

## BCED ESL Instructor Publishes Textbook for English Language Learners

Jose V. Torres, adjunct ESL Instructor in the Business and Continuing Education Division, recently published his first textbook, "I Want to Learn English." The book is dedicated to his parents, Jesus Torres and Carlota Torres, who always wished to participate in English learning classes.

With over 15 years' experience working with refugee and immigrants in English language learning classes in Florida and Maryland, Mr. Torres saw the need for a textbook that met the needs of working adult students of English as a Second Language.

Mr. Torres describes the book as a "phonics-based, beginner level textbook for adult and high school English Language Learners. It was developed to enhance the English learning experience using phonics lessons side by side with grammar components, contextual activities, and comprehensive, real-world conversations," developed after five years of trials with hundreds of students prior to publication.

He has worked in both the public school and adult education sectors. "Doug Weimer, BCCC Coordinator of Community ESL Sites, once told me if I couldn't find a textbook to fit all the needs of my students, perhaps I should write one," he said. "I'm not sure if he was joking but it certainly was the nudge that got me seriously thinking about writing a textbook for beginner-level English learners."

He describes the goal of the textbook as twofold; one, to help students establish a strong phonemic awareness in order to improve their literacy and communication skills, and two, to provide concrete data and perpetuate serious conversation among professionals and intellectuals in the field of linguistics on the critical importance of teaching phonics to adult English learners, especially at the beginner level.

The son of migrant workers, Jose's personal story is itself one that touches and inspires as he shares that he was the last one of a brood of eight children. "All of my siblings were born in different cities and different states because my parents moved around depending on the seasons and what crops were being harvested," he said. "As a result, my siblings all dealt with interrupted education and none of them graduated high school. By the time I was born, my family had settled in south Florida in a farm town called Homestead. There, my family could work on the farms year round. My mother told me I had to finish high school, but my siblings all told me I had to reach higher."

Initially a student of classic literature and Shakespeare, Jose remarked that the demand for quality ESL instructors opened the door to what has become a lifelong commitment to teaching English to both school children and adults. Says Jose, "I guess I was lured in by the career opportunity, but once I set my feet in this field, I realized why God put me in this role. I cannot see myself doing anything else but this work."

Speaking again on his childhood, Jose reflected, "Luckily, I was spared the misfortune of relocating from season to season, but my siblings have shared many stories with me. There was never any real comfort or sense of belonging. I didn't dwell on the dread, though. Instead I kept my head in the books."

Jose recounted his parents' reaction to the publication of new textbook: "Well, both parents expressed genuine joy. My father just got his first copy last week and called me on the phone. He was so thrilled; I could hear him getting choked up. He went straight to my uncle's house and within hours I was getting messages from my aunt and other family members with whom I hadn't been in contact in some time. I would say they are proud of me."

He concluded, "I see this publication as merely a beginning. My intention is to continue researching and improving strategies designed to teach English to non-native speakers. I believe monumental efforts can be made that will include collaboration with neuroscientists, linguists and educators. It is my aspiration to be in the mix of that collaboration."