

Politics Affecting Undocumented Immigrants: Applications to Adult ESL

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Abstract: (150 words)

ESL teachers play important roles in teaching English and cultural orientation to immigrants coming to the US. They serve a variety of people residing legally within the United States such as permanent residents, refugees, migrant workers, asylees, parolees, and some citizens and international students. They also serve undocumented immigrants. Because of the US Department of Education and the Office of Civil Rights anti-discrimination guidelines, teachers are often not informed of their students' legal status. This paper rectifies this information gap about undocumented immigrants by providing information about who they are, why they have come, and what role ESL teachers can play in their education/advocacy. It also explains the impact of conservative and liberal administrations on border enforcement and how the relative open borders of the Biden administration have not only endangered those crossing the border illegally during a pandemic but also the documented immigrants and citizens already in the country.

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Adult ESL instructors have a variety of students in their non-credit ESL classes. Many of them are documented citizens, short-term to long-term immigrants, refugees, parolees, migrant workers, and even F-1 visa international students. If teachers work in large metropolitan areas in the US, like Los Angeles, New York, Houston, and Chicago, they are also likely to have undocumented immigrants in their ESL classes. However, teachers may not know their students' actual legal status. Administrators usually do not identify the undocumented in order to prevent any possible discrimination based upon race, color, sex, disability, age, and national origin (which may include citizen and immigration status) per Department of Education and Office for Civil Rights guidelines (Department of Education, 2022).

Likewise, students themselves may avoid identifying their legal status to the instructor because of embarrassment or for fear of being deported. However, with the increased number of undocumented immigrants arriving to the US and the likelihood that more ESL teachers from more regions will encounter such students, a candid and thorough discussion of who they are, why they have come, and what role adult ESL teachers can play in their education, especially during Covid, is essential. Also an understanding of the history of immigration policy in the US and the intensity of right and left political debate calls for greater political activity on the part of ESL professionals.

What is the background of the undocumented immigrant in adult ESL?

The number of undocumented immigrants in the US is growing, mostly because of recent policies by the Biden administration. Between 2015 to 2020, the actual number of undocumented immigrants living in and arriving to the US remained fairly stable, with no big surges, at about 11,000,000 (Capps, Gelatt, Soto, & Hook, 2020; Migration Policy Institute, 2021). In FY 2021, there was a huge change when 1,956,519, from over 160 countries, mostly from Latin America (Migration Policy Institute, 2021) were encountered by US Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) at or between entry points, the highest number in more than 20 years (Chiacu, 2021). In the first half of FY 2022, the total number of illegal releases into the interior of the US during the Biden administration amounted to 836,225. This quote by Andrew Arthur, former INS Associate General Counsel, puts in perspective the immensity of the numbers:

The number of illegal migrants the Biden administration has released into the United States is greater than the population of Seattle (787,995) or Denver (760,049)...the total number of illegal migrants who have reached the interior since Biden became president stands at more than 1.6 million. If those aliens were a city, it would be the sixth-largest in the United States, exceeding the population of San Antonio (1,598,964) or Philadelphia (1,585,480) (Arthur, 2022b).

An additional 620,000 people eluded USCBP apprehension in FY 2021 and FY 2022, slipping over the border during the day while officers were busy with intake of unaccompanied children, or in the night, when they were not easily caught. These “got-aways” disappeared into the interior of the country without being identified by USCBP (Arthur, 2022a; Murdock, 2022). Additionally, 853,955 others, mostly non-native English speakers, overstayed their visas in 2022

(Homeland Security, 2023). They arrived on visitor or student visas to stay for an allotted period of time, but they never went home.

Finally, according to USA Facts (2024), 11 million unauthorized encounters have occurred between October 2019 and June 2024. These largely co-occur with the Biden presidency. This number is approximately equivalent to the population of North Carolina. The highest month for encounters was in December 2023, at which time 12,000 people were encountered at the border each day. Most people are non-native speakers and suggest a huge unmet need for ESL classes.

In FY 2021, these immigrants mostly included single adults (with a larger number of women than usual), larger than normal numbers of unaccompanied children without parents or legal guardians, and more family units than in the past (USCBP, 2022b). According to USA Facts (2024), “The proportion of encounters of individuals in family units tripled between fiscal years 2020 and 2024 to-date [June 2024] from 11.6% to 35.1% of total encounters.”

They have come to the US for a multitude of reasons, including fleeing the effects of covid, unemployment, food insecurity, gang violence, drug cartels, extortion, and environmental problems like floods and earthquakes. Others are seeking better economic conditions and educational opportunities—unfortunately, not valid reasons for asylum in the US (Bolter, 2021). Only about 5% are legally eligible for asylum. To plead asylum they must be physically present in the US and are “seeking protection because they have suffered persecution or fear that they will suffer persecution due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion” (Arthur, 2022b; US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2022).

In addition, President Biden's campaign promise to increase immigration and his lax enforcement policies, have made it easier for undocumented immigrants to enter the US illegally (Bolter 2021; Davis, 2021; United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2022). In fact, American taxpayer money funneled through United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or other non-profit organizations has also provided cash debit cards for lodging, food, prescription medicine and legal services, further assisting immigrants along the way to cross the US border illegally (Bensman, 2022a; Bensman, 2022b; Bensman, 2024; Rodgers, 2021). US taxpayer money is also being used by the Biden administration for transporting undocumented immigrants throughout the US once they cross the border (Bensman, 2021b).

What is the role of Adult ESL Educators?

Adult ESL teachers, often part-time and uncertificated (Eyring, 2014), have played an important role in teaching immigrants English and orienting them to a new culture (Nash, 2019). Normally, the majority of students enrolled in their classes are documented immigrants. Between July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, only 448,332 students were enrolled in federally-funded adult ESL classes nationwide (National Association of State Directors of Adult Education, 2024). But with the millions of additional undocumented immigrants entering the country, most of whom do not speak English, public schools and private, non-profit/charity programs are already being impacted (Bensman, 2022c; Hicks, Campanile, Jaramillo, & O'Neill, 2023; Hung, 2007; Kamprad, 2022; Larotta, 2017; Martin, 2012; National Association of State Directors of Adult Education, 2024; Sloomjes, 2022).

ESL professionals need to be aware of the circumstances of arrival of their undocumented students in order to respond to their needs. Some of them have flown from foreign countries, ridden on boats, trains, or buses, or walked to reach the US border as

individuals, in small groups, or in caravans. Some have paid large amounts of money to human smuggling organizations to transport them comfortably from their native countries to the US border, where they can plead for asylum to US Customs and Border Protection officers (Davidson, 2021). However, others, with fewer means, have risked their lives paying trafficking fees or sexual favors to coyotes, members of drug cartels, or sex and drug traffickers to make their way on the migrant trail.

Sometimes these immigrants have suffered serious injuries, rape, torture, or death before making it to any ESL classroom (Bensman, 2021a; Chang, 2021; Eyring, 2023; Fernandez, 2019; Jones as cited in Davidson, 2021; USCBP, 2022a; United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2022; Vera, Sutton, Simonson, Musa, Caldwell & Alvarez, 2022). Such atrocities should motivate ESL professionals to think beyond simple classroom issues to the broader political situation which has facilitated their illegal entry into the US (Eyring, 2022). Along with brave and disadvantaged immigrants, criminals interweave themselves into the caravans. They can exploit and extort immigrants at the border and even into the interior of the country. Others have abused parole conditions and commit crimes once in the U.S. such as gun smuggling into migrant shelters or sex trafficking of migrant women (Taer, 2024).

In 2020 there were 103,603 criminal arrests of undocumented immigrants, 90% of whom were individuals with homicide-related offenses, kidnappings, robberies, assaults and sex crimes with an average of 4 per arrest. According to the report *Biden's border crisis: examining policies that encourage illegal migration* (United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2022), in 2021, the number of criminal arrests more than quadrupled. Biden's border policy has also been exploited by cartels. According to the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, "The most violent criminals in the world are exploiting U.S. immigration

policies and lack of border security to enter the United States illegally, which threatens the safety and security of communities at home” (2022, p. 15). “Communities at home” refers to places where documented immigrants and undocumented immigrants live as well. ESL professionals are caught between sympathy for those who endured trials to get to the US and grave concern for the incidents of increased crime against border patrol, citizens, and legal immigrants, which are happening as a result of porous borders.

In the US, 9 million or more non-native English speakers do not speak English well (Eyring, 2014). Historically, half or more are Hispanic and have below basic or basic proficiency and may have difficulty with such common tasks as signing a form or reading a TV guide (Eyring, 2014). If the millions coming into the US are indicative of the ones who have already arrived, ESL Programs have a mammoth task ahead of them. Learning English as a second language does not happen overnight—it takes 1 to 2 years for immigrants in the public schools to achieve conversational fluency but 5 to 7 years to achieve academic proficiency (Cummins, 2008). For adults, these time frames are usually longer, especially if the individuals are not literate in their first language or they settle in native language communities where learning English is not considered a necessity. Homesickness and cultural disorientation (Arthur, 2021; Bensman, 2021a; Chang, 2021; USCBP 2022b) may add to the challenge and readiness to learn English as well.

Some research shows that public school collaborations with migrant-led organizations can provide excellent assistance to new immigrants since these organizations are acutely aware of the cultural needs of their communities (Slootjes, 2022). State and federally-funded adult ESL programs provide opportunities for all immigrants to learn English from trained teachers and learn to interact with people from other language backgrounds as well as the broader US

community. Collaborative work between organizations seems to be the most useful for serving the needs of the undocumented and documented immigrants in ESL classes (Vanek, Wrigley, Jacobson, &, Isserlis, 2020).

Undocumented students in ESL classrooms may also present another challenge for ESL teachers. Some of their documented students, who speak the native languages of the undocumented and have a deep knowledge of their classmates' circumstances, may have increased sympathy for those who are pleading asylum but also increased resentment towards those who may not have waited in line to apply for visas, spent years applying for green cards, and studied US government and history to become citizens in the legal manner. Many legal immigrants have fled totalitarian regimes to become citizens of a free country and are critical of others who have come for economic opportunity only. This type of resentment can affect a comfortable classroom atmosphere and may even be a reason for certain students dropping the class.

During covid, these resentments may have been magnified because non-native English-speaking immigrants living in poverty have already taken the brunt of dealing with the covid epidemic in the US (Miles, 2021). Many lacked material or digital abilities to use online education or communicate online with others during the lockdowns (Miles, 2021; Sloomjes, 2022). Many had to risk their health continuing to work as essential workers interacting with the public in grocery store, food preparation, delivery, cleaning, and healthcare jobs. Other students survived on reduced working hours or lost their jobs entirely as businesses downsized or folded (Schmidt, 2022). While working, they also had to deal with increased anxiety about their children not enrolled in school because of Covid or worries about themselves being exposed to Covid at work and bringing the virus home.

With the huge influx of new undocumented immigrants, the citizens and documented immigrants now have to face competition for many of the same types of jobs they currently hold. They also compete with documented immigrants and citizens for basic services such as transportation, waste, police, fire, water, housing, and jobs at taxpayer expense (Arthur, 2022a).

In September 2023, Mayor Eric Adams stated that the surge of illegal immigrants “will destroy New York City” because of the costs required to care for them. The city is expected to spend \$12 billion dollars to provide housing, food, health care and other services for these individuals. There are only two ways to cover these costs--cut services for all or raise taxes (Camarota, 2024).

How has US immigration policy affected undocumented immigrants in the past and the present?

Compared with the rest of the world, the US has very generous immigrant rights (Arthur, 2019). The 14th amendment guarantees birthright citizenship and legal paths to citizenship. Most countries would not award citizenship simply because someone was born in a country. Others will not allow people to become citizens, even if they live in a country for a substantial amount of time.

Over time, immigration policies have changed. In the 1800s, the US encouraged relatively open immigration. In the 1980s and 1990s, Congress passed several pieces of legislation that allowed in more immigrants and gave amnesty for immigrants already living in the US (Center for Immigration Studies, 2022; Fernandez, 2015).

Since September 11, 2001, the US public has been less favorable about immigration--especially since almost 3,000 deaths were caused by foreigners in the US on student or tourist visas during the 9-11 disaster (Arthur, 2019). In more recent times, immigration reform bills were introduced in Congress in 2006, 2007, 2013, 2017, and 2018, but none of them passed,

often because of lack of public support (Center for Immigration Studies, 2022). Several bills are currently being considered in US Congress offering immigration reform, but time will tell if they will actually ever pass. See Representative. Maria Salazar's H.R. 3599: DIGNIDAD (Dignity) Act of 2023 for an example (GovTrack.us, 2024).

In 2014, President Obama issued an executive order which would assist 3.6 million children of undocumented immigrants (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program) to remain in the country without being deported and also to obtain work permits. Then with the Trump administration, several executive orders in 2017 signaled "zero tolerance" for illegal immigration (Center for Immigration Studies, 2022), although he did propose granting legal status to DACA recipients and a pathway to citizenship in exchange for funding a border wall and other security measures. Ultimately, neither political side was in favor of the proposal (Jenkins, 2018).

President Trump also made a travel ban on visitors from seven countries because of security concerns (Arthur, 2019). Because of the covid crisis, over 135 million visitors were banned from visiting the US, as was done in multiple other countries. Trump also rescinded Obama's DAPA order for unauthorized immigrants who are parents of DACA children. He also attempted to phase out DACA, making children of unauthorized immigrants eligible for deportation, but a court order overturned this decision. Finally, he started building a wall on the southern border to protect the nation from the invasion of illegal immigrants (Center for Immigration Studies, 2022).

In 2021, President Biden replaced many of Trump's executive orders (Chishti & Bolter, 2022). He ceased building the border wall and overturned the travel ban. He also changed enforcement guidelines for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to limit enforcement to

those who pose a national security risk, have been convicted of certain crimes or who recently entered the country illegally (Alvarez & Sands, 2021). Undocumented immigrants who have been in the US for generations will also not be removed from the US (Homeland Security, 2021).

Biden ended Trump's Migrant Protection Protocols (Remain in Mexico policy), which would require those who come to the border and seek asylum to wait in Mexico while their cases are processed in immigration court. However, the US Supreme Court upheld a lawsuit by Texas and Missouri, so Biden reinstated the policy (Malliotakis, 2022). More recently, the US Supreme Court allowed Biden to end the Remain in Mexico policy (Dwyer & Owen, 2022). However, it did not allow Biden to rescind the Title 42 CDC covid order. He also requested that Congress pass legislation for a pathway to citizenship for all 11 million unauthorized immigrants in the US (Krogstead & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022). Finally, he maintained the refugee cap at 125,000 for FY 2024 (Santana & Lee, 2023).

How has political debate affected views on illegal immigration?

Many agree that the US has become polarized politically in recent years on many topics, including immigration. In the current era, President Biden and President Trump have come to represent two different perspectives on immigration. Biden is in accord with the Liberal International Order (LIO), established by the western political elites after WWII (Biden, 2017; Patteson, 2022; Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and National Engagement, 2022). According to Mearsheimer (2019), the LIO has a deep commitment to "porous, if not open borders" to further trade and universal human rights (p. 8). Taylor (2020) further clarifies that the LIO shares priorities with other western countries, like open and free trade, universal human rights, and international institutions, but the US "remains central to the project."

Some of the international institutions that were set up after WWII to implement the LIO are the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). According to Brent Hardt, Professor at the Naval War College, global organizations like the UN are designed to “order flows of people” moving from one nation to another, including to the US (Hardt, 2019).

President Trump, on the other hand, questioned the approaches of these institutions, especially when they threatened the sovereignty and national identity of the United States (Kundnani, 2017; Mearsheimer, 2019). He cut funding to the UN after 120 member nations criticized the US decision to declare Jerusalem the capitol of Israel (Goodkind, 2017) and announced the end of the US relationship with the World Health Organization after it spread inaccurate information about the cause of the covid crisis (Hoffman & Vasquez, 2020).

In recent years, Biden has shown solidarity with the LIO as well as the updated version of globalist objectives of the World Economic Forum (WEF) (Adler-Nissen & Zarakol, 2021; Biden, 2017; Pattesen, 2022; Soare, 2021). His Build Back Better campaign dovetails with the Build Back Better plan and the “Great Re-Set” of capitalism planned by the WEF (Bakker & Elkington, 2020; Kyrylenko, 2021; Newman, 2021). In contrast, Trump’s campaign promise of “America First” motivated him to strongly disagree with the derogatory picture of the US portrayed by the World Economic Forum on global affairs at their annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. In his speech to the WEF, Trump emphasized a nation’s duty to put citizens first and support their economic success. He criticized radical socialists who seek to destroy the US economy for globalist ends. He declared that a vibrant market economy depends on the personal freedom of all of its citizens (Trump, 2020).

In an interview, John Ratcliffe, former US Director of National Intelligence, stated that border security was the safest it had ever been because of Trump's Remain in Mexico Policy and other agreements he had made with Northern Triangle countries. He also stated that the Biden administration policy to return to the Obama/Biden policies has put border officers in harm's way and signaled to drug cartels that it is "business as usual" initiating criminal activity over porous borders. He also stated that the Biden policies threatened national security because they reversed Trump policies that were clearly working (Schwartz, 2021).

Peter Navarro, former Director of the National Trade Council in the Trump Administration, wrote a report praising Trump's innovative ways to curtail a steady stream of illegal migrants while prioritizing the safety of those living in the US. Some of these ways included building a southern wall, sending 4,000 National guard personnel to support border security and wall construction, using ICE to remove undocumented immigrants convicted of criminal offenses, and creating the National Vetting Center which allowed the Department of Homeland Security to check information about foreigners against information by other intelligence agencies to assist law enforcement to secure the border against criminals (Navarro, 2020, pp. 26-28).

To clarify the distinction between these perspectives, Table 1 displays border enforcement policies and perspectives of the right and the left. Those more on the left view borders as open and sympathize with those migrating to better their lives, they refer to immigrants as "unauthorized immigrants" or even "non-citizens." On the other hand, those more on the right view immigrant status from a US legal perspective and use the legal term "undocumented immigrant" or "illegal alien," to emphasize their lack of legal status in the US (Epstein, 2021).

Table 1. Border Enforcement Policies and Perspectives

More on the Left	More on the Right
Philosophical Foundation: Liberal International Order with open borders	Philosophical Foundation: US Law with regulated borders
Terms for immigrants: unauthorized immigrants, non-citizens, new Americans	Terms for immigrants: illegal aliens, undocumented immigrants
Policies and Perspectives: -Fluid borders -Assist the unauthorized -Abolish ICE -Defund the police -Do not detain the unauthorized -Provide amnesty and work permits for all -Transport unauthorized to all parts of the country at taxpayer expense -Use “catch and release” -Stop Remain in Mexico Policy	Policies and Perspectives: -Sovereign borders -Protect the legal immigrant or citizen -Use law enforcement and ICE to deport unauthorized according to law -Limit immigrants -Allow immigrants with “credible fear” to plead their cases for asylum -Build walls or surveillance to protect citizens -Use Remain in Mexico Policy

Those with a more “open borders” perspective would see borders as more fluid and would, as a high priority, protect unauthorized immigrants. They would prefer not to build walls or barriers to keep them out. On the other hand, those who believe in “regulated borders” would view the US as a sovereign country governed by rule of law and would prioritize protecting the legal immigrant or citizen. To prevent traumatizing undocumented immigrants, those on the left would be in favor of abolishing deportation by ICE and defunding the police. In contrast, those to the right believe law enforcement is welcome and necessary to execute the law.

Those more on the left would be in favor of not detaining unauthorized immigrants and instead using “catch and release” or providing amnesty and work permits for all. Those more on the right believe in limited immigration and allowing those who express “credible fear” to apply for asylum. They also believe in using the Migration Protection Protocols, where the thousands of people pleading asylum would remain in Mexico until a judge has heard their cases.

With the many challenges during the pandemic, some people have wondered why the current administration took more than a year to acknowledge the crisis at the border (Arthur, 2022a; Malliotakis, 2022) and why it continues to endanger legal immigrants and citizens by allowing this steady inflow. Because of the millions coming in during the past few years without abatement, some argue that “an invasion” has occurred and that not protecting US sovereign borders is a violation of the Constitution’s “Guarantee Clause”—Article IV, Section 4 (H.R. 6155-117th Congress, 2022).

Others wonder why the Biden administration has allowed undocumented immigrants to travel to the interior of the country without covid vaccinations (Barkoukis, 2021) and fly using arrest warrants as identification (Stieber, 2022). A minority report of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (2022) points to the increased crime affecting undocumented and documented immigrants living in the US as a result of more open borders. The Committee states that Transnational Criminal Organizations or “TCOs exploit the porous borders, rough terrain, and weak law enforcement throughout the region to advance their criminal agendas at the expense of migrant populations” (p. 6).

Finally, homeless shelters, not used to such numbers, are being inundated by undocumented immigrants. Citizens and documented immigrants are vying for services with those who have recently entered the country illegally (Arthur, 2022b). Jeffrey Harris, a resident in the Bellevue men’s shelter in Manhattan fumed, “If we can’t take care of the homeless here, how can we take immigrants? They get all the resources in the world, but the ones who are here and homeless seem like they are forgotten about” (Hogan, Vago, & Golding, 2022).

Discussion

It is clear that there are differences of opinion about immigration which can lead to divisiveness amongst ESL educators. On the one hand, they are required to advocate for all of their ESL students equally (Taylor, 2016; Schmidt, 2022), yet they themselves espouse a variety of liberal and conservative viewpoints on illegal immigration (Parkhouse, Massaro, Cuba & Waters, 2020). Some oppose Biden's handling of the border crisis. Others opposed Trump's immigration policies (Finn Miller, 2019). Still others may endorse viewpoints from both sides.

Not surprisingly, most immigrants in the US are in favor of immigration reform (American Immigration Council, 2022). DACA students remain in limbo as they have grown up in the US with parents or caretakers who crossed the border illegally, yet their schooling has been in the US and they identify as "Americans," yet are not on a path to citizenship. Others who qualify for asylum have been returned to sometimes dangerous situations in Mexico with Trump's and then Biden's "Mexico Protection Protocols" to wait until they can speak with immigration officers for months or even years because of the immigration restrictions of the CDC Title 42 Covid policy (American Immigration Council, 2022).

Until the right or the left is convinced of the value of comprehensive immigration reform, there is likely to be a stalemate unless compromise can be obtained (Kotkin, 2021). Living in a representative democracy is a messy business that requires the work of citizens to vote for qualified and motivated legislators to work on bills that could resolve the border crisis. Executive Orders, which can be rescinded with each new administration, have not been effective.

The Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages organization (TESOL) has produced a position paper on "Immigration Policy and Reform," supporting carefully considered and comprehensive immigration reform proposals in the U.S" that "offer orderly and fair

pathways to legal residency and citizenship for all immigrants” (TESOL, 2017). The operating terms here are “orderly and fair.” To be orderly, policies must work within the bounds of present or new US law. To be fair, both the rights of legal immigrants, who have waited in line and made applications for visas and citizenship over a period of years must be weighed with the needs of undocumented immigrants who have crossed the border recently for a variety of reasons. Adult ESL teachers, who play central roles in orienting immigrants to a new country, should play pivotal roles in understanding how comprehensive immigration reform could work and serve both documented and undocumented students.

ESL professionals need to educate themselves about the concerns of all of their students. Inside the classroom, they can provide a warm and welcoming climate for all—both documented and undocumented immigrants and be aware of the psychological health of their learners, some of whom have recently crossed the border (Crawford & Witherspoon Arnold, 2016). They can also collaborate with other organizations to share their expertise about teaching English and learn from them about immigrant needs in their respective communities (Vanek, Wrigley, Jacobson, & Isserlis, 2020).

Outside the classroom, they can become more active politically. They are not obligated to side with one political party or another to be considered “true” members of the TESOL profession. This type of attitude has stymied ESL professionals’ ability to understand and relate to their students, who also represent a variety of views. Teachers fighting for “social justice” does not just mean acknowledging the rights of undocumented immigrants while denying the rights of documented and legal citizens already living in the US.

According to the report *Shared values: How immigrants align with the Republican and Democratic parties on social values issues*,” data from the 2008-2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey was used to capture political views of 18.6 million immigrant citizens from various immigrant groups in the US and their tendency to side with one party or the other. Key findings include: 1) Immigrants have low levels of party affiliation, 2) Immigrants who do identify as Democrats are more conservative than members of the Democratic party overall, 3) Immigrant citizens often don’t identify with the party one would expect based on their religious values, 4) Some key and growing groups of immigrants could be critical to strengthening conservative causes in the future, and 5) Young immigrants today are more conservative and religious than young people in the country overall (Partnership for a New American Economy, 2014, pp. 1-2). This report on immigrant citizens is suggestive of the types of opinions that students in adult ESL classes most likely share.

To truly understand the needs of documented and undocumented immigrants, it is important to avoid assuming a “liberal” orientation when the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey clearly shows that overall immigrants are more “conservative” based upon their church attendance and traditional views. The Partnership for a New American Economy also states, “Many immigrants have conservative views on issues like abortion and gay marriage—and a personal commitment to marriage and family—that make them natural allies for the Republican Party (2014, p. 5). Adult ESL classrooms need to welcome students with diverse beliefs and values and treat them all with mutual respect.

A case in point from the community is the story of a naturalized citizen of the US, originally from Mexico, named Mayra Flores. She was concerned about the overwhelming number of

undocumented immigrants arriving in a short period of time during a pandemic and the subsequent chaos that has ensued in her border state of Texas. She is a US Border Patrol member's wife that changed from Democrat to Republican and ran her campaign under the slogan of "God, Family and Country." She prevailed against her Democrat opponent in a Special Election in South Texas, becoming the first Mexican-born congresswoman in US history (Reilly, 2022). Thousands of other legal immigrants, just like Flores, attend adult ESL classes each week and have Republican ideals.

ESL professionals should study immigration issues and various ideas for comprehensive reform. This research must go beyond simplistic explanations such as "climate change" for explaining the migrant crisis (White House, 2021). Solutions must certainly include trained adult ESL teachers who can prepare millions of non-literate and semi-literate non-native English speakers for school and work settings. They must include ideas for safety and security of a sovereign nation but also for accommodation of long-term immigrants who only know the US as their home. There is also a whole host of other questions which need to be solved. These include whether legal immigrants may bring in family members from abroad, whether immigrants who have committed minor crimes should be released into the country without Notices to Appear before an immigration judge, whether sanctuary cities should be outlawed, whether extreme poverty is a reason to accept immigrants into the country, whether the lottery system for bringing in immigrants from a variety of countries, regardless of talent or skill, should remain, whether long-term immigrants who overstayed their visas twenty years ago should be expelled, and whether all "dreamers" who came into the US illegally at a young age should be given amnesty.

Besides these humanitarian and logistical issues, the issue of budget must also be considered. Simply printing more money or raising taxes to subsidize the costs for transportation and housing of undocumented immigrants around the country will have multiple deleterious effects on legal immigrants and citizens already living in the US, especially during a recession and following Covid times.

ESL professionals should also become more active in their professional organizations, which may hire lobbyists or sponsor interest groups focusing specifically on issues relating to documented and undocumented learners. The prospects of deportation of illegal immigrants is very real since Trump won. Although these organizations lean liberal, they claim to be non-partisan and should respect students without regard to race, color, sex, disability, age, and national origin as well as support those immigrants who may have suffered persecution or fear of persecution in their native countries because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. They should also respect rule of law necessary to maintain a Constitutional Republic and the rights of legal immigrants and citizens:

- American Association of Adult Continuing Education (AAACE)
<https://www.aaace.org/>
- Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) - <https://coabe.org/>
- National Association of State Directors of Adult Education - <http://nasdae.org/>
(NASDAE)
- Proliteracy - <https://www.proliteracy.org/>
- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) - <https://www.tesol.org/>

- TESOL Affiliates such as CATESOL, Intermountain TESOL, Illinois TESOL, Sunshine State TESOL, etc. - <https://www.tesol.org/connect/tesol-affiliate-network/worldwide-affiliate-directory/worldwide-affiliate-directory----u-s-affiliates>

Finally, they can follow legislation that affects immigrants and testify to congressional committees. They can write texts and letters to politicians and participate in rallies, demonstrations and town halls. They should register to vote and encourage citizens to vote. They could even consider running for office, as Mayra Flores did, to make sure that their core values on immigration reform are instituted in their city, state, or nation.

Conclusion

The US has been facing the largest surge of undocumented immigrants across the border in the past 25 years. Most of these undocumented immigrants will need to learn English language and US culture in adult education programs over many years to be successful in a new country. The current administration has allowed this influx because it values open borders and globalist objectives. By making the US easier to enter, the Biden administration has promoted criminal organizations and trafficking operations to extort or exploit immigrants. It has also made it easier for those with criminal records or with asylum pleas to remain in the US indefinitely.

Some people think that the number of immigrants arriving at such a fast speed has put unfair stress on citizens and documented immigrants who will pay higher taxes for additional services for the undocumented, endure increased competition for jobs, and experience more crime brought in by criminal cartels. Restricting immigration can be viewed as cruelty to

undocumented immigrants, but it also can be viewed as compassion to documented immigrants and citizens, who have suffered greatly and will continue to suffer as the costs of unimpeded illegal immigration during Covid caused additional hardship.

There is no monolithic blueprint for advocacy for ESL professionals, since adult ESL teachers come from every political persuasion, but their usual compassion and resourcefulness will be needed more than ever in the coming days. Their interest in informing themselves about current policy on immigration and raising awareness about the need for immigration reform is important. Despite their own mostly part-time status as educators, time spent in getting involved with their professional organizations and talking or writing to legislators is needed now more than ever. And then finally voting on these issues and encouraging others to vote on these issues is the best solution in a representative democracy to make change for those wanting to live and work in the US and those already living there.

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