
Putting the Pieces Together in a Multilevel Class

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A room full of students who are actively engaged and busy working on the same project can bring a rare sense of harmony to the multilevel class. This scene stems from a hands-on, visual project that took place in my family literacy class at the Jackson Mann Community Center. The first time I saw my students all busily cutting, gluing, and conversing, there was a change in the dynamics in the room. For me as an adult education teacher, that change led to new ways of looking at my students and at the question of the multilevel class.

This hands-on project has been a focus of mine as part of the Multilevel Question Research Group, in which I participated this year at the A.L.R.I./SABES Regional Support Center. I was drawn to the group in February of 1997, after teaching a multilevel class ranging in level from preliterate to college educated, a class which I am still teaching at Jackson Mann. All students are second language English speakers.

Multilevel classes were not new to me as an ESOL teacher. However, the ever-present question of how best to teach a multilevel class surfaced and resurfaced with each new lesson. The same concerns were always brought up: Are all students benefiting from the activities? Are some students restless, some lost? Is there one activity or curriculum that works best? Are teachers trying to reach unattainable goals? These questions, and the questioning faces of my students, led me to the research group, as one more effort to examine this teaching challenge.

A Family Literacy Setting

Family literacy classes are offered as part of the Adult Education Program at Jackson Mann. Classes meet twice a week, in the evening, for a total of six hours. All students are from the Allston/Brighton area.

The ages of students range from late twenties to early fifties. Most are employed in low wage work, although there are variations in income. A few stay home full time to care for young children. Ages of children range from toddler to late adolescence. There is a mix of single parent and two parent families. The class numbers approximately 7-10 students in attendance each night, and enrollment is open. Some students leave for periods of time and then return. Attendance can be inconsistent; often when children are sick parents miss several classes in a row.

Educational backgrounds vary from no primary education to undergraduate degrees earned in the native country. Languages include Spanish, Cambodian, Portuguese, and Cantonese. Levels of English proficiency vary from spoken language only to intermediate proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking. There are many different learning styles, and some students have barriers to learning which stem from experiences in their country.

Learning readiness is an area of considerable need for many students and reflects an important focus of the mission at Jackson Mann. Some students are struggling with being able to socialize and feel safe in a new environment. All students cite learning English and improving grammar and conversation as their primary interest in joining the class.

There is a community feel to the class. Parties are held on holidays with everyone sharing food that the students have made. Respect for the many differences among us is often brought up.

Many different models exist for family literacy, including those where parents and children do literacy activities together. At Jackson Mann, an evening literacy class for parents, with childcare provided, best serves the needs of our families, many of whom are

balancing a heavy schedule during the week. Parents attend class while their children (if also attending) are cared for by a babysitter.

The philosophy of the program is that, through improved literacy, parents will be more able to help their children learn at home and to advocate for them at school. Special workshops on parenting and literacy are held throughout the year, in addition to the regular classtime. One workshop this year, led by Lenore Balliro and Sandra Darling of the A.L.R.I., focused on books for children and literacy activities to do with children at home. A series of four "Families First" workshops, held in the evening, with dinner and childcare provided, dealt with communication between parent and child. In addition, there were two Family Nights, which offered an arts and crafts evening, and a Health Night. These nights also included dinner and childcare.

After getting to know my students and the program better, I began to think carefully about the many "multis" in this class. How to mesh some of these with a coherent lesson plan? How to tailor the teaching of the class? My most important concern was a quality class experience for each student. What things would work? Most students were focused on the teacher as the center of the activity and learning, not an unusual situation in an ESOL class. School experience for most had meant a very traditional classroom in their native country.

With this context in mind, some objectives for me after coming to the program in September were:

- Teacher as facilitator
- A cooperative learning effort
- A format which engages all levels.

Setting the Framework for a Quilt Project

The idea of a quilt project had some appeal as a way to address the multilevel question. Hands-on activities had worked before in my class, with a clothing lesson, in which I brought in items of clothing to show and use to learn new vocabulary. However, the quilt would be a more ambitious project, working with a professional, and would be long-term, not a one-night activity. By its nature, it would require a high level of activity and participation. The intrigue would lie in its emphasis on the visual and spatial, not on the verbal, as a whole class activity.

A project of this nature would involve a change in basic format. Would my students attend and participate? Would they learn language skills? How would they feel about sewing and craftwork as the central class activity? Therefore, the first questions I would be considering in my teacher research were:

- Could a quilt project hold students' interests?

- Could all levels participate?
- Would it succeed?
- What would be the criteria for success?

Additional questions that would be looked at during this project were:

- What would it demonstrate about hands-on activities in the multilevel class?
- What would be some of the unexpected results of a project like this?
- Would it accommodate the context of family literacy?

Our class was fortunate enough to be working under the direction and supervision of Clara Wainwright, an artist and quilter who has been involved in many Boston area projects, including First Night. Clara contacted Jackson Mann administrator Diane Joyce with the idea of the project. My class was suggested, and I was open to trying new ideas. Quilting activities had been written about in the literature and had always posed a curiosity for me. However, I had never tried a project of this proportion.

When the project was first discussed, there was uncertainty on the part of both the students and myself. When I explained the idea of the project to the students, they seemed interested but still very uncertain about exactly what was involved. There was no spoken objection, but I wondered if to some extent they were accepting the idea because the teacher was proposing it. In some ways, I was just as unsure as they were. We had two nights a week to devote to our many language learning goals and to various parenting topics. How would this project fit in with the needs of the students? I had not been able to meet with Clara to discuss objectives for the class or any other issues that might come up. However, I remained open to any ideas that might work with the family literacy class, with its wide ranges of skill levels, cultural backgrounds and family compositions. I had read about Clara's work in a recent article, which helped to secure my confidence. I felt it was important to give the project a chance. Perhaps it would provide the class with a learning tool, and also with the feeling of comfort that could come from a traditional, handmade quilt.

The project was discussed with students in early February, two weeks before it actually began. Vocabulary was introduced with words like quilt, material, design, square, etc. I did find some library books on quilting to show to the students, and though the pictorials were vivid, the reading and language were aimed at a native level proficiency in English. Drawing a sketch of a quilt on the board was helpful. I let students know that we would be using this project to help to learn English, although at the time I was not exactly sure what methods would work. The quilting would take place once a week, and leave one night for other

activities. On those nights, we continued with our regular format, although some time was spent discussing the previous night's quilting. Those nights we continued with a mix of computer time, group instruction, and small group work. A few times we worked on activities related to reading and making a newspaper.

On her first night, Clara brought in a quilt she had made with another class in Dorchester. Her purpose that night was to simply show the quilt and meet with the students, who were very impressed with her work. The second week she brought materials for the students to make their own "practice" square—a good way to help prepare students for the larger project. By this time, we had talked about what a quilt was, and most students were familiar with it and had examples to describe from their own countries. Preparation for the project was critical in helping all students feel comfortable about trying out a new skill and getting used to a change in class activities.

The quilt project spanned several months of work and was divided into segments of activity. The time line chart below outlines the activities for each month. The theme of the quilt was based on "visions for the year 2000," seen through the eyes of immigrant students. Students had to depict their homelands as well as their goals and wishes for the future. Each month presented a different task and a different square to be made. In the last month, a writing portion was incorporated and the activity was group quilting, also known as the "quilting bee."

Under Clara's direction, students would be constructing two squares, each approximately 15" x 15", one to represent their homeland, and one for their future visions. Clara provided the idea for the main themes and the structure and size of the quilt. She also encouraged a process where shapes would be made directly from the mind's image, without a drawing or diagram, although students could use whatever method worked best for them.

For students who seemed unsure about what they would do with their squares, Clara suggested images of houses or childhood memories. Some students created mountain scenes, water, houses, trees, fruit, a farmer, and faces of women. After the squares were designed and shapes of fabric glued to form the picture or scene desired by the student, Clara would take the squares to her studio and have them sewed. Each week, she returned with the squares, and students continued on to the next step.

After students had finished the squares of their homelands, Clara made up the outer border of the quilt; a "river" of water (turquoise material), which separated the outer border from the inner section of squares. This inner section depicted students' visions of the future. Again, Clara made suggestions about what the squares might look like. She asked questions such as "What would you like in the future? Do you see a house? A garden?" Some students seemed to need the suggestions and Clara's guidance to help them focus on the task. Other students were more self-directed and

Time Line For the Quilt Project

	First Month	Second Month	Third Month	Fourth Month
Topic	Define project	Your homeland	Your future	Finish/Give Title
Preparation	Discuss project. Use visuals of quilts; Present stories. Relate to literacy.	Think about a picture of your native country or a place you remember there.	Discuss theme of quilt and relate to students' lives. Think about future goals and wishes.	Think about title for quilt. Discuss finishing. Prepare for "bee."
Materials	Drawings, pictures, books, fabric, glue, scissors.	Fabric, scissors, glue, vocabulary list.	Fabric, scissors, glue, writing materials, indelible markers.	Needles, thread, scissors.
Activities	Meet with quilter. Bring in craft object. Make practice square. Take home for own use.	Discussion. Make first square—homeland.	Make second square—the future. Write about future. Transpose writing to square.	Quilt and sew on title. Write on message. Discuss display. Commemoration. Follow up.

quickly came up with their own ideas. One square was a small shop, one a graduating class with caps and gowns, one a scene from nature.

The Creative Process

How would students who were at different levels in their skills respond? How would the project meet different needs? The task of representing one's country visually with fabric demanded a creative and thoughtful process involving both abstraction and imagination, which students approached in a variety of ways. A few students were self-directed, while students at all levels assisted each other. Assistance was usually in the form of suggestions, ideas, and encouragement spoken in English or the native language. Some people asked questions about others' work, such as, "Where is your background?" or "Why don't you try this?" Several beginning students started out very hesitantly, but soon became very involved with the design process. Two students at the preliterate level eventually chose their own materials and told us what they would like to see in the square (a mountain, a tree, a bird, an animal). At times they required help with cutting shapes, but they manipulated pieces of material to their satisfaction. One student pointed to parts of the square and stated, "This is a mountain in Cambodia; this is a tree in Cambodia." Another student looked over and agreed, identifying scenery particular to Cambodia.

Two beginning level students made houses and gardens, with help from both Clara and me. One included a basketball hoop outside for the student's teenage son; this was an idea that I suggested, knowing that her son played basketball. A concern of mine for the beginning level students was that they were not given the time needed to create original designs from beginning to end on their own. However, the smiles on their faces after seeing some shapes that Clara had helped them cut out were encouraging. Two students in particular were very shy and spoke very little English. I took note of any activities that generated smiles and communication, hoping to rely on these later for future activities. In addition, I had to recognize that some students needed a great deal of support due to learning disabilities or other obstacles that challenged them in the classroom setting.

One advanced level student expressed interest in more vocabulary learning with the project, which I provided. More emphasis in this area during the preparation period would have strengthened the vocabulary component. Another student, Angela, a college educated woman from Peru, created a very sophisticated theme with both of her squares. She used her material to represent the effects of pollution on air and water, and depicted this in a very elaborate way with raindrops, clouds, rainbows, and tears. Some students

created images of houses; one square was a very detailed, perfectly proportioned picture of an ancient Mayan figure. Some squares were pictures of a single person or icon, usually a woman or a farmer.

There were many different expressions of love and pride for the native country by students of all levels. A design could be very simple, such as a single woman in native dress or hairstyle, or more complex, such as Angela's tears for the environment. A design such as a woman in braids or a bowl of fruit could be construed in many different ways. Deep feelings about the native country or culture appeared to stir during the collage portion, although the complexity of the responses may not always have been depicted "on the surface" of the square.

Although students helped each other out, they often stayed within their familiar pair or group. Students who usually worked independently continued to do so. Overall, students of various levels managed well-thought-out, expressive designs, such as a picture of capped and gowned graduates holding degrees, or a panorama of sky and water, although students with low confidence and social skill levels often got off to a slow start on conceiving an idea for the square and beginning the collage process.

Effects on Instruction

Vocabulary: During the project, students used a variety of verb patterns and new vocabulary. Verbs that were introduced included: borrow, cut, sew, glue, lend. "Could you lend me...?" and "Could I borrow...?" were differentiated by one advanced level student in speaking to other students during the cutting and gluing. Nouns, such as material, fabric, background, clouds, and border, were used and practiced during the collage process. Question patterns such as "Where is...?" and "Do you have...?" were practiced in conversation at tables during the making of the squares. Conversation took place throughout the cutting of the squares both in English and the native languages.

Although students seemed interested in learning vocabulary associated with the quilt, the vocabulary handout which I prepared did not seem to spark a lot of interest. It included words like cut, sew, thread, needle, diagonal, straight, stitches, etc. There were also little illustrations for many of the words. It wasn't until there was a need for a new word to be learned, however, such as during a particular quilt activity, that the vocabulary seemed to have much significance. Everyone wanted to know the words "needle" and "thread" when the final sewing was done during the quilting bee. Up to that point, students had been gluing rather than sewing, and there was little interest in learning about a needle during that time. They were busy with the collage process, and perhaps written vocabulary was not a task

to be focused on at the time. In a way, it took the emphasis off active and onto more passive learning. Would I use a vocabulary list again? Probably yes, for the few more-advanced level students who made specific requests. However, it would not be a priority method for learning the new vocabulary. The active learning process was more of an impetus for new vocabulary than any worksheet could have provided.

Writing Activities:

Two advanced level students worked together to write up a one-paragraph report on the project, which was featured in the family literacy newsletter. One student wrote a thank-you letter to Clara. One new student was a little unsure about jumping into the sewing and cutting, although with Clara's help she made a square about a shop where she would sell fish. When she was through with that square, I asked her to write about what another student was doing during the project, while she waited for the next stage of activity. She wrote:

Sarita is working on the quilt. She is making a house. She used cloths with colors black, red, green, waith, light blue. She make quilts in her country. She make house in her country. She like making the quilt because she feel relax making that.

This type of short writing task was helpful to fill in "gaps" in the activities, which occurred infrequently.

Writing on the Squares: When it came to the written quilt squares, students were asked to write about their memories, dreams, or the future. Each student had a square or two in which to write out with indelible marker a statement or message about their dreams and hopes. Preparation for this activity included discussion about the topic several weeks in advance and a short writing assignment during regular classtime. When it came time to write on the material, students first practiced on an 8 1/2 x 11 piece of paper, writing in bold marker what they wanted to say. Then they then wrote directly onto the fabric.

This piece of writing represented one of the most intense periods of project activity. Children helped out

parents. Clara and I helped parents and children. Some students seemed intimidated by writing on cloth. Clara helped them to feel comfortable, focusing at first on message over mechanics, although the final product needed to be as clear and legible as possible. Most students needed help and support from both Clara and



me when it came to constructing their sentences and ideas. We asked, "What is important to you when you think about the future?," stressing the words "goal," "wish," and "want." I asked individual students, "What do you see for you and your family in five years, ten years?"

With continued encouragement, students began to write, first on their practice paper, then on the fabric. Some students dictated their message to Clara or me for the first draft and contin-

ued on to a second draft on their own. One 11-year-old daughter helped her mother, who had little reading or writing experience. More advanced students wrote with less hesitation; some were able to construct well-revised versions of their first drafts. Although beginning-level students were initially overwhelmed by the writing task, more advanced students enjoyed this segment, putting to practice some of their skill in describing their countries and their dreams.

For students less experienced in writing, this was an opportunity to practice in a very contextualized form. Those who were nervous at first eventually wrote on the material with more confidence. There was a need for students to try to put ideas together in a compact, coherent message that would both convey their sentiments and speak to the subject, stressing conciseness and sentence structure. At the same time, there was lots of room for individual expression.

Participation and motivation were very high during this phase. Luz's 14-year-old daughter, who had attended especially for the quilt project, brought her square to me and showed me her comments about the future of the environment and her interest in trees:

The picture I made is about what trees mean to me. The trees in my countrie are not that colourful but they are trees. I think there should be more trees in world beccuse they

help us breathe good air.

Another student, Marta, wrote of memories:

I remembered the special place in the yard, under the big tree where I played with my friends in my country, Columbia, when I was a little girl.

One student wrote a message about “What is your dream?”

My dream is some day to be again with my family, and for each person to find God, to be happy, and that way the world will find peace.

Skills Involved in the Quilt Project

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Activity</i>
spatial	collage design/ overall pattern
question patterns	obtaining help & materials
vocabulary	identifying materials, shapes, designs
conversation	offering suggestions, quilting “bee” chat
writing	message square
social	helping others, quilting “bee”
critical thinking	symbolizing homeland & future, naming quilt

Revelations about Students

Students approached the quilt project in entirely different ways. Some were thoughtful, some frustrated, some hesitant, some quiet, and so on. Some students finished several squares, while others managed one. Some were very controlled while others were more exploratory and did more “free associating.”

Angela, in her confident way, went ahead with something very unique. She didn’t spend any time worrying about whether her piece was a work of art; she simply put it together and was more concerned about the overall message rather than the perfection of the artwork. Marta struggled to work without a drawing during the collage portion, eventually succeeding. All along, she was critical of her work, seeming to be looking for some indefinable quality about her childhood memories. I was concerned about the struggle she was experiencing, but I knew that this was also a good experience for her to work out on her own. Elena

humorously talked about her lack of artistic ability, although her image of a Brazilian woman with hair piled high and fruit on her head was highly stylized.

For Luz and Anna, there was painstaking changing of little bits and pieces here and there, with disapproving looks on their faces. They took considerable time in selecting their materials, looking them over and examining colors with scrutiny. They also watched others for long periods of time. They did not seem pleased with their designs when finished, although they seemed to enjoy the exploring process. Andrea, on the other hand, jumped into action and began putting together a rich, colorful tapestry image of mountains and sky with both ease and energy.

During the “bee,” conversation flowed more than at any other time in the project. One very shy student, who had used the image of a dog in her square, said that she would like to have a pet, but was not allowed to by the landlord. This was another piece of useful information for me, suggesting the student’s love for animals. Also during this activity students talked about sewing techniques they had learned in their country.

From a teacher’s perspective, the project activities were instructive in helping me know more about each student’s personality, individuality, and learning style—important information that might not have been revealed in the usual class format. I thought carefully about how no two students approached an activity in the same way—a reinforcement of the “multi” aspect of any task, despite the format?

I was also able to learn more about students’ backgrounds, talents, and interests, in an informal, contextualized setting. For example, a very shy Cambodian student who rarely spoke mentioned during the “bee” that her mother was a seamstress and had taught her to sew when she was an adolescent. This was the first time the student had ever mentioned either of her parents, and until then, I had little knowledge of any skills she may have learned during her life. Knowing more about this student’s history through an informal setting was helpful to me as a teacher. If she had been taught how to sew earlier in her life, she might have acquired other skills related to sewing, such as math or spatial skills. She could have more information to relate about her adolescent experiences, which could be used as a starting point in journal writing.

Shy students who had often seemed withdrawn came to class with improved affect following the finishing of the quilt. Conversation initiated by beginner students was more likely to take place after the quilt project. One student had commented during the “bee,” while looking at her written passage on her country of Guatemala, “I wasn’t sure about the project in the beginning, but now I am happy I did it.” A sense of accomplishment was shared by everyone in the form of

pleased looks and comments of satisfaction about the beauty and craftsmanship of the quilt. Some beginning students were less inhibited about writing after the project was finished. Actual improvement in writing levels was not clear, but the fear or hesitation that often accompanied writing for some students seemed to be reduced.

Student Participation

In all, sixteen participants worked on the quilt project, including five children and our childcare worker. Mani, the single male student in the class, did not participate in the collage process, citing the activity as being “more for the women.” Clara and I did not pressure him to work with the fabric. We kept cultural factors in mind, and made sure the option was there for him to do other activities, such as work in the computer room with our tutor. No one was obligated to work on the quilt, though all the female students took part with interest. The female students did not seem to be affected by Mani’s decision not to participate. There was a little bit of humor and some smiling, but otherwise there was no issue. Mani participated in the project later, after the squares were sewn together. He wrote the border message onto the “river” of water, using a piece he had written earlier about the meaning of success.

The quilting activities took place for one to two hours each Monday evening. Students who arrived late were able to make the transition into activities easily. Students who had to leave early could continue their work during the next class. If attendance was irregular, there was enough flexibility so that a square could be started and finished in a single class. Newly enrolled students could participate upon their first class, and any student could enter into the activities at any point of the project. One student who was absent during the period of the quilt-making due to her daughter’s illness was the only female student who did not participate.

Our other night of the week, in which we did not work on the quilt, was used for grammar and other ESOL activities. However, discussion of the quilting always took place, whether to gather feedback, to talk about any questions the students might have, or to announce any changes in the quilt scheduling. (For example, if Clara would not be available on a certain week or day.) I felt it was important for the class to retain its regular ESOL format whenever possible to help remind students and myself that the quilting was a project that would be temporary and would not mean a new change in format. On our “non-quilting” night, I looked for signs of discontent, listened for complaints, and allowed time for feedback from the students. There were no voiced objections to the project, however.

Evaluating the Project

Did the quilt project address some of the objectives I had talked about earlier for the family literacy class?

1) *Teacher as facilitator:* One of the first changes that took place during the project hands-on was that the emphasis on the teacher as the source of activity for learning was lessened, and students were involved in independent work, either individually, in pairs, or in small groups. I was able to take on the role of facilitator while the center of action was with the students.

2) *A format to engage all levels:* All students who were present for the time period in which the project took place were engaged in the project, regardless of level.

3) *A cooperative learning effort:* A cooperative learning effort was demonstrated by exchange of ideas and suggestions, and by students helping each other out.

When first thinking about the project, I had also asked some additional questions, and I’ve been thinking about how to answer these.

1) *What could this project tell me about hands-on, visual activities?* I found that as a visual activity, the quilt project lent itself well to the multilevel class. I needed to look at some of the reasons why and to think about how to apply them to future classes. One reason that the project worked was that it was a visual, as opposed to a linguistic, activity. Although language and communication were an integral part of the activities, there was no reading or writing level in the target language that would preclude any student from participating. As a visual project, the target language was not at the center of its goals and objectives. Every student, from preliterate to advanced, could make a contribution. Another reason the project worked well was that it was open entry. Students could participate at their own pace, make the transition into the activities easily, and produce as much or as little of the craftwork as time and ability level allowed.

2) *Could the project accommodate a family literacy context?* As a family activity, the project allowed children and parents to work together. Children could make their own squares or help their parents with a square. Children who ranged from ages 5 to 11 were both invited and encouraged to work on the project. The collage process was age appropriate for the children and for the one teenager who participated.

3) *Would there be any unexpected outcomes of the project?* Though I was concerned that advanced level students might be less engaged since the focus was off grammar and literacy skills, most of the advanced students were engaged fully in the collage activities and used this time to make some very elaborate designs relating to the pride and love they had for their country. Critical thinking was one of the key elements of the

project that helped to engage all levels. For the advanced and intermediate level students, that critical thinking element provided a needed impetus and focus. When it came time for Elena, an advanced level student, to write about her hopes and visions for the future, she carefully crafted her passage so that it reflected something very personal yet universal. She needed to project her thoughts so that she could imagine what might take place and what might be relevant to her life. She began with a statement about the general welfare of children in the world. Her message finally said she wanted a college education and a good life for her daughters. For many students, working with the concept of the future required a sorting out of their thoughts and an analyzing of what the future meant to them. For some, this was not a familiar thought process. Looking at priorities and values was part of this work. What exactly did the future mean to them? Was it something concrete, like buying a car or a house, or something more reflective and abstract, like a good life for all, happiness, reward, tranquility?

Implications for the future would be to consider doing other projects with a visual emphasis. Before the quilt project came along, I planned to do a newspaper with the class. The few lessons I did try didn't have the same ease as the quilt project. If I return to that idea, I want to think about making it even more of a visual, hands-on activity. I would like to think more about target language components with the project, although I would do so cautiously. Could I combine more target language practice so that students can have the opportunity to strengthen subskill areas through the activity at the appropriate level? Would this compete too strongly with the visual aspect of the activity? Some trial period could be set up, but careful planning would be a requirement.

Many ESOL activities could be adapted to more open entry projects, such as language experience writing and response writing. However, the question of a level of skill in writing, or any other subskill, then returns and could preclude participation, especially in

classes where levels begin with preliterate. The appeal of the visual is that it eliminates this problem, even if it does not accomplish other goals. Possible ideas for visual activities include painting, flower arranging, photo albums, paper quilts, drawing, papier mache, origami, pottery. The purpose and design of the activity need to be well prepared for the project to be accepted by most students.

Participation of mixed gender classes is another area for thought. Our class was predominantly female, and our male student was able to be involved in other



activities. However, issues could arise around gender which could be addressed in the planning stages, with time allowed for some discussion or even a lesson planned around the question of cultural gender issues. It may be the case that some male students will not wish to participate in the sewing part of the project. There are other related activities, however, that they could do, such as

taking photographs, helping with the hanging of the quilt, or reporting on the activities.

Conclusion

Was the quilt project a success? In terms of the finishing and crafting of the quilt, by all means yes. The "Family Literacy Dreams and Memories Quilt" is an exceptional visual experience, reflecting the creative, often hidden, talent of students. It also successfully provided a format in which all levels could participate. In terms of meeting the target language needs of each individual student, that may be more difficult to assess. Since the project is not structured around skill or level in English, this would not be an expected outcome. Objectives for hands-on, visual projects could vary from class to class, though. Meeting the target language learning needs of each individual student was not an objective for this particular project.

All students acquired or strengthened some spatial, memory, and basic conversation skills, in addition to the skills cited in the previous chart, though these may be areas more beneficial to lower level students. Grammar study, often cited as the main interest of more

advanced students, was not an area that received focus in the quilt project. Even some beginning students seemed eager to get back to some more “traditional” activities.

Probably the most important achievement of the quilt project was that it provided a central focus for the class, something that we could all identify with as a shared experience. This has important considerations in a class where there are so many “multi” aspects. As a family literacy project, the quilt brought parents and children together in a shared activity. Although we had

some doubts in the beginning, the quilt did create the sense of comfort and security I had hoped for early on. On display at Jackson Mann, it will now provide other families and children with a visual experience and a stimulus which helps to identify the concerns and hopes of immigrant students. In addition, the quilt helps to define the social and cultural contributions of the immigrant family and can act as a source of pride and achievement within that context. Students experiencing the quilt in this way may be more stimulated or motivated to pursue their educational goals. •

Clothing Fits Into ESOL

• ***What purpose does this activity fill?*** This lesson is used to help students learn vocabulary and conversation about clothing, including identifying colors and styles.

• ***What materials do you need to get started?*** A bag of clothing from home or thrift shop. A handout with written vocabulary and pictures of clothes. A board or easel and a marker.

• ***When would you recommend using this activity?*** This lesson may be adapted to any level and could be used as part of any ESOL curriculum. It is a good lesson to use when the class needs “hand-on” activity. It is helpful to do this lesson with a tutor, and access to a computer is also helpful.

• ***What are the steps in implementing the activity?***

1) Show clothing and allow students to touch and feel the different fabrics and textures. Discuss parts of clothing such as buttons, collar, etc. Name different types of clothing.

2) After looking at clothes and naming parts, ask a more advanced level student to write names, styles, textures, etc. on the board, while the teacher or another student shows that particular item. As a whole class activity, read what the student has written for oral practice.

3) Ask students to identify what they are wearing, then what another student is wearing.

4) Split the class into groups. The intermediate to advanced level can work on computer skills, practicing new vocabulary, independently or with a tutor. If a tutor is not available, the advanced group may work on a discussion of clothing and styles in their country, or comparing sizes and prices. Beginning level students can work on a role-playing scenario with a salesperson and a customer in a clothing store. Handouts and clear directions are helpful for group work.

• ***Possible pitfalls?*** Be sure to do a good “show and tell” job when showing clothes for the first time. Point carefully to the part you are naming. Allow enough time for “hands-on” looking at and touching of clothes.

• ***What should teachers pay attention to as their students participate?*** Teachers need to watch for student participation. Beginner students can look at clothes and practice saying new words. More advanced students should be able to compare different styles, textures, etc. Teachers should make sure students can practice the new learning in a safe environment.

• ***Why do you think this lesson is successful in a multi-level class?*** This lesson is hands-on and visual and satisfies student needs to apply conversation and vocabulary to practical use. It can be adapted to levels in various ways, with different tasks for beginning and advanced students.

—Judy Waters
