Critical needs analysis (NA) recognizes that NAs are subjective and political, and that power differentials exist across multiple sources (Benesch, 1996). This poster reports on the results of a critical NA of adult students’ task needs in an advanced ESL class at a community school. Adult ESL immigrant programs have the potential of fostering individuals’ self-positioning as active members of their adopted communities. To fulfill an empowering role, they would benefit from both task-based and critical approaches to education. The two strands emphasize that students’ needs should be at the heart of the curriculum. We propose multilayered integration of NA and collaboration with students in developing curriculum and instruction at the classroom level.

### Task-based Critical Pedagogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Pedagogy</th>
<th>Task-based Critical Pedagogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational purposes</td>
<td>Educational purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an alternative to oppressive beliefs and practices, and achieve critical consciousness.</td>
<td>Build skills and knowledge necessary to function in society as a language user by “doing” language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build language to express the critical knowledge and to take social action.</td>
<td>Operationalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve students in multiple perspectives by challenging ideologies and practices considered oppressive.</td>
<td>Sequence pedagogic tasks in increasing cognitive complexity, leading to the target task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage learners in critical dialogue that problematize issues in the students’ daily lives.</td>
<td>Language tasks should allow students to shift their attention to the incomprehensible linguistic features.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Learner Needs Analysis Data (themes & quotes)

**Family values:** Parenting, child responsibility, relationship with in-laws, etc.

**Gender roles and discrimination:** Glass ceilings (salaries, job status, responsibilities).

**Language use in family:** Heritage language versus English.

**Co-workers’ personal stories:** Drug use, homelessness, etc.

**Participating in community services:** Submitting quarter designs, volunteer work, etc.

**Community resources:** Getting a state ID and driver’s license, voting, sequencing registration.

**Information on work:** Getting the exact time and location, advertising, contact person.

**Information on how to do work:** Show me how, using illustrations, a computer program, etc.

**Information on how to do work:** Speaking in English, translating the workplace's language into one's own language, asking questions in English.

**Communication at work:** Request for time off from work, clarification on phone to get message correctly, ordering via email versus phone, etc.

**Discussions and dialogues at work:** Asking a question, ordering, getting paid, learning about workplace rules.

**Institutional mission, goals, and learning outcomes are aligned with state-wide “General Learner Outcomes” and National Institute for Literacy’s “Equipped for the Future Standards for Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning.”**

### Discussion and Conclusion

The above diagram shows emerging themes. However, it was only through critical methods, such as dialoguing and in-class interviews, that learners had the opportunity to reveal deeper, higher stakes issues. For example, a student asked about American names, but dialoguing uncovered the fact that she lost her job because she inaccurately recorded a customer’s name, and that she was more interested in how to ask for clarification of information, so as not to make the same mistake and keep her job. Therefore, it is imperative that educators keep in mind that task development, whether it be primarily linguistically or otherwise motivated, may involve more complex intra- and interpersonal issues.

While international students’ needs in academic institutions are mostly constrained by top-down, academic standards, immigrant students need in community adult schools tend to be less academically constrained and are not easily identified through a surface level inventory. Consequently, this study demonstrated that a bottom-up, critical needs analysis requires researchers to voice their concerns through identifying some of this growing population’s more pressing needs. In sum, linguistic, social and cultural competence are intimately intertwined, so issues of identity, empowerment and pragmatics cannot be teased out of the language classroom.

### References