Learning Together:
The Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm®
for ELL Parents with Limited Formal Education

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What is MALP®?

MALP® is an *instructional model* that teachers can use to *plan and to evaluate* their English language teaching directed at learners who may be new to or have had *limited exposure to formal education*.

Marshall and DeCapua, 2009

**“Limited” formal education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Does the home language have a written form?</th>
<th>Did the student attend school (and acquire basic print literacy) as a child?</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliterate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Somali Bantu or Hmong students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonliterate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Nepali-speaking Southern Bhutanese students who did not go to school as children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiliterate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Students from Burma who left school after a few years because they couldn’t afford it, or they had to work to help support their families, or they had to flee a war zone</td>
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</table>
In the Classroom

• May be uncomfortable with the physical set-up of the classroom

• May not be familiar with “basic” classroom expectations and rules

• May not distinguish print that needs to be copied down from print that really doesn’t

• May not understand what to do with written classroom exercises, (true/false, fill in the blank, read a dialogue out loud, etc.)

• Too much print in the classroom can actually be a distraction

• May seem to find print overwhelming and exhausting
Print exercise: Copy this down!
What are their strengths?

• Often speak two or three languages fluently
• Often have huge auditory and memory capacity
• Strong coping skills and survival mechanisms
• Hands-on learning
• Practical skills
• Real-life experience
The Hidden Assumptions

- Preferences in accessing & transmitting information
- Ways of interacting
- Responsibilities in imparting & receiving knowledge
- Ways of thinking & learning

Flaitz, 2012

Three Cultural Differences

- Collectivism vs. Individualism
- Orality vs. Literacy
- Informal Learning vs. Formal Education

The most important things I have learned about the United States that is a book, newspapers, or notebook and pens. These things are always let me know how to live here.

I never care about reading until I come here. In my country nothing to read but here, everywhere print, words and signs and books and you have to read.

Informal Ways of Learning

- Revolves around immediate needs of family and community
- Grounded in observation, participation in sociocultural practices of family and community
- Has immediate relevance
- Centered on orality

(Gahunga, Gahunga, & Luseno, 2011; Paradise & Rogoff, 2009)

Collectivism

- “We” rather than “I”
- People see themselves as part of an interconnected whole
- “Web” of relationships
- Group is more important than any single individual

Individualism

- Personal efforts praised, rewarded
- Personal interests, desires, primary
- Personal judgments
- Personal responsibility
- “Self-actualization”

# Two Different Learning Paradigms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Learning</th>
<th>SLIFE: students with limited or informal education</th>
<th>U.S. Classrooms</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CONDITIONS</strong></td>
<td>Immediate Relevance</td>
<td>Future Relevance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interconnectedness</td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROCESSES</strong></td>
<td>Shared Responsibility</td>
<td>Individual Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral Transmission</td>
<td>Written Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACTIVITIES</strong></td>
<td>Pragmatic Tasks</td>
<td>Academic Tasks</td>
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</table>

The Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP) Instructional Model

- **SLIFE**
  - Immediate Relevance
  - Interconnectedness

- **U.S. Classrooms**
  - Future Relevance
  - Independence
  - Individual Accountability
  - Written Word

**Accept SLIFE Conditions**

- **Combine SLIFE & U.S. Processes**
  - Shared Responsibility
  - Oral Transmission

**Focus on U.S. Activities with familiar language & content**

- Pragmatic Tasks

## MALP® Teacher Planning Checklist

<table>
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<tr>
<th>A. Accept Conditions for Learning</th>
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<tr>
<td>A1. I am making this lesson/project immediately relevant to my students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A2. I am helping students develop and maintain interconnectedness.</td>
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<th>B. Combine Processes for Learning</th>
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<td>B1. I am incorporating both shared responsibility and individual accountability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B2. I am scaffolding the written word through oral interaction.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>C. Focus on New Activities for Learning</th>
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<tr>
<td>C1. I am focusing on tasks requiring academic ways of thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2. I am making these tasks accessible to my students with familiar language and content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Breaking New Ground: Teaching Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education in U.S. Secondary Schools.*
Mural Project, Spring 2014
Mural Project, Spring 2014
Mural Project, Spring 2014
A: Accept Conditions for Learning

A1. I am making this lesson immediately relevant to my students.
- Students created visual representations of their first countries (flags, flowers) to display on mural
- Mural is made of artwork by students and their children, done individually and in groups in class
- Mural decorates the Circle Time area used daily by students and their children

A2. I am helping students develop and maintain interconnectedness.
- Mural is a group effort shared by families in the program; they planned, designed, and created it together
- Students dictated 2 group Language Experience Activities (short essays) about making the mural
B. Combine Processes for Learning

B1. I am incorporating both shared responsibility and individual accountability.
- Students worked together to dictate LEAs (essays) about what the entire group did to create the mural, then each wrote and edited individual short essays describing their personal contributions and their kids’
- Although the mural was a group effort, individual students created the flag and flower decorations representing specific countries, and everyone decorated their own individual leaves

B2. I am scaffolding the written word through oral interaction.
- Students communicated with classmates orally in English throughout the process of making the mural
- Students wrote and edited group and individual essays about what they did, selected pictures to illustrate each essay, and put them together into a class book documenting the project
C. Focus on new activities for learning

C1. I am focusing on tasks requiring academic ways of thinking.
- Students’ individual essays on their contributions to the mural went through a writing process of polishing the drafts, then typing, formatting, and illustrating on a computer.
- Students used Google to look for images of home country flags and flowers, selected images, and used Microsoft Word to copy-paste, crop, resize, frame, and rotate those images.

C2. I am making these tasks accessible to my students with familiar language and content.
- Flags and flowers from the home country are familiar images with emotional connections for students.
- Most of the vocabulary associated with making the mural was familiar language involving art activities that young children do frequently (coloring, painting) and that parents often do with their children.
Translation Project, Spring 2014

- Group translation of Susan Stockdale’s *Stripes of All Types* (Peachtree Publishers, 2013) into Kirundi.
Student translation of Stripes of All Types into Nepali
Toting a shell,
Cargando un caracol,

twisting on sand.
Photo collage 1, Spring 2015
Website:  http://malpeducation.com
Wiki:  http://malp.pbworks.com

Articles:


Books:


• **Gahungu, A., Gahungu, O., & Luseno, F. (2011, April 15).** Educating culturally displaced students with truncated formal education (CDS-TFE): The case of refugee students and challenges for administrators, teachers, and counselors. [http://cnx.org/content/m37446/1.1/](http://cnx.org/content/m37446/1.1/)

• **Lovrien (Schwarz), Robin.** Trainings for Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council staff, 4/27/2009 and 12/1/2011.


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