

## Topic: Cultural Adjustment for Seniors

### Activity: Learning English: A Lesson Plan for Use with Refugee Seniors

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#### Objective

- ✓ Participants will be able to identify the importance of learning English
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify ways to practice and learn English
- ✓ Time permitting, and if applicable to the population being served, participants will be able to identify ways in which learning in English may differ from education in their previous experience

#### Lesson Time

45 minutes (30 minutes discussion; 15 minutes viewing the video)

#### Materials

- Refugee Seniors in the United States* video, online at \_\_\_\_\_
- Projector or some other way to show video to group
- Interpretation assistance and/or scripts of the video (for literate participants)  
Note: You can download the script for refugees literate in Arabic, Burmese, English, Karen, Nepali, or Somali at \_\_\_webpage\_\_\_. Refugees literate in English may also read the video's subtitles. All other refugees will require interpretation. Alternatively, you may choose to show participants only the portions of the video in their own language. For a chart of the times various languages are used, see \_\_\_\_\_.
- Eight to ten separate photos or drawings of ways to practice English outside of school (see samples included):
  - Talking to people at the grocery store
  - Talking to people in the apartment building (neighbors, landlord, manager)
  - Having an "speak English only" dinner at home with the family
  - Asking case worker for help getting a tutor
  - Watching Sesame Street or other educational children's TV
  - Asking grandchildren to help with lessons and exchanging native language for English
  - Talking to co-workers
  - Speaking English to other refugees at the resettlement agency
  - Speaking English to others in temple or church
  - Exchanging greetings with the bus driver
  - Talking to children/grandchildren's teacher
  - If above beginning level, using a free online English-learning program (such as USA Learns, at <http://www.usalearns.org/>)
- Worksheet containing all photos or drawings of ways to practice English outside school
- Flip chart and markers
- Optional: Checklist of classroom specifics – pre-prepared on flip chart (see samples included)

#### Practice

Warm up: Needs assessment

The Importance of Learning English

1. Ask the participants to pair off, then discuss with their partner reasons for learning English. Then ask for one person from each pair to say the reasons they discussed. As the participants report to the group, write the reasons they offer on the flip chart (while the group may not be literate in English, this can be helpful for you to recall the items discussed). Possible reasons may include the need to learn English:

- For employment
  - To take public transportation
  - To participate in the community
  - To help children and grandchildren and set a good example
  - To shop
  - To talk to neighbors
  - To talk to people at a place of worship
2. Now show the *Refugee Seniors in the United States* video, which is approximately 12 minutes long. Before beginning the video, tell participants to pay attention to the reasons the people in the video say English is important.

After the video is over, discuss the reasons refugees in the video mentioned the need to learn English. These reasons include: need to be able to read signs (Bhutanese 7:30-7:45), need to be able to pay the rent (Bhutanese, 9:38-10:16), and to earn money (Burmese, 8:08-8:23).

Although it is not addressed in the video, you may also want to mention that attaining citizenship requires some English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Citizenship is necessary in order to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and medical insurance after seven years in the United States, so refugee seniors will want to focus on learning English in order to pass the exam, as well as to facilitate their integration into their new home.

#### Practice: Ways To Practice English

1. Brainstorm with the whole group ways they can practice English in the United States outside of class.
2. Post photographs or drawings of ways to practice English outside of school. Ask participants to walk around and view all the images.
3. After participants return to their seats, lead a full group discussion of what is going on in each image. Ask participants to say how the activities in the drawings show ways of practicing English. Ask the participants if they can think of additional ways to practice.

#### Application/Assessment

1. Give the participants a handout with the same drawings as those posted on the walls. Ask the participants to circle three ways they think they can study English. Have them brainstorm how they can try to remember the English they've learned.
2. With seniors who have higher levels of English and previous educational experience, ask them to write down sentences about 3-5 ways they can work to improve their English.

#### Variation

##### Previous Experience with Education and Expectations of Education in the U.S.

Time permitting, and if participants are from groups that have prior educational experience, discuss seniors' previous experience with education and their expectations of education in the United States. This will help prepare participants for learning English in the United States.

1. Ask the participants to discuss in twos their last educational experience. How old

were they? What were they studying? How did they dress? How did the teacher dress? Where did they sit? What activities took place? What did they do in class? What did the classroom look like? What materials did they have? How many students were in the class?

2. Ask the participants what they have heard about English classes in the United States. Ask them to predict the answers to the same questions they were asked in Question 1.

3. On a flip chart, indicate the participant expectations reported by checking off the expectations on the list below.

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| a. sitting at desks                         | sitting at tables                |
| b. men and women together                   | men and women separated          |
| c. classes mixed by ages                    | classes separated by age         |
| d. students dressed in uniforms or formally | students dressed informally      |
| e. teacher dressed formally                 | teacher dressed informally       |
| f. classes mixed by ethnic groups           | classes of one ethnic group only |

Then show the video from 5:55 – 6:10, which shows an ESL classroom. The teacher will then go over the chart with the participants. Were their expectations correct? Did anything seem strange to them? Did anything seem good/positive/hopeful?