

# Research Topics in Adult Basic Education: Speaking and Listening Skills for Non-native English Learners in the Workplace

## Importance of this Research

Literacy Action Network (LAN) conducted Focus Groups with ABE professionals statewide. There is a critical need for research in ABE. The Professional Issues Committee has identified a number of research topics to be pursued by university students. Additional topics are available at the LAN website:

<http://www.literacyactionnetwork.org/>

You are encouraged to use the LAN Professional Issues Committee as a resource and share results to help improve the ABE field. Potential formats for sharing results include posting links to research on the LAN website, attending a Professional Issues Committee meeting or presenting at the annual ABE Summer Institute conference.

## **Research Topic:**

What is the level of importance of speaking and listening skills for non-native English learners in the workplace?

## **Background:**

### *Defining the Issue*

Many skills are taught in English Language Learning classes often without a specific emphasis on speaking and listening. The type of conversations being taught may or may not include workplace conversation. How much classroom emphasis should be placed on workplace speaking skills?

### *Defining the Terms*

ABE = Adult Basic Education; a state and federally funded program through the Department of Education to serve adults wanting to earn their GED, learn English, gain basic literacy skills, and prepare for the world of work or post-secondary education. ABE programs can be found throughout the entire state of Minnesota in schools, correctional facilities and nonprofit organizations.

Non-Native English Language Learner = A population of adults who is born in a country other than the United States and whose first language is not English. Many have little to no formal education from their home countries. This population is also more likely to live in poverty, be unemployed or under-employed.

### *Target Learner Population*

The research should focus on English Language Learners at levels ranging from Pre-Literacy to High Intermediate ABE functioning levels.

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## **Sample research questions:**

- How important are speaking and listening skills for non-native English speakers in job attainment?
- How important are speaking and listening skills in maintaining a job or for a promotion within a job?

## **Resources/ contacts:**

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Adult Basic Education Web Site  
<http://mnabe.themlc.org>

Literacy Action Network Web Site  
[www.literacyminnesota.org](http://www.literacyminnesota.org)

## **Research Results**

Final reports or results will be shared with Literacy Action Network's Professional Issues Committee to increase our knowledge and help improve the ABE field.