Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice

An Instructor Handbook

Developed for instructors teaching English to adult newcomers in Ontario

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Contents

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Introduction

Welcome to *Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice, An Instructor Handbook*.

This handbook was developed for LINC and Adult ESL instructors in government-funded language training programs in Ontario to help them apply their professional learning to day-to-day teaching. It is ultimately intended enhance professional learning and improve outcomes for learners. To this end, it presents a practical and reflective approach to examining teaching practices in light of the impact they have on learners.

Two cornerstones of this handbook are an emphasis on job-embedded professional development and an approach to exploring classroom practice that is rooted in reflective methods.

As its name suggests, job-embedded professional development (JEPD) is professional learning that is "embedded" in an instructor's day-to-day work. It can happen alone or in collaboration with others. One of its key distinguishing features is that it emerges from the challenges and issues of day-to-day teaching. In addition, the JEPD process makes a direct connection between professional learning and its application to the classroom in order to improve instruction. It includes, but is not limited to, discussion with others, peer coaching, mentoring, team teaching, instructor study groups and action research.

Reflective practice and action research complement JEPD and often form a large part of quality JEPD. Both are rooted in classroom experience and the challenges and issues posed by groups of actual learners. In reflective practice, the emphasis is on improving instruction by exploring components of instruction and the effects they have on learners. Action research emphasizes following a systematic cycle of "planning, acting, observing and reflecting on an issue or problem in order to improve practice."1 Not surprisingly, these three activities often overlap.

This publication was informed by guiding principles that are intended to ensure its quality and relevance to LINC and Adult ESL instructors in Ontario:

- Professional learning is relevant to and applied to the instructor's individual teaching practice.
- Instructors are viewed as the local experts in their own classrooms, able to reflect on and explore the findings of SLA and TESL research in light of their local context and experience.
- JEPD activities are aligned with the principles inherent in the Canadian Language Benchmarks.
- Instructors' active engagement with professional learning is particularly beneficial when it includes opportunities to explore and evaluate instructional strategies through experimentation in the classroom and focuses on evidence provided by learners.

[1] Farrell, 2007, p. 94.

Contents of the handbook

The development of this handbook was informed by both a review of research and professional literature and extensive consultation with Ontario language training administrators. The literature review provided a base of understanding regarding the key concepts, such as quality professional development, job-embedded professional development and reflective practice. The consultations provided insights into the current professional development landscape of LINC and Adult ESL instructors in Ontario.

The handbook consists of four chapters:

1 The Professional Development Landscape in Ontario

This chapter outlines key forms of professional development currently available to LINC and Adult ESL instructors in Ontario and features promising PD practices from Ontario language training providers.

Chapter 1 is included to offer readers an overview of the professional development landscape in Ontario as well as strategies for connecting PD activities to daily instructional practice.

2 A Reflective Method

This chapter presents a reflective method for moving professional knowledge to classroom practice. It describes the approach and provides practical tools that facilitate a methodical exploration of professional learning, instructional practices and their impact on learners.

3 Learning from SLA and TESL Literature

This chapter offers a series of brief summaries of TESL research on topics that have been identified as high-interest by instructors. The summaries emphasize practical ways to integrate research findings into classroom practice, and provide links to resources for further exploration.

Chapter 3 is included to support professional learning that considers TESL and SLA research literature as it is connected to the CLB and classroom practice.

4 Practices and Resources for CLB-based Planning

This chapter provides brief descriptions of key practices and CLB-referenced planning resources in government-funded language training in Ontario. Chapter 4 is included to provide an overview of the instructional context in which professional learning is developed and applied.

Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice

An Instructor Handbook

Chapter 1

The Professional Development Landscape in Ontario

Chapter 1

The Professional Development Landscape in Ontario

Introduction

Overview

This chapter describes current professional development activities for Ontario LINC and Adult ESL instructors, and highlights strategies for moving professional learning to classroom practice. It is based on a review of existing opportunities in Ontario, the research literature, and province-wide consultations with language training providers in Ontario. It presents:

- An overview of professional development opportunities most readily available to LINC and ESL instructors in Ontario
- Examples of promising practices of various Ontario language training providers that aim to maximize the benefits of various types of PD
- Strategies for moving professional learning to classroom practice

In keeping with the focus of this handbook, there is an emphasis on job-embedded professional development. The direct connection of PD to an instructor's own teaching practice makes job-embedded PD a promising approach to professional learning and development.

Good to know

Job-embedded professional development is "learning that occurs as educators engage in their daily work activities." It can be both formal and informal and includes, but is not limited to, discussion with others, peer coaching, mentoring, study groups and action research.

(Wood & Killian, 1998, p. 52)

PD and LINC and ESL instructors in Ontario

Job-embedded professional development is well-suited to the profile of LINC and adult ESL instructors in Ontario—in general, a well-educated, experienced group of instructors with part-time, contractual instructional assignments.

Instructor profile

Survey data of LINC and Adult ESL instructors[1] indicate that in general, instructors in Ontario are a well-educated and experienced group. Virtually all have formal ESL qualifications, almost 90 per cent have a bachelor's degree (a requirement of TESL Ontario accreditation), and about 25 per cent have a master's degree. 40 per cent of LINC and Adult ESL instructors have more than 10 years of teaching experience, and another 20 per cent have more than 5 years. Approximately 85% of instructors are female and on average, in their late forties.

Survey data also indicate that many work in contractual and part-time positions. A 2010 evaluation of the LINC program by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) CIC acknowledged that "a long standing issue in the field is the temporary or contractual nature of the teaching positions"[2] Indeed, a 2009 survey of LINC and Adult ESL instructors found that 50 per cent worked 15 hours or less a week.

Many Ontario LINC and ESL instructors currently access a range of professional development opportunities, such as conferences, workshops, newsletters,

[1] Current data are from the Post TESL Certificate Training Framework Project, 2011; the 2000 data are from PowerAnalysis, 2000.

[2] CIC Evaluation Division, 2010.

journals, networking events, mentoring and in-house support from colleagues and supervisors. Some of these forms of PD are outlined in more detail in this chapter.

By far the most commonly reported forms of professional development offered to LINC and ESL instructors are conferences and stand-alone workshops, with TESL Ontario conferences, TESL Ontario affiliate conferences, employer-organized workshops and PD events reported most often (in order of frequency).

Instructors' PD preferences[3]

A 2011 survey that focused on Ontario instructors' perspectives on professional development identified four key factors that motivate instructors to pursue professional development activities, and five professional development activities that have the greatest impact on practice, as listed in the chart below. The province-wide consultations that were conducted to inform this publication confirm some of these findings. In interviews with administrators and instructors, a recurring theme was instructor interest in time for professional sharing.

Motivating factors for PD	PD activities with greatest impact
→ Improve teaching → Get inspired → Try out new strategies → Learn from experts in the field	→ Meet with other instructors to discuss and support each other's teaching → Independent reading related to the field → Complete an Adult ESL-related course leading to a degree, diploma or certificate → Attend a TESL conference → Develop curriculum materials

Learner priorities

Of over 7,500 learners surveyed in an Ontario Adult ESL/FSL non-credit learner survey, 62% reported speaking as the skill they most want to improve (18% reported listening, 16% writing, 4% reported reading).

In the LINC program and the Adult ESL program in Ontario, the most frequently mentioned suggestion for improvement (among surveyed learners) related to more in-class conversation.

(Adult non-credit ESL/FSL non-credit learner survey: 2010; CIC Evaluation Division, 2010)

Instructors report a need for professional development in a wide range of topics. There is a fair degree of agreement on the topics of priority across different surveys of instructors' preferences. For example:

- A 2011 survey of 900 Ontario LINC and adult ESL instructors[4] ranked the top five content areas as:
  - Teaching pronunciation
  - Implementing language assessment in the classroom
  - Developing curriculum
  - Teaching advanced-level speaking skills
  - Using technology inside and outside of the classroom
- LINC program evaluations have highlighted the need for PD regarding the needs of ESL literacy learners and learners with special needs.[5]

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[3] Survey data drawn from Post TESL Certificate Training Framework Project, 2011, and CIC Evaluation Division, 2010, p. 13.

[4] Post TESL Certificate Training Framework Project, 2011, p. 6.

[5] Howard Barton & Associates, 2006; Jangles Productions, 2006.

Barriers to engaging in professional development[6]

The professional development experiences of LINC and ESL instructors are influenced by the nature of the field and its funding structures. A scan of the literature has identified a number of challenges to LINC and adult ESL instructors' engagement with PD. Challenges frequently cited include instructors' lack of time and the often part-time nature of employment in the field. The following structural characteristics contribute to this time-related pressure on instructors:

- Continuous intake classes: Over half of surveyed[7] instructors reported continuous intake has an impact on the progress of learners. For instructors with literacy learners, this percentage was much higher (80 per cent).
- Contractual nature of employment: A minority of LINC instructors (39 per cent) are permanent employees, with the others mostly employed in temporary or contractual positions, often with more than one contract at a time. This implicitly impacts on time available for PD.
- Part-time nature of employment: Recent data suggest that fewer than 50 per cent of instructors have full-time positions (defined as 25 teaching hours or more per week).[8]

Profile of an average LINC class in one term:

Begins with 17 learners

- 9 new learners enroll throughout the term
- 6 drop out
- 2 are transferred to other classes
- Instructor finishes the term with 18 learners

(CIC Evaluation Division, 2010)

In a study of 900 participants,[9] Ontario LINC and ESL instructors ranked the following five factors as the most significant barriers to their participation in PD, four of which are time-related:

- The need to travel outside their local area
- Family commitments
- Conflicts with their work schedules
- The requirement to pay fees
- Having no free time outside work hours

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6 Literature reviewed includes CIC Evaluation Division, 2010; Cray, 1997; Haque & Cray, 2010; Labaree, 2003; Post TESL Certificate Training Framework Project, 2011.

7 CIC Evaluation Division, 2010.

8 Post TESL Certificate Training Framework Project, 2011.

9 Post TESL Certificate Training Framework Project, 2011.

Job-embedded PD as a promising practice

As its name suggests, JEPD is professional development that is "embedded" into the day-to-day work of an instructor. It can be defined as "learning by doing, reflecting on the experience, and then generating and sharing new insights and learning with oneself and others." 10 Common examples of job-embedded PD activities include action research, study groups, mentoring, reflective practice and coaching.

One of the goals of this handbook is to raise awareness about the potential of job-embedded forms of professional development. In fact, LINC and Adult ESL instructors in Ontario were already showing a strong preference for job-embedded PD when they ranked "Meet with other instructors to discuss and support each other's teaching" as their highest-impact professional development activity."11 Research has shown that the best professional learning occurs when instructors collaborate with their peers, and an additional benefit of this collaborative learning is that it can counteract the reality of teaching as a somewhat isolated profession (OLNS, 2007).

Always, I think, teachers talking to teachers is the best PD…the most beneficial, the most meaningful, because they know their local needs and they know their circumstances.

Ontario language training provider administrator (Dec. 12, 2011)

The chart below offers a summary of the contrasts between traditional forms of PD and job-embedded PD.

Models of Professional Development[12]

Primary goal	*Increase teacher knowledge, skills and teaching competency; introduce new instructional models or methodologies*	*Improve student learning, help instructors with specific teaching problems they face*
Location	*Mostly off-site*	*Mostly at the instructional site*
Common format	*Workshops, seminars, conferences*	*Study circles, practitioner research, inquiry projects, mentoring, team teaching*
Content	*Range of knowledge and skills instructors should know/be able to do (competencies, special issues, new approaches to teaching, using new curricula)*	*Student thinking and learning (examining student work or consulting learners to gain insight into their needs and how to improve instruction), teaching problems*
Application of content	*Often left to the instructor to undertake after the PD has been delivered*	*Application is part of JEPD, so occurs simultaneously with learning*

There are a number of reasons why JEPD makes sense. One of the most obvious is that it is immediately relevant to an instructor's interests and needs. JEPD is "based on the assumption that the most powerful learning is that which occurs in response to the challenges currently being faced by the learner and that allows

10 Wood & McQuarrie, 1999, p. 52.

11 Post TESL Certificate Training Framework Project, 2011.

for immediate application, experimentation, and adaptation on the job."[12]

Most models of JEPD occur over longer periods of time than workshops or conferences and allow instructors the chance to apply new knowledge in the classroom and, often, to get feedback on how that application goes. Ultimately, analyses of research findings in professional development support the JEPD model. "Research that finds changes in teacher practice and, in some cases, student learning, supports the conclusion that: Intensive professional development, especially when it includes applications of knowledge to teachers' planning and instruction, has a greater chance of influencing teaching practices and, in turn, leading to gains in student learning."[13]

Although the evidence supporting JEPD is strong, this handbook is not advocating that it replace traditional PD. Rather, the goal of this handbook is to raise awareness about how forms of JEPD might be used creatively along with traditional PD. The sections that follow include an overview of common forms of professional development available to LINC and Adult ESL instructors along with suggestions on how to maximize the benefits of all forms of PD. Many of these suggestions have been informed by consultations with administrators and instructors across Ontario.

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[12] Sparks & Hirsh, 1997, p. 52, as cited in Zepeda, 2012, p. 125.

[13] Emphasis in original, Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2007, p. 9.

Forms of Professional Development

Conferences and workshops

‣TESL Ontario

The annual TESL Ontario conference is one of the most popular sources of professional development for Ontario LINC and ESL instructors. The year 2012 will mark the 40th anniversary of the conference, which attracted over 1,500 delegates in 2011, making it one of the largest—if not the largest—gatherings of members of the TESL field in Canada. The conference offers a variety of opportunities for professional learning over a three-day period, including keynote speeches, panel discussions, a research symposium, a technology fair, an extensive publisher exhibit area, and hundreds of sessions on a variety of topics. Related social events, such as the annual dinner and evening outings, offer an opportunity to network with colleagues from around the province.

The conference is open to anyone to register; however, the fees can be a barrier to participation for instructors. Funding is provided by both the federal and provincial governments to heavily subsidize the conference fees for several hundred LINC and adult ESL instructors. Local resources and ways to access support vary widely, so it is a good idea for instructors to become familiar with their employer's policies regarding support well in advance of the conference, which usually takes place in Toronto in the fall.

Instructors who are unable to attend the conference in person can access a range of podcasts of selected conference sessions. Credit in the form of PD hours is granted for viewing podcasts, and can be applied towards maintaining TESL Ontario certification at a ratio of two hours of podcast viewing to one hour of PD. In addition, presenter handouts from the previous year's conference are available.

To learn more

Visit the Conference section of the TESL Ontario website. It includes information about the TESL Ontario conference, including details about upcoming conferences, past conference reports, session podcasts and presenter handouts.

www.teslontario.net

Did you know?

To maintain Ontario TESL certification, instructors must log at least five hours of eligible professional development activities per year. Eligible professional development activities are listed on the TESL Ontario website (in the accreditation section).

It is not required by TESL Ontario to submit proof of these five hours. However, each year a number of instructors are randomly selected for an audit and are required to provide proof of their professional development hours. Ensure that you receive and keep certificates issued by the conferences and workshops you attend.

TESL Ontario affiliate conferences

TESL Ontario affiliates are regional volunteer organizations for LINC and ESL instructors that facilitate PD opportunities and communication amongst their membership. There are 12 affiliates to TESL Ontario around the province of Ontario. A membership with TESL Ontario includes a membership with the affiliate the instructor selects on his or her TESL Ontario membership application.

TESL affiliates are listed on the Affiliates section of the TESL Ontario website, with contact information.

Each TESL affiliate offers at least one conference or professional development event annually, such as: an employment evening with tips on what TESL employers are looking for (TESL Toronto); a best practices sharing session with a used book sale (TESL Kingston); a technology PD event addressing smart boards, wikis, and PowerPoint (TESL London); a full-day conference with workshops and a publisher display (TESL North York).

TESL Ontario Affiliates

- TESL Durham
- TESL Hamilton-Wentworth
- TESL Kingston
- TESL London
- TESL Niagara
- TESL North York/York Region
- TESL Northern Region
- TESL Ottawa
- TESL Peel/Halton/Etobicoke
- TESL Toronto
- TESL Waterloo/Wellington
- TESL Windsor

The benefits of getting involved in a local TESL affiliate include gaining access to PD that is geographically accessible, networking with colleagues who likely live and work in the area, learning about local employment opportunities, and having a stronger voice in the PD offerings.

Getting involved with an affiliate can include:

- Checking the website for news or upcoming events
- Attending a PD event
- Contacting a conference committee member to offer suggestions, or to volunteer at a conference
- Joining the executive board of the affiliate
- Delivering a workshop or presentation at a PD event or conference

Workshops (employer-arranged)

Many language training providers arrange for workshops and presentations to support LINC and ESL instructors' learning. The provision of these workshops varies from employer to employer and is heavily dependent on available resources for professional development.

Here are a few examples that illustrate the range of employer-arranged workshop opportunities that existed at the time of publication:

- Monthly workshops that an instructor is paid to attend for up to five hours (additional time attending workshops is voluntary and unpaid)
- Monthly workshops where an instructor has the option to be paid up to five hours to prepare a presentation to share her or his expertise with colleagues
- Various types of sharing time arranged by employers; this may be a brief sharing of best practices during a staff meeting, or longer meetings during unpaid time
- For school board language training providers, providing LINC and Adult ESL instructors access to workshops for the K-12 sector when relevant

Creative partnerships between language training providers (especially small ones in areas outside of large urban centres) to share PD workshops across organizations to reduce costs.

Language training providers are particularly concerned that the PD they offer is relevant to instructors. Some ways in which providers have consulted with instructors to ensure this relevance include:

- Formal surveys
- Informal requests for preferences from supervisors
- Requests for input during staff meetings or in newsletters
- Surveys after workshops to allow instructors to rate the relevance of the content to their classroom practice

While PD offerings vary from employer to employer, by offering input into the content an instructor can help ensure that the available PD is relevant and has practical applications to his or her instructional context.

Maximizing learning from conferences and workshops

There are a number of ways in which instructors can maximize the knowledge they gain from conferences and workshops. Below are some suggestions that can be used alone or with colleagues.

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

- *Decide on the sessions you want to target*

  Find out when the conference program will be released. Use that as a deadline to identify one or two focus areas for your conference learning.

- *Expand your coverage*

  If there are conflicting sessions you'd like to attend, strategize with a colleague. Together, you can cover more ground and then share the session's resources and key take-home points afterwards.

- *Come prepared*

  Based on the descriptions of the sessions you will be attending, take a few minutes to jot down questions that are relevant to your classroom context. During the session, check whether or not your questions are addressed; there may be an opportunity to ask them.

DURING THE CONFERENCE

- *Talk to the presenter*

  Presenters often have more material to share than there is time for. If your question/s were not addressed in the session, stay afterwards and talk to the presenter. Alternatively, contact the presenter later (if he/she has shared contact information), or leave your email address with the presenter along with your question(s) or area(s) of interest.

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

- *Spread the news*

  Many training providers encourage instructors to share the highlights of their conference learning with others. Review the following list for options you could suggest or undertake on your own.

  - Allot some or all of a staff or team meeting for conference sharing (see the case studies below on Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services and the YMCA of Western Ontario).
  - Place a copy of the most useful handout you received from the conference with your name on it in a folder in the staff room for others to flip through. If someone has a question about the session, they will be able to ask you about it.
  - View a podcast of a particularly useful session together in a staff meeting.
  - Use a workplace electronic environment for sharing best session/s attended or handouts with colleagues.

- *Explore further and apply learning to your instruction*

  If you've discovered a new approach, technique or instruction strategy, you may want to explore it further or experiment with trying it in your classroom. Chapter 2 presents a "reflective method" that you can use to try out an idea, either on your own or with a colleague.

An example from the field…

Using staff meetings for conference sharing:
Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services

Staff at Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services are encouraged to participate in professional talk on a regular basis, including the sharing of new resources, best practices, or anything "outstanding" that they want others to know about. This forum was facilitated by their previous LINC contract, which allowed for paid time to meet for 45 minutes every month.

The TESL Ontario conference was the particular focus of a meeting in which instructors were asked to give a brief summary of the highlights of the workshops they had attended. As one instructor recalled, "that was a very, very good activity. Because we could attend, let's say four or five workshops a day, and the other colleagues attended another four or five workshops. And then we shared the outcome of each and [especially] the more interesting ones. That was a really good follow-up discussion." Handouts from all sessions were also copied and distributed to all instructors.

But the sharing of that new knowledge didn't stop there. One presentation inspired all the instructors to get involved in a new initiative to create a portable school library on a cart. Spreading the word about the library at a recent open house led to the donation of dozens of books, adding substantially to their collection. Interestingly, when the instructors' colleagues at the agency's other location heard about this initiative, they, too, started their own portable library for learners. As an instructor concludes, "Really, good news spreads!"

An example from the field…

After-hours PD meetings: YMCA of Western Ontario

Every few months, LINC instructors at the YMCA of Western Ontario know they will have a chance to meet for professional development. The sessions are held after paid work hours from 5–7 pm.

One session requested by instructors is the opportunity to share something learned at the TESL Ontario conference with colleagues. The only rule for this PD is that you must bring something and be active. As the director says to the instructors about that session, "You ARE the PD!" Overall, these sessions are well attended. Other events have included an ESL Literacy night and a session with an invited speaker. One benefit of this initiative has been increased communication between the four LINC sites, because the instructors are more aware of the in-house expertise amongst their colleagues in specific areas. The director adds, "We're not operating in a silo anymore: there's much more sharing."

Courses and additional credentials

Post-TESL-certificate training (PTCT)

Instructors in government-funded language training programs teach in a rapidly changing field. Access to appropriate professional learning opportunities and resources best positions instructors to respond to shifting learner demographics and government priorities.

In 2011, this need was addressed in Ontario with *Post-TESL Certificate Training* (PTCT). PTCT offers Ontario instructors opportunities to extend their knowledge in content areas that have been identified as high priority through Ontario-wide consultation.

PTCT is guided by a set of standards that govern the design and implementation of training in specialized content areas. These standards were developed to ensure that training design and delivery are of high quality and relevant to government-funded language training instructors in Ontario.

Many LINC and ESL instructors already have a variety of professional development opportunities available, including conferences, newsletters, journals, workshops, networking events and in-house support from colleagues and administrators. PTC Training provides opportunities for professional growth that are distinct and complementary to current opportunities. PTCT differs from current professional development in the following ways:

- It is structured and standardized and lasts 25 to 35 hours.
- It offers an opportunity to explore research and theory that are directly connected to the instructional context of government-funded language training in Ontario, with a focus on the practical application of new knowledge to the classroom.
- It is recognized through specialized accreditation; instructors successfully completing PTC training will have it recognized on their TESL Ontario accreditation as an additional qualification.

Eligible PTCT participants

To be eligible to take PTCT, an instructor must:

- Have completed a TESL Certificate from a TESL Ontario-accredited institution or have TESL Ontario Accreditation
- Have a minimum of 600 hours’ experience teaching adults in ESL training programs

Available PTCT courses

At the time of this publication, three accredited training courses were being offered:

- LearnIT2Teach, Phase 4
- Advanced Pedagogical Grammar
- PD Partner Training

The offerings are continually updated on the TESL Ontario website in the accreditation section.

Fees and eligibility requirements for courses will vary (with some at no cost) and will be determined by the training provider. The training location and modality (online, face-to-face, blended) can also vary.

To learn more

Visit the Post TESL Certificate Training section on the TESL Ontario website. It is continually updated with details on available training:

www.teslontario.net/accreditation/ptct

Master's degree as professional development

According to a recent evaluation of the LINC program, a third of current LINC instructors hold a master's degree.[14] Many others who teach LINC or ESL choose to pursue a master's degree as a form of professional development while they are working.

Considering a master's degree as professional development

There are a number of factors to weigh when considering whether or not to pursue a master's degree, such as:

- Financial resources and time: The financial investment necessary to complete a graduate degree is significant. Many graduate programs require two years of full-time study (or equivalent). Tuition can be as high as $8,000 per year for full-time and over $2,000 for part-time studies. Online study options may increase the flexibility of study and reduce costs.

  While part-time studies allow a student to earn income, part-time status may limit access to some university resources, such as funding for scholarships and bursaries. Working will limit the time available to take advantage of seminars and other resources offered on campus.

- Education requirements: Many master's degrees require a four-year bachelor's degree to apply. Not having this already will involve upgrading before submitting an application.
- Benefits of the master's degree on completion: Weighing the potential benefits of holding a master's degree includes considering whether it will offer improvement in earnings or in employment opportunities.
- Application of learning to current instructional context: Universities vary in terms of how "applied" their master's programs are. Some instructors enjoy learning more of the theory behind language learning, preferring to make connections to their practice on their own; others prefer a program with a stronger grounding in its practical application to the classroom or work context.

[14] CIC Evaluation Division, 2010.

It's worth researching the merits of a graduate degree before undertaking one. As part of this research, it can be helpful to talk to colleagues, staff at the university registrar's office, administrative staff, professors, and current or past students of the targeted program about the pros and cons of graduate study for LINC and ESL instructors. To locate students, you can ask administrative staff to connect you with current students, visit the campus (if possible), or search the website for student organizations whose members may be able to connect you with students in the program.

Applying a master's degree to your practice

There are a number of strategies that can help you assess how close a connection there is between a master's program and your current teaching practice. For example:

BEFORE THE DEGREE

- Review the course offerings closely: to what extent would you find the content helpful to your teaching?
- Find out how often courses are offered. This can affect your ability to complete certain program requirements in a timely way or access a course you particularly want to take.
- Speak to professors in the program about the extent to which course assignments can be used to explore issues directly related to your teaching.
- Speak to colleagues who are or were in a master's program program about their experience.
- Find out if the degree requires coursework only or if you need to complete a thesis. If the coursework is less immediately connected to your instructional context, consider the thesis option that allows you to conduct original research or explore a topic of interest in a major research paper.
- Consider what options are available to take courses in other areas, such as adult education, that could be helpful in your work.

AFTER THE DEGREE

- Consider how you can share what you've learned. Conference presentations or articles in journals or newsletters can help you share your learning and its application.
- You may want to use the "reflective method" in Chapter 2 of this handbook to try out small changes in your teaching and reflect on how they impact your learners.

Interested in Master's studies? Possible questions to explore

With yourself

- Why do I want to pursue this degree? How will it benefit me or my teaching?
- What resources can I draw on for support (e.g., partner, financial, passion for learning)?
- What do I need to know to select the program that's best for me (e.g., full-/part-/flex-time, online, funding support, program content)?

With program administration

- How long does the degree take to complete (for full-time, part-time)?
- How do funding opportunities differ for full- and part-time students?
- What teaching context do most students come from (EFL,ESL, K-12…)?
- What opportunities are there to connect what I'm learning to work?

With current students or graduates

- How long will/did the degree take you to complete?
- What resources are you/did you draw on to support your studies?
- Is there anything you know now that you wish you'd known at first?
- What opportunities are/were there to connect your studies to your work?
- Do you feel this program was/is the right choice for you? Why?
- How are your Master's studies impacting on your teaching now?
- What advice would you give to someone considering this program?

Job-embedded Professional Development

▸Orientation programs

Sometimes called "New Teacher Induction Programs," orientation programs can help provide newly hired instructors with a strong start. Each organization has its own culture, structures and valued teaching skills; an orientation program can introduce a new hire to key policies, procedures, performance expectations and core teaching skills valued by the organization. Some induction programs have an element of support that includes meetings with a mentor or discussions in an online environment. Below are some strategies for accessing various kinds of support that may be offered by employers:

- If the organization does *not* have a formal orientation program, ask if they would be willing to pair you informally with a more experienced "buddy" for brief orientation conversations.
- Ask if there is a program supervisor or curriculum resource staff person who is available to provide some orientation support (e.g., see the case study that follows of the TCDSB orientation program for new hires).
- Ask your new employer if they offer any teaching-related resources to their instructors. (See the case study that follows on using an online environment for posting resources for new hires at the Centre for Skills Development and Training.)

For experienced instructors

Consider volunteering to support a newly hired instructor with a few conversations or emails to answer questions. If your employer is willing to establish this as a formal program, you may have this contribution to your workplace recognized.

An example from the field…

Supporting new hires with mock lessons:
Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)

A TCDSB supervisor noticed newly hired instructors facing challenges in their classrooms, and decided to expand an existing 75-minute orientation for new instructors to include a two-hour mock teaching session. The session would allow new instructors to support each other with feedback in addition to receiving support from the program supervisor. She explains that the intention behind the expanded orientation is to "make things easier for [new teachers] before they set foot in one of our classrooms."

One instructor observed that she has a tendency to prepare more material than needed and that often, she needed to go more slowly and reduce the content. "During the mock lessons, I repeated the mistake of over-preparing for the estimated period of time and this was brought to my attention," she said. "I've taken this advice and have been trying to implement it. I realize it has been beneficial to me personally and to my learners."

Another participating instructor reported that the mock lesson allowed her to see what she was doing well, and to get other ideas about how to teach the lesson. "A few suggestions were provided on how the lesson could be improved, and I really appreciated this as well. It made me realize how sometimes we get fixated on certain exercises or methods of delivering material, and due to time constraints or inflexibility, rarely introduce new things into our teaching. This will definitely help me diversify my teaching."

An example from the field…

Using technology to support new hires:
The Centre for Skills Development and Training

The Intranet of the Centre for Skills Development and Training has become a welcome resource for new hires. It contains an online employee handbook as well as resources shared by experienced instructors across five sites in Halton.

The online handbook provides background information on immigration, principles of adult education, guidelines for best practices in language instruction, tips for planning, tips for creating a positive classroom environment and much more. Along with these resources are more typically expected items, such as job descriptions and links to key documents such as the LINC Curriculum Guidelines. There is also introductory support on LINC-related skills, such as methodologies for presenting themes.

In addition to the key CLB-referenced published documents there are best practices from experienced instructors, including effective lesson and monthly plan templates.

The LINC/ESL coordinator reports that new hires are encouraged to visit the site and online handbook, and that feedback to date has been positive. As best practices are recognized on the team, the resource continues to grow.

Mentoring, coaching and non-evaluative support

One instructor working with another to provide assistance with his or her teaching practice can be referred to as a mentor or coach. In the teaching field, the terms used to describe this activity vary, sometimes in relation to the relative expertise of the instructor.

Mentoring refers to a situation in which an instructor with more expertise in a given area supports an instructor with less. Coaching can describe a situation where the two instructors are more equal in their expertise or where one is more expert. The adjective "peer" is used to emphasize the equality of the two instructors, as in the terms "peer mentor" and "peer coach."[15]

Instructors often talk with each other about their challenges and successes. What sets mentoring and coaching apart from these kinds of conversations is its intensive focus on helping the one instructor address a challenge or goal related to her teaching. Most often, this requires an investment of time to build a relationship and work together towards the instructor's goal.

For LINC or ESL instructors in Ontario, access to mentoring or coaching can be limited and is often somewhat connected to supervision, in that a supervisor who conducts a performance evaluation may also be available to offer coaching. This can mean that in many contexts, instructors who wish to receive coaching that is separate from supervision or evaluation may need to organize it themselves.

A small number of instructors in Ontario have access to a resource staff person who is available to visit their classes and provide non-evaluative support. This support is non-supervisory and may include observation, resource support or curriculum support.

Interested in mentoring or coaching?

The reproducible tools in Chapter 2 can support you in exploring your teaching practice with a colleague.

Beyond observation

While a common practice when working with a coach or mentor is to have them observe your teaching, it's not always necessary.

Coaches or mentors can also use the *unseen observation* method. For example: Before teaching a lesson, discuss it with a coach or mentor by sharing your goals for the lessons and reasons why you designed it the way you did. Afterwards, share your reflections on what went well and whether or not you achieved your desired goal(s).

(Marshall & Young, 2009)

Instructors who have worked with a coach or mentor report the following benefits: gaining new insights into their teaching practice; learning about new resources; acquiring a new skill, such as learning a new technology; feeling confident enough to conduct a new assessment; or solving a perplexing problem related to their learners.

[15] Sherris, 2010.

An example from the field…

Resource staff person: Durham District School Board

An experienced instructor works as a resource staff person at the Durham District School Board to support LINC and ESL instructors. She feels that the fact that her job combines resource support with volunteer coordination is a key to the success of the position: “Because I know the resources, I know the levels, I understand the time thing with the teachers, because we’re not paid for prep time. I know that’s part of my job – to help as much as I can. And also, I’m in charge of the volunteers, so I am able to go around to the classrooms and find out from the teachers what their needs are, and [then can identify] the appropriate volunteers who either work in the classroom with the teacher or pull out a few students.”

An example from the field…

Peer mentoring program: Toronto District School Board (TDSB)

The Peer Mentoring Program was a 2010 initiative for one unit of adult ESL/LINC instructors within the TDSB. It was developed jointly by the TDSB and CUPE 4400, with funding provided by the province as part of the Provincial Discussion Table Agreement.

The program was a professional development model based on a peer mentoring/coaching approach. It provided an opportunity for LINC/ESL instructors to visit another instructor’s classroom at a different site, and for the instructors to share ideas, resources and strategies on a particular aspect of ESL instruction in a classroom setting. The model was adapted from a similar program offered at Hamline University, Wisconsin.

The overall objective of the project was to promote reflective teaching in an adult ESL environment through peer mentoring. It consisted of a four-stage process, including:

1. Identification of mentors and protégés: An application process with selection criteria identified instructors who were interested in:
   - Mentoring/coaching another instructors in an instructional area in which they were particularly strong, and/or
   - Receiving mentoring/coaching by a peer in a particular area of instruction

   Mentors were chosen on the basis of their expertise in a specific area. Protégés were chosen on the basis of an available mentor with expertise in the protégé’s identified area of teaching. Pairs were matched, considering topic, region, time, level and availability.
2. Orientation: Both the mentor and the protégé attended an orientation meeting to prepare for the partnership. The orientation addressed the following: the concept of protégées and mentors; best practices for mentoring; observation, active listening, and experience sharing; selection of specific teaching focus; scheduling; and the development of detailed lesson plans for the model classes.
3. Observation (by protégé): The protégé observed the mentor modelling the target teaching activity/approach in the mentor’s class and had an opportunity to ask questions. A supply instructor taught the protégé’s class while he/she was observing the mentor’s class (for 2 to 2.5 hrs.).
4. Observation and Feedback (by mentor): The mentor observed the protégé (in the protégé’s class) put into practice the selected aspect of instruction, and provided feedback.

Following the process, each pair attended a debriefing session.

An example from the field...

The PD Partner model: The Toronto Catholic District School Board

Through Citizenship and Immigration Canada Ontario Region funding, the TCDSB developed and implemented (in conjunction with this publication) a formalized model of peer coaching known as PD Partnering, in which an experienced instructor receives training to support the professional development of other instructors. A PD Partner training course includes foundational grounding in CLB-based instruction, training in communication skills, and knowledge of research sources and resources.

As a peer, the PD Partner is not expected to be an expert. PD Partners are available to collaboratively support the instructor's exploration: they may search out relevant research, recommend resources, observe the class, or help to implement an instructional strategy. Instructors who have worked with PD Partners have commented positively on the benefits of having "another pair of hands" and "another pair of eyes" to support professional development.

One instructor's experience with a PD Partner

I was interested in having a PD Partner ...

Working collaboratively with another instructor to explore an area of my choosing seemed to be a focused approach that I thought would help me address the specific needs of my learners.

My topic of exploration ...

Most of the learners in my class were senior Chinese speakers. They were reluctant to engage in speaking activities, and seemed to resist pair and group work. I wanted to find ways to improve their speaking competence so they could communicate better.

We explored the topic together ...

We decided to find out what the research says about teaching ESL to adult Chinese speakers, and to explore some communicative language teaching strategies that might work in my class. My PD partner spent some time sifting through research and was able to bring me information that helped me to understand cultural characteristics and learning strategies I could introduce.

I tried some of the strategies. I used a larger variety of simulations and task-based activities, and I think the classroom atmosphere became more engaging.

Working with a PD Partner provided me with a great opportunity to discuss and share experiences as well as brainstorm instructional methods I could apply in my classroom.

Observation and performance evaluation

Instructors may associate classroom observation with performance evaluation. However, performance evaluation is only one way in which observation can be a form of job-embedded professional development. This section will discuss two other options: non-evaluative observation conducted by a supervisor and non-evaluative observation conducted by a peer.

The performance evaluation process often includes classroom observation and feedback on instruction. Although it varies across language training providers, many LINC and ESL instructors are evaluated through observation every two to three years. Often the person conducting this observation is the LINC or ESL coordinator or a supervisor.

The policies and practices that govern the evaluation process, the knowledge and communication skills of the supervisor, and the relationship between the instructor and supervisor are key factors in how the evaluation is experienced by the instructor, and whether or not the experience becomes a form of job-embedded professional development.

The performance evaluation may go more smoothly when instructors have clear answers to the following questions:

- *What is the purpose of this evaluation?* Ensure that you understand the purpose of the evaluation and the ramifications of the evaluation outcome on your employment.
- *How am I being evaluated?* Ensure you understand on what basis your teaching is being evaluated. Discussing the evaluation process, tool or checklist step by step with your supervisor can help.
- *What are my rights?* In the event of a negative evaluation, it is helpful to know, in advance, about any appeal processes.
- *How can I prepare?* If you receive notification of when you will be observed, preparing extra well for that lesson (as well as reflecting on your teaching) can help your confidence on the day of the evaluation.
- *Is there follow-up support?* Find out if, post-evaluation, there are supports available to you in the event that an area of your teaching is identified as needing improvement.

An example from the field…

Performance evaluation promotes reflection:

Dufferin Peel Catholic School Board (DPCSB)

LINC instructors at DPCSB are observed by a supervisor as part of their annual evaluation. Prior to the evaluation, instructors reflect on their practice using self-observation forms. This facilitates reflection on specific areas of their instruction.

Non-evaluative observation by a supervisor

Non-evaluative observation by a supervisor can be a strong form of job-embedded PD when it centres on an instructor's individual needs. Following are some strategies instructors can use to help focus an observation on his/her needs:

- Review the checklist or tool that will be used during observations and select the areas in which you are most interested in getting feedback.
- Ask if you can set a goal for the observation with your supervisor.
- Discuss the results of the observation with the supervisor and collaborate on an action plan.
- Find out if the observation will be followed up with a further visit, for example to discuss relevant resources or what was learned from the observation.
- If you feel comfortable doing so, offer any suggestions you have as to how the observation process could be improved.

Tools to support observation

Some of the reproducible tools in Chapter 2 focus on observation and include topics such as:

→ Teacher vs. student talk

→ Communicative language teaching

→ Error correction

Non-evaluative observation by a peer

Instructors may be more comfortable having a peer observe their teaching, especially if they will then switch roles.

Research within the field of education has identified many potential benefits of peer observation, including:

- Developing more self-awareness
- Collecting information not readily available to you while in the midst of teaching
- Receiving constructive feedback on your teaching
- Building collegiality at your program or site
- And for the peer observer, a chance to see and learn from how a colleague deals with some of the same challenges you face and potentially observe effective teaching strategies you may not have tried or be aware of[16]

Peer observation can be undertaken by a peer coach, a PD Partner or a fellow instructor (for examples in this chapter, see pages 19–20).

The next chapter of this handbook presents a "reflective method" that you can apply when observing a peer or having a peer observe you. In addition, there are several one-page reproducible tools at the end of the chapter that provide support in reflecting on instruction, collecting information, collaborating with a colleague, and articulating teaching beliefs and practices.

[16] Adapted from Farrell, 2007, p. 135.

Instructor learning groups

Instructor learning groups refers to instructors coming together for the purpose of professional learning or sharing. By joining forces, instructors can support each other's professional development while learning together.

The focus of these groups can vary depending on the interests of the instructors involved. For example, it can be a sharing of best practices related to a specific area of interest, or an exploration of the research literature in a particular topic. Sometimes, the discussion in a staff meeting can be similar in nature, especially if part of the meeting time is dedicated to this kind of professional sharing on an ongoing basis.

One example is designating a specific staff meeting to allow instructors to share knowledge gained during the TESL Ontario conference with colleagues. In this way, instructors benefit from sessions they were not able to attend, and promising practices discovered at the conference can be discussed.

Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the professional development landscape of LINC and Adult ESL instructors in Ontario. It has addressed the challenges with accessing PD opportunities, the most common forms of PD, and a range of practices related to supporting the professional development of instructors amongst a sampling of Ontario language training providers.

Job-embedded PD is identified as a particularly promising practice for LINC and Adult ESL instructors because of its ability to directly connect professional learning to an instructor's teaching context.

Chapter 2 of this handbook articulates a job-embedded process rooted in reflective practice and action research for applying professional learning to classroom practice. Termed the "reflective method," the process can be used alone or with a colleague to apply any professional learning to the classroom and evaluate its value based on how it works with learners. Chapter 2 also includes resources and tools to support instructors in applying learning to their own classrooms.

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Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice

An Instructor Handbook

Chapter 2

A Reflective Method

Chapter 2

A Reflective Method

The Reflective Method

Tools to Support the Reflective Method

Tools for collaborating with a colleague

Tools for collecting information and reflecting on instruction

Tools for articulating teaching beliefs and practices

In this handbook, "tools" are reproducible one-page resources that can include:

- Reference information
- Reflective questions
- Data collection templates

Introduction

This handbook places particular emphasis on reflective practice as a means to enrich language instructors' ongoing professional development. The term reflective practice, in its broadest sense, refers to the process of reflecting on the effectiveness of one's teaching in order to enhance one's professional practice.

The benefits to language instructors of engaging in different kinds of reflective practice are widely recognized by the field and include increased confidence about instructional decisions, further engagement with teaching practice and professional growth, and enhanced overall satisfaction with teaching (Farrell, 2007, 2011; Gallup Rodriguez & McKay, 2010; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

This chapter presents a practical reflective method for moving professional knowledge to classroom practice. The method is rooted in reflective practice and action research and is tailored to the Ontario context.

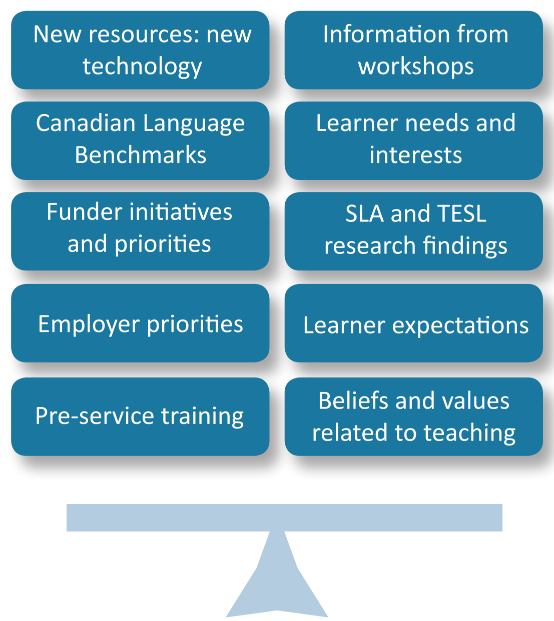
Why the reflective method?

The instructional practices of LINC and Adult ESL instructors in Ontario are influenced and informed by a myriad of factors. Instructors must balance, for instance, their professional knowledge, teaching styles, theories of language learning, learning acquired through conferences and research, employer initiatives, funder-mandated priorities and the needs of learners.

The model of reflective practice articulated in this chapter can enable instructors to apply professional learning in a way that is relevant to their classrooms and focused on improving learner outcomes.

By reflecting on teaching practices and the effect they have on learners, instructors can ultimately improve outcomes for their learners.

Influences on instructional practice



Chapter organization

This chapter provides a systematic method and a variety of tools to help instructors identify and explore areas of interest using a reflective approach in a way that suits their own schedules and contexts. A range of engagement with reflective practice is described—from informal reflection on what went well in a speaking class to tracking learner outcomes to guide the selection of effective authentic materials. Instructors who review this chapter can identify where they are in this range of engagement and where they might like to journey to with reflective practice.

Throughout the chapter there are practical suggestions for ways to try reflective practices without investing too much time. The descriptions of what other instructors are doing with reflective practice offer insight into the benefits gained and inspiration for the application of reflective practice to instructors' own classrooms.

The chapter includes three sections, outlined below.

Chapter 2

The reflective method

- *Provides a rationale for adopting a reflective approach to applying professional learning to classroom practice*
- *Outlines a six-step reflective method*

Applying the reflective method

- *Provides options for using the reflective method alone or with colleagues*
- *Outlines the skills and attitudes of a reflective practitioner*

Tools

- *Provides 20 one-page tools to facilitate the use of a reflective approach*

The Reflective Method

What is reflective practice?

Reflective practice can enhance your instructional approach, renew your enthusiasm for language teaching and empower you by helping to solve the challenges that arise in every language classroom.

Definitions of reflective practice vary in the research literature. However, what *is* agreed on is that reflective practice can, through a methodical reflection on teaching and its effect on learners, lead to professional growth and to more conscious decision-making about teaching practices. Farrell (2007) sees reflective practice as a method that increases the information instructors have available to them on which to base their decisions regarding next steps: "[reflective practice involves] conscious recall and examination of the classroom experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action" (p. 9).

In all forms of reflective practice, instructors:

- Reflect on their own teaching and its effect on learners
- Explore possible reasons for this effect on learners
- Adopt a systematic approach with some degree of rigour
- Adapt instructional behaviour based on results from reflection, new information from the classroom, or a combination of the two

Consider how three different language instructors integrated reflective practice into their work.

Dave

Dave couldn't figure out why regardless of how much correction he gave his learners during speaking activities, the number of errors they made didn't seem to decrease. He mentioned this quandary to a colleague, who told him about a research paper on error correction she had heard about at a conference.*

Although the paper was about French immersion students, Dave found that the way it classified types of feedback to give learners, and the impact of each, was helpful.

Dave asked his colleague to observe him teaching a speaking lesson and make note of the kinds of error correction he used. He was shocked to see that he only used one type of feedback—and this led him to be more mindful and active when giving error correction to learners.

** Lyster & Ranta (1997); this article is freely available; see link provided in the references.*

Kathy

Kathy had always given her learners vocabulary exercises to accompany the authentic reading texts she used in class. However, she had been noticing that her learners tended to rely on electronic dictionaries and did not seem to have developed techniques for guessing new words when they encountered them.

Kathy reflected on the ATESL best practice statements on instruction, particularly one statement about vocabulary teaching, which contains numerous strategies to enable students to begin to predict and guess word meaning. After instructing her learners on these strategies in class for six weeks and encouraging their use of them, Kathy assessed them to find out if they were using the strategies.*

The results demonstrated that her learners were using word guess strategies much more than they previously had. Kathy felt encouraged by this data, and continues to explore ways to incorporate strategy instruction into her vocabulary teaching.

* *Best Practices for Adult ESL and LINC Programming in Alberta (ATESL, 2009)*, available at *http://www.atesl.ca/cmsms/index.php.*

Rachel

Rachel taught in the afternoons and often found her learners losing energy during her explanations of grammar. She knew they needed to improve their grammar skills, but was unsure how to teach them more effectively.

After reflecting on the problem by looking at her lesson plans more closely, she noticed that her grammar lessons were not very communicative in nature. She was doing all the talking.

Her peer mentor recommended an eLearning module offered through the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks on lesson planning. The module offers ideas and examples of how to integrate language items such as grammar into a communicative CLB-based lesson.

Rachel started planning her grammar lessons differently, integrating grammar instruction into the lesson rather than treating it as a separate add-on.

She then asked a colleague to observe her class and track the minutes during which she spoke to the whole class versus the number of minutes that the learners worked together in small groups during her now more communicative grammar lesson.

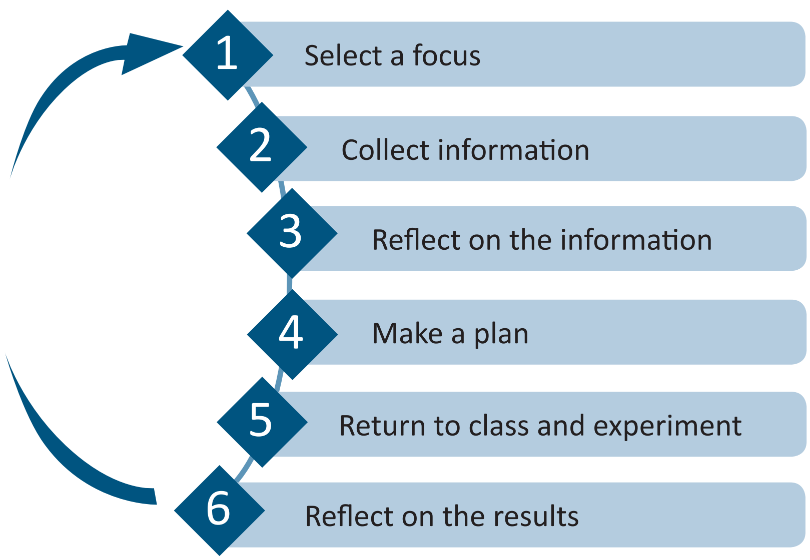
CCLB e-learning modules available at http://elearning.language.ca.

The reflective method

The reflective method is a practical approach to reflective practice that focuses on actively applying professional learning to classroom practice. The focus for this exploration will vary from instructor to instructor. One instructor may be interested in exploring a particular topic that is relevant to her learners, while another might pursue an approach to teaching a certain skill and another may decide to further explore an idea he/she learned from a workshop.

This method provides an answer to the question below, which instructors may ask themselves.

How can I reflect on my instructional decisions and the impact they have on learners in order to create an optimal environment for language learning?



1 Select a focus

Select a question, topic, area of interest or classroom issue to explore. The topic may represent an area of special interest to you, or may present itself through policy changes, classroom activities, or professional development. Possible examples include:

- A funder- or employer-mandated change or initiative
- The introduction of a new resource you want to explore
- An approach/resource that piqued your interest from a conference or workshop you attended
- An incident or event in the classroom that was surprising, concerning or satisfying to you

See the tools section of this chapter for one-page resources that can help facilitate Steps 1 and 2 of the reflective method.

2 Collect Information

Collect information about learners and about the focus identified in step 1. Collecting information about learners may involve observing learners and describing what is happening in the classroom in an effort to consider as many factors as possible. It may also involve the use of data collection strategies, such as:

- Learner questionnaires, surveys or interviews
- Observing learners or classroom activities (e.g., with video or audio recording, or a colleague observing)
- Examining lesson plans, keeping a journal, examining learner work

Collecting information about the topic may involve exploring information about instructional approaches and strategies related to the topic. It could involve:

- Observing or learning about what colleagues do
- Reading related research articles or research summaries and learning about evidence-based techniques
- Examining a resource and the principles upon which it is based

3 Reflect on the information

Examine the data from Step 2 as they relate to your instructional practices. This can include examining:

- New information you have gained about your classroom practices and the effect it has on learners
- Feedback from learners on how they approach a skill, such as listening
- The attitudes, assumptions or underlying theories reflected by your instructional practices
- The degree to which your instructional practices relate to your stated beliefs or theories regarding language instruction and learning

4 Make a plan

Based on Steps 2 and 3, identify options for how you might proceed, and select one of those options. This may include trying a new teaching technique or strategy, changing an approach or getting further information. You may want to discuss your options with a peer, an instructor learning group or a supervisor. Developing a clear plan of action and a starting point is important for Step 5.

5 Return to the class and experiment

Carry out the plan from Step 4. This may involve trying the alternative technique, instructional strategy or approach in the classroom. This step involves adopting an attitude of open-mindedness, whole-heartedness and exploration. It may involve trying an approach or technique you have doubts about, or that differs from your usual approach.

6 Reflect on the results

Reflect on results in the classroom—observe and consider what impact the alternative instructional practice has had on learners. Based on the results, you may decide to incorporate your new change into your teaching. Alternatively, you may go back to Step 4 and make a new plan to either collect more information or experiment with another approach.

Applying the reflective method

There are many ways to apply the reflective method to your teaching. At times you may want to pursue reflective activities on your own. At other times you may prefer to explore a topic with a peer, a resource person or even a supervisor. Or you may have the opportunity to undertake reflective activities with a group of colleagues. Your schedule, your comfort level with observation, the availability of peers, and the topic you want to explore are all factors that will determine how you go about putting the reflective method to work.

What distinguishes the reflective method from much of the day-to-day thinking you might do about your practice is that you attempt to systematically record information about teaching practices and what goes on in the classroom, and then you use that information to inform an action plan. There is a focus on using evidence from learners to inform future teaching practices. In this sense, you can choose to undertake the reflective method on your own, at your convenience, and in a way that suits your schedule. Following is an example of the reflective method undertaken by an individual instructor.

Applying the reflective method on her own: Bernadette

Bernadette enjoys using authentic materials with her CLB 6 learners, and they have been enthusiastic about reading them. Every week she brings in articles from a local newspaper for learners to read and work with in class.

1 Select a focus

However, she noticed that some weeks, the learners struggled with the articles, while other weeks, the articles were more manageable. Looking at the articles, she was not able to identify the source of the difficulty; this led her to select a focus of exploring this issue further with her learners.

2 Collect information

Based on what she noticed in her class, Bernadette decided to collect information about learners' impressions of the articles. She prepared a simple feedback form and instructed learners on how to fill it in, rating the difficulty of the article read in class each week.

3,4 Reflect; make a plan

From the learners' feedback forms she collected over several weeks, Bernadette tracked the article topics and the average difficulty ratings learners gave them. She noticed a pattern that suggested which topics were likely to be more challenging for learners. Based on this insight, Bernadette made a plan that included developing brief pre-reading activities for articles with topics that were more likely to be challenging.

5 Return to the class, experiment

When she experimented with the pre-reading activities in class, she continued using her feedback forms to collect information about how learners were rating the difficulty of the articles.

6 Reflect on the results

When Bernadette reflected on the results, she realized that she was able to streamline her choice of articles to better meet her objective of using authentic materials in her class. She also gained more insight into when pre-reading support would be appropriate.

"Here's what I gained"

Instructors who undertook reflective practice on their own

WRITING ABOUT A LESSON

- Improved awareness of successful and challenging aspects of lessons.
- Enhanced ability to approach group work and plan for a similar situation in future

VIDEOTAPING

- Awareness of what proportion of errors I was correcting
- Awareness of how I was correcting learner errors and how learners responded
- Ability to identify some habits, such as restless pacing, that had developed in my teaching style

Adapted from Richards and Farrell (2005), *Professional development for language teachers.*

Inviting others (team teachers, colleagues, supervisors) to collaborate with you in this process can enhance your reflection. For example, working together with a team teacher as you plan and teach a class together can promote an appreciation of and experimentation with different ways of teaching or evaluating learners. Reflective discussions with a colleague can fuel an interest in alternate instructional approaches and generate possible solutions to issues that arise in the classroom. Inviting a peer, mentor, coach, supervisor or a resource person into your class to observe your teaching and learners can provide you with the power of "another pair of eyes" to observe your actions and learners' responses.

Trust and a shared understanding of the purpose and process of the observation are critical to ensure that the observation is collaborative and non-evaluative. You and your colleague will want to agree on the purpose of the observation, what to observe, and what kind of tool (if any) will be used to record observations. When collaborating with a colleague, keep the following guiding characteristics in mind:

Effective collaboration is...

"Here's what I gained"

Instructors who undertook reflective practice with a peer

OBSERVATION

- "It revealed more detailed information on student performance during specific aspects of the lesson than I could have generated on my own."
- "It revealed unexpected information about interaction between students during a lesson."
- "It helped me develop a better working relationship with a colleague."
- "It has taught me how much I can learn from my colleagues."
- "It made me more aware of the limited range of teaching strategies that I have been using."
- "I realized that I need to develop better time-management strategies."
- "I have learned the value of evaluating myself. I know more about my strengths as a teacher as well."

Adapted from Richards & Farrell (2005), Professional development for language teachers, pp. 87–88.

🛠 The observation tools provided later in the chapter facilitate a focus on *what* was observed rather than an evaluation of it.

On the following page is an example of the reflective method undertaken by an instructor and a peer observer.

Applying the reflective method with a peer observer: Milla and Joanne

When an opportunity arose for Milla (an instructor) to explore a question about her teaching practice with a coach (Joanne), Milla accepted. She acknowledged that working collaboratively with a colleague on her own professional development was new to her: "*I wasn't sure about what this involved, but I wanted to try it for three reasons: to get out of my comfort zone, to try something new, and possibly improve my instruction.*"

1 Select a focus

Milla already had a topic in mind: "*My goal was to explore ways to improve students' listening comprehension using authentic newscasts. I wanted to explore why students were not really improving. I hoped that having someone collaborate with me on this would give me a new perspective on my teaching.*"

2 Collect information

Before visiting Milla's class, Joanne sifted through research, and sent Milla articles directly related to her area of interest and her learners' backgrounds. After Joanne observed Milla's class, they discussed their observations of the learners. They decided it would be a good idea to ask the learners themselves about their listening strategies; they brainstormed questions and decided to ask learners these four:

- *Why is listening difficult for you?*
- *Which of these stories was most difficult? Why?*
- *Which was easiest? Why?*
- *How can the teacher help you?*

Milla reflected that, "*Although these were simple questions and I had previously asked similar ones, I had never thought of formulating them in such a direct and open-ended way. I used to ask more leading questions.*"

3 Reflect on the information

When Milla and Joanne analyzed learners' responses, Milla realized that learners believed that they had to understand every word to get the meaning of the whole. She recalls: *"This was an important starting point; I realized I had to challenge their perception of what constitutes a good listener, as well as their perception of what a teacher should do to help them. I felt optimistic because by identifying the obstacles and the students' perception of them, I had something important to start with."*

4 Make a plan

Next, Milla made a plan: "*I decided that in order to help students improve their listening skills, I had to help them adopt different listening strategies.*" She read the research Joanne had shared, and together they considered options for proceeding. Milla decided to experiment with a few new approaches, including talking more with learners about listening strategies, allocating class time for practicing listening strategies, highlighting meaning extraction, and trying to alter her learners' perceptions about what constitutes "good listening."

5,6 Return to class; experiment; Reflect on the results

After some time, Milla noticed that learners were "*better at predicting and extracting key points, and encouraged by their progress. When I asked them what was helping them, some [told me that] they were trying to focus on the key points and not just details.*" In addition, she incorporated more discussions with learners about what worked and didn't work in the lessons, and she felt they appreciated her open discussions about teaching techniques.

Instructor Groups

In some settings you may have the opportunity to be part of a group of instructors pursuing reflective practice. This approach is beneficial when you would like to explore a topic to gain broader insight into its application. In a group, a larger amount of work, reading or experimenting with different approaches can be shared amongst members. Instructor groups often take a collaborative approach that creates a safe and supportive foundation for professional development activities. Team and staff meetings can provide opportunities to apply the reflective method in a group setting, along with teacher support groups, learning circles, study groups or instructor networks (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Richards and Farrell (2005) identify a variety of ways in which instructor groups can be organised:

- By topic (see the example below)
- By language training provider
- By specific job title, e.g., administrators
- By activity, e.g., reading, research
- In a virtual environment

"Here's what I gained":

Instructors who undertook reflective practice with a group

- "At first, I hesitated to join the group because of my tight schedule. But then I felt the need to take part, talk about our classes and find out what was happening in them. I couldn't resist pushing myself into it."
- "We were able to read things you might not normally have time to read. You learn a lot through discussing the readings with peers, and you get ideas for follow-up application in your teaching."

Adapted from Richards & Farrell (2005), *Professional development for language teachers,* pp. 61, 57.

Applying the reflective method as part of an instructor group:

1 Select a focus

A workshop at TESL Canada (TESL Canada, 2009) by Bow Valley College on creating an ESL Literacy circle, coupled with staff interest in the area, led to a learning circle of ESL and LINC instructors at the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board with a focus on ESL Literacy. The circle met monthly for five months outside of work hours. About 15 instructors attended the sessions, which were about an hour and a half long.

2 Collect information

Initially the sessions focused on discussing readings relevant to ESL literacy instruction. Instructors collected information from available research and other sources and connected it to their teaching practices through group discussions.

3,4 Reflect: make a plan

By the final session, the focus had shifted from discussing the readings to planning how they could better prepare literacy learners to transition into the workplace. The administrator recalls: "…W*e talked more about what skills the students did have, how we could build on those skills, and what transitions would be available to them, in our own school or in other programs that we were aware of….It actually was very nice because it turned into a planning session with the staff who taught literacy about how we could move our literacy students forward."*

5,6 Return to class: experiment

Instructors returned to their classrooms to experiment with the new knowledge and approaches that came out of the ESL literacy circle.

6 Reflect on the results

When reflecting on the results of the ESL literacy circle, the administrator noticed that instructors increased their focus on accommodating ESL literacy learners' needs and building work-readiness. They provided opportunities and accommodations so that ESL literacy learners could access work-related certificate courses, such as first aid and safe food handling: "*…so the emphasis isn't on reading all the material, but we're able to adapt it, so as long as they can prove that they can do the tasks, they can pass. Again, it was looking at literacy students in a way that they're not going to be totally hampered by the fact that they can't read the dense text of a certification course. And I think that [this ESL literacy circle] helped our instructors see that literacy students have a lot of possibilities and potential."*

Characteristics of a reflective practitioner

As instructors, we all reflect as we teach. For example, we can sense whether or not a task appears to be successful with learners. However, a reflective practitioner is someone who has deliberately made it a habit to support his or her professional learning by engaging in a reflective cycle like the reflective method described previously. There are particular characteristics (attitudes, skills) associated with being a reflective practitioner.

Dewey (1933) suggested that instructors need to adopt three key attitudes in order to be reflective: they need to be *open-minded*, *responsible* and *whole-hearted*.

To be open-minded is to have the desire to listen to more than one side of an issue and give attention to alternative views. To be responsible is to carefully consider an action's consequences, especially as it impacts learners personally, intellectually and socially. To be whole-hearted is to enter into something with commitment and enthusiasm, and be able to overcome fears and uncertainties to critically evaluate ourselves so we may make meaningful changes.

Open-mindedness	Considering more sides than one
Responsibility	Careful consideration of the consequences of actions
Whole-heartedness	Seeking every opportunity to learn

How might these characteristics be reflected in the classroom?

Here are some questions you can ask yourself to assess your level of open-mindedness, responsibility, and whole-heartedness:

OPEN-MINDEDNESS

- Do I think critically about why I am teaching a lesson in a particular way?
- Do I actively seek my learners' input into how and what I teach?
- To what extent do I integrate my learners' needs assessments into my lesson planning and long-range planning?
- Do I question the value of the tasks and activities I assign to learners? Are they really learner-centred, communicative activities?
- Do I discuss with colleagues how to apply new ideas, policies and professional learning to the classroom?
- Do I consider the community of learners with whom I am working, and respect and try to learn more about their cultures, goals and values?
- Do I consider other peoples' perspectives on my teaching (e.g., that of a learner, a colleague, a supervisor)?

RESPONSIBILITY

- Do I consider whether or not the language training provider I work for is meeting its vision and goals for learners?
- Do I strive to create a learning environment that is supportive of all learners regardless of culture, gender, race, ability, sexual orientation, religion or country of origin?
- Do I challenge myself in areas where I am aware that I may have biases or limitations in my knowledge?
- Do I reflect when I have a particularly strong response to a learner or incident, in order to become more conscious of my role in the situation and possible solutions?

WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS

- Do I try different classroom techniques and methods with a spirit of enthusiasm and an open "see if it works" attitude?
- Teaching is not a simple enterprise. Am I willing to engage with the "messy" aspects of striving for self-improvement as well as the neat and tidy ones?
- Am I willing to face my own anxieties about having someone observe my teaching so that I can learn from it and benefit my learners?
- Am I open and non-defensive when it comes to feedback about areas where I could improve my teaching?
- Do I recognize that no teacher is perfect and value my own professional journey, marked as it is by strengths, weaknesses, challenges and highlights?

Other skills: neutral observation and data collection

Being a reflective practitioner also requires neutral observation and description skills as well as data collection skills.

The ability to observe and describe without making assumptions, evaluating, or drawing conclusions is a key part of being a reflective practitioner. Farrell (2007) describes a scenario in which Brian, a relatively new instructor, noticed that two students sat in the back of the classroom and often whispered to each other. His impression (or assumption) was that the students did not have confidence in him, and were perhaps making fun of him—and he gave them very low participation marks. He later found out that when the students were whispering, they were actually rehearsing the language they needed for classroom activities in order to impress him. The ability to observe without drawing conclusions would have resulted in clearer communication for Brian and his students, and is a key skill for a reflective instructor.

As an instructor, when you reflect on your own practice, "all or nothing" statements that do not allow for shades of grey (e.g., "This lesson tanked! They hated the article!") are less helpful for your development. Instead, aim for statements such as "I was disappointed in the class response to the content of this authentic material, and need to explore the reason for this."

The ability to observe without drawing conclusions is also important for those (peers, mentors, supervisors) who have been invited to observe in an instructor's classroom. As an observer, when you convey what you see, it is important to only *describe* and not to evaluate, make assumptions or draw conclusions. The distinction between describing and evaluating is illustrated in the following two statements:

Descriptive	→	*During the practice activity, I saw that Hamid, Lee, and Angel were not on task. Hamid was accessing his electronic dictionary, and Lee and Angel were talking in Mandarin.*
Evaluative	→	*During the practice activity, I saw that lots of the students were bored and didn't want to participate.*

As an instructor, you are already continually noticing and collecting data on your learners' progress and how each lesson is going. The reflective method can facilitate collecting information in a more systematic way. Although the method is systematic, it need not be complicated or time-consuming. You could choose to pose a few simple questions to learners, as Joanne and Milla did in the case study earlier in this chapter. You could provide an observer with a checklist to use as they observe an aspect of your teaching or an aspect of learner behaviour (e.g., to keep track of the kind of feedback you provide, or the number of times learners speak). Browse the tools on the following pages for ideas. You can adapt the tools to customize them for your use or develop your own tools.

🛠 The tools on the following pages can help to facilitate observation, description and data collection.

Tools to Support the Reflective Method

Introduction to the tools

This section of Chapter 2 offers a collection of practical tools intended to help instructors apply the reflective method.

Using these tools is not necessary or prescribed; they simply represent a small collection of ideas that can be drawn on to support a reflective exploration of a topic. They can help to explore some of the reflections you make "on the go" in a deeper way, providing a practical bridge to exploring your instructional practices and the effect that they have on learners.

Browse the table of contents at the beginning of this chapter to find a tool of interest. The tools relate to three broad areas:

- Collaborating with a colleague
- Collecting information
- Articulating teaching beliefs and practices

What is a tool?

In this handbook, a tool is a one-page reproducible resource. A tool can be:

- A reference page with at-a-glance tips, information or guidelines
- A template for reflection or data collection

Each tool is a two-page spread.

The first page includes an explanation of the tool, its purpose, and instructions on its use.

The second page contains the reproducible tool.

Tools for collaborating with a colleague

Characteristics of effective collaboration

Purpose of tool
▪ This tool was informed by *Supervision in Practice* (Glanz & Sullivan, 2000) and *Language Teaching Awareness: A guide to exploring beliefs and practices* (Gebhard & Orprandy, 1999). Its purpose is to provide guidance for adopting a collaborative stance in order to further professional growth in a partnership.
Possible uses of tool
This tool raises awareness of the characteristics of effective collaboration. It can be used in a variety of ways. For example: ▪ At the beginning of a professional development partnership, read and discuss the characteristics and agree to adopt them in your behaviour towards one another. ▪ Select one or two characteristics you are interested in learning more about, and find out how they are manifested in behaviour and why they can facilitate collaboration; find out how the opposing characteristic is manifested and why it is a barrier to collaboration. ▪ After completing your PD partnership activities with your colleague, reflect (either on your own or with your colleague) on which of your behaviours did or did not manifest one or more of the characteristics, and why.

Characteristics of effective collaboration[1] *(in a PD Partnership)*

In a collaborative professional development partnership, two individuals work together towards a common goal by sharing knowledge, experience and instructional alternatives under the assumption that “two heads are better than one”.

Goal directed: The partnership is focused on exploring a topic that is of interest to an instructor and situated in his/her classroom practice. This exploration is directed towards applying knowledge to classroom practice and ultimately, enhancing learner outcomes.

Collegial: Power is equal among the PD Partners. Both have areas of expertise. The scope of knowledge in the field is much broader than either; neither one is the authority. Knowledge, experience and instructional alternatives are shared with the assumption that “two heads are better than one.”

Descriptive/Non-evaluative: Through their choice of words, body language and tone, PD Partners take an open-minded, non-judgmental, non-evaluative stance. They strive to observe and describe without evaluative interpretations. They avoid judging, diagnosing, and evaluative praise or criticism.

Provisional/Non-prescriptive: Partners offer up alternative instructional techniques or teaching strategies as possible options. They avoid prescriptive or evaluative judgments of teaching techniques. They avoid ordering, moralizing, questioning inappropriately, prying, advising, lecturing or taking on the role of “the expert.”

Respectful: The instructor is respected as the expert in his or her classroom. Ultimately, the choice of which instructional practices are best for his or her context lies with the instructor. However, the reflective practice process in collaboration with the PD Partner, can contribute to making an informed choice.

Reflective: Both parties strive to model a reflective stance during collaboration. For example, they actively subject their own ideas and interpretations to critical analysis. The approach to observation and discussion is curious and inquiring; ideas are explored as possibilities rather than as “the” solution.

Evidence-based: The reflective practice process focuses on basing instructional decisions on evidence. Evidence serves as data for evaluation and may be collected from learners, or by SLA or TESL research.

Well-informed: The collaboration is informed by key concepts in CLB-based instruction (i.e., task-based, learner-centred, competency-based), and by best practices and research in adult ESL instruction.

[1] Informed by *Supervision in Practice* (Glanz & Sullivan, 2000) and *Language Teaching Awareness: A guide to exploring beliefs and practices* (Gebhard & Orprandy, 2000).

Useful language for collaboration

When supporting an instructor in their professional learning

Background

This tool raises awareness of the importance of taking a collaborative approach and using non-judgmental language when partnering with an instructor to provide feedback, observe teaching and discuss instructional options. It provides examples of non-judgmental, collaborative language that can be used when:

- Seeking to understand the instructor's intent, perspective and teaching practice
- Facilitating goal-directed reflection
- Discussing classroom observations
- Discussing instructional options

The aim of partnering with a colleague is to use the combined observational power, knowledge, experience and dialogue of two people to further professional growth. Although this pairing could be two instructors, it often is between an instructor and a staff person or supervisor whose job it is to support instructors. In cases where a supervisor takes on the role of collaborator to assist the instructor in his/her professional development, it is helpful to keep in mind the distinction between a supervisory approach—which may involve the use of a "directive control approach"—and a collaborative approach, as illustrated in the diagram below:

Directive control approach

1. Identify problem.
2. Tell the teacher how to proceed.
3. Check to make sure the teacher has followed instruction.

Collaborative approach

1. Identify the problem from the teacher's perspective, soliciting as much clarifying information as possible.
2. Summarize what you've heard to check for accuracy.
3. Begin collaborative brainstorming, asking the teacher for his/her ideas first.
4. Problem-solve by sharing and discussing options.
5. Agree on a plan and follow-up meeting.

Diagram source: adapted from *Supervision in Practice* (Glanz and Sullivan, 2000, pp. 51–56).

Purpose of tool

- To provide guidance for adopting a collaborative, non-judgemental stance in order to facilitate reflection and professional growth in another person.

Possible uses of tool

This tool can be used in a variety of ways. For example:

- At the beginning of a PD partnership, reflect on the language provided in the tool. For one or more categories of language samples, discuss how the samples reflect a non-judgmental stance.
- During or after a professional development partnership, reflect on and discuss the ways in which your partnership reflected a non-evaluative and collaborative tone.
- Choose a category you are interested in and learn more about it (e.g., brainstorm other language samples, read or research information about it).

Useful language[2] for collaboration

When supporting an instructor in their professional learning

To understand the instructor's intent, perspective and teaching context

Ask questions to clarify:

- Can you tell me more about...?
- Can you give me an example so I can better understand...?
- Can you explain to me what you meant when you said...?
- Why did you choose to .....?

Paraphrase to show you are listening, alert the instructor to misinterpretation, and encourage further explanation:

- You're concerned about...; You're pleased with ... ; So you would like to ...; Did I understand that correctly?

Elicit concrete examples and specific information:

- How often does that happen? At what time do they generally show up? (after "Learners always show up late")
- Do any of the learners seem to enjoy it? What do they do/say to let you know? (After "Learners in my class don't like pair work")

Name assumptions or concepts when the discussion becomes detail-heavy:

- So an assumption here is that...; so a belief is ....
- So it sounds like you are talking about pragmatics.

To facilitate reflection that is goal-directed

Summarize and organize what the instructor says; shift the discussion to include concrete examples:

- So you're concerned about several issues... (name them). Which one would you like to explore first?
- So it sounds like you have two goals here: One is .... ; the other is....
- So ... might include ...

To discuss classroom observations

Focus on describing evidence rather than offering your interpretation or opinion:

- When you ... the learners responded by ...

To discuss instructional options

Avoid language that conveys prescriptiveness, assumptions or that suggests you are the expert:

- I wonder what would happen if ...?
- What do you think about trying this activity?; What if you allowed learners to use translation dictionaries?
- One option is to...; there are a number of approaches...
- One thing I've done before is ...; I've seen other instructors ...
- Here is an article that describes .... It might be interesting to try it out.

---

[2] Language samples were adapted from Horn and Metler-Armijo (2011).

Behaviours that support collaboration

Background

This tool is based on J.R. Gibb's (1961) identification of six categories of interpersonal behaviour that facilitate a supportive climate and six opposing categories that are characteristic of a defensive climate.

A supportive environment for peer-to-peer collaboration in professional development is in large part derived from the language that instructors use when observing each other and discussing instructional practices. For this reason, Gibb's categories are especially relevant to the context of working collaboratively with a colleague.

Purpose of tool

- To raise awareness of the behaviours that facilitate supportive communication climates (as opposed to defensive ones) in order to facilitate effective peer collaboration.

Possible uses of tool

The goal of partnering with a colleague to further your professional development is to use a collaborative approach and the combined observational power, knowledge, experience and dialogue of two people. When observing a colleague or discussing instructional practices, a non-judgemental stance can facilitate a supportive environment for professional growth. One hallmark of non-judgmental stance is *description* rather than *evaluation.* Applied to LINC or Adult ESL instruction, a factual description free of interpretation of what took place during classroom instruction can be offered to your colleague. This can help a colleague notice and consider issues, then adapt his or her teaching to reflect this new understanding.

This tool raises awareness of the behaviours that can contribute to a supportive climate as well as those that can contribute to a defensive one. It can be used in a variety of ways. For example:

- At the beginning of a professional development partnership, discuss the behaviour categories and agree to adopt those that facilitate a supportive environment in your behaviour towards one another.
- Select one or two categories you are interested in exploring in more detail.
  - Brainstorm (on your own or with a colleague) how that category is expressed with examples of behaviours or statements.
  - Discuss why those statements can facilitate a supportive or defensive environment.
- After your collaboration, reflect (on your own or with your colleague) on which categories your behaviours tended to fall into.

Behaviours[3] that support collaboration

Supportive behaviour		Behaviour to avoid
Description Presents perceptions, events non-judgmentally; makes genuine requests for information; reflects direct observations of visible behaviour back to the other person descriptively; avoids terms like "good" or "bad".	*Rather than*	**Evaluation** Passes judgement; assumes; blames, criticizes or praises; questions motives or standards. Uses "you" statements.
Problem orientation Focuses on the instructional issue (rather than the instructor); collaborates; mutually defines and solves problems rather than tells what to do.	*Rather than*	**Control orientation** Assumes knowledge of or imposes a solution to the instructional issue.
Spontaneity Straight-forward and honest; responds to events and people with flexibility. (Spontaneity should not be construed to mean lack of organization or absence of plans and structure.)	*Rather than*	**Strategy, or a hidden agenda** Manipulates through the use of hidden plans or intentions.
Empathy Becomes involved with others; identifies with, respects, accepts, understands others; is interested in learning about the other, and conveys this verbally and non-verbally.	*Rather than*	**Neutrality** Indifferent, detached, aloof; other-as-object-of-study attitude.
Equality Willing to participate *with* the other person to define and solve problems mutually; downplays differences in power or ability; recognises the contribution and worth of each individual.	*Rather than*	**Superiority** Fails to recognise the worth of the other person, arouses feelings of inadequacy in the other, communicates that one is better than the other.
Provisionalism Presents instructional options as tentative and provisional; open-minded, willing to explore alternative points of view or plans of action.	*Rather than*	**Certainty** Resists considering alternatives; emphasis on proving a point rather than solving a problem.

[3] Adapted from Gibb (1961).

Tools for collecting information

TESL-related journal and article sources

Purposes of tool
▪ To support Step 2 of the reflective method (collecting information). ▪ To provide an annotated list of freely accessible web-based sources of information on SLA (Second Language Aquisition) and TESL research and its applications to the classroom.
Possible uses of tool
On your own: Use the sources to search for information related to a classroom challenge or area of interest. **With others:** Share articles with colleagues to spark discussion about an area that is relevant to your instructional context.
Instructions
To collect information related to an area of classroom practice you have already identified ▪ Search through a selection of the listed sites to identify articles or resources that address the issue. ▪ Read and reflect on one or more articles that relate directly to your area of exploration. ▪ Determine if and how you want to proceed, and make a plan. This may involve exploring further sources of information, collaborating with others, or trying out something you learned from the article in your class. ***To discover possible topics of interest*** ▪ Explore one or more of the listed sites. You could browse the latest issue of a journal or scan the titles of articles in the past few issues. Alternately, you could narrow your search and read an article in one topic area. ***Helpful hints*** ▪ These sites vary widely in terms of how they are searched and the volume of articles available on them. If at first you are unsuccessful at finding an article of interest, you can widen or change your search term(s). ▪ Some websites, such as TESL Canada and ERIC, include Help Guides with tips on searching effectively. ▪ While some of the journals listed are not freely available, you may be able to access them in the research database(s) available through your local library.

TESL-related journal and article sources

The sources below offer immediate, open access to all content; enter search terms in the site search box, or search by subject or title.

TESL Canada Journal: www.teslcanadajournal.ca

- A refereed journal (established in 1984) about learning and teaching official languages
- For teachers, teacher educators, researchers
- For more advanced searches and tips on searching effectively, click *Search* on the navigation bar at the top of the page

TESL Ontario Contact Magazine: www.teslontario.net/publication/contact-magazine

- The official newsletter of TESL Ontario
- Contains articles, conference proceedings, letters and book reviews in a theme-based format
- Includes an annual Special Issue with information on the TESL Ontario conference Research Symposium

CAL Digests (Centre for Applied Linguistics): www.cal.org > Resources > Online Resources > Digests

- Short reports highlighting topics related to language learning, cultural orientation and linguistics
- CAL is a private, non-profit organization based in Washington, DC
- Digests are for ESL practitioners

CAELA Network Briefs (Centre for Adult English Language Acquisition): www.cal.org/caela > ESL Resources > Briefs

- Short articles summarizing evidence-based information on instructional practices
- For ESL teachers and administrators

Internet TESL Journal for teachers of English as a Second Language: http://iteslj.org/ > Articles

- Non-refereed journal that aims to publish short articles of practical use to ESL teachers

TESL-EJ — Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language: www.tesl-ej.org

- Refereed, freely accessible academic journal
- For teachers, teacher educators, researchers
- Contents include academic articles, resource reviews

Language Learning & Technology Journal: http://llt.msu.edu/

- Refereed journal for second & foreign language teachers, researchers
- Articles link research and theory to language learning and teaching that utilize technology

National Centre for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy: www.ncsall.net

- Aimed at improving practice in adult language and literacy education (new articles published until 2007)
- Literacy topics include health, curriculum development, multiple intelligences; other topics include technology, youth, professional development
- Click *Publications* on the navigation bar at the top of the page to access publications

The sources below offer more *limited* access

ERIC database (Education Resources Information Center): www.eric.ed.gov

- An online library of education research and information sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences of the US Department of Education
- Accessing the database is free; some full text articles are free, others are abstract only
- An extensive help guide is available with video tutorials (upper right corner) to support searching

TESOL Quarterly (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages): www.tesol.org > Publications > TESOL Quarterly

- A refereed journal for teachers, researchers
- Recent issues include topics such as vocabulary instruction, phrasal verbs and a special issue on writing
- Online subscription is US $50/year; abstracts are free

TESOL Journal: www.tesol.org > Publications > TESOL Journal

- A refereed, practitioner-oriented electronic journal based on current TESOL theory and research
- Recent topics include: co-teaching, English language learners with interrupted education
- Complimentary with a TESOL membership (US $95/year), but limited to members

Concept mapping

Background

Concept mapping is a process of mapping relationships among different concepts or areas of knowledge using shapes, connecting lines and concept labels. Its power lies in the learning process that happens as the concept mapper attempts to represent the relationships between concepts in a visual way. This can be useful in the TESL profession, where instructors integrate the application of multiple TESL concepts with learner goals as they teach.

The concept map on the next page is an example of a one an instructor created in order to consolidate her understanding of the elements of vocabulary instruction. She created it using Best Practice Statement #48 in *Best Practices for Adult ESL/LINC Programming in Alberta* (ATESL, 2009). (A similar concept map could be created using another best practice statement in the Instruction section of that resource, or another source of information.)

Purposes of tool

- To generate possible topics related to a broader topic of classroom practice for further exploration (by presenting brainstormed ideas visually).
- To aid learning about an area of classroom instruction by depicting, for later reflection, the breadth of knowledge involved in that area (for example, a concept map on how to teach vocabulary, such as the concept map on the next page).
- To assess a learner's understanding of a lesson (by having the learner construct a concept map of it).
- To assess a learner's conception of how a particular skill can be learned (by having a learner construct it individually or in a group).
- To communicate concepts to others (e.g., to use it as a teaching tool).

Possible uses of tool

There are numerous uses of a concept map, related to each of the purposes outlined above. In relation to the reflective method, the concept map can be used to *Select a Topic for Further Exploration (*Step 1 of the reflective method) and *Collect Information* (Step 2 of the Reflective Method).

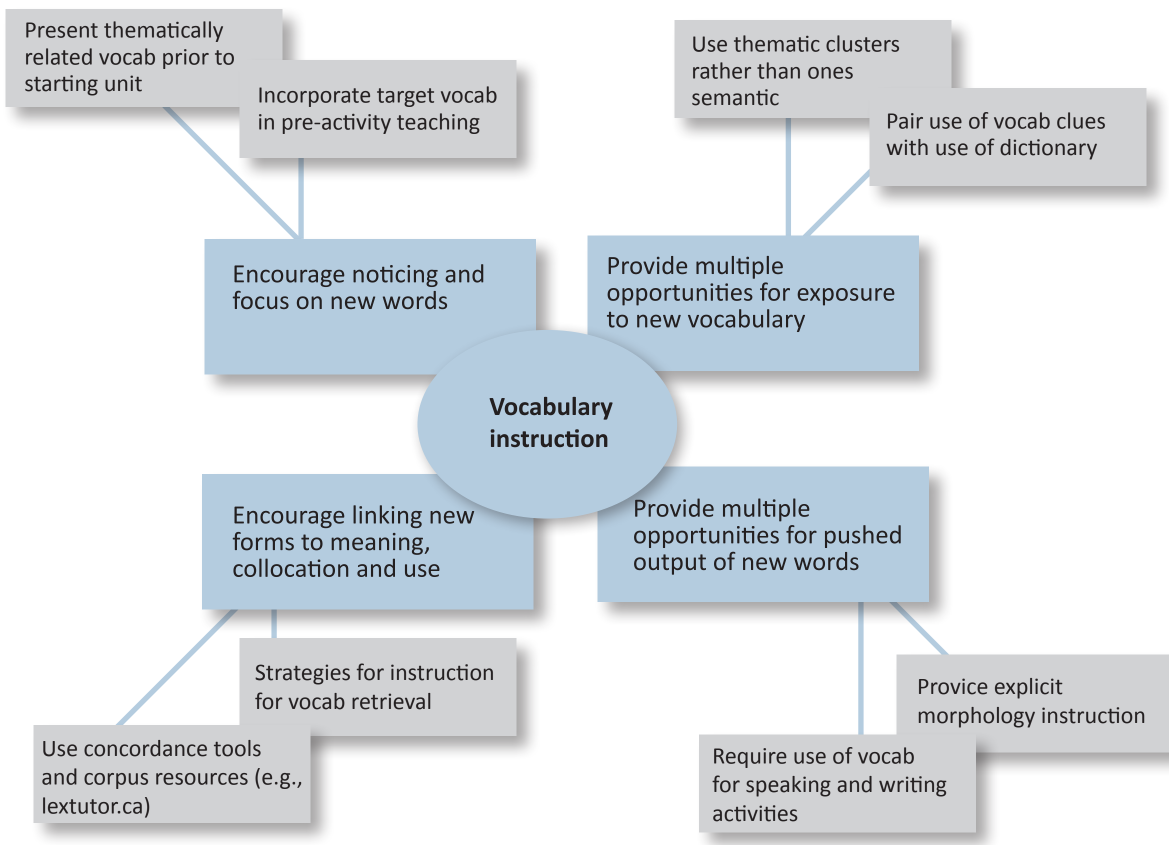
Creating your own concept map on an area of instruction—such as in the example on the next page—can facilitate awareness of the breadth of parts that make up that particular instructional area. This can prompt reflection on aspects you already address in your classes, and on areas for further learning or experimentation. In constructing a concept map, you could draw information from:

- Your own brainstormed ideas (or ideas brainstormed with others)
- Resources, such as books or articles
- Information from learners (e.g., behaviour, assessment results, your observations)

Instructions for creating and using a concept map will differ depending on the purpose for which you or learners are creating it.

Concept mapping

Elements of vocabulary instruction[4]



[4] Source of information depicted in concept map: *Best practices for ESL/LINC programming in Alberta (ATESL, 2009, Statement #48)* www.atesl.ca/cmsms/resources/best-practices-2

Classroom observation log

Background
The aim in partnering with a colleague (e.g., a PD partner, supervisor, fellow instructor) for class observation is to use the combined observational power, experience and dialogue of two people to further professional growth. The observations are shared in a post-observation discussion. Generally, a collaborative approach to observation goes somewhat like this:

Pre-observation: Collaborative observation begins with a shared understanding of the purpose of the observation. Colleagues agree on which aspect(s) of classroom practice to observe, how long the colleague will be observing, and how to record data.

Observation: A key feature of a collaborative approach to observation is its emphasis on ***describing*** classroom evidence with as little interpretation, opinion and judgment as possible. This can involve a factual, inference-free account of what happened during classroom activities, or of the behaviour (verbal and non-verbal) of learners and the instructor. The observer strives for descriptive rather than interpretive statements.

Interpretive	Despcriptive
The learners were bored.	*Two learners were sleeping.* *Two were conversing in Spanish.*

Post-observation: A collaborative approach involves discussing the new information gained through the observation. Often led by the instructor, it involves deciding on what this informative might mean, and what a productive next step would be, given the new knowledge about instruction or learners.

Purpose of tool

- To provide guidance for observing a class in a non-judgemental (as opposed to interpretive) way.

Instructions

Use the tool to record observations and descriptions of what the instructor and learners were doing at certain points during a lesson.

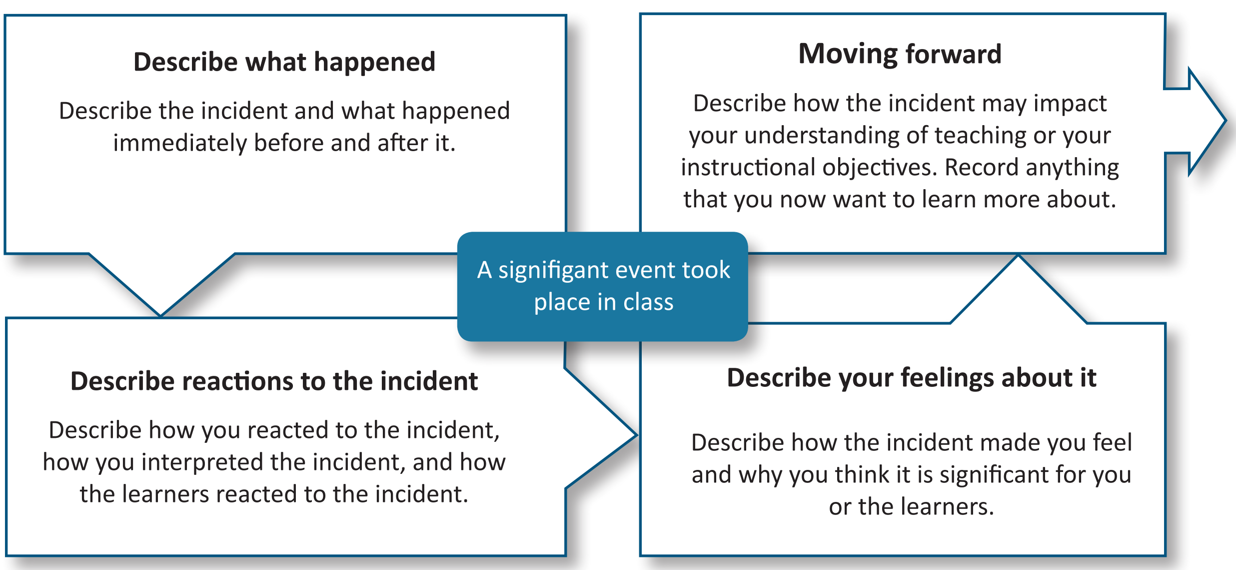
1. Using descriptive, non-judgmental language, the observer records observations and descriptions of what the instructor was doing throughout the class, along with corresponding observations and descriptions of what students were doing.
2. The instructor and/or observer reflect on the observations and note down points in the third column during their discussion.
3. Together, the instructor and observer identify challenges or issues from the instructor's perspective.
4. Instructor and observer collaboratively brainstorm for and discuss options for problem-solving.
5. Instructor and observer agree on a plan (e.g., to collect more data, to experiment with an alternate instructional practice, to research a topic that has emerged from the data).

Classroom observation log

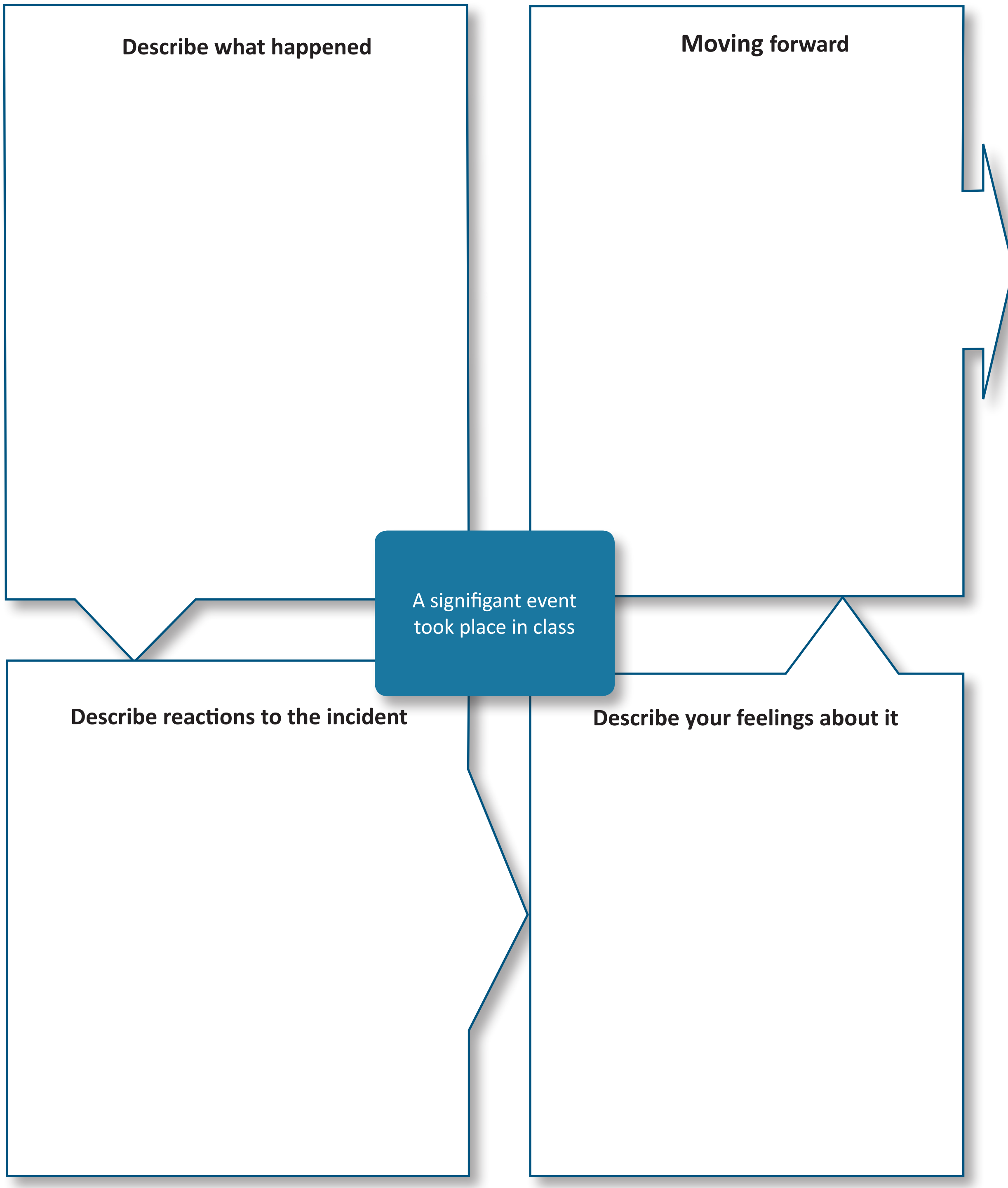
Descriptions of what the instructor was doing throughout the lesson	Corresponding descriptions of what the learners were doing	Points during follow-up discussion

Critical incident journal

Purpose of tool
▪ To facilitate reflection on a significant incident from an instructor's own classroom.
Possible uses of tool
A critical incident is an event that takes place in your class that is significant or memorable for you in some way. It can be a surprising or commonplace event (either negative or positive), but is an event that you want to explore further. Use the critical incident journal to reflect on a critical incident in your classroom. By systematically recalling, describing and analyzing such incidents, you can explore assumptions about teaching practices; this process may also help you to select a focus (Step 1 of the reflective method) for further learning and reflection.
Instructions
1. In the first box, describe the incident and what happened in the classroom immediately beforehand and afterwards. Avoid making assumptions or using evaluative language (e.g., "The class was bored" or "Maria completely lost it.") Instead, focus on describing the observable behaviours, events or actions that took place. 2. In the second and third boxes, describe your reactions to, interpretations of, and feelings about what happened, as well as learner reactions. 3. In the final box, record your reflections about how you think this incident may impact your beliefs or practices as a language instructor, or may lead you to explore an area of classroom practice further.



Critical incident journal[5]



[5] Adapted with permission from a NorQuest College model for understanding critical incidents as they arise in the classroom.

Teaching journal[6]

Purpose of tool
• To facilitate reflection on instruction.

Possible uses of tool

On your own: Writing in a journal can help you see classroom events in a different light by forcing you to 'step back' in order to recall and record reflections on a lesson. Journal entries can provide a written record of various aspects of your practice over time. By returning to these entries, you can identify trends and areas of interest for further exploration. A journal can also provide a venue for describing challenges and setting goals. Journal entries can be written in variety of ways. For example:

- In a structured way, such as by using a template with specific questions to answer, and answering the same questions each time; this allows you to quickly flip through entries to find the responses to a particular question
- In a non-structured way, such as annotations or sticky notes on your lesson plan

With others: Sharing journal entries with others can be done in an instructor group or on a blog or wiki.

Time investment: You may want to dedicate just a few minutes a day to your journal entries, or considerably more in order to reflect in a deeper or more critical way on your instruction.

Instructions

Five-minute teaching journal

1. Reflect briefly but regularly on your teaching by taking five minutes after class to jot down reflections on your lesson. A sample template is provided on the tool with possible areas of instruction to explore.
2. At the end of a specified period of time (e.g., a week or month), scan through and reflect on your journal entries. Jot down some of the trends or key issues that arose and the insights you have gained as a result of the journaling process.
3. If there is an area you have identified that you want to explore further, make a plan for how to proceed.

Deeper teaching journal

You may prefer to reflect on your teaching without the use of a template in more detailed or focused way. You can either select one particular area of teaching to reflect on regularly, or reflect on more general questions about an entire lesson. Possible questions include:

- To what extent were the objectives for my teaching day accomplished? How can I tell?
- Were the materials effective in helping meet the lesson objectives? To what extent did they reflect texts and situations that learners are likely to encounter in real life?
- Was there a balance of teacher talk and student talk?
- Did the classroom activities have a balance of skill-building and real-world, skill-using tasks?
- To what extent did I provide feedback that supported learners' language development?
- In what way was my classroom a supportive environment for learners? How can I tell?
- How was a communicative, learner-centred philosophy of teaching reflected in my lesson?
- How could the lesson be improved to better meet the language learning needs of learners?

[6] Questions adapted from Richards and Lockhart (1994).

Five-minute teaching journal

Overall	
Successes and activities that motivated learners:	Challenges and activities less interesting to learners:
Teaching objectives	
My communicative teaching objectives for today *(e.g., what I wanted learners to be able to do in real life in English)*:	How learners demonstrated whether or not they met the objectives:
	How well my materials and activities supported my teaching objectives:
Moving forward	
Things I would change next time:	Things to follow:

Lesson sketch

Purpose of tool
▪ To facilitate documenting information gained from observations (by the instructor him/herself) on how an entire lesson went, after it has happened.
Possible uses of tool
As Richards and Farrell (2005) observe, a "lesson report can be thought of as the opposite of a lesson plan. A lesson plan describes what the teacher sets out to achieve in a lesson, a lesson report tries to record what actually happened during the lesson" (p. 38). This tool allows you to file a quick lesson report on an entire lesson.
Instructions
To report on a lesson 1. In the first part of the tool, focus on what actually happened in the lesson as you describe what you and your learners did. 2. In the second part of the tool, reflect on the lesson as you complete a critical review of what happened.

Lesson sketch

Descriptive report of what happened

Describe what *you* did during the lesson, and describe what the *learners* did during the lesson

What I (or the instructor) did	What the learners did, or how they reacted

Critical review of what happened

Things that worked well (state possible reasons)

Things that did not work well (state possible reasons)

Focused lesson sketch

Purpose of tool

- To facilitate documenting information gained from observations (by the instructor him/herself) on a single *aspect* of a lesson, after it has happened.

Possible uses of tool

As Richards and Farrell (2005) observe, a "lesson report can be thought of as the opposite of a lesson plan. A lesson plan describes what the instructor sets out to achieve in a lesson, a lesson report tries to record what actually happened during the lesson" (p. 38).

This tool allows you to file a quick lesson report about a specific aspect of your instruction. The example on the next page illustrates how this can be done for grammar. It can also serve as a model for developing quick lesson reports for any other aspects of a lesson or class (e.g., a lesson on how to write an essay or how to respond to an argument; a lesson on giving and responding to compliments; a lesson on linking words in thought groups). The benefit of reporting on one aspect of a lesson is that you have information recorded to refer to later when considering how to teach the lesson again.

Instructions

To report on a grammar lesson

1. In the first few rows of the table, record which aspects of grammar you had planned to teach and how.
2. In the next few rows, reflect on the relative effectiveness of the lesson activities by describing the challenges and successes experienced (by you and the learners).
3. End with notes to yourself regarding what to consider when teaching the lesson again.

Use this tool as a model for reporting on other aspects of a class

1. Following the model given, first record the objectives you were planning to address, the time spent on the lesson, and the types of activities planned.
2. Then reflect on the lesson by describing the challenges experienced by learners and the instructor as well as the relative effectiveness of the planned activities.
3. End with notes to yourself regarding what to consider when you next teach this lesson.

Focused lesson sketch (grammar)

Descriptive report of grammar instruction

Describe what *you* did during the lesson to address grammar, and how the *learners* reacted

What the instructor did	What the learners did, or how they reacted
Description of planned grammar activities/instruction:	
Description of unplanned grammar instruction:	

Time spent on grammar during the lesson:

Grammar points addressed during the lesson:

Critical review

Challenges and successes:

To what extent did the communicative language tasks elicit the target grammar?

How was feedback provided to learners on their grammar? How did learners respond to the feedback?

To consider when teaching next time:

Audio or video recording your lesson

Purpose of tool
▪ To support your analysis of an audio or video recording of your own teaching.
Possible uses of tool
If you are interested in "another pair of eyes" in your classroom, but do not have the opportunity or desire to invite someone in to observe, video- or audio-taping a lesson can be helpful. Basic equipment can allow you to capture information that you may not be aware of.
Instructions
1. Consider the equipment available and your own and your students' comfort levels with being recorded before you begin. 2. Check with your institution's policies on recording students (even though you may be the subject of your recording, it is likely that students will be recorded) and find out whether or not there are any procedures you need to follow to get permission to record the class. 3. Explain to your class the purpose of the recordings and how they will be used (e.g., you might assure students that the recording will be used to help you reflect on your teaching, not to evaluate student participation). Ensure that students are comfortable with your plan. 4. Determine a goal for the recording. What will you focus on? What do you hope to gain? 5. Record the class. 6. Listen to or watch the recording to gather your first impressions. Fill in the first section of the worksheet. If you find it difficult to get beyond the self-conscious feelings that arise, you may find it useful to note down what you observe using descriptive rather than evaluative language. For example, rather than "Learners were bored during the grammar lesson," note down that "J, S, and K were talking to each other while I was explaining how to form the present perfect." The *Classroom observation log* tool, presented earlier in this chapter, may provide helpful suggestions. 7. Watch or listen again and complete the reflection questions. 8. Make a plan to apply what you've learned in your teaching practice. You may find the section earlier in this chapter on the reflective method useful.

Audio or video recording your lesson[7]

Before watching your recording
Describe your goal for recording this lesson.
What do you want to focus on or look for when you watch this recording? Are there any tools in this chapter that could help you?
On first watching your recording
Describe your first reaction. Is there anything you notice that you were not aware of while you were teaching?
Analysis (watching the recording again and reflecting)
What do you see in terms of the aspect of your teaching you are focusing on?
Does anything surprise you about what you see?
Do you see any possible areas for improvement?
How has the recording impacted your views (e.g., of teaching, of learners)?
Based on what you have learned, is there a next step you would like to take?

If you did not have a specific goal for recording the lesson, you could explore one or more of the following questions as you watch it:

- Do you think the language objectives of the lesson are clear?
- What was the balance of teacher talk and learner talk?
- From the recording, how would you characterize your role as an instructor?
- To what extent were learners provided opportunities to engage in meaningful communication?
- Did the way learners were grouped for tasks work?

[7] Adapted from Richard and Farrell (2005).

Communicative tasks and grouping learners

Purposes of tool

- To raise awareness of multiple ways to group learners during a lesson.
- To gather data about the effectivness of grouping learners during an observation.
- To gather data about the degree of authentic communication happening in an activity.
- To analyse how different communicative tasks might be matched with learner groupings to promote communication.

Possible uses of tool

This tool helps focus the observer on the types of groupings that are chosen for different types of activities and on the communicative objectives of various activities.

This activity is designed primarily to be used with a colleague-observer. Using an observer helps to ensure that each group or pair of learners are observed during their activities. However, it can also be used for self-reflection just after a lesson has been taught (see instructions below). If you invite a colleague to observe your class, be sure to explain the purpose of the tool and allow the observer time to become familiar with the tool prior to the class.

Instructions

Collect information (on your own or with an observer)

1. In the first column, the observer lists the tasks in which learners engage, in the order in which they happen. (This could also be done immediately after the lesson by the instructor.)
2. For each activity, the observer (or instructor) takes note of the grouping orientation used (whole-class, group, pair, or individual).
3. For each activity, the observer (or instructor) evaluates the communicative nature of the task by considering the following questions:
   - Did learners **engage in real communication**? That is, did the task and grouping orientation foster the exchange of information, ideas, opinions and the use of strategies to ensure understanding?
   - Did the task and grouping orientation require learners to **pay attention to meaning**?
   - Did learners need to **negotiate meaning**? That is, did they need to check comprehension, rephrase and ask for clarification?

Reflect on the information and make a plan

4. Reflect on the completed table. Were a variety of grouping orientations used? Did the grouping orientation encourage communication?
5. Reflect with an observer. Discuss the balance (or lack thereof) between whole-class, group, pair, and individual activities. What factors affected the grouping orientations chosen for each activity? Discuss whether another grouping orientation might have more successfully encouraged learners to use language to communicate.

Communicative tasks and grouping learners[8]

Did the task and grouping orientation encourage learners to do any of the following?

Task	Grouping (e.g., whole-class, groups of 4, pairs, individuals)	1. Engage in real communication (i.e., exchange info, ideas, opinions)? 2. Pay attention to meaning? 3. Negotiate meaning?
Collaborate to write a paragraph.	*Groups of 5*	*1.Yes* *2. Yes* *3. Sometimes, but two learners really dominated most of the conversation and writing*

[8] Adapted from Wajnryb (1992).

Task-based teaching

Background

A *task* is a pedagogical activity in which learners are focused on meaning as they use language to achieve a clearly specified, non-linguistic outcome (where a learner's attention is primarily on conveying intended meaning, rather than on using specific linguistic forms).

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an approach to organizing instruction that views tasks as the primary units of instruction, where lessons include activities that prepare learners for tasks, the tasks themselves, and activities that arise from the task performance. For background on the concepts in this tool, see the article *Task-based language teaching* in Chapter 3.

Purposes of tool

- To encourage reflection on classroom task design.
- To foster a principled approach to task design.
- To raise awareness of the options available when planning a task-based lesson.

Instructions

Reflect

1. Identify a classroom task that you plan to use or have already used. Reflect on the extent to which the task meets the *Task Criteria* by answering the *Reflective Questions* listed on the tool. You may want to ask a colleague to examine your task in light of the criteria to see if she/he agrees with your conclusions. If necessary, consider how you might fine-tune the task to more effectively meet the task criteria.
2. Make lists of the activities that lead up to your task, the activities that are part of the task, and the activities that follow up on the task. Then examine the *Pre-, During- and Post-task Options* listed in the tool. Which of those options were you already planning to use (or did you use)? Are there other options you might consider trying?

Plan for the future

3. If needed, make changes to your task prior to using it in class. For additional details regarding the criteria and options listed in the tool, refer to *Task-based language teaching* in Chapter 3, or to one of the articles referred to in the tool.[9]
4. Observe learners as they carry out the task, keeping the following questions in mind. Use your observations to reflect on the success of the tool and to implement changes.
    - Were learners primarily focused on meaning as they used language to accomplish a goal?
    - Were learners adequately prepared to carry out the task, or would further pre-task activities be useful?
    - Might changes to the design of the task (e.g., the time allotted to perform the task, access to input, opportunities to focus on form) make the task more effective?
    - Did post-task activities successfully encourage learners to reflect on their performance, improve accuracy, complexity, or fluency, and provide an opportunity to "do it again"? Would further or different post-task options improve the effectiveness of the task?

[9] Ellis (2006), Ellis (2003), and Nunan (2004).

Task-based teaching

Reflect on a classroom task. Consider the extent to which it meets the criteria below (drawn from Nunan, 2004, and Ellis, 2003) by answering the reflective questions. Then consider which pre-, during-, and post-task options (drawn from Ellis, 2006) you will make use of when you use the task.

Task Criteria	Reflective Questions
Learners use language to accomplish a clearly specified, non-linguistic and somewhat authentic goal.	⇢ What is the non-linguistic outcome or goal of the task? ⇢ In what ways does the task reflect what learners might need to do in the real world? ⇢ What criteria must learners meet to successfully complete the task? ⇢ What instructions will maximize the effectiveness of the task?
Learners focus on meaning as they interact with language.	⇢ What information, ideas, opinions or attitudes must learners comprehend/communicate in the process of carrying out the task?
Learners use their own resources to carry out the task. What they actually say, and the language they use, is not specified.	⇢ What linguistic forms will likely be elicited by the task? ⇢ Do learners have the linguistic resources and background knowledge to complete the task? If not, what scaffolding is in place to enable learners to be successful?

Pre-task Options

- Walk the whole class through a similar task
- Have learners examine or observe a model
- Design activities to reduce the linguistic demands on learners (e.g., activities that introduce useful language)
- Design activities to reduce the cognitive demands on learners
- Allow learners enough time to meaningfully prepare for the task
- Provide clear instructions
- Provide guidance regarding when learners should focus on form versus content

During-task Options

- Have learners work under time pressure to encourage fluency
- Allow learners to work at their own pace to promote complexity and accuracy (e.g., assign as homework)
- Allow learners access to input (e.g., to refer to a text during the task) to encourage them to "borrow" language
- Don't allow access to input, to encourage learners to depend on own resources
- Respond to questions about form
- Focus on form in response to learner error (i.e., request clarification; recast learner errors; explicitly correct errors; explain a rule or pattern; remind learners of useful language)

Post-task Options

- Have learners repeat a performance privately or with a different partner to increase complexity or fluency
- Have learners repeat a performance publicly
- Encourage reflection by having learners report on a task (orally or in writing)
- Encourage learners to evaluate their performance (by providing criteria)
- Encourage learners to identify steps they can take to improve
- Review forms used incorrectly
- Review gaps (i.e., forms learners should have used, but didn't)
- Design activities that help learners notice their own errors
- Design activities that allow learners to practice forms

Accuracy versus fluency

Background

Activities that focus on *fluency* tend to focus on meaning and may include a number of features. These features may include free production activities, the provision of planning time, the teaching of strategies for gaining planning time or holding a turn (e.g., lexical fillers), activities that are naturally repetitive, and a focus on learning high-frequency formulaic expressions. Activities that focus on fluency also tend to focus on meaning.

Activities that focus on *accuracy* help learners identify and correct vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation errors. They may also push learners to use more complex elements of language than they are accustomed to so that language does not become over-simplified in order to be accurate.

Some activities facilitate the development of *both* fluency and accuracy. For example, activities that involve gaining planning time and involve repetition have been shown to improve both fluency and accuracy.

For further background to this tool, see the articles in Chapter 3 titled *Communicative language teaching* and *Task-based language teaching.*

Purposes of tool

- To raise awareness of how different design features of a lesson can affect the balance between a focus on fluency and a focus on accuracy.
- To raise awareness of how instructors and learners often differ in their interpretations and intentions for different language learning activities.

Instructions

Gather data

1. Make a list of the activities you plan to have learners work on during a lesson.
2. Reflect on each planned activity. Are you hoping it will help learners improve their fluency, their accuracy, or both? Check off any *Features that promote fluency*, or *Features that promote accuracy* (see next page) that are present in your activities.
3. Teach your lesson. As you (or a colleague) observe learners, take notes on what they are actually focused on when carrying out each activity: What are they doing? What are they talking about? What steps did they follow to complete the activity?

Reflect on the data

4. Reflect on the following questions (alone or with a colleague):
   - To what extent was my intention (in terms of a focus on fluency and a focus on accuracy) behind each activity reflected in what learners actually did?
   - With reference to the items I checked off in the *Features that promote fluency* or *Features that promote accuracy* boxes, to what extent do the activities in my 'lesson as planned' reflect a balance between a focus on fluency and a focus on accuracy? If I am focusing on one to the neglect of the other, do I have a good reason for doing so?
   - To what extent did learners display a balance between a focus on fluency and a focus on accuracy in the 'lesson as lived'? If relevant, consider or discuss why learners focused primarily on one aspect to the neglect of the other.

Make a plan for the future

5. What changes might ensure that your intentions for each activity are reflected in what learners actually do? What changes might you try out to ensure a better balance between a focus on accuracy and on fluency, both in your 'lesson as planned' and in the lesson as lived out by your learners? What additional data could you collect?

Accuracy versus fluency

List the activities learners will work on during a lesson.	**With reference to the activity features below**, is the activity designed to help learners develop fluency, improve accuracy, or both?	**Observe learners as they carry out the activity.** What are they actually focused on? What did they actually accomplish through the activity in terms of fluency and accuracy?
Activity 1:		
Activity 2:		
Activity 3:		
Activity 4:		

Features that promote accuracy:

- Raise awareness of potentially useful language prior to a task
- Provide opportunities to focus on form when planning
- Guide learner to focus on form when observing a model (pre- or post-task)
- Include time to collaborate and ask questions to solve linguistic problems while on task
- Encourage corrective feedback by instructor or other learners (recasts, comprehension checks, explanations)
- Provide vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation learning and practice activities
- Include instructions to focus on form when repeating or revising a task

Features that promote fluency:

Provide opportunities to:

- Gather ideas and content prior to a task
- Practice strategies for holding a turn, gaining planning time, negotiating meaning, etc.
- Repeat the same or similar activity
- Practice high-frequency formulaic expressions

May include:

- Intrinsically repetitive communication activities
- Free production activities

Teacher talk versus student talk[10]

Purpose of tool

- To raise awareness of the balance of teacher talk and student talk in a lesson.

Possible uses of tool

Use this tool to gather information about the balance of teacher talk versus student talk in a class. This tool encourages the observer to take note of who is speaking at any given time and for what purpose.

This tool is designed to be used with a colleague-observer; be sure to explain the purpose of the tool and allow your observer time to become familiar with it prior to the class.

Instructions

Collect information

1. During class, the observer keeps track of who is speaking (instructor or learners) during each period of time.
2. Regarding time periods, one option is to break up the class into equal time segments (e.g., every 15 minutes). Another option is to record time periods (e.g., 8:00–8:12) based on what is happening.
3. The observer should briefly indicate what the speakers are doing with language at that time (see examples below).

Reflect on the information and make a plan

4. Reflect on the proportion of teacher talk to student talk in the lesson. Based on the chart, how many minutes did you spend talking? How many minutes did individual learners spend talking? How many minutes did they spend talking in groups/pairs? How many minutes were spent in silent work? Does the proportion of teacher talk to student talk match the objectives of the lesson?
5. Reflect on what you were doing when you were talking, and what learners were doing when they were talking. What functions took up the most time?
6. Reflect with the observer. Ask if there were any points where you could have spoken less to provide learners with more opportunity to speak.
7. Make a plan for the future.

FOR EXAMPLE

A teacher speaking to the class might be:

- *Sharing own experience/chatting*
- *Telling/explaining what to do*
- *Explaining language or providing corrective feedback*
- *Clarifying content, elaborating*
- *Checking comprehension, questioning*
- *Formally presenting input or modeling language*

No one may be speaking because they are:

- *Reading, writing, waiting, or planning*

A learner speaking to the whole class or the teacher might be:

- *Responding to a teacher question*
- *Responding to a classmate*
- *Asking a question*
- *Asking for help*
- *Sharing own experience*
- *Formally presenting*

Learners speaking to each other in groups or pairs might be:

- *Collaborating on a task*
- *Comparing/checking answers*
- *Asking for help, clarifying*
- *Presenting information*
- *Sharing own experience*
- *Mimicking*
- *Role-playing*
- *Chatting*

[10] Adapted from Wajnryb (1992), p.72.

Teacher talk versus student talk
A tool for observers

Who is speaking, and in what function?			
Time period	Instructor talk	Learner talk (to each other or to teacher during whole class)	Learner talk (in pairs or small groups)
9–9:15	- Taking attendance (2 min.) - Asking learners about weekend - Telling/explaining first activity (7 min.)	- Talking about weekend (4 learners) (5 min.)	- Chatting (to each other during attendance)

Display versus referential questions

Background

Several studies have examined the proportion of referential to display questions instructors ask ESL learners, and the responses those questions elicit (Yang, 2006; Brock, 1986; Long and Sato, 1983). Those studies indicate two key findings:

- Teachers ask significantly more display than referential questions (Long and Sato, 1983; Brock, 1986).
- Referential questions elicit longer, more grammatically complex answers from learners, which in turn elicit more confirmation checks and clarification requests from instructors (Yang, 2006; Brock, 1986).

Characteristics of display questions	Characteristics of referential questions
▪ Instructor already knows the answer ▪ Do not serve a genuinely communicative purpose ▪ Often asked to determine whether a learner knows an answer or has learned an aspect of language, e.g., *What is the past form of go?* ▪ Generally have a right or wrong answer, and elicit yes/no or short-answer responses ▪ Seldom occur in native speaker conversations	▪ Instructor does not know the answer ▪ Indicate a genuine gap in knowledge, and result in genuine information transfer, such as *How did you spend your weekend?* ▪ Tend to be open-ended and may require a learner to describe an experience, express an opinion, analyze, paraphrase and summarize ▪ Generally elicit longer answers and often draw out learner experiences ▪ Often occur in native speaker conversations

Purposes of tool

- To raise awareness of the types of questions that you ask in class.
- To gather data about learners' responses to different question types.

Possible uses of tool

A. To collect information: With an observer or on your own, use the tool to record data:

- Record the questions you/the instructor asks learners, check the question type (display or referential) and use checkmarks to record the length of responses from learners.
- Reflect on the data or discuss it. Consider questions such as, *Do you ask more display or referential questions? Is there a connection between question types and length of learner responses?*
- Decide on a course of action (e.g., collect more data, experiment with question types, learn more).

B. As an awareness-raising tool:

- **On your own:** Consider this tool and reflect on the types of questions you asked learners, your purpose in asking them, and the responses they elicited. When your purpose was to prompt communication, consider whether or not your questions were genuine requests for information.
- **With others:** Use the tool to spark discussion, exploration or experimentation amongst colleagues about the effectiveness of different question types.

Display versus referential questions[11]

Use checkmarks to record the length of responses each question elicits. More than one learner may reply to a question, so there may be multiple checkmarks.

Questions asked by instructor	Q type	Length of responses
When did the man in the story eat breakfast?	☑ Display ☐ Referential	_____ No response _✓_ 1-2 sentences ✓✓ 1-2 words _____ Extended discourse
	☐ Display ☐ Referential	_____ No response _____ 1-2 sentences _____ 1-2 words _____ Extended discourse
	☐ Display ☐ Referential	_____ No response _____ 1-2 sentences _____ 1-2 words _____ Extended discourse
	☐ Display ☐ Referential	_____ No response _____ 1-2 sentences _____ 1-2 words _____ Extended discourse
	☐ Display ☐ Referential	_____ No response _____ 1-2 sentences _____ 1-2 words _____ Extended discourse
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	☐ Display ☐ Referential	_____ No response _____ 1-2 sentences _____ 1-2 words _____ Extended discourse

[11] Questions in this tool adapted from Yang (2006).

Giving feedback on oral errors

Purposes of tool
▪ To raise awareness of the multiple ways of providing feedback on learners' spoken errors and of one's own preferred ways of providing feedback. ▪ To gather data about learners' responses to feedback types.
Possible uses of tool
With an observer: Ask a colleague to observe your teaching and use the tool to record the data. Then discuss the data with your colleague, sharing observations and discussing the effectiveness of different feedback types. Together, decide on a course of action. **On your own**: Considering the tool can prompt further reading or reflection on error feedback. Begin to notice the types of error feedback you give regularly, and the types of responses your feedback elicits in learners. You could also record your teaching (video or audio) to examine your use of feedback. **With others**: Use the tool to spark discussion, exploration or experimentation amongst colleagues about the effectiveness of different types of error feedback.
Instructions
Collect information 1. During class, record errors made by the learner word-for-word (in the first row on the tool). 2. Record the word-for-word response to the error given by the instructor. 3. Record how the learner responds word-for-word to the instructor's feedback . *Analyse the data, reflect on the information and make a plan* 4. Categorize the verbatim responses of the instructor and learner(s) on the tool, using the categorizations charted below (adapted from of Lyster and Ranta, 1997) listed on charts below. Note any that are difficult to categorize. 5. Reflect on the data (analyze patterns in types of feedback, in learner responses, and in the connection between the feedback and response). 6. Make a plan (e.g., to collect more data, to adapt or experiment with feedback types, to learn more about particular feedback types).

Instructor error feedback types *to "We goed to the store"*	Learner response types *to instructor feedback*
Explicit correction: Provides the correct form. *Oh you mean, "We went to the store."* **Recast:** Reformulates part/all of utterance. *We went to the store.* **Clarification request:** Indicates he/she has not understood, and a *repetition* or reformulation is required. *What do you mean by goed?* **Metalinguistic feedback:** Provides comments, informtion or questions without giving correct form. *The verb "go" is an irregular verb.* **Elicitation:** Directly elicits correct form. *How do we say 'go' in the past?* **Repetition:** Repeats utterance, often with adjusted intonation to highlight error. *We goed (?) to the* store*?*	**Repetition:** Repeats the instructor's feedback (i.e, the correct form). **Incorporation: R**epeats instructor's feedback (i.e., the correct form), incorporating it into a longer utterance. **Self-repair:** Corrects error after feedback (when feedback did not include correct form). **Peer repair:** A peer learner corrects error. **Same error:** Repeats the same error. **Different error:** Makes a different error. **Acknowledge:** Acknowledges feedback (e.g., *yes*) but does not correct error. **Partial repair**: Corrects part of the error.

Giving feedback on oral errors

Try to categorize the type of error feedback and the type of response it elicits from the learner.

Learner error	We goed to the store.	
Instructor feedback	We went to the store.	Recast
Learner response	We went to the store, and we bought apples.	Incorporation

Learner error		
Instructor feedback		
Learner response		

Learner error		
Instructor feedback		
Learner response		

Learner error		
Instructor feedback		
Learner response		

Learner error		
Instructor feedback		
Learner response		

Learner error		
Instructor feedback		
Learner response		

🛠 Tools for articulating teaching beliefs and practices

Autobiographical sketch[12]

Purpose of tool
▪ To provide a starting point for instructors who want to explore their beliefs, values and theories about language teaching and learning.
Possible uses of tool
Use the set of guiding questions in this tool to help you become more aware of factors that have shaped your instructional methods. The tool encourages you to consider a number of factors, such as your early experiences, regional background, and learning experiences to answer questions about your beliefs and values related to teaching adult language learners.
Instructions
1. Think about your experiences as a learner and an instructor and reflect upon how they have influenced your instructional practice. Imagine your life as the tree in the "Autobiographical sketch – Getting started" tool. 2. Label the roots and the branches with your experiences as a learner and instructor. The way you choose to add information to the tree is up to you, as it is a reflection of your life and experiences. You can jot down notes that reflect these experiences right on the tool, or add them on sticky notes that you can move around as you reflect on and design your tree. To get started, you may wish to do the following: a. To the **roots**, you might want to add your early experiences in school and as a language learner, along with your (or your family's or your culture's) values about education. b. To the **trunk,** you could add your experiences as an adult learner in college or university. Were you educated in a different culture than the one you grew up in? If yes, you could reflect on how those differences in culture influenced your development. c. To the **branches,** you could add your experiences as an ESL instructor, including professional development. How have your learners influenced you? What have you learned from them that has helped you become a better instructor? 3. As you add each item, reflect on how that experience contributed to making you the instructor you are today. 4. Looking at the tree as a whole, you can determine whether or not there is anything you would like to explore further. The reflective method can support further exploration.

[12] Adapted from Farrell (2007).

Autobiographical sketch

Imagine your life as this tree. Think about your experiences as a learner and instructor, and reflect on how they have influenced your instructional practice. Label the roots and branches with your experiences as a learner and instructor. As you add each label, reflect on how that experience contributed to making you the instructor you are today.

Articulating a teaching philosophy

Background

A teaching philosophy is a comprehensive statement of your vision of teaching. It can be a useful document to have prepared for employment applications and interviews, or to include in your teaching portfolio (see the next tool).

What are my beliefs about good language instruction?
Am I teaching according to these beliefs?

Articulating a teaching philosophy can be helpful because many of our instructional practices are driven by our beliefs related to teaching.[13] By articulating those beliefs, we make them explicit. This can help us to determine whether we are teaching according to those beliefs as well as to evaluate the assumptions they are based on, how they impact our teaching, and their worth. As a result, we can reaffirm the values and related teaching practices we still hold dear, and discard those we do not.

Topics you can include in your teaching philosophy

- Your definition of good teaching, with an explanation of why you have adopted this definition.
- A discussion of your teaching methods: how do you implement your definition of good teaching?
- A discussion of your assessment methods and how they support your definition of good teaching.
- A description of your students, their key learning goals and challenges.
- A description of your teaching goals: with what content and skills should students leave your class?
- Your goals for improving your own teaching.

Source: Tip sheet: Writing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy, Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, University of Toronto; www.teaching.utoronto.ca.

Purpose of tool

- To provide support for instructors who want to explore their beliefs, values and theories about language teaching and learning in order to develop a teaching philosophy.

Possible uses of tool

The set of guiding questions in this tool can help you become more aware of the factors that shape your instructional methods. The tool encourages you to consider a number of factors, such as early experiences, regional background and learning experiences to answer questions about your beliefs and values related to teaching adult language learners.

Construct a picture of your beliefs and theories about learning and teaching by responding to selected questions in the tool. As you reflect on what you've written, you may discover areas you would like to explore more, whether through research, talking with colleagues or by applying the reflective method in your classroom.

[13] Shi and Cummings (1995) explored the "beliefs and practice of five experienced language teachers." They found that, even though the teachers had been "educated in the same institution, and by the same methods, the knowledge guiding their instruction [was] largely based on personal beliefs" (as cited in Farrell, 2007, p. 33).

Articulating a teaching philosophy[14]

➲Being an ESL instructor

- Why did you become an ESL instructor?
- What does the word instructor mean to you?
- How would you explain your job to a friend?
- What are the qualities of a good instructor?
- What is the most rewarding part of teaching?

➲Beliefs about language teaching

- How do you see your role in the classroom?
- How would you define effective teaching?
- What teaching methods do you try to implement in your classroom?
- How do you determine if language learning has taken place among your learners?
- What is your approach to classroom management?
- What do learners in your class believe about your teaching?
- Richards & Lockhart (2005) have suggested "teachers are often unaware of what they do and what they teach." Do you think this statement applies to your teaching?
- What place do authentic materials have in your ESL instruction?
- What do you think the role of task-based learning is in your ESL instruction?

➲ Beliefs about language learning

- What do you think are the best ways to learn a language?
- What do your learners believe about language learning?
- Where do your beliefs about language learning come from?
- Does your teaching emphasise the importance of particular learning styles? To what extent do you accommodate a wide range of learning styles?
- What kinds of learning strategies do you encourage in your learners?

➲ Experiences as a learner

- How have your experiences as a language learner influenced your ESL teaching?
- How did the approach of the instructor contribute to or limit your language learning?

➲Beliefs about your ESL program

- How would you characterize the TESL profession in Ontario?
- What kind of professional development activities best support teachers?
- To what extent is your teaching based on the needs of your learners?
- What is your attitude towards assessment in your ESL program?
- What changes would you like to see in your program?

➲ Beliefs about the English language

- Do you think English is a more difficult language to learn than others?
- What do you think is the most difficult aspect of learning English for your particular group of learners?
- Do you think it is important to speak English with native speaker-like pronunciation?
- Do you think English has particular qualities that make it challenging for your learners?

➲ Ask yourself…

- What are my assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning a language?
- Do my beliefs about language learning coincide with what the literature tells us about language learning?
- Do my beliefs correspond to those of my employer, colleagues or funder?
- To what extent do I apply these beliefs in my daily teaching?

[14] Questions adapted from Richards and Lockhart (1994), and Farrell (2007).

Developing a teaching portfolio

Purposes of tool
▪ To help instructors create a teaching portfolio. ▪ To support instructors in reflecting on the experience and knowledge they have gained throughout their career.
Possible uses of tool
Developing a teaching portfolio can provide you with opportunities for self-reflection and collaboration with colleagues as well as offer opportunities to plan your own professional development. The benefits of developing a teaching portfolio extend beyond reflection and the planning of professional development. Creating a teaching portfolio encourages you to consider your starting point, direction and goals. Once completed, the teaching portfolio can help you to explain and demonstrate your teaching methods to current and potential employers, supervisors and colleagues. You can use a binder with clear plastic sleeves, a scrapbook, or an accordion folder with relevant headings to organize the items in your portfolio.
Instructions
This tool encourages you to articulate a teaching philosophy and compile artifacts that demonstrate that philosophy. 1. Gather together items that document the following: ▪ Your knowledge of the subject matter (as seen in units of instruction and descriptions of courses you have taught) ▪ Your knowledge of methods of instruction (as seen in lesson plans, samples of learners' work, evaluations by learners, and classroom observation reports) ▪ Your professionalism (e.g., workshop presentations, practicum student supervision, articles written) ▪ Your credentials (e.g., résumé, degrees, certificates, awards) 2. Begin your teaching portfolio with a one- or two-page written statement of your *Teaching Philosophy* (see previous tool). 3. Include a written or oral self-assessment of the collection itself and your plans for the future.

Teaching portfolio … *sample contents*[15]

Teaching philosophy

- A reflection of your beliefs about effective language teaching

Knowledge of ESL teaching and learning

- A thematic unit of instruction you have developed and taught, demonstrating your knowledge of communicative language teaching (CLT) and the Canadian Language Benchmarks
- Descriptions of workshops, conferences and other professional development you have undertaken
- Descriptions of workshops you have presented
- A reflective piece of writing about a particular area of interest related to TESL in the Ontario context (e.g., PBLA, integrating grammar into Communicative Language Teaching, CLB-based assessment)

Knowledge of instructional methods

- Sample lesson plans
- Samples of learner work (ask for permission; remove all identifying information)
- Samples of learner feedback on your teaching
- Video or audio recordings of yourself teaching
- Feedback from a peer observer
- Observation feedback from a supervisor

Professionalism

- A current plan for your professional development
- A current résumé
- A list of memberships/accreditation
- A description of volunteer commitments (e.g., committees, boards, conference planning)
- Proof of qualifications (e.g., copies of certificates, degrees)

[15] Farrell (2007) discusses a comprehensive list of items for consideration to include in a teacher portfolio. The list above, adapted from Farrell's suggestions, could support the development of a teacher portfolio for the Ontario context.

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Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice

An Instructor Handbook

Chapter 3

Learing from SLA and TESL Literature

Chapter 3

Learning from SLA and TESL Literature

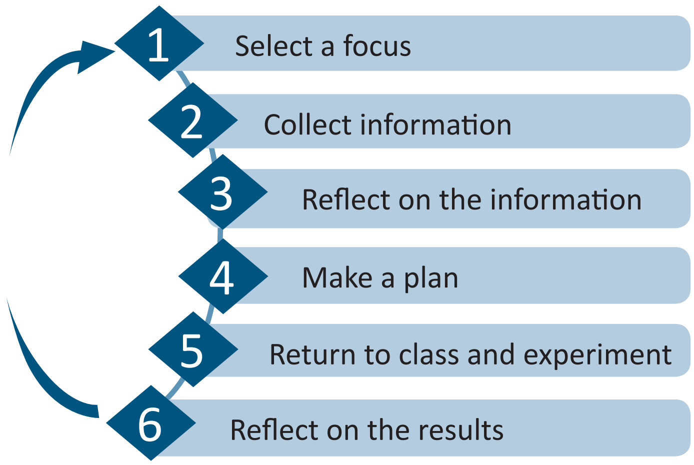
Literature Summaries

Introduction

This chapter introduces readers to literature from the second language acquisition (SLA) and teaching English as a second language (TESL) fields, and provides strategies for applying research and theoretical frameworks to classroom practice. It provides brief summaries of the literature in a number of areas of language teaching and learning that are relevant to LINC and adult ESL instructors in Ontario.

A reflective model

The *Instructor Handbook for Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice* emphasizes a proactive model of reflective practice to facilitate the application of professional learning to classroom practice. It outlines a six-step process, illustrated on the right.



The focus or topic an instructor chooses for this process (Step 1) can be as individual as each instructor. The research summaries in this chapter may provide material for selecting a focus as they include topics of contemporary interest and focus on classroom concerns.

The model emphasizes the importance of collecting information about topics and learners (Step 2) in order to inform instruction, and encourages instructors to consider evidence from the research in their classroom decision-making.

This chapter supports the reflective model by delivering relevant, concise and manageable evidence from research upon which an instructor may base her/his instructional decisions.

The research summaries

Each summary in this chapter draws from research to respond to a question that is specific to a teaching context, and aims to model how academic literature can inform possible solutions. The summaries may act as springboards, spurring instructors to do further research in an area of interest. They may also provide evidence to explain why instructional changes tried as part of the reflective model have not delivered the expected results. As such, the summaries could support the development of a modified plan.

Each summary includes the following elements:

- An introductory question from a classroom instructor's perspective
- A summary discussion of the key literature that provides a response to the question
- Approaches to applying that information from the literature to the classroom
- Connections between the research summary and the Canadian Language Benchmarks
- References for deeper investigation of the issues raised

The research summary topics were selected based on needs assessment surveys of Ontario LINC and Adult ESL instructors in addition to an expert consultation[1]. They represent a selection of the topics instructors have indicated they want to explore further. They include:

- Autonomous learning strategies
- Authentic materials
- Classroom assessment
- Communicative language teaching
- Error correction and feedback
- Grammatical accuracy in spoken tasks
- Multilevel classes
- Pragmatics
- Pronunciation
- Task based langauge teaching

Engaging with SLA and TESL research

Engaging with SLA and TESL research can be daunting for an ESL instructor who is short on time or has limited access to journals. The research literature focuses on the technical knowledge of language learning, which tends towards the analytical and theoretical (Ellis, 1997; Labaree, 2003). Conversely, teachers tend to focus more on procedural information that is context-specific, experiential and immediately relevant to the classroom. Presenting summaries and principles from the academic literature can therefore be a useful approach to supporting instructors who are attempting to derive guidance from research (Ellis, 2005; Erlam, 2008).

Instructor expertise

This publication recognizes that the instructor is the expert in his/her own classroom and is best situated to determine the needs of learners and the relevance of the findings from the literature in his/her instructional context. For this reason, the information gained from consulting the academic literature should be considered as provisional and part of a much broader set of influences that impact classroom decisions.

[1] For a complete list of documents that contributed to the list of topics, please see the references section.

Authentic materials in the ESL classroom

Justine Light

"I know authentic materials are best but I find it difficult to use them with learners at the lower CLB levels."

The use of authentic texts and tasks is the stated goal for many ESL instructors: however, the term "authentic" has often been a source of confusion and frustration for instructors and much debate for academics (Roberts, 2009). The research has provided multiple definitions of what an authentic text is (Cook, 2001; Gilmore, 2007; Widdowson, 2003). In fact, in his state-of-the-art review paper in 2007, Gilmore provides eight definitions of authenticity in the language classroom. After reviewing the literature, the author offers the following as a possible working definition that may be meaningful to ESL instructors in the Ontario context:

"*An authentic text is a stretch of real language produced by a real speaker/writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort*." (Gilmore, 2007, p. 98)

In a classroom context, instructors may be drawn to the apparent value of an authentic text such as a newspaper article or transit schedule. At the same time, the instructor is aware that an abridged or simplified text, featured in a textbook, may be more accessible to learners. The momentum of the communicative language teaching (CLT) movement impacts the choice of materials in every aspect, as the thrust for authenticity is central (Gilmore, 2007). The CLT classroom's primary mission is to prepare the language learner for the real world. This leads to an emphasis on texts and tasks that expose learners to the language of the real world (Guariento, 2001). This philosophy implies that by working with authentic texts in the classroom, learners will be better prepared when they meet such texts in the real world.

Authentic texts have also been described in TESL literature as providing greater motivation for language learners. Gilmore (2007) cites an extensive number of studies that suggest the use of authentic texts is motivational for learners. It is posited that this motivation stems from the following summarized list of factors:

- Authentic materials are inherently interesting because their intrinsic goal is to communicate something meaningful
- Authentic materials show learners they can cope with real world texts
- Authentic materials are more learner-centred than textbooks
- Learners' perceptions that the materials are real motivates them because reading them represents an effective use of time

However, other studies (Widdowson, 2003) have been quick to assert that frustration among learners was compounded by the complexity of authentic materials and that this could be equally de-motivating in a language-learning classroom. Guariento (2001) adds, " … the use of authentic texts may not only prevent learners from responding in meaningful ways but can also lead them to feel frustrated, confused and more importantly de-motivated" (p. 348).

However, the importance of rich input to language learning is a central tenet of CLT and its impact on the interlanguage of learners is well described in the literature (Ellis, 1994). Ellis (2005) describes the importance of enriched input for learners leading to improved opportunities for language acquisition, and Skehan's (1998) framework of information processing, which begins with the importance of frequent and salient occurrences of language forms in texts, supports this view. Gilmore (2007) concludes that noticing forms has a beneficial effect on learners and the development of their communicative competence. It appears that the rich language of authentic texts offers input with a wider variety of grammatical lexical and discourse features.

Researchers who promote the use of authentic materials also point to the deficits of textbooks, which they say present the most commonly available forms of simplified language text. Citing research by Holmes (1988) and McCarthy (1991), Gilmore points out that textbooks often offer poor representation of real language forms, a bias to linguistic rules over socio-linguistic forms, and frequent omission of key discourse development tools.

The benefits of authentic texts, their genuine, real and natural state, along with the motivation to learners are not, however, without challenges to the instructor. Gilmore concedes that the challenges of authentic text are real:

- High lexical density
- Idiomatic language
- Low-frequency vocabulary items
- Opaque cultural references

Should texts be abridged and simplified to make them more accessible while retaining their authentic features?

Guariento and Morley point out (2001) that, "While simplification of text, especially for lower levels, is justified, it appears to be difficult to execute seamlessly" (p. 348). Some of the problems that occur when text is simplified include:

- the removal of technical and sub-technical words
- the loss of redundant features that in fact have important discourse functions
- artificially reduced length of text
- increased subordination structures

Should instructors of lower level students still consider using authentic texts?

Research has not demonstrated conclusively that either authentic or abridged texts will lead to greater or lesser levels of language acquisition (Gilmore, 2007). Gilmore could not find conclusive evidence in the research that abridged or simplified materials led to greater language acquisition rates. The exposure to the language of the real world through an authentic text may, in a communicative classroom, outweigh the perceived benefits of simplified texts.

What adaptations could be made to authentic materials to make them more accessible to learners?

There are two key strategies for making authentic materials more accessible to learners:

1. Selecting authentic texts with an awareness of factors that may affect difficulty

The table below summarizes the work of Brown and Yule (1983) in analyzing text difficulty.

	Easier text	More difficult text
Genre	Description, instruction	Storytelling, opinion
Length	Shorter	Longer
Characters and events	Single event, single character	Multiple events, multiple characters
Concept complexity	Static concept, dynamic concept	Abstract concept
Background knowledge	Very little knowledge required	Requires more extensive background knowledge

Adapted from Brown & Yule (1983)

2. Adapting the task that accompanies the authentic text

Many proponents of a communicative language approach believe that the use of an authentic text is a requirement of a truly communicative classroom, and that it is the job of the instructor to ensure that the task that accompanies the authentic text is accessible to learners. It is a key assumption of the CLT approach that partial comprehension is an acceptable and likely outcome of using an authentic text with language learners. This too, they argue, replicates the real world, where native speakers are able to function with a partial understanding of many of the texts they encounter.

The diagram below summarizes the work of several researchers who have proposed that adjusting a text can mitigate the difficulty of a classroom task associated with it. It includes information on how to simplify a text in a minimal way—but moreover how to adjust the support for the text as well as the process and output required for the task to support learners adequately.

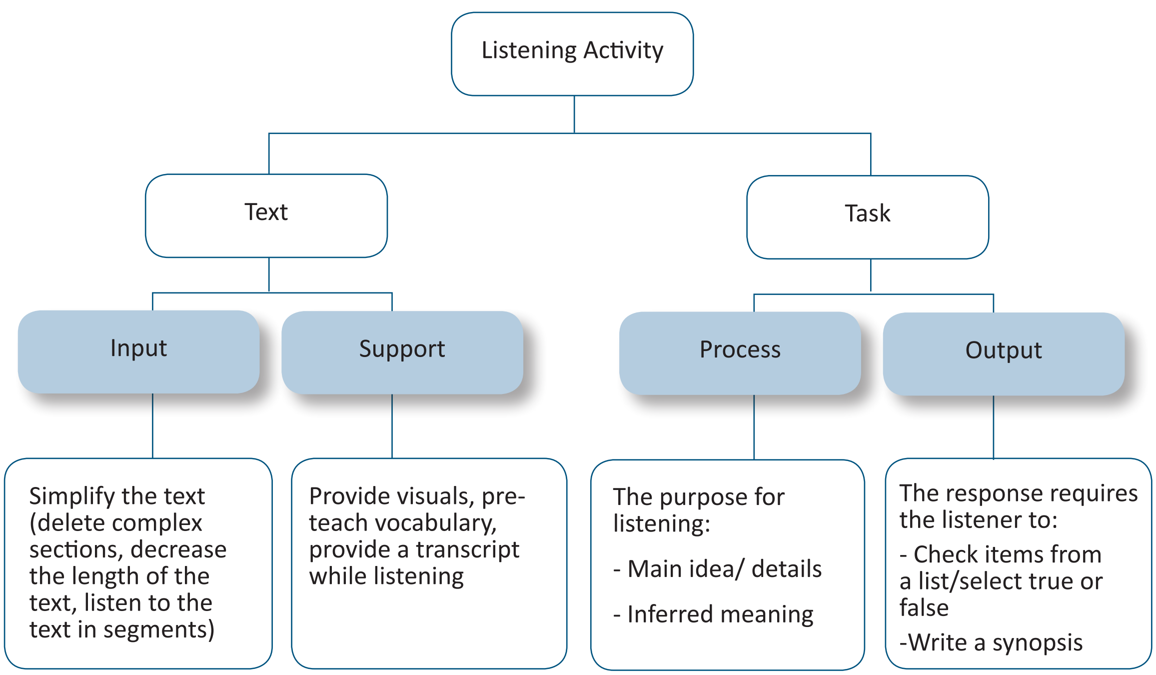
The diagram depicts a variety of the stages at which an instructor can manage the difficulty level of a text or task involved in a classroom listening activity.

The model demonstrates that while the input text may be authentic and more challenging for the learner, the instructor can mitigate its complexity by increasing the support given along with the text—for example by providing visuals or pre-teaching vocabulary. On the other hand, when using a modified text where complex sections have perhaps been deleted, less support could be offered.

On the task side of the diagram, a complex authentic text could be combined with a simpler process and less output required for the task. In this model, the combinations are endless, giving the instructor considerable flexibility to meet the unique learning outcomes of her/his classroom.

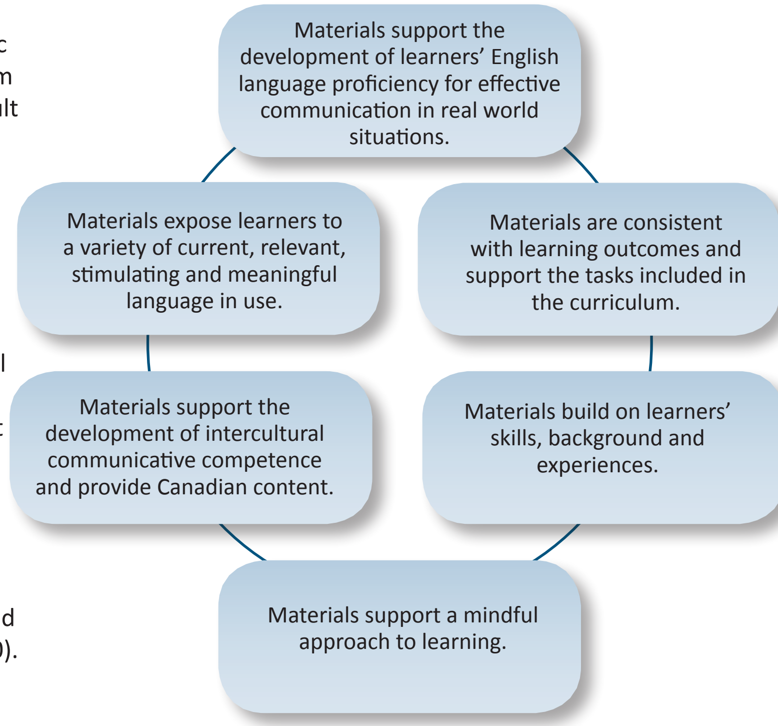
Supporting the use of authentic materials through adjusting the text and the task

(Adapted from Rossiter & Abbott, 2008; Thornbury, 2002; Lynch, 1996.)



Selecting materials

If after reading the above you have determined that you will utilize authentic materials whenever possible, the diagram to the right, adapted from the ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework (Chambers, Gnida, Messaros, Ilott, & Dawson, 2011) may help you to choose appropriate materials *(reproduced with permission)*:



Checklist for developing materials

If after the discussion above, you still feel that the benefits of abridged materials developed by an instructor offer the best solution to meet the objectives of your learners, there are considerations from the SLA/TESL research that can support you.

The following checklist has been prepared by adapting the work of Tomlinson (2010). These principles apply the knowledge gained from SLA/TESL research to guide instructors.

- ☐ Are your texts rich with language examples that seem authentic?
- ☐ Do your texts reflect genres, text types, themes and topics that your learners are likely to encounter in the real world?
- ☐ Is the language presented in a context that contributes to understanding its meaning?
- ☐ Are there sufficient samples of language features for natural recycling to occur?
- ☐ Do the tasks that will accompany this text engage learners and encourage them to think before, during and after interacting with the text?
- ☐ Are the themes and topics of the materials focused on the needs of the learners and likely to be of interest to them?
- ☐ Are the materials likely to improve learners' affective response to language learning?
- ☐ Will these materials encourage learners to utilize language-learning strategies?
- ☐ Does the text contain features that will enable learners to make language discoveries for themselves?
- ☐ Do the tasks that will accompany this text provide opportunities for the learners to produce language?
- ☐ Have the materials been created in a way that they provide exposure to authentic-like language samples?
- ☐ Do the materials include some content element that enables learners to learn more about topics other than language learning?
- ☐ Do the tasks that will accompany this text provide opportunities to undertake formative assessment to support learning**?**

Reflecting on your practice in light of the literature

Simplified materials

Select a couple of simplified texts (listening or reading) that you have recently used in your class. These could be texts that you created, or they could be texts from a curriculum or textbook that you are currently using.

- Evaluate the texts based on the checklist adapted from Tomlinson (2010). Based on the checklist, are you satisfied with the simplified texts you are using, or do you think your learners would benefit from the use of more authentic texts?

Authentic materials

Select an authentic text (listening or reading) that you have used or hope to use in your class.

- Look at the figure/diagram/checklist adapted from the ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework. Could the text be used in a way that supports the principles listed?
- Examine the text in terms of the "factors affecting difficulty" identified by Brown and Yule (1983). According to the table, is the text you selected an "easier text" or a "more difficult text"?
- Examine your text in light of the diagram adapted from Rossiter and Abbot (2008), Thornbury (2002) and Lynch (1996)
  - What support will you need to provide in order to ensure that learners are not overwhelmed by the text?
  - What kinds of "process tasks" could learners realistically be expected to perform using this text?
  - What kinds of "output tasks" could learners reasonably be expected to produce? For example, if a listening text is fast and dense, it could be unrealistic to expect learners to take notes, synthesize or make inferences that require a complete understanding of the passage. However, on a first listening/reading, learners might very well be able to listen/scan for a few salient details to fill in a chart (especially if a portion of the chart is completed), and/or they might be able to catch the overall topic/main idea. Extra support (e.g., a transcript or a second and third listening, each with a narrowly focused task), interspersed with peer work, could make it possible for them to answer more complex questions.

Autonomy for language learners

Sara Gnida

"How can I encourage learners to use good strategies and become more independent in their language learning?"

A call for research on good language learners was made by Rubin in 1975 in the hope that the learning strategies they used could be identified and eventually incorporated into classroom instruction. The hope was that such instruction would "lessen the difference between the good learner and the poorer one" (p. 50). The next few decades saw research on good language learners, language learning strategies, learner autonomy and strategy teaching (Oxford, 2011a). Handbooks and guidebooks on language learning strategies were published, and frameworks for classifying strategies were developed (Oxford, 2011a) and criticized (Rose, 2012).

This research summary will review the characteristics of good language learners, the importance of learner autonomy and self-regulation, frameworks for classifying strategies, and strategy instruction.

Good language learners

Early research on learner autonomy and strategies focused on the characteristics of people who learn languages easily. In 1975, Rubin proposed an initial list, to which others have added over the years. Good language learners are:[2]

- Good guessers, making use of clues from the setting and the grammar to narrow down the potential meaning and intent of utterances
- Driven to communicate and learn from communication
- Somewhat uninhibited and willing to look foolish (however, Reiss (1985) found that many good language learners were not uninhibited about making mistakes)
- Concerned with form, including looking for patterns in language
- Concerned with meaning, function, intention, and intelligibility. Successful readers, for instance, have been found to focus on the main meaning of a passage, rather than being distracted by unknown words (Erler & Finkbeiner, 2007)
- Willing to practice, for example by pronouncing words, creating sentences, initiating conversation with native speakers and teachers, watching movies
- Constantly monitoring speech, processing information and learning from their own mistakes
- Deliberate in their use of strategies, as opposed to making sporadic or desperate use (Reiss, 1985)

In 1989, Stevick conducted a series of interviews with seven very successful language learners, hoping to find commonalities in how they went about learning a language:

"If we could teach their secrets to our students, I thought, then everyone else could become as successful as the people I had talked with." (Stevick, 1989, p. xi)

However, Stevick did not find the commonalities he was looking for; instead, the diversity in how the good language learners went about learning language was the "most significant lesson to be learned" (p. xii). A quick read through Stevick's book makes it clear that, although the successful language learners interviewed employed very different strategies, they each made deliberate use of a variety of strategies that were geared to their individual learning styles and situations. They were quite aware of why they were doing what they were doing: they planned their learning, designed their own learning tools, and accepted responsibility for how things turned out.

Learner autonomy and self-regulation

Echoing Stevick's findings, research has demonstrated that successful language learners make use of "conscious, tailored combinations of strategies" in an "orchestrated fashion" (Oxford, 1994, p. 1). In other words, although the specific strategies they use are different, good language learners tend to be autonomous in their learning. They are self-directed, take responsibility for their own learning, and have a selection of strategies that they can draw upon (Allright, 1990, as cited in Oxford, 2011a, p. 173).

Nakata (2010) discusses how intrinsic motivation and self-regulated learning result in the development of learner autonomy. He posits that "the best-case

[2] The following list is drawn from Rubins (1975, pp. 45–48) unless otherwise specified. Instead of focusing on aptitude, which cannot be manipulated, Rubins focused on learner strategies.

scenario in this respect is for learners to enjoy what they do, to feel in control of their own learning (e.g., by setting their own goals), and to be able to take steps to manage or regulate the tasks they undertake to learn" (Nakata, 2010, p. 2).

Advances in communication and education technology have certainly expanded the options for motivating learners and encouraging them to take control of and responsibility for their own learning. Gunn (2011), for instance, discusses how learner autonomy can be promoted in the ESL classroom through the use of communication tools on the Internet, including blogs, photo and video sharing, social networking and wikis.

L2 learning strategies[3]

A "well-functioning strategy repertoire" can enhance a person's ability to learn a language (Cohen, 2005, p. 276) and promote learning autonomy and self-regulation. Language learning strategies have been defined as "conscious or semi-conscious thoughts and behaviors deployed by learners, often with the intention of enhancing their knowledge and understanding of an L2" (Cohen, 2005, p. 276). Although the CCLB lists communication strategies, it The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Theoretical Framework considers learning strategies to be "paths to better language learning, comprehension, and construction of discourse" (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002, p. 19).

Many different frameworks for classifying strategies have been proposed. Cohen (1996, 2005), for instance, distinguishes between language ***learning*** strategies and language ***use*** strategies. Language ***learning*** strategies include:

- Cognitive strategies (distinguishing, grouping, practicing, memorizing)
- Metacognitive strategies (planning, checking, evaluating)
- Affective strategies (monitoring attitudes, motivations and emotional reactions)
- Social strategies (enhancing learning by cooperating with other learners and native speakers)

Language ***use*** strategies deal primarily with helping learners make use of language they have already learned. Language ***use*** strategies include:

- Retrieval strategies (e.g., visualizing a list or remembering a keyword mnemonic to call up information stored in memory)
- Rehearsal strategies (e.g., form-focused practice of an L2 structure)
- Communication strategies[4] (e.g., for steering conversation, for expressing meaning creatively, for getting time to think, for negotiating difficult parts of conversation, for compensating for gaps, for maintaining the floor)
- Cover strategies (e.g., learners may laugh at a joke they don't understand, or nod in response to an utterance, to give the impression they have greater control of the language than they actually do)

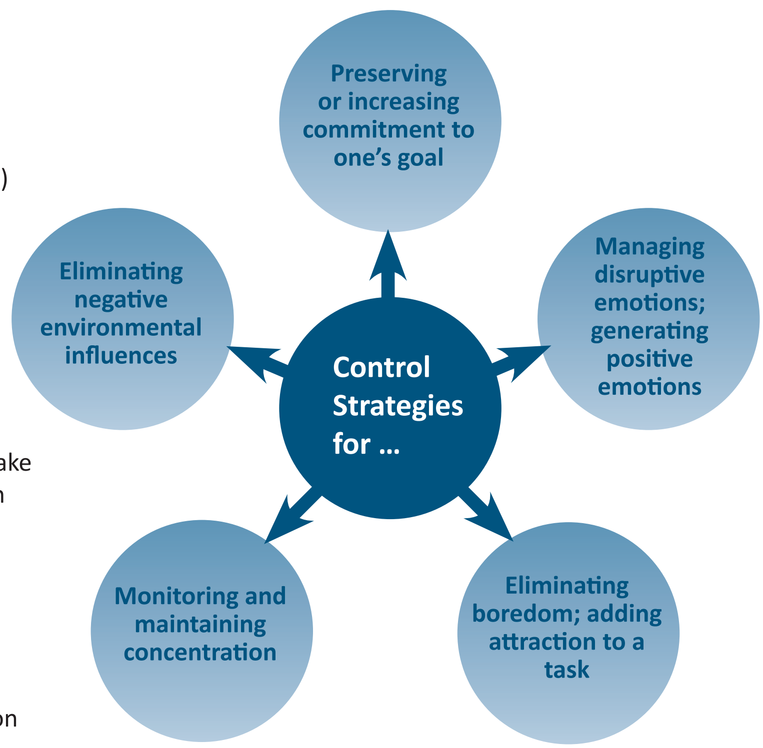
The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire, developed by Oxford (1990), gathers data on language learning strategies in six categories (See the table on the following page). Completing the SILL questionnaire can give learners (and instructors) a sense of which strategy clusters they already make good use of when learning English, as well as raise awareness of strategies they might want to try.

[3] Much research has been done on strategies for reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary, which is beyond the scope of this research summary. For more information on strategies in any of these areas, see Section III in Oxford, 2001; see also Cohen, 2007; Griffiths, 2008). For lists of vocabulary, reading, and listening strategies, see ATESL (2009, Best Practices #44 and #48).

[4] See also the communication strategies listed in the CCLB Theoretical Framework (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002, pp.23–24).

SILL CATEGORIES	EXAMPLES
Memory strategies ➔	Grouping, imagery, audio/visual links, semantic mapping, rhyming, mime
Cognitive strategies ➔	Summarizing, skimming, deductive reasoning, contrasting, analyzing, looking for patterns
Compensation strategies ➔	Gestures, guessing, synonyms, coining, using linguistic & non-linguistic cues, asking for help, avoidance
Metacognitive strategies ➔	Planning, organizing, evaluating, arranging to interact, paying attention, searching out new strategies
Affective strategies ➔	Being aware of emotions, motivations and attitudes; keeping a journal; making use of rewards
Social strategies ➔	Asking for clarification, practising with others, asking for correction, learning about culture

Again, the goal is that learners become autonomous and self-regulating in their use of learning strategies. The categories of control strategies listed in the figure to the right are based on the concept of self-regulation and drawn from Dornyei's (2005) taxonomy of strategic learning (as cited in Rose, 2012, p. 45).



Strategy instruction

While some learners come to class with a well-developed repertoire of strategies they are proficient with, others have a narrower repertoire and are less able to make successful use of those strategies. Research on the efficacy of strategy instruction has at times shown mixed results; however, strategy instruction has been found to be especially beneficial for low-proficiency learners. Lam's (2010) study, for instance, found that lower-proficiency learners who received communication strategy instruction demonstrated greater improvement in group discussion tasks and demonstrated an increase in the frequency and variety of strategies used.

The following table lists common features of strategy instruction, drawn from Chamot's (2008) discussion of three different models of strategy instruction (p. 270) and Oxford's (2011b) comparison of strategy instruction models (pp. 185–186).

Features of strategy instruction

	STRATEGY INSTRUCTION	EXAMPLE
Raise awareness of learning strategies	▪ Learners identify their learning strategies and styles through questionnaires ▪ Learners reflect on and discuss strategies used to complete tasks ▪ Learners complete a task and then share the strategies that worked ▪ Instructors explicitly name and describe strategies ▪ Instructors demonstrate and model strategies	A group of learners tells their instructor they have trouble focusing when reading. The class brainstorms strategies to help them focus, but don't have a lot of ideas. The instructor explains how previewing, predicting and questioning can improve focus. He uses a reading that students have done as an example, and talks them through how he would preview, predict and question, explaining how doing so would improve his focus.
Provide opportunities to practise	▪ Learners are given opportunities to apply new strategies to tasks ▪ Learners develop the ability to use the strategies autonomously (e.g., more reminders at the beginning, fewer reminders later) ▪ Learners are encouraged to try different combinations of strategies	Over the next few classes, the instructor has students preview, question and predict prior to every in-class reading. He includes previewing activities in the reading handouts. He varies the type of previewing according to the different kinds of reading (first sentence and pictures of a news article; first paragraph, topic sentences and conclusion of an essay; headings, pictures, and tables of a textbook chapter). Sometimes he has students predict; other times he has them question. Later, he just periodically reminds learners to preview, question and predict.
Encourage learners to regulate and orchestrate their own use of strategies	▪ Learners evaluate the success of strategies ▪ Learners select strategies for tasks ▪ Learners transfer strategies to new tasks ▪ Learners develop a repertoire of strategies that work for them.	Learners talk about whether or not the strategies have helped them focus on reading. They brainstorm and try out other strategies that have worked. They apply predicting and questioning to listening activities (stopping the video after the first minute).

Strategy instruction requires teachers who are themselves active and strategic learners, and who are willing and able to invite learners to take an active role in their own learning. According to Oxford (2011b), instructors who successfully provide strategy training are involved in the following:

(a) "developing metacognitive awareness their own learning and their students' learning,
(b) practising and encouraging self-reflection,
(c) observing and questioning students regarding learning,
(d) modeling learning strategies, and
(e) identifying a given student's strategies and encouraging other students to try it out" (p. 180).
With the above list in mind, work through the following reflective questions:

Reflecting on your practice in light of the literature

The good language learner:

- Stevick's 1989 book (accessible online) is a readable account of interviews with seven extremely successful language learners. In the preface, Stevick writes, "If you are a language teacher, the experience of working through this book will make you better acquainted with the language learner in yourself. Then you will be more clearly aware of the preferences and prejudices that you bring to your work. The experience may also make some of your students' differences from you seem less strange. It may even make strangeness itself less threatening" (p. xiii). Read through a selection of the chapters in the book, taking note of the wide variety of strategies that the successful language learners used. Do you see yourself or your students in these language learners?

Language learning strategies:

- Look back at the lists of language learning strategies included in this research summary.[5] Which category(s) of strategies do you deliberately foster as you teach? Which category(s) of strategies receive the least attention in your classes? Which categories of strategies are your students already proficient at?
- To develop both your own and your students' awareness of how they learn, have your learners take and then score Joy Reid's Perceptual Learning-style Preference Questionnaire[6] and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning.[7]

Self-regulation/strategy instruction:

- Look at the graphic containing the different categories of control strategies drawn from Dornyei (2005). Plan an activity with your class in which you elicit strategies that learners use for each of the categories listed. This could be done in the form of questions in an electronic survey[8], small group brainstorming sessions, or rotating posters[9]. The goal would be for learners to develop a broader repertoire of strategies from which to choose, and for you as an instructor to learn new strategies that you could potentially pass on to others.

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[5] i.e., Cohen's (2005) Language *use* and *learning* strategies, or Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). For more detail, you may choose to look at Cohen (1996 or 2005), the Appendices in Oxford (2011b), or the communication strategies listed in the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000*, *Theoretical Framework* (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002, p. 19)

[6] Available at http://lookingahead.heinle.com/filing/l-styles.htm#1984.

[7] Available numerous places online. (Note: you will need both the questionnaire as well as the scoring instructions.) The following site, for instance, has both Reid's Perceptual Learning-style Preference Questionnaire and Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, as well as scoring instructions for both: http://www.wtuc.edu.tw/dcc/learning%20styles%20preferece.htm.

[8] For example, groups could be assigned different categories from the graphic, and could develop questions for an electronic survey related to that category (e.g., each group could develop a "matrix of choices" question using Survey Monkey). The survey could be posted on a wiki or sent out by email. After collecting data from their classmates, they could present the results of the survey to the class.

[9] Divide into five groups and give each group a poster headed with a question (e.g., How do you keep focused on your language learning goal?). Students should brainstorm for answers. After 5–10 minutes, posters are rotated. Students read what other groups have written and add to the poster.

Classroom-based assessment

Tara Holmes

"What are the benefits of classroom assessment in teaching and learning ESL?"

For the past decade there has been growing interest in classroom-based assessment (also known as formative assessment, teacher-based assessment, alternative assessment and assessment *for* learning) and its application to the field of TESL. Research in the field has led to important shifts in our thinking about the role of assessment in our classrooms.

Traditionally, the term formative has been used to describe *when* assessment occurred in the learning process. Formative described the informal assessment that occurred continuously during the learning process (and summative was used for the more formal assessment that happened at the end of the learning process). However, as Torrance notes, many have argued that, in practice, both types of assessment have often served the same function, that is to determine if learning has occurred and provide "snapshots" of where learners have "got to" (as cited in Davison & Leung, 2009, p. 399). This type of assessment may have little impact on learning.

A seminal study undertaken by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam reviewed the results of over 250 quantitative research studies and provided convincing evidence that certain innovative formative assessment practices had a significant positive impact on learning (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & Wiliam, 2003, p. 7). An increased emphasis on what they term assessment *for* learning has been found to contribute to positive learner achievement in the classroom. This is assessment that helps learners identify where they are and what they need to do next. The primary purpose of assessment *for* learning is to provide feedback that will promote student learning. This type of formative assessment is often informal and is integrated into all aspects of the teaching and learning process; it happens while learning is underway. Evidence is used to diagnose learner needs, plan next steps in instruction, and provide learners with feedback they can use to improve their performance (Holmes, 2005, p. 6). This can be contrasted with assessment *of* learning, which is the summative assessment that comes "after learning is supposed to have occurred to determine if it did" (Stiggins , Arter, Chappuis & Chappuis, 2004, p. 31).

A useful analogy describes the shift in thinking that is required about assessment as moving from a "quality control" approach to one of "quality assurance."

> *Traditional approaches to instruction and assessment involve teaching some given material, and then, at the end of teaching, working out who has and hasn't learned it—akin to a quality control approach in manufacturing. In contrast, assessment for learning involves adjusting teaching while the learning is still taking place—a quality assurance approach. Quality assurance also involves a shift of attention from teaching to learning. The emphasis is on what the students are getting out of the process rather than what teachers are putting into it.*
>
> (Leahy, Lyon, Thompson, & Wiliam, 2005, p. 19.)

Wiliam and Leahy argue that an assessment is only formative to the extent that "information from the assessment is fed back within the system and actually used to improve the performance of the system in some way (i.e., that the assessment *forms* the direction of the improvement). . . .To be formative, feedback needs to contain an implicit or explicit recipe for future action" (Wiliam & Leahy, 2007, p. 31). They suggest that formative assessments "cannot be separated from their instructional consequences, and assessments are formative only to the extent that they impact learning" (William & Leahy, 2007, p. 32). They identify three steps that are essential to the process:

- Establishing where the learners are in their learning
- Establishing where they are going
- Establishing what needs to be done to get them there (William & Leahy, 2007, p. 32)

Some have argued that even summative assessments of learners' language skills "can and should be used formatively to give constructive student feedback and improve learning" (Davison & Leung, 2009, p. 397). In some cases the same assessment task or test can serve both purposes. An end of unit assessment can provide both summative information (related to what learners have achieved) and can also be used for formative purposes.

It becomes assessmetn *for l*earning if teachers analyze where students are in their learning adn provide specific focused feedback to students regarding performance and ways to improve it. Teachers should also be a ble to use the assessment informaiton to adjust their teaching and learning activitgeis (Holmes, 2005, p. 6)

What are the implications for our classrooms?

Extensive research into effective assessment practice has shown that consistent use of key practices improves student learning (Leahy et al., 2005; William & Leahy, 2007). Wiliam and Leahy identify five broad strategies that characterize effective classroom practices. The following chart shows the role of teacher and learner in each of the three steps in the formative assessment process and their relationship to the five strategies (adapted from Wiliam & Leahy, 2007, p. 33).

	Where the learner is going	Where the learner is now	How to get there
Instructor's role	Strategy 1 Clarifying learning intentions and criteria for success	Strategy 2 Engineering effective classroom discussions and tasks that elicit evidence of learning	Strategy 3 Providing feedback that moves learners forward
Learner's role	Strategy 1 Understanding learning intentions and criteria for success	Strategy 4 Activating learners to become instructional resources for one another Strategy 5 Activating learners to become the owners of their learning	

Strategy 1: *Clarifying learning intentions and criteria for success.* Teachers try to ensure that learners are clear about their learning goals and the expectations for their work. Teachers may brainstorm assessment criteria with learners before they begin a task. In some classrooms, teachers and learners look together at anonymous samples of both strong and weak performance; they discuss how the samples meet (or don't meet) specific criteria and how they could be improved (Holmes, 2005, p. 9).

Strategy 2*: Effective classroom discussions and tasks that elicit evidence of learning.* In whole group discussions and activities, teachers shift their focus from only listening for "correct" answers to listening for what they can learn about students' thinking so they can use this information to adjust instruction. They begin to listen "interpretively" rather than "evaluatively" (Leahy et al., 2005, p. 21).

Teachers also use strategies to increase student engagement, such as randomly selecting who will respond to a question by using name cards or drawing from a beaker of popsicle sticks with students' names on them. Or they may address questions to the whole group and have students write their responses on cards they hold up, so the teacher can quickly check for understanding across the class.

Strategy 3: *Providing feedback that moves learners forward.* Teachers look for opportunities to increase the amount of descriptive feedback and decrease the amount of evaluative feedback to learners. "Indeed, the research shows that when students receive a grade and a comment, they ignore the comment. The first thing they look at is the grade, and the second thing they look at is their neighbour's grade" (Leahy et al., 2005, p. 22). Teachers who have begun to experiment with comments-only feedback on many of their tasks and assignments have become convinced of the value of this approach to assessment. This does not mean that all kinds of comments are helpful. The authors suggest that "what does cause thinking is a comment that addresses what the student needs to do to improve," and that, where appropriate, this may be linked to rubrics (Leahy et al., 2005, p. 22). Teachers try to ensure their feedback to learners is accurate, specific and focused on how to build for success.

For example, a teacher might give a comment such as the following on a CLB 4 assessment task that requires learners to write a note to a landlord stating a problem and requesting action. "You state the problem clearly. Add your contact information. Find and correct two spelling errors."

Teacher feedback should include three steps:

- Recognition of the desired goal
- Evidence of the present position
- Knowledge about how to close the gap between the two (Alberta Assessment Consortium, 2003, p. 13)

Strategy 4: *Activating students as instructional resources for one another.* Students are often better able to assess their classmates' work than their own work, to which they have a strong emotional attachment. As students use criteria and well-constructed rubrics to review the work of classmates, they must understand the rubrics and the criteria behind them. In some cases students may be able to communicate certain things to their peers better than the teacher.

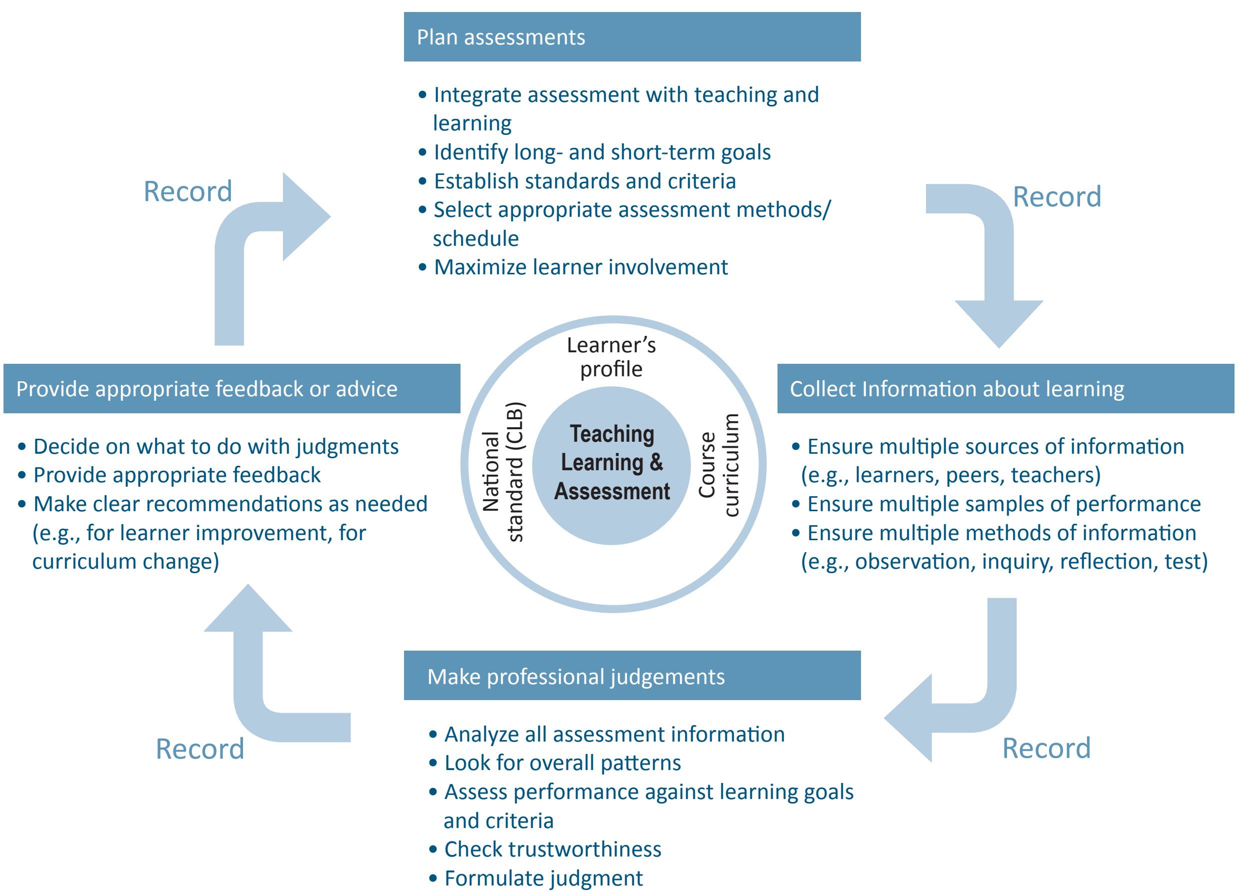
Strategy 5: *Activating students as the owners of their learning.* Teachers develop a range of strategies for helping learners to develop self-assessment skills. In addition, they encourage learner self-reflection through strategies such as weekly learning logs, where learners look back on the week and comment on what they have learned, what was challenging and what they need to work on further. Some teachers do this on a more regular basis through the use of quick "exit tickets" that students complete before they leave the class each day. Students might comment on something on they learned or something they did not understand.

How does classroom-based assessment support the learning process?

The assessment cycle that becomes an integral part of the teaching and learning process is depicted in the following framework model (adapted from Davison, 2008).

A Framework for Teacher-Based Assessment

Source: Davison, C. 2008. *Assessment for learning: Building inquiry-oriented assessment communities.* Paper presented at the 42nd Annual TESOL Convention and Exhibit, New York, N.Y.



What are some of the challenges and implications in classrooms that use the CLB?

There are a number of challenges in classroom-based assessment that have been identified by researchers and many would apply to our adult ESL context in Canada. These include:

- *How to construct tasks and explicit assessment criteria appropriate for learners.* In classrooms that use the CLB, considerable support for constructing assessment tasks is embedded in the document itself. The Profiles of Ability give an overall description of learners' language ability in a particular skill and benchmark level. The Sample Tasks give examples of appropriate tasks from workplace, educational and community contexts. The Competency Statements, Sample Indicators and Features of Communication pages give guidance for creating tasks and establishing appropriate assessment criteria.

- *How to interpret or evaluate learner performance in relation to standards.* Davison and Leung describe a classroom-based assessment initiative in Hong Kong involving over 1,800 teachers in 650 schools over two years. The initiative included professional development training and multiple opportunities for teachers to share and review performance samples. Monitoring of the assessment process showed that teachers were able to reliably rate students' work with a high degree of inter-rater reliability. Developing this expertise takes time supported by focused opportunities to engage in conversation with colleagues.

- *The challenge of changing "deeply entrenched socio-cultural attitudes and expectations"* (Davison & Leung, 2009, p. 403). Some of the students in our classes may come from more traditional learning environments and not expect learners to be actively engaged in the assessment process. Teachers have found that by introducing strategies for learner self-assessment and self-reflection (such as those described earlier in the article), learner attitudes begin to change over time. In classrooms where portfolio assessment is being used, practices such as involving learners in setting and reviewing their language goals and selecting some of the entries for their portfolios further support active learner engagement.

Conclusion

Recent research in classroom-based assessment provides evidence that certain assessment practices have significant positive impacts on learning. These practices, which focus on engaging learners in the assessment process and providing feedback that moves learners forward, are consistent with the learner-centred approach supported by the CLB framework and have the potential to increase the effectiveness of our work with adult ESL learners.

Reflecting on your practice in light of the literature

Think back on the assessment tasks you've done this term. Choose one of the assessment tasks that you might use again. In light of the literature, how might you refine or improve this task as assessment *for* learning?

- How could you make the expectations clearer before learners begin the task?
- Is there a way you could you involve learners as resources for one another?

For your next classroom assessment task, review the feedback you give to each learner. Is it specific and focused on how to build for success? Does it give the learner information he or she can use to improve performance?

After reading this summary, what is one strategy you would like to try in your classroom to enhance learning? Use it consistently for a month and note what happens. Does it make a difference?

Communicative language teaching

Sara Gnida

"How can I help my learners communicate more fluently and accurately?"

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has evolved over the years from an initial focus on providing learners with input and opportunities to communicate to a focus today on taking a deliberate approach to the development of both accuracy and fluency within a communicative context. This research summary will begin with a review of three basic values that underpin CLT: communicative competence, a focus on communicating meaning, and the importance of input, interaction and output. It will then examine the research and implications for practice related to the issues of fluency and accuracy.

What is communicative competence?

A basic principle underlying CLT, and recognized by the Canadian Language Benchmarks, is the belief that the purpose of language learning is to develop communicative competence—the ability to understand and communicate appropriately and effectively in a range of situations. This ability to communicate effectively requires a variety of different sub-competencies,[10] including:

- The ability to accurately understand and put together words and sentences. This includes a facility with and knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.
- The ability to understand and produce unified, cohesive, extended discourse, whether written or spoken. This includes, for instance, turn-taking conventions (in speech) and sequencing conventions and rhetorical markers (in writing).
- The ability to understand and convey intention; the ability to connect language with function. This includes a facility with language functions, formulaic language and speech acts (e.g., requesting, comforting).
- The ability to effectively deal with language in real-life contexts. This includes an ability to take factors such as the setting, participants and purpose of the interaction into consideration. It includes a facility with, for example, genre, registers, politeness strategies, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references, and an ability to negotiate social relationships through language.
- The ability to manage language use, to plan, to overcome problems, and to avoid or repair communication breakdown.

The goal of CLT, then, is to develop communicative competence. This is a much broader mandate than either that of traditional structural approaches (which focused primarily on grammatical competence), or that of some of the stronger versions of CLT (which avoided any focus on grammar) (Nunan, 2004).

Using language to communicate meaning

A core value of CLT is that learners are encouraged to interpret, express, and negotiate meaning (Savignon, 1991). That is, first and foremost, learners in CLT classrooms focus on meaning, message, and content as they use language to communicate.[11] Not only is this focus on meaning motivating, but it is important in the development of fluency, and is thought to create the right conditions for language acquisition (Ellis, 2008). This focus on meaning and content is apparent in a number of approaches to language instruction that could be described as "communicative": thematic teaching, content-based instruction, task-based instruction, project-based instruction and immersion (Nunan, 2004).

Some of the more typical oral communication activities found in CLT classrooms—small group and pair discussions, role-plays, decision dramas,[12] information gap activities,[13] jigsaw activities[14] and problem solving activities—clearly prioritize the communication of meaning as learners use language to communicate their ideas, attitudes and opinions to others. It is important to note that this emphasis on meaning is

[10] The following five competencies are drawn from Bachman (1990), Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell (1995), and Pawlikowska-Smith (2002). See the Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 Theoretical Framework (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002) for a discussion of each.

[11] This focus on meaning, however, does not exclude "a focus on metalinguistic awareness or knowledge of rules of syntax, discourse, and social appropriateness" (Savignon, 2000, p. 128) as will be discussed in the section titled "Attention to Accuracy and Form."

[12] An activity where one person takes on the role of a decision-maker facing a dilemma; others in the group take on roles in relation to that person, and try to convince him/her to take a particular course of action.

[13] An activity where each student has part of the information necessary for a task to be completed. To complete the task, students must interact and share their given information.

[14] An activity in which different groups do different tasks (e.g., different reading, surveys, fieldtrips). Learners re-group, then share what they have learned with one another.

as relevant to the teaching of reading and writing as it is to the teaching of oral communication skills, as readers and writers also actively interpret, express, and negotiate meaning (Savignon, 2000).

Opportunities for extensive input, interaction, and output

Another core value of CLT is that it provides (or facilitates the provision of) extensive amounts of input (i.e., language the learner is exposed to). This includes, for instance, the use of the second language as the medium of instruction, exposure to a large amount of authentic or authentic-like listening and reading, access to resources outside of class time, activities that encourage learners to access input outside of the classroom, and extensive reading programs (Ellis, 2008). Particularly valuable in extensive input is the learners' repeated exposure to formulaic expressions[15] and the linking of those expressions to specific pragmatic goals (Wood, 2002). While there is debate as to the precise role of input in language acquisition,[16] research in the area has indeed found extensive input to be valuable. For example, one recent study found that international teaching assistants who participated in an extensive reading[17] program demonstrated clear improvement in reading fluency and comprehension, and some improvement in speech fluency and accuracy (Gorsuch, 2011). Another study found that middle school[18] students who listened extensively to their instructor reading them stories demonstrated an increased ability to both comprehend and tell stories (Zhang, 2005, as cited in Renandya and Farrell, 2010).

Accuracy: *the ability to avoid grammatical, phonological, and lexical errors.*

Complexity: *the use of more complex or advanced structures, as in when a learner begins to use (or is pushed to use) a linguistic item that she/he previously had not used.*

Fluency: *the ability to communicate smoothly, avoiding unnecessary hesitations and pauses (Gatbonton and Segalowitz, 2005).*

While extensive input is necessary for language acquisition, most researchers agree that learners also need opportunities to produce output (i.e., language the learner produces) and interact in the second language. This focus on providing learners with plenty of opportunity for interaction and output is characteristic of CLT. As learners interact and negotiate meaning in small group and pair tasks, they negotiate changes to the input they receive[19], making it comprehensible (see Long, 1996). As they speak and write, and as they push themselves (or are pushed) to try out new words or structures, learners have the opportunity to test hypotheses about language, automatize what they know, and receive feedback (Ellis, 2008).

Communicative language teaching, then, is distinguished by its emphasis on having learners ***use*** language in the classroom interactively to comprehend and communicate meaning. This emphasis has led to discussions and research regarding how accuracy and fluency can be developed within the context of a communicative classroom.

Attention to accuracy and form[20]

With the emphasis on communicative competence, meaning and input, earlier versions of CLT tended to avoid formal, explicit attention to accuracy and form. However, this was to some degree a misinterpretation, as early proponents of communicative competence were not advocating the wholesale abandonment of grammar (or pronunciation) teaching, but were rather defining grammatical accuracy as but one part of the broader goal of language teaching (Savignon, 2002). The act of communicating meaning requires a measure of accuracy. Thus, within CLT, focusing on accuracy/complexity and focusing on meaning/fluency should not be seen as mutually exclusive.
CLT, then, allows for instruction that focuses learners' attention on accuracy and form, but that attention is most beneficial when contextualized within communicative activities (Spada & Lightbown, 2008), and when initiated by learners or in response to learner error (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001). Research has shown that an explicit focus on form (i.e., through rule explanation and drawing learners' attention to form) can contribute to learners' ability to make use of language in spontaneous production (Spada, 2011). Also, explicitly focusing on a form makes it likely that learners will attend to the structure in input, and this attending may facilitate the acquisition or automatization of that form (Ellis, 2008; Spada & Lightbown, 2008).

[15] For more on formulaic expressions, see *The development of fluency* below.
[16] That is, the debate as to whether comprehensible input (along with motivation) is all that is required for language acquisition (as per Krashen's *Input Hypothesis*), or whether, for instance, interaction, comprehensible output, or pushed output is also necessary. See Krashen (1998) for a discussion of the relative merits of comprehensible input versus comprehensible output.
[17] Although reading was their primary source of input, they also listened to recordings of the readings.
[18] i.e., junior and senior high school.
[19] i.e., through comprehension checks and clarification requests.
[20] In this section, "form" refers to grammatical, phonological, and lexical form.

While mechanical and mindless drills are avoided in CLT, classroom activities that are naturally repetitive can provide the rehearsal necessary for a form to become automatized[21] without distracting from the communicative flow of a class (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005; Isaacs, 2009).

Focusing on form (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary) in CLT classrooms most often occurs in the context of communicative activities, such as;

- In response to student questions
- In response to student error
- To raise awareness of structures learners will encounter
- To prepare learners for structures/forms they will need to make use of

The development of fluency

Fluency, an important measure of oral competence, is the ability to communicate smoothly, avoiding unnecessary hesitations and pauses (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005). It requires the ability to quickly and easily access implicit, unconscious knowledge about language.

The "free production" types of activities that are common in CLT classrooms tend to promote general fluency (Rossiter, Derwing, Manimtim, & Thomson, 2010). However, participation in intensive ESL courses does not necessarily result in increased fluency (Derwing, Munro, & Thomson, 2007), and a number of researchers are now advocating a more deliberate approach to developing oral fluency in the CLT classroom.

One suggestion for fostering fluency is to allow students **planning time** prior to a communicative activity (Rossiter et al., 2010; Yuan & Ellis, 2003)**.** This planning time may be unfocused, or the instructor may guide students to focus on a particular aspect of a task (e.g., planning the content, or identifying and practising potentially useful vocabulary or structures). Another suggestion is to raise awareness of **strategies for gaining planning time** (e.g., the use of fillers such as "well, let's see… um…what I mean is…") (Rossiter et al., 2010). A third suggestion is to design activities that are **naturally repetitive** and promote automaticity. For instance:

- A family tree role-play task—requiring learners to identify their roles in an imaginary family and interview others about roles in order to draw a family tree—can provide opportunity for rehearsal and repetition of specific sentence patterns (declarative sentences, questions) (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005).
- Repetitive yet communicative tasks—such as a Twenty Questions game or rehearsing a commercial in preparation for a pretend audition—provide opportunity for the rehearsal and repetition of aspects of pronunciation (Isaacs, 2009).
- Poster presentations, surveys, shadow reading, and jigsaw activities all provide opportunity for the rehearsal and repetition necessary for oral fluency (Rossiter et al., 2010).

A fourth way to promote fluency is to encourage learners to automatize and make use of high-frequency formulaic expressions (Rossiter et al., 2010; Wood, 2002). Formulaic expressions are "multiword units of language that are stored in long-term memory as if they were single lexical units" (Wood, 2002, p. 2).

Evidence shows that speech fluency is connected to the ability to automatically access large quantities of these formulaic expressions (lexical phrases, sentence stems). That is, learners who use formulaic expressions to express familiar content and speech acts are more fluent because they need less time for processing and encoding (Wood, 2002).

A further advantage is that these unanalyzed chunks of language may allow learners to focus on meaning and keep interactions going for more turns (Spada & Lightbown, 2008). A number of researchers point out that these language chunks also provide learners with samples of language that may be broken down and incorporated into their grammatical systems at a later date (Ellis, 2008; Spada & Lightbown, 2008).

Communicative language teaching, then, encourages instructors to mediate a balance between fluency and accuracy, meaning and form to best meet their learners' needs to communicate effectively and appropriately in particular contexts and settings.

[21] See next section for more on the automatization of language.

Reflecting on your practice in light of the literature

- **Communicative competence:** Consider how you address each of the five components of communicative proficiency in your classes. Which component(s) do you tend to address most clearly? Is there a component that you seldom or never address?

- **Developing fluency:** Review the section titled "The development of fluency." Reflect on how you might more deliberately develop your students' fluency. (You can scan the study by Rossiter, Derwing, Manimtim and Thomson (2010) for additional suggestions for developing fluency.)

- **Paying attention to accuracy and form:** The article by Isaacs (2009) addresses how pronunciation accuracy can be developed within a communicative context. Read it and make a list of strategies for improving learner pronunciation within communicative contexts. Try out one or two of them. Do you feel they were successful? Try out a few of the strategies. Do you feel they were successful?

- **Balancing accuracy and fluency:** Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005) describe a three-phase lesson process for the automatization of language segments in communicative contexts (below). After you read the article, design a communicative task that intrinsically requires the repetition of functionally useful language. Using that task, teach a three-phase lesson following the process below. Reflect on your lesson. Do you feel that the lesson enabled learners to automatize language?

  Phase 1 (creative automatization) involves learners participating in a genuinely communicative task that naturally requires the repetition of functionally useful utterances.

  Phase 2 (language consolidation) involves focused attention on the grammar or pronunciation problems identified in the first phase.

  Phase 3 (free communication) involves the opportunity to use the language practised in the second phase. The purpose of the activity should be explicitly identified and the learners should be "pushed" to make use of the new language covered in Phase 2.

Feedback on spoken errors

Leila Ranta

"What kind of feedback should I give to learners when they make errors while speaking English? I want to help them to be more accurate but I don't want to damage their confidence or break their communicative flow."

Many novice teachers are uncertain about how to respond to students' persistent errors in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary during speaking. The issue of responding to errors has been addressed by researchers from a wide range of perspectives under the headings 'feedback on error' and 'corrective feedback.' Although SLA research can offer specific recommendations for teachers, giving corrective feedback remains a pedagogical issue that teachers need to approach armed with knowledge, sensitivity and a long-term vision. In this summary, we examine ideas about why, how and when feedback should be given.

Different views on giving feedback

There are conflicting views in the second language teaching literature about whether to give feedback on oral errors at all, or, if feedback is to be given, how and when to do so. Surveys of language teachers reveal a certain level of ambivalence about the value of error correction (Nunan, 1988; Schulz, 2001). For example, Folse (2009) says that "if you interrupt the students when they are talking, they might lose their train of thought or suddenly become quiet, which is not what you want" (p.311). Teachers appear to be very concerned with the negative emotions that may result from being corrected. Yet surveys of adult language learners indicate that they want to have their errors corrected (Nunan, 1988; Schulz, 2001). SLA research on this topic provides a clearer understanding of why providing feedback is indeed an important function for teachers.

Why should I give feedback on errors?

Research shows that when communicating in a second language (L2), the learner cannot focus on both meaning and form at the same time until they are at a more advanced level of proficiency (VanPatten, 1990). Attaining high levels of grammatical accuracy is relatively easy for learners on a fill-in-the-blank exercise where full attention can be devoted to grammar. In contrast, during communicative tasks it is usually difficult for L2 learners to focus on grammatical correctness and at the same time speak fluently and express a complex message. The role of teacher (or peer) feedback during oral communication is to give learners a mental space (or 'time out') to notice their errors and think of how to 'repair' them. Noticing is important because it is no longer believed that L2 learning can take place subconsciously—some level of attention must be devoted to whatever is to be learned (Schmidt, 1990). Research with French immersion students suggests that if learners do not receive feedback as part of form-focused instruction that targets frequently occurring errors, they run the risk of having those errors as a permanent part of their French (Ranta & Lyster, 2007).

When do I give feedback on errors?

Many teachers believe or have been told that teachers should note errors made during communicative tasks and deal with them in a separate lesson. However, it is at the moment of speaking that learners are most likely to make the connection between what they have said and the grammatical forms needed to express the intended meaning in a more appropriate way (Long, 1996). Unfortunately, for many teachers, free communicative production may be a time when they are less likely to give corrective feedback for the reasons given by Folse above. The issue here is how to give feedback without derailing the learner's communicative intent.

How do I give feedback?

Most language teachers appear to believe that the best way to give feedback is by giving recasts. This means reformulating what the learner has said in a target-like way immediately after the error has occurred (see examples from an ESL classroom by Panova & Lyster, 2003). In a study of 457 French, German and Spanish speakers in the US (Bell, 2005), 80 per cent agreed with the statement, "An effective foreign language teacher uses recasts (correct reformulations of students' speech) as a preferred method of corrective feedback." This response is consistent with studies of teachers' behaviour in many different kinds of language teaching contexts, where it has been found that recasts are the most frequent form of feedback (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Sheen, 2004).

As suggested in the quote from Folse, teachers seem to be concerned with the affective aspects of being corrected, especially among adult learners. This reflects a tendency in native speaker conversation not to correct ungrammatical utterances of other adults (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977). Because recasts are covert, they do not have this “offensive” nature. Unfortunately, many SLA researchers worry that the unobtrusiveness of recasts makes them less noticeable and therefore less likely to be useful to the learner.

In an influential study of French immersion teachers, Lyster & Ranta (1997) found that there was a different pattern of learner responses after recasts than after other types of feedback (see examples of feedback types in the Appendix). For example, after feedback in the form of an elicitation, learners were more likely to show that they had understood the feedback and to self-correct. Lyster and Ranta argued that learners need to notice the corrective intention of their teacher’s feedback but that this may be more difficult with recasts than with feedback that prompts the learner to self-correct. Prompting feedback (i.e., elicitation, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback and repetition of learners’ errors) is likely to be useful because it draws attention to the error and gives the learner a space to reformulate his/her utterance, but puts the onus on the learner to generate the correct form.

Other researchers, particularly those working with adult learners in different contexts, have shown that learners are able to notice recasts (e.g., Ellis et al., 2001). Recasts are more likely to be noticed when they are made more salient, which can be done in different ways (Sheen, 2006). For example, when teachers consistently recast one type of error such as the past tense during an activity, learners are likely to notice the feedback. Similarly, teachers can make their recasts more noticeable by reformulating learners’ errors with emphasis.

Implications for teaching

Although there are theoretical issues that remain unresolved, what can be concluded from SLA theory and research is that teachers need to respond to student errors in order to help them speak accurately as well as fluently in their second language. Teachers should not be afraid that correction will hurt students’ feelings, since most learners believe that correcting errors is part of a teacher’s job. Most importantly, teachers need to make sure that their feedback is not ambiguous, that learners understand it is intended as a correction, and that the teacher is not simply rebroadcasting the student’s utterance to the rest of the class. That being said, teachers must also exercise judgment since it is clearly not appropriate to give feedback on grammatical form when the learner is communicating something deeply personal.

You can become aware of what your normal feedback practices are by recording yourself and or having a peer observe you.

Survey your students. What are their views? Discuss with students how you are going to give them feedback. Use some agreed-upon convention to make them aware of when you are correcting and when you are just rebroadcasting a student’s utterance to the class. Some suggestions include hand signals (Schachter, 1981), or pointing to a relevant chart on the wall. One teacher even rigged up a special light that he could push to indicate the learner had made an error!

Consider targeting certain kinds of errors rather than responding randomly. Let students know what you are targeting. For example, during a Jeopardy-type quiz activity, feedback could focus on correct question forms (see description of this type of activity and the impact of recasts in Mackey, 2006).

Remember to pause to give learners time to self-correct after you have given them feedback. Too often, teachers keep talking without giving learners time out to notice and repair their errors.

Use a variety of feedback techniques (see the appendix, below)—don’t just reformulate errors but also prompt learners to self-correct.

APPENDIX: types of teacher feedback:
Examples from an adult ESL classroom interaction (Panova & Lyster, 2003)

Recast:	S: Dange-rus? T: Yeah, good. Dangerous. You remember? Safe and dangerous. If you walk in the streets....
Clarification request:	S: I want practise today, today. T: I’m sorry?
Elicitation:	S: New Ecosse. T: New Ecosse. I like that. I’m sure they’d love that. Nova ...? S: Nova Scotia.
Explicit correction:	S: The day... tomorrow. T: Yes. No, the day before tomorrow.
Metalinguistic feedback:	S: Nouvelle Ecosse... T: Oh but that’s in French.
Repetition:	T: Here when you do a paragraph, you start here,... you write, write, write (pretends to be writing on the board), remember this is... What is this called? S: Comma. T: Comma? S: Period.

Promoting grammatical accuracy in speaking

Leila Ranta

"How can I help learners become more grammatically accurate when speaking? I have noticed that their fluency during communicative activities is great, but it seems there are so many grammar errors that never seem to improve."

Many adult learners of English as second language want to be able to use their new language to communicate both fluently and accurately. To many ESL instructors, this may seem like an impossible goal. Is it possible to design instruction so that learners develop 'accurate fluency'? We will examine what we know from SLA research about this complex issue and consider how instructors can use these insights from research in order to plan more effective grammar practice activities.

The development of grammatical accuracy

What is grammatical accuracy and how does it develop?

Accuracy refers to the extent to which the language produced by learners conforms to target language norms (Ellis, 2008).

One important finding from early SLA research was that some (but not all) grammatical features develop in a predictable sequence or in stages (see footnote below). It is understood that learners cannot skip stages, but that form-focused instruction may help them to move more quickly from one stage to the next.

The existence of developmental patterns[22] in grammar acquisition means that instructors should not expect learners to move rapidly from being able to ask simple yes/no questions with *do* to more complex questions with 'wh'- words and *do* just because the class has 'gone over' the rules for forming questions and completed some fill-in-the-blank exercises.

[22] Evidence of developmental patterns has been found for question forms, negatives and a set of grammatical morphemes (*including progressive –ing, plural -s, past –ed, and possessive 's forms,* see Lightbown & Spada, 2006). For example, learners of English (as a first or second language), begin forming a question without inverting the auxiliary and subject. As they notice how questions are learned, they begin to front the auxiliary '*do*' in yes/no questions both correctly and incorrectly. At this stage, errors such as "*Is you is…*" or *"Does you is….*" are common. In the next stages, learners produce correct questions first with the verb *to be* and then in '*wh- questions*" with '*do*' (e.g., "*Why do birds fly*?") and embedded questions ("*You know what I want*?").

Two different kinds of grammar knowledge

Another reason why instructors should not have overly high expectations for accurate grammar in speaking is that when learners can state a rule, they are relying on their explicit (or declarative) knowledge, but when they are communicating in speaking, they rely on their implicit (or procedural) knowledge. Explicit knowledge is knowledge that learners are able to verbalize because it is in an analyzed form. In contrast, implicit knowledge is intuitive, tacit and not available for self-report; it is the knowledge that underlies spontaneous language use. It has been known for a long time that the ability to correctly supply an answer on a written grammar test does not imply that the learner can use the form correctly in speech (Lightbown, 1985). Krashen (1985) argued that this was the case because the two kinds of knowledge are unconnected to each other. Furthermore, he claimed (and still does) that explicit knowledge cannot become implicit knowledge, that there is no *interface* between the two. In his view, instructors should therefore not "teach grammar" but should allow implicit grammatical knowledge to emerge through exposure to comprehensible input. Today most scholars disagree with Krashen's claim because empirical evidence that has emerged since the 1990s does not support it. On the one hand, a body of research shows that learners who have had massive amounts of comprehensible input in mainstream or immersion contexts do not acquire native-like levels of accuracy (Hinkel, 2003; Lyster, 2007). On the other hand, second language learners who have received explicit grammar instruction have been shown to perform better on some measures of learning than those who have not (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Ellis, 2002). Thus, there appears to be some kind of connection or "interface" between explicit and implicit knowledge, which means that learners can benefit from grammar lessons (Ellis, 2008; White & Ranta, 2002). The crucial piece of the puzzle is the kind of practice that the learner engages in.

What kind of grammar instruction is effective for promoting accuracy in speaking?

Why traditional techniques don't work

Although research has shown that grammar lessons can positively impact learning, it is not the case that just any kind of grammar teaching will have a positive effect on speaking. In fact, traditional approaches to teaching grammar were discredited by proponents of the communicative approach to language teaching in the 1970s and 80s for this very reason. Lightbown (1983) concluded from a study of francophone learners of English who had had only audiolingual teaching that the drilling of structures did not lead to the ability to use the drilled forms during an oral picture description task. As Wong and VanPatten (2003) conclude, "drills are not necessary or beneficial for foreign language acquisition or the development of fluency and should be discarded from instructional practice" (p. 403).

One feature of current commercially produced grammar materials is the fill-in-the-blank exercise. Does this kind of practice help learners to become more accurate in speaking? Useful insights about this issue come from a study by Hosenfeld (1976), who had American high school students "think aloud" when they were doing different kinds of fill-in-the-blank exercises in their French class. Hosenfeld found that the students failed to assign meaning to sentences if meaning was not required to get to the answer. They also reported using a range of strategies such as simplifying the task by always answering the affirmative or translating into their L1 to arrive at the answer. In other words, the learners approached the exercise as a problem-solving activity (i.e., how to fill in the holes as quickly as possible) rather than as a language processing activity. This is likely to be true with all kinds of learners when faced with decontextualized or mechanical exercises that have no communicative relevance or meaning to the learner. To counteract this, instructors could create their own meaningful grammar exercises that relate to students' lives. But even if the student reads and completes such an exercise carefully and with enjoyment, it is not likely to lead to the kind of automatic knowledge needed for speaking because narrow-response types of writing activities and spontaneous speaking tasks place very different constraints on the learner.

Using grammar while speaking

Before we get to the question of what type of grammar activities promote accuracy in speaking, we need to consider the processes involved when speaking. According to an influential model by Levelt (1989), speaking involves three stages: conceptualizing the message, formulating the utterance and then articulating it. In conversation this is then followed by the stage of listening to one's interlocutor, interpreting their response and then reinitiating the production sequence. All of this takes place in a matter of seconds. Each stage involves a number of micro-processes that have to be executed very rapidly and therefore require knowledge that has been automatized. Typically, when speakers have something to communicate, they focus their attention on the conceptualization of the message, leaving the formulation of the utterance to proceed automatically. This works fine for native speakers but the language learner necessarily lacks automatic control over the grammatical knowledge needed to correctly formulate utterances. The result may be speech that is fluent but inaccurate. What learners need is practice that makes grammatical knowledge accessible under communicative pressure, as is typical of speaking situations outside of the classroom.

Transfer-appropriate practice

The concept of "transfer-appropriate processing" comes from psychology and has been applied to L2 learning by Segalowitz and Lightbown (1999) and Lightbown (2008). Learning is transfer-appropriate when the processing mechanisms during instructional practice are the same as those that will be activated later at the "time of test" (i.e., when the learner needs to use the language for real-world purposes). One might conclude from this that the best thing to do is assign communicative tasks because then the 'test' and practice activities are the same. The problem with this is that learners need to focus on form to develop their grammatical competence—so when the formulation stage results in grammatical inaccuracies during communication, these errors become automatized through practice (Ranta & Lyster, 2007). Unfortunately, as we noted above, grammar instruction that consists solely of highly scaffolded activities such as written fill-in-the-blanks exercises does not lead to knowledge that is readily transferable to oral communication. What is needed is grammar practice that gradually moves from filling in the blanks to doing form-focused activities where there is greater communicative pressure but not too much. Unfortunately, at present, there is little published material that presents this approach systematically.

How can I make my grammar practice activities more transferable to speaking?

Below are a few suggestions of types of grammar practice activities that increase the processing demands on the learner compared to written fill-in-the-blank exercises, but do so without being completely open-ended.

Structured output activities: This kind of activity provides learners with multiple opportunities to produce the target form for communicative purposes but within a scaffold of some kind. A familiar example is the "Find someone who…" task; this is a common ice-breaker activity that could be used to automatize the correct use of the present perfect for the meaning of 'having accomplished something' (e.g., Have you run a marathon?). See ideas about designing 'creative automatization' activities in Gatbonton and Segalowitz (1988, 2005).

Form-focused listening tasks: Listening activities that have been specially designed to require grammar practice are ideal for increasing the learner's ability to process the targeted grammar form rapidly while maintaining a focus on meaning. Examples of form-focused listening activities can be found in textbook series like *Focus on Grammar* and *Grammar Dimensions*. These can be models for creating your own activities.

Feedback on error: Provide feedback on errors involving targeted forms during communicative tasks (Ranta & Lyster, 2007). When learners are focused on meaning and leave the grammatical formulation of their message to their 'automatic pilot,' the instructor or fellow students can provide feedback on errors.

Reflecting on your practice in light of the literature

- Read Gatbonton and Segalowitz (1988) to gather ideas for designing 'creative automatization' activities.

- Examine the tasks learners completed that are related to the last grammar point you focused on in class. Rank each task as ***high or low scaffolding***, and ***high or low communicative pressure***. If your class makes use of a grammar textbook, scan the text. Is there a range of activities, some with high scaffolding and low communicative pressure, and others with low scaffolding and high communicative pressure?

- For the next grammar point that you focus on in class, locate or design two scaffolded tasks that can serve to "anchor" the knowledge that learners gain. The first task should have high scaffolding and low communicative pressure. The second should have less scaffolding and more communicative pressure.

- For the same grammar point, locate or design an automatization activity that meets Gatbonton and Segalowitz's five criteria for ensuring that activities promote "intensive rehearsal while avoiding the pitfalls of traditional pattern drills" (pp. 484–489). Is the activity:
    - Genuinely communicative?
    - Psychologically authentic (i.e., allows learners to experience the psychological pressure that comes with real communication)?
    - Focused around one or two basic functions found in a particular situation?
    - Formulaic (i.e., short, memorisable, applicable to a variety of situations)?
    - Inherently repetitive?

If your class makes use of a grammar text that includes application or communicative activities, select one such activity and evaluate it according to the five criteria listed above.

Multilevel ESL classes

Justine Light

"How can I provide a meaningful language-learning environment for all of the learners in my multilevel class in a way that is efficient in terms of preparation?"

Many ESL instructors are concerned with the issue of multilevel classes, as they appear to make planning and teaching effective communicative ESL lessons especially challenging (Harmer, 2007). Almost every ESL class can be considered multilevel to some degree. In this research summary, a multilevel class is defined as one that includes students who are diverse in some or all of the following ways (Bell, 2004):

- Language proficiency level
- Previous experience with education
- Cultural expectations for classroom roles and tasks
- Individual differences, such as age and motivation

The challenges faced by an ESL instructor in a multilevel setting include (Bell, 2004; Matthews-Adynili & Van Horne, 2006):

- Developing tasks that work for all learner proficiency levels
- Ensuring learner engagement and motivation
- Mitigating learner frustration
- Managing unrealistic preparation time to meet all learners' needs

As many instructors may reflect, and as Bell notes, there can also be great benefits to a multilevel class, such as:

→ Flexibility. A teacher with a highly diverse class is not locked into a particular approach or curriculum.

→ Diversity. Differences among learners can contribute to an environment where different viewpoints co-exist, interactive opportunities abound and a more naturalistic environment prevails.

Despite these advantages, an instructor could fairly ask, "How can a teacher possibly gather all these disparate threads together?..." (Bell, 2004, p. 24).

How can I create tasks that will engage all the learners in my multilevel class?

Differentiated instruction

One approach to resolving the challenge of task design for a multilevel class is provided by the work of Skehan (1998), and is known as differentiated instruction. Skehan describes how the difficulty of tasks for language learners can be analyzed and modified by considering three elements:

1. Code complexity—the language required to complete a task
2. Cognitive complexity—the thinking required to complete a task
3. Communicative pressure—the performance conditions established for the task

By adjusting these three elements, the instructor can create tasks that have a shared core and thematic unity while remaining appropriate for a wide range of learners in one classroom.

The framework suggested by Skehan is helpful as it offers a way of thinking about the difficulty of a text or a task, and provides multiple ways an instructor could adapt individual elements of the core text or task to create something that is appropriate for a multilevel class.

Consider the examples on the next page *(adapted from Skehan, 1998, p. 99, and Rossiter & Abbot, 2008).*

1 Adapting code complexity (linguistic)

Instructors can adapt

- The complexity of the language used to explain a task
- The language required by the learner to complete the task
- The language support a task is presented with

Easier task example		More difficult task
Describe the symptoms of influenza.	→	Compare and contrast the symptoms of a common cold and influenza.
Read an abridged version of the Canada Food Guide.	→	Read the Canada Food Guide.
Read a text about the doctor-patient relationship, with synonyms and definitions provided.	→	Read a text about the doctor-patient relationship, and use a dictionary for unfamiliar words.

2 Adjusting cognitive complexity

Instructors can adapt:

- Cognitive familiarity*: adjust task elements (e.g., topic, genre, task type) so they are more predictable (or less so) to learners*
- Cognitive processing demands: *adjust task elements (e.g., organization of information, sequencing, problem-solving required by learner, amount of inference required by learner, concrete vs. abstract language) so they require less or more cognitive processing*

Easier task example		More difficult task
Complete a chart about your family's food preferences.	→	Complete a chart comparing food preferences in Canada and your home country.
Narrate a situation with a child's peanut allergy from five chronological photographic cues.	→	Complete a narrative about a child's peanut allergy that begins with two photographic cues.
Read a text on the benefits of exercise, then create a list of suggestions for Canadians about the topic.	→	Read a text on the benefits of exercise, then work in small groups to make suggestions for specific demographic groups in Canada (e.g., seniors, children) about the topic.

3 Adjusting communicative stress

Instructors can adapt:

- Time limits and pressure
- Speed of language presentation
- Number of participants
- Length of text
- Length of response required
- Type of response required *(e.g., analytical or synthesizing increases the complexity of a task)*

Easier task example		More difficult task
Within 10 minutes, complete a chart about the causes of obesity.	→	Within five minutes, complete a chart on obesity.
Place statements describing the pros and cons of using lawn care chemicals into a chart.	→	Rank the pros and cons of using lawn care chemicals, then write an argument supporting or opposing a municipal bylaw restricting their use.
Work in pairs to create a brochure on safe food handling.	→	Work in groups of four to create a brochure on safe food handling.

Bias and tiered tasks

Bowler and Parminter (2002) present bias and tiered tasks as other options for working with multilevel classes.

→ Bias tasks require varying levels of learners' responses.

→ Tiered tasks provide varying levels of support to the learners' responses.

Examples of this approach include the use of the same text (audio or written) with tiered difficulty of the tasks the learners are required to complete. By varying the amount of support given to the learners and adjusting the outcome of their activity, the same text can be used by all successfully. This enables quicker preparation of materials and lesson plans.

The following tiered tasks (adapted from Bowler and Parminter) are all based on the same listening text (below) and are appropriate for a multilevel class with a range from CLB 3–5.

🎧 Vancouver has had a difficult week. First, a painful loss in the Stanley Cup final, and second, widespread riots. Very large crowds in downtown Vancouver became violent after the Canucks lost the Stanley Cup final to the Boston Bruins. The riots caused millions of dollars in damage and theft to downtown businesses, at least 150 injuries as well, including nine police officers and a very bad international image.

Police chief, Jim Chu, defended how the police handled things, saying the riot was under control in three hours. Chu said the rioters wanted to attack police officers, including one officer who was hit with a brick and needed nine stitches. British Columbia Premier Christy Clark is promising to prosecute the criminals.

www.cbc.ca/edmonton/eal/2011/06/june-17-2011.html

Reproduced from Learning English with CBC (materials originally developed for learners at CLB 4).

Group A (CLB 5)	Listen and answer open-ended questions or Listen and complete a cloze exercise with a focus on a target grammar item
Group B (CLB 4)	Listen and answer multiple choice questions or Listen and complete a cloze exercise using a choice of words, minimal pairs or frequently confused words
Group C (CLB 3)	Listen and fill in cloze gaps while listening or Listen and complete a cloze using missing words provided on cards

One benefit to this activity is that all learners may end up with the same set of correct answers and can debrief together.

Grading tasks

Lynch (1996) provides a useful framework for a more conventional approach to multilevel classes, which instructors may recognize as scaffolding. Lynch's approach focuses on the input and support given by the instructor rather than the task design and outcomes expressed above. An example of Lynch's approach for providing varying levels of scaffolding is presented in the research summary on using authentic materials, earlier in this chapter.

Is there a way to organize learners in my multilevel class in order to optimize the way the groups work together to work on one task?

Beyond adapting the texts and tasks, "grouping strategies are essential in a well-run multilevel class." (Matthews-Aydinli & Van Horne, 2006. p. 2). The grouping of students can encourage the development of a class identity as well as offer variety that engages learners with the tasks and texts. In addition to the consideration of the task requirements, an instructor may change the groups around depending on the learners' needs and preferences (Willis, 1996).

In addition to time spent working as a whole class, as individuals and in pairs, Shank and Terrill (1995) identify some key considerations for teachers grouping students in a multilevel class into small group to complete tasks.

→ *Homogenous groupings*: Learners are placed in groups with homogenous proficiency levels. This grouping can be most effective when the final task outcome can be completed at a range of language levels. In this case, homogenous proficiency groups can work on differentiated tasks or produce collaborative efforts to complete tasks at a variety of complexity outcomes. Bell (2004) identifies tasks that require sequencing process writing to be well-suited to this grouping approach.

→ *Heterogeneous groupings*: Learners are grouped to include a range of proficiency levels within each group. In this case, lower proficiency learners are exposed to a richer level of language from their group mates, whereas higher proficiency learners may be required to take more responsibility for explaining the task and leading its completion. Bell (2004) identifies tasks that require cooperation, persuasion and decision-making to be well-suited to this grouping structure in a multilevel class.

How does the CLB framework support an instructor with a multilevel class?

The theoretical frameworks and suggestions included in this research summary are ideally suited to a CLB–based classroom. An approach that allows for differentiated outcomes in task completion is well-supported by the CLB framework, which describes specific conditions under which a learner can demonstrate competence in performing a task (including factors such as time constraints, length of task/text, assistance given) listed in the Profile of Ability for each CLB level adn the Features of Communicaion pages for each stage.

Indicators of ability appear under each competency statement, and provide examples of behaviours and skills a learner demonstrates when proficient in a CLB competency. This allows an instructor to design one core task for a multilevel class while planning for a range of outcomes for different levels of proficiency within that class.

The CLB framework also suggests a spiraled approach to instruction by outlining different specific conditions for a core task and describing different sample indicators of ability for different CLB levels. This is shown in the following example from the CLB document:

Listening – IV: Comprehending information	
CLB 3	Gets the gist. Identifies factual details, key words and expressions as required.
CLB 4	Gets the gist. Identifies factual details, some implied meanings, key words and expressions as required. Identifies who, what, where and when.
CLB 5	Gets the gist. Identifies key words and phrases. Identifies factual details and some implied meanings. Identifies facts from opinions. Interprets descriptions, reports and explanations.

CLB sample indicators of ability, then, can provide instructors with support as they tier the language required to complete tasks in response to a text. An instructor is well-supported by these CLB sample indicators of proficiency to deliver CLB-based programming in a multilevel setting.

Taking on a multilevel ESL class can be a daunting proposition, and planning for differentiated instruction for every task and lesson may not be realistic (Harmer, 2007). However, by using a variety of the strategies included above, an instructor can offer learners a rich, interactive multilevel environment.

Reflecting on your practice in light of the literature

Differentiated instruction

- Examine a task-based lesson you have recently taught that was successful with learners in a standard single-level class. Consider how you could adapt the tasks using Skehan's framework for differentiated instruction to adapt the lesson plan for a multilevel class.
- Using the examples on page 28 as a model, consider one of the units you teach, such as government in Canada, transportation, or seeking employment, etc. How could you develop differentiated tasks for that theme?

Tiered tasks

- Consider a written or audio text from a LINC resource or other textbook you use often with learners. How might you tier activities to accompany the text for three different levels?

Using CLB in a multilevel class

Look at the sample indicators of ability (in the CLB document) that would be appropriate for the range of learners for a particular task you might teach. Use the CLB document to describe how the outcomes for a task might vary according to the range of proficiency levels in the class.

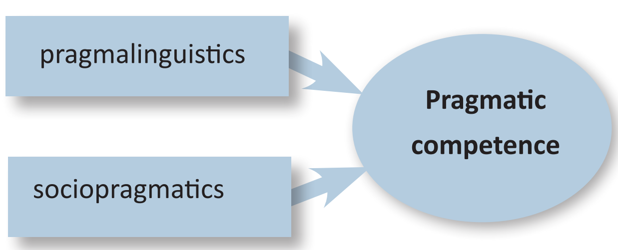
Pragmatics in the ESL classroom

"My learners use correct grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation when speaking, but can come across as unclear, rude or overly polite. How can I help them to become more appropriate when they communicate?"

Pragmatics has been defined as "meaning in interaction" (Thomas, 1995) or "the study of language in use" (Crystal, 1997; Mey, 2001). A learner's pragmatic competence is "the ability to communicate and interpret meaning in social interactions" (Taguchi, 2011). Any instructor who has ever heard requests such as "Give me your pen," or "Teacher, you must help me now!" has encountered the grammatically correct requests of learners who are still developing their pragmatic competence.

Pragmalinguistics vs. sociopragmatics

In order to successfully participate in any number of language functions, such as apologizing, requesting or refusing, a learner needs to have both pragmalinguistics (knowledge of linguistic forms in order to perform the functions) and sociopragmatics (an accurate assessment and understanding of the social context in which they are applying their pramalinguistics). This highlights the complexity of pragmatic competence, where learners must know the forms (grammar) for the functions they want to perform (e.g., inviting or apologizing) as well as the rules for using form and function in the particular context in which they find themselves (e.g., are they talking to a good friend or are they participating in a job interview?)



Pragmatic competence and the CLB

The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) recognize the importance of pragmatic competence in successful communication. Two of the five components of communicative ability that underpin the CLB[23]—functional competence and socio-cultural competence—fit under the category of Pragmatic Competence. The skills required for pragmatic competence (i.e., being able to interpret and appropriately select micro-functions and speech acts) most often fall within the CLB competency areas of Interacting With Others and Getting Things Done. Although these skills are apparent in all four language skills, they are especially apparent in the speaking benchmarks, beginning at Speaking CLB1, where learners are asking and granting permission in simple ways. As learners move through the benchmarks, they increase the repertoire of language functions they can successfully participate in (e.g., giving permission, making a request, apologizing). As they move from Stage I to II, the focus moves from developing pragmatic competence in informal to more formal situations. With the increasing number of CLB-based programs that focus on workplace readiness for higher-level language learners,[24] knowing how to teach pragmatics is becoming a greater priority for instructors.

Importance of context

CLB-based instruction emphasizes the importance of *context* in teaching pragmatic competence, i.e., making learners see the impact of contextual variables (setting, participants, purpose, tone, etc.) on interaction and the language of discourse (*CLB 2000: Theoretical Framework, p. 18).*

[23] See the *CLB 2000 Theoretical Framework* (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002) for a discussion of each.
[24] Such as OSLT.

What do we know about pragmatics?

First of all, we know that pragmatics can be taught and that research has shown that learners who receive formal instruction in pragmatics learn more quickly than those who are learning a language in a natural setting without instruction (Roever, 2009; Taguchi, 2011). However, there are important differences between the classroom setting and natural learning. As Taguchi (2011) observes, the research literature agrees that "classroom learning [can be] poor in opportunities for pragmatics learning" (p. 301). Why is this so? She argues that a number of factors contribute to this, including the common lack of pragmatics information in textbooks, the use of inauthentic language samples in texts, and the fact that language communication in the classroom can be limited in terms of the situations and levels of formality represented. This is especially true of the pragmatics surrounding more formal situations, such as talking to a supervisor.

Explicit instruction is valuable

One final research finding of importance concerns the "how" of instruction in pragmatics: overall, most studies have found explicit instruction to be superior in terms of learner outcomes (Roever, 2009; Taguchi, 2011). This is believed to confirm Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, meaning that learners must notice the "linguistic forms, functional meanings, and relevant contextual features" in order to acquire them (Taguchi, 2011, p. 291).

What could I teach?

Your first source for content can be the CLB for the class you are currently teaching and the curriculum documents that support your instructional program. Pragmatics is woven into the benchmarks starting at CLB 1.

There are, however, some aspects of pragmatics that are known to be more difficult to acquire without instruction. One example of these is what is called "formulaic implicature," where often highly cultural responses take the place of a yes/no answer. Here's an example from the work of Roever (2004): Maria and Frank are working on a class project together, but won't be able to finish it by the deadline.

Maria:	*Do you think Dr. Gibson is going to lower our grade if we hand it in late?*
Frank:	*Do fish swim? (p. 289)*

While learners may face some initial challenges decoding the meaning of Frank's response, imagine the level of difficulty when other versions of these questions are thrown into the mix that are more geographically or culturally specific, such as "Does a bear have fleas?"

Another aspect of pragmatics that is more difficult for learners to acquire is *discourse structuring*. As Roever (2009) observes, "even highly proficient L2 speakers often follow their L1's rules in structuring a discourse contribution. Hearers in turn may attribute these communication problems to the speaker 'not thinking clearly' and develop an unjustified negative impression" (p. 565). So, another aspect of learners' pragmatic competence that may require explicit instruction is how they organize their communications, such as a complaint letter or a refusal and explanation for why they are unable to attend a party.

How can I teach pragmatics?

As described previously, there are reasons that classrooms are not as rich in pragmatic input for learners as they could be. Another reason is that, in terms of correction, instructors may tend to focus on grammatical accuracy, rather than the pragmatic success of their learners' speech during classroom interactions. This is worth reflecting on: how much feedback do your learners receive on their developing pragmatic competence? How could you build in more diverse feedback? In addition, research has shown that learners may not always be aware of the pragmalinguistic functions of certain grammatical features, such as modals. When you teach features such as these, to what extent are you drawing your learners' attention to their pragmalinguistic functions?

With explicit instruction showing more benefits to learners, the question is not whether to use explicit instruction, *but how*. Most often, explicit instruction involves some direct explanation of target pragmatic features followed by practice (Taguchi, 2011, p. 291). Other aspects of highly successful instruction are to create cognitively demanding tasks for learners that involve the target pragmatic feature, such as finding it in scripts or in videos and analyzing the relative success of a request, for example, and justifying their conclusions. In addition to the explicit and active learning of pragmatics, instructors can also build in time for practice, which has been seen to have positive effects on learners' accuracy. For higher-level learners, you can assess to what extent your role-plays and other practice opportunities offer your learners an opportunity to interact in more formal situations where the person they are talking to is an authority figure.

You may be interested in trying a framework for pragmatics instruction developed by Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan (2006) called the Six Rs: Researching, Reflecting, Receiving, Reasoning, Rehearsing, and Revising:

"The first two stages expose learners to pragmatic concepts (e.g., speech acts of request and apologies), and have them gather first language (L1) pragmatic data and analyze these data according to social variables (e.g., gender, social status). In the third and fourth stages, learners receive explicit instruction on the L2 version of these pragmatic acts and are then expected to analyze these acts using L2 data. The last two stages provide opportunities for learners to practice their knowledge in communicative activities and to receive feedback" (Taguchi, 2011).

Kasper and Rose (2002) have developed the only developmental sequence for the development of requests, and it is possible that targeted instruction could speed learners' progress through these stages (Roever, 2009). You can use this model to analyse where your learners are and target your instruction.

If you are not sure of the pragmatics features of an activity that you currently use, you can undertake a task analysis to determine them.

Reflecting on your practice in light of the literature

- Conduct a mini-pragmatics needs assessment to find out what speech acts your learners are experiencing the most difficulty with or are most interested in learning.
- Observe your own feedback to students for one day: Are you giving feedback on form AND pragmatics?
- For higher-level learners: In North America, the "sandwich" approach to feedback is a common one in which a negative or constructive comment is "sandwiched" in between two positive pieces of feedback. Ask your learners to reflect on how feedback is delivered in their L1/culture of origin. Can they identify a structure or pattern? How is it similar to, or different from, the "sandwich"?

For deeper exploration

- Try Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan's (2006) Six Rs framework with your (more advanced) learners. Collect feedback from them on how effective it was, and include a final assessment of some kind.
- How much practice makes perfect? Provide explicit instruction on a pragmatic feature, such as polite requests, then create opportunities for practice. How will you assess success? After the activities, collect learner feedback or an oral or written assessment or both.

Pronunciation

Sara Gnida

"How can I offer pronunciation instruction in class that will help my learners to communicate more clearly in real-life situations?"

Teaching pronunciation is a task that many ESL instructors in Canada approach with ambivalence (Breitkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2002), as illustrated in the following case study describing an instructor's feelings about it:

> *My students all say they want to improve their pronunciation, but I'm not sure how to go about helping them do so. I'm also not sure whether the time I spend teaching pronunciation is worthwhile. I do spend time helping students distinguish and form particular sounds. However, I don't often see this transfer into their communication. And, even if they manage to produce a sound, they are often still difficult to understand.*
>
> *Some students drop off consonants at the ends of words. Others add extra sounds in between words. Some speak in a monotone, with each syllable equally stressed, and others stress the wrong syllables and words. And most students substitute one sound for another, somewhat regularly.*
>
> *What can I do to help these students become easier to understand? What should I be focusing on? Is there anything 'out there' that speaks to these issues?*

In fact, there is research that addresses this fictional instructor's concerns. Instead of a pessimistic view of the value of pronunciation instruction and learners' ability to change their pronunciation, the research has shifted towards "a view of pronunciation teaching as an effective and important part of language pedagogy" (Derwing & Munro, 2010, p. 367). The purpose of this literature summary is to motivate you to examine the research that addresses how pronunciation instruction can make a difference in the classroom.

Instruction makes a difference

First of all, despite perceptions to the contrary, research does indicate that pronunciation instruction can make a difference. For instance,

- Couper (2006) demonstrated that explicit instruction and practice can help learners who add extra sounds after consonants, or who drop consonant sounds.
- Verdugo (2006) demonstrated that increasing learner awareness of intonation patterns can result in improved pronunciation.
- Saito (2007) demonstrated that explicit phonetic instruction and error correction can help learners improve their production of specific vowels.
- Saito (2011) demonstrated that explicit instruction of certain English sounds had a positive effect on comprehensibility.

Intelligibility as the goal, not a native-like accent

Very few people who learn English after childhood ever achieve native-speaker-like speech patterns (i.e., lose their accent), so the goal of losing one's accent is generally unrealistic (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Not only is this goal unrealistic, but it can result in teachers and students expending an enormous amount of effort (and many class hours) dealing with aspects of pronunciation that may not significantly improve their ability to communicate in English. That is, just because a structure is difficult for a learner doesn't mean it is worth teaching or can be taught (Munro & Derwing, 2011). Instead, it is **intelligibility** that is "most critical for successful communication in an L2" (Munro & Derwing, 2011, p. 318). Intelligibility refers to "the extent to which the speaker's intended utterance is actually understood by a listener." A related measure is **comprehensibility**, which refers to "the listener's perception of the degree of difficulty encountered when trying to understand an utterance" (Derwing & Munro, 2005). The evidence suggests that pronunciation instruction can result in increased intelligibility and comprehensibility.

Determining a focus

What aspects of pronunciation particularly affect intelligibility?

If intelligibility is the goal, then instruction should focus on those issues that affect intelligibility (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Determining what affects intelligibility involves an understanding of how listeners process language as well as an understanding of which non-standard features of pronunciation impair intelligibility. This is an area that is currently being explored.

One debate is whether to focus primarily on **segmentals**[25] or on **suprasegmentals.**[26] Materials used in Canadian classrooms (especially software) tend to be heavily focused on segmentals (Breitkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2001). Derwing and Munro (2005) found that a focus on only segmentals does indeed improve students' ability to produce individual sounds, but the "overall effect on comprehensibility in extemporaneous speech was negligible" (p. 388). Research is finding that it is often a combination of both issues that affects intelligibility. The following is a list of some of the non-standard pronunciation features that have been found to mislead listeners:

- Non-standard patterns of strong and weak syllables in multi-syllabic words (Field, 2005; Zielinski, 2006, 2008)
- Non-standard added syllables or vowels (Zielinski, 2008)
- Non-standard vowels in stressed syllables (Zielinski, 2006, 2008)
- Non-standard consonants at the beginnings of stressed syllables (Zielinski, 2008)
- Deletion or addition of final consonants (Zielinski, 2006)
- Stressing every item in an utterance (i.e., not reducing unstressed syllables), or not stressing new/contrasting information (Hahn, 2004). While Zielinski found that non-standard primary stress[27] did not affect intelligibility, Hahn (2005) found that listeners remembered more content and viewed speakers more positively when primary stress was correct.

[25] i.e., the 15 vowels and 25 consonants that are used in spoken English, that is, "the basic inventory of distinctive sounds that combine to form a spoken language" (Cunningham Florez, 1998).
[26] i.e., "global" issues, such as stress, rhythm, adjustments in connected speech, prominence, intonation (Cunningham Florez, 1998).
[27] i.e., the change in pitch, vowel duration, and intensity that signals new or contrasting information.

ATESL (2009) identifies the priorities of pronunciation instruction as the following:

- "The first priority is speaking habits that affect intelligibility (e.g., mumbling, slurring, volume).
- "The second priority is global issues (suprasegmentals) that affect intelligibility. These can include inappropriate sentence stress, syllable stress, intonation, and rhythm. These can also refer to problems related to unconnected speech, including addition of extra syllables and dropping of final consonants.
- The third priority includes those sounds (segmentals) that most affect intelligibility, recognizing that most segmentals will improve on their own. Vowels are more important than consonants." (ATESL, 2009, pp. 76-77.)

Raising awareness

How can we make learners aware of both their own and the target pronunciation?

Once the focus of pronunciation instruction is determined, the next step is to raise learner awareness. Without explicit instruction, students are often not aware of the characteristics of spoken English. For example, they may not:

- Hear a sound that does not exist in their native language
- Hear a sound that occurs in English in a context in which it would not occur in their native language (e.g., they might hear an initial /n/ or /t/ but not hear the /n/ or /t/ at the end of a word; they might hear /s, t, r/ sounds individually, but not all together in a consonant cluster in the word "frustration")
- Hear the linking that occurs in English
- Realize that some words and syllables are reduced
- Have noticed the differences between how language is written and spoken

They also may not be aware of the differences between how they speak and how proficient speakers speak.

Training learners to perceive characteristics of spoken English, and to perceive differences in their speech as compared to the speech of native or proficient speakers, can result in improved production (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Kennedy & Trofimovich, 2010), just as in the teaching of grammar, "students need help noticing what they are doing" (Derwing & Munro, 2005, p. 388). Explicit instruction provides this help, and can result in improved production even when students have limited practice. The following are a few of many ways to raise learner awareness (see also Couper, 2006, p. 59):

- Presenting or helping learners discover useful rules and patterns (e.g., rules for the "ed" ending, rules for vowel length before voiced and unvoiced consonants)
- Explanations of how sounds are physically made
- Focused listening activities in which learners are encouraged to focus on a particular aspect of pronunciation
- Highlighting the stressed syllables in newly introduced multi-syllabic words—the vowels, the consonants, the length, the pitch. That is, don't assume learners will notice the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables on their own.
- Recording and comparing of own speech with the speech of proficient speakers
- Controlled practice, where learners have opportunities to produce the target aspect
- Feedback and error correction

Incorporating pronunciation instruction into communication

How can we help learners incorporate what they learn in communication?

Ultimately, if pronunciation instruction is to be successful, it needs to be "integrated into regular classroom activities, …[go] beyond presentation and practice, and [provide] opportunities for instruction to be applied in communication" (ATESL, 2009). The following table illustrates three of many possible ways to accomplish this (see ATESL, 2009 for additional methods):

Integrating pronunciation instruction into communication	Sample contexts	Sample activities
Focus pronunciation practice on high-frequency words and phrases—that is, on the words and phrases students are likely to need outside the class or in imminent classroom communication activities.	Internationally trained health professionals discussing a reading and doing a role-play about a patient with diabetes	Prior to the discussion and role-play, students focus on clearly forming the vowels and consonants in the stressed syllables of "diabetes" and "diabetic" (and in any other multisyllabic words they will need to use). They continue to focus on highlighting and clearly forming the stressed syllables of the target words as they engage in the communication tasks.
Design activities in which learners focus on a particular aspect of pronunciation while communicating.	Students who have difficulty pronouncing the final "n" in words	Students practice linking "when I," and then talk about different stages of their lives using "when" time clauses (e.g., When I was 5, I could…; When I was 10, I lived in…).
Provide feedback and error correction along with an opportunity to try it again.	Students completing a communication task	The instructor takes note of pronunciation errors during the first half of the activity. He interrupts the communicative activity at a logical point to focus learner awareness on some of the errors he heard (especially those that affected communication), and gives opportunity for learners to practice correct forms. Then learners continue the communicative activity so they have the opportunity to "try it again."

Reflecting on your practice in light of the literature

Intelligibility as the goal

- Examine your goals and your learners' goals related to pronunciation instruction. Are they realistic?
- Read one of the Derwing and Munro articles. Do you agree that intelligibility should be the goal? How about comprehensibility? Or are there other factors that come into play with your particular students? (Will they be penalized on a high-stakes test if they use intelligible but non-standard forms?)

Determining a focus

- Make a list of the pronunciation issues you've noticed in your students' speech. Were any of those issues listed in "Determining a focus" on page 35?
- As students give presentations, note down instances where you have difficulty understanding them. Try to identify the non-standard pronunciation features that impaired intelligibility. Use that list to guide you as you make decisions about what to focus on during pronunciation instruction.

Raising awareness

- Do your students add extra vowels after consonants or drop consonant sounds? Couper (2006) found that raising learner awareness regarding how their pronunciation differed from native/competent speaker pronunciation in this area resulted in clear progress and improvement. Examine Couper's study to identify how he went about raising awareness. Would any of those techniques work in your class?

Task-based language teaching (TBLT)

Sara Gnida

"How can I design tasks that engage my learners and help them improve their ability to communicate?"

The Canadian Language Benchmarks document clearly specifies a task-based approach to language instruction. It describes language proficiency in terms of a learner's ability to accomplish listening, speaking, reading and writing *tasks*. It uses *tasks* to provide demonstrable and measureable outcomes of performance. It considers *tasks* to be the basic building blocks of syllabus design and planning units for language teaching. Given the influential role of the CLB in language teaching in Canada, it is important that instructors understand what task-based language teaching (TBLT) is and what its theoretical underpinnings are—that is, *why* there is such emphasis on tasks.

This research summary will begin to answer this question with definitions of 'task' and 'task-based language teaching.' It will then examine what the research is now saying about how tasks can be designed to most benefit learners as they strive to improve their ability to communicate competently, with increased fluency and accuracy.

What is a task?

The definition of what exactly constitutes a 'task' in language teaching varies in the literature.[28] However, it is widely accepted that a *task* in language teaching is a pedagogical activity that is characterized by the following features:[29]

- Learners use language to accomplish a clearly specified objective or outcome. That is, as is common in the real world, language is used to meet a non-linguistic and somewhat authentic goal.
- Learners are focused on meaning as they interact with language. That is, although learners may give some attention to form, their primary intention is to convey or comprehend meaning rather than to demonstrate an ability to manipulate language.
- What learners actually say, and the language they use to carry out a task, is not specified. That is, although certain tasks have potential to elicit certain linguistic forms, learners use their own resources (language, ideas) to carry out tasks.

For instance, consider the following pedagogical activities. Some are tasks as defined here, while others are not:

Lost Purse: Writing and Speaking Activities

Activities: A	Activities: B
Writing: Imagine you have lost your purse/wallet. Write a description of it to post on the school bulletin board. Consider which features would be most important to describe, what other key information to include and the most effective way to organize your notice.	*Writing:* Write a paragraph describing the purse and contents in the picture. Use vocabulary from the list provided to describe the size, color, features and contents of the purse.
Speaking: Each learner receives a different picture of a purse/wallet + contents with these instructions: *You have lost the pictured item/s in a mall. Talk to mall clerks to find out if they have seen your item. Consider how to approach the clerk, describe your item, and end your conversation.* Pictures are redistributed so half the learners (the "clerks") get two pictures each, and stand around the edge of the class. "Customers" approach clerks to describe their lost objects. Clerks ask questions as needed to determine whether or not they have the missing item; if they do, they show the picture to the customer. When a customer finds their item, they become the clerk, and the process is repeated.	*Speaking:* Look at the purse in the picture. Complete the dialogue, then practice it with a partner. Janice: Excuse me. I lost my purse yesterday. I'm ________ if it has been handed in to you. Clerk: Well, we've had a number of lost purses handed in today. ________ you describe your purse? Janice: Sure. It is ___ (color). It's pretty ____(size)—about __ __ long and __ __wide. Let's see, it has _____ with large ____ buckles. Inside, there is a set of ____, a _________, a couple of _______, a __________, and a ___________. Clerk: I'll go _________.... .... It looks like your lucky day! Is this it? Janice: Oh, thank you so much!

[28] See Ellis (2003) and Nunan (2004) for discussions of the many definitions that have been proposed.

[29] These features are drawn primarily from Ellis (2003, 2009) and Nunan (2004), who in turn drew on a wide range of definitions.

Clearly, the "A" activities are more 'task-like' than the "B" activities. They have a specified and authentic non-linguistic outcome (a notice, locating a lost item) and require that learners focus primarily on meaning as they communicate, although they would likely give temporary attention to form as they consider which linguistic items to use. The tasks would likely elicit certain forms (adjectives describing size, color, decorations, material; prepositions describing location; nouns describing objects commonly found in purses; politeness strategies), but learners are free to use their own language and ideas to carry out the tasks.[30]

In contrast, the "B" activities meet fewer of the criteria for tasks. Although the writing activity has a clear outcome, it is not authentic, and the speaking activity does not have a "non-linguistic" outcome. There is little meaning to communicate in either activity (after all, everyone, including the instructor, has the same picture). Learners doing either of these activities would be placing primary attention on language to ensure that they are choosing the right words. They would be manipulating and demonstrating language rather than using it to communicate.[31]

What is TBLT, and how is it distinguished from communicative language teaching?

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) falls under the broader umbrella of 'Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). ' That is, TBLT is but one of a number of potential realizations of CLT that place a premium on the negotiation and communication of meaning (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). Both CLT and TBLT view language as action and focus on what learners can *do* with language (Nunan, 2004; Savignon, 1991). TBLT, however, would go a step further to view tasks as the basic planning unit for language instruction, or as Ellis (2003) puts it, "a useful device for planning a communicative curriculum[32]" (p. 30). That is, while activities in a CLT class might be organized around functions, themes, projects, content or (less commonly) even structures, learner activity in a TBLT class will be organized around tasks.[33]

In TBLT, it is not enough to just *use* language (e.g., to read or listen to a text, or to discuss a topic), or to *analyze* language (e.g., understand a grammar point, fill in a cloze exercise, or memorize a list of vocabulary). Instead, language is the means of achieving a clearly specified outcome, and the way language is used in class is similar to how it is used in the real-world (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). Following are some characteristics of TBLT:[34]

- Tasks are clearly defined.
- Instructions and criteria for success are clearly specified.
- Communication is genuine; language is used to fill in real information or meaning gaps.
- Learners use their own resources and the content they access through language (as they listen, view, read, discuss, interview) to *do* things that are meaningful.
- Content accessed through reading and listening is used as learners complete tasks (e.g., solve a problem, design a poster, write a report, complete a form, teach a client, convince a classmate, prioritize a list, make a decision).
- Focus on form (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, functions, formulaic "chunks", etc.) and focus on strategies and skills (e.g., skimming, scanning) are contextualized within a task: prior to a task to enable students to accomplish the task, during the task to facilitate the task, or after the task based on issues that arose.
- Skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) are integrated as they are in real-life (i.e., learners will likely need to make use of more than one skill to accomplish a task).
- Learners self-correct and give each other feedback; they receive formative feedback; they have the opportunity to 'try it again.'

How can I maximize the potential benefits of TBLT for my students?

One way to maximize the benefits of TBLT is to ensure that learners are adequately prepared to successfully accomplish a task, that the tasks themselves are well

[30] Note: Tasks can also focus on reading or listening skills. E.g., learners can listen to a phone conversation between a clerk and customer while viewing pictures of purses to determine whether the purse being described is in the 'lost and found.' Or different groups of learners can read different sections of a story of someone whose wallet was lost and then returned, then tell the story section to classmates in order to put the story in the correct order.

[31] For further comparison of activities that are "tasks" and activities that are just exercises, see Ellis (2003). For lists of tasks with a real-life focus, see the CLB document, *Essential Skills Profiles* (HRSDC, 2009) and the *CLB/Essential Skills Comparative Framework* (CCLB, 2005).

[32] Especially in contexts where learners have limited opportunity to communicate in the target language (Ellis, 2003).

[33] These tasks, however, might be grouped thematically or, in a weaker version of TBLT, grammatically.

[34] Drawn primarily from Ellis (2003, 2009), Plews and Zhao (2011).

designed, and that what learners gain through the tasks is followed up on and reinforced. An effective way to conceptualize tasks is to consider what learners will do in each of the following phases:

Pre-task phase

In the pre-task phase, learners receive clear instructions regarding how to do the task and engage in scaffolding activities to enable them to accomplish tasks. These could include, for instance:[35]

- Doing a similar task in a large group under the guidance of the instructor
- Viewing a model
- Gathering ideas (brainstorming, reading, listening, viewing, research) that might be useful in accomplishing the task
- Gathering/priming linguistic resources (lexical items, structures) that might be useful (e.g., brainstorming, glossing, dictionary work)
- Unguided or guided planning that is focused on language, content or both

For instance, in the pre-task phase of the Lost Purse speaking task described earlier, learners might gather linguistic resources by making a list of items in their own purses/wallets and listing descriptive language for describing their own wallets. They might watch their instructor model an interaction with a clerk, and have time to plan what they would say. In preparation for the writing task, they may read and analyse one or two lost item notices that could potentially be posted on a bulletin board.

During-task phase

In the during-task phase, learners are focused primarily on meaning as they engage in activities that are central to tasks. These activities can be done with or without time pressure or access to input (i.e., materials) (Ellis, 2006). They may be done in pairs, groups or even individually (especially in reading and writing). In this phase, learners' attention may temporarily shift from meaning to form, but these shifts occur within the context of determining how to best meet a task's communication demands. Teachers can facilitate these shifts, implicitly (through recasts and requests for clarification) or explicitly through error correction and metalinguistic explanations (Ellis, 2006).

For instance, in the speaking task described earlier, learners may or may not be allowed to have written notes about what their purse/wallet looked like. Also, after approximately half of the students have "found" their missing items, the instructor may pause the activity briefly to give feedback on issues related to accuracy or appropriateness of language, and then have learners continue the activity.

Post-task phase

In the post-task phase, learners reflect on and report on the task and engage in other follow-up activities including, for example:[36]

- Opportunities to repeat the task
- Opportunities to focus on linguistic forms that they used incorrectly or failed to use (e.g., through identifying errors, or reviewing and correcting errors)
- Opportunities to practise and automatize linguistic forms
- Awareness-raising activities (e.g., comparing their performance to a model of a fluent speaker doing the task; comparing their transcription to an instructor's reworked version)

For instance, after receiving feedback on their lost item notices, learners may revise the notices prior to 'posting' them. After the speaking activity, the instructor may write a number of less polite phrases he heard during the activity on the board, and, together with the students, practice intonation patterns and brainstorm for language that could be used to make them more polite.[37] Learners could then redo the role-play with a partner, focusing on using the more polite linguistic options.

A challenge in task-based language teaching (and indeed in all communicative language teaching) is to encourage increased accuracy and complexity while also promoting fluency. The next sections explore what the research is saying regarding the effects of some of the different design features of tasks mentioned above.

[35] Many of these examples are drawn from Ellis (2006). For more detail on each activity, see Ellis' article available at http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/Sept_06_re.php.

[36] These examples are drawn from Ellis (2006). For more detail on each of them, see Ellis' article.

[37] E.g.,

"I lost my purse, do you have it?"	"Hi, I've lost my purse, and I'm wondering if someone might have handed it in to you."
"No."	"I'm so sorry... I've checked, and nothing we have matches your description"

Pre-task planning time

Studies have found that allowing learners planning time before a task results in more fluent use of language (Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1999; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). It also results in more complex language (Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1999; Kawauchi, 2005; Sangarun, 2005), and sometimes more accurate language (Kawauchi, 2005; Sangarun, 2005).[38]

Pre-task planning time can be unfocused (i.e., learners make their own decisions regarding what to focus on), or strategic (as when learners are guided to pay attention to meaning, or to linguistic form, or to both). Strategic pre-task planning, in which learners focus on ***both*** meaning and form, has been found to be more effective than either unfocused pre-task planning, or pre-task planning that focuses learners on only form or only meaning (Sangarun, 2005).

Planning time during tasks

Studies have found that allowing learners more planning time *during* tasks (referred to as "online planning") results in learners producing more accurate and more complex language (Yuan & Ellis, 2003). That is, if learners are not pressured to perform quickly, and if they can work more carefully and slowly, they produce more accurate and more grammatically complex language, although there is a slight negative effect on fluency (Ahmadian, 2012; Ellis & Yuan, 2005).

Task repetition

The first time a learner does a task, he or she must pay attention to a broad range of factors, including decisions regarding how to do the task, what messages to convey, how to order those messages, and what language to use. When a learner repeats a task, the language he or she needs has already been 'primed' and the message has been thought through, allowing the learner to produce more complex and accurate language (Bygate, 2001; Bygate & Samuda, 2005). Also, subsequent repetitions of a task can result in a qualitatively more successful performance, with more coherence and depth (Bygate & Samuda, 2005).

Interestingly, one study found that allowing learners online planning time ***while*** repeating a task resulted in an "exponential increase" in the complexity of oral production without the dysfluency that is typical of careful online planning (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2010, p. 55).

[38] Yuan and Ellis (2003) did not find that pre-task planning time led to either more accuracy or complexity, while Kawauchi (2005) found that lower proficiency learners gained the most in terms of accuracy from pre-task planning.

Task repetition can be operationalized in the classroom in different ways. Learners can repeat a task, but in a slightly different context (e.g., with different classmates, taking on different roles, or in smaller or larger groups). Another option would be to have the teacher and learners work together through a sample task prior to having learners work on a task independently or in smaller groups/pairs (Ellis, 2006). A third option is to design tasks that are themselves repetitive; that is, in order to complete the task, learners find themselves repeating certain speech functions or linguistic items over and over.[39] Studies have found that inherently repetitive tasks that target formulaic and functional expressions improve both fluency and accuracy in grammar (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005) and in pronunciation (Isaacs, 2009).

Pre-task modeling

One way to provide scaffolding for a task is to have learners observe the task or a similar task being performed (e.g., a videoed interaction, an interaction between the instructor and a volunteer), or analyze a sample text. This pre-task modeling can be focused generally on how to do the task, or it can be designed to raise learner awareness of useful strategies, functions, or linguistic options (Ellis, 2006).

Research has found that pre-task modeling of collaborative tasks results in more collaborative interaction (i.e., feedback, responses to questions, sharing of ideas), more target language use, and more creative (rather than verbatim) use of language from the materials (Kim & McDonough, 2011; see also Kirgoz, 2011). It also results in more corrections and discussions about language choices.[40]

Focus on form

Although attention to meaning and communication are the priority in TBLT, attention to form is also considered to be a necessary element in instruction (Ellis, 2009). That is, TBLT allows for learners' attention to be

[39] For instance, learners who are surveying people (e.g., about a lost purse) will have a series of similar conversations with different people – structures, functional phrases, and lexical items will be naturally repeated.

[40] In Kim and McDonough's (2011) study, pre-task modeling included specific instructions on how to interact with a partner and a videoed model (with actors) of the task. As the actors modeled the tasks, they also modeled how to resolve linguistic questions, give feedback, respond to questions and share ideas. In the Kirgoz (2011) study, one of several pre-task activities was to have learners listen to recordings of native speakers performing similar tasks, to raise awareness of communication devices (clarification requests, repetition).

briefly and temporarily drawn to linguistic elements (vocabulary, collocations, structures, sounds, pragmatic patterns) as they arise "incidentally" in meaning-focused lessons (Long, 1997).

Although some worry that focusing on form while learners are doing tasks will disturb the flow of the lesson and communication, research has found that focus on form episodes are common and do not appear to disturb the flow of communication (Ellis, Basturkman, & Loewen, 2001; Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

One question that a number of studies address is whether or not these focus-on-form episodes result in more accurate and/or more complex language use. In general, studies show that focusing on form can indeed result in improved complexity and accuracy. One study, for instance, found that learners who received corrective feedback during an online chat with an instructor regarding an upcoming role-play were more likely to make correct use of the forms targeted (Cho, 2009). Another study found focus on form episodes to be more successful (i.e., with greater student uptake) when it was the students who initiated the focus on form, when the focus on form occurred in response to a learner error, and when learners had an opportunity to "negotiate extensively around the problem" (Ellis, Basturkman, & Loewen, 2001, p. 313). The same study found focus on form episodes to be less successful when the teacher initiated the focus on form.

This focus on form can occur in all phases of a task-based lesson (Ellis, 2003, 2006). In the *pre-task phase,* learner awareness of potentially useful language (words, phrases, formulas, patterns, pragmatics, pronunciation) can be raised. This can be done explicitly (e.g., through glossed words in readings/listening or lists of useful items) or implicitly as learners are exposed to input as they prepare for a task. Learners can be guided to pay attention to specific forms while observing a model. They can be given planning time and encouraged to focus strategically on form during that time.

During a task, learners may temporarily shift their attention from meaning to form as they collaborate with each other to solve linguistic problems. Learners may ask the instructor questions about linguistic form. The instructor may use recasts, comprehension checks, explanations and reminders to provide corrective feedback or raise awareness of potentially useful forms. As learners report on their performance, they may also focus on form.

In the *post-task phase*, learners may participate in consciousness-raising and practice activities directed at linguistic features that occurred in the input. They may examine linguistic features as they observe models of fluent speakers doing the tasks. They may compare their own language to the language of fluent speakers doing the task to raise awareness of their errors or language they could use. The teacher may review forms that were used incorrectly, or that could potentially have been used. And last, learners could repeat the task, or do a similar task, with the intention of avoiding previously made errors or of incorporating more complex language.

The value of TBLT has been and is being debated in the literature in terms of both its theoretical underpinnings and its practical applications. Concerns have been raised, for instance, regarding different understandings of the term "task" (Littlewood, 2004), the types of interaction and language elicited—or not elicited—by tasks (Seedhouse, 1999; Carless, 2008), and whether or not tasks are an appropriate vehicle for teaching new language (Swan, 2005).[41] However, a principled approach to task design—with pre-task, during-task, and post-task activities that enable learners to do tasks and maximize learners' engagement with language—can mitigate many of the identified concerns.

[41] See Ellis, 2009, for a summary of and responses to critiques of TBLT.

Reflecting on your practice in light of the literature

Task-based language teaching

It's clear that the CLB advocate a task-based approach to language learning. However, Plews and Zhao (2010) found that, although the Canadian ESL teachers they interviewed and observed advocated a task-based approach to language teaching, they did not necessarily follow TBLT principles (or at least they did not follow the version of those principles held by Plews and Zhao). After reading the article, focus on the *Discussion* of their study (pp. 53–55). In what ways is your approach to the use of tasks in your classes similar to or different from the approaches of the teachers in the study? Based on what you know about TBLT, do you feel that Plews and Zhao's critique is fair? Do Plews and Zhao convince you of the benefits of a stronger version of TLBT?

Task design

Ellis (2006) lists a variety of options available during the pre-, during-, and post-task phases of lessons. Either read the article or examine the "Task-based teaching tool" in Chapter 2, which summarizes his suggestions. As you examine the options, notice how TBLT allows for a focus on form and accuracy at any stage of the task—but all within the context of a communicative task. Consider a recent task that you had your students carry out. What pre-, during-, or post- tasks activities did you include? What design features could you change or add to maximize learners' engagement with language?

Examples of TBLT

The following articles provide examples of TBLT lessons and course. Read and reflect on one of them. In what ways could the experiences and ideas described in the article apply to your own teaching context? (To locate the articles, see the references section at the end of this chapter.)

- Kirkgoz (2011) provides a description of a successful task-based speaking course that incorporated video recordings into the learning process.
- Huang (2010) provides examples of task-based lessons that incorporate grammar instruction and repetition.
- Gatbonton and Gu (1994) provide an account of the development of a task-based English for Academic Purposes course that was developed collaboratively by Canadian and Chinese instructors.

First language usage

An issue of concern in foreign language TBLT classrooms is that learners often make use of their native languages (instead of the target language) to complete a task. In fact, some have found that the more engaging a task is (i.e., the "better" it is), the more likely it is that learners will revert to their native language to accomplish it (Carless, 2008). While the use of the native language to accomplish tasks in adult ESL classes is less problematic in Canada than in EFL situations, it is still a concern for those teachers with large numbers of learners who share the same first language. Along with results of an interview study, Carless (2008) presents suggestions for dealing with the use of the native language in TBLT classrooms in Hong Kong. Read the article. Which of his suggestions would be useful for instructors in Ontario who want to encourage their learners to use English to accomplish tasks?

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- TESL ON research as part of the POST TESL Certificate Training project, 2011
- CAELA Framework for Professional Development, 2010
- CCLB National Consultations on CLB 2000 Report, 2010
- ATESL Best Practices for ESL/LINC Programming in Alberta, 2009

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Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice

An Instructor Handbook

Chapter 4

Practices and Resources in CLB-Based Planning

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Practices and Resources in CLB-based Planning

Key Practices in Classroom Instruction

Key Practices in Assessment

Resources for Program Planning

Introduction

This chapter provides a brief description of key practices in classroom instruction and assessment in government-funded adult language training programs in Ontario.

The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) are the national standard for describing language proficiency, and have been adopted by Ontario government-funded language training programs to guide program planning and assessment. The CLB and the resources that exemplify them can inform decisions regarding topics and practices to explore and adopt in the classroom. Instructors may choose to select one of the resources or concepts highlighted in this chapter for further exploration.

The purposes of this chapter are to briefly highlight the standards and key practices in government-funded LINC and Adult ESL programs in Ontario, and to provide an accessible listing of program planning resources (not including instructional resources) that are referenced to those standards and practices.

The collection of planning resources in this chapter:

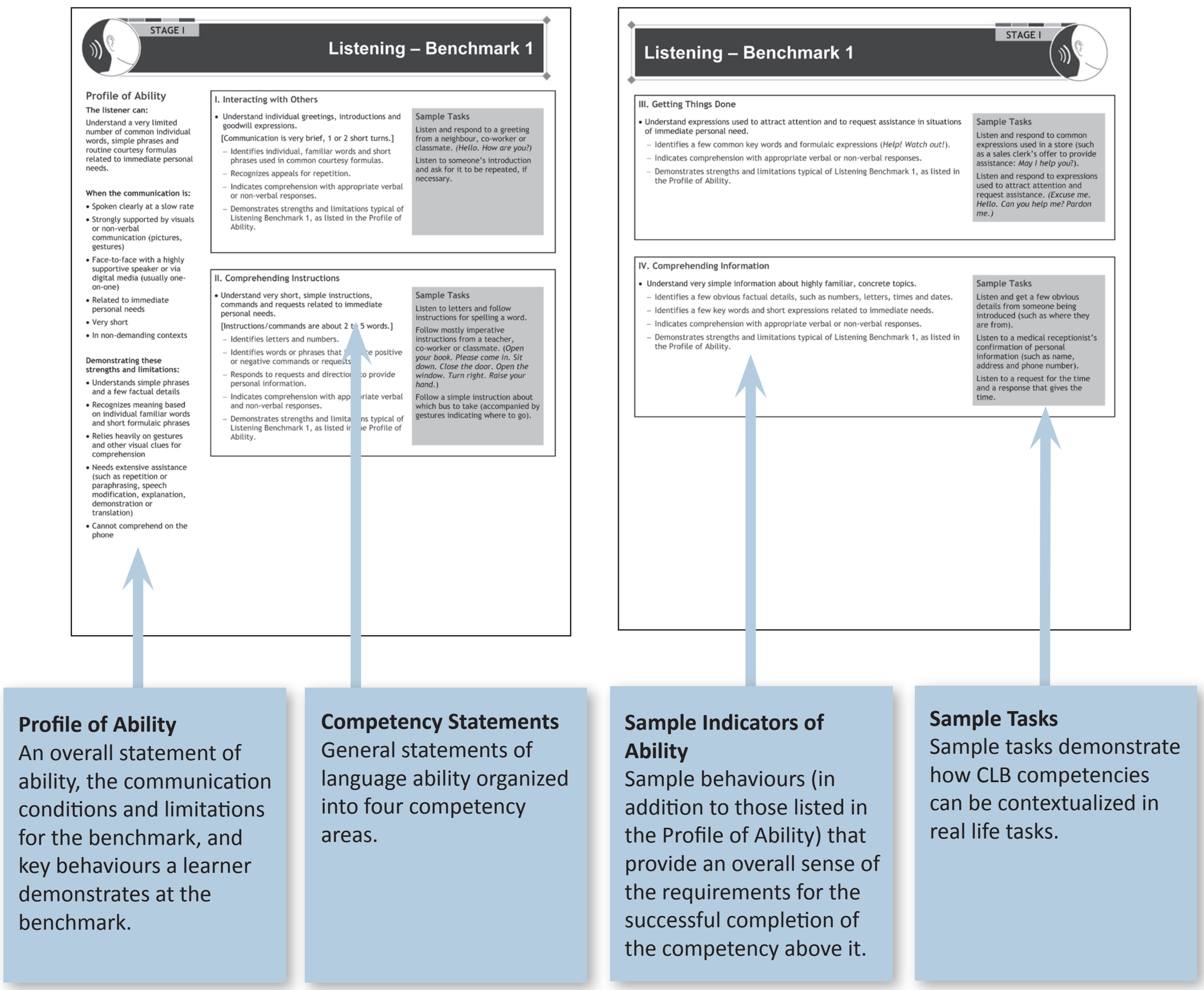
- Is Canadian and CLB-referenced
- Represents only a sample of the available resources
- Emphasizes the importance of task based, learner centred instruction based on the CLB
- Emphasizes the importance of task–based instruction as a condition for effectively implementing task-based assessment
- Affirms that an instructor’s communicative classroom tasks may be used as effective assessment tasks
- Does not evaluate, prescribe or endorse the use of any particular resource, but presents the resources for instructors to explore and evaluate in terms of their effectiveness and relevance to particular classroom contexts
- Does not include instructional materials

Key Practices in Classroom Instruction

The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) guide classroom instruction and assessment. The CLB includes representative competencies that describe what a learner can do in English in four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) across 12 proficiency levels or benchmarks. Both the federally funded LINC program and the provincially funded Adult ESL program in Ontario recognize the CLB as the standard for assessing learner progress.

The CLB was first published in 1996, and has since undergone two revisions. The first revision was published as the CLB 2000. Shortly after, *CLB 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* was released, articulating the progression of ESL literacy learners. The second CLB revision was published in 2012.

The key components of a benchmark and how they are organized in the CLB document are illustrated below. Each benchmark for a particular skill is presented in a two-page spread (the spread below is pp. 4–5, CLB 1, Listening), and includes the following components:



Theoretical basis of the CLB

The CLB standard reflects a theory of communicative competence that recognizes that five areas of knowledge and ability are needed for communicative language proficiency:

- Grammatical knowledge: to convey and interpret meaning at the sentence level
- Textual knowledge: to convey and interpret cohesion and coherence devices to connect units of communication into a coherent whole
- Functional knowledge: to convey and interpret communicative intent
- Sociolinguistic knowledge: to appropriately convey and interpret meaning in specific social contexts
- Strategic competence: to integrate and apply the four components of language ability to specific contexts of language use

CLB competency statements are communicative tasks that describe what a learner **can do** in English. They are organized into four areas that represent broad, universally relevant contexts of daily life in work, study and community situations:

I: Interacting with Others

II: Giving and Comprehending Instructions

II: Reproducing Information (in Writing only)

III: Getting Things Done

IV: Comprehending and Sharing Information

What instructors do with the CLB

Instructors of CLB-based programs are guided in their planning by the CLB. CLB competencies are broad general communication tasks, such as "*Understand very short, simple instructions, commands and requests related to immediate personal needs" (CLB 1, Listening).* Instructors consider learner needs, interests and language abilities as they:

- Design classroom tasks that approximate real life tasks. These tasks contextualize the CLB competencies with topics and life situations that are relevant to learners, and provide opportunities for meaningful communication.
- Design activities to provide instruction and practice with the language elements (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, cultural conventions) involved in completing the real life tasks.

CLB Competencies are:

CLB

Competency-based

Learner-centred

task-based

The assumptions on the next page summarize the characteristics of CLB-based language instruction.

Assumptions about CLB-based language instruction

The following assumptions describe the characteristics of effective CLB-based instruction in Ontario, and have been synthesized and adapted from the *CLB 2000 A Guide to Implementation*, *LINC 5–7 Curriculum Guidelines*, and the *ATESL Best Practices for Adult ESL/LINC programming in Alberta*.

1. **Instruction stresses communicative competence**: The outcome of learning and teaching is a learner's ability to use language in specific social contexts to convey and interpret intended meaning.

2. **Instruction is task-based**: Classroom activities focus on a learners' ability to perform a range of real-world language tasks related to the CLB competencies. Instructional plans include classroom tasks that simulate authentic language tasks, providing rehearsal for life outside the classroom as well as opportunities for learners to use English to create and interpret meaning.

3. **Instruction is learner-centered**: The content and pace of instruction and classroom activities have a transparent connection to the learners' real-world needs, learning goals and language abilities.

4. **Instructional planning begins with a consideration of authentic language tasks:** Planning begins with and is guided by a consideration of authentic tasks and the aspects of language required to perform them.

5. **Instruction includes skill-building activities related to authentic language tasks:** Explicit instruction and focused practice of the language elements (e.g., pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, text structure, pragmatics) implicit in authentic tasks raise learners' awareness of the characteristics of English and Canadian culture; this focused practice has a transparent connection to real-world classroom tasks (tasks that simulate authentic tasks) in which learners apply their knowledge as they create or interpret meaning in purposeful tasks.

6. **Ongoing assessment informs learners and class direction:** Ongoing formative task-based assessment and feedback of value to learners are integrated into the teaching and learning process and inform class direction.

7. **Real life as source and model:** Instruction provides learners with extensive exposure to texts and discourse that closely approximate those they are likely to encounter in real life; it also provides learners with repeated opportunities to practise CLB competencies in a variety of situations and contexts (i.e., the same competency is spiralled in different contexts).

8. **Supportive learning environment:** Classroom practices create a learning environment that fosters comfort, engagement and risk-taking in language learning.

9. **Instruction fosters learner autonomy**: Classroom practices encourage learners to take an active role in managing their learning, and include activities that foster learners' awareness and selection of language learning strategies.

Key Practices in Assessment

Defining the terms

The assessment terms below are defined according to how they are understood in the Ontario context.

Placement assessment is conducted to *place* a learner in an appropriate class. The result of a placement assessment is a CLB proficiency level in four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Diagnostic assessment is conducted to identify a learner's strengths and weaknesses in language ability for the purpose of tailoring instruction. It is usually conducted at the beginning of a teaching term, and helps the instructor understand learning needs.

Needs assessment is conducted to find out more about learner needs. This assessment can include collecting data about a learner's long-term goals, learning goals, background, interests, reasons for attending class, and existing knowledge and experience, as well as the results of his or her placement and diagnostic assessment. It is conducted for the purpose of tailoring instruction to learner needs and preferences, and to facilitate goal setting. It is often done at the beginning of a teaching term, as well as on an ongoing basis throughout the term.

Classroom-based assessment is conducted by instructors in the classroom, and is sometimes described as either formative or summative:

- Formative assessment is conducted to provide feedback to learners that will promote their learning, and to inform teaching and learning activities.
- Summative assessment is conducted to identify what the student has learned. It focuses on the product of learning, and is often translated into a CLB proficiency level for reporting purposes and for determining learner placement into subsequent classes.

Placement assessment in Ontario[1]

Prior to 2012, placement assessment of Ontario LINC-eligible clients was conducted at assessment centres while assessment of those eligible for provincially funded adult ESL programs was typically conducted at individual program sites using locally developed placement assessment tools.

As of 2012, placement assessment of clients eligible for *either* LINC *or* adult ESL is conducted at Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS) centres. CLARS assessors use standardized, CLB-referenced assessment tools to determine a learner's placement CLB in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

What is CLARS?

CLARS originated from an agreement between the federal and Ontario ministries responsible for immigration (CIC and MCI) to enhance the coordination of their immigrant settlement policies and programs.

CLARS is an Ontario-wide system of language assessment and referral. It is based on common standards and protocols and delivered consistently across Ontario. After an extensive piloting process in three regions of Ontario, it was implemented province-wide in 2012.

CLARS centres in 18 regions of Ontario assess clients' English language proficiency and language training needs and refer them to appropriate language training providers.

What happens at a CLARS centre?

At a CLARS centre, trained assessors assess the readiness and English language proficiency of clients in order to place them in appropriate language training classes (either federally funded programs, such as LINC, or provincially funded programs, such as Adult ESL). Assessors:

- Screen clients for eligibility based on proof of immigration status
- Provide language assessment
- Refer clients to language training programs according to the results of the assessment and other data (collected during an interview)
- Provide clients with information about eligible training opportunities available in the community so clients can enrol in the language training course(s) of their choice

[1] This section was adapted from the CLARS Guiding Principles

Which tests are used to assess language proficiency?

CLARS centres use tests that are based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks. Test results are provided to clients and language training providers. The following tests, administered by language assessors, are used for eligible clients:

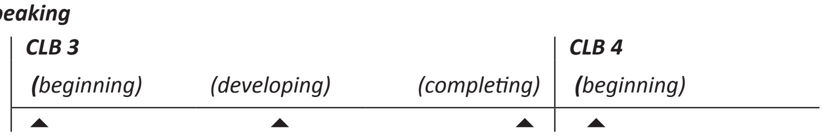
- Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA)
- Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Assessment (CLBLA)
- Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT)
- Enhanced Language Training Placement Assessment (ELTPA 6-10)
- Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Placement Tool (LPT)
- *Batterie de test de classement* (BTC) based on *Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens* (NCLC)
- Other tests referenced to the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB/NCLC) that may be developed for use by CLARS centres

How are placement levels from CLARS centres interpreted?

Assessment at a CLARS centre locates a learner on a scale of communicative competence by assigning a benchmark for each skill. Each benchmark indicates that the learner has demonstrated *at least* the minimum requirements for that benchmark, but it does not convey where, within that benchmark, the learner lies.

A placement assessment of CLB 3 in speaking means the learner has shown that he/she is **at least** at a beginning CLB 3. (It could be that the learner is farther along in his or her proficiency within CLB 3.)

Speaking



For example, consider a learner with a placement determination of CLB 3 in speaking who enters a CLB 3 class. During the class term, the learner works at strengthening and consolidating the speaking competencies associated with CLB 3. It is possible that the learner could enter a class at CLB 3 and complete a term either having demonstrated competency at CLB 3 (and ready to enter CLB 4 the next term) or still developing competency at CLB 3.

How are placement assessment results used to refer learners to my class?

Assessors refer clients to specific classes based on a number of factors, such as eligibility, placement benchmarks, learning goals, length of time in Canada, and the availability of language training programs.

To skills-based courses: When a course is mainly focussed on a specific skill (i.e., Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing), placement may be guided by the client’s proficiency in the skill being targeted in the course, as well as by a holistic consideration of other factors, such as the learner’s ability to follow and participate orally in class.

To integrated courses: When a class covers all four skills, the assessor bases a placement recommendation on a holistic consideration of a variety of factors. In addition, the assessor will first give consideration to a client's listening and speaking benchmarks, and give secondary consideration to his/her reading and writing benchmarks. This will help to ensure that most of the learners in a class can understand directions, speak to fellow learners and participate in oral class activities. See the table below for examples of how learners with different combinations of benchmarks might be placed:

L-S-R-W	Situation	Probable Placement
3-2-3-3	Majority of benchmarks at one level	Assessor likely places at the majority level (CLB 3)
3-3-4-4	50-50 split, where the *lower* benchmarks are L or S	Assessor likely places at the lower benchmark (CLB 3)
4-4-3-3	50-50 split, where the *higher* benchmarks are L or S	Assessor likely places at the higher benchmark (CLB 4)
4-4-2-1	Variations of 2 or more levels	Assessor places based on consideration of many factors

The learners in one class may therefore represent a range of benchmarks in reading and writing. To address this range, instructors should provide learning opportunities that allow learners to work and progress according to their individual profiles.

How do CLARS centres learn about language training programs in the community?

Language training providers give CLARS assessors detailed information about their language training programs or classes, including CLB levels, schedules, location, special features of instruction (e.g., computer, skills-based), availability of child-minding, wheelchair accessibility, and services for special needs groups.

How are a learner's placement levels and progress recorded?

Ontario government-funded language training organizations and assessment centres use the HARTS (History of Assessments, Referral and Training System) information management system to collect, store and retrieve data about a client's assessment, referral and training.

Placement assessment results are entered into the HARTS database, and these benchmarks remain in the learner's assessment history.

At the end of each term of instruction, a learner's progress can be considered to determine placement in subsequent courses. The example that follows of a fictional learner, Ali, illustrates how this is done.

Ali's placement assessment results

At a CLARS centre, Ali receives placement benchmarks of 4,4,3,3. He is placed in a language training class and works *within* those benchmarks.

Listening CLB 4	Speaking CLB 4	Reading CLB 3	Writing CLB 3

Ali

Through classroom assessment activities, Ali's instructor determines that after one term, Ali has progressed somewhat. He has demonstrated proficiency with the CLB competencies associated with CLB 4 in *speaking* and with CLB 3 in *reading*. However, he is still developing proficiency *within* CLB 4 in listening and *within* CLB 3 in writing (i.e., he did not demonstrate proficiency with all the competencies associated with that CLB in those skills.) The instructor shares the results of her assessment with Ali, using a progress form like the one below to document and explain his progress.

Ali's benchmarks at the end of the term

Name: Ali Morku Date: June 21, 2012			
Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
CLB 4 ☐ Beginning ☑ Developing ☐ Completing	CLB 4 ☐ Beginning ☐ Developing ☑ Completing	CLB 3 ☐ Beginning ☐ Developing ☑ Completing	CLB 3 ☐ Beginning ☑ Developing ☐ Completing

At the end of the term, Ali's instructor checks *Completing* for CLB 4 Speaking. This means that as Ali moves into the *next* term, he can begin to work within the CLB 5 competencies.

Ali's benchmarks, entering the next term

Listening CLB 4	Speaking CLB 5	Reading CLB 4	Writing CLB 3

On starting the new term, Ali's instructor may recommend a different class based on his updated benchmarks.

When does a learner progress to a new class?

Ultimately, the instructor decides when to move the learner into a different class based on a holistic consideration of many factors. These factors include the learner's progress, goals, interests and the benchmark range addressed in a particular course.

Classroom-based assessment[2]

Classroom-based assessment refers to assessment that is conducted by the instructor in the classroom. Classroom assessment is sometimes characterized as either summative or formative.

Summative assessment (assessment of learning) refers to assessment conducted to determine what a student has learned and can do. It is often translated into CLB scores and used for reporting and progressing learners to higher-level classes.

Formative assessment (assessment for learning) refers to assessment that is conducted primarily to help learners identify where they are and what they need to do next. It is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and happens on an ongoing basis. It can be informal or more formally documented. Evidence from formative assessment is used to diagnose learner needs, plan next steps in instruction and provide learners with feedback they can use to improve their performance and promote further learning.

Formative assessment involves the instructor and the learner having a shared understanding of what successful performance of a task involves. This requires that instructors:

a) Are aware of what the learner can do and still needs to learn to perform a task proficiently, and
b) Clearly communicate that gap to learners

Assessment in a CLB-based program

The CLB is the standard frame of reference for teaching and assessing English in Ontario government funded adult language training. The CLB is task-based, with a primary focus on using English *in order to* accomplish communicative language tasks in a variety of social contexts. The CLB competencies themselves are generic and context-free. Through an ongoing needs assessment process, instructors determine relevant social contexts and topics with which to contextualize the CLB competencies, and the language elements to teach.

In classroom assessment, instructors use several assessment tasks to determine learners' proficiency with a benchmark or competency. The tasks are linked to curriculum objectives, learner needs and classroom instruction. Assessment tasks are real-world classroom tasks that involve the use of language elements that have been taught and rehearsed through skill-building and skill-using classroom activities and tasks.

Good to know

Skill-building (enabling) tasks:

- Develop isolated pre-requisite skills
- Focus on form and accuracy
- Require limited language choices or memorized chunks of language
- May or may not be communicative

Skill-using (real-world) tasks:

- Provide rehearsal for authentic tasks beyond the classroom
- Focus on fluency and making meaning
- Provide minimum scaffolding
- Require a repertoire of linguistic and non-linguistic resources to accomplish a goal
- May require negotiation of meaning to ensure a message is understood
- Have a communicative purpose

(CLB 2000 A Guide to Implementation, p. 66)

[2] This section was adapted from Integrating CLB Assessment into your ESL Classroom, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (2005)

Learner familiarity with the CLB

Both placement and classroom assessment are reported to learners in terms of a CLB level. For this reason, it is important that learners are familiar with the CLB. Instructors can facilitate learners' use of the CLB to set learning goals, then set instructional goals based on those learning goals. For example, the *CLB Can Do Checklist,* Level 5 (Writing), states:

- [ ] *I can write a short letter, note, or email using appropriate language*.

Instructors can elicit from learners the situations in which they need to write letters, notes or emails, and help learners set learning goals. Then, considering the learners' goals, current language proficiency, and the skills needed to reach the goals, instructors can plan instruction and assessment activities. Refer to the resource listing in this chapter for possible resources that can be used to help familiarize learners with the CLB.

Portfolio-based language assessment

Portfolio-based language assessment (PBLA) is an approach to classroom assessment that allows learners and instructors to collect, assess and document progress in language learning. It can:

- Enable instructors to assess and report on learner progress between and within benchmarks in a consistent manner
- Increase learner awareness of and motivation for their own learning and progress
- Facilitate mobility between federal and provincial government-funded language training programs

PBLA requires the active participation of both the learner and instructor throughout a class term. It involves conducting and storing needs assessment data, introducing learners to the CLB, facilitating learner goal setting, and conducting task-based instructional and assessment activities.

The history of PBLA

A portfolio approach to language assessment was initiated in Manitoba's adult English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs in 2003, and later became mandated there. Manitoba's success with the portfolio approach, coupled with the body of literature on the benefits of portfolio-based assessment, prompted Citizenship and Immigration Canada to identify PBLA as a promising approach to language assessment and to contract the development of resources to support its adoption. Field-testing of PBLA in several regions of Canada informed the development of the current iterations of the PBLA-related resources (e.g., *Portfolio-Based Language Assessment: Best Practices Guide* and the *Language Companion,* both described later in this chapter).

Principles of assessment and classroom implications[3]

The following principles may help instructors plan for classroom assessment.

Assessment…

1. Is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and relates directly to course contents and outcomes.
   - Do my assessment tasks relate to what we have been doing in class?
   - Do my assessment tasks relate to key outcomes I have set for this unit?

2. Is continuous and ongoing, informing every aspect of instruction and curriculum building.
   - Is my assessment based on multiple sources of information, including both formal assessments and informal strategies to monitor learner performance as learners carry out daily classroom tasks? Do these strategies include reference to CLB descriptors where possible?
   - How will I use the results of learner assessment to plan future lessons and units?

3. Is based on authentic and meaningful contexts.
   - How closely do the assessment tasks I planned match real life tasks that adults engage in both in and out of class?
   - How closely do the assessment tasks match contexts that are useful and relevant for this group of learners?

4. Is dynamic in that it focuses on the process of learning (e.g., learning strategies) as well as the products.
   - Have I included processes that document learners' use of effective strategies?

5. Processes invite active collaboration. Learners and teachers work together to plan, monitor and assess learning.
   - How have I involved learners in planning assessment strategies and feedback processes?
   - Have I clearly explained the purpose of each assessment activity and the criteria I will use for evaluation? Have I related these criteria to CLB levels in a way that is clear to learners?

6. Processes recognize that learner self-evaluation is an essential component of the assessment process.
   - What self-assessment strategies have I included in this unit? Have I prepared learners adequately to engage in self-assessment?

7. Is developmentally and culturally appropriate.
   - Are the assessment tasks I expect learners to complete age-appropriate and not "culturally biased"? (i.e., Have I ensured there are no Canada-specific features that would be strange/unknown to learners?)
   - Have I adequately addressed areas that may be problematic, and provided alternatives?

8. Focuses on learner strengths.
   - Will the evaluation tools and feedback processes I've chosen identify what learners can do (i.e., the skills they are developing and progress they've made related to CLB competencies)?
   - Will areas of difficulty be highlighted? How will I address these areas of difficulty in future lesson planning so learners will have opportunities to develop competence?

9. Includes effective methods of communicating learner growth.
   - Do learners know their CLB levels in all four skills?
   - Do learners understand how assessment of specific tasks relates to CLB descriptors?

Assessment recording tools

Rubrics, checklists and rating scales with assessment criteria can be used as tools to facilitate classroom assessment. They can be used for assessing performance, providing feedback to learners and recording assessment results. They can be designed by the instructor, by learners (with instructor guidance), or selected from previously-created tools.

Assessment tools that are collaboratively developed with learners ensure that learners participate in the assessment process and have a clear understanding of the assessment criteria. Tools with assessment criteria that are written in plain language can clearly show learners what they need to learn and do to perform a task successfully. Learners can also use these tools to assess themselves or their peers.

Rubrics[4]

An effective assessment rubric has a fixed scale (e.g., 1,2,3,4), with a clear description of characteristics for each value of the scale. It shows learners how a task will be assessed and guides instructors on how to evaluate learners' work. Using assessment rubrics can benefit both instructors and learners by:

- Increasing consistency of scoring
- Making the task expectations transparent to the learner
- Helping learners understand the assessment process
- Increasing learner autonomy, as learners become better able to assess their own work
- Helping instructors link curriculum outcomes with classroom activities and assessments

Vocabulary		
	1	Almost no vocabulary related to topic
✓	2	Some vocabulary related to the topic
	3	Adequate vocabulary related to topic; mostly used correctly
	4	Varied use of topic-related vocabulary; almost all is used correctly

Feedback forms

A feedback form facilitates providing feedback to a learner on his/her performance. Although feedback can be provided verbally or as written notes on a learner's work, a form can provide a learner with more tangible feedback and can be used for self- or peer-assessment. A feedback form is often more informal than a rubric. It can be as simple as a checklist (with no accompanying rating scale or comment box), or include a rating scale and an area for written comments.

Did I........	No	Almost	Yes	Feedback
Describe the problem & request action?				
Use eye contact?				
Use appropriate vocabulary?				
Use appropriate opening and closing?				

Adapted from Classroom Assessment Templates based on the CCLB resource: Integrating Assessment into your ESL Classroom, CCLB.

[3] The principles are reproduced from The CLB 2000 A Guide to Implementation, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (p. 159)
[4] Some information adapted from ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework, 2011.

The two assessment forms below, developed as part of the ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework (2011), demonstrate how an assessment form can be used for both formative and summative assessment purposes for the learning outcome: *Present and respond to opinions and recommendations in formal group settings.*

To help learners practise this outcome, the instructor may design several tasks in which learners learn about and role play simulated committee meetings, discussing various matters of public interest. After sufficient practice, learners and the instructor could brainstorm the features of successful participation on the committee. They can use the brainstormed features to collaboratively create an assessment form to use for self- and peer-assessment.

Example of an assessment form used during formative assessment:

Participating on a committee Name ______________________			
	Great	Good	Needs work
Expresses and supports opinions. Contributes effectively to the conversation. Shows understanding of topic.	☐	☐	☐
Uses verbal & non-verbal cues to show desire to speak; gets turns.	☐	☐	☐
Shows listenership by giving verbal and non-verbal feedback. Recognizes cues that others want to speak (does not dominate).	☐	☐	☐
Responds to what others say with comprehension checks, comments, expressions of agreement and disagreement, requests for clarification.	☐	☐	☐
Is easy to understand.	☐	☐	☐
Uses some vocabulary related to the topic (from readings).	☐	☐	☐
Uses some functional vocabulary related to expressing agreement and disagreement, making recommendations, etc.	☐	☐	☐

Participating on a committee (rate each item on a scale of 1–4) *4: Very Good 3: Demonstrated 2: Partially demonstrated 1: Not enough to evaluate*				
	Yuan	Maria	Jacob	Andjez
Content: Expresses opinions; contributes to discussion; demonstrates understanding of topic				
Turn-taking & listenership: Gets turns; recognizes cues and gives others turns; shows listenership				
Responses: Responds to ideas (agrees/disagrees, expands); checks comprehension; requests clarification				
Clarity: Speech is clear and easy to understand; pronunciation (linking, sounds) and grammar are good				
Vocabulary: Uses topic-specific vocabulary; uses functional vocabulary for expressing agreement, disagreement, etc.				

After learners participate in a number of simulations, a similar rating form could be used for summative assessment.

Considerations for selecting assessment criteria[5]

Use the following questions as a guide to develop assessment criteria for a task:

- ☐ What criteria are **most** critical to effective communication in this task? What factors most significantly affect the quality of communication? For example, in a particular social interaction such as an introduction, appropriate use of non-verbal features (eye contact, handshake) might be significant. In another social situation, effective use of conversation management strategies, such as using questions to extend the conversation, might be critical.
- ☐ Are the assessment criteria related to skills that are important to this group of learners?
- ☐ Are the criteria tied to the learning goals and objectives for this unit? Course? Program?
- ☐ Are the assessment criteria related to classroom teaching and learning? For example, if assessment will relate to the use of sequence markers, have they been taught or reviewed in class?
- ☐ Will the number of criteria be manageable for learners? Will learners be able to focus their attention on these aspects when they undertake the task?
- ☐ Will there need to be adjustments made to the criteria for learners who are working at a higher or lower benchmark?
- ☐ Over a series of assessment tasks, will learners have been evaluated on a range of the performance indicators identified at this level?

You can use a blank form, such as the one below (for writing), to develop your own formative assessment results form.

Criteria	Yes	Somewhat	No
Overall:			
I can understand you/read your message.	☐	☐	☐
You followed instructions & completed the task.	☐	☐	☐
Other:			
____________________	☐	☐	☐
____________________	☐	☐	☐
____________________	☐	☐	☐
____________________	☐	☐	☐

To develop criteria:

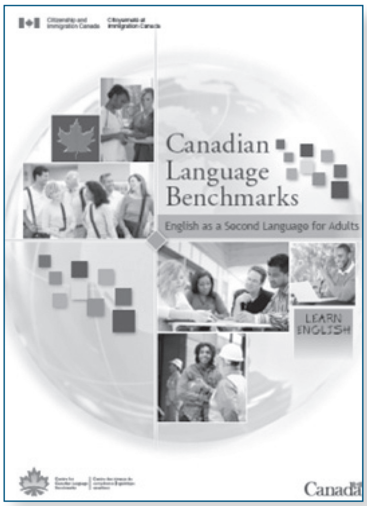
- Analyze the task; determine criteria critical to the task.
- Draw from the Profile of Ability and the Sample Indicators of Ability in the CLB standard.
- Develop criteria based on what you are teaching.
- Use already-created criteria.

[5] Reprinted from Integrating CLB Assessment into your ESL Classroom, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (p. 108)

Resources for Program Planning

Resources to foster understanding of the CLB

Canadian Language Benchmarks (2012)



Form: Online; or book, spiral bound (210 pp)
Developed by: Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012
Price: Free download, or $25 for a print copy
To find it: www.language.ca > *Publications*

The *Canadian Language Benchmarks* is the national standard for describing English as a second language proficiency in Canada. It is a reference document for educators, assessors and test developers working with adult ESL learners.

CLB Support Kit (2012)

Form: book (approximately 300 pp)
Developed by: Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012
Price: Free Download or $25 for a print copy
To find it: www.language.ca

The CLB Support Kit provides information on using the Canadian Language Benchmarks in a CLB-based program. It offers:

- An orientation to the revised CLB, including information on using specific sections for classroom planning and assessment
- Sections on incorporating grammar, pronunciation and pragmatics into CLB-based programs
- Strategies for using the CLB in specific contexts (e.g., multi-level classes, academic and workplace English, special needs learners)
- Speaking and writing exemplars (samples of learner performance) for each benchmark
- Reading and listening sample texts (with tasks)

The Common Theoretical Framework
Canadian Language Benchmarks and Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens (2012)

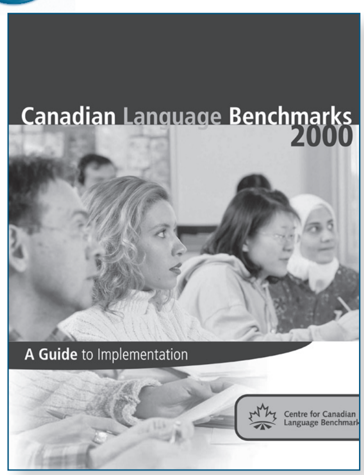
no image available

Form:	Online book (85 pp)
Developed by:	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012
Funded by:	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
To find it:	www.language.ca > *Publications*

The Theoretical Framework provides a theoretical background to the CLB/NCLC (2012). In includes sections on the following topics:

- Theoretical foundations of the CLB/NCLC
- Language Ability in the CLB and NCLC Standards
- Pedagogical principles
- Language testing

CLB 2000: A Guide to Implementation

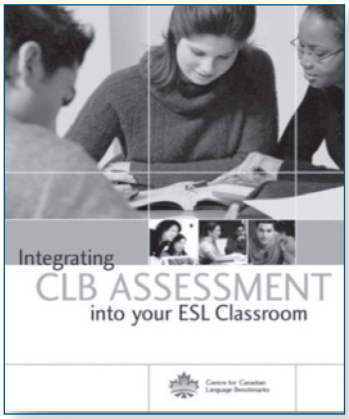


Form:	Online book (194 pp)
Developed by:	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2001
To find it:	www.language.ca > *Publications*

Provides information about the theory and practical application of the CLB to classroom instruction and assessment. Topics include:

- Needs assessment in a learner-centred approach
- Setting learning objectives
- Methodology
- Planning for teaching and learning
- Selecting resources
- Classroom-based assessment

Integrating CLB Assessment into your ESL Classroom



Form:	Book, spiral bound (137 pp); accompanying DVD
Developed by:	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2005
Price:	$50
To find it:	www.language.ca > *Publications*

Helps teachers develop CLB-related assessment practices that are integrated into classroom teaching. An accompanying DVD includes learner speaking samples (from classrooms profiled in the book) and PDF files of the CLB Task Sheets. The book includes three sections:

- Becoming familiar with assessment practices
- Looking at assessment in four adult ESL classrooms
- Planning for assessment in your ESL classroom

CCLB e-learning portal

Form:	Online, interactive e-learning modules
Developed by:	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks
To find it:	http://elearning.language.ca

This e-learning portal includes online modules:

- CLB Boot Camp (an introduction to the CLB)
- CLB Lesson Planning
- CLB Classroom Assessment

New Teacher Workshops (webinar series)

Form: Webinar series
Developed by: Government of Manitoba, Adult Language Training Branch
To find it: www.ealmb.ca/ > *Professional Development > New Teacher Workshops*

This webinar series aims to help new teachers deepen their understanding of CLB instruction and assessment practices. It includes the following four workshops:

- Introduction to the CLB 2000 (1 hr., 55 min)
- Language Assessment (1 hr, 26 min): guidance with developing appropriate language assessment tasks and rubrics
- Task-based Teaching (1 hr, 12 min): guidance with determining thematically related, real-world language task goals
- Lesson Planning (1 hr, 25 min): characteristics of good lesson planning and types of learning activities

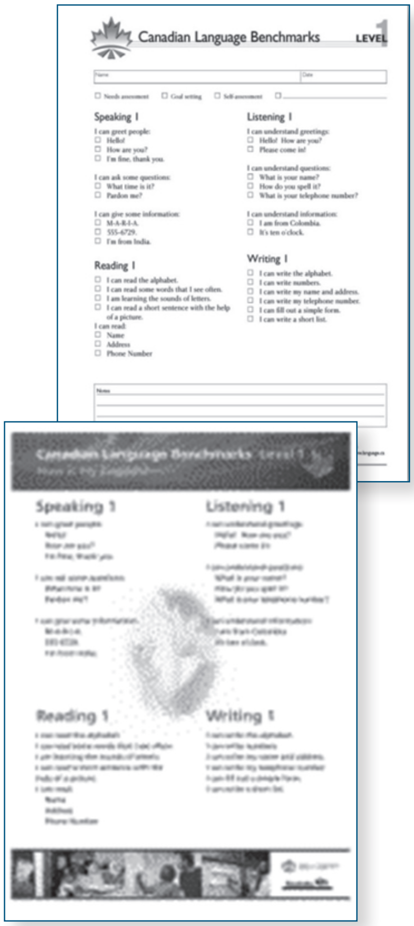
Taking Teaching to Task (video series)

Form: 10-segment video series, viewable online
Developed by: Government of Manitoba, Adult Language Training Branch
To find it: www.ealmb.ca > *Professional Development >* Taking Teaching to Task

Features four Manitoba EAL (English as an Additional Language) instructors discussing topics related to task-based teaching:
Part 1: Introduction (2:44)
Part 2: Focus on Task (3:44)
Part 3: Getting Close to Real (13:46)
Part 4: Less Teacher Talk (13:57)
Part 5: Using Repetition (12:25)
Part 6: Raising Awareness and Building Skill (14:56)
Part 7: Giving Clear Instructions (11:59)
Part 8: When to Correct (7:48)
Part 9: How to Correct (14:58)
Part 10: Conclusion (3:28)

Resources to foster learner familiarity with CLB

FREE CLB “Can Do” Checklists, Mini Posters, Wall Posters



Can do checklist (based on the CLB 2000)

Form:	Single-page checklists (8½ x 11 in), CLB 1–10
Developed by:	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks
Price:	Free download *OR*
	$5 for a pad of 50 pp (of one level)
	$45 for a set of pads (of the 10 levels)
To find it:	www.language.ca > publications

Each single-page checklist:

- Is 3-hole punched for easy insert into a binder or portfolio
- Has checkboxes for learners to check what they want to learn
- Includes a notes section at the bottom of the page for learners to write a goal statement or give examples of what they want to learn

Wall posters

Form:	Wall poster, colour (26¼ x 25 in), CLB 1–10
Price:	$5 for each poster; $45 for a set of 10
To find it:	www.language.ca > publications

Each poster features:

- Clear-language descriptions of one Benchmark
- Descriptor s for listening, speaking, reading and writing

Mini-posters

Form:	Mini-poster, two-colour (8½ x 11 in), CLB 1–10
Price:	Free download
To find it:	www.language.ca > *For ESL professionals* > *Teacher resources* (then find *CLB Mini Posters*)

Each mini-poster includes the same descriptors as the wall poster.

The Language Companion

Form: Book, downloadable
Developed by: Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2012
Funded by: Citizenship and Immigration Canada
To find it: www.tutela.ca

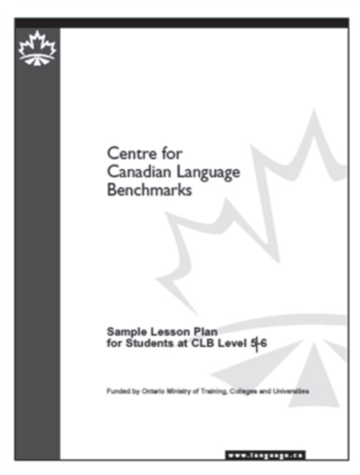
The Language Companion is a learner resource developed to support a learner's settlement and language learning as well as to facilitate a portfolio-based language assessment process. There are three versions of the Language Companion:

- Literacy
- CLB 1-4
- CLB 5-8

The Language Companion can be printed and housed in a binder with tabs separating each section. There are six sections in each version of the Language Companion. The first five sections are provided as PDF files on Tutela.ca. The final section of the Language Companion is titled "My Portfolio" and is for learners to include their portfolio contents. The six sections of the Language Companion are:

- The Canadian Language Benchmarks
- My Canada (information about Canada and its services)
- Where I Live (information about community services)
- Helpful English (useful language for a benchmark range)
- My Notes (for learners to organize day-to-day learning activities)
- My Portfolio (to organize assessment tasks)

Lesson plans to familiarize learners with CLB



Form:	Lesson plan, downloadable
Developed by:	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks
Funded by:	Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
To find it:	www.language.ca > *For ESL professionals > Teacher resources > Learner Introductory kit* (then scroll down to *Lesson Plans about the CLB)*

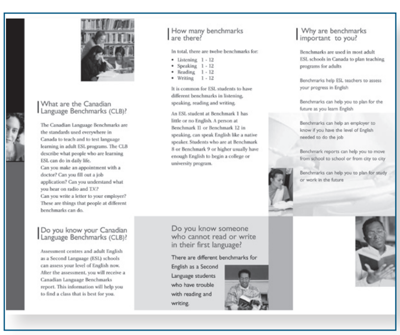
Lesson plans aim to familiarize students with the CLB:

- CCLB Lesson Plan 1: for CLB 3–4 learners (4 pp)
- CCLB Lesson Plan 2: for CLB 5–6 learners (5 pp)
- CCLB Lesson Plan 3: for CLB 9–10 (2 pp)

Each lesson plan features:

- Lesson objective, approximate time, resources needed
- Outline of lesson procedures and learner handouts

Brochure



Form:	Brochure, downloadable
Developed by:	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks
To find it:	www.language.ca > *For ESL professionals > Teacher resources > Learner Introductory kit*

Single brochure introduces learners to the CLB in eight languages:

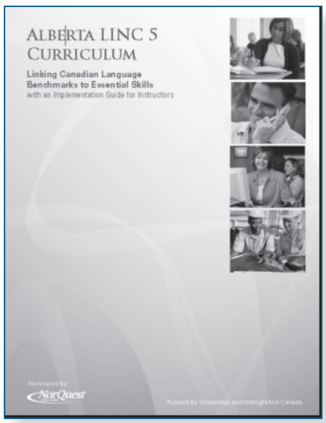
- Arabic
- Chinese
- English
- Korean
- Russian
- Farsi
- Spanish
- Urdu

CLB-referenced curriculum guidelines

Curriculum guidelines are resources that aim to guide instructors in their program planning. They typically include suggested outcomes of learning, topics of instruction, and sample resources. They usually do not contain lesson plans or ready-to-use classroom activities.

The following curriculum guideline documents are Canadian, freely accessible, CLB-referenced, and developed for instructors of adult English language learners in government-funded language programs.

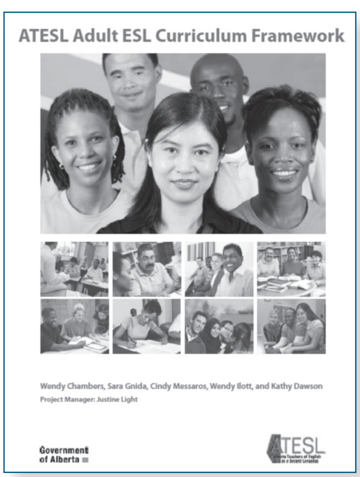
FREE Alberta LINC 5 Curriculum



Form:	Book, downloadable (90 pp)
Developed by:	Norquest College, 2008
Funded by:	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
To find it:	www.tutela.ca

This book provides guidance in developing a CLB-based program that is linked with the Essential Skills.

FREE ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework

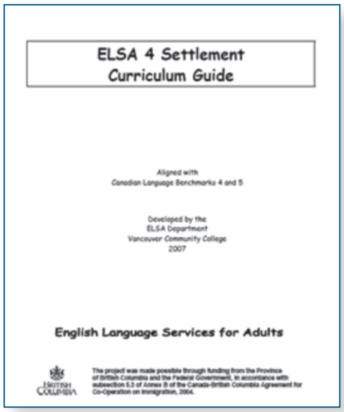


Form:	Book, downloadable
Developed by:	Government of Alberta, 2011
Funded by:	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
To find it:	www.tutela.ca

This resource provides guidance for effective curriculum development in Alberta adult ESL programs. It includes the following sections:

- Determining Needs
- Setting and Assessing Outcomes
- Sequencing Tasks
- Selecting Methods and Materials
- Demonstrating Accountability
- Mindful Learning
- Intercultural Communicative Competence
- E-learning

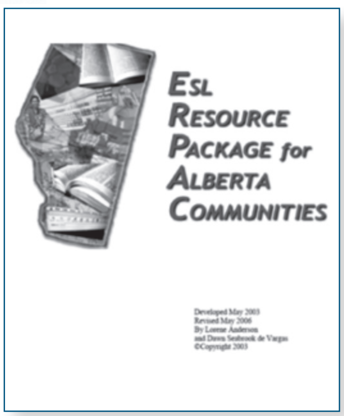
ELSA 4 Settlement Curriculum Guide (CLB 4–5)
ELSA 5 Settlement Curriculum Guide (CLB 5–6)
Enhanced ELSA 4/5 Curriculum Guide (labour market focus, 2004)



Form: Online books (approx. 100–150 pp each)
Developed by: Vancouver Community College ELSA Dept., 2007
Funded by: Government of British Columbia, Citizenship and Immigration Canada
To find it: www.tutela.ca

These three publications provide a CLB-referenced planning framework for ELSA (English Language Services for Adults) providers in British Columbia.

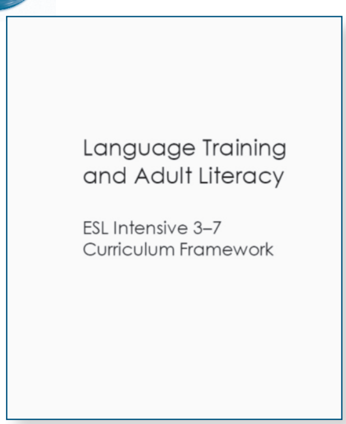
ESL Resource Package for Alberta Communities



Form: Online book (128 pp)
Developed by: Bow Valley College and Norquest College; 2003,2006
Funded by: Alberta Learning
To find it: www.norquest.ca/corporate/edresources/
www.tutela.ca

This publication provides guidance in developing a CLB-based curriculum and identifying appropriate resources.

Language Training and Adult Literacy Intensive 3-7 Curriculum Framework

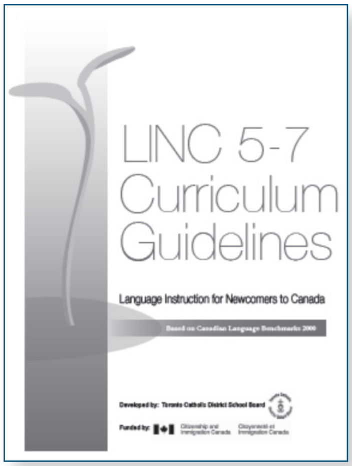


Form: Online book (64 pp)
Developed by: Norquest College, Alberta, 2010
Funded by: Alberta Employment and Immigration
To find it: www.norquest.ca > Resources & Services > Resources > Educational Resources for Educators > ESL

This is a CLB-referenced curriculum framework for a specific content-based ESL program offered at Norquest College. It features tables containing:

- Canadian Language Benchmark outcomes (based on the CLB 2000)
- Suggested grammar outcomes (by CLB level)
- Information about Essential Skills complexity
- Suggested pronunciation outcomes (by CLB level)

LINC 5–7 Curriculum Guidelines

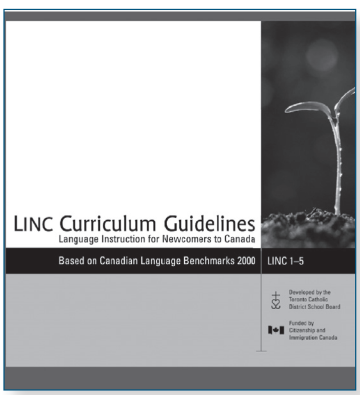


Form: Online book (370 pp), hard copy (in binder)
Developed by: Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2007
Funded by: Citizenship and Immigration Canada
To find it: http://wiki.settlementatwork.org > Language Training Resources

OR request a hard copy (while quantities last) from leena.dinoto@tcdsb.org

This resource addresses teaching learners at CLB 5-8. It offers sample unit develop ideas, contexts of language use, and tasks that are organized into broad communication situations (academic skills, business writing, interacting with others, looking for a job, managing information, meetings and telephone calls). For instructors following a more theme-based planning approach, sample theme development ideas and resources are provided for 12 general theme areas.

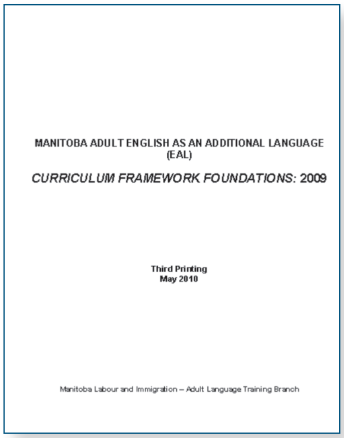
LINC 1–5 Curriculum Guidelines



Form: Online (529 pp), hard copy (in binder)
Developed by: Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2002
Funded by: Citizenship and Immigration Canada
To find it: http://wiki.settlementatwork.org > Language Training Resources
OR request a hard copy (while quantities last) from leena.dinoto@tcdsb.org

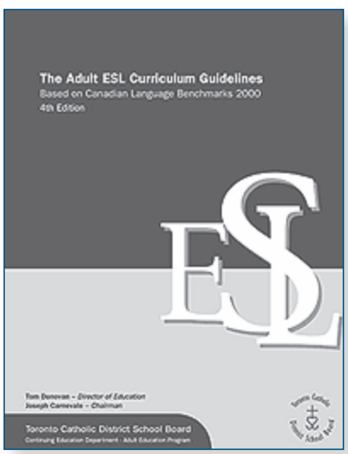
This resource addresses instruction at CLB 1-6. It provides sample topic development ideas, learning outcomes and sample tasks within 12 theme areas, for five levels of language proficiency.

Manitoba Adult EAL Curriculum Framework Foundations



Form: Online book (106 pp)
Developed by: Manitoba Labour and Immigration, Adult Language Training Branch, 2009
To find it: www.ealmb.ca > MIIP Core EAL Resources
www.tutela.ca

The Adult ESL Curriculum Guidelines, CLB 1–12

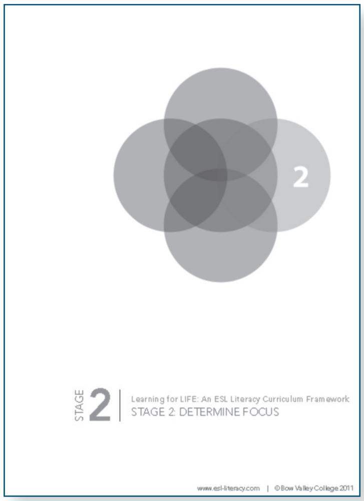


Form: Hard copy (440 pp), spiral bound
Developed by: Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2003
Price: $35 + Shipping/handling

To order: www.tcdsb.org/adulted/publications.html

This resource addresses instruction at CLB 1-10. It provides sample learning outcomes and sample tasks within 10 theme areas.

ESL Literacy Curriculum Framework



Description

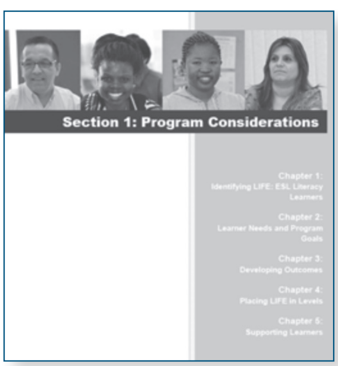
Form: Online, with five sections (stages) of the framework posted as PDF documents
Developed by: Bow Valley College, Alberta, 2011
Funded by: Alberta Employment and Immigration
To find it: www.esl-literacy.com > Curriculum

Outlines a five-stage process of curriculum development (each stage includes a PDF document and a slidecast video):

Stage 1: Understand Needs (31 pp)
Stage 2: Determine Focus (54 pp)
Stage 3: Set Learning Outcomes (126 pp)
Stage 4: Integrate Assessment (65 pp)
Stage 5: Demonstrate Accountability (24 pp)

Sample Theme Units: A sample theme unit for each ESL literacy phase (Foundation, Phase I, II, II) is available for download. Theme units highlight key concepts from the ESL Literacy Curriculum Framework. They include planning framework, lessons and materials for a sample theme.
To find it: www.esl-literacy.com/clb-literacy

Essentials for LIFE *(learners with interrupted formal education)*



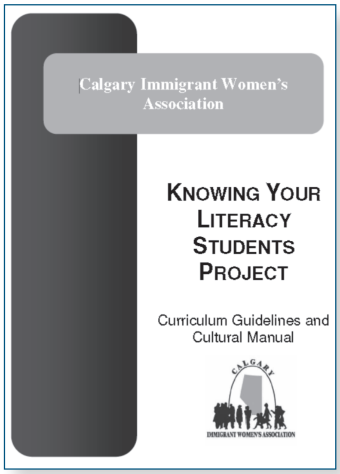
Description

Form: Online
Developed by: Bow Valley College, Calgary, Alberta, 2011
Funded by: Alberta Employment and Immigration
To find it: www.esl-literacy.com > Essentials

Includes numerous topics organized into three sections:

- 1: Program considerations
  Includes needs assessment, identifying and placing literacy learners, developing learning outcomes, and supporting learners
- 2: Classroom Strategies
  Includes techniques in ESL literacy instruction, other areas of ESL literacy instruction (e.g., numeracy, technology, teaching multilevel classes), materials, theme teaching, assessment
- 3: Levels of ESL Literacy
  Includes foundation, phase I, II and III outcomes, approaches, and unit planning resources

Knowing Your Literacy Students Project *Curriculum Guidelines and Cultural Manual*

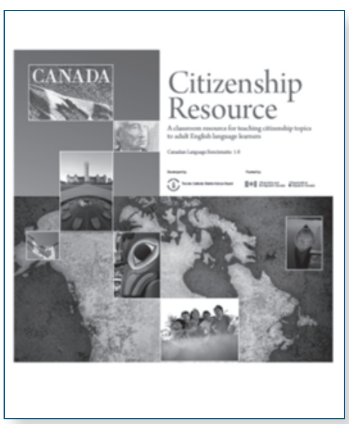


Form: Online book (154 pp)
Developed by: Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, 2007
To find it: www.atesl.ca/Resources
www.tutela.ca

This curriculum and cultural resource manual is designed to enhance instructors' cultural knowledge and sensitivity to foster respectful communication with learners in the classroom.

The document provides materials and activities for eight theme-based units. Each unit includes teaching objectives, related literacy competencies, teaching notes and handouts.

Citizenship Resource (2010)



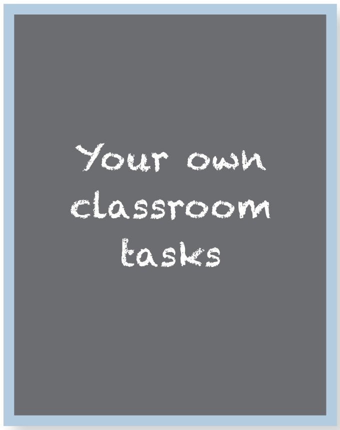
Description

Form: Online book with audio files; hard copy (in binder), 235 pp, with audio CDs
Developed by: Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2010
Funded by: Citizenship and Immigration Canada
To find it: http://wiki.settlementatwork.org. Enter *Citizenship Resource* in the site search box. You can also find this resource on Tutela: www.tutela.ca

Provides a curriculum planning framework, sample reproducible activities and instructional resources for teaching citizenship-related concepts to LINC or adult ESL learners at CLB 1 to 8.

CLB-referenced classroom assessment resources

Your own classroom tasks



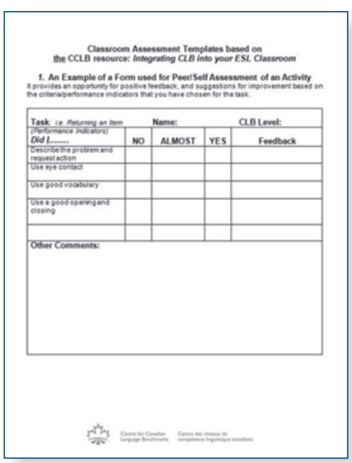
Description

Your own level-appropriate, real world classroom tasks, relevant to learners' needs, can make good assessment tasks.

To use them as assessment tasks:

- Refer to the CLB document (2012 version) to review the Profile of Ability for the Benchmark and skill you are targeting to make sure your task is level appropriate.
- Determine the criteria for success. You can draw criteria from the indicators of ability listed below each benchmark competency in the CLB document. You can also analyze the task to determine the language skills and abilities learners need to perform the task.
- Share the criteria with learners so they know what successful performance will involve.

Classroom Assessment Templates based on: *Integrating CLB into your ESL Classroom*



Classroom Assessment Templates based on
the CCLB resource: *Integrating CLB into your ESL Classroom*

1. An Example of a Form used for Peer/Self Assessment of an Activity
It provides an opportunity for positive feedback, and suggestions for improvement based on the criteria/performance indicators that you have chosen for the task.

Task: *i.e. Returning an Item*	Name:		CLB Level:	
(Performance Indicators) **Did I……..**	NO	ALMOST	YES	Feedback
Describe the problem and request action				
Use eye contact				
Use good vocabulary				
Use a good opening and closing				

Other Comments:

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks Centre des niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens

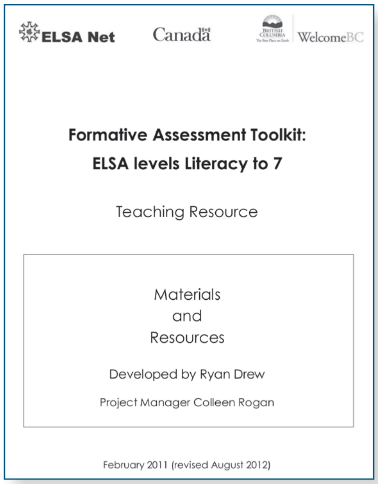
Description

Form:	Online (9 pp), MS-WORD document
Developed by:	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2010
To find it:	www.language.ca > *What's New* > *Workshops* *(then find Classroom Assessment Templates)*

Includes examples of:

- Peer- or self-assessment of an activity form
- Instructor feedback form
- Rating form
- Instructor anecdotal feedback forms
- Group discussion checklists

Formative Assessment Toolkit *ELSA levels Literacy to 5*



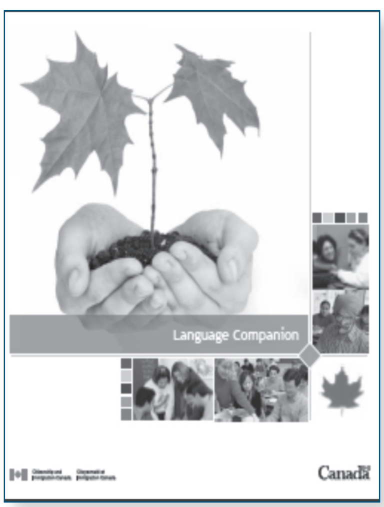
Form: Online book (116 pp)
Developed by: ELSA Net, 2011
Funded by: Province of British Columbia and Citizenship and Immigration Canada
To find it: www.elsanet.org > *Resources* > *For teachers*
www.tutela.ca

This kit aims to help instructors incorporate assessment into daily teaching practice. It:

- Outlines CLB-based formative assessment processes
- Provides 8 assessment tasks per benchmark
- Provides reproducible scoring forms instructors can use to record assessment results (final 30 pages).

A companion resource, developed in 2012 and titled Learner Self-Assessment Toolkit, ELSA Levels Literacy to 7 (91 pages), is also available for download on the above-mentioned websites. It provides guidelines and tools to help instructors introduce learner self-assessment activities.

Portfolio Based Language Assessment: Best Practices Guide



Form: Online book (154 pp)
Developed by: Joanne C. Pettis, 2010
Funded by: Citizenship and Immigration Canada
To find it: www.tutela.ca

The 2010 document is a working document intended to assist administrators and instructors with implementing PBLA effectively. It includes conditions, principles, expectations, protocols and sample resources for implementing PBLA into adult ESL instruction.

Progress Reports: PBLA Progress Report templates are available in several versions: an interactive Progress Report Generator, PDF reports designed to be completed electronically, PDF reports designed to be printed and completed manually, and as an MS Word version.

To find it: www.tutela.ca

CLB Online Self-Assessment (OSA) Tool

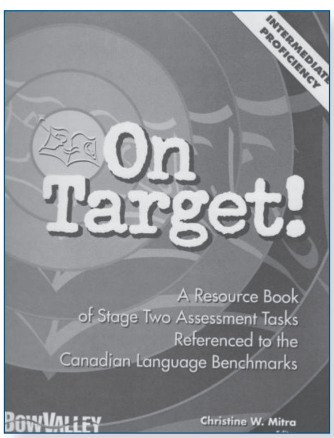
Form: Website
Developed by: Centre for Education and Training, Mississauga
Price: Free access; register to take the tests
To find it: www.clb-osa.ca/home

The CLB-OSA is an online self-assessment tool based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks. It assesses English language proficiency in **reading** and **listening**.

Users must register (free) to take a test, and have up to 60 minutes to complete all sections. On completion, a benchmark range appears. The results are unofficial and not shared with others. To take the tests, users should:

- Have a headset for the listening test
- Have time to complete the whole test (it cannot be paused)
- Print the CLB-OSA Note Sheet for the listening test
- Answer questions without assistance and without a dictionary

On Target! Stage I (CLB 1–4); On Target! Stage II (CLB 5–8)

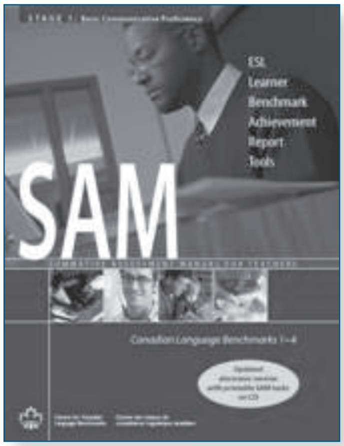


Form: 2 books (reproducible); approx. 350 pp each
Developed by: Bow Valley College, Alberta,1999
Price: $110.25 for each book
To find it: www.towes.com > *products and services > Workplace training solutions* > *On Target*

These two resources are based on the CLB 1996 (speaking/listening are combined). They include assessment tasks for ESL practitioner use to informally assess Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. Results provide general information on learner progress. *On Target!* activities may also be used as instructional material. These resources include:

- Tasks
- Scoring criteria

Summative Assessment Manual (SAM), CLB 1–4



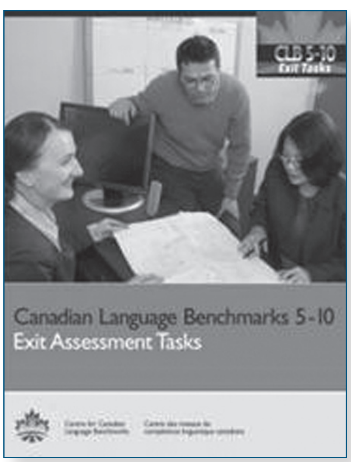
Form: Book; two accompanying CDs
Developed by: Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2004, 2009
Funded by: Government of Alberta *and* Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Price: $45

To find it: www.language.ca > publications

Classroom-ready assessment tools and supports for CLB 1–4, in four themes: Food & nutrition; Health & safety; Home & community; Work. This resource includes:

- Book: information on using SAM
- CD 1: SAM tasks and an electronic version of the manual
- CD 2: audio files (for CLB 4 tasks)

CLB 5–10 Exit Assessment Tasks (2007)



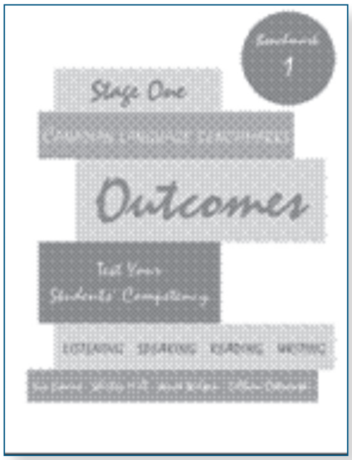
Form: Book, spiral bound (317 pp); eight accompanying CDs
Developed by: Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2007
Funded by: Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Price: $70
To find it: www.language.ca > publications

Standardized assessment tasks for use at the end of programs with learners at levels CLB 5 and up. This resource includes:

Book:
- Best practices, administration procedures, teacher's guide, answer key
- CLB 5–6 Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking exit tasks
- CLB 5–6 Scored writing exemplars
- CLB 7–10 Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking exit tasks
- CLB 7–10 Scored writing exemplars

Eight CDs:
- 5 CDs: Listening tasks
- 2 CDs: CLB 5–6, and CLB 7–10 scored speaking exemplars
- 1 CD: PDF files for printing test forms for class use

Stage 1 Canadian Language Benchmark Outcomes (2004)

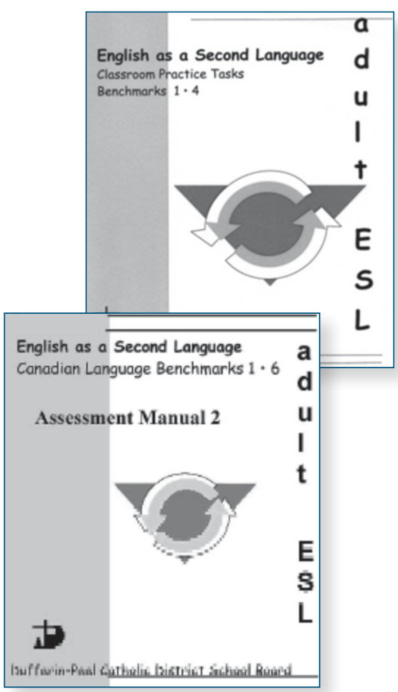


Form:	Four books, spiral bound, 2004
Developed by:	Thames Valley District School Board
Price:	$27.95 per book (photocopy rights for one teacher)
To find it:	Order from Canadian Resources for ESL, www.eslresources.com

Each book addresses one CLB level and includes 1 to 3 assessment tasks within each competency area (social interaction, instructions, suasion and information) for each skill (listening, speaking, reading, writing).

- CLB Outcomes, Benchmark 1 (48 pp)
- CLB Outcomes, Benchmark 2 (52 pp)
- CLB Outcomes, Benchmark 3 (53 pp)
- CLB Outcomes, Benchmark 4 (53 pp)

Dufferin Peel Assessment Resources



Classroom Practice Tasks 1–4 (2005); Classroom Practice Tasks 5–6 (2006)

Form:	Books, spiral bound (approx. 120 pp), with audio CD
Developed by:	Dufferin–Peel Catholic District School Board
Price:	CLB 1–4: $55 for use in up to 5 classes CLB 5–6: $45 for use in up to 5 classes
To find it:	Order from Dufferin–Peel Catholic District School Board www.dpcdsb.org/CEC/CNE > *ESL/FSL Citizenship and LINC > DPCDSB ESL Resources For Purchase*

Designed for formative assessment purposes; includes at least 16 tasks per benchmark and instructor guidance for each task.

Assessment Manual 1 (CLB 1–8, 127 pp, 2000)
Assessment Manual 2 (CBL 1–6, 137 pp, 2003)

Form:	Books (binder format), audio CD
Developed by:	Dufferin–Peel Catholic District School Board
Price:	$500 for each manual (for use in up to 5 classes)
To find it:	See above

Designed for exit assessment; includes an audio CD and a CD of the book (for reproducing). Assessment Manual 2 was designed as a parallel set of tests.