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ABSTRACT

A research-based model of adult literacy categorizes adult reading habits into four categories: (1) illiteracy, the inability to read; (2) aliteracy, the absence of reading by those who are able to read; (3) selective literacy, reading only one type of material for a single purpose; and (4) active literacy, fully embracing literacy in all aspects of life. The model explores reasons why people develop such different reading habits. Family, school, and peer cultures are major areas of focus, especially when students experience culture clashes between home, community, and school. Culture's impact on learning style is another important consideration in the formation of lifelong reading habits. The affective domain is another critical element. It contributes to readers' personal definitions of reading, to their attitudes toward reading, toward their self-concepts as readers and learners, and to the readers' views of literacy use in their futures. Finally, interventions for both children and adults are suggested which could move more people toward active literacy. Common practices which are successful at all educational levels as well as varied teaching methods and materials which appeal to diverse learners are stressed, as the purpose of the model is to suggest interventions which would move more people toward active literacy. (Contains 5 figures and 31 references.) (Author)

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A Model of Adult Literacy: Implications for Educational Change

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Abstract

This research-based model of adult literacy categorizes adult reading habits into four categories: illiteracy, the inability to read; aliteracy, the absence of reading by those who are able to read; selective literacy, reading only one type of material for a single purpose; and active literacy, fully embracing literacy in all aspects of life. The model then explores reasons why people develop such different reading habits. Family, school, and peer cultures are major areas of focus, especially when students experience culture clashes between home, community, and school. Culture's impact on learning style is another important consideration in the formation of lifelong reading habits. The affective domain is another critical element. It contributes to readers' personal definitions of reading, to their attitudes toward reading, toward their self-concepts as readers and learners, and to the readers' views of literacy use in their futures. Finally, interventions for both children and adults are suggested which could move more people toward active literacy. Common practices which are successful at all educational levels as well as varied teaching methods and materials which appeal to diverse learners are stressed, as the purpose of the model is to suggest interventions which would move more people toward active literacy.

A Model of Adult Literacy: Implications for Educational Practice

Why a Model of Adult Literacy?

In recent years, the United States has paid increasing attention to adult literacy primarily because the lack of literacy poses problems for the entire country. Literacy is defined by the National Literacy Act of 1991 as "an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to potential" (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993, p. 3). According to some, the lack of literacy has placed this country at a competitive disadvantage both economically and socially.

The numbers of adult illiterates in America is staggering. In 1986, the Bureau of the Census collected data on the 26 tasks considered essential to adult living in the United States and estimated the functionally illiterate population between 17 and 21 million (Taylor, 1989). Even though this estimate includes about 13% of Americans over twenty, it is not as high as other assessments. Jonathan Kozol, for example, estimates 60 million functionally illiterate Americans (Harman, 1987), and Krusemark (1990) places the number between twenty and thirty million and warns about future increases based on the 600,000 non-English speaking immigrants expected to enter the United States each year for the next nine years.

Yet according to the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), while 95% of adults could read at the fourth grade level or above, nearly half of all Americans scored in the lowest two levels of literacy. These two levels included a range of tasks, with respondents scoring no higher than 275 out of a possible 500. Some respondents comprehended so little they were unable to reply to much of the survey, while others could locate information in a text, make low-level inferences using printed materials, and perform quantitative tasks requiring a single operation. What people at these two levels could not do was perform higher level reading and problem-solving tasks such as

synthesizing information from complex or lengthy texts or set up a quantitative problem from information given in written form (Kirsch et al.,1993). Cooper and Holzman (1989) use the term *nominally literate* to describe "people who have gone to school, who can read and write, for the most part at a level usually described as fifth grade, but who hardly use those skills" (p.162). The NALS results confirm this description. In their results, 25% of adults with an average of ten years of formal schooling had literacy skills equivalent to fourth grade or lower (Wagner & Venezky, 1995).

The National Educational Goals Panel has determined that American workers need to score in higher levels if they are to compete in an increasingly global economy (Wagner & Venezky, 1995). Such an economy demands higher level skills than most Americans seem to possess, and the economic costs are great. With each level of education a person attains, income rises. Those who scored in level one on the NALS earned an average of $240 per week, while those scoring in level five, the highest level, earned an average of $680 per week (Wagner & Venezky, 1995). Over half of all prison inmates and many welfare recipients are less than marginally literate (Bishop, 1991). Therefore, one question a model of adult literacy has to answer is why, when so many adults are able to learn to read and contribute to society, so many do not.

But illiteracy is not the only problem society faces. Many Americans who can read well choose not to. Current estimates of aliteracy, the lack of reading by capable readers, are high. Of the 80% of adults who can read well enough to use reading effectively in their daily lives, only one of four chooses to do so. According to a 1972 Gallup poll, 10% of the population accounts for 80% of the books read in the United States (Cramer & Castle, 1994, p.4). Aliteracy is a major concern for the future of society, and it begins early. Based on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results, 50% of twelfth graders watch more than three hours of television per day, but 25% never or hardly ever read for fun (Ruddell & Unrau, 1994). Many students

enrolled in college developmental reading and writing courses are aliterate and lack prior knowledge (Stahl, Simpson, & Hayes, 1992). The lack of early reading places these students at a disadvantage as they try to pursue higher education or enter an increasingly technological workforce.

It is worthwhile, therefore, to begin an examination of what factors contribute to adult illiteracy, aliteracy, selective literacy (those who read only one type of material for a single purpose), and active literacy. This model does not attempt to provide all the answers. Rather, the intent is to raise issues for further exploration. It is the beginning of a search for factors that will encourage all Americans to use literacy fully to enrich their lives and the lives of others. (See figure 1.)

Beginning Reading

Some people believe that children are born predisposed toward literacy or illiteracy or that their economic levels predetermine their ability to read. Research demonstrates just the opposite. According to Bishop (1991), only 4% of the population have disabilities so severe they cannot learn to read. In a two-year study of elementary school students with some follow-up through high school, Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) found that, in terms of reading ability, the distribution of scores for low-income children differed little from a more affluent population in the primary grades. In fact, they found that the low-income children "demonstrated many strengths in literacy and language, particularly in the first three grades of elementary school" (p.112). This study did show declines in literacy achievement beginning in fourth grade and continuing through high school, but the researchers attributed such declines to school and environmental factors rather than to a genetic predisposition. Specifically, Chall et al credit the fourth- grade slump to the poor development of inferential reasoning in low-income children due to less educated parents who read less complex material to their children (p. 151). Other research supports this idea by revealing that adult illiterates

draw conclusions from concrete facts rather than from abstract reasoning (Abdazi, 1994).

Unlike Chall et al., Spiro's model (1994) attributes achievement changes to teaching methods. "The methods of education in introductory and advanced learning seem, in many ways, to be at odds....These discrepancies in aims and tactics...raise the possibility that introductory learning, even when it is 'successful,' lays foundations in knowledge and in an approach to learning that interfere with advanced acquisition" (p. 603). Whether it is contradictions between primary and secondary education or exposure to abstract reasoning that distinguish successful from unsuccessful readers, clearly innate ability alone is not responsible for adult reading habits. The search for what is responsible leads to a complex combination of factors that vary in structure and amount to determine a person's lifelong reading habits.

Cultural Influences

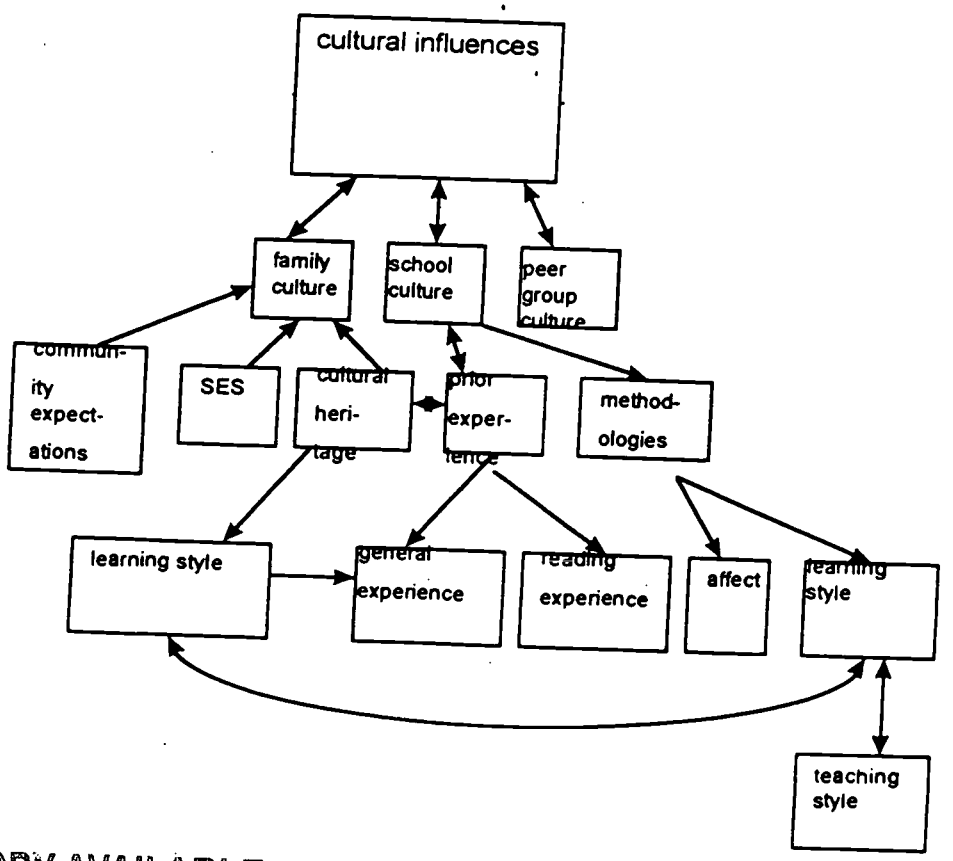

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Figure 2

Much current research demonstrates the powerful impact of a person's culture on literacy development. In fact, Craig (1992) defines reading as "first of all the acceptance of, and the resultant commitment to, a culture. It is not something which is done in isolation from who you are, or where you are" (p.25). Where children grow up--their family cultures, school cultures, and peer cultures--all impact reading development. It is impossible, therefore, to develop a model of adult literacy without considering culture. The study of sociolinguistics shows the strong link between language and the environment in which it develops. This connection between individual and environment is a powerful one that affects a person's entire literacy life. "Writing is a social activity....Teacher and learner, researcher and subject, bring with them entire communities whenever they are engaged with writing" (Cooper & Holzman, 1989, p. viii). Yet the American system of education often ignores students' social systems, including the family culture in which the student lives. This contrast between home and school cultures may account for lapses in literacy achievement for some students.

Family Culture

In the 1950s, Chomsky identified the innate human capacity to understand and generate language, but more recent research has recognized the importance of the family environment in which that innate language capacity develops. "The sociocultural values and beliefs that the reader acquires through family, peer group, and community interaction have a profound and pervasive effect on school success in general and reading development in particular" (Ruddell & Unrau, 1994, p.1006). Some researchers believe the family is the major component in a child's reading development (Taylor, 1983).

Precisely what role family plays is not always clear because of its complexity, but that role is always powerful. Heath (1994) sees the everyday interactions between adults and children as the basis of future linguistic and metalinguistic awareness. Block

(1995) states that the "assumptions, the expectations, and the sense of possible structures that the reader brings out of his/her stream of life" (p. 105) determine what s/he will attend to in the environment. In fact, the community in which the family resides can determine a person's literacy goals. "There are common patterns in reading and writing activities in any community, and membership is partly defined by knowing and participating in these practices" (Abdazi, 1994, p. 15).

Since reading comprehension is making sense of the world through reading, it is inseparable from the world structures learned in the home. Many of the students who entered the City University of New York during open admissions, for example, had family backgrounds which impeded their success in the traditional school system. "Many [of these students] had spoken other languages or dialects at home and never successfully reconciled the worlds of home and school, a fact which by now had worked its way deep into their feelings about school and about themselves as students" (Shaughnessy, 1977, p. 3). The family cultures in which children grow and mature strongly influence the kinds of learners and readers they will become.

A large part of family culture is access to literacy and, contrary to some media reports, this access has little to do with wealth. Avid readers, for example, recall being read to regularly and frequent trips to the library as children (Fisher, 1994). Samuels' (1994) study of automaticity and comprehension establishes the powerful negative impact of limited world access by allowing for an interaction of visual information and knowledge as the basis for word recognition. "It would appear that a strong relationship exists between reading performance and prior knowledge" (p. 831). If the family culture restricts world access, the child's knowledge base is reduced, and according to Samuels, there is less likelihood of automaticity in reading.

The family's socioeconomic status, while not directly affecting early reading or general affective characteristics, is associated with increased availability of reading

materials, more discussion, and higher expectations (Spiegel, 1994). These conditions will not determine a child's initial ability to read, but they may impact the downward literacy trend of low-income children in grade four (Chall et al., 1990) and contribute to higher order critical thinking skills. Working to ensure that all families are aware of their tremendous influence on young readers may help produce adults who are actively literate instead of illiterate, aliterate, or selectively literate .

School Culture

Many researchers have recognized the strong connection between home and school environments. The environment in which one matures can determine how one learns and what one considers important. Heath notes that children's language is a reflection of their cultures. When home language patterns differ from school language patterns, children must change to achieve success. Such changes, however, "come very slowly and only in concert with numerous other types of change..."(Block, 1995, p.73). But the changes do come. When schools allow children to develop school language slowly so they do not lose their natural language beginnings, most children can become successful, lifelong readers.

When schools do not allow changes to transpire slowly, however, culturally diverse children can fail to achieve literacy or fail to use the literacy they do attain, resulting in illiterate or aliterate adults. Unfortunately, most schools are designed for children whose home language background matches the school's language use. When a mismatch occurs, schools often track children into special education or other inappropriate classes. According to Hiebert (1994), these "nonsolutions...[can] hinder children's learning" (p. 393). Schools' inability to recognize the language patterns and meaning children bring to school produces educational failures and adult non-readers.

What is taught in school is not the only problem. How literacy is taught and who does the teaching are also important determinants of lifelong literacy. Schools often ask

children to ignore what they have learned in their family environments and to accept the viewpoints of authorities (Block, 1995). Several studies (Good & Brophy, 1978; Robeck & Wallace, 1990; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Shrank, 1968) have demonstrated the power of teacher expectations on student achievement (Dwyer & Dwyer, 1994). The teacher's style, the "operational behavior of the teacher's educational philosophy" (Conti & Welbourn, 1986, p.20), can contribute to or detract from a student's literacy development. When teacher and student expectations differ due to sociocultural differences, communication breaks down and school achievement suffers (Ruddell & Unrau, 1994, 1007). This severely interrupts the pursuit of lifelong literacy.

The teacher's style and expectations determine methodology, and certain methods and curricula can work against a student's own learning. "It creates the scope and sequence of learning to read despite absolute ignorance of the knowledge and interests of students, and when these students fail to achieve at the normalized rate, it declares the individual learner disabled, absolving the structure's implication in the child's condition" (Block, 1995, p.83). Methodologies and teaching styles that ignore or are not aware of individual learner's prior knowledge doom the students to adult lives without active literacy.

Culture affects what a child learns before coming to school, but recent research also shows that culture impacts a child's learning style. Learning style is a person's typical way of collecting, organizing, and using information and making that information part of one's knowledge base (Conti & Welbourn, 1986). Of course, not every student from a certain cultural background learns exactly same way. However, people from certain cultures "exhibit a characteristic pattern of style preference" (Guild, 1994, p. 16). For example, Mexican Americans have a high regard for family and personal relationships, and they are comfortable with cognitive generalizations and patterns rather than with facts and specifics. Research into the learning styles of African

Americans reveals a valuing of oral experiences, physical activity, and loyalty. Native American students generally develop acute visual discrimination, perceive globally, and have reflective thinking patterns. Mainstream white Americans, in contrast, value independence, analytical thinking, objectivity, and accuracy; they match the typical American classroom (Guild, 1994). Students from other cultures, students whose numbers are increasing, do not.

When school environments do not match family cultures, students experience conflict. These conflicts become part of maturing students' lives and help students develop their personal definitions of reading, their attitudes and motivation for reading, their self-concepts as learners, and their future orientations toward reading. If students' early literacy experiences are unpleasant, they are less likely to see reading and writing as part of their futures. "How one was taught to read determined to a large extent not only how one read but what one read and what reading was considered to be" (Block, 1995, pp. 72-73). Students must believe in their abilities to succeed in school and to merge their home and school cultures if literacy is to become part of their adult lives (Dwyer & Dwyer, 1994). Teachers and school cultures contribute to a student's developing attitude toward reading, an attitude which will cause the student to approach or to avoid reading situations (McKenna, 1994). "If children--or adults--are not moved by the need or desire to read, reading will be put off for other more impelling pursuits" (Ruddell & Unrau, 1994, p. 1003). And all students grow up in environments that contain "compelling pursuits" that can distract them from reading and prevent them from becoming actively literate adults.

Peer Culture

Many elements of culture help determine a student's literacy future. "There is peer pressure and there is writing anxiety and there is ideology and there is institutionalized alienation" (Cooper & Holzman, 1989, p. viii). One of the biggest

distractions or one of the biggest assets to a child's literacy development is the peer group. If a student's peer group values academic achievement and creates a literate environment, even the student whose family does not value literacy will become more involved in reading and writing. If, however, a peer group pursues values other than literacy, the student will be less likely to value literacy. The peer group gains importance as the student matures. The older the student, the less family control and the increasing peer influence.

Development of Self as Reader/Learner

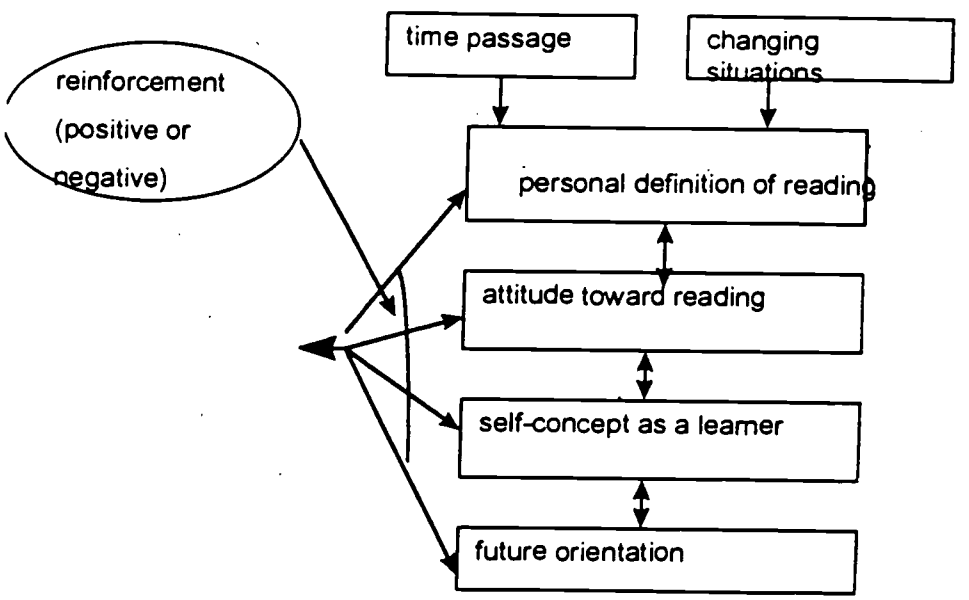

Figure 3

At the point in a person's reading development when the peer group is extremely important, affect becomes a critical concern because it determines a person's attitude toward reading. A student must begin to see him/herself as a reader, or other things will become more important than literacy, and literacy will cease development. When many basic writing students enter college, for example, "they have learned to think of themselves as incapable of learning to read, or to write, or to think" (Bartolomae & Petrosky, 1986, p. 138). What happens at this stage will help determine whether a

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reader will plateau and remain either illiterate or at a literal, functional level of literacy where the most reading s/he will do is for utilitarian purposes or will continue to progress, developing strategically and metacognitively, and become a lifelong, active reader.

Affect is the result of a combination of factors and impacts motivation to read, attitude toward reading and content, reader's stance, and values and beliefs (Ruddell & Unrau, 1994). As important as the affective domain is to reading development, models of reading are just beginning to consider affect, so it is not as well understood as are other influences on reading. Three of the main models of affect in reading are the Mathewson model, the Ruddell-Speaker model, and the Fishbein-Ajzen model (Cramer & Castle, 1994). Although these models vary in their approaches and components, there are strong similarities which suggest why some people develop into active readers and others do not.

The Mathewson model, for example, emphasizes a three-component definition of attitude: prevailing feelings about reading, action readiness for reading, and evaluative beliefs about reading (Mathewson, 1994). The Ruddell-Speaker model is comprised of the reader environment, knowledge utilization and control, declarative and procedural knowledge, and reader product. While seemingly different, both models account for "slow changes in attitude toward reading partly through the notion that feedback is cumulative from each individual act of reading to overall attitude toward reading" (McKenna, 1994, p.23). The Fishbein-Ajzen model also demonstrates the impact of numerous reading experiences over a period of time. According to this model, a person's beliefs about reading are strengthened or weakened, not as the result of a single incident, but after numerous encounters with print. As in the other two models, any change is slow and cumulative (McKenna, 1994). It is clear that if a child's family environment, school environment, or peer group does not provide consistent positive

feedback regarding literacy and the reading process or if the child experiences conflicts between these major influences in his/her life, the child is unlikely to become an avid, active reader.

In fact, certain affective factors seem to predict ludic readers, people who read for pleasure. Ludic readers must be skilled, but they must also expect to derive pleasure from reading. When they do read, they change both physiologically and cognitively, and these changes act as positive reinforcers for the reading process (Nell, 1994). Children's cultures determine if they will feel positively enough about reading to persevere in the early stages so they will gain the skill necessary to derive pleasure and for the reading process to be self-reinforcing. A child to whom adults read, who sees adults reading for pleasure, and who is surrounded by literacy is more likely to become a ludic reader than a child whose family, school, and peer cultures send conflicting messages or the message that reading is not an important part of adult life.

Cultural influences accumulate, time passes, and the person experiences different situations. In the next stage of the model, the affective domain determines if reading results in positive or negative reinforcement which evolves into a personal definition of reading. Based on environment and experience, the person determines if reading is totally unnecessary to future goals, necessary on a minimal level, needed only in certain areas of life, or an integral part of adult life. A person's concept of self as learner is a major part of his/her definition of reading. A person whose self-view is of a successful reader, whose culture values reading, and whose peer group includes literacy in its activities will most likely continue development toward active literacy. This development includes reading increasingly challenging materials, reading a variety of materials, and a growing awareness of one's personal reading processes. This idea is substantiated by adults who seek to gain literacy skills. They often do so because of a changed personal definition of literacy (Craig, 1992).

A large part of a reader's self-concept is based on future considerations. "Reading occurs, as does all thinking and learning, based on the anticipation of the future" (Block, 1995, p.72). A reader's expectations determine the functions reading serves, and expectations are strongly tied to affect. "Both present selves and possible selves are expected to influence readers' attitudes toward reading...The extent to which knowledge gained from the reading reinforces either present or possible self-concepts is positively related to attitude toward further reading" (Mathewson, 1994, p.1147). According to adult educator Alan Tough, the most common motivation for learning is anticipated application of what is learned (Block, 1995). The belief that reading will help future individual or cultural advancement will help determine effort expended on the reading process (Abdazi, 1994) and will impact the affective domain, including self-concept, attitude toward reading, and the developing personal definition of reading.

Future orientation is an extremely important contributor to the type of adult reader a person will become, and this orientation begins developing in childhood. Family cultures with high expectations help children focus early on the future and on the importance of literacy achievement in that future. A culture that lacks future orientation, that lives on a day-to-day basis, is less likely to produce a great respect for literacy, a view of the future that includes literacy, or a positive concept of self as learner. Less affluent families who must focus on daily living are less likely to focus on the future than are more affluent families who do not have to focus on survival. The lack of future orientation may be a contributing factor to Chall et al.'s (1990) findings of decreasing reading scores in the fourth grade and beyond. By fourth grade, children are aware of the family's circumstances, and their attention is aimed at survival in the present. Poorer children may lack the future orientation so necessary for reading skills to mature to a level where literacy becomes joyful. If reading remains hard work, one will hit a reading plateau and will remain a non-reader or, at best, will not read beyond a literal level.

Plateauing or Progressing

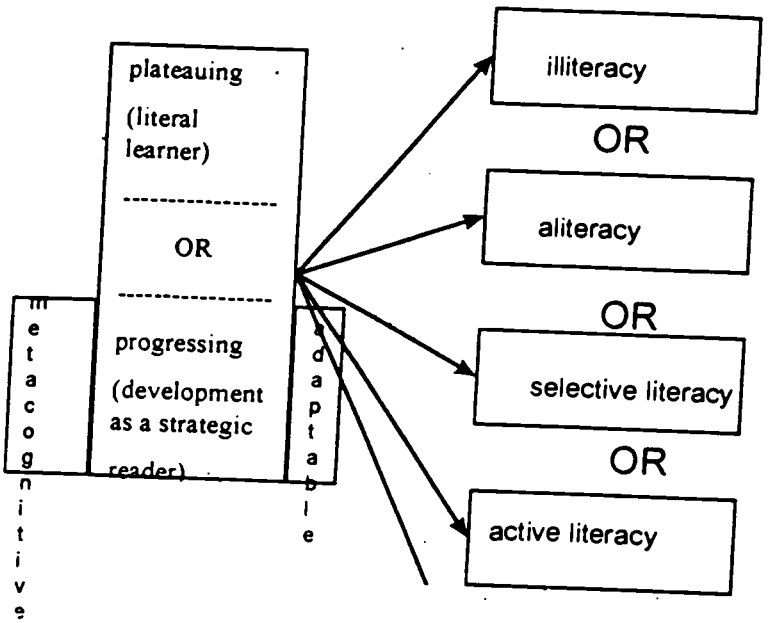

Figure 4

Even with future orientations, readers can proceed in two ways: toward active literacy or toward selective literacy. Active literacy means reading serves a multitude of functions from simple literal information gathering to lifelong learning for personal growth and development. Moving toward active literacy requires continual development, constantly pushing toward higher levels of learning in varied situations, and increasing awareness of one's reading processes by increasing one's repertoire of reading strategies and monitoring the success of these strategies in different situations. A reader who moves in this direction is on the way to active literacy, literacy that will deepen throughout life.

Other readers with future orientations, however, will be more limited. They will read and their skills will improve to a point, but their views of literacy use in their futures will be narrow. They will often limit their reading to information gathering. These readers rarely see reading as joyful; their view of reading remains utilitarian. This view of reading limits personal growth and adaptability; a person does not need wide-ranging strategies or intense self-awareness if reading occurs only in certain limited situations.

Such selective literacy may allow for some success in society but limits the development of higher level skills needed for personal growth and for success in a global economy.

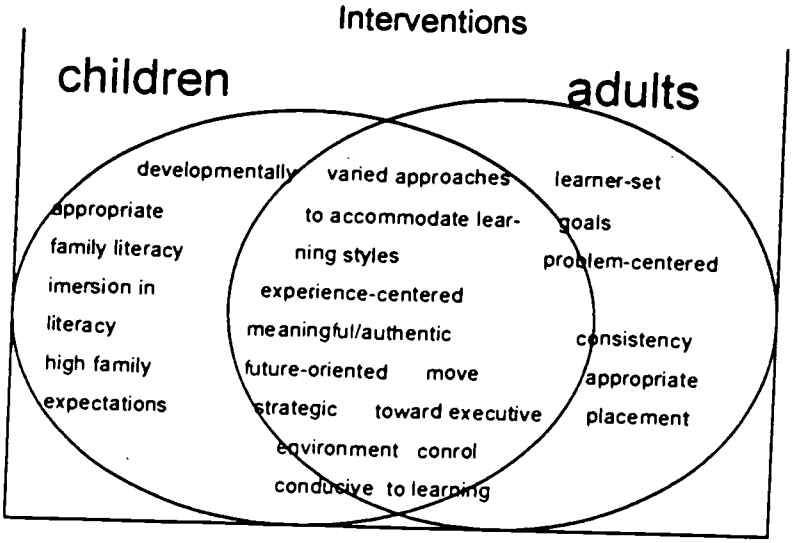

Figure 5

If most Americans have the potential to be actively literate adults but many choose not to, the question then becomes what can schools and families do to create an America of active readers and writers? While no simple answer exists, the key to success in school settings seems to be a recognition of the wide range of learning styles and family cultures children bring to school. This variety of students suggests the need for diverse teaching methods and approaches; no single method will work for everyone. Even when classrooms use a variety of approaches to literacy instruction, some instruction must be individualized. The teacher must know and care for each learner and work to move each student toward a positive self-concept as a learner, a broad personal definition of reading, a positive attitude toward reading, and a future orientation that includes a liberal view of literacy as a necessary component of life.

The classroom environment must support this concern for individual growth toward active literacy. The classroom should be supportive and contain materials at varied levels so each child can read at an appropriate level of difficulty. Instruction

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should be based on meaningful learning objectives and should use extrinsic motivation carefully and selectively. Cambourne's model of engagement which is comprised of immersion, demonstration, expectations, responsibility, modeled use, reinforcement of approximations, and response helps move young learners toward an adulthood that includes continued learning and active literacy (Johns & VanLiersburg, 1994).

Schools alone, however, cannot produce adults who embrace literacy. Parents at all economic and educational levels can help create family cultures that encourage their children to become actively literate adults. All parents can convey the importance of education and encourage their children to succeed in school. They can impart the value of reading and enjoy and respect their children by spending time, some money, and effort to nurture their children's literacy. By viewing themselves as their children's first teachers, parents will be aware of their children's school lives and literacy development (Spiegel, 1994). Parents and schools can combine to develop adults who are actively literate. "Reading must be supported by immersion in language that the latter's structures and resources and potentialities might be explored in an environment made risk free and available for experiment" (Block, 1995, p. 195).

But what happens to adults who have slipped through the cracks, adults who are illiterate, minimally literate, or aliterate? Is it too late to move adults along the continuum toward active literacy? It is never too late. In fact, principles of adult learning closely resemble the characteristics of productive children's classrooms. For example, Simpson (1980, p. 54) identifies the following principles of adult learning which bear stiking resemblance to whole language classrooms:

Learning must be problem-centered.

Learning must be experience-centered.

Experience must be meaningful to the learner.

The learner must be free to look at experience.

The goals must be set and the search organized by the learner.

The learner must have feedback about progress toward goals.

For both children and adults, the learner's culture and experience must be important considerations in the learning/teaching interaction. The connection to personal experience which is based in cultural influences is a critical component of all learning and a foundation of successful adult education. In fact, the three main areas of current research in adult education are learning orientation research which focuses on motivation for learning, learning ability research which examines changes in performance that enhance or inhibit learning, and learning style research which studies adults' approaches to and processing of learning content (Simpson, 1980). Some of the learning style research focuses on the relationship between culture and learning style and, as with children, the results indicate strong connections (Guild, 1994).

Many adult literacy programs, however, often fall short of ideal situations. Only a small portion of the adult illiterate population signs up for literacy programs, and 50-75% of those who do drop out in the first few weeks. Questionable teaching methods and little or no system of accountability dominate many programs (Bishop, 1991). Currently, students are categorized and placed in adult literacy classes based on standardized test scores. Wagner and Venezky (1995) criticize this procedure and advocate the following placement categories: English as a second language but literate in another language; English as a second language and not literate in any language; competent writing but poor math skills; learning disabled. This categorization may not be perfect, but it does

indicate the need to examine the current system to meet the needs of more adults.

Another component missing from current adult literacy programs is the future orientation so essential to active literacy. "[Adult] students aren't motivated because they see little value in raising their skill levels by such trifling amounts. Real job and salary improvements come only with advanced degrees" (Bishop, 1991, p. 21). Programs need to help adults focus on literacy as part of a better total life, not only as increased income. A utilitarian approach to literacy instruction may encourage functional or selective literacy, but it will never encourage active literacy.

Many other components are needed for successful interventions. Lack of child care and transportation often prevent attendance at adult literacy classes. Many programs use the look-say method exclusively, and students get frustrated because they lack the skills necessary to attack unfamiliar words. Affect, one of the most important determinants of adult reading habits, is rarely a consideration in adult literacy programs which are staffed primarily by volunteers who come and go at their convenience, eliminating consistency (Bishop, 1991).

The need for literacy skills is not limited to adult basic English or second language learners. Even many college students have not achieved the levels of literacy necessary for active literacy. Stahl, et al. (1992) suggest teaching methods at the college level which will develop students as efficient and effective independent learners and allow them to transfer strategies across literacy situations. Among their suggestions are to use process-oriented assessment procedures rather than traditional standardized methods. Since one reason learners do not progress is their lack of background knowledge, the next suggestion is to broaden students' conceptual background knowledge. This provides a knowledge base which more closely meets school expectations but which begins with students' prior knowledge. This is a great benefit for students from other cultures whose prior knowledge may be rich but inconsistent with

school expectations. The authors further recommend immersing students in "the language of the academy" and in the "language of the institution" (p.4), and they mention several established methods such as Haggard's self-collection strategy, Beck's word of the week, and Pauk's frontier system. Another recommendation is to use research-validated learning strategies such as SQ3R and PORPE rather than methods that have not been proven. Instruction on application of these strategies is essential. A final suggestion is to incorporate writing into the reading curriculum. Research supports the benefits of integrating writing and reading processes. After all, a fully literate person is one who can read what others have written as well as articulate ideas of his/her own.

Conclusion

Adults in the United States fall along a literacy continuum ranging from almost all forms of illiteracy (total, functional, marginal, and basic) (Bishop, 1991) to aliteracy to selective literacy to active literacy. If, as many believe, an informed citizenry is the key to a successful democracy, it is to the advantage of every American to move everyone toward active literacy. Accomplishing this goal requires effort on many levels, especially from the family, school and peer cultures. These cultures can combine to develop affective domains which will inspire young literacy learners toward progressing rather than toward plateauing, so the individual will continue through life enjoying increasing literacy use. After a certain point, literacy use is self-reinforcing, so once a person progresses into a strategic, metacognitively aware reader, development will continue, and s/he will enjoy the lifelong learning and growth active literacy guarantees.

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