



Compass Points

New Directions for English Language Training

October/November 2006

Celebrating 200 Cycles of WorkStyles: 1985 - 2006

ELT and ORR

Burna Dunn, Spring Institute, Denver, CO

The English Language Technical Assistance Project has begun a new Cooperative Agreement with the Office of Refugee Resettlement to provide technical assistance services for programs teaching English to Refugees. Through our agreement we can provide training and consultations with you on issues your programs encounter in providing the best possible services to refugees. We do training and consultations in the areas of ESL strategies and techniques, ESL pre-employability training programs (called WorkStyles®, the topic of this newsletter), integration of ESL with other refugee services, health and mental health considerations for classroom teachers working with refugees, how to set up worksite English language training programs, working with students with limited literacy or schooling, and other topics as requested by service providers. We look forward to working with many of you in this new funding cycle. Thank you for all you do to empower refugees.

Message from Spring's CEO

Myrna Ann Adkins, Spring Institute, Denver, CO

What is your work style? Have you ever had to modify some of your work habits in order to fit into the culture of a new work place? When you started a new job, was there a new language you had to learn in terms of abbreviations, acronyms, or references to historical happenings at the workplace that didn't mean anything to you, even though people spoke your native language? How did you learn the unspoken "rules," build relationships with your co-workers and figure out how to be successful in the work environment? Workstyles has been offered to amazing people from 53 countries in 200 cycles of the program.

We greatly appreciate the support and collaboration of the people who have made this program possible through funding and partnerships in sending students, helping make sure we were meeting the needs, coming to graduation ceremonies and being available to work together in the service of the program participants.

What is WorkStyles®?

WorkStyles is a pre-employment competency-based training for individuals with limited English Language skills. It is designed to provide the opportunity for people to learn skills for getting and keeping a job in the United States in a supportive and challenging environment. The usual format is a two-week, 60-hour intensive course.

Small group discussions, brainstorming, case studies, role plays, lectures, and videotaped exercises are all utilized in the training. While the content includes developing resumes, completing applications, and interviewing for a job, the course is actually about building confidence and self-esteem.

WorkStyles allows people to meet and overcome major obstacles -- they are "empowered" -- as they become proficient at dealing with other more manageable barriers and gain confidence in their ability to do that. Participants are encouraged to take small risks, to do all that they can do in each of the course content areas. Class members develop skills to meet the challenges of the American employment culture and to gain some measure of control over their lives.

WorkStyles Beginnings

Barbara Sample, Spring Institute, Denver, CO

WorkStyles #1 was held in February 1985 with participants from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. The history of WorkStyles goes back to 1984 though. Myrna Ann, Bob Sample, and I met with Charles Ray, a colleague and later a Spring Institute Board member, over lunch at the Three Sons, an Italian restaurant near the original Spring Institute at 50th and Lowell in Denver. Charles, a community mental health professional, developed WorkStyles at the Lakeview Center in Florida in 1981-82 for CETA (welfare) clients. Originally designed for native English speakers, WorkStyles focused on both career and personal effectiveness skills. It was clear we would need to adapt the program for use with non-native speakers, but Charles could see the potential WorkStyles had for refugees who had some of the same challenges to their self-esteem and confidence that CETA clients had. We decided to purchase the franchise for something like \$2,000 and began offering it to refugee participants in 1985.

When we started WorkStyles in 1985, virtually all refugee clients went through the Colorado Refugee Services Program (CRSP). There was definitely a need for pre-employment training for refugees, but there was no system of referrals in place initially. We needed to do a bit of convincing, but the CRSP case managers agreed that we could try WorkStyles with their toughest clients, the ones they were ready to sanction for non-cooperation, refusing to take jobs, hopping from job to job, blowing it once they were on a job. That first group was tough. None of them had been successful at keeping a job, they were defensive, resistant. Underneath the tough exterior, though, people were unsure, they didn't know the cultural rules or the language for getting a job and keeping it. WorkStyles provided them both information and practice. They gained skills and in the process confidence that they could be successful at getting and keeping the next job. The transformation was quite remarkable. We were hooked.

We figure over 2,500 people have gone through the WorkStyles training since it started in 1985. WorkStyles has made a difference in a lot of people's lives. It has made a difference for the participants, but those of us who have been WorkStyles trainers realize how fortunate we are to work with such remarkable people. We have learned so much from them. We are awed by their strength and spirit. We are inspired by their gift of diversity and tolerance. And we know how lucky this country is.

Student Successes

I open a new business this week. I plan to meet one person, and I think I need your help. I will call you for details.

- Igor Pyastolov, July 2006

I have learned more about the United States and how to live here in the nine days of Workstyles than I have in 3 years of living here. I am so grateful to now feel so much better. I will begin a job next week as a day care worker. I was a nurse in Nepal.

- Suku Rai, June 2006

Adrien Mangituka, graduate of WorkStyles #190 in April, was profiled this quarter in the African Refugee Network's national newsletter (published by ECDC). The article was titled, "Congolese Refugee Becomes a 'Must Hire' for ACC Staff." It documented his life in Africa before immigrating to the US as a refugee, and then went on to describe his job at the African Community Center as the Assistant Manager of their Safari Seconds Thrift Store (a venture started with a TANF Grant to serve Level 3 clients).

Two years ago, I came to Denver. Individuals and organizations that welcomed and helped me to become self-sufficient in the United States are always in my mind. The efforts of Spring Institute and its instructors' passion for their students are great. I am grateful to the Spring Institute for your wholehearted support.

- Debello Challa, August 2006

"Every time my husband and I get new jobs, they're always better than the previous ones. We always give credit to WorkStyles for this."

- Mu Mu, a graduate of WorkStyles #183 (September 2005) who was recently hired at Lutheran Family Services as a case manager. Her husband, Win Naing (WorkStyles #178) was recently promoted to assistant manager of the warehouse for United Natural Foods, Inc.

WorkStyles Students' Countries of Origin

1. Afghanistan
2. Albania
3. Armenia
4. Azerbaijan
5. Belarus
6. Bosnia
7. Bulgaria
8. Burkina Faso
9. Burma
10. Burundi
11. Cameroon
12. Colombia
13. Congo
14. Croatia
15. Cuba
16. DRC
17. Ecuador
18. Eritrea
19. Ethiopia
20. Guatemala
21. Guinea
22. Haiti
23. Indonesia
24. Iran
25. Iraq
26. Ivory Coast
27. Kazakhstan
28. Kenya
29. Kosovo
30. Laos
31. Latvia
32. Lebanon
33. Liberia
34. Mauritania
35. Mexico
36. Morocco
37. Myanmar
38. Nepal
39. Pakistan
40. Poland
41. Russia
42. Rwanda
43. Senegal
44. Sierra Leone
45. Somalia
46. Sudan
47. Syria
48. Togo
49. Uganda
50. Ukraine
51. Uzbekistan
52. Venezuela
53. Vietnam

Trainer's Reflections and Hopes for the Future: What do you like about training in WorkStyles?"

This is a very valuable program for newcomers to the United States. It is very flexible; different people learn different things...I did not have such a program when I came to the United States. - *Krassin Gueorguiev, Lead Trainer*

With those that have had limited resources in the past, it's good to show them all the resources available here. - *David Koppers, Trainer*

Training in WorkStyles is like paying back something you have already borrowed. I went through the program and it benefited me a lot. So it's an opportunity for me to help people like me benefit as well and improve their lives. - *Yohannes Mengistu, Program Coordinator*

I get to meet people I never would have met ever in my entire life. We get to provide a service for people that is really needed. That's a fulfilling experience to welcome them into the community. - *Jillian Lettes, Trainer*

I have friends that say, 'I don't know anyone who loves their work like you do.' I see how much [the participants] have to offer our community and how grateful they are that our country has invited them to become new Americans. I love their energy. I love their ability to learn. I love it!

- *Suzanne Saenz, Lead Trainer*

WorkStyles Training of Trainers

WorkStyles is a two-week, intensive, pre-employability skills training designed for non-native English speakers, and Spring Institute frequently conducts a Training of Trainers in conjunction with WorkStyles during the first three days of the second week. The WorkStyles Training of Trainers provides an overview to the WorkStyles program, orients participants to the training manual, gives them a chance to observe the WorkStyles program in action, and offers the chance to practice some of the activities in class with our coaching. As we go through the training, we work together on ways to adapt the program to the needs of the prospective trainers. If you or your agency is interested in the WorkStyles Training of Trainers, please contact Burna L. Dunn, elt@springinstitute.org.

A Poem

by Emily Balikuddembe (a WorkStyles Student)

What can we talk about?
 We have something great to talk about.
 Spring Institute is the talk of the day.
 Where everybody feels at home in every way
 A precious gift to all refugees and asylees.
 WorkStyles classes with smiling teachers,
 From the top to the bottom everybody alike.
 Full of Love, Life, and Compassion.
 Job finding is not hard at the end of the Day.
 Unlimited knowledge is the Crown all the way.
 Long Live Spring institute, Long Live WorkStyles.

<p>ELT Coordinates</p> <p>Mail: Burna Dunn ELT Project Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning 1610 Emerson Street Denver, CO 80218</p> <p>Telephone: (303) 863-0188</p> <p>Fax: (303) 863-0178</p> <p>E-Mail: elt@springinstitute.org</p> <p>Web Page: http://www.springinstitute.org</p>	<p>Other Technical Assistance Providers</p> <p>For contact information on other ORR Technical Assistance providers, please go to www.acf.hhs.gov/program/orr and click on technical assistance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Welfare - BRYCS • Employment - Refugee Works • English Language Training - Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning • Health - Office of Global Health Affairs • Housing - Mercy Housing • Individual Development Accounts (IDA) - ISED • Mental Health - SAMHSA • Microenterprise Development - ISED • Refugee Crime Prevention - ONA • Technical Assistance to Mutual Assistance Organizations - IRC and ISED • Services to Survivors of Torture - CVT • The National Asylee Information and Referral Line - CLINIC
---	---

Compass Points is distributed by the English Language Training Technical Assistance Project pursuant to Grant 90 RB 0005 from the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The views expressed are those of the Spring Institute and may not reflect the view of ORR.



Technical Assistance for
English Language Training Projects
1610 Emerson Street
Denver, CO 80218

PRESORTED STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
DENVER CO
PERMIT NO. 152

Spring Institute for International Studies

ELT

Technical Assistance for
English Language Training Projects
1997-1998

Sponsored by the
Office of Refugee Resettlement

SCANS PLANS PORTFOLIO



Active Listening - Listen, Repeat, Do

by Barbara Sample, Spring Institute for International Studies

Level: Multi-level

Performance Outcomes:

1. Students will use active listening, repeating or paraphrasing what has been said, to confirm understanding.
2. Students will use introductory phrases and rising intonation to ask for clarification.
3. Students will follow one, two, or multi-step instructions.
4. Students will give instructions to another person.

Communication teaching points: Giving and following commands (imperative)

SCANS Competencies:

Interpersonal skills: teaching others
Information: acquiring data, interpreting and communicating
Systems: understanding organizational systems
Basic Skills: reading, speaking, listening
Thinking Skills: knowing how to learn
Personal Qualities: self-esteem, self-management

Classroom configurations: Pairs, small groups, whole class

Materials: Classroom and workplace objects

Procedure:

1. Demonstrate and give commands; have students follow your commands (using Total Physical Response). Initially the commands can be classroom instructions like, "Stand up. Sit down. Open the door. Close the door. Write your name. Use the red marker." (As much as possible, give commands which might be heard on the job like, "Follow me. Have a seat. Fill out this form. When you are finished, put your application on the table.")
2. Introduce *Listen, Repeat, Do* with a volunteer by having one of the more advanced students come to the front of the room. Say, "Listen to what I tell you, repeat what I said, and then do it." Ask your volunteer to repeat what you just said. If he/she repeats the instructions in a way that indicates understanding, say, "Okay. That's right." If not, repeat the process. Then write *Listen, Repeat, Do* on the blackboard or flip chart.
3. Next, give the volunteer two or three step instructions [Listen]. The student restates the instructions [Repeat]. And then the student follows the instructions [Do]. For example, say, "Please stand up, walk to the door, and close the door." The student says, "You want me to stand up, walk to the door and close it?" "That's right." Have the student follow the instructions.

Then, increase the difficulty. Again, as much as possible, give commands which might be heard on the job. For example, "Use a black pen. Write your last name, then write your first name on the application." "Okay, I write my name with this?" (Holds up the blue pen.) "No, use the black pen and write your last name first." "My last name first?" "Yes, write your last name, then your first name." When the person follows the instructions correctly, we always applaud the effort. Give several people a chance to follow your instructions. Vary the number of steps and the difficulty of the instructions based on the level of the individual's language proficiency. (For example, a MELT Level 1 or 2 student can follow one or two step directions when items are within the room; a MELT Level 5 student can follow multi-step directions for procedures outside the room.)

4. Teach introductory phrases like "So I should...", "You want me to ...", "Let me see if I understand...", as well as the use of rising intonation with repeated phrases which indicates a question as in, "My last name first?"

5. Finally, have students give each other instructions to Listen, Repeat, Do in pairs. Note the use of active listening and phrases asking for clarification. If students simply Listen and then Do and skip the feedback step, refer to the words, *Listen, Repeat, Do* which were written on the board. Encourage students to increase the difficulty of the steps if people can follow the instructions correctly without repeating them.

Expansion:

Active Listening - Listen, Repeat, Do Blind Man's Bluff

Blind Man's Bluff is a variation on Listen, Repeat, Do which practices the skills of following directions and asking for clarification in a job safety context.

Materials: Classroom objects to construct an obstacle course; blindfolds for half the class members

Procedure:

1. Demonstrate commands such as *duck, crawl, step over, turn around, step to the left, etc.* by standing with your back to the class so that your left is their left. Have a volunteer stand at the front of the room and follow your commands. Then have everyone follow your commands (Total Physical Response).

2. Blindfold a volunteer. (Please note that some participants will not be comfortable with the blindfold. Many have traumatic experiences associated with being blindfolded. If this is the case, students may simply close their eyes. The activity can also be done with eyes open if necessary.) With the help of the other students, set up an obstacle course with chairs, glasses of water, a yardstick laid across the space between two tables, etc. so that the volunteer does not see the course.

Ask the volunteer to listen to your directions, to repeat them, and then to do what you said. Initially, give one command at a time. Then increase to two step instructions. When the volunteer has gone through four or five obstacles and has completed the course, remove the blindfold so the person can see what he/she accomplished. Repeat the process with another person. Change the obstacles, and this time have different members of the class each give one step instructions.

3. Have people work in pairs, giving and following directions using feedback skills.

4. Debrief the activity with the class. What did they learn about their own communication skills? What about the importance of active listening for safety? When else can they use active listening on the job?

Spring Institute for International Studies

ELT

Technical Assistance for
English Language Training Projects
1997-1998

Sponsored by the
Office of Refugee Resettlement

WorkStyles:

Pre-Employment for the Low Level English
Speaker

By Barbara J. Sample, Vice President
and Director of Education
Spring Institute for International Studies

A year ago I went through customs in Mongolia. I had been handed an immigration card on the plane and painstakingly decoded the Mongolian words in Cyrillic script so I could transfer information from my passport onto the form. I experienced first hand the frustration (and fear brought on by my lack of confidence) that many of our low level students experience when they try to fill out forms in English.

How can people with extremely low level English language proficiency learn the skills to get and keep a job in the United States? When I think of trying to get through a job interview in a second language, or even of attempting to fill out an application in a script I am not familiar with (as I did in Mongolia), the task seems pretty daunting. But there are ways to help our students gain the skills and confidence to accomplish these tasks in English. This article outlines strategies that have helped people get and keep jobs. Activities utilized in WorkStyles, a pre-employment program offered by the Spring Institute, will be used to illustrate some of these ideas.

First, a look at the WorkStyles program: Spring Institute offers a program designed for limited English speakers specifically to address the barriers to learning created by lack of confidence and self-esteem. WorkStyles is a two-week intensive course focusing on pre-employability and personal effectiveness skills, utilizing a competency-based approach. The content includes developing resumes, completing application forms, practicing interviews, and making phone calls about jobs, as well as setting goals, identifying skills, understanding American work culture, and solving problems on the job. This content is the context for learning and acquiring English language skills

WorkStyles sets up a challenging yet supportive environment for learning and employs a variety of strategies which help to reinforce self-confidence by encouraging people to share their knowledge and experience: videotaped role plays, brainstorming activities, skits to demonstrate cross-cultural situations, small-group problem solving, and individual exercises. As people participate in these activities, they build skills, they take risks, and they gain confidence in their ability to handle new, unfamiliar situations.

Now a look at several skills and ways to develop these skills for low level learners. We will briefly discuss Active Listening, Completing Applications, Identifying Skills and Positive Qualities, and Doing Well in Interviews.

Active Listening - Active listening, a deceptively simple yet powerful communication skill, is one of the best ways for limited English speakers to gain confidence in their ability to communicate in English. Active listening is simply the strategy of repeating what has been understood, or giving feedback to confirm understanding. Our students can use this valuable skill not only on the job to follow instructions but also in an interview or on the phone to get clarification.

It is fine for our students to be able to say "Please repeat" or "I don't understand", but these statements often actually stop communication. Active listening can keep the conversation going. Instead of answering "Yes" to the question "Do you understand?" (especially when they really don't), your students

can say, “So, you said” and repeat the question or the instructions. It gives them a way to be responsible for understanding what has been said to them by giving the speaker a chance to clarify anything that was misunderstood.

How can people learn the communication skill of active listening when they don’t speak much English? Consciously teach your students the strategy of repeating what they understand to confirm their understanding. Try Listen, Repeat, Do and Information Gap activities. (See SCANS Plans Portfolio.)

Completing Applications - Applications are especially difficult for low level learners because so much of the vocabulary is uniquely “form language”. In addition, most companies have their own application form making it difficult for students to prepare by following a model. Finally, some companies use an applicant’s ability to fill the form out properly as a way to screen potential employees.

How can we help low level learners with this important task? In general, start with the known and move to the unknown, from the simple to the complex. For example, begin with the oral language for personal information that people already know (*I’m from Russia.*) Link the meaning to the written words which commonly elicit that information on an application form (*country* or *nationality*). Use word and picture cards to give students time to familiarize themselves with the application vocabulary. Then move to reading those words on simple forms and filling in the appropriate personal information. (See SCANS Plans Portfolio.)

Identifying Skills and Positive Qualities - Being able to talk about your skills and positive qualities is very important in applying for a job in the US, but the concept is difficult for people from many other cultures to understand. Why would you say good things about yourself? Other people can say good things about you, but it is rude for you to do it. How can we work with low level learners in this area which involves both language and culture?

Start with skills first. Use a variety of pictures which illustrate jobs and skills, and teach the words for the things your students can do (*sell, clean, cook, fix, cut, etc.*) First, work with oral language, having your students work in pairs to ask and answer the question “What can you do?” Then write the words for the skills and job titles on flip chart pages that can be put up around the room. Add to the list each day so that your students expand their ability to talk and write about themselves.

Then introduce positive qualities by performing short skits which illustrate different qualities like *patient, honest, punctual, neat*. Have students practice in pairs asking the question “What are your strong points?” and answering with sentences like “I am *patient*.”, identifying qualities that are true about them. It is important to acknowledge that saying good things about yourself is a peculiarly American job search phenomenon. It is not considered rude if “selling yourself” is done in a sincere and not proud or aggressive way.

Finally, combine skills and qualities. Have students tell you their previous job experience, skills, and personal qualities in answer to “Tell me about yourself”. For example, “I am a repair man. I can fix TVs, radios, and cassette recorders. I am patient, careful, and dependable.” As people talk about themselves, write their “stories” using the language experience approach. These stories help students read, they provide a model for filling in application forms, and they become a practice sheet for interviews. (See SCANS Plans Portfolio)

Doing Well in Interviews - Getting through a job interview is a challenge for anyone, but it is especially hard for people from other cultures where a formal interview is not required to get a job. The key to preparing low level learners for interviews is to work on it in small steps. In WorkStyles we begin with the introduction. Students start by interviewing another student and introducing that person to the class. The next step is to introduce themselves on video. Next they watch and debrief two model interviews, one “good as gold” and one “awfully awful”. After that we elicit the phrases they should say and actions they should perform during the first part of an interview. Something like the following is usually what gets generated and written on the flip chart:

1. *Hello, my name is _____ .* (The space between the first and last name indicates a definite pause. We work on saying both names clearly and slowly so that someone who is not familiar with the pronunciation has a chance of actually hearing the distinction between the two names and perhaps remembering at least one of them.) [Firm hand shake.] (We exaggerate the difference between a firm handshake, a dead fish and a knuckle cruncher in role plays.)
2. *I'm here to apply for the _____ job.* [Eye contact.] [Sit down after the boss.]
3. *Here is my resume.*

These three phrases are practiced over and over with trainers, in pairs, and at home until the phrases are virtually automatic. We practice answering several questions they might be asked such as “Tell me about yourself.” “How’s your English?” and “What are your strong points.” At this point people are ready for their first video taped interview. Each step getting to this point is small but significant. Subsequent steps are also significant. Ultimately, people complete four video taped assignments, two introductions and two interviews. The challenge is real and the support is substantial. People surprise themselves and inspire others with the barriers they are able to overcome in order to gain the skills for employment. (See SCANS Plans Portfolio)

Conclusion: One of the things our students have lost in their move to this country is control over their own lives. Perhaps the most important ability they have lost is the option to communicate in their own language. In our role as language teachers we have an enormous opportunity to help people gain the skills to become independent and to communicate in English. What we have learned through our work in WorkStyles is that developing skills is an important part of the process of raising self-esteem and increasing self-confidence. And these are the keys to becoming self-sufficient.