

Introduction to the ESOL/KYR Tool Kit

Dear ESOL Instructor,

You are probably looking at this Know Your Rights and English for Speakers of Other Languages (KYR/ESOL) Tool Kit because you are considering including materials about “human rights” within your English instruction. Thank you for considering using some of these lessons to support your ESOL class. The materials presented herein have been developed by the Boston College Center for Human Rights and International Justice with ESOL teachers at Casa El Salvador and Women Encouraging Empowerment in Massachusetts. They have found that students in their classes bring up feelings and emotions, such as, “being afraid,” “feeling like they don’t know who to trust,” “acting calm,” and/or “engaging in self-silencing” when topics such as these are discussed.

We hope this introduction can provide you with an overview of the Tool Kit and related resources. Likewise, we hope you’ll find helpful lessons from which your class can benefit.

What is the broader context behind the creation of this KYR/ESOL Tool Kit?

The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that as of 2012 over 11.7 million unauthorized migrants resided in the United States. Recent enforcement trends such as increased militarization of the border and Secure Communities (SC), have contributed to the deportation of more than 1.5 million people from the U.S. between 2009 and 2012, and the removal of millions more through various other mechanisms. As a result of harsh policies, many migrants, including those who are undocumented, struggle to support themselves and their families. Many migrants attend ESOL classes in order to better navigate the multiple systems they encounter within the U.S. It’s important to remember that immigration law is extremely complex, particularly for those who do not have proper documents to live in the U.S. Major legal changes since 1996 have made it easier for undocumented migrants to be deported, even for minor issues (e.g., traffic violations are almost a quarter of cases). Increased enforcement programs and resources have subjected many more people to detention and deportation than in the past. For instance, starting in 2008, the Secure Communities program (S-Comm) has meant that the fingerprints of people booked by the police are automatically checked against immigration databases in many communities, which can lead to immigration detention and deportation.

How can instructors handle sensitive discussion regarding discrimination?

In the context of Know Your Rights Workshops that we have facilitated, many migrants discussed how police mistreatment and racial profiling affected their lives. It’s therefore likely that this topic may come up in your classroom. And while many international human rights instruments and local laws prohibit discrimination, many migrants and people of color report that they have been victims of mistreatment and profiling. Here are some tips for how to handle such discussions in your class:

- Validate the experiences that people share in class,
- Provide students with concrete steps they can take to address these issues,
- Engage in community action projects (as a class, as an organization, or as an individual) around these themes.

Depending on the particulars of your classroom environment, you may find yourself slowing down to make sure people are given ample time to talk. You may also find it helpful to facilitate these conversations in the students' native languages if possible.

Why was this KYR/ESOL Tool Kit created?

This Tool Kit was developed to support migrants' English language development while engaging in critical discussions about migrants' rights. It includes various units centered on a range of issues which affect migrants – and especially undocumented migrants - living in the United States. It follows a popular education framework, which builds on the knowledge of adult migrants in ESOL classes. As a popular education method, this Tool Kit is designed to foster critical discussions on social issues raised by participants who can simultaneously develop their oral and written English skills.

How is the Tool Kit structured?

This Tool Kit is composed of units, each including a number of lessons. The lessons contain various activities. These activities can be used independently to cover a given content or rights objective or used as full curricula. The lessons can be intermixed, depending on the teaching agenda. This Tool Kit is just that - a tool kit. It is not meant to replace your existing curriculum, but rather to supplement it. You can choose to use only a lesson (or even one activity) or an entire Unit in your classroom. Each Unit has been created both at a beginner's English level (for those students who are developing their basic English language skills) and at an intermediate English level (for students who have developed their basic English skills and can engage in more complex writing and conversation).

Instructors are provided a separate guide, which includes suggestions for instruction as well as specific language, content, and rights objectives. In addition, FAQ handouts are included to support the instructors and to be used with students as the teacher finds helpful. The FAQ's are meant to give you some background information that may help you guide discussions and answer questions during the lessons. **This is not legal advice** and you should consult with a lawyer or advocacy organization if you have specific questions. The Tool Kit also includes some information that you and your students may find helpful to explore and share with one another while reflecting on how it applies to diverse personal experiences. As with any group, gender and cultural differences are likely to come up (e.g. Do certain groups have more rights? Should they?). As an instructor, you may want to be prepared for and practice responding to a variety of views.

What topics are covered in this KYR/ESOL Tool Kit?

This KYR/ESOL Tool Kit is made up of two units:

- (1) **Basic Human Rights Unit:** This Unit introduces the students to the concept of human rights while exposing them to key tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This Unit's activities creatively engage students in (1) identifying some basic human rights and (2) understanding the need for rights advocacy by and for the immigrant community. The students have varied opportunities to share their perceptions of rights as applied to their diverse needs and experiences. Both the teachers' guide and the FAQ handouts for this unit are meant to guide your instruction pertaining to immigrants' rights in the

U.S. context. You should bear in mind that the notion of rights might be contradictory for some depending on their experiences and identities. For instance, women's rights might conflict with men's rights in some communities or cultures; some students might be undocumented while others might be citizens and thus have different priorities.

- (2) **Police Car Stops Unit:** This Unit introduces the students to their rights in a situation in which they have been stopped by the police while driving. Though the information focuses on the specific challenges an undocumented migrant is likely to face if stopped by the police while driving, much of the information is also relevant to documented migrants and U.S. citizens. The students have opportunities to develop their English vocabulary in the context of role playing in which they also learn how to best act when stopped by a police officer while driving under diverse circumstances (being undocumented, not having a driver's license, etc.). The instructors' guide for this Unit supports teachers in how best to enhance students' dialogues in English while providing cues of appropriate responses, as outlined in the FAQ handouts.

Conclusion

Our team from the Boston College Center for Human Rights and International Justice thanks you for using the Tool Kit. We hope that it invites rich discussion and increases language, content, and rights literacy among your students. We hope you adapt it to your unique classroom environment and share your experiences with us! We can be reached at the following email address: chrij@bc.edu.