

EVALUATION OF LITERACY INSTRUCTION ON LOW-LITERATE ADULT ESL LEARNERS: A STUDY IN PROGRESS

Larry Condelli and Stephanie Cronen
American Institutes for Research, Washington, DC, USA

1 Introduction

According to the 2006 programme year statistics from the US Department of Education (US ED), 46 percent of the 2.4 million students in the federally funded adult education program in the USA were English as a second language (ESL) students (ED, 2008). Of these, about 200,000 are at the lowest ESL level, beginning literacy. These students, who face the dual challenge of developing basic literacy skills - including decoding, comprehending, and producing print - along with proficiency in English, represent a range of nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Although the majority of students come from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries, there are also students from Africa, India, the Philippines, China, Vietnam, and the Caribbean (Wrigley et al., 2003).

In the USA, ESL classes are provided in each state through a federal basic grant program. Within states, content of instruction varies widely but is designed to assist students in their efforts to acquire literacy and language skills by providing a combination of oral language, competency-based, work skills and literacy instruction (Condelli et al., 2003). There is, however, little rigorous research to help guide instruction. A comprehensive review of published research studies on the effects of literacy interventions for ABE and adult ESL learners, Condelli & Wrigley (2004) found that out of 17 adult education studies that used a rigorous methodology (i.e., quasi-experimental or randomized trials) and only two included adult ESL students. Although studies with rigorous methodology were limited, some suggestions of 'promising' approaches emerged.

The review provided several recommendations for future research, including that a systematic approach to literacy development was a promising intervention for low-literate adult ESL learners that would be valuable to study (Brown et al. 1996; Carell, 1985; Cheek & Lindsay, 1994; Chen & Graves, 1995; Rich & Shepherd, 1993; Roberts, Cheek & Mumm, 1994). The factors identified as defining a systematic approach to literacy included: (1) a comprehensive instructional scope that includes direct instruction in phonics, fluency, vocabulary development and reading comprehension, (2) strategic instructional sequence, (3) consistent instructional format, (4) easy-to-follow lesson plans, and (5) strategies for differentiated instruction.

LESLA learners - students with little or no literacy in their native language - would benefit most from this type of intervention. To succeed in an ESL class, they must acquire the basic text processing skills - decoding and encoding and meaning making—

that allow them to follow along in classes where words, phrases and sentences appear on the blackboard and in textbooks. If these students' literacy skills are not developed, language learning in formal classrooms becomes problematic. Yet, until the last quarter century, schools and resettlement agencies designed ESL classes on the assumption that adult students had the basic education and literacy skills to learn another language (Van de Craats, Kurvers & Young-Scholten, 2006).

To help improve research-based knowledge of effective instruction for LESLLA learners, the US Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) funded the Adult ESL Literacy Impact Study to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction based on a promising literacy textbook - *Sam and Pat* - which offers an approach to literacy development that is systematic, direct, sequential, and multi-sensory. It also includes multiple opportunities for practice with feedback. Consistent with characteristics identified as promising through a review of the literature conducted by Condelli & Wrigley (2004), *Sam and Pat* also provides opportunities for cooperative learning, real world tasks, and an explicit focus on reading.

The study will address three key research questions:

1. How effective is instruction based on the *Sam and Pat* textbook in improving the English reading and speaking skills of low-literate adult ESL learners?
2. Is *Sam and Pat* more effective for certain groups of students (e.g., native Spanish speakers)?
3. Do impacts on student outcomes vary with the service contrast?¹

The evaluation phase of the study began in spring 2007 and data collection will conclude in summer 2009. This paper reports on the intervention and study design. A report of findings will be available in mid-2010.

2 Overview of the adult ESL literacy intervention

2.1 *Sam and Pat*-based ESL literacy instruction

The *Sam and Pat* textbook (Hartel, Lowry, & Hendon, 2006) is described by the developers as a basal reader or textbook that tailors the methods and concepts of the Wilson and Orton-Gillingham reading systems developed for native speakers of English (Wilson & Schupack, 1997; Gillingham & Stillman, 1997) to meet the needs of adult ESL literacy level learners.² *Sam and Pat* was designed to incorporate the following components of the Wilson/Orton-Gillingham systems:

- A focus on moving students systematically and sequentially from simple to complex skills and materials;

¹ The service contrast refers to differences between instruction delivered in classrooms taught by teachers assigned to the *Sam and Pat* condition and instruction delivered in classrooms taught by teachers assigned to the control condition.

² Although there is no available research on the effectiveness of *Sam and Pat*, the textbook and its accompanying training and technical support is based on these two reading systems (Wilson & Orton-Gillingham) which have shown promise in teaching struggling readers (Adams, 1991; Clark & Uhry, 1995; Kavenaugh, 1991; Torgesen et al., 2006).

- The use of multisensory approaches to segmenting and blending phonemes (e.g., sound tapping);
- An emphasis on alphabets/decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension;
- The use of sound cards and controlled texts (wordlists, sentences, stories) for practicing skills learned;
- Continual review (cumulative instruction) of letters, sounds and words already learned.

However, the authors made variations on the base reading systems to make the text useful and relevant to the adult ESL literacy population for which *Sam and Pat* is designed. Specifically, *Sam and Pat* differs from the base reading systems on four dimensions:

- The sequence in which the sounds of English are taught;
- The words chosen for phonics and vocabulary study;
- The simplification of grammar structures presented;
- The added bridging of systematic reading instruction to ESL instruction.

Building on the components of the earlier reading systems, *Sam and Pat* was therefore designed to 1) sequence the teaching of English sound and spelling patterns to ESL students by moving from a focus on simple to complex literacy skills and materials, 2) provide a controlled basal that follows this sequence of patterns, 3) use a simplified grammar, 4) embed a controlled vocabulary that is relevant to the lives of this population of students, and 5) include a collection of stories that are based on simplified themes from daily life.

There are two volumes of *Sam and Pat*. The *Sam and Pat, Vol. 1* literacy textbook is the focus of this study. It is organized into a total of 22 multi-component lessons. The lessons follow what the authors consider to be an optimal sequence for introducing English phonics and high-frequency English sight words to non-native speakers of English. However, the sequence in which English vowels and consonant sounds are introduced has been modified from that usually used in approaches such as the Wilson and Orton-Gillingham reading systems. For example, like the Wilson System, *Sam and Pat* begins with the *short-a* sound, but *short-a* is followed several lessons later by *short-u*, rather than *short-i*. This modification was made to provide the maximum sound contrasts for the short vowel sounds that are notoriously challenging for English language learners to discriminate.

Sam and Pat is also designed to introduce and build basic English speaking and reading vocabulary, as well as foundational skills in basic English grammar. Both the vocabulary and grammar components are focused on the functional needs of new immigrants in the domains of work, their children's school, shopping, family life, and their interactions with the medical system.

Each lesson contains a chapter of an ongoing story that follows the daily lives and adventures of an immigrant family headed by the title characters. Like the basal readers written for English speaking adult beginning readers, the text is *controlled*; that is, it only contains words that follow phonics patterns that have been previously taught, as well as sight words that have also been taught. This is intended to give learners the opportunity to develop word reading skills and fluency in meaningful text, without encountering phonics patterns and sight words they have not been taught.

In addition, because *Sam and Pat* was created for ESL literacy students, the text has also been controlled for vocabulary and grammar content; that is, the learners only encounter word meanings and grammar patterns that have been previously introduced in accompanying oral and written activities. In addition, as the *Introduction* explains, ‘Only simple words that students might encounter in their daily lives are used in the stories. The stories are written with simplified grammar, since long sentences and complex structures can interfere with comprehension’ (Hartel et al., 2006, p.v.).

2.1.1 *Intended use of Sam and Pat*

Sam and Pat was designed to provide learners with listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities that are sequenced and designed to reinforce each other. Each lesson is intended by the authors to include at least one day (approximately 2.5 hours) of pre-reading instruction and at least one day of decoding and reading comprehension instruction, with additional review and reteaching added as determined by the teacher.

The goal of the pre-reading instruction day is to explain, demonstrate, and provide practice opportunities for the new phonics, sight words, vocabulary, and grammar prior to reading each new chapter of *Sam and Pat*. The skill areas targeted on pre-reading instruction days include:

- Review/rereading a story for fluency;
- Review of names and sounds of letters learned previously, and introduction of new sounds;
- Pre-reading conversations, grammar and/or vocabulary practice;
- Sight word instruction (review and new);
- Phonics instruction (review and new);
- Pre-reading pictures for the upcoming story.

The skill areas targeted on decoding/reading comprehension instruction days include continued practice from the previous day as well as new activities:

- Review/rereading a story for fluency;
- Review of names and sounds of letters learned previously, and introduction of new sounds;
- Pre-reading review of conversation and vocabulary from previous day;
- Sight word instruction (review and new);
- Phonics instruction (review and new);
- Pre-reading review of pictures from the previous day;
- Reading the new story;
- Written exercises based on text.

As implied by the inclusion of the target skill ‘conversation’ during both days of instruction, literacy instruction based on *Sam and Pat* does not include reading and writing activities exclusively. In the authors’ experience, such activities normally take up about one-third of the total instructional time, although speaking and listening activities also take place connected to the activities in the basal.

Several types of oral language activities, tied to the content, could precede the story part of each chapter. For example, Lesson 1 begins with a line drawing of the characters Sam and Pat and the text, ‘This is Sam. This is Pat. They are Sam and Pat.’ Before reading this chapter with the students, a teacher might conduct a spoken

language activity. For instance, she may write each learner's name on a place card. She would then point to a person and his place card and say, 'This is Juan.' Then she would point to another person and her card say, 'This is Marie.' After giving the class numerous opportunities to practice these phrases in different combinations and with each others' names, the teacher would next point to both learners and say, 'They are Juan and Marie,' followed by more practice as before.

Whenever possible, teachers are encouraged to use real life objects and line drawings to introduce key vocabulary words that are about to occur in the story. For example, in Lesson 5, the words *van* and *bus* figure prominently. The teacher might use toy vehicles and pictures of vans and buses to make these words concrete for the learners and to engage them in brief dialogues using the words.

The goal of *Sam and Pat* is to provide ESL literacy learners with multiple opportunities for repetition, guided practice, and review. The authors of *Sam and Pat* report that when used correctly and in combination with appropriate spoken language activities, teachers should spend about seven class hours on each chapter of the book, including pre-reading and decoding/comprehension instruction, reteaching as necessary, and supporting oral language activities. At that rate, an ESL literacy class would be expected to spend almost an entire school year to complete *Sam and Pat, Vol. 1*. Given that the study classes in the research study are expected to spend an average of five hours per week on *Sam and Pat* instruction, and last an average of twelve weeks, the *Sam and Pat* teachers should get through an average of nine chapters.

2.1.2 Teacher training and follow-up technical assistance

To ensure fidelity of implementation, the *Sam and Pat* developers provided the teachers selected for participation in the study with three days of intensive training on the implementation of *Sam and Pat*. The training included discussions about the origins and rationale for the *Sam and Pat* approach, the unique characteristics of ESL literacy level learners based on current research, the structure and terminology of *Sam and Pat*, the components of reading and oral language instruction, the Lesson Plan template developed to support implementation, *Sam and Pat* literacy and ESL techniques and activities, and classroom organization and management. It also included multiple opportunities for the teachers to reflect on their current ESL instructional practices, to observe and analyze videos in which the literacy textbook developers model *Sam and Pat* instruction³, to engage in structured lesson planning with guidance and feedback from the trainers, and to self-assess what they are learning and evaluate the training activities to inform the pace and content of the workshop itself. A refresher webinar training on the same material was held early in winter 2009, before the start of the second data collection period.

The trainers also conducted one or two site visits per teacher to observe instruction and provide feedback. Using standardized procedures, they reviewed the classroom environment (e.g. the availability and use of specific instructional materials, the alignment of observed instruction with the *Sam and Pat* Lesson Plan template, and teacher practice) offered both oral and written feedback on the quality of instruction

³ *Sam and Pat* trainers gave a DVD to teachers that contained 23 instructional demonstration videos created by the developers for teachers' continued reference outside the training. Developers provided an additional video on phonics instruction after the refresher training.

and suggestions for improvement, and provided other technical assistance to the treatment teachers as needed in response to e-mails or phone calls from the teachers.

3 Study research design

The Adult ESL Literacy Impact Study employs a randomized research design that includes:

- 10 adult education program sites;
- 38 teachers;
- 1,3410 low-literate adult ESL learners.

Within site, teachers and students were randomly assigned to one of two conditions:

- The *Sam and Pat* condition, which includes a minimum of 60 hours of *Sam and Pat*-based instruction per term, with any remaining class time being spent on the types of instruction normally provided by the program.
- The control condition, which consists of the instruction normally provided by the program.

Teachers (or classes) within each program site were randomly assigned in pairs, so that each pair of experimental and control classes met at the same time, in the same building, and for the same number of hours. Across the study sites, the total number of class hours varies and ranges from approximately 60 to 225 total hours, depending on the programs' course schedules.

3.1 The control group: standard ESL literacy instruction

The study is designed to estimate the impact of *Sam and Pat*-based instruction and professional development, relative to standard ESL instruction, that is, the kind of instruction ESL students in study sites would normally receive in the absence of the study. In the USA, adult ESL instruction encompasses a range of approaches and content but the goal is to help the student acquire facility with the English language and function in everyday life. Content includes oral language development, grammar, vocabulary and cultural topics. ESL instruction may also include a life skills approach to language, such as learning how to complete forms, interpret labels, and negotiate tasks such as shopping, dealing with schools, doctors and government agencies (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Crandall & Peyton, 1993).

Typical ESL instruction assumes that students are literate in their first language and therefore does not usually focus on phonics or the other basic literacy skills emphasized in *Sam and Pat* (Wrigley & Guth, 1992; Wrigley, Chisman & Ewen, 1993). In the single quantitative study of instruction of 38 adult ESL literacy classes in seven states, Condelli et al., (2003) found that ESL instruction focused on developing oral English language, vocabulary and life skills. Of the 38 classes, seven included direct literacy instruction for more than half of the total class time, and in 31 classes, more than 40 percent of the time was spent on second language instruction despite the fact that all of these classes were designated as 'literacy level.' Furthermore, across all classes, a majority of total class time (51 percent) was spent on second language instruction.

When literacy instruction did occur, it was considered by the researchers to be unsystematic and of short duration (Condelli et al., 2003). With their limited focus on literacy, the control classes should be sufficiently different from the study classes to produce a differential impact on the study outcome measures.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

Data collect for the study began in the fall term of 2008 and continued in the winter term of 2009, and includes a different cohort of students each term. Student-level data collection each term consists of an assessment of native language literacy and student background information collected at baseline, pre- and post-testing in English reading, speaking and listening, and attendance in the study class.

The same group of teachers is participating in the study across the two terms. Teacher-level data collection consists of:

- Background information collected at baseline;
- Follow-up surveys to collect data on both *Sam and Pat* and control teachers' participation in non-study professional development during the year, as well as their use of a variety of instructional materials. *Sam and Pat* teachers are also asked questions about the time they spent preparing for *Sam and Pat* instruction, the number of the last *Sam and Pat* lesson taught each term, and their attitudes about *Sam and Pat* and its ease of implementation.
- Classroom observations to document instructional materials and practices used during both terms of the study.

3.3 Selection of programs and sites

Programs were identified and screened for eligibility for the study through a multi-step process. First, data from the US Department of Education (ED, 2008) were used to identify states with the largest adult ESL enrollments. These states were California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, Washington, New Jersey and North Carolina. Evaluation staff contacted the state directors of adult education in each state, explained the study and asked them to identify local programs in their state that might be eligible for the study according to whether the site had:

- An open enrollment policy or enrollment history where a majority of learners enter during the beginning of a course,
- Enrollments of adult ESL literacy learners was large enough to support the study design (i.e., able to enroll about 90 students from the target population per semester in study classes),
- A sufficient number of adult ESL literacy instructors to support the evaluation's requirements (at least three instructors per site in the target classes),
- Common programmatic features (e.g. have classes that are of similar duration both in terms of total class hours and class hours per day/week); and
- In addition, the site could not currently offer instruction based on *Sam and Pat*.

After the state adult education directors identified 130 programs based on the specifications above, they provided us with a list of the names of programs and the telephone, fax, and email addresses of the programs' directors or managers. We then

contacted the program directors to gauge their interest in participating in the evaluation, and to learn more about the types of students they served and the number of classes they provided. We examined the characteristics of the programs and found that, preliminarily, 67 programs served low literacy students. We conducted follow-up screening via telephone conferences with program directors to obtain more information and to ascertain their program's study eligibility. We sought explanation and clarification on enrollment policy, student academic background and attrition, teacher training and qualifications, class schedules, sizes, and locations, and other factors that would provide information on each program's desirability for inclusion in the study.

Of the 67 programs contacted, 32 programs met the selection criteria and showed interest in participating in the study. The program directors of the 32 programs were contacted a second time to confirm their interest in participating and to verify information regarding their program's eligibility for the study. Evaluation staff also provided the program directors with more information about the study, including details about random assignment. Seven programs declined to participate in the study. Among the remaining 25 programs, 12 were interested in participating and appeared to meet the study criteria, and 13 expressed interest but did not meet the study criteria upon further discussion. From a close screening of the remaining 12 programs' enrollment policies, student attrition, teacher training and qualifications, class schedules and location, we selected eight programs that offered 13 instructional sites (i.e., multiple sites within some programs) to visit for further consideration. During the visits evaluation staff again verified that the site conformed to study criteria, and that teachers and site staff were willing to participation.

After site visits, one program was no longer interested in participating in the study and two programs had insufficient numbers of adult ESL literacy students attending.

Table 1: Sites, classes and students in the study

Program Location	Sites	N Class Pairs	Total N Student Enrollment
Florida	Site 1	4	54
	Site 2	2	86
	Site 3	2	109
California #1	Site 4	2	222
Texas	Site 5	3	205
	Site 6	1	72
	Site 7	1	88
Illinois	Site 8	1	88
	Site 9	1	71
California #2	Site 10	2	346
Total		19	1,341

We recruited the remaining ten sites (across five programs) for the study. Within these sites, we identified all pairs of adult ESL literacy classes that met at the same time and location. After eliminating pairs of classes in which teachers did not agree to participate

in the study and pairs of classes with an enrollment of less than 15 students per class, evaluation staff identified 19 class pairs to include in the study. Table 1 shows the sites, classes and students at each site.

4 Procedures: flow of study activities

Figure 1 shows the flow of data collection for the study. Before student intake and random assignment of students, teachers completed the Teacher Data Form and were randomly assigned to condition.

Teachers assigned to teach *Sam and Pat* attended a three-day training delivered by the literacy textbook authors in the summer of 2008.

Prior to the beginning of the fall 2008 and winter 2009 terms, students registered for classes as they normally did. If the site staff determined during intake that a student belonged in a literacy level class, the student was considered eligible for the study. The site staff explained the study to the student and obtain informed consent translated into the student's native language. Students who chose not to participate in the study were allowed to take the class and were assigned to a class by the site according to the site's normal procedures for assigning students to classes but were not included in data collection activities.

Eligible consenting students were randomly assigned to either the *Sam and Pat* condition or the control condition on the first day that they reported to the site for class. During the first two weeks of attending class, each student was assessed with a battery of standardized English literacy and speaking/listening pre-tests. Teachers took daily attendance throughout the study period.

4.1 Student assessment

The study assessment battery includes a native language literacy locator and pre- and post-tests that measure the English reading, speaking, and listening skills that are the primary outcomes for the study. Pre-tests scores will be used as covariates in the impact analyses.

The Native Language Literacy Locator (Florida Department of Education, 2006) was used to obtain a measure of student's literacy in their native language. The assessment consists of a short writing sample in the student's native language that allows us to identify their literacy status (literacy level vs. higher level). We asked the sites during recruitment to use these assessments to help inform placement decisions.

In the spring of 2008 we conducted a pilot test of assessments using a sample of 48 adult ESL literacy students attending classes in three adult ESL programs. The students spoke languages and had characteristics similar to students that we expect to be in the study. The piloted assessments were appropriate for use on adult ESL literacy students, measure skills typically taught in adult ESL classes and reflected skills we expect to be taught through instruction using *Sam and Pat*.⁴

⁴ Because the students tested for this study are low-literate non-English speakers, they require some accommodation in testing, such as simplified and/or translated test instructions. For this reason, and because they differ from the referent norming population of the assessments, comparisons cannot be made between the study sample and national norming samples.

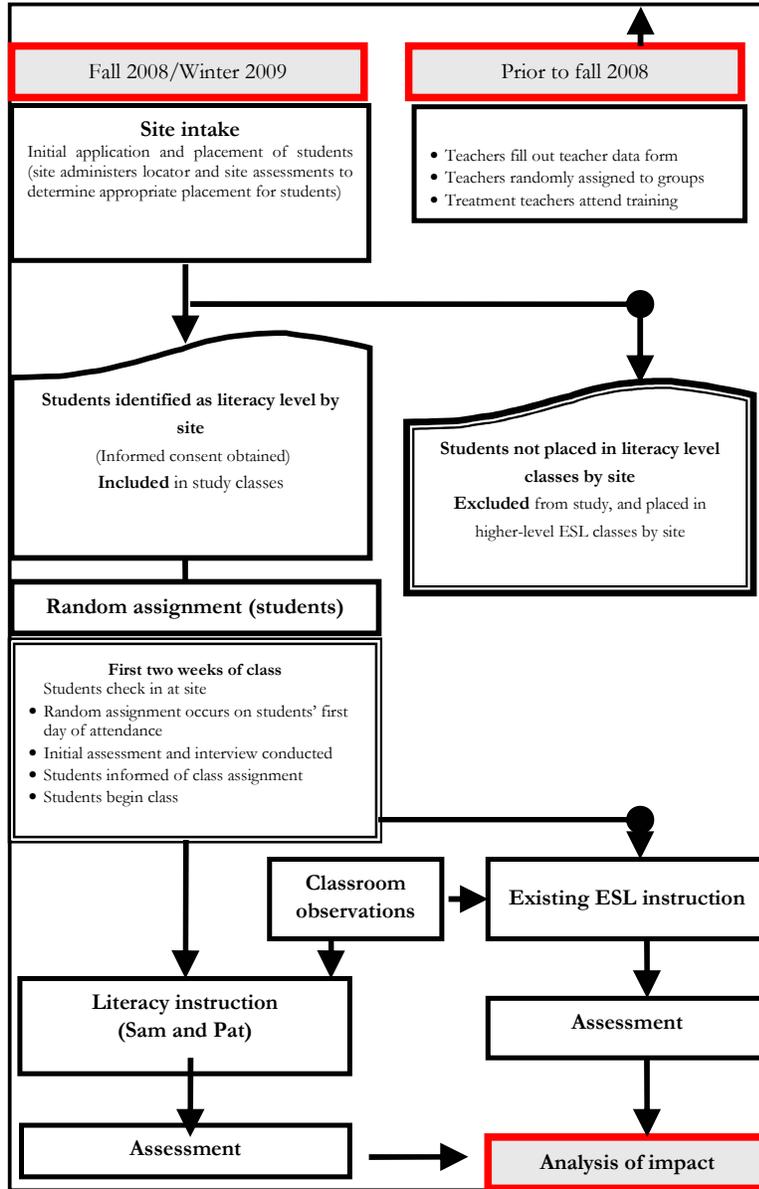


Figure 1: Study procedural flow chart

Based on this pilot, the following assessments were selected for the study:

- *Woodcock Johnson III Tests of Achievement (WJ)*: Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001). This battery provides subtest and composite scores in several areas of reading achievement. From this battery, subtests from two of the clusters are most relevant for use in this study:

From the readings cluster:

- *Letter-Word Identification* – measures participant’s word identification skills as indexed by pronunciation of familiar printed words.
- *Word Attack* – measures skills in applying phonic and structural analysis skills as indexed by pronunciation of unfamiliar words.
- *Passage Comprehension* – participants read a short phrase or passage, then choose or supply missing words that makes sense in the context.

From the oral language cluster:

- *Picture Vocabulary* – participants are shown images and asked to identify the relevant words.
- *ETS SARA – Word Attack*. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) developed the SARA assessment battery for research purposes to measure English literacy skills. The Word Attack subtest from the battery measures skills in applying phonic and structural analysis skills as indexed by pronunciation of unfamiliar words. The Letter Naming subtest measures knowledge of the alphabet by asking students to name letters.
- *Oral and Written Language Scales (OWLS) – Listening subtest*. The examiner reads aloud a verbal stimulus and the respondent points to one of four pictures.
- *Receptive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (ROWPVT)*. The examiner says a word and the participant must point to one of four pictures.

Most assessments are administered at both pre-test and post-test. The exceptions are the SARA Word Attack and the WJ Picture Vocabulary test, which are administered at post-test only.

5 Data analysis

Data analysis for the *Adult ESL literacy impact study* will consist of descriptive, implementation, and impact analyses. The analysis will be conducted in the summer of 2009.

5.1 Descriptive analysis

The descriptive analyses will provide a snapshot of the programs, teachers, and students participating in the study, and include the following:

- Description of the participating programs;
- Description of the teachers and students in the treatment and control groups;
- Analysis of any differences in baseline characteristics between treatment and control groups;
- Description of the rate of student and teacher mobility over the period following random assignment.

5.2 *Implementation and instructional analyses*

The implementation and other instructional analyses will include both descriptive analyses as well as some relational and comparative analyses, as described previously. These will include:

- Descriptive analysis of the fidelity of implementation of the treatment;
- Descriptive analysis of the instruction in both treatment and control classrooms;
- Comparisons between treatment and control groups on the variables included in the descriptive analyses, including the instructional service contrast between the two groups; and
- Descriptive (non-experimental) analyses of how impacts on student outcomes vary with the level of service contrast.

5.3 *Impacts on student outcomes*

The basic analytic strategy for assessing the impact of *Sam and Pat* will be to compare outcomes for students who were randomly assigned to either the treatment (*Sam and Pat*) or the control condition. The impact analyses will focus on four types of student outcomes - English reading, speaking, and listening skills, and students' persistence in their study classes.

The impact analyses will use an 'intent-to-treat' approach and include students regardless of whether their enrollment status changes during the term. The estimates of effect will therefore reflect the impact of *Sam and Pat* on the intended sample.

Student as well as teacher or class-level covariates will be included in the model to increase the precision of the impact estimates. Missing values on covariates (e.g., student pre-test scores) will be replaced with the mean value for all participants in the student's site. Students with missing data on the outcome variables, however, will be dropped from the impact analysis for which they lack data.

Because treatment groups are determined at the student level, the primary unit of analysis will be the student, with the difference between the average outcomes for students receiving the intervention and those randomly assigned to the control group representing a reliable and unbiased estimate of the intervention's impact.

The basic strategy to estimate treatment effects in a random assignment study is to conduct a comparison of mean outcomes for treatment and control group members. That is, the treatment effect on an outcome Y is the difference between Y_p and Y_c , where Y_p is the mean outcome for the program group, and Y_c is the mean outcome for the control group. Written as a simple equation and representing the treatment effect with a coefficient b_i , a simple unadjusted intervention effect can be estimated.

Because the number of teachers being randomly assigned to the enhanced ESL program is so much smaller than the number of students randomly assigned, the potential for differences at baseline is greater among the teachers. Therefore it is beneficial for the study to include the teacher background data in the analysis. One major advantage of including teacher-level control variables is that it reduces the effective intra-class correlation in the sample which significantly increases the study's statistical power.

6 Conclusion

This study is the first ever to evaluate the impact of an instructional approach on LESLLA learners using a random assignment design. Findings will reveal how a literacy focused approach will affect the acquisition of English literacy and oral language skills for these students compared to the type of instruction normally offered in adult ESL classes in the USA. This instruction does not usually focus on literacy development. Research on second language development suggests that this approach will result in positive impacts on English literacy development for LESLLA learners. In 2010, a report of findings from the study will provide sound data on the impact of this intervention.

References

- Adams, M. J. (1991). *Beginning to Read*. Cambridge: MIT Press
- Brown, R., Pressley, M., Van Meter, P., & Schuder, T. (1996). A quasi-experimental validation of transactional strategies instruction with previously low-achieving, second-grade readers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88, 18-37.
- Carrell, P. L. (1985). Facilitating ESL reading by teaching text structure. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19, 727-752.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2001). Language teaching approaches: An overview. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or foreign language* (3rd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Cheek, E. H., & Lindsey, J. D. (1994). The effects of two methods of reading instruction on urban adults' word identification and comprehension abilities. *Journal of Vocational and Technical Education*, 11, 1, 14-19.
- Chen, H. C. & Graves, M. (1995). Effects of previewing and providing background knowledge. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 663-682.
- Clark, D., & Uhry, J. (1995). *Dyslexia theory and practice of remedial instruction*, 2nd edition. Baltimore, MD: York Press.
- Crandall, J. A. & Peyton, J. K. (Eds.) (1993). *Approaches to adult ESL literacy instruction*. Washington, DC & McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 364 127.)
- Condelli, L., Wrigley, H., Yoon, K., Seburn, M. & Cronen, S. (2003). *What works study for adult ESL literacy students*. Washington DC: US Department of Education (draft, not released).
- Condelli, L., & Wrigley, H. (2004). *Identifying promising literacy interventions for adult ESL literacy students: A review of the literature (draft)*. Washington DC: American Institutes for Research.
- Florida Department of Education (2006). *Instructions for administering the native language literacy screening device for placement in literacy for adult ESOL learners course*. Retrieved from http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/adult_ed.asp on January 14, 2009.
- Gillingham, A., & Stillman, B. (1997). *The Gillingham manual (eighth edition)*. Cambridge: Educators Publishing Service.
- Hartel, J., Lowry, B., & Hendon, W. (2006). *Sam and Pat*. Boston: Thompson/Heinle.
- Kavanaugh, J. (1991). *The language continuum from infancy to literacy*. Baltimore: York Press.

- Rich, R., & Shepherd, M. J. (1993). Teaching text comprehension strategies to adult poor readers. *Reading and Writing*, 5, 387-402.
- Roberts, R., Cheek, E., & Mumm, R. (1994). Group intervention and reading performance in a medium-security prison facility. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 20(3/4), 97-116.
- Torgesen, J., Myers, D., Schirm, A., Stuart, E., Vartivarian, S., Mansfield, W., et al. (2006). *National assessment of title I interim report - Volume II: Closing the reading gap: first year findings from a randomized trial of four reading interventions for striving readers*. Retrieved from Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education Website: <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/disadv/title1interimreport/index.html>.
- U.S. Department of Education (2007). *Implementation guidelines: measures and methods for the national reporting system for adult education*. Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education. Website: <http://www.nrsweb.org>.
- U.S. Department of Education (2008). Statistics retrieved from <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS> on October 17, 2008.
- Van de Craats, I., Kurvers, J. & Young-Scholten, M. (2006). Research on low-educated second language and literacy acquisition. In Van de Craats, I., Kurvers, J. & Young-Scholten, M., (Eds.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition: Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium – Tilburg 05*. Utrecht: LOT.
- Wilson, B., & Schupack, H. (1997). *Reading, writing and spelling – The multisensory structured language approach*. Baltimore: The International Dyslexia Association.
- Woodcock, R., McGrew, K., & Mather, N. (2001). *Examiner's manual: Woodcock -Johnson III tests of cognitive ability*. Itasca, IL: Riverside Publishing.
- Wrigley, H. & Guth, G. (1992). *Bringing literacy to life. Issues and options in adult ESL literacy*. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International.
- Wrigley, H., Chisman, F., & Ewen, D. (1993). Sparks of excellence: Program realities and promising practices in adult ESL. A report on an investigation of English as a second language service for adults by The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 373 586).
- Wrigley, H., Richer, E., Martinson, K., Kubo, H., & Strawn, J. (2003). The Language of opportunity: expanding employment prospects for adults with limited English skills. *CLASP Policy Brief*, 2.