

# Welcoming New American Seniors: Learning the Language and Culture of the Workplace

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*Presented by*

*Miriam Burt  
Center for Applied Linguistics*

*Laura Chenven  
Senior Service America, Inc.*

*Christine Takada  
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging*

*Directions: Select the letter that best completes or responds to each item. When you finish, discuss your answers with someone sitting near you.*

1. Research on language learners shows that it take the following length of time for an adult to become proficient in English:

- a. 3-5 years
- b. 5-8 years
- c. 1-3 years
- d. it is difficult to predict the time adults need, because of many factors

2. Which of the following factors may influence the development of oral proficiency and literacy development in adults learning English?

a. age

b. first or native language literacy, educational level

c. attitude towards learning the language

d. all of the above

3. If the workers' native language uses the Roman alphabet (like Spanish), they...

a. will have little trouble reading and pronouncing English, because the alphabet is the same.

b. will need practice in English sound-symbol correspondence.

c. may have an easier time learning to read English than those whose native language does not use the Roman alphabet.

d. both b & c.

4. Which of the following factors may have an impact on communication between immigrant elders and native speakers at the workplace?

a. eye contact, gestures, physical distance between speakers

b. value placed on seniority, previous workplace experience, male and female roles

c. religious background, health issues, views about time, expectations about workplace behavior

d. all of the above

5. With respect to language skills needed at the workplace...

a. there are no commonalities among jobs.

b. all workers need to be able to ask for, give, and follow directions.

c. all workers need to be able to indicate lack of comprehension and ask for help.

d. both b & c are true.

6. To be able to speak English well, immigrant elders must..

a. always speak English, everywhere, at all times on the job and at home with family members.

b. be corrected immediately whenever they make a mistake in English.

c. both b & c

d. none of the above



7. To help immigrant elders on the job, one must...
- a. always speak loudly to them and repeat verbatim everything that one says, until they understand.
  - b. ask them if they understand.
  - c. find ways to let them demonstrate that they understand.
  - d. both a & b

# Change is difficult for everyone

- Immigrants
- Native born workers
- Managers
- Program staff



# Cultural considerations

- Age related roles
- Gender roles
- Formal and informal ways of addressing people
- Time



# Language issues that are a challenge in the workplace

- Slower pace of language learning for seniors
  - Literacy
  - Eyesight
  - Formal and informal language
  - Gender and age related language
- 

# Training and Information to Promote Success (TIPS)

- Understanding Language and Literacy
  - Promoting Good Workplace Practices
  - Promoting Effective Communication (oral and written)
  - Promoting Cultural Understanding
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# Help is on the way

- Hands on approaches to training
- Bi-lingual staff
- Cultural competency as an opportunity not a burden
- Workplace, contextualized language instruction
- Promoting Communicative Activities
  - In services
  - Team building activities
  - Ice breakers

What is your experience?

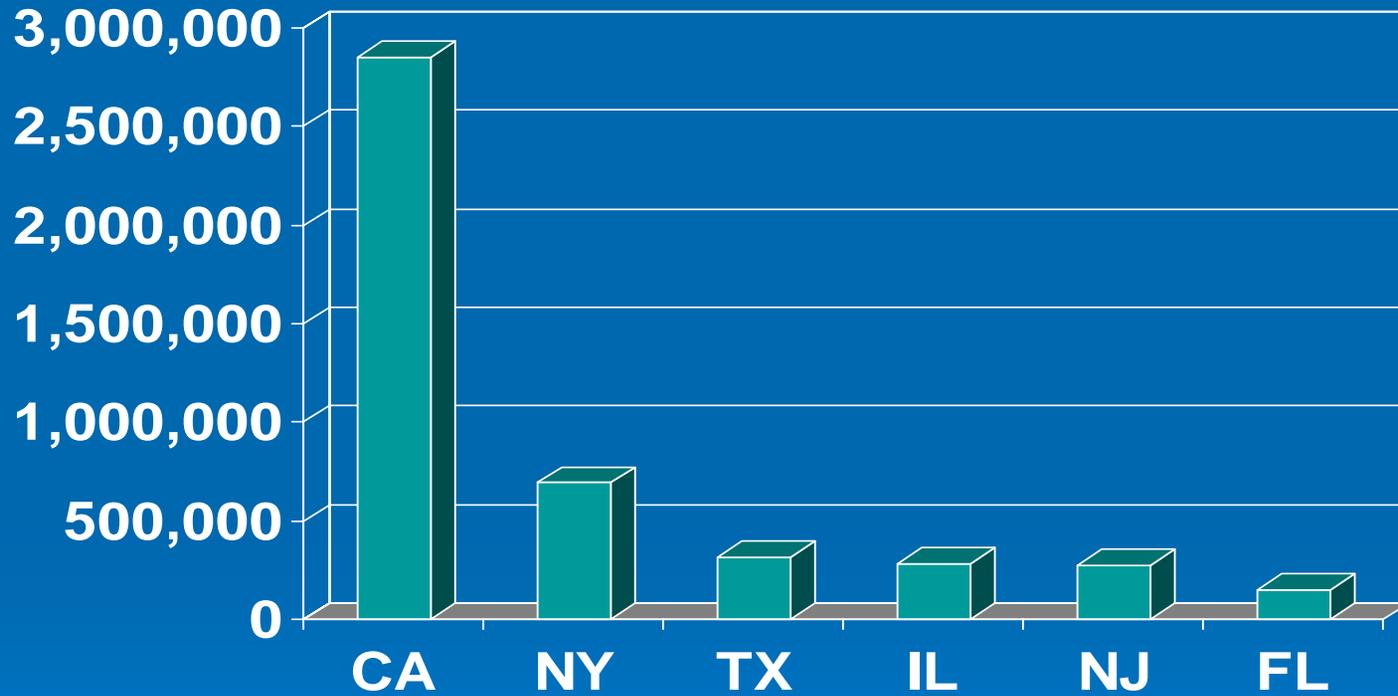


# Foreign born population

- 28.4 million
- 10.4% of total U.S population
- 20% are 55 and older
- 13.8% (65 and older) live in poverty
- Less than 50% (65 and older) have a high school diploma
- More than 11 million households are considered linguistically isolated

(Welcoming New Seniors / 2000 Census)

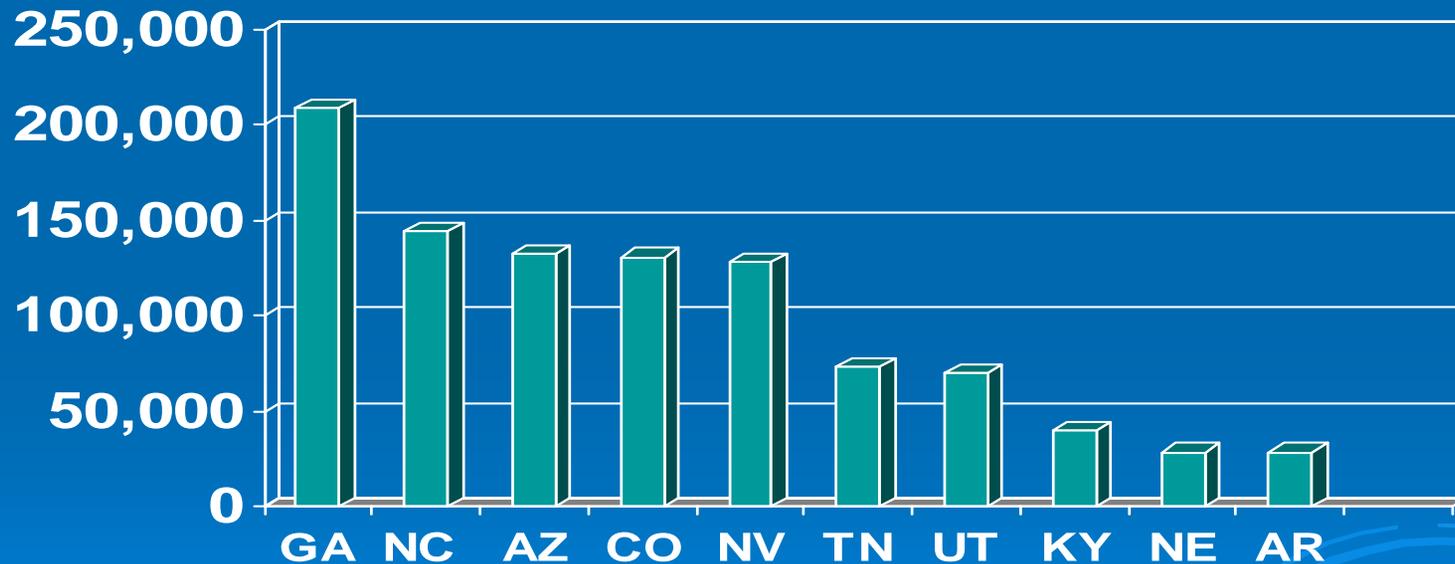
## States with historically high immigrant / refugee concentrations



(Census 1990)

# States with 135% - 274% increase in foreign born population

Asian and Pacific Islander (API) population in these states



(Census 2000)

# NAPCA participants in 2004

Project site	% LEP
New York City	98.58
San Francisco	90.98
Boston	89.16
Orange County	84.85
Seattle	84.82
Chicago	83.85
Houston	66.67
Los Angeles	63.18
Fairfax, VA	60.00
Philadelphia	54.93

# API Ethnicities served in 2004

1. Chinese
2. Korean
3. Vietnamese
4. Filipino
5. Samoan
6. Indian
7. Cambodian
8. Thai
9. Japanese
10. Laotian
11. Burmese
12. Indonesian
13. Bangladeshi
14. Pakistani

# Cultural Values

## Respect for Elders

- Hierarchy
- Obedience

## Family structure

- Extended family
- Traditional gender roles

## Harmony

- Collective unit over the individual
- Conformity versus self-expression
- Indirectness / Modesty / Politeness

## Education

- Priority

# Tips

- Respect each individual
- Don't assume
- Be sensitive to cultural differences
- Remember that “not all differences are cultural”

# Contacts

## **Miriam Burt**

Center for Applied Linguistics  
4646 40th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20016  
(202) 362-0700 (phone)  
(202) 363-7204 (fax)  
[miriam@cal.org](mailto:miriam@cal.org)

## **Laura Chenven**

Senior Service America, Inc.  
8403 Colesville Road, Suite 1200  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3314  
(301) 578-8824 (phone)  
(301) 578-8947 (fax)  
[lchenven@ssa-i.org](mailto:lchenven@ssa-i.org)

## **Christine Takada**

SCSEP National Director  
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging  
1511 Third Avenue, Suite #914  
Seattle, WA 98101  
206-838-8162  
[christine@napca.org](mailto:christine@napca.org)