

TEACHING MORE ENGLISH, BETTER: Developing More Accessible & Effective Adult ESL Programs

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ABSTRACT

Much research on **second- and foreign-language acquisition** is directed towards young or pre-adolescent students. Less attention has been directed towards adult learners. Yet, **the demand for adult language acquisition is still robust**: Many people migrate later in life to a place in which they are required to know another language, and still others want to learn a new language out of personal interest.

METHODOLOGY

This project relied on previous research done on adult language acquisition and extant pedagogical structures in use by popular language textbooks for English speakers at the postsecondary level. Over the summer, I began to develop a pedagogical program that would be **lightweight and low-cost** so that a set of trained volunteers **without any experience in language teaching** could use it effectively in the classroom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SAMPLE

There are **teacher sheets** and **student sheets**: Below is a diagrammed excerpt of what the **student worksheets**' interface looks like.

Lesson 1: Hello!

New vocabulary is introduced

Vocabulary: Introductions

Fill in the corresponding spaces with the English translations of the Creole vocabulary words.
Ranpli espas ki koresponn yo ak tradiksyon anglè mo vokabilè kreyòl yo.

moun		manman	
pèp		papa	
nonm		mari	
fanm		madamn	
chime		lepè	
gason		grann, granmanman	

Grammar is introduced using language and examples familiar to the learner

In Creole, you put the definite article after the noun (such as **libr la**), but in English you put it before the noun (**the book**). This can be confusing.

- Nan lang kreyòl, ou mete atik defini a apre non an (tankou **libr la**), men nan lang angle ou mete l **anvan** non an (**la liv**). Sa ka konfizyon.

By comparing language facts, confusing grammar is directly addressed to minimize learner confusion

Below is a teacher worksheet; in addition to the correct answers to questions on the student worksheet, they also get "When Teaching" tips.

When Teaching:

- Explain the language comparisons. Compare the articles to their counterparts in Creole.
- Point at an object in the room that is on the vocabulary list: Ask the learners to name it in English, practicing using the article "the"
- Then, tell the learners you are thinking of an object that is on the vocabulary list. Ask them to guess which object you are thinking about. Instruct them to use "a" or "an": Use this to emphasize that the "idea" of a thing is indeterminate, but the "specific referent" of a thing is determinate.

Script, if necessary:

When I point to an object in the room, say its name in English with "the."

When I ask you to guess what object I am thinking about, answer in English with "a" or "an."

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FURTHER RESEARCH

Currently, I help coordinate a program called **Teach English CU**, which provides English education services to adults in the Morningside Heights/Manhattan Valley community. We mostly serve Spanish speakers; however, there are many other linguistic communities whose needs are not being met. Further research would involve **continuing to develop language-to-language pedagogical programs**, recruiting volunteers to teach, and running **standardized diagnostic tests** to measure the efficacy of this new approach against more traditional ESL programs including but not limited to the NYPL program, the Columbia Teacher's College program, CPL, and more. The impacts of expanding ESL education in the U.S. are enormous; a **lightweight, volunteer-based program** would be **cheaper and more accessible**.

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.

- Ludwig Wittgenstein

Join us at Teach English CU! QR code to volunteer below :) Currently seeking teachers for Fall semester!

