

WRITING WITH BEGINNERS

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A LITTLE LITERATURE ABOUT LEARNERS WHO LACK LI LITERACY

“Almost all the learners studied in SLA research have been literate. There has very little research on the cognitive processes of illiterate low literacy adult L2 learners....They have been left out of the SLA database” Tarone, Bigelow and Hansen (2009)

- Minnesota project with Somali adolescents and adults

“language processing skills that have been assumed to be universal human traits appear instead to be a product of the learner’s experience with alphabetic print literacy.”

- **Conclusion: “older language learners who lack alphabetic print literacy are using the linguistic input they receive orally in different ways from those who are alphabetically literate.”**



PATHWAYS A CLASS:

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14 learners: 4 Mandarin speakers

3 Spanish speakers

1 Somali speaker (lack alphabetic print literacy)

6 Dari speakers (lack alphabetic print literacy)

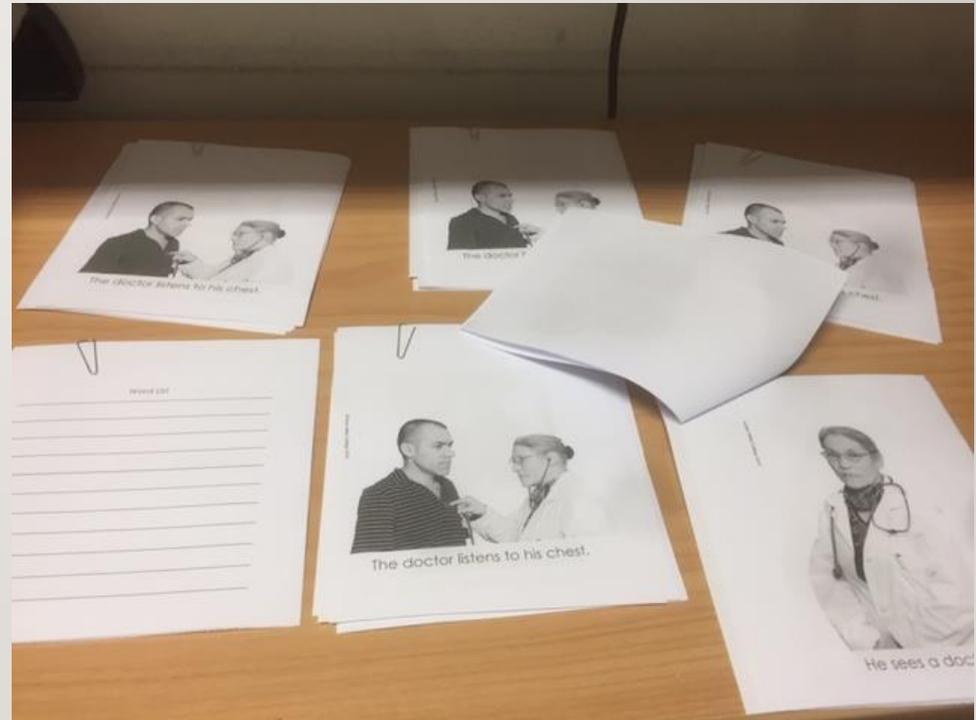
A LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

Story called “Amir Gets Sick” was the resource.
Bow Valley Readers, Canada.

<https://globalaccess.bowvalleycollege.ca/esl-readers/amir-gets-sick/>

Preparation: I photocopied the PDF and mixed the sequence.

Task: Put the pictures and stories in the correct order.



CLASS PREDICTING THE SEQUENCE OF THE STORY



ELICITED THEIR INTERPRETATION OF THE STORY

Used Wh questions. Who was sick?
How long? Etc.

Students collaborated to suggest words for the story.

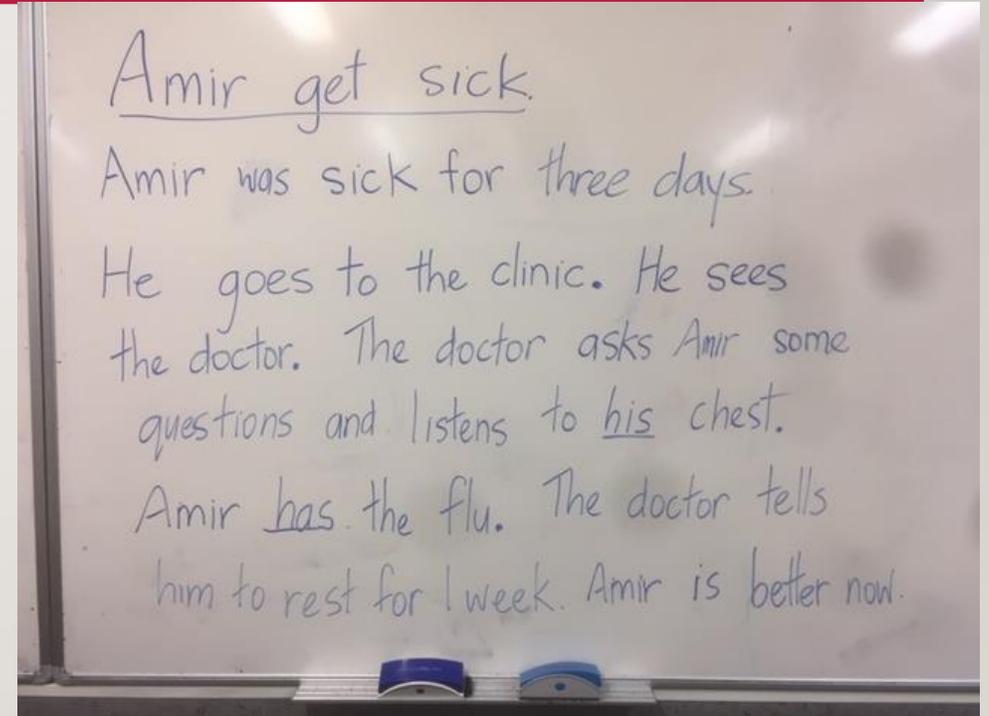
I wrote it as they suggested, although used and talked about 'He' instead of 'Amir' in line 2.

Students then read it together.

They wanted to copy it. Writing.

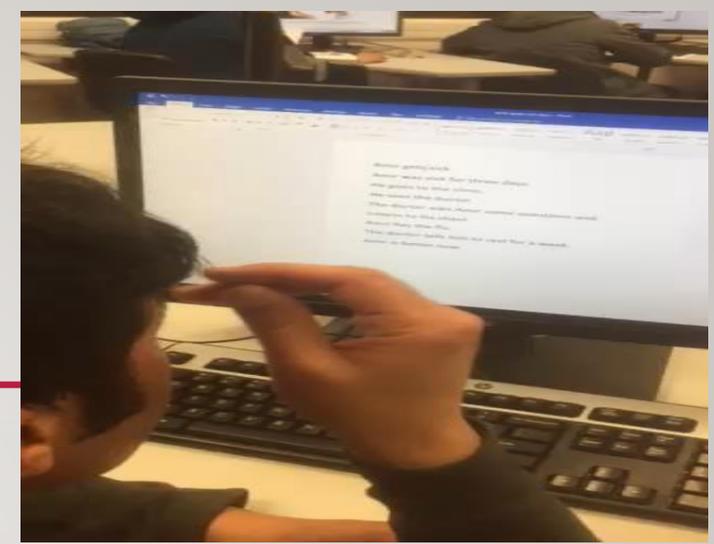
After copying we listened to the audio from the book.

I then wrote the story onto Word, which they copied in the Computer hour. Writing. Then they read it again.



SEQUENCE

- The resource can be varied: a real shared experience is the important factor
- Talking about the experience is essential. New vocab is elicited at this stage.
- Write the story with teacher as a scribe. T's helps with questioning perhaps, but the words should come from students as much as possible.
- Students read story with teacher. Any features of interest can be noticed either here or when story is scribed. Group, class and individual reading.
- Students can copy or word process the story and read again.
- Follow up in the next lesson by reading again.



PEDAGOGY

- Learners have a shared experience. They discuss it and then write it using a scribe
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- The teacher's role is to facilitate the language. (guiding, questioning, prompting)
 - Learners contribute to the writing; spelling, word order, grammar
 - L2 writing is modelled in this activity
 - They feel in control of the process which is a group effort, cooperative and non-threatening
 - They have a product to read in a relatively short time. As the words are theirs, they generally read it quite well
 - Read it again within a short time. Repetition important.
 - The Language Experience has these components: Awareness, Authenticity and Autonomy (van Lier, 1989)
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FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

- A cloze activity with key words
- Take home reading
- Read the story again in the next class.
- Role play parts of the story