tell me about their home situation. I wish I could do something to help them" (IFI 10-19-87). When asked why she was interested in the adult ESL program, she replied:

I love to work with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. I have always wanted to teach English to foreign adults. I guess I have developed this interest over the past several years... long

before I even finished my undergraduate work. Needless to say I strongly believe that everyone can learn no matter what learning style he or she uses... It is important for these adults to learn the language to survive in this society and I am trying to do everything I can to help them reach that goal (FI 10-12-87).

Mrs. Matienzo was born and raised in a rural farming community in the Midwest. She is a second generation American. Her parents emigrated to the United States in the late 1930's from Eastern Europe. During an informal interview with her, she said, "Both of my parents still have heavy accent, even though they have been here for many years" (IFI 10-8-87). Mrs. Matienzo's background has significance because like her parents, all of her students came from outside the United States. The similar experience her parents had to go through might have helped her understand and sympathize with her students. She was sensitive to the trauma of culture shock her students experienced and was aware of the adjustments they had to make.

Mrs. Matienzo went to a university not far from where she taught ESL adult classes and earned her two degrees, B.A. and M.A., in Language with a special emphasis on teaching English to foreigners. Before she assumed her present post, she was teaching part time at the university's language center, helping foreign students who experienced difficulties with the English language. She had also taught English in Japan and Indonesia for some years.

What is Going on in Mrs. Matienzo's Classroom?

The following paragraphs outline and describe Mrs. Matienzo's schedule and the various activities which took place during the class sessions. Background knowledge of the activities will help the reader understand the relationship, if any, between these activities and absenteeism as well as dropping out from the program.

Schedule of Activities

Even though Mrs. Matienzo was always willing to make last minute changes to accommodate unexpected visitors, she tried to follow a regular schedule of activities. Each evening the same events and activities took place at the same times as the previous evening. The following table shows a typical schedule:

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activities</u>
6:30 - 6:45	Greetings, attendance, and getting started
6:45 - 7:30	Conversation and listening drill
7:30 - 8:00	Written exercises
8:00 - 8:15	Break
8:15 - 9:00	Reading and spelling
9:00 - 9:30	Listening in the language lab or staying for extra help (optional)

Table 4. Mrs. Matienzo's schedule

The schedule is described below in more detail:

Greetings, Attendance and Getting Started (6:30 - 6:45)

Mrs. Matienzo seemed to follow a routine; each evening she would stand by the door greeting her students as they came in. Some of them would continue their conversation in the hallway until she said "Ok guys, let's go, we have to start." After looking around the room checking to see if everyone was in, she would then start asking initiating questions like "How was your weekend? Did you go to church on Sunday? What did you do Friday night?" etc. This was intended to encourage them to participate in informal conversation as much as possible. It seemed to be a good way of starting a class. Not only were learners encouraged to participate in discussions but they also had the chance to know each other better.

Occasionally they did a "show and tell" type of activity. Some of the learners brought family photo albums or snap shots, postcards from their own countries or other countries, and letters they received from beloved ones. They seemed to love sharing their experiences with each other. Some of them would get carried away and say so much not only about themselves, but also about their family members and their friends. One evening, Fatma came with beautiful postcards from her own country (Nepal) which showed a nice countryside scenery -- mountains, rivers, and lakes. She looked so proud as she passed the postcards

around showing them to everyone and saying "This is my country... Yes, this is my country" (FN 10-14-87).

Conversation and Listening Drill (6:45 -7:30)

Mrs. Matienzo always encouraged her students to engage in conversation, formally or informally. In spite of this, the learners usually looked for someone from their own country to sit with and were tempted to speak in their own language instead of English. Mrs. Matienzo tried to break off this habit by separating them or saying "English only please."

Conversation topics differed from evening to evening. The most common ones were: 1) sharing experiences, 2) T.V. shows, and 3) current affairs. The learners formed groups. Sometimes there were two groups with ten participants in each, other times there were four groups with five participants in each or five groups with four participants in each. There were also times when two learners worked as partners. The number of participants in the groups was not always even because of absenteeism. The size of a group depended on the type of the activity. For example, two learners studied together for a test in spelling; a discussion on a certain issue seemed to work better with a group of four or more participants in it. One person in each group was chosen or assigned to be the group leader, serving as a chairperson to keep the discussion going. Mrs. Matienzo walked around and helped. While some of the

learners were somewhat reserved and did not say much, most of them loved to share their experiences. They would go on and on telling about themselves and what they knew about the subject.

The learners also seemed to enjoy discussing current events. They liked to share what they read in the newspaper or saw on T.V., especially if it had anything to do with their home country. Some of them related terrifying stories; for example, Karsov told his group that he saw a report on T.V. about a guy who got upset because he was unemployed for a long time and shot his wife, his son, and his sister-in-law. This led to a lively discussion on cultural differences. Many of the learners said that family ties in their cultures are very strong. One would not even think of shooting someone from his or her own family no matter what.

The learners were also given pictures with no writing to look at for few minutes and then they were asked to figure out what the pictures were about. This activity generated interesting discussions. They came up with all sorts of interpretations. One evening Mrs. Matienzo distributed copies of a picture which showed a man sitting at a train station with his head down and a conductor from one end of the train trying to get the man's attention. Here is what some of the learners had to say about the picture:

Wang: I think the man has been waiting for the train for a long time and fell asleep.

Kim: It looks like he is tired probably from working for many hours and is sleeping.

Elena: Maybe he is drunk or crazy... I don't know, or perhaps he couldn't see the conductor waving at him.

Alberto: I would say that the man is probably deaf and didn't hear the train coming or the conductor calling him.

Ahmed: Maybe there was something wrong with the train and the conductor was trying to tell the man to find some other way to get home or wherever he was going but was not able to get his attention (FN 11-18-87).

Another activity that the learners were expected to do was listening, not only to their teacher or to each other but also to cassette recordings. Even though listening to cassette recordings was normally reserved for lab sessions after class, Mrs. Matienzo used it to introduce new lessons too. Many times she said, "Listen, listen, just listen and don't copy anything." Cassette recordings were usually of conversations between two people.

Written Exercises (7:30 - 8:00)

During this half hour block, the learners were engaged in written exercises which required answering questions, filling out blanks, and correcting misspelled words or grammatically wrong sentences. The majority of the time they did these exercises in their workbooks. Other times they had to copy them from the blackboard. Most of the papers were corrected at the time of the exercise and immediate feedback was given.

Break (8:00 - 8:15)

The majority of the learners usually looked forward to this time. Every evening they would be looking at the clock again and again and when it hit eight, out they went. While sipping their tea, coffee, or hot chocolate or smoking cigarettes, they talked about different subjects. Not always did they talk in English though. Most of the times they talked in their own languages. It was also during this time that they got acquainted with each other.

Some of the learners preferred to stay in the classroom and continue with their written classwork or conversations. Most of the informal interviews with the learners were also conducted during this time. I shuttled between the classroom and the hallway trying to talk and listen to the learners who were staying in as well as to the ones who were taking a break. It was also partly during this time that the teacher was interviewed formally and informally. Break time was only 15 minutes long, but some of them came back five to ten minutes late.

Reading and Spelling (8:15 - 9:00)

Surprisingly, reading was one of the activities in which almost everyone wanted to participate, and Mrs. Matienzo did not seem to have a hard time finding volunteers to read. They usually read "round robin" -- each person reading only one paragraph at a time, going around until everyone got at least one chance. One evening Carmen

did not want to stop after reading one paragraph aloud and continued on to the next paragraph. She kept on reading until Mrs. Matienzo said "Carmen, that's enough now ... Stop! It is Tony's turn to read now" (FN 11-21-87).

Reading was also done in two other formats: 1) individual reading, with each learner reading silently; and 2) reading with a partner, i.e., two adult learners taking turns in reading to each other. The learners were usually required to answer comprehension questions following reading exercises.

Spelling was done in three different ways. The learners were given a set of spelling words to study at the beginning of each week. After studying at home individually, with a family member or with a friend, and in the classroom with a partner, they were given the test. They also did "spelling bee" and dictation. Dictation seemed to be the least liked activity. Whenever Mrs. Matienzo announced that there would be a dictation, a loud "No...!" was usually heard. This was especially true with the older women, even though Mrs. Matienzo was not reading fast and was trying to avoid long and complicated sentences. Hamar was very vocal about this exercise. She once said "Oh no! Dictation again? I don't like it ... It is hard" (FN 10-18-87).

Listening in the Language Lab or Staying for
Extra Help (9:00 - 9:30)

Since this activity was optional, hardly anyone stayed after class. Especially in the winter months everyone wanted to go home right away. When asked why they did not want to stay, the general answer was "We are tired, we want to go home" (IFI 10-13-87). Karsov and his wife had more to say:

We listen to cassette recordings in the classroom all the time. If we want to ask the teacher some questions we can ask her during recess. It is getting late and our children are waiting for us (FI 10-14-87).

Mrs. Matienzo made herself available to the learners all the time and many of them preferred to ask her questions while the class was in progress or during break time instead of staying afterclass. Since most of them came to the evening class after a long day of hard work or studying, they just did not seem to be that eager to stay one minute following their class session.

Summary

Negotiating for entry is an important part of the whole research project. Not only is the researcher trying to secure a site without which it would be impossible to conduct a study, but through contacts and meetings with many people he/she can have a better feel for the project. Discussing the purpose of the study with various people may help him or her decide whether to continue with the same

project or pick another one before too much time is wasted. Even though entry negotiation can be a very frustrating task as it was in this study, the end-result can turn out to be a very rewarding experience.

ESL adult education classes were held at Sloan Elementary School in Norsetville, a small town near one of the major universities in the Great Lakes Region. Many of the adult learners were either preparing to or already attending the university and had children enrolled at Sloan Elementary. Since they lived in the university apartments, they walked to their classes unless the weather was too bad. Others drove from an adjacent city where many of the residents lived with incomes below the poverty line. Some of them were employed and working hard and others were on welfare. Even though it was rather difficult for adult learners to use elementary school facilities such as desks and chairs, Sloan seemed to have been strategically located to serve adult learners coming from all sides of the town.

CHAPTER V

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

This chapter presents and interprets the data gathered for this study. Factors associated with absenteeism and dropping out, and the influence of ESL adult learners' cultural background on these factors, are described in detail. Furthermore, how the teacher and her teaching style as well as the classroom physical environment are related to absenteeism and dropping out among ESL adult learners will be discussed. This chapter uses the following format: A research question is followed by a detailed description of activities and events observed in each of the different settings pertaining to, and which support or provide answers for that question. Direct quotes from interviews as well as recurring events recorded in notes taken during observations are presented as evidence of the participants' perspectives on absenteeism and dropping out.

Absenteeism in Mrs. Matienzo's Class

How bad was absenteeism in Mrs. Matienzo's class? What did she have to say about it? In none of the 48 English class sessions held during the whole quarter was there perfect attendance. Most of the evenings, only half or fewer of the class were present. There were also times when

only two or three adult learners showed up. This was especially true during the winter months. When Mrs. Matienzo was asked about the situation she said, "Well..., I know we have a problem, there is no question about it. But you will see an improvement. We will have more of them tomorrow" (laughingly) (FN 11-4-87).

Table 5 depicts a vivid picture of this serious problem. Three out of the seven ESL adult learners who dropped out from the program, or almost 43%, missed more than half of the class sessions they attended up to the time they stopped coming altogether. Five out of thirteen, or close to 40%, of the adult learners who stayed for the entire quarter missed half or more of the total class sessions.

WHAT DO ESL ADULT LEARNERS PERCEIVE TO BE THE FACTORS RELATED TO ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT OF THIS CLASS?

The most significant factors that were perceived by ESL adult learners as closely related to absenteeism and/or dropping out of the program were: age, fatigue, family obligations, the weather, and lack of interest or motivation. It should be mentioned at this point that some of these factors do overlap, for example, age and lack of interest or motivation to learn English, and fatigue and age. Older adult learners may tend to be less motivated to learn English. Older participants may also complain about fatigue more than younger participants. Each of these factors will be discussed in the following sections.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Absent</u>
1. Alberto	12 out of 36 sessions (dropped out)
2. Monica	5 out of 48 sessions
3. Carmen	7 out of 12 sessions (dropped out)
4. Tony	12 out of 48 sessions
5. Hamar	25 out of 48 sessions
6. Mardi	9 out of 48 sessions
7. Nadia	7 out of 48 sessions
8. Ahmed	8 out of 48 sessions
9. Sophia	26 out of 48 sessions
10. Sarina	11 out of 20 sessions (dropped out)
11. Fatma	24 out of 48 sessions
12. Wang	4 out of 12 sessions (dropped out)
13. Tang	10 out of 48 sessions
14. Kim	15 out of 48 sessions
15. Shizu	6 out of 48 sessions
16. Yasha	8 out of 36 sessions (dropped out)
17. Karsov	27 out of 48 sessions
18. Yonas	12 out of 20 sessions (dropped out)
19. Elena	20 out of 36 sessions (dropped out)
20. Kristle	28 out of 48 sessions

Table 5. ESL adult learners' absence record

Age

During the formal and informal interview sessions, age was cited as a factor related to absenteeism and dropping out, not only by adult learners who were older or thought of

themselves as too old to enroll in the ESL program, but also by the younger adult learners. Most of the adult learners who were 50 years of age or older said that they were missing many classes partly because they did not think it was really necessary for them to enroll in these classes since they were older. Hamar, the third oldest in the group, had this to say:

Look at me... Don't you think I am too old to be sitting here? Some of these young laldies here could be my grandchildren. Does your father go to school? I am ... old and going to school like a child. Sometimes I don't even like to come to class. What am I going to use it for? It is a lot harder for me to learn English because I am old. My head will not accept it. It is funny, it is really funny. Oh..., please leave me alone (laughingly) (IFI 10-15-87).

Hamar constantly talked about her not being able to learn English because she was old, and she sounded very serious about it. However, toward the end of the program she seemed to have realized that in this society, learning the English language may not only be helpful but necessary. Her discussions with me, the teacher, and some of her classmates about the problem might have helped in changing her attitude toward learning English. Even though she continued to miss many classes, she never dropped out of the program.

Like Hamar, Sarina did not think learning English was for her. Sarina was older than Hamar; she looked tired and a lot weaker. She wore heavy glasses and held the book very

close to her face whenever she read. Even though Sarina was not as vocal as Hamar about attending English classes, she also had a hard time understanding why it was so necessary for an old woman like her to learn the language. She chose to stay at home most of the time and missed a lot of classes. She seemed to blame her daughter for putting her through the situation. This is what she said when asked about the program:

Why do I learn more English? I can speak English... My daughter said I have to come but she can maybe teach me in home. Old people like me don't need to learn more. I am not going to work. I always stay in home (IFI 10-15-87).

Sarina did not stay very long. She was one of the adult learners who dropped out a few weeks after the program started.

Carmen also felt she was too old to attend the English classes, but she did not say much about it or complain a lot like the other older adult learners did. She did not miss as many classes as they did either. But when asked if she thought age has anything to do with absenteeism and dropping out she said, "Definitely" (IFI 10-6-87).

Most of the younger adult learners were convinced that age does contribute to absenteeism and dropping out of older adult learners. "What else could it be? They don't have to go to work," said Tony. "I would probably stay at home too if I were their age," he added (10-22-87). Shizu put it this way:

I can't say it is the only reason for these women to miss so many classes but I think it is mainly because they are older than the others and they don't feel like coming to class every evening. Maybe it is harder for them to sit and listen for a longer time, I don't know... I even feel it is too long sometimes, but when you get older you get tired easily, I think (FI 10-21-87)

Many of the things that were said about the older participants were clearly exhibited during the participant observation. Not only did some of these participants look uninterested and tired, but they also refused to take part in some of the class discussions or activities. Sarina looked half-asleep almost every evening. When Mrs. Matienzo asked her to read a paragraph during one of the reading sessions, Sarina said:

No...no, I don't want to read. Carmen will read! (looking at Carmen and smiling). I...I don't like to read (FN 10-19-87).

This is not to suggest however, that they were reluctant to take part only because they were old or they felt they were too old to learn English; certainly not. There may have been some other reasons too; e.g., maybe they did not feel well or did not understand the material and were too embarrassed to admit that. But the way they felt about their age and the fact that they constantly mentioned their age in relation to learning English seemed to have a lot to do with whether or not they were actively participating in the learning process.

Fatigue

Most of the participants had to work in order to support themselves and/or a family. Some of them had full time jobs and others worked only part time. Those who worked full time found it very difficult to come to a 6:30 class after a long day of hard work. Yonas explains:

It is crazy to expect people to come to class after working hard for a whole day. I am really tired. Sometimes I feel sleepy in class and I don't know what is going on (IFI 10-11-87).

Other adult learners who also worked hard during the day were equally frustrated. Monica, who worked in a store complained about a backache one evening and said, "I am going home, I can't concentrate anymore" (FI 11-2-87).

The type of job an adult learner was engaged in outside the home seemed to have made a difference. Jobs like time keeping, easy cleaning, and baby sitting did not require a lot of physical energy and were not as tiring as other jobs like janitorial work, or working in a factory or a garage. Elena, who worked for a nearby law firm, was asked if she was too tired to come to class in the evenings. She said: "No, I have a very easy job. All I do is dust desks and shelves and sometimes I wash windows but that's not hard either. I am not tired now at all" (IFI 10-29-87). To the contrary, Karsov, who was employed at a local factory, expressed a real concern:

It is very difficult for me to sit and listen to the teacher because I become very tired. I work nine and sometimes ten hours everyday for six days making

spare parts for cars. We have only 45 minutes for lunch and a short break in the afternoon. After I come home, I have only one hour and sometimes less to eat and rest before I come to class (IFI 10-12-87).

One evening, Mrs. Matienzo introduced a lesson on tenses-- past tense, present tense, and future tense. In an effort to make her presentation simple and clear she tried to involve them in the lesson as much as possible. She called three of the participants and asked them to stand in front of the class and said:

Can everyone see now? Is everyone watching? I want you to pay attention. Look at this people while you listen carefully. Karsov, please look up here. Nadia, Sophia and Alberto are going to help me demonstrate something. Tonight we are going to learn about tenses. Does everyone know what tenses are? Very good. What? You... Oh..., you had it last year? It looks like most of you remember learning about it last year. "Tense" means time. We are going to learn about the past tense (yesterday), the present tense (now) and the future tense (tomorrow). Nadia, yesterday you ate your lunch; point backward with your hand. Sophia, now you are eating your lunch; point at your mouth. Alberto, tomorrow you will eat your lunch; point forward with your hand (FN 10-13-87).

While most of them were listening, some of them had their heads down and did not seem to be paying attention. For example, Karsov was not looking and Mrs. Matienzo had to call his name trying to get his attention. Ahmed was actually slumbering and his face looked very tired. I talked to him during break and asked him how things were. He said "Oh, I am tired. I had only three or four hours of

sleep last night because I had to study for a test in one of the other courses I am taking at the university for my graduate study" (IFI 10-13-87).

Some of the participants were housewives who claimed to work just as hard as those who had a job outside the home. Even though they did not complain as much, they also said they were tired. One of them mentioned that she got up several times every night to feed her baby and found it very difficult to sleep during the day. As a result, she would feel drained when she came to class in the evening.

Family Obligations

Family obligations ranged from baby sitting to entertaining a relative or a friend. Some of the participants were mothers who had small children or babies. It was not easy for them to find a baby sitter that they could depend on or call any time they needed to, partly because they lived in a student community where baby sitters were not always available. Money was another problem. Not all of the mothers could afford to send a child or children to a baby sitter for four evenings a week.

Sophia almost got herself in trouble one evening. She left her ten year old and seven year old children at home without a baby sitter and went to class. Shortly after she left, a neighbor who had seen this happen more than once in the past alerted the police. The police arrived at Sophia's house in no time. One of the police officers stayed with

the kids the whole evening baby sitting them. When Sophia came home after class she was surprized to see a police officer sitting with the kids and wanted to know what was going on. The officer gave her a full explanation. After she told the class about the incident the following evening, she said:

What can I do if I don't have enough money to leave them with a baby sitter every evening? I am mad at that woman who reported me to the police. There is nothing like that in my country. Nobody would call the police if you leave your children without an adult. My children are old enough to stay home by themselves (FI 11-4-87).

Some of the adult learners missed classes to entertain a visitor. A visitor could be a friend or much closer than that -- a cousin or a family member. Alberto had missed many classes. One evening during an informal conversation at break time, I asked him why he was absent the evening before. He said, "Oh ... Louis, a very close friend of mine, came over my house and we talked for a long time. By the time he was ready to leave it was too late for me to come to class and I decided to stay home and watch T.V." (IFI 10-26-87).

Nadia usually had a good attendance record. But one week she was absent three evenings in a row. When she came back, her friends were very curious to find out why she was absent for that long and began showering her with questions like "What happened? Are you ok? Were you sick? Did you

go somewhere?" etc. "Wait a minute!" said Nadia, and began answering their questions this way:

Well, my brother came to visit us from Egypt. Since this is his first time in the United States, we are trying to take him around to show him some places. We are going to take him to Washington D.C. and New York next week. I know I am going to miss a lot of classes but what can I do? I have to study a lot when I come back (FN 10-22-87).

Obviously Nadia was very happy to see her brother and was very excited about showing him places. Could she have avoided missing classes? Probably not. She seemed to be very much concerned about missing so many classes and the amount of work she would have to do when she returned. When Mrs. Matienzo was asked how she felt about the fact that some of the participants stayed home in order to entertain a visitor, she said: "It may sound ridiculous but for them everything comes before English" (IFI 10-28-87).

Other family obligations which were related to absenteeism and dropping out among ESL adult learners were taking a sick child to the clinic, grocery shopping, and helping a spouse doing some work in the house. The first one happened all the time, especially with mothers who had children younger than three years. More than any other health problem, ear infections seemed to be very common among this age group. Since some of the mothers did not have health insurance coverage, they took their children to a free health care center which happened to be in the same building as the ESL classroom. By going to this clinic they

had more of a chance of getting back to their class faster than if they had gone to another clinic. Fatma used the clinic quite frequently. She talked to me about it:

I am tired of going to that clinic. My boys are always sick. They complain about so many problems. I have missed so many classes because of this. My husband is always in class or in the library studying so he can't help me. I am mad many times (FI 12-1-87).

Grocery shopping could probably have been done before the class started. Other chores like cleaning in the house could also have been done either before or after the class. Nevertheless, some adult learners continued to say that they could not come to class because of these obligations. "I thought I would be done with my laundry before class started but it took me longer," said Elena. "Then I had to do more cleaning in the house," she added (IFI 11-23-87). Kim, who had to go grocery shopping about twice a week, explained:

My husband comes home around the time we begin class. One of us have to be home with our sick child all the time. I like to go grocery shopping before class because after class it is too late to be going shopping. It is not every time I go shopping that I am late for class or I miss class anyway. Sometimes I make it on time (IFI 11-24-87).

The same adult learners said that it would be too late and they would be too tired to clean up a house or do other work around the house after class and preferred to do it before they go to class. One of the adult learners also mentioned that it was against her cultural belief to clean a house at

night. People in her country believe that cleaning a house at night is inviting evil spirits.

I made an effort to see if there was any connection between the responses to the formal and informal interview questions and what was observed in the classroom. In addition to what was observable, e.g., their tired-looking faces and reluctance to take part in the class activities, many times some participants were heard talking among themselves about the very things that were discussed in the previous paragraphs.

As was mentioned earlier, adult learners from the same country or region tended to sit together and the temptation of speaking in one's own language became harder to overcome. Kristle and Elena happened to be from the same country. One evening after break, just before Mrs. Matienzo started her lecture, Kristle and Elena were carrying on a conversation in their language. I pulled up a chair and sat right by their table and all of a sudden their conversation stopped. I apologized for interrupting. Kristle said:

No, that's ok, we were just talking about my son's baby sitter. She is going back to her country tomorrow and I don't know where I am going to take him starting tomorrow evening. I might have to miss some classes this week until I find another baby sitter. My baby sitter was really good and she was not taking that much money from us. I don't think I can find another one like her (FN 11-5-87).

Nadia was talking to Kim about her trip to Washington D.C. and New York with her brother. "I had a wonderful time

even though I had to miss a lot of classes. We visited so many interesting places. My brother is still here. He will be with us for two more weeks" (FN 11-2-87).

The Weather

Since all of the participants in the study were from outside of the United States, they found the weather difficult to deal with, especially in the winter months. Many preferred to stay home during the windy and chilly evenings in October and November. One evening in late October Hamar came to class wrapped up from "head to toe." One of the adult learners joked with her and said that it was too early to dress up for Halloween. But some of them still did not know much about Halloween. Therefore the joke did not produce any laughter. Even though it was not terribly cold that evening, except for the wind, Hamar thought it was, and said: "It is cold... It is cold tonight. I think it is going to be very cold winter if it started to be cold this early. I don't like cold weather because I am from a warm climate" (FN 10-29-87). When asked if she would miss class because of the weather, she said: "If it is cold like this evening or colder, for sure I wouldn't come. I almost stayed home this evening" (IFI 10-29-87).

Many of the participants were unable to attend classes regularly in December and January because of bitterly cold and sometimes sub-zero temperatures. Even though some of the

adult learners had experienced this type of weather once or twice before and others had lived all their lives in it, e.g., the Polish, there were times when almost the entire class stayed away due to snow storms and blizzards, even when classes were not officially cancelled.

Many evenings Mrs. Matienzo was left with only a couple of adult learners because many of them did not show up for class at all. Of the ones that did come, most of them felt it was too cold to stay around and decided to go home after the break. One evening she started out with only five adult learners and two of them went home early. She did not seem to be disappointed at all; she said:

Well... It is interesting, Isn't it? We have the whole room all by ourselves. Come on, we are going to be all right. Aren't we? Let's continue reading from where we left off early. Who would like to read? Ok, you can go head Monica. We are going to spend the rest of the evening in the lab. We are going to have fun...! (FN 12-8-87).

Even though the room was within the normal temperature, a number of the adult learners did not think it was warm enough for them to take their jackets off. Ahmed was one of them. He was almost shivering one evening with an outside temperature of about 35 degrees Fahrenheit, and he could not wait to leave the room during the break for a cup of coffee or a cigarette to warm himself up. When asked if he thought many adult learners were absent because of the weather, he said:

Yes, of course! Don't you think it is too cold? I should have stayed home

like the others. I can't stand this weather. Believe me it is a curse. I prefer our desert hundred times. At least we get oil from it. What can you get from snow? This is my second winter here and I think this one is colder than the last one. Only Allah knows if I will be here for another one. Maybe I will move to Texas or California. I have many friends there (FN 12-16-87).

Ahmed happened to be from that part of the world which is sultry hot almost all year round. Even though he seemed to have a hard time adjusting to the cold weather, he managed to stay around and continue with his classes. Through their responses to interview questions, Ahmed and most of the other adult learners, including the ones who dropped out of the program, pointed out that the weather was definitely related to absenteeism and dropping out.

Lack of Interest or Motivation

How serious were these adult learners about the program? Did they consider it to be very important to them? Were they coming to class just for the sake of coming? Were they really interested in learning English? These and other similar questions were answered by the participants themselves.

The majority of the participants came to class with only one purpose or goal in mind, i.e., to learn English. There was no question about that. One could read it on their faces. It was also seen in their enthusiasm to learn and in their willingness to participate in every class activity. They were eager to learn not only how to

communicate but also how to read and write. Monica was typical. She always came to class at least ten or fifteen minutes early to finish up her assignment. If she needed help she would ask the teacher or someone else. One evening, she came to me and said:

Sir, can you please help me with this? I tried and tried to do my homework last night but I couldn't. If I don't turn it in tonight Mrs. Matienzo will not be happy. I like to bring my work back on time. Oh! ... that's all I need to do? I thought it was something else. Now I am happy. "Gracias", that means thank you (FN 9-30-87).

From then on, Monica did not hesitate to ask Mrs. Matienzo or me whenever she had a question. The fact that she always wanted to make sure her assignment was done right and turned in on time, as well as her desire to participate in any of the many class activities, indicates that she was serious about the program and was very much interested in learning the English language. This assertion was supported by the responses Monica and other participants gave during the interview sessions.

There were also those who did not seem to take their assignments seriously and did not make any effort to turn them in on time. Mrs. Matienzo had to go around reminding them to hand their work in several times a week. During class discussions, they looked somewhat lost and preferred to remain silent most of the time. Some of them had to be asked repeatedly before they uttered a word. Mrs. Matienzo was very careful in her approach. She usually pulled up a

chair and sat by one of them in order to provide individual help; for example, "How is it coming? Are you ok? Let us read the question together. Do you understand it now? Great!" (FN 9-23-87).

Other than what appeared to be lack of ability to understand the material presented, some of these adult learners seemed to have lost interest in actively participating in the learning process, possibly because of low self concept. A lot of times they did not think they would give the right answer to a question if they attempted to do so and felt very embarrassed when called upon by the teacher. Yasha turned red and was sweating one evening when Mrs. Matienzo called her name to ask her a question. She said: "No, no, I don't know. I don't want to answer" (FN 10-24-87). Hamar was honest when she said:

I am not fast learner... Ok! I need more time to understand the book. It take me more time to understand all these. I think my friend here is the same but I am more bad (FI 11-10-87).

An informal interview with all 20 adult learners indicated that nine of them, or 45%, felt some participants did not turn in their assignments or participate in class activities because the work was getting harder and harder for them. As a result they started losing interest in doing it, which eventually led to more absences and, for some, dropping out. It seemed like whenever the level of difficulty went up the level of interest went down. In other words, the more difficult an assignment was,

the less interested these adult learners were in doing it. Sarina, who many times claimed to have learned enough English already and that it was not necessary for her to attend the English classes, said:

Even though my daughter always try to help me, this work is very hard to me. I did not bring any work to class before. Now it is hard and hard everyday and I cannot do it. I don't know if I shall come to class tomorrow. What did she say we will do now? Reading? Oh no! (FN 10-1-87).

Responses to interview questions followed by probes revealed that more than 25% of the adult learners chose to stay home whenever an assignment was hard for them to do. Three out of the seven participants who dropped out of the program, or about 43%, also indicated that a feeling of inadequacy and lack of interest in doing the assignment were among their reasons to quit. Even though they did not question Mrs. Matienzo's dedication and willingness to help everyone succeed, a few of the participants mentioned that monotonous activities and boredom also made them lose interest in the program, which in turn led to missing classes and dropping out.

Other Factors

During the course of the interview, a few of the participants pointed out that some of the other "reasons" or factors related to missing classes were: .

- 1) having to watch a favorite T.V. show;
- 2) being out of town;

- 3) not feeling good;
- 4) taking care of a member of the family who was sick; and
- 5) having a conflict with one's work schedule.

These were not considered to be major factors because there was not enough evidence to show that a significant number of ESL adult learners were missing many classes because of them. For example, only one adult learner said that he was out of town when he missed class one evening; and two adult learners missed about two or three classes each because someone in their family was sick or they themselves did not feel good. Furthermore, only one participant mentioned that he stayed home two evenings so that he could watch his favorite T.V. shows. Tony loved "Three Is Company" and "Bill Cosby" -- two rather popular T.V. comedies. When other adult learners were asked if they, too, missed classes to watch T.V., they answered no.

Karsov was the only adult learner who reported a conflict with work schedule. He had to miss some classes when he started working overtime at his job. I asked him if he was required by his employers to put in extra time. He said:

No, but I need the money. I have to feed a wife and two children. I want to work as many hours as I can. Everything is expensive here (FI 11-30-87)..

Karsov also mentioned that he could not cope with the amount of pressure he had as a result of his overtime work and the assignments he had to turn in to his teacher. What other factors did the adult learners who quit the

program cite as contributing toward dropping out? Some of them said:

- 1) they could not learn the language and were disappointed;
- 2) they did not need it any more; and
- 3) they had too much pressure.

Two out of the seven adult learners who dropped out from the program said that the assignments they were doing in class and at home were more than they could handle and that they were getting disappointed from day to day. Even though they claimed to have made enough effort to turn in the work and participate in the learning process, Mrs. Matienzo did not feel they were doing enough. As it was discussed earlier, these adult learners (Sarina and Carmen) also repeatedly mentioned how they felt about their age and learning the language. Such a feeling and a sense of discouragement about their progress in learning English finally forced them to quit.

Yasha, who was pursuing her graduate studies at a nearby university, did not think she needed to continue attending the program. She felt very confident about her ability to do graduate work after enrolling in the ESL program for over a year. When asked why she quit the program, she said, "I think I can handle it now. If I need help I will ask some friends or Mrs. Matienzo" (FI 12-3-87).

Three of the participants who dropped out of the program reported that they had too much pressure related to their jobs or family situations. They were also concerned

about their families and friends back in their home countries and had so many things to think about that they found it very difficult to concentrate on their studies, and finally they decided to quit. Yonas had tears in his eyes when he related the following story:

I was so angry one evening, when I saw a report in the news that some people from my country were eating from the garbage because they could not find a job. I know these people were hard workers in my country and they had food to eat. It was very embarrassing... I was so sad and was not able to do my studies (FI 11-4-87).

Yonas could not help crying when a major T.V. network showed a picture of people from his own country eating from a garbage dumpster. He said he was so upset that he decided not to go to class that evening.

WHAT INFLUENCE DOES CULTURAL BACKGROUND HAVE ON ESL ADULT LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS RELATED TO ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT?

Everything we do in our everyday life may, one way or the other, be influenced by our cultural beliefs or values. Our cultural background influences the way we dress, the way we eat, the way we talk, and of course, the way we think about things. One can say, therefore, that the way adult learners perceive factors related to absenteeism and dropping out might have been influenced by their cultural beliefs. Seven out of the ten adult learners who participated in the in-depth interview said that their

perception of some of the factors related to absenteeism and dropping out was influenced by their cultural background.

Cultural Beliefs and Age as a Factor

For many people in U.S. society, it is an accepted fact that as people grow older their ability to do the things they used to do earlier in their lives, including learning, greatly diminishes. Not only do they lack enough strength or energy to do what they want to do, but they may also have less drive or motive to do it. Do you remember Hamar (the Sudan) and Sarina (Iran) who constantly talked about their age in relation to learning English? Both of these older women felt that they should not attend the English classes because they were old. After an in-depth interview with Hamar, and informally interviewing Sarina, it was found that their cultural beliefs contributed toward such feeling. Sophia, who is also from Iran, confirmed that in their society, it is generally believed that only children and younger adults enroll in school or learning institution.

Who are "younger adults?" How old does a person have to be in order to be considered too old to go to school? Where do you draw the line? There is no clear answer. From talking to many adult learners, it was revealed that most of them used the phrase "younger adults" to refer to people between the ages of 15 and 20; to others, it could go up to age 30 or as high as 50, depending on what society or group

of people they belonged to. Many of the participants also pointed out that because of their cultural background, to some people it may look strange or unusual when people at the age of 50 or older enroll in school or in programs like the ESL.

In many societies such as that of Hamar and Sarina, it is also generally believed that only children and younger adults enroll in school. In spite of the fact that adult education or literacy programs are widely employed to educate people in many of these countries, the idea that "big people" do not go to school still persists. Mardi (Mali) had this to say:

In my country it is strange for old people to go to school. They feel shy to go. I think some of the older people in our class don't come to class many times because they feel that way. Maybe they choose to stay home and do something else instead of coming to class (FI 11-17-87).

Since Mali is not a homogeneous society, it is assumed that Mardi was referring to her tribe or group of people when she uses the phrase "in my country." She might also have used that phrase to indicate that people in Mali do in fact tend to believe that older people should not go to school. More than half, or 60%, of the total number of ESL adult learners who took part in the study agreed with Mardi and said that it is unusual for older people to go to school even though some people do. Many of these participants have also pointed out that older people who attend classes have a tremendous amount of pressure because they are always

worried about how their friends and the public at large will react. As a result, they miss a lot of classes and eventually drop out of the program.

Cultural Beliefs and Family Obligations as Factors

Some of the family obligations that were discussed earlier appear to be influenced by cultural beliefs or values. For example, to many adult learners it seemed perfectly normal to miss a class and stay home in order to entertain a friend. They would find it very difficult to tell a friend that he or she has to leave so that they can go to class. This was especially true if the friend was visiting for the first time or had not been there in a long time. Nadia (Egypt) said:

You don't do that! It is very rude to leave a friend at home by himself or herself and go to class even if the friend says it is ok. I just can't do that. I don't think anyone from my culture would do that. You can always copy the assignment from a classmate (IFI 11-12-87).

Monica (Columbia) felt the same as Nadia but put it differently:

I don't think it is polite to leave a friend or a visitor at home and go to class; but sometimes you got to do it. I don't like to miss classes but when my mother came to visit us from my country I didn't want to leave her by herself and I stayed home maybe two times. If she will visit us again I shall ask her to come to class with me (FI 11-11-87).

Asked if her decision to stay home with her mother was influenced by her cultural background, Monica said, "My

parents taught me to be like that. But I think other peoples in Columbia are also like that" (FI 11-11-87). Monica could not say for sure whether or not her action was influenced by the way she was brought up in her home or by the cultural beliefs of the society at large.

Baby sitting as a family obligation was also influenced by cultural beliefs in different ways. The idea of leaving a baby or a child with a "stranger" four evenings a week in order to attend English classes just did not sound right to some mothers. These mothers attended classes only when a family member or a very close friend was available to baby sit. Many times they were forced to take their children to class with them. Fatma (Nepal) explains:

In my country we have our children with us all the time. I can't leave my boys with anyone other than my husband or my friend. But my husband is in the library or in class most of the time. I have to miss classes and stay home with the children or I have to take them with me to class (FI 11-16-87).

Fatma and six other adult learners who had children strongly believed that the welfare of their children comes before attending English classes. However, even though they missed classes to take care of their children, and they said that they would miss more classes if they had to, many of them tried very hard to attend classes regularly.

As indicated in Table 6, seven out of the ten adult learners who took part in the in-depth interview pointed out that their cultural background played a major role in influencing their perceptions of age and/or family

obligations as factors related to absenteeism and dropping out.

<u>Adult learners</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Family obligations</u>
1. Hamar	x	x
2. Mardi	x	x
3. Ahmed		x
4. Tang	x	x
5. Nadia		x
6. Sophia	x	x
7. Fatma		x

Table 6. ESL adult learners' perceptions of factors influenced by cultural background

In some societies, women are supposed to stay home all the time. This gives mothers the chance to spend a lot of time with their children, and they may tend to become so attached to them that they find it very difficult to be away from them even for a short time. Ahmed (Saudi Arabia) agreed:

My wife doesn't work, she stays home all the time. She takes care of our son who is only three years old. She wants to be with him all the time. I wanted her to take some classes at the university but she wants to wait (FI 11-24-87).

Saudi Arabian women are required by Islam law to stay home almost all the time. They can find themselves in trouble if they do not. It is a mixture of religious and cultural beliefs. This may also apply to Moslem women from other

societies in the Middle East or elsewhere. Fatma and Nadia, who are both Moslems, agreed, and said that it is less strict in their countries than it is in Saudi Arabia, probably because they are more exposed to Western culture. Other family obligations such as grocery shopping and working in the house did not seem to be influenced by cultural beliefs.

THE TEACHER AS A FACTOR ASSOCIATED WITH ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT AMONG ESL ADULT LEARNERS

What did the teacher do, or not do, that contributed toward absenteeism and dropping out? What role did she play in avoiding absenteeism and dropping out?

Her Personality

As it was pointed out in Chapter IV, Mrs. Matienzo was very much liked by everyone. She always came to class neatly dressed, and even though she did not appear to wear too much makeup, she was well groomed. Her good smile and low-toned voice gained their respect and admiration.

Mrs. Matienzo treated the adult learners not as merely students but as friends. She was very polite in her approach and respected everyone. She was very much concerned about their learning and made herself available for help all the time. She showed them that she cared and that she was interested in their success. She never showed anger or displeasure. None of the adult learners during the formal and informal interview sessions complained about her as a

person. Her personality was not a factor for absenteeism and dropping out among ESL adult learners.

Her Teaching Style

Most of the participants had a very high regard for Mrs. Matienzo as a teacher in terms of her qualifications, experience, and teaching method. But there were a few who were heard complaining that she lectured most of the time despite the fact that she tried to involve every participant in the learning process through group discussions or activities. Hamar related the following:

She is always talk, talk, talk, talk...
no stop. I get tired and sleepy.
Sometimes I feel like going home. She
can talk for a long time and don't get
tired. We read and do some other things
together but it is not all the time (IFI
10-14-87).

Hamar's feeling was shared by seven other participants which makes it 40% of the whole group. Not only did they agree with Hamar that Mrs. Matienzo used too much lecture, they also said that she was sometimes too fast when lecturing, which was especially hard for older participants. Most of them pointed out that many times they were turned off by her lectures and decided to stay home. However, none of the seven adult learners who dropped out of the program said that her teaching style contributed to their dropping out.

During the participant observation, Mrs. Matienzo was seen lecturing almost every evening. She would always begin the lesson with some sort of story or report. She would

then go on talking for about fifteen minutes or longer. She would do the same when introducing an activity. Many times, some adult learners looked as if they were saying, "It is enough!" When Mrs. Matienzo was asked what her teaching style was, she said:

I love to lecture. There is no question about that. But I also try to get them involved in conversations and group activities as much as possible. I may get carried away with my lecture sometimes. It is really hard not to. There are times that I have to say more to explain certain things (FI 10-28-87).

THE CLASSROOM PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AS A FACTOR RELATED TO ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT AMONG ESL ADULT LEARNERS

The classroom physical environment refers to the overall appearance of the room from within, i.e., how attractive it looked in terms of color, decorations, set up, and sitting arrangement. It has also to do with the lighting, heating, and ventilation systems. I looked at each of these areas carefully to see whether or not absenteeism and dropping out were influenced by them, and to what extent.

Sitting Arrangement

Since ESL adult learners met in a third grade classroom, one can imagine how uncomfortable they were, sitting in tiny chairs that were made for eight and nine year old kids. I sat on these chairs many times and can testify to this -- they were very painful. No wonder some

of the adult learners were very anxious to go out during break and came late after it was over. Kristle, who stayed out about five minutes longer, said:

I want to rest more. I am tired sitting in that chair for an hour and half. It is not good. I don't know how those ladies can sit there the whole evening. They don't go out for break (IFI 10-29-87).

Like Kristle, other adult learners also said that it was very tiring to sit in small chairs for a long time. Some of them were seen standing by the window or at the back of the room and stretching up while class was in progress. Tony was one of them:

A....h..h..h (stretching and yawning)
Isn't it time for recess? I am tired.
Can't sit there anymore Mrs. Matienzo
(FN 11-9-87)

Tony looked very tired and so did the others who were still sitting. Some of them wanted to stretch up like Tony but were either too polite or too shy to do it. "You don't do that in class when the teacher is teaching!" said Kim, when she saw Tony do it again (FN 11-12-87).

Mrs. Matienzo was definitely aware of the problem but there was nothing she could do to correct it. Whenever adult learners failed to pay attention due to the situation, she would say: "Let us stand up and stretch. Come on guys, we are almost done. We will go out about ten minutes earlier tonight."

About 30% of the participants said that the physical environment of the classroom, and the sitting situation in

particular, was one of the reasons for them to miss classes.

Sophia was very serious when she said:

I get very tired by sitting in those small chairs. It will be good if they change the chairs and desks. I don't like to miss a lot of classes but a number of evenings I decided to stay home and do my work because of this situation (FI 11-9-87).

Two out of the seven adult learners who dropped out of the program, or about 29%, also pointed out that the sitting arrangement in the classroom played a major role in making their decision to quit. Yonas was one of the participants who dropped out of the program. The researcher was able to arrange an interview with him after he left. When asked if he was comfortable with the sitting arrangement, he said:

Oh no! It was hard to concentrate on the lesson and pay attention to what the teacher was saying because I was not happy with my seat. I thought they would change it but they did not. I think this was one of the reasons for my quitting (FI 11-25-87).

Other Classroom Environment Factors

Adult learners were asked if other classroom environment factors such as lighting, heating, ventilation, aesthetics, and acoustics had in any way contributed toward their decision to miss classes or drop out of the program. Neither the answers to the interview questions nor the information gathered during the participant observation provide any evidence that supports the assertion that these factors are related to absenteeism and dropping out.

However, some participants pointed out that there were times when they wished they had stayed home during the cold evenings in early December because the room was not warm enough. They also mentioned that the room was not cold enough to make them go home.

Summary

This chapter describes and interprets the data gathered during the course of the study. The major factors that seemed to be related to absenteeism and dropping out were: age, fatigue, the weather, family obligations, and lack of motivation or interest. These factors were described under each of the research questions and were interpreted through hunches, triangulations, and linkages between the patterns in the data and the research questions. An attempt was made to see if some of these factors were influenced by the ESL adult learners' cultural background. Two of these factors, age and family obligations, appeared to be influenced by cultural values or beliefs. Conclusions for this study, curriculum implications, and recommendations for further research will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM
AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors related to absenteeism and dropping out among ESL adult learners enrolled in evening classes. The site selected for this study was Sloan Elementary School where these classes were held. Sloan, which is owned by a local school district, is located in Norsetville in the Great Lakes region.

This study employed qualitative research methods -- participant observation, field notes, and in-depth interviews as techniques for gathering data. A total of 20 ESL adult learners took part in this study and 10 of them participated in the in-depth interview. During the course of data-gathering a variety of people, which included the teacher, the program coordinator, other teachers, as well as the adult learners and their family members, were interviewed formally and informally. Direct quotes from interviews as well as recurring events recorded in notes taken during observations are presented as evidence of the participants' perspectives on absenteeism and dropping out. The findings are briefly summarized under each research question in the following paragraphs.

The findings of this study were drawn from an analysis of the data gathered from fieldnotes, interviews, documents, and accounts of the researcher's personal experiences. After a careful analyses of the data in Chapter V, important conclusions were drawn regarding ESL adult learners' perceptions of factors related to absenteeism and dropping out.

1. WHAT DO ESL ADULT LEARNERS PERCEIVE TO BE THE FACTORS RELATED TO ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT IN THE CLASSES THEY ATTEND?

The major factors perceived by ESL adult learners as related to absenteeism and dropping out appeared to be age, fatigue, family obligations, the weather, and lack of interest or motivation. Age was perceived as a factor related to absenteeism and dropping out not only by the older participants but also by the younger adult learners. Most of the older participants opted to stay home many evenings rather than to come to English classes they did not feel were necessary for them.

Some of the adult learners had to work for 8 to 10 hours during the day to support themselves or their family. One can only imagine how tiring it would be to come home after a long day of hard work, eat dinner in a rush, and run to an evening class. These adult learners had to do it four days a week. It was very difficult for them to listen and concentrate on their class assignments. Mrs. Matienzo, their teacher, though very understanding most of the time,

got frustrated at times. Throughout the study, behavior patterns which linked with responses to interview questions were observed.

Some of the adult learners missed classes because they had other things to do at home -- obligations such as baby sitting, shopping, etc. While they could not help missing classes, it appeared that for others English was not a priority. This study indicated that to some of the adult learners everything came before English, even entertaining friends.

The weather as a factor seemed to affect almost everyone. Most of the adult learners had never seen snow before. While many of them were able to bear the cold evenings in December and January, others could not see themselves going to an English class shivering. Many evenings Mrs. Matienzo conducted her class with fewer than five adult learners.

Most of the adult learners were intrinsically motivated to learn the English language which made it a lot easier for Mrs. Matienzo. They always wanted to do extra work and turned in their assignments on time. But there were those who had to be pushed almost all the time to do a piece of work. They refused to volunteer to read or take part in most of the class activities. Many times they preferred to stay home and some of them eventually dropped out of the Program.

After comparing data collected from the field through participant observation with responses to interview questions, it appears that these factors played a major role in contributing to absenteeism and dropping out among ESL adult learners at Sloan Elementary School.

2. WHAT INFLUENCE DOES CULTURAL BACKGROUND HAVE ON ESL ADULT LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS RELATED TO ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT?

This study clearly revealed that adult learners' perceptions of some of the factors associated with absenteeism and dropping out were influenced by their cultural values or beliefs. Seven out of the ten adult learners who participated in the in-depth interviews said that their cultural background played a key role in influencing their perceptions. Many of the other adult learners who took part only in the informal interview sessions also said the same. The factors that appeared to be influenced by cultural background were age and family obligations.

The study indicated that ESL adult learners from some societies in Africa and Asia tend to believe that people do not go to school or attend classes after reaching a certain age. An adult or older person is supposed to work and maintain a family, not attend school. It may also be safe to say that this belief still persists especially among the less educated population.

This study clearly revealed that family obligations such as baby sitting and helping out at home were influenced by cultural beliefs. Some of the participants pointed out that young boys in their countries start school three to four months late every year because they have to help their fathers in the farm until the harvest is over.

3. HOW DO ESL ADULT LEARNERS PERCEIVE THE TEACHER'S PERSONALITY AS A FACTOR ASSOCIATED WITH ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT?

4. HOW DO ESL ADULT LEARNERS PERCEIVE THE TEACHER'S TEACHING STYLE AS A FACTOR ASSOCIATED WITH ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT?

Mrs. Matienzo was well-liked and respected by most of the ESL adult learners. She was always willing and eager to help the adult learners succeed in achieving their goal -- learn English. She showed compassion and concern for every adult learner. Though she lectured most of the time she also used group discussions a lot. The study uncovered that ESL adult learners did not feel that her personality and teaching style contributed to absenteeism and dropping out.

5. HOW DO ESL ADULT LEARNERS PERCEIVE THE CLASSROOM PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AS A FACTOR RELATED TO ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT?

ESL adult learners met in a classroom that was intended for a third grade class. They had to sit on tiny chairs around small desks for two and half hours four nights a week. Many of them complained about the situation and

pointed out that it was difficult for them to concentrate on their assignments.

The study revealed that some of the adult learners missed a lot of classes and some others dropped out from the program partly because of the sitting arrangement. The study also indicated that some of the other classroom environment factors such as heating, ventilation, acoustics, and aesthetics did not seem to contribute to absenteeism and dropping out.

Alternative Explanations

Discussed in the following paragraphs are some of the alternative explanations that might also account for absenteeism and dropping out among these ESL adult learners.

Course Not Sufficiently Organized

One area that might provide an alternative explanation is whether or not topics were organized in such a way that one was built on the other. If the topics in the ESL adult education program were organized in this way, it is possible that adult learners who missed a class would get totally lost and as a result would be discouraged and would miss more classes or drop out. But this might also discourage absenteeism because adult learners could also feel the need to come regularly in order to keep up with the class.

On the other hand, if the topics were not sequentially organized to build on each other, it would not make much of

a difference whether or not they missed classes. The feeling of "I am not going to miss much" might have encouraged ESL adult learners to be absent more -- although, this would also discourage dropping out. It is important to look into these possibilities.

Lack of Compulsory Attendance

In addition to the possible influence of how the class was organized, another alternative explanation is that the learners were not compelled to attend. Mrs. Matienzo was required to keep attendance record mainly for funding purposes. She had to turn in a report to the program coordinator regularly because continuing the program largely depended on how consistent their attendance was. Mrs. Matienzo did not in any way try to require continuous attendance by ESL adult learners.

Even though andragogy is embraced by many adult educators, it has its own limitations and weaknesses, one of which is the absence of requiring adult learners to attend classes regularly. It is possible that many, if not all, of the ESL adult learners were subjected to rigid attendance requirements in the earlier years of their schooling and were generally submissive to authorities in their countries. Therefore, they are probably unaccustomed to this feature of andragogy and this might explain why they did not attend classes regularly.

Lack of a Strong Culture Within the Group

Another possible explanation is that a strong culture did not develop within the group which comprised ESL adult learners even though in this study no attempt was made to see if a culture was developing. There were times when ESL adult learners interacted with others across cultural boundaries; for example, during picnics and potlucks many of them were seen conversing and exchanging ideas in English despite the apparent language barrier. Although this may not have been enough for a strong culture to develop, it seemed that there was some sort of culture emerging. In order for a culture to develop within such a group, however, it may be imperative that members of the group share some common characteristics or values that bond them together as one body. These ESL adult learners, on the other hand, came from diverse backgrounds, with different languages as well as cultural values. During the course of the study, members of the same society or those from the same country were seen many times grouping together and carrying on conversations in their own languages instead of practicing their English by mingling with other participants. Mrs. Matienzo tried to discourage this habit but had little success.

Even though most of the ESL adult learners shared the same or similar concerns and problems and had the same general purpose or goal for enrolling in the evening English classes, each one of them also had specific goals, needs, and interests. Some of them wanted to learn nothing but

conversational English. They only wanted to learn how to communicate with friends and workmates. Others wanted to go one step further. They wanted to learn not only how to converse but also how to spell and write. This was especially true with those who were attending the university. Although as a group they learned about other aspects of life, socializing with other people, and appreciating American customs, the absence of common background and similar needs and interests among the participants made it impossible for a strong culture to develop within the group. It is quite possible that lack of a strong culture developing within this diverse group contributed to absenteeism and dropping out. If there were a strong culture they might have helped and encouraged each other and pulled together to overcome the problems they were confronting as individuals and as a group.

No Tuition Charged

Other than what they had to pay for registration when they first enrolled, which was considered a small amount, ESL adult learners did not pay tuition for their classes. Moreover, no fee was charged for books or other materials used. People generally tend not to take good care of something they do not have to pay for. Even though this possibility was not directly studied, since almost everything was free some of the ESL adult learners might not have been serious about their classes. Perhaps charging

some sort of fees might have helped to encourage ESL adult learners attend classes regularly and stay in the program.

Recommendations for Further Research

Because the literature is very limited in this area and this study is not exhaustive, it is recommended that more in-depth research be carried out. Future researchers are needed to discover more clearly the influence of cultural background on ESL adult learners' perception of factors associated with absenteeism and dropping out. Throughout the course of the study, the researcher has gained some insight into the cultural background of ESL adult learners. It appeared that there are similarities between cultural beliefs or values across boundaries, at least among peoples in Africa and Asia, for example, the beliefs that older people do not go to school, and that one does not leave a visitor at home to go to class. But further research is recommended to see if this would also be true with a larger population, and to look into the differences between cultural values of the different societies.

It is also recommended that additional research be carried out using the same or different methodology to investigate more factors related to absenteeism and dropping out among ESL adult learners. There could be other factors that this study was not able to identify. The need for further research is not only to see if there are other factors but also to see if the findings of this study can be

replicated. For example, to see whether or not this pattern would hold up in other situations, a larger population and a study conducted over a longer period of time is needed.

Some of the factors in this study labeled "Other Factors" were considered to be minor because very few of the adult learners thought of them as factors related to absenteeism and dropping out. These factors may turn out to be significant in other circumstances.

Research alone, however, is not enough. Research and curriculum development together are important if the adult education approach is to be more responsive to the needs and goals of ESL adult learners. Implications for curriculum development are discussed in the following section.

Implications for Curriculum in Adult Education

Among curriculum writers and theorists there seems to be a lack of common ground on the definition of the term "curriculum." Every curriculum writer defines the term the way he/she wants (Sharpes, 1988). Curriculum has been broadly defined as what the teacher teaches (content) and how the teacher teaches (process). To many educators it is a written plan, a document, a syllabus, a system, and an educational program. This study has taken a wholistic approach to curriculum. Curriculum is not only content and method, it is everything that affects learning -- the teacher, the school environment, and activities within and

without the school directly or indirectly related to the learners. The reader should be aware that it is with this approach in mind that implications for curriculum development from the factors related to absenteeism and dropping out are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Adult learners possess unique characteristics, interests, and abilities different from those of children (Knowles, 1984). They bring to the learning situation their own self-confidence and self-perception. Experience is the richest source for their learning. This says a lot to adult educators and adult curriculum developers in particular. They need to consider this when planning an educational program.

The findings of this study which are particularly important to teachers of ESL adult learners, ESL curriculum planners, adult educators, and administrators support the position that planning a curriculum for adult learners should be done with the andragogy approach to teaching in mind. This study also revealed that neither the personality nor the teaching style of the teacher contributed to absenteeism and dropping out. Most of the ESL adult learners felt quite comfortable with her teaching and indicated that they liked her personally, which seemed to have fostered a positive relationship. Mrs. Matienzo therefore appeared to be an andragogue. However, andragogy needs to take into account other aspects of the learners' life, e.g.,

family obligations and aspects of the teaching situation such as scheduling.

A knowledge of factors that contribute to absenteeism and dropping out will help ESL adult educators to develop a curriculum that would minimize if not eliminate these problems. For example, when scheduling the program one has to consider the needs and obligations of adult learners. Since all ESL adult learners are foreigners, most of whom have never been exposed to snow, English classes can be offered during the warmer months in the spring and the summer. It was during the bitterly cold months of December and January that most of the adult learners stayed away from class.

Scheduling the classes to begin at 7:30 instead of at 6:30 would accommodate most adult learners better since it was very difficult for many of them who were tired from working the whole day to start class that early. Classes could also be rescheduled to meet on Saturdays and/or Sundays.

This study uncovered that age and family obligations as factors related to absenteeism and dropping out were influenced by cultural beliefs or values. Although educators may not be able to do much about this since they cannot control the cultural patterns of ESL adult learners, they can at least make an effort to understand the situation. It might be beneficial to involve some adult learners in planning the educational program. Furthermore,

teachers could be made aware of the influence of cultural beliefs on these factors through workshops or in-service training sessions on world cultures.

Some of the adult learners were mothers with small children who had to miss classes many times because they could not find baby sitters or could not afford to leave their children with baby sitters. Providing mothers with baby sitting services at the same site where English classes are offered may be part of the solution to this problem.

The classroom physical environment, especially the sitting arrangement, is another area that ESL adult educators and curriculum planners should look into. It is assumed that an adult education program based on the principle of andragogy accommodates the interest and needs of adult learners. Therefore, ESL adult learners might learn better and might be retained in class longer if they are provided with proper sitting and learning facilities.

A few of the adult learners complained that some of the activities did not meet their needs; for example, some of them wanted to learn only how to converse well in English, not how to write or spell. They also mentioned that the activities were repetitive and somewhat boring. As a result they started losing interest in the program and were less motivated to continue attending, which eventually led to their withdrawal. Since these adult learners came from diverse backgrounds, it was not always easy for Mrs. Matienzo to adapt the class activities to fit the needs of

every adult learner. Therefore, adult curriculum planners need to address this problem. They can develop a more specified program to meet individual needs, for example, conversational English for those who want to learn how to speak English only.

Adult educators and adult curriculum planners also need to ensure that the topics in the course are sequentially organized -- one built on the other. As discussed earlier, although this was not revealed in the study, unorganized topics in a course may contribute to ESL adult learners' absenteeism. On the other hand, if topics are organized, adult learners might be motivated to come to class regularly because if they miss it is possible that they might get totally lost.

If institutions are to be successful in retaining non-traditional students they need to respond to the special needs of such students. Every effort should be made to facilitate the social and academic integration of these students. For example, personal and career counseling should be provided, and adult educators should attempt to be more understanding (Weidman, 1985).

Adult educators should look for ways of creating a strong culture within the classroom. This could be done by encouraging adult learners to use English in describing their own home culture to others, and in promoting unity and understanding among individual learners to ensure learning motivation in the group. Adult learners could also take

part in a "show and tell" activity in English to help them not only practice their conversation and develop self confidence, but also form a cohesive unit among themselves.

Concluding Reflections

A parallel can be drawn between this study and other, earlier studies. Berrol (1976) and Seller (1978) came up with very similar results from their studies on immigrants who were enrolled in the first ESL adult evening classes in the city of New York and other major cities during the first part of the 1900s and earlier. Both of these authors report that among the factors related to absenteeism and dropping out were poor scheduling, fatigue, lack of adequate teaching materials, poor sitting arrangements, lack of motivation, and lack of understanding on the part of the teachers. Robinson (1969) also found that lack of motivation, changes in work schedules, and the general atmosphere of the classroom contributed to ESL adult learners' absenteeism and dropping out. It is distressing that many of the same problems continue so many years later. It is important therefore that since this is an enduring problem, both researchers and curriculum planners look into it closely and collaboratively.

At the beginning of this study I requested a curriculum guide to look at, but the program coordinator said that there was none available. It is hoped that the results of this study will help develop one that will take

into account the principles of andragogy in teaching adults and the factors revealed by this study that affect adult learners' needs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM FOR THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM FOR THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Dear.....:

I am a candidate for a PhD. degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Michigan State University. I am interested in investigating factors related to high rates of absenteeism and dropping out among adult learners attending English as a Second Language (ESL) evening class. The topic for my dissertation will be "ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT AMONG ADULT LEARNERS STUDYING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL): A FIELD STUDY."

The knowledge gained from this study might help teachers better understand the individual needs of their students and plan accordingly, to provide a better educational experience. In order to accomplish this, I would like to work with Ms./Mr. _____ in the classroom for about twelve weeks observing the students as they learn. The study will be conducted in accordance with the following:

1. The content of this study will remain confidential and be used only for research purposes without personal identification and disclosure.
2. Your students will freely consent to participate and may discontinue their participation at any time without penalty. Their decision to withdraw will not have an effect on their grades or performance.
3. Your students will be assured that anonymity of any personal data will be guaranteed.
4. The study will be treated with strict confidence. Identities of all subjects, school employees as well as the school, will remain anonymous. To insure confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used.
5. The researcher agrees to discuss the nature of this study with participants and school authorities and make the results available.

Date.....

Signature.....
Program Coordinator

Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you have further questions, please feel free to call me at 394-7154.

Sincerely,

Bereket Habtemariam (researcher)

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM FOR THE TEACHER

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM FOR THE TEACHER

Dear.....:

I am a candidate for a PhD. degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Michigan State University. I am interested in investigating factors related to high rates of absenteeism and dropping out among adult learners attending English as a Second Language (ESL) evening class. The topic for my dissertation will be "ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT AMONG ADULT LEARNERS STUDYING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL): A FIELD STUDY."

The knowledge gained from this study might help teachers better understand the individual needs of their students and plan accordingly, to provide a better educational experience. In order to accomplish this, I would like to work with you in your classroom for about twelve weeks observing the students as they learn.

The study will be conducted in accordance with the following:

1. The content of this study will remain confidential and be used only for research purposes without personal identification and disclosure.
2. You and your students freely consent to participate and may discontinue your participation at any time without recrimination.
3. You and your students will be assured that anonymity of any personal data will be guaranteed.
4. The study will be treated with strict confidence. Identities of all subjects, school employees as well as the school, will remain anonymous. To insure confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used.
5. The researcher agrees to discuss the nature of this study with participants and school authorities and make the results available.

Date.....

Signature.....
Teacher

Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you have further questions, please feel free to call me at 394-7154.

Sincerely,

Bereket Habtemariam (researcher)

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR THE ADULT LEARNERS

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR THE ESL ADULT LEARNERS

Dear:

I am a candidate for a PhD. degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Michigan State University. I am interested in studying more about factors related to high rates of absenteeism and dropping out among adult learners attending English as a second Language (ESL) evening class. The topic for my doctoral dissertation will be "ABSENTEEISM AND DROPPING OUT AMONG ADULT LEARNERS STUDYING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL): A FIELD STUDY."

The knowledge gained from this study might help teachers better understand the individual needs of their students and plan accordingly, to provide a better educational experience. The study will be conducted in accordance with the following:

1. The content of this study will remain confidential and be used only for research purposes without personal identification and disclosure.
2. You will freely consent to participate and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. Your decision to discontinue will not have an effect on your grades or performance.
3. You will be assured that anonymity of any personal data will be guaranteed.
4. The study will be treated with strict confidence. Identities of all subjects, school employees as well as the school, will remain anonymous. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used.
5. The researcher agrees to discuss the nature of this study with participants and school authorities and make the results available.

If you are willing to participate in my study, please sign your name below.

I have read and understand this consent form and hereby agree to participate in this study. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous, that my responses will be treated with confidentiality, and that I may discontinue my participation at any time without penalty.

Date.....

Signature.....
Participant

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have further questions, please feel free to call me at 394-7154.

Sincerely, .

Bereket Habtemariam (researcher)

APPENDIX D
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS

APPENDIX D

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS

As you know, I have been observing your class for some weeks now. I would like to know what you think the factors that contribute to absenteeism and dropping out in your class are. If you do not understand any of the questions I am going to ask you, please let me know.

1. Would you tell me what you know about the problem of absenteeism and dropping out?
2. How serious a problem do you think is absenteeism and dropping out in the class you are attending? How often do you miss classes? Why? Have you ever dropped out from the program?
3. In your opinion, why do ESL adult learners miss classes? Why do others drop out?
4. Which of these reasons would you say are more significant? Why?
5. How do you like the program you are attending? How satisfied are you with the method of instruction? What method do you like better? Do you like your classroom?
6. Is the schedule suitable to you or you would have preferred the class was offered at a different time? What time would you suggest?
7. Does the class interfere with your work program or other responsibilities?
8. Does your cultural background have an influence on your understanding of the factors related to absenteeism and dropping out?

Additional In-depth Interview Questions for Dropouts:

9. Why did you drop out from the program? How long have you been away from the program? What are you doing now?
10. What changes in the program would you suggest should be made?
11. How would you go about making these changes if you were in charge?
12. Would you return to the program if these changes were made?

LIST OF REFERENCES

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Bergevin, Paul. (1967). A Philosophy for Adult Education. New York: Seabury.
- Berrol, Selma. (1976). "From Compensatory Education to Adult Education: The New York City Evening Schools 1825-1935." Adult Education, 26 (Summer): 208-225.
- Bogdan, Robert, & Biklen, Sari. (1982). Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods. Boston: Allyn and Bacon Co.
- Broudy, Harry, & Palmer, John. (1967). Philosophy of Education: An Organization of Topics and Selected Sources. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Brum, Joseph. (1983). A Study of Societal Factors Which Have Influenced Adults to Withdraw from the Business Administration Curriculum at Fayetteville Technical Institute. Nova University. ED 263 833.
- Burdick, Susan. (1987). Gender, Culture and Classroom Interactions. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. East Lansing: Michigan State University.
- Carlson, Robert. (1975). The Quest For Conformity: Americanization through Education. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Crandall, JoAnn, & Grognet, Allene Guss. (1982). "English for Special Purposes in Adult ESL." On TESOL '82: Pacific Perspectives on Language and Teaching. Washington, D.C.: TESOL.
- Cremin, Lawrence. (1970). American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783. New York: Harper and Row.
- Cross, Patricia. (1981). Adults As Learners. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Devereux, W. A. (1982). Adult Education in Inner London, 1870-1980. London: Shephard Walwyn in collaboration with Inner London Education Authority.
- Elias, John, & Merriam, Sharan. (1980). Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education. Huntington, NY: R.E. Krieger Publishing Co. ✓
- Erickson, Frederick. (1986). "Qualitative Methods in Research on Teaching." In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook of Research on Teaching (3rd ed.) (pp. 1-191). New York: Macmillan.
- Ernst, Robert. (1965). Immigrant Life in New York. New York: Ira J. Friedman.
- Freire, Paulo. (1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Glaser, Barney, & Strauss, Anselm. (1967). The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goetz, J., & LeCompte, M. (1984). Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research. New York: Academic Press, Inc.
- Gorden, R.L. (1980). Interviewing: Strategies, Techniques, and Tactics. Homewood, IL: The Dorsey Press.
- Gutek, Gerald. (1970) The Educational Theory of George Counts. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Hartman, George. (1948). The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Herman, Therese M. (1977). Creating Learning Environments: The Behavioral Approach to Education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Hirst, Paul. (1983). Educational Theory and Its Foundation Disciplines. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Hollins, Carol. (1985). Where Have All the Students Gone? A Study of Student Attrition at John Tyler Community College. Chester, VA: Office of Institutional Research. ED 274 410.
- Houle, Cyril. (1984). Patterns of Learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hudson, J. W. (1969). The History of Adult Education. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers.

- Illich, Ivan. (1978). Deschooling Society. New York: Harper and Row.
- Jarvis, Peter. (1983). Adult and Continuing Education. New York: Nicholas Publishing Co.
- Johansson, Berndt. (1973). Government Subsidized Adult Education in Sweden. Stockholm: Svenska Institutet.
- Johnstone, J., & Rivera, R. (1965). Volunteers for Learning. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.
- Kallen, Horace. (1962). Philosophical Issues in Adult Education. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Kidd, J.R. (1973). How Adults Learn. New York: Association Press.
- Knowles, Malcolm. (1962). The Adult Education Movement in the United States. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Knowles, Malcolm. (1970). The Modern Practice of Adult Education. New York: Association Press.
- Knowles, Malcolm. (1977). The Adult Education Movement in the United States (rev. ed.). New York: Robert Krieger Publishing Company.
- Knowles, Malcolm. (1984). The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species. London: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Kozol, Jonathan. (1972). Free Schools. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Lenning, Oscar. (1980). Retention and Attrition: Evidence for Action and Research (rev. ed.). Boulder, CO: National Center for Higher Education Management and Systems.
- Makaula, Patience. (1986). A Descriptive Study of Guided Group Interaction (GGI): A Discipline Program in a Midwest School. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. East Lansing: Michigan State University.
- Maslow, Abraham. (1976). "Education and Peak Experience." In Courtney D. Schlosser (Ed.), The Person in Education: A Humanistic Approach. New York: Macmillan.
- McCall, G.I., & Simmons, J.L. (Eds.). (1969). Issues in Participant Observation. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

- McKenzie, Leon. (1978). Adult Education and the Burden of the Future. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America.
- Moreira, Figueiredo. (1985). Reasons for Leaving School: The Perceptions of the Azorean Portuguese Immigrant Dropouts. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Boston: Boston University.
- Nicholls, Sandra, & Naish, Julia. (1981). Teaching English as a Second Language. London: British Broadcasting Corporation.
- Nordic Ministries of Education. (1976). Adult Education in the Nordic Countries. Stockholm: Nordic Council and the Secretariat for Nordic Cultural Co-operation.
- Paterson, R. (1979). Values, Education, and the Adult (rev. ed.). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Patterson, H. (1973). Humanistic Education. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Robinson, B.E. (1969). Use of the Initial Teaching Alphabet in English as a Second Language. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles.
- Rogers, Carl. (1969). Freedom to Learn. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.
- Ronald, Gross. (1977). The Lifelong Learner. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rowntree, Derek. (1981). A Dictionary of Education. Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books.
- Schatzman, L., & Strauss, A.L. (1973). Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Seller, Maxine. (1978). "Success and Failure in Adult Education: The Immigrant Experience, 1914-1924." Adult Education, 28 (2), 83-99.
- Sharpes, Donald. (1988). Curriculum Traditions and Practices. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Smith, Timothy. (1969). "Immigrant Social Aspirations and American Education." American Quarterly, 21, 523-543.
- Spradley, James. (1980). Participant Observation. Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

- Spring, Joel. (1973). A Primer of Libertarian Education. New York: Free Life Editions, Inc.
- Tough, Allen. (1971). The Adult's Learning Projects: A Fresh Approach to Theory and Practice in Adult Learning. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Tough, Allen. (1979). The Adult's Learning Projects: A Fresh Approach to Theory and Practice in Adult Learning (2nd ed.). Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Watkins, Linda. (1985). "Losing Grounds," The Wall Street Journal, May 29, 1.
- Weidman, John. (1985). Retention of Nontraditional Students in Postsecondary Education. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh. ED 261 195.
- Wilson, Russell. (1980). "Personological Variables Related to GED: Retention and Withdrawal." Adult Education, 30 (3), 173-185.
- Wilson, S. (1977). "The Use of Ethnographic Techniques in Educational Research." Review of Educational Research, 47 (1), 245-265.
- Youngman, Frank. (1986). Adult Education and Socialist Pedagogy. (Radical Forum on Adult Education series). London: Dover, N.H.
- Zahn, Jane. (1964). "Dropout and Academic Ability in University Courses." Adult Education, 15 (1), 35-46.
- Zahn, Jane & Phillips, Laura. (1961). "A Study of the Dropout in University Adult Education." Adult Education, 11 (4), 230-234.

LIST OF OTHER REFERENCES USED

- Agar, M.H. (1980). The Professional Stranger: An Introduction to Ethnography. New York: Academic Press.
- Apps, J. (1979). Problems in Continuing Education. New York: McGraw Hill Book Co.
- Carl, Donald. (1983). Teaching Listening and Speaking Skills to English as a Second Language (ESL) Adults. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Department of Education. ED 240 266.
- Dave, R. (1976). Foundations of Lifelong Education. Oxford: Pergemon Press.
- Haggerty, Madeleine. (1985). A Comparison of Selected Variables of Adult Persisters and Non-Persisters over Age 24 at an Urban Commuter University. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh. ED 261 195.
- Ives, E.D. (1974). The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press.
- Knowles, Malcolm. (1980). The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy (rev. ed.). New York: Association Press.
- Lovett, T. (1975). Education, Community Development and the Working Class. London: Ward Look Educational.
- Martin, Ann Aronson. (1984). Effective Teaching of ESL Reading. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Chicago: Roosevelt University. ED 260 591.
- Miller, Jeffrey. (1986). A Cultural Perspective of an Elementary School and Mainstreaming: An Ethnography. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. East Lansing: Michigan State University.
- Morstain, B.R., & Smart, J.C. (1974). "Reasons for Participation in Adult Education Courses." Adult Education, 24 (2), 83-98.
- Newman, M. (1974). Adult Education and Community Action. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative.
- Page, Terry, & Thomas, J.B. (1977). International Dictionary of Education. New York: Nicholas Publishing Co.

Spindler, G. (1982). Doing the Ethnography of Schooling: Educational Anthropology in Action. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Wheldall, Kevin. (1987). The Behaviorist in the Classroom. London: Allen and Unwin.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIV. LIBRARIES



31293005690833