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University of San Francisco

**Engaging Older Immigrants to Learn English:
Advocating for Late-In-Life Learning for Everyone**

A Field Project Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English To Speakers of Other Languages

By
Susan Marie Filous
Fall 2023

**Engaging Older Immigrants To Learn English:
Advocating For Late-In-Life Learning For Everyone**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

by

Susan Marie Filous

Fall 2023

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

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May 11, 2023

Date

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The convergence of aging with nostalgia for my immigrant family inspired this field handbook. My parents, who spoke Slovak to one another, did not attempt to teach me or my sister Slovak. We most likely wanted to avoid learning Slovak because we were always a little embarrassed by our ethnicity. We made fun of my father, who used to say, "Vats it about it?". We dreaded going to the Polka parties and having to dance with strange "off the boat" boys. Did every family eat blood sausage and sauerkraut soup? We knew that they did not. I regret not giving my family the respect they deserved for having the courage to get on a boat and come to the United States with little money, education, or skills. My grandmother, Kristina, lived with us for a long time, and I did not take the time to ask her about her experiences in Europe or immigration because her English was limited, and we did not have those kinds of conversations.

There are stories behind the grandmas and grandpas that fail to get passed down partly because of language barriers. Older immigrants are a resource of courage and guidance for younger adults yet they often remain mysterious members of our society. They come to the

United States with rich life experiences that can be a source of creative expression. I would like to unlock the communication barriers which deny these older members the opportunity to share their stories and talents and form closer relationships with their grandchildren.

As a society, we should acknowledge that ageism influences our expectations and the self-expectations of older immigrants. It is unhealthy for a community to marginalize older adults. We can do more to celebrate aging as an experience that not everyone lives long enough to enjoy and create opportunities for older adults to participate fully in self-actualization and community engagement.

ABSTRACT

In the United States, late-in-life and aging-in-place immigrants require basic English language skills to support their ability to independently access economic, medical, housing, legal, and social services. Older immigrants typically rely on family members, potentiating the risks of neglect and dependency. There is an opportunity to expand their agency in society by increasing their English proficiency.

Foreign language geragogy supports differentiated educational strategies for older learners. There is no upper age limit on the ability to learn a new language, and there are new methods and practices to teach foreign languages to older students. It is insufficient to mainstream older language learners into generic English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs if these students have learning differences. The scarcity of ESOL programs targeting late-in-life learners may reflect the influence of ageism on the allocation of educational resources to the detriment of these immigrants, their families, and our society.

The Language CLUB field project consolidates critical findings from a literature review into a handbook to facilitate ESOL programming for older immigrant learners. The project's significance is that it can serve as a template for establishing ESOL instruction to meet these diverse learners' needs and motivate them to pursue additional education.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, approximately 281 million people, or 3.6% of the world population, live somewhere other than their country of origin (United Nations OHCHR, 2022). Many of these people have been forced to leave their homes due to ongoing military conflicts, economic inequities, and political turmoil (Swift et al., 2017). Increases in immigrant and refugee populations drive the need for increased social services in adopted countries (Maleku et al., 2021).

In the United States, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes address the language needs of immigrants and refugees. Learning English can empower immigrants and help them to use English to access social and economic resources (Maleku et al., 2021). Community colleges, charitable organizations, and community centers offer ESOL classes with the typical curriculum oriented toward preparing students for the workforce with a focus that is inappropriate for retired older adults (Valdez & Park, 2021).

ESOL programs in the United States do not discriminate against older adults. However, a growing field of research on critical geragogy suggests that older immigrants have unique needs and educational barriers that most ESOL classes need to address (John, 1988; Formosa, 2012). Older immigrants who lack English proficiency are at risk for health, social and economic disparities due to their isolation and dependency on family members (Formosa, 2012; Maleku et al., 2021). ESOL outreach for older immigrants represents an opportunity to empower this group through self-advocacy to enable them to address their economic, health, cultural, and social needs through a new language. While social, cultural, and economic factors can create barriers to outreach, research confirms that older adults can learn a new language late in life

and may derive social and cognitive benefits from late-in-life language acquisition (Rasmcar et al., 2017). Unfortunately, most ESOL programs do not meet the specialized needs of older immigrants (Balyasnikova & Gillard, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

ESOL programming targeting older adult immigrants is limited and needs to adequately address this group's learning differences and motivation. There needs to be more focus on English language acquisition in addressing older immigrants' underlying social, economic, and health concerns. The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion cites the U.S. National Adult Literacy Survey, which found that approximately one-third of immigrants who arrive in the United States after age twelve are not fluent in English. Literacy rates vary based on educational level, and immigrants with lower academic levels are most at risk for lower rates of English fluency, which leads to a disparity in access to health resources (U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2020). The California Master Plan for Aging (MPA) addresses healthcare, housing, access to healthy food, employment, and family support. It does not include the need or a budget for language acquisition among older immigrants (California, Master Plan for Aging, 2022). The plan includes \$20 million for a Language Access Initiative, focusing on translation services rather than language acquisition programming. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement Service for Older Refugees provides federal funding to the California Department of Social Services Refugee Programs Bureau to provide linguistic services for refugees over 60. Like the Language Access Initiative, these funds focus on connecting refugees to social programs and

naturalization support, with a narrow focus on English learning (Services to Older Refugees, 2023).

ESOL programming for older adults is not a social priority, which may reflect the influence of ageism. Ageism refers to discrimination or stereotyping based on age, and the term has acquired a specific reference to discrimination based on advanced age (Avalon et al., 2017). Ageism in stereotypes, attitudes, and acts of discrimination undermines the agency of older adults and increases their marginalization. For many older immigrants, ageism overlaps with other forms of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or political affiliation (Levy & Macdonald, 2016). The intersection of ageism and other forms of discrimination compounds the impact of marginalization among older immigrant populations (Grenier et al., 2019). In addition, older immigrants are disproportionately more likely to experience insecure or insufficient access to essential resources such as food and housing (Grenier et al., 2019). They are at risk for social, economic, and health disparities exacerbated by the intersection of age and immigration status (Maleku et al., 2021). It is essential to support culturally responsive learning opportunities for late-in-life immigrants (Maleku et al., 2021). ESOL programs for older immigrants can potentially provide a venue to empower this population to counter ageism in our society to gain agency in the United States.

Late-in-life and aging-in-place immigrants can learn a new language and benefit from culturally and age-appropriate educational approaches. English language skills will enhance their ability to self-advocate and engage in their communities. This field project addresses the need for resources to design and implement ESOL programming for older immigrants.

Purpose of the Project

This field project aims to empower older immigrants by affirming their potential to learn a new language and advocating for dedicated English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) curriculum to support older students. The curriculum guide presented in the field project in Chapter Three helps older adults embrace language learning to support their ability to navigate social, economic, and health systems. The project integrates concepts of critical geragogy and critical foreign language geragogy to foster a dynamic learning environment tailored to the needs of older adult immigrants. It incorporates best practices revealed in a literature review that includes arts-based learning, peer-to-peer mentorship, and strategies to lower implicit age-based bias. It contains units to create a framework for establishing a Language CLUB (Cooperative Language Unity Builder).

The first unit in the Language CLUB handbook sets the foundational principles for the targeted ESOL approach for older students. It presents the program's overall vision to establish the handbook's foundation. The second unit focuses on developing a dynamic framework to build lesson plans to address the collective interests of the students. The third unit provides resources for the marketing and administration of the program.

The underlying premise of developing the curriculum is that older immigrants must first overcome internal and external barriers to learning that inhibit progress in traditional ESOL programs. Creative arts and hobbies are integrated into the curriculum to showcase students' abilities to create positive learning experiences and reduce language learning anxiety. The program is centered on students to empower students to direct the flow of the curriculum and to assume active roles as both students and peer coaches to advance language proficiency.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and the theory of critical foreign language geragogy (CFLG) are the theoretical frameworks for this project. Vygotsky's ZPD is part of a foundational pedagogical theory that positions the teacher and the student in a collaborative relationship that requires teachers to adapt the curriculum to students' potential. Under the instructor's guidance, students can achieve their highest learning potential (Vygotsky, 1937/2017). The ZPD positions acquired knowledge as influenced by outside forces and differentiated from a student's learning potential. In immigrant communities, these external forces may include racism, sexism, nationalism, ageism, limited educational opportunities, and traumatic life experiences (Grenier et al., 2019). There are two critical components of the theory of ZPD that resonate for older immigrant students; (1) Each student is an individual and should be treated as an individual with unique learning potential; (2) External forces can undermine the motivation to learn as well as the teacher's perception of the potential of the student.

The theory of CFLG recognizes the impact of explicit and implicit societal forces. It ascribes active roles to the student and teacher in addressing ageism and transforming the narrative to create a more positive experience in the ZPD. In CFLG, the student confronts any cognitive or physical deficiencies and incorporates them into the student's educational starting point with an explicit mission to teach students a new language and not just to support socialization (Ramirez Gomez, 2016). CFLG's foundational goal is to empower the older immigrant community to gain agency in their communities. These transformative principles challenge the existing age-based norms in our society.

Taken together, these authors provide a framework/rationale for understanding why it is essential to create a curriculum that is precisely matched to the older immigrant population, as

these theories recognize the heterogeneity of this population and serve as the theoretical impetus to advocate for change in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) that is reasonable and appropriate to address the potential of older adults to learn English.

Significance of the Project

This field project may interest educators, social service workers, social policy advocates, and immigrant families seeking culturally and age-adapted programs for older family members. The goal is to provide a curriculum to target learners who would benefit from geragogy-based teaching and to create awareness of the opportunity to reach socially isolated older immigrants through language learning. The concept of a Language CLUB is to emulate a preschool environment that prepares students for advanced study. It acknowledges that while many older students successfully participate in community English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs, a segment of the population is intimidated by formal classwork. Social policy advocates and families can funnel potential students experiencing the adverse effects of isolation into ESOL adult programs. The hope is that this field project may draw attention to the cognitive and social needs of the older immigrant population and the need to incorporate principles of critical foreign language geragogy with ESOL programs in the community. On an aspirational level, the project may challenge the lack of resources dedicated to ESOL in California's 2022 Master Plan for Aging (MPA) and provide support to advocate for funding for specialized programs.

Positionality Statement

Immigrants have unique life circumstances impacted by health, economic, social, and educational differences that will impact their aging experience. My father and my grandparents were immigrants to the United States with limited educational backgrounds and a lack of English language proficiency. Their lives were inspirational in recognizing the challenge of adapting to and aging in a new culture.

The dynamics of aging in the United States are highly differentiated by economics, health, and social factors. None-the-less, there are stereotypes of aging that impact all older adults, and it is essential to recognize that ageism manifests subconsciously and consciously at individual and systemic levels and is part of our society (Bergeon & Lagace, 2021). Ageism impacts educational outreach to older adults and in particular to older immigrant adults as well as the motivation for older adults to engage in new learning.

Our society and culture devalue the potential of older people unless they have political or economic power. This relationship to aging is complex as there is evidence to support that negative stereotypes of aging that originate in childhood toward an outgroup will, in turn, impact an individual's self-image in a process called stereotype embodiment (Levy, 2009). The inherent probability of aging should position geragogy and respect for older people in the self-interest of all members of our society. When we invest resources in programs for older adults, we invest in our future.

Definition of Terms

- Ageism: Ageism is a term that technically refers to any discrimination or stereotyping based on age, but the term has acquired a specific reference to discrimination based on advanced age (Avalon et al., 2017).
- Bidirectional: Involving, moving, or taking place in two usually opposite directions. (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary)
- California State Plan on Aging: The California Department of Aging is a California state department that oversees federal regulations on aging, requiring each state to have a specific plan for aging. (California, *Master Plan for Aging* 2022)
- California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Refugee Programs Bureau: This state department oversees resources to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate resources to support self-sufficiency in the refugee population. (Services to Older Refugees, 2023).
- Culture shock: A series of emotional reactions “precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Oberg, 1954 as cited in Alves Lopez & Potrero, 2013)
- Critical Geragogy (CG): Geragogy refers to the need to ascribe a voice to older learners to empower them to learn and overcome social, political, and economic disparities (Formosa, 2002, as cited by Ramirez-Gomez, 2015).
- Critical Educational Geragogy (CEG): Critical educational geragogy identifies and addresses age-related discrimination to empower older adults to claim their individuality

in the aging process and to advocate for meaningful educational opportunities (Glendenning & Battersby, 1990)

- Critical Foreign Language Geragogy (CFLG): The application of the principles of CG to foreign language learning to acknowledge student limitations and prescribe accommodations (Ramirez-Gomez, 2015)
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL): English learning for non-native English speakers.
- Forward assessment: The practice of assessing the intelligence of a student not based on acquired knowledge but instead on the potential to acquire new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1937/2017)
- Geragogy: The term used to describe the process involved in stimulating and helping the elderly to learn (John, 1988).
- Harmonious aging: A process of aging that brings into balance experiences that value relationships and reflection on aging (Liang & Luo, 2012).
- Magistral dialogue: The potential for interference in the student-teacher relationship in the zone of proximal development (Cheyne & Tarulli, 1999)
- Outgroup: A group distinct from one's own and so usually an object of hostility or dislike. (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary)
- Precarity: A social situation where an individual has inadequate resources as well as a lack of control over the resources (Grenier et al., 2019)
- Second Language Acquisition (SLA): The learning of a new language that is not necessarily the second language for the speaker.

- Stereotype embodiment theory (SET): a theory that discusses the effects of elderly stereotypes on the perceivers themselves (Levy, 2009).
- Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL): The practice of teaching English to non-native English Speakers.
- Third Age Movement: A movement that aspires to enhance the period after retirement when older adults are healthy and able to continue to engage in learning and contribute to society (Pfenninger & Singleton, 2019).
- Translanguaging: Translanguaging is the process of using a multilingual person's full linguistic capabilities and honoring all languages as equal in value instead of trying to keep narrowly focused on a single language. (Valdez & Park, 2023)
- Zone of Proximal Development: The difference between what a child can learn on his own and the potential knowledge acquired under a teacher's guidance (Vygotsky, 1937/2017).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The claim of fact for this literature review is that the current approach to teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to older adult immigrants is deficient both in practice and priority and fails to adequately address and appreciate the social, economic, and mental health benefits that can be achieved with ESOL outreach. Three bodies of scholarship justify this claim. These include (a) evidence that demonstrates that older learners are capable of, and may benefit from, learning a new language late in life; (b) older adult immigrants are at risk for social, economic, and health disparities exacerbated by the intersection of age and immigration status; (c) there is a need for more research examining strategies to target ESOL classes to older immigrants. A targeted effort to address the needs of older adults can lead to creative and inclusive forms of instruction that can influence the broader TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) profession.

The theoretical framework includes the work of Vygotsky and principles of the Zone of Proximal Development. It also explores emerging work in geragogy (a pedagogy designed for older learners) as it applies to foreign language acquisition.

Joint reasoning is used to justify the claim that there is a deficiency in outreach and strategies to serve older ESOL students because the individual elements cannot stand alone. However, when the sets of evidence/reasons are added together, they warrant the final conclusion. A visual representation of the logic equation is as follows: $(R1, + R2 + R3) \therefore C$ (Machi & McEvoy, 2012, p. 97).

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky (1931/2017) developed the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory to understand knowledge acquisition in children. His educational ideas advanced a new pedagogical approach to teaching that encompassed the influence of external forces on assessed knowledge and differentiated acquired knowledge from the individual's potential to acquire new knowledge. In a traditional student assessment, a student's ability to recall information served as a benchmark of intelligence; however, Vygotsky believed that a child's ability to respond to a coach and acquire new knowledge was a better indicator of intelligence. This forward assessment of intelligence was the foundation for developing the educational theory of the Zone of Proximal Development. In the ZPD, the teacher guides the student based on the perceived ability of the student to move to the next step in the learning process.

Vygotsky described the ZPD as a growth-oriented process where new learning builds on existing understanding in an ongoing process under the guidance of a coach. He viewed testing as a backward assessment of knowledge reflective of previous exposure to information rather than students' true potential. In early education, he believed that the influence of parents and exposure to information before school positioned some children as more capable than others. These early educational experiences did not define the potential of a student to acquire new knowledge. In the ZPD, dynamic interaction occurs as a pattern of exposure to further information, internalizing new knowledge, and establishing a new benchmark for future learning. The coach continually exposes the child to new knowledge ahead of their current level of development rather than following a traditional approach of age-benchmarked learning. This process respects the learner's acquired ability derived from external social and familial exposure

and times new teaching to match the readiness of the student to acquire new knowledge.

In language acquisition research, there is a focus on what happens within the ZPD. For example, Bakhtin (1936/1981) advanced a theory that all language is heteroglossic, with each word influenced by social, external, and internal forces. Based on this theory, these forces significantly affect the teacher and the student. The student internalizes any new learning as they uniquely experience knowledge acquisition within these societal influences. Cheyne and Tarulli (1999) expanded on this concept to describe the characteristics of the types of dialogue that took place in pedagogy and used the term magistral dialogue to illustrate the potential for interference in the student-teacher relationship in the ZPD. In magistral dialogue, outside forces and established norms heavily influence the teacher. Cheyne and Tarulli use the analogy of ventriloquism to show how outside parties manipulate the relationship between the student and the teacher. This interference is supported by Eun (2008) who believes that evaluating teachers based on student test performance results in teaching to the test rather than meaningful interactions between students and teachers.

The recognition of the impact of outside societal forces, as described by Cheyne and Tarulli (1999), has poignant significance for the older immigrant population. For example, racist, sexist, or ageist stereotypes that influence a teacher's expectations of a student's potential can lower a teacher's expectations and impede learning among older immigrant language learners. In addition, assumptions about intelligence, cultural norms, and potentiality can negatively impact older immigrant language learners. However, Eun (2019) suggests that students retain agency and can mediate the influence of both the teacher and the factors listed above. Eun claims that students can create a continuum of collaborative learning through "questioning, selectively accepting, recreating, and most importantly, co-constructing meaning

in collaborative efforts" (Eun, 2019, p.27).

As demonstrated by Bakhtin (1936/1981), Cheyne and Tarulli (1999), and Eun (2019), the theory of the ZPD has implications for designing and implementing English for Speakers for Other Languages (ESOL) classes targeted at older adult immigrants. The ZPD provides a practical framework for understanding and accommodating this population's unique learning challenges and opportunities. The ZPD can be used to acknowledge and respect older adult learners' life histories and incorporate their wisdom in a collaborative learning process. It can facilitate the construction of individualized goals based on the unique potential of each learner. The following sections describe research framed with an understanding of Vygotsky's ZPD theory.

Third Age Movement and Critical Geragogy

Global demographic trends indicate rapid growth in the population of older adults and older immigrants. As these populations advance in age, and experience cognitive and physical decline, they will place an increasing burden on their families and societies (Ramscar et al., (2017). An emerging body of work positions older adults as productive contributors to society rather than impending burdens. For example, Pfenniger and Singleton (2019) refer to the Third Age Movement, which positions aging in four quadrants, where the third age precedes the final fourth age of life. In this third age period, older adults generally have good mental and physical health compared to the fourth age, where older adults have health-related limitations. Pfenniger and Singleton theorize that this third phase of aging can be extended by engaging in active learning, and language acquisition is well suited to fostering engaged learning.

Formosa (2021) warns that in the Third Age Movement, positioning the third age as a way of staving off the fourth age leads to a new form of ageism against the fourth age; this is

counterproductive in addressing ageism in our society. Liang and Luo (2012) believe that the Third Age Movement is Western and middle-class-focused and not inclusive. They advocate for the replacement of successful aging constructs with the more culturally diverse and realistic concept of harmonious aging that places value on contextual experiences that value relationships and reflection above active and engaged learning. Ramsar et al. (2017) claim that the declining contextual experiences of retired individuals contribute to cognitive decline. They believe that retirees need to retain exposure to new learning experiences. Learning a new language as an older adult encompasses social and cognitive disciplines that meet the objectives of harmonious and successful aging principles. Teachers can incorporate these outlooks on aging with critical geragogy to align their teaching strategies with the needs and interests of older students.

Johns (1988) established the principles of the theory of geragogy as a framework to recognize the differentiated needs of older learners with the belief that their needs required a specialized pedagogy. Johns established the pragmatic age-related accommodations of geragogy and set the foundation for the more political and social focus of critical educational geragogy (CEG). Critical educational geragogy was advanced by Glendenning and Battersby (1990) to identify and address age-related discrimination. This theory recognizes that older learners are burdened by societal expectations that impact their self-worth and broader societal expectations of the learners. It aims to empower older adults to claim their individuality in aging and advocate for meaningful educational opportunities rather than patronizing learning experiences. Following Glendenning and Battersby (1990), Ramirez Gómez (2016) expands on the theory of critical geragogy to develop the theory of critical foreign language geragogy (CFLG), a specific framework for teaching foreign languages to older adults. This framework recognizes that ageist

assumptions by both learners and teachers must be addressed to remedy the impact of internalized stereotypes. The principles of CFLG are based on recognizing the impact of negative societal and internalized assumptions about aging, combined with the recognition of age-related physical and cognitive differences that require compensatory strategies. Ramirez Gómez believes that foreign language acquisition and its role in promoting overall well-being holds excellent potential for older learners, provided that the curriculum addresses age-based discrimination and empowers learners to embrace their differences. The main principles of CFLG share some commonalities with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, including the recognition of the learner's heterogeneity, the instructor's role, and the impact of extraneous social forces on learning in the ZPD. These theories frame the field project presented in Chapter Three.

Age and Language Acquisition

Limited research examines older students' learning potential (Ramscar et al., 2017). Mixed evidence suggests that bilingual older adults have increased brain plasticity, which improves cognitive performance and potentially delays age-related cognitive decline (Pot et al., 2019). Still, this evidence is derived reflexively and does not address any potential gains from acquiring a new language late in life. In a meta-analysis that reviews the small body of existing proactive research on the topic, Pot et al. (2019) examine the topic of language acquisition in older adults. The meta-analysis reviewed eight studies, in which two could document cognitive improvement due to language training, and all of the studies demonstrated positive social gains. Pot et al. also explored the bidirectional nature of bilingualism. Certain personality traits and life experiences lead to improved language acquisition, and language acquisition leads to enhanced

personal and life experiences. The authors conclude that language training should be an essential addition to the study of gerontology and suggest that language learning in later years " brings together the disciplines of education, applied linguistics, neuroscience, psychology and sociology (Pot et al., 2019, p. 14).

In summary, research demonstrates that older learners can and may benefit from learning a new language late in life. A limited body of scholarship suggests that active learning may enhance mental health and that learning a new language aligns with active learning. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs should consider the social, economic, and health issues that impact this demographic and address the current inadequacy of most ESOL programs to position programs to meet the specialized needs of this population. The following section reviews the literature related to this topic.

Social, Economic, and Health Disparities Among Older Immigrants

The research discussed in the preceding discussion suggests that late-in-life language acquisition is possible and, more importantly, potentially beneficial for older adults. Language learning for older adults may hold additional benefits and challenges in immigrant communities. These challenges are associated with the social, economic, and health disparities of older immigrants compared to their non-immigrant contemporaries. According to Grenier et al. (2019), *precarity*, or the condition of insecure resources and limited control of resources, is prevalent among older adults in marginalized communities late in life. Precarity harms health and independence in late adulthood and can contribute to isolation among older immigrants. According to Grenier et al., older immigrants may also experience hostility based on their race or creed, which limits their access to health care and other services, and they may have fewer navigational skills to access available resources. Grenier et al. suggest that foundational

principles of gerontology focused on stages of aging need to be expanded to include factors of inequity and marginalization in late adulthood.

There is a need for research on precarity as it relates to the intersection between aging and immigration. A study by Maleku et al. (2021) explores this intersection and the challenges faced by late-in-life immigrants in the United States. Many immigrants come from cultures where they self-identify as seniors younger than Medicare's benchmark of 65. Limited resources and programs target immigrants in their late 40s or 50s. According to Maleku et al., older adult immigrants are more likely to lack formal education in their native language and to lack English proficiency. They often live in high-crime areas, leading to social isolation and limited outdoor access, which is incredibly challenging for people from rural cultures. In addition, women risk being restrained by traditional gender roles that consign them to domestic labor in the home. Maleku et al. believe that these factors lead many older immigrants to experience mental health concerns, though many will not seek mental health services due to stigma or lack of access. Maleku et al. suggest developing senior companion programs that link seniors with multilingual and culturally adapted materials to remedy this. However, they also acknowledge that there is no easy remedy for the social, economic, and resource challenges experienced by older immigrants. The studies in this section help to justify the claim that older adult immigrants are at risk for social, economic, and health disparities exacerbated by the intersection of age and immigration status. Fortunately, a new and growing body of research acknowledges the particular needs of the older immigrant population and offers creative, collaborative, and inclusive strategies to improve English for Speakers of Other Languages(ESOL) programming. The final section reviews this research.

English for Speakers of Other Languages Strategies for Older Immigrants

The needs of immigrant communities are complex and require various strategies. The research in this section recognizes the humanity and individuality of older immigrants and reviews current research on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) strategies that may benefit this population. This section first explores the teaching of English through the arts. It then examines the role of immigrant peer mentors. Next, this section discusses the importance of lowering ESOL teachers' implicit bias and developing their cultural competencies. Finally, this section discusses the importance of understanding the practical needs of older language learners. These studies support the claim that it is essential to address the needs of older adults to develop creative and inclusive instruction tailored to their cultural and linguistic experiences and language acquisition needs.

Teaching English Through the Arts

One strategy for teaching English to older immigrants is to approach language learning through the arts. Balyasnikova and Gillard (2021) describe one such program, Senior Thrive, a part of the University of British Columbia Learning Exchange adult learning program. Senior Thrive offered a variety of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) programs that integrated English with the arts. The program defined seniors as age 55 and above, acknowledging that many older immigrants had shortened life expectancies based on economic, cultural, and social histories that lead them to self-identify as seniors at an earlier age. Courses offered were based on input from the participants and included offerings such as acting, singing, cooking, and

painting. Importantly, arts-based SLA programs provide opportunities for older adults to acquire a new language while participating in activities that transcend language ability and provide additional benefits such as (a) appreciating other cultures; (b) sharing their own culture; (c) presenting their work in public settings to increase community engagement; (d) forming social bonds with other students which decreases isolation. According to Balyasnikova and Gillard, integrating the arts into language classes is a strategy that can address older language learners' language acquisition and social needs.

The Role of Immigrant Peer Mentors

According to Zhang et al. (2021), immigrants with more experience in a new country or a new language can play an essential role in the learning process of immigrants with more limited experience. Immigrants who have spent time navigating the culture and language of a new country can act as teachers and mentors for more recent immigrants. They can also help newer immigrants with essential life skills such as accessing healthcare services, using public transportation, understanding local traditions and holidays, or seeking employment. According to Zhang et al., this type of mentoring leads to increased engagement and perseverance in language acquisition classes. In addition, the mentors themselves experience the benefit of growth in self-esteem, a sense of purpose, and increased participation in community politics as advocates for the immigrant community. Providing recent immigrants with more experienced peer mentors from the immigrant community supports active and healthy aging among the volunteer mentors.

Lowering Implicit Bias and Developing Cultural Competencies of ESOL Teachers

In addition to integrating the arts, and providing recent immigrants with immigrant peer mentors, another valuable strategy for working with older immigrant language learners is to lower the implicit bias and develop the cultural competencies of ESOL teachers. The needs of

immigrant communities are complex and illuminate the requirement for resources targeted to this community. Entigar (2021) recognizes the good intentions of some ESOL educators but points out that they may inadvertently contribute to frustration, alienation, and trauma for their students. Entigar (2021) conducted a study to highlight the implicit bias of teachers who may end up stereotyping students or creating classroom environments where this occurs. The study was a sequential multi-phase design based on a feminist quasi-participatory framework that included a survey and two focus groups. The students shared experiences of being stereotyped or tokenized and experiences that triggered traumatic memories.

The study highlights the importance of understanding that under the banner of inclusion, many activities can be offensive or harmful to students. Students have life experiences that they may not want to share, and they don't want to be stereotyped based on their country of origin. Working collaboratively to create dynamic learning environments that recognize students' social, cultural, physical, and emotional needs is essential. The author simplifies this message by stating that the educator must create opportunities to speak with students rather than speak to them. Entigar asks educators to challenge their privilege and worldview and to be aware of any tendency to exoticize students based on perceptions of the student's national culture.

Related to this, Valdez and Park (2021) also explored the importance of cultural competence among ESOL teachers. According to the authors, traditional Western top-down and monolingual teaching methods do not support learning environments that honor older adults' culture and life experiences. To remedy this, Valdez and Park suggest that ESOL teachers develop cultural competencies that reflect their students' cultural and linguistic identities. Cultural competency includes understanding the unique challenges that older refugees face, including multiple and overlapping experiences of marginalization. These may consist of (a) time

spent in displacement or refugee camps; (b) disrupted or limited opportunities for formal education; (c) social isolation and dependence on younger family members; (d) shame related to low levels of literacy. The authors suggest that ESOL classes designed as student-centered and collaborative will better support this cohort.

To build a student-centered and collaborative environment, Valdez and Park suggest ESOL teachers take risks and make mistakes in front of their students to normalize a growth mindset. A student-centered and collaborative class requires the teacher to learn words, phrases, and customs that govern dialogue between teachers and students of different ages in the students' languages. Doing this can position the teacher as a student and provide the students with an opportunity to become the teacher, demonstrating their own linguistic and cultural expertise. ESOL teachers should strive to understand cultural norms and honorific language to create more inclusive classrooms that foster dynamic intercultural exchanges and build upon student experiences and cultural wealth. Incorporating collaborative and translanguaging learning can have the added benefit of deconstructing linguistic hierarchies that position English as a superior language. To embed these translanguaging experiences into the SLA classroom, ESOL teachers must be very observant and grow their cultural competencies in multiple languages/cultures. When ESOL teachers work to address their implicit biases and develop their cultural competencies, they can create learning environments and experiences that meet the needs of older immigrant students.

Understanding the Pragmatic Needs of Older Language Learners

In addition to addressing their implicit biases and developing their cultural competencies through translanguaging activities, ESOL teachers should also understand the everyday pragmatic needs of older language learners. According to Ho (2019), understanding age-related

differences is an essential and effective requirement for teaching older students. The author suggests that older ESOL students may benefit from teachers who understand their practical needs, such as hearing loss or the need for repetition. For example, many older language learners may benefit from a slow rate of speech in the target language, as well as the use of visual aids. Related to this, older language learners may benefit from instruction chunked into shorter sessions, with multiple opportunities for student participation. In addition, Ho suggests that the teachers of older immigrants can increase memory recall, engagement, and motivation by choosing topics that are personal, interesting, or important to their students. It is also crucial for teachers to be prepared to adjust their lessons based on student progress and to include more repetition to accommodate memory challenges experienced by many older adults. Finally, the author recognizes that while age does not have to be a deterrent to language acquisition, specific age-related factors, such as hearing loss or memory decline, may be limiting factors. ESOL teachers need to develop their understanding of the needs of their students, to develop inclusive learning environments for older language learners

In summary, new research is emerging into effective strategies to target older ESOL students. This includes (a) research that illustrates the use of arts and culture to build on the talents and interests of students; (b) research that advocates the use of student mentors and student-driven programming; (c) research that demonstrates the importance of lowering the implicit bias of ESOL teachers, as well as developing their cultural competencies; and (d) research that provides practical suggestions to accommodate age-related differences in older adults. These strategies can lead to creative and inclusive forms of instruction that can influence the broader TESOL profession.

Summary

Older learners can learn a new language late in life and the process of learning a language may confer cognitive and social benefits. For older immigrants, the ability to speak English in the United States will support access to resources and socialization. There are new teaching strategies that recognize the learning differences of older adults that can be incorporated to target aging-in- place or late- in- life immigrants to engage them in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes.

CHAPTER III

THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Project

The field project is a handbook to support organizing a language club for older English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners to provide an alternative to traditional ESOL class formats. It addresses the unmet needs of a growing and aging immigrant population in the United States. The rationale for this project is that older immigrants may be intimidated by traditional intergenerational ESOL classes. Some older learners require more time to complete tasks and prefer a slower pace of learning. Additionally, they may have impaired vision, memory, cognitive, or hearing limitations that impact performance and increase anxiety in formal class settings.

Older immigrants range in age from 55 and upwards and come from diverse educational backgrounds. Immigrants that come to the United States may have interrupted or limited education or advanced degrees from their native countries. These older immigrants are often united in sharing a level of internalized ageism expressed through insecurity and self-doubt about their ability to learn a new language late in life. It is not sufficient to direct these learners to traditional ESOL classes because these classes may be age-inclusive in theory, however, in practice, they serve the needs of younger adults to prepare them for participation in the workforce or higher education. These classes often have a curriculum that centers around standardized goals and matriculation supported by testing and advancement that may not be relevant to older learners who do not share the same language goals.

There is no age limitation on learning a new language, but older learners have differentiated needs that require a different educational approach. The study of geragogy and language acquisition includes Critical Foreign Language Geragogy (CFL). CFL recognizes the impact of ageism on the learner and the teacher and aims to undermine age-based stereotypes. It acknowledges the need for age-based accommodations but does not view these as academic limitations. The approach advocates educational enrichment with student-focused goals. It asserts that speaking English in English-speaking countries is essential for full civic engagement and political advocacy. English proficiency is vital because many late-in-life immigrants experience precarity in maintaining access to economic, social, and medical resources. They also experience social isolation and dependency on family members, which puts them at risk for abuse and mental health challenges. As educators, we should confront ageism in ESOL outreach and consider the diversity of talents that older students possess. We can begin by advocating for age-appropriate language classes to support late-in-life immigrants. This handbook outlines an approach to ESOL that better meets the needs of late-in-life immigrants. The guide draws on insights from these four clinical studies:

1. Balyasnikova, T, & Gillard, S. (2021) They gave me back my power: Strengthening older immigrants' language learning through arts-based activities, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, (1-18) <https://doi.org.10.1080/02660830.2021.1911109>
2. Ho, T. (2019). Age and other factors influencing second language, *International Forum of Teaching and Studies*, Vol 15, No 1. Retrieved February 5, 2022, from <http://americanscholarspress.us/journals/IFST/pdf/IFOTS-1-2019/IFOTS-V15n1-art2.pdf>
3. Valdez, V.E.,& Park, K. (2021). Translanguaging as culturally sustaining pedagogy: Transforming traditional practices in an ESOL classroom for older adults from refugee backgrounds in Warriner, D. S., *Refugee Education across the Lifespan: Mapping experiences of language learning and use*. (pp 327-345), Switzerland: Springer Nature

4. Zhang, W., Zhu, Y., Liu, X., & Qiu, Y. (2021). Teaching older immigrants active aging: Narratives of peer English instructors. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 40(5-6), 439–454. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2021.1968972>

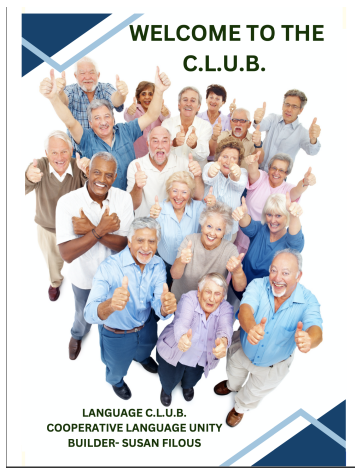
These researchers support creative yet practical approaches to teaching older adults.

Balyasnikova and Gillard (2021) examine the formation of Senior Thrive, a University of British Columbia program which supports language acquisition and self-actualization through participation in arts-based learning. Balyasnikova and Gillard recognize the individuality of older immigrants and the talents they possess. The Senior Thrive format creates a venue for showcasing the lives of older immigrants while teaching English. Zhang et al. (2021) highlight the symbiotic relationship between students and teacher aides by revealing the benefit of helping others while working as teacher's aides and stressing the importance of having role models for fellow students. It confirms that positive learning environments do more than just teach a skill; they develop character and self-esteem. Valdez and Park (2021) validate using translanguage strategies to create welcoming environments. Translanguaging techniques help the teacher share in the language learning process to demonstrate humility and respect for students. Ho (2019) highlights pragmatic strategies such as slowing the speech rate and using repetition to create supportive learning environments.

The field handbook also draws upon Vygotsky's theory of The Zone of Proximal Development which positions each learner as an individual engaged in a personal learning experience. Vygotsky acknowledges the individuality of each student and the presence of outside forces that can interfere with a student's ability to learn and a teacher's expectation of the student. This handbook is aspirational in celebrating older adults' existing knowledge and skills to build confidence collaboratively in their ability to participate in new educational experiences.

It provides the freedom to draw upon multiple educational theories and play with learning to meet the needs of the students.

Figure 1. Welcome to the C.L.U.B



Note. Cover of Field Handbook.

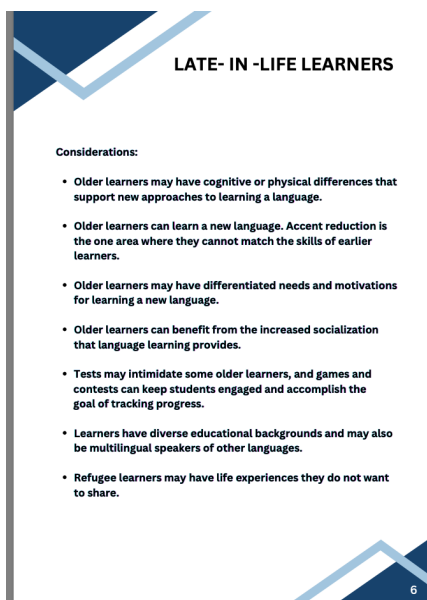
The field handbook (Figure 1) is a guide to advocate for and establish learning clubs for older learners. The field handbook for the Language CLUB uses the acronym CLUB to stand for Collaborative Language Unity Builder. Participants share their favorite songs, talents, and interests on a registration form, and this information establishes the curriculum's foundation. A dynamic interaction between students and teachers builds unity in meeting individual and collective goals integrated with English language instruction.

The handbook has two sections. Section one includes an introduction to the concept of a Language CLUB and provides an overview of expectations for students, teachers, and teacher's aids and club dynamics. Section two focuses on the program's creation and includes participant engagement, curriculum development, program marketing resources, references, and acknowledgments. This section has four units outlined in the handbook table of contents.

Section One

This section summarizes the author's philosophy of creating welcoming spaces to learn and practice English. Section one begins with a review of organizational considerations for a Language CLUB. This includes appropriate settings, flexible goals, and teaching techniques. Section one provides talking points to advocate for the formation of a CLUB that include an awareness of the fragility of older immigrants, the development of the field of geragogy, and a review of the potentiality of older immigrants to learn English and the benefits that language acquisition can provide. Figure 2 highlights critical considerations when teaching late-in-life learners.

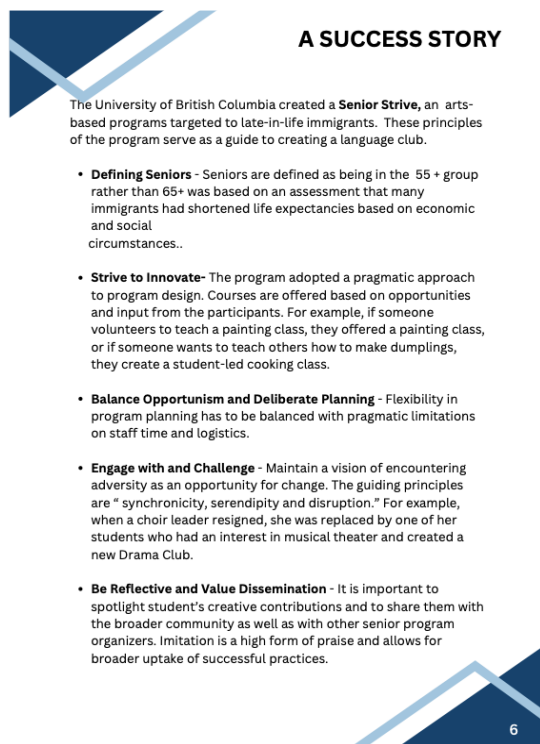
Figure 2. Late In Life, Learners



Note. Reflections on teaching older ESOL students.

Section one includes guidance for the Language CLUB based on the success of Senior Thrive to encourage a creative and dynamic approach to teaching (Figure 3). The focus on the arts highlights the importance of creating welcoming spaces to learn English to break down barriers to ESOL efforts and lower student affective filters.

Figure 3. A Success Story



A SUCCESS STORY

The University of British Columbia created a **Senior Strive**, an arts-based programs targeted to late-in-life immigrants. These principles of the program serve as a guide to creating a language club.

- **Defining Seniors** - Seniors are defined as being in the 55 + group rather than 65+ was based on an assessment that many immigrants had shortened life expectancies based on economic and social circumstances..
- **Strive to Innovate**- The program adopted a pragmatic approach to program design. Courses are offered based on opportunities and input from the participants. For example, if someone volunteers to teach a painting class, they offered a painting class, or if someone wants to teach others how to make dumplings, they create a student-led cooking class.
- **Balance Opportunism and Deliberate Planning** - Flexibility in program planning has to be balanced with pragmatic limitations on staff time and logistics.
- **Engage with and Challenge** - Maintain a vision of encountering adversity as an opportunity for change. The guiding principles are " synchronicity, serendipity and disruption." For example, when a choir leader resigned, she was replaced by one of her students who had an interest in musical theater and created a new Drama Club.
- **Be Reflective and Value Dissemination** - It is important to spotlight student's creative contributions and to share them with the broader community as well as with other senior program organizers. Imitation is a high form of praise and allows for broader uptake of successful practices.

Note: A listing of fundamental principles from the University of British Columbia Senior Thrive program as outlined by Balyasnikova, T, & Gillard, S.

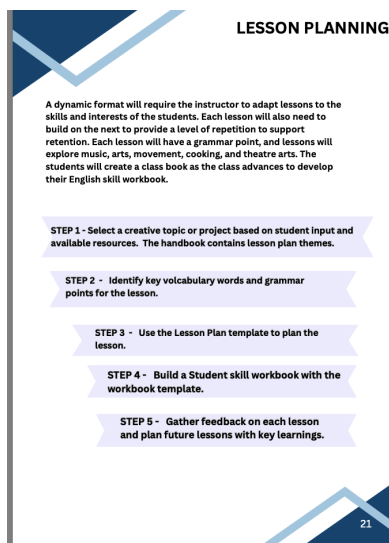
Section Two

The second section has four units. Unit one introduces the concept of the Language CLUB and provides an overview of how to use the handbook. It also depicts potential students reacting to learning English in a different format. Unit one has organizational guidelines for

teachers, student leaders, and classroom organization. This unit prepares the participants to understand the principles of foreign language pedagogy, translanguaging, age-based accommodations, and the role of peer leaders. It supports awareness of late-in-life learners' specialized needs and provides guidance to maximize teaching effectiveness.

Unit two provides the foundation for Language CLUB lesson planning. The lesson plan outlines five steps: the selection of a topic, the integration of English learning, the creation of a lesson plan, the simultaneous building of a student workbook, and reflection and feedback to build the next lesson plan. Figure 4 illustrates the five steps in lesson plan development.


Figure 4. Lesson Planning



Note. The Five Steps to lesson planning.

Unit two includes a sample lesson plan for a drawing exercise using colored pencils to teach students colors and then create self-portraits to learn the names of the body parts. These portraits are conversation starters for students to use their pictures to introduce themselves to class members. Unit two contains suggested themes and a list of lesson plan resources to help inspire and support additional class themes.

Figure 5- Art-based Lesson Plan

Language C.L.U.B Lesson Plan		
Instructor MARY JEN	Student Leads MARGO LEW	Date: JUNE 19, 2023
ACTIVITY STUDENTS WILL USE COLORED PENCILS TO CREATE A SELF PORTRAIT. STUDENTS WILL THEN INTRODUCE THEMSELVES IN SMALL GROUPS AND SHARE THEIR PICTURES	NEW VOCABULARY EAR NOSE MOUTH TEETH LIPS EYELASHES NECK FACE EYES	<p>Art</p> <p>Art based lesson can incorporate visual and spacial skills to support language learning. This can include traditional art as well as home crafts.</p> <p>The students will give students a set of colored pencils and then name and show the colors as the students raise the pencil that matches the color.</p> <p>The teacher will ask the student to draw a self-portrait as she demonstrates a basic drawing of a self portrait.</p> 
GRAMMAR POINT CONJUGATE THE VERB TO HAVE I HAVE YOU HAVE HE HAS THEY HAVE WE HAVE	MATERIALS NEEDED COLORED PENCILS PAPER	
KEY POINTS FROM PREVIOUS LESSON TO REVIEW COLOR REVIEW RED, GREEN, BLUE, BROWN, BLACK, ORANGE, YELLOW/PINK, BLACK.		
ACTIVITY FEEDBACK		

Note - The sample lesson plan reflects an arts-based theme.

Unit three provides tools to help the marketing and administration of the Language CLUB. Unit three includes a sample flier (Figure 6), an introductory letter introducing the concept of a Language CLUB, registration forms, and a student questionnaire. The student questionnaire is fundamental to the class as it will guide initial lesson planning. Ideally, someone will assist the student in filling out this form to ensure that students can confidently express their interests. These examples can be adapted to the sponsoring organization and represent potential outreach efforts.

Figure 6 - Join the Language Club



Note - A sample flier designed to recruit students to the Language CLUB.

Unit four is the conclusion of the handbook and includes clinical references and a description of the tools used to create the guide. There is also a formal acknowledgment of support for the development and inspiration of the project.

Development of the Project

The experiences of children with immigrant parents or grandparents inspire this project. My grandparents had limited English skills, lacked formal education, and remained culturally isolated in New York. Our family spoke a mixture of Slovak and English. However, my sister and I only had a limited Slovak vocabulary. We had less and less to share with our grandparents as we grew up, and we assumed that they were too old to learn to speak English, and we were not interested in learning Slovak.

How might my grandparent's lives have changed if they had improved their English language skills? I became curious about English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) resources dedicated to late-in-life immigrants and outreach to these potential students. A literature review on ESOL for late-in-life immigrants introduced the study of geragogy and the expansion of these principles to foreign language acquisition.

A literature review informs this field project on emerging strategies and theoretical models to establish a foundation for developing a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) curriculum for older adults. Data collection included outreach to program administrators, a literature review on successful strategies, and a review of the principles of geragogy and critical foreign language geragogy (CFLG). This data was incorporated to identify opportunities for integrating CFLG principles into a differentiated format to inform lesson plans targeted to older adult immigrants in the TESOL community.

A review of the literature confirms that older learners are capable of learning a new language late in life and that they can also derive health and social benefits from learning a new language. The literature review highlights compelling reasons to provide educational resources to late-in-life immigrants who often face difficulties accessing social, economic, and medical resources and are dependent on others and at risk for elder abuse.

Four studies highlighting successful ESOL strategies for working with older students are the focus of this project. The goal was to consolidate the information from these studies into a handbook that could serve as a resource to create a new teaching format for older immigrants. The acronym CLUB stands for collaborative language unity builder to capture the essence of a free-formed club that would also support socialization and confidence building to encourage these learners to learn to speak English.

The selection of Canva to create the handbook facilitated the use of stock photos from Canva without formal authorization. The format is a guide rather than a curriculum based on the need to foster collaborative learning. The Language CLUB concept requires collaboration to build lesson plans based on student interests and capabilities.

Forming a Language CLUB requires a highly motivated and creative individual who can envision successful learning with this format. It assumes participants will embrace the opportunity to share their talents and engage in collaborative learning. The goal of the handbook is to advocate for and share critical principles for teaching older adults. It also shares a goal with Senior Strive in Canada to share success and encourage others to copy efforts in reaching out to this underserved group of immigrants.

The motivation to advocate for older immigrants also reflects the need to address ageism and its role in keeping older immigrants on the margins of our society. Many individuals quickly make stereotyped assumptions about older people that deny authenticity to a diverse group. We should advocate for funding programs to support outreach efforts to ensure we all benefit from an inclusive society.

The Project

The project can be found in its entirety in the Appendix.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Our society will be impacted by how we address the needs of our growing and aging immigrant population. English proficiency for this population will positively affect older immigrants' ability to self-advocate and seek services to manage their health and social and economic needs. It will also empower this group to engage with the new dynamics of our society that require digital literacy to access information and services. This group must learn to protect themselves from fraudulent threats and to advocate for personal rights. We cannot assume that older immigrants have someone to protect them and guide them in the United States, and we cannot believe that they are too old to become proficient or fluent in English.

When we respect the heterogeneity of older immigrants, we acknowledge that we should have a variety of tools to address the varied needs of this population. Some immigrants with academic backgrounds will quickly adapt to standardized ESOL classes, while others will be intimidated by formal educational settings. The concept of a Language CLUB is to create a safe space to experiment with learning as a starting point. It doesn't replace advanced learning but rather empowers older immigrants to gain confidence in their ability to achieve self-expression in English as a starting point to gaining English proficiency. It draws upon individual skills and life experiences to lower anxiety about learning English. The sharing of cooking, crafts, or artistic talent refreshes confidence in the abilities of each student and lets them share and learn collectively.

Late-in-life immigrants are placed in "double jeopardy" as they face the new realities of aging while also having to adapt to a new culture (Maleku et al., 2021). Their predicament can

provide an opportunity to confront ageism in our society and address the lack of educational outreach to older adults with economic needs. The Third Age movement capitalizes on increased longevity and earlier retirement trends advanced by marketing opportunities to target middle-class seniors. This movement underscores the capabilities of older adults. It provides additional validation to include older economically challenged immigrants in the Third Age movement to empower them to realize their potential and rights as older adults. The late-in-life and aging-in-place immigrants and refugees come to the United States with histories. They are often challenged with hardships that we may never fully appreciate. We should respect that this cohort may have emotional and physical fragility that isolates them from the broader community. It is crucial not to turn away from this group but to turn towards them and include them in educational opportunities.

Recommendations

The findings of a literature review inspired the Language CLUB concept. The principles of foreign language pedagogy suggest differentiated techniques benefit older learners and support learning a new language. There is awareness of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) potential to enhance socialization and support active aging. The handbook is a theoretical blueprint for teaching English to older immigrants. It will require field testing to finetune the format and determine if it is a helpful tool.

The next step might have been the first step. There is a need to conduct a needs assessment analysis to determine the viability of supporting this class type. The Language CLUB concept requires advocacy for adoption. There is a competitive market for ESOL funding, and more resources are needed to allocate funds for a new format. A formal needs assessment survey

will help to inspire program administrators to dedicate resources to older immigrants. The concern is that the overwhelming focus on younger adults and children will overshadow outreach efforts to seniors, given limited resources. That will require tapping private funding independent from the government aligned with the mission of supporting these immigrants. New funding sources will require fundraising and grant writing to obtain resources.

Motivating students to join the Language CLUB is equally essential, and student engagement involves outreach to family and community members. We should acknowledge that older immigrants may share ageist stereotypes that undermine their motivation to participate in the Language CLUB. It is helpful to seek positive role models to help recruit students. For example, students currently engaging in tai-chi classes or chat groups can serve as a baseline cohort of potential students to test the Language CLUB handbook. The success of Senior Thrive was supported by starting with a group of students already engaged in learning at the Senior Center. The goal is to showcase the talents and success of the concept to attract new students and support from the community.

The Language CLUB handbook includes a lesson planning section designed to integrate the interests and abilities of students into the curricula. As the class progresses, the flow of the course will create more predictable lesson plan elements. Collaborative lesson planning can be labor-intensive on the instructor's part. It may require developing a formal curriculum adaptable to new lesson themes.

The call to action to address the educational needs of older immigrants has to compete with the baseline economic, social, and health resources this community requires. It would be helpful to integrate ESOL with community and government services to establish English proficiency as a basic need for newcomers in the United States, regardless of age. Many

immigrants age in place without learning English, and we can connect native older English speakers with older immigrants to share a new experience of teaching and learning a new language. There is also an opportunity to foster intergenerational connections between younger volunteers and older students. Burnes et al., (2019) advocate for connecting generations as a way to reduce ageism. Translanguaging strategies can be incorporated to require the volunteers to understand some aspects of the student's native language. Shared language learning can create a dynamic and fun learning environment that can inspire teachers and volunteers to learn while they teach and show respect for the challenge of learning a new language.

In conclusion, we have an opportunity to enhance our efforts to value and embrace the potential of older immigrants to learn a new language. If this contributes to improved mental health, empowerment, and socialization, it will create a better future for the participants and their families, friends, and our society.

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APPENDIX

Language CLUB- Collaborative Language Unity Builder

WELCOME TO THE C.L.U.B.



**LANGUAGE C.L.U.B.
COOPERATIVE LANGUAGE UNITY
BUILDER- SUSAN FILOUS**

This handbook is designed to facilitate the initiation of a language learning club targeted to older adult immigrants differentiated from traditional English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) formats.

The design is based on observations from four clinical studies that specifically address the learning needs and challenges of older immigrant learners.

1- **T Balyasnikova, et al. (2021)** examines the work of a group called Senior Strive in Vancouver, CA that incorporates ESOL with the arts. This program positions the instructor as a guide to explore creative outlets that appeal to students to incorporate students in the development of arts-based projects where language is learned simultaneously.

2- **Zhang, et al. (2021)** shares the work of a Senior Center in Canada that incorporates peer-teacher aids to role-model success as older students.

3- **Valdez and Park (2021)** share strategies used with refugees in a Mid-West Senior Center that employs translanguaging strategies to create a shared learning experience that enables students to teach the instructor their native language to address the positionality of English as a superior language.

4- **Ho (2019)** shares insights from a Senior Center in Oakland, Ca that include the need to create slower, and repetitive learning environments with age and culturally appropriate materials.

CONSIDERATIONS

Many older students experience internalized ageism and lack confidence in their ability to learn a new language. Learning a new language can build cognitive and social skills that can enrich the lives of these students. These students may be overlooked by social planners based on ageist constructs that do not advance the agency of older immigrants to advocate for their own health, security and happiness.

The format is intended to be used in community settings such as public libraries, places of worship, senior centers, and community centers. The concept is student-centered and therefore requires a dynamic curriculum that can be adapted to student capabilities and interests. This requires a balance between structured and unstructured components and an appreciation for the specific learning challenges of the students.

The use of repetition and multi-sensory memory techniques will lead the students to where they are capable of going with the understanding that some students may be able to advance more quickly than others. That is where the role of student peer leaders is positioned to provide additional motivation for all learners.

The Language Club format does not meet the standards required by Title III legislation for funding because it does not include testing or tracking of students toward any specific educational or professional goal. It requires a source of funding that would have to come from sponsoring organizations. Participation in a language club format may motivate students to enroll in traditional ESOL programs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ageism differs from all other forms of discrimination because of the inevitability that in time, all people will experience ageism if they live long enough (Palmore, 2003)

Our society is youth-focused, and while I believe that the future belongs to the young, it would be a shame not to prepare future generations for aging. One step would be to honor the abilities and potential of older adults to contribute to society and to foster curiosity about their lives and talents. I am a retired sales manager enrolled in USF's Master's TESOL program. My goal is to motivate older immigrants to see their potential for change in later life.

I would like to acknowledge one of the greatest gifts I received from my family, the gift of imperfection. I grew up in an immigrant family with family members displaying varying English language proficiency levels. Having the confidence to speak a language is inspirational when your attempts are imperfect because it celebrates the power of the need and drive to communicate.

We should respect all efforts to communicate and strive to create welcoming spaces to learn and practice English.



My Grandma Kristina - What courage did it take for her to board a ship to New York as a young woman, her occupation listed as a servant, with limited education and no English language skills? I dedicate this handbook to my grandmother and to all the grandmas and grandpas who took a chance to change their lives and the lives of their children.

WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO TEACHING OLDER IMMIGRANTS?

" The immigrant seniors, who come here later in life, are the most tortured and abandoned group in our region. There are not any services. If there are, they are not culturally appropriate to these diverse seniors" (Maleku, et al., 2021, p. 11).

The emerging study of gerogogy or learning targeted to older learners supports the need to accommodate age-related supportive needs. Older learners may have hearing or cognitive differences that require a slower and more repetitive curriculum. They may also have differentiated language goals from the goals of traditional ESOL classes. Older learners have a lifetime of learning to draw upon that deserves an outlet for expression and inspires collaborative learning experiences.

Learning a new language has positive cognitive and social value, and age should not deter learning a new language. Immigrants lacking basic English skills must depend on family or social services and may become socially isolated. They face challenges navigating health care, supportive services, and managing daily interactions.

The formation of a Language C.L.U.B may provide a creative outlet for self-expression while also expanding English language skills that can empower late-in-life immigrants to engage in society.

LATE- IN -LIFE LEARNERS

Considerations:

- **Older learners may have cognitive or physical differences that support new approaches to learning a language.**
- **Older learners can learn a new language. Accent reduction is the one area where they cannot match the skills of earlier learners.**
- **Older learners may have differentiated needs and motivations for learning a new language.**
- **Older learners can benefit from the increased socialization that language learning provides.**
- **Tests may intimidate some older learners, and games and contests can keep students engaged and accomplish the goal of tracking progress.**
- **Learners have diverse educational backgrounds and may also be multilingual speakers of other languages.**
- **Refugee learners may have life experiences they do not want to share.**

A SUCCESS STORY

The University of British Columbia created a **Senior Strive**, an arts-based program targeted to late-in-life immigrants. These principles of the program serve as a guide to creating a language club.

- **Defining Seniors** - Seniors are defined as being in the 55 + group rather than 65+ based on an assessment that many immigrants had shortened life expectancies based on economic and social circumstances and identify earlier as seniors.
- **Strive to Innovate**- The program adopted a pragmatic approach to the program design. Courses are offered based on opportunities and input from the participants. For example, if someone volunteers to teach a painting class, they offered a painting class, or if someone wants to teach others how to make dumplings, they create a student-led cooking class.
- **Balance Opportunism and Deliberate Planning** - Flexibility in program planning has to be balanced with practical limitations on staff time and logistics.
- **Engage with and Challenge** - Maintain a vision of encountering adversity as an opportunity for change. The guiding principles are “ synchronicity, serendipity, and disruption.” For example, when a choir leader resigned, she was replaced by one of her students who had an interest in musical theater and created a new Drama Club.
- **Be Reflective and Value Dissemination** - It is essential to spotlight students’ creative contributions and to share them with the broader community as well as with other senior program organizers. Imitation is a high form of praise and allows for broader uptake of successful practices.

C.L.U.B. Handbook



A guide to building a language learning environment to meet the differentiated needs, strengths, and interests of older learners

Handbook

The handbook integrates student-led initiatives with traditional English teaching fundamentals. The goal is to keep English language skills as the primary objective with a collaborative goal of building social engagement and life skills for the older immigrant learner. The fundamental principle is that all students have acquired knowledge and skills that can contribute to a dynamic learning environment.

The curriculum evolves by focusing on student strengths to expand confidence in English language skills. It is also structured to nurture student-leader volunteers to support learning and demonstrate the ability to learn at any age. The program is paced with an understanding that many older learners may have limitations that can be accommodated by a slower pace of learning as well as repetition and the use of the creative arts to support memorization and engagement.



HOW TO USE THE HANDBOOK

- The handbook is designed to serve as a guide, not a curriculum.
- The instructor can look to the themes to elicit input from students. For example, if the theme is Music, what kind of music? Is there someone in the group with a unique talent? Will the group create a chorus or just do Karaoke? Is there a venue that will welcome a performance from the group, like a Senior Center or community event?
- The goal is to have student leaders emerge while participating in the class. The instructor will match language skills to creative activities. If the student wants to teach a dance class, the instructor will work to highlight the language skills and let the student create the dance lesson.
- The instructor will have to facilitate compromise and support practical activities while ensuring that students work together, knowing that everyone can advocate for themes..
- The class dynamics may impact some activities based on the cultural representation of the students and the level of homogeneity.
- The handbook is designed to inspire creativity and celebrate multisensory approaches to learning and retention.
- The themes can be aligned with healthcare, housing, etc., to meet the class's needs.



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WHAT IS THE LANGUAGE CLUB?



The Language CLUB is open to all learners who wish to participate in a collaborative learning experience and advance their English language skills. We do not discriminate based on age, country of origin, gender, race, ability, or cultural affiliation.

The Language CLUB strives to teach English within a dynamic format that incorporates English learning with creative arts and skill-based activities to help members gain confidence to use English and engage with the community.



The Language CLUB promotes peer-to-peer learning under the guidance of an instructor to guide the members to acquire English language skills. It is a team-based approach to learning that requires openness and collaboration, and compromise to explore new themes.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Creativity

The Language CLUB strives to integrate English skills with creative and dynamic activities. The Language CLUB relies on its members for inspiration and contributions to identify projects and topics for the curriculum.

The Language CLUB recognizes that some members may have physical or cognitive limitations. We will work to accommodate all members to enable them to participate in learning activities.



Accommodation



Individualism

The Language CLUB embraces the individualism of each member. Members will be free to share whatever they feel comfortable sharing. Each member is a unique individual and will not be stereotyped.

The Language CLUB has the foundational principle that all languages are beautiful and challenging.



Respect

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

You should always remember the following three points: make mistakes (not being afraid of making mistakes, forget grammar(not thinking of grammar when speaking English) ,express yourself (using your body language if needed) - Mike, Zhang et. al. 2021

The Language Club focuses on speaking and listening skills with reading and writing used to support learning. The main goal is to increase communication skills and break down inhibitions.

For some students, learning a new alphabet is a roadblock to learning that is easier once the student has success with oral communication skills. The class progresses to focused reading and writing skills after students gain confidence in speaking while simultaneously gaining exposure to written words throughout the class.

The class can also serve as an entry point to ESOL where students first break down communication barriers and then can transition to or add traditional ESOL classes.



Thoughts about Language C.L.U.B



*Yes, I can share
my talents!*

*Yes, I can learn
new things!*



*Yes, we can
learn English!*

Thoughts about Language C.L.U.B



*I want to
learn
English .*

No tests!



*No problem!
I can do this!*

CLASS INSTRUCTOR

The instructor will be a trained Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (T.E.S.O.L.) instructor who can guide the class with constructive English learning matched to each activity.

The additive factor of age on refugee status requires an instructor to understand cultural norms and honorific language. The simple practice of how students are addressed in class can contribute to stress in a classroom. Students may want to address the teacher formally as is their custom, and the teacher should accommodate this rather than enforce informality. It is also important to honor the students' language as equal to English in importance and prestige. Valdez, V.E., & Park, K. (2021)

Key Concepts:

- **Respect for students**- Instructors must learn to pronounce each student's name and refrain from any nicknaming.
- **Translanguaging** - Instructors will strive to learn a few phrases in the native language of the students. This will create a welcoming environment and position the instructor as an equal learner willing to make mistakes and face the challenge of learning a new language.
- **Individuality** - The instructor will respect each student's individuality and not make any assumptions based on their country of origin, gender, or cultural affiliation.
- **Collaboration** - A collaborative approach to learning requires compromise as well as quiet leadership. The goal is to unite the class in activities that may not meet the strengths of all participants. It may also take time to develop the concept of collaboration and cultivate the dynamics of a non-traditional learning environment.

STUDENT LEADERS

" I am immersing myself in happiness as a teacher and volunteer" -Mike - Student volunteer, Zhang et al. ,2021

The goal is to recruit a few student volunteers that have already acquired basic English skills to help motivate other students. These volunteers can help to create a welcoming environment and support the instructor if translations are needed.

Key Concepts:

Student Leaders can be recruited by sponsoring organizations or as part of the marketing of the class.

Student Leaders will also emerge during the class and should be encouraged to support other students.

Student Leaders should be given recognition for their important role in the class. This can be done with certificates of recognition.

Student Leaders gain a great deal of respect and appreciation from fellow students.



ACCOMODATIONS

**There are a few helpful tips that support teaching older students.
These are elaborated on by Ho, T. 2019**

- Slow down the rate of speech and increase the volume of your speech.
- Use visual aids to support new vocabulary.
- Use body language to build on total physical response skills but be mindful if class participants have mobility limitations.
- Encourage classroom participation by first having students work in pairs and then expanding the group size to get them in front of the whole class..
- Teach in chunks of knowledge to create connections between the subject themes.
- Choose topics that are personal, interesting or important to the learners
- Normalize ambiguity and use it as a learning strategy with guessing games.
- Adjust the lesson based on student progress and include a level of repetition to accommodate memory challenges.

CLUB LOGISTICS

The Language C.L.U.B. can be hosted by Senior Centers, Libraries, Community Centers, or any other interested organization.

- The class should meet at least two days a week for no more than 2 hours at a time.
- The site selection will influence registration and staffing requirements; the instructor may be required to obtain liability insurance and undergo a background check.
- It is also important that the site meets ADA guidelines for accessibility and safety.
- The funding for the program will depend on sponsorship, or participants may be required to pay a program fee.
- Student recruitment for the program will involve students, family members, and sponsoring organizations.
- The stretch goal is that the participants will be able to perform or present their work to a community or club audience.



LESSON PLANNING

A dynamic format will require the instructor to adapt lessons to the skills and interests of the students. Each lesson will also need to build on the next to provide a level of repetition to support retention. Each lesson will have a grammar point, and lessons will explore music, arts, movement, cooking, and theatre arts. The students will create a class book as the class advances to develop their English skill workbook.

STEP 1 - Select a creative topic or project based on student input and available resources. The handbook contains lesson plan themes.

STEP 2 - Identify key vocabulary words and grammar points for the lesson.

STEP 3 - Use the Lesson Plan template to plan the lesson.

STEP 4 - Build a Student skill workbook with the workbook template.

STEP 5 - Gather feedback on each lesson and plan future lessons with key learnings.

Language C.L.U.B

Lesson Plan

Instructor

MARY JEN

Student Leads

MARGO LEW

Date:

JUNE 19, 2023

ACTIVITY

STUDENTS WILL USE COLORED PENCILS TO CREATE A SELF PORTRAIT. STUDENTS WILL THEN INTRODUCE THEMSELVES IN SMALL GROUPS AND SHARE THEIR PICTURES

NEW VOCABULARY

EAR
NOSE
MOUTH
TEETH
LIPS
EYELASHES
NECK
FACE
EYES

GRAMMAR POINT
CONJUGATE THE VERB TO HAVE

I HAVE
YOU HAVE
HE HAS
THEY HAVE
WE HAVE

MATERIALS NEEDED

COLORED PENCILS
PAPER

KEY POINTS FROM PREVIOUS
LESSON TO REVIEW

COLOR REVIEW -RED, GREEN, BLUE, BROWN, BLACK, ORANGE,
YELLOW,PINK, BLACK,

ACTIVITY FEEDBACK

Lesson Themes



The Language Club is dynamic, and lessons are formed based on the individuals in the club. The club incorporates flexibility and imagination when planning lessons.

The arts-based concept can also support the real-life needs of the community by using art to express feelings and to practice communicating in social and welfare settings.

**New ideas will emerge from the class participants.
This guide provides some generalized themes to guide the class.**

Each lesson will include a short grammar point that will be used in the creative lesson or as a communication exercise

Grammar point.

The students greet each other and tell each other their name.

To Be:

I am

You are

He/She/It is

We are



Karaoke-style singing with songs selected based on repetitive keywords or sayings can be a fun way to learn a language. The songs selected can incorporate the student's music tastes with songs that have clear and repetitive lyrics.

For example:

Hello/Goodbye - Beatles

Singin' in the Rain - Gene Kelly

Stop in the Name of Love - The Supremes



Art-based lessons can include visual and spatial skills to support language learning. Arts can encompass traditional art as well as home crafts and hobbies.

The instructor gives students a set of colored pencils and names and shows the colors as the students raise the pencil that matches the color.

The students draw a self-portrait, followed by the instructor who will draw a portrait and identify parts of the body and face in English.



The class can create short scripts or adapt materials to perform. Themes can be used to help students navigate social situations.

Maria: I am very happy today!

Charlie: Why?

Maria: Today, I am meeting my best friend.

Charlie: I thought I was one of your best friends.

Maria: No, you are not.

Charlie: Really!

Maria: Oh, Charlie, you are my ONLY best friend.

Charlie: I'm very happy today!



Simple recipes can be used to engage the class, expand vocabulary and share food.

Palacinky Recipe *

1 cup flour
2 eggs.
3/4 cup milk.

1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon butter
1/2 teaspoon salt



* Adapted from my mother's Slovak recipe.

Dance or exercise can be used to teach direction, body parts and movement and energize the class.

The students can learn to do the Macarena, the Hokey Pokey, Tai Chi or any other student generated suggestions.



Lesson Plan Resources

There are many creative approaches to learning English that are shared on the internet.

1- Learn English with TV- Various TV themed ideas/

<https://youtu.be/fwrD70WeSzs>

10 Great Songs For English Fluency & How to Learn with Music

2- ELLII- ESL Resources that include scripts.

<https://ellii.com>

3- J.Paul Getty Museum - English Through the Arts- Lesson Plans and Handouts with Arts based curricula.

https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/esl3/esl3_lesson01.html

4- ISS of BC Janis' ESL - A Resource for Life Skill Vocabulary and Activities

<https://janis-esl.issbc.org/esl-links/>

5- KNILT- The Knowledge Network for Integrating Learning and Teaching -An online creative teaching resource that includes the use of Dance.

https://knilt.arcc.albany.edu/Lesson:_Integrating_Dance_into_English_Language_Arts#Lesson_Objective

6-Wordwall.net -On-line quizzes, games and activities

7- OEBd - Open Education Database - 50 essential resources

https://oedb.org/ilibrarian/50_essential_resources_for_esl_students/

Language C.L.U.B Workbook

Date:

ACTIVITY

NEW VOCABULARY

GRAMMAR POINT

KEY POINTS FROM PREVIOUS
LESSON TO REVIEW

ACTIVITY FEEDBACK

Language C.L.U.B

Lesson Plan

Instructor

Student Leads

Date:

ACTIVITY

NEW VOCABULARY

GRAMMAR POINT

MATERIALS NEEDED

KEY POINTS FROM PREVIOUS
LESSON TO REVIEW

ACTIVITY FEEDBACK



Marketing and Registration Resources

Join the Language Club!



Learn to speak English for fun while you share your talents.

- Arts, Culture and Skill based lesson plans.
- Ideal opportunity to learn basic English.
- Community engagement.
- Open and welcoming learning environment.
- Non-traditional learning environment tailored to the older adult.



Registration time:

June 24, 2023
3PM to 6PM

Millbrae Community Center, 1212 Taylor Blvd,
Millbrae, CA. 94030

More information :

 wisdom@usf.edu

Invite someone you know to join our Language Club! They will say, "Thank you"!

www.wisdomlearning.edu

Our goal is to create an enriching social environment with activities based on members interests to support English skills.

Sample Outreach Letter

April 15, 2024

Dear Ms. Wit:

We live in a community with a large and growing population of older immigrants, some of who have aged in place without acquiring English skills, and newcomers who are late-in-life immigrants. These older adults will face unique challenges accessing resources that impact their physical and economic well-being and mental health. A new approach is needed to support their needs while providing enrichment opportunities that benefit the broader community.

We would like to present the Language C.L.U.B or Collaborative Language Unity Builder. The program is designed to create a safe space for communication by emphasizing the creative arts as the foundation for English language development. The program is aligned with older learners but is open to students who may need more confidence or are uncomfortable in traditional ESL classes.

We have attached a copy of the program handbook for your review and hope that you will agree that this format does fill an unmet need in our community. We look forward to meeting with you to review the class proposal and address any concerns.

Sincerely,

.....



NEW CLUB MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE

What is your name?

What languages do you speak?

What are your hobbies or interests?

What is your favorite song and singer?

Do you have any special needs that we should know about? What are they?

Why do you want to learn English?



LANGUAGE CLUB REGISTRATION FORM

Basic Information

Name

Date of Birth

Phone Number

Email

Address

Emergency Contact

Relationship

Phone Number

Email

**Do you have any food allergies?
Please list them:**

**Do you have any physical
limitations or special needs that
we can accommodate?**

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