



Centre for
Canadian Language
Benchmarks

Centre des niveaux de
compétence linguistique
canadiens

CLB

Support Kit



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

CLB Support Kit



Centre for
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Benchmarks

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compétence linguistique
canadiens

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Background

In 2010, the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) were revised to achieve the following goals established through a national consultation process:

- Achieve greater clarity and differentiation between CLB levels;
- Eliminate gaps, inconsistencies, and redundancies throughout the levels; and
- Improve the usability of the document through layout and formatting changes and through the use of plain language.

The revised CLB have gone through rigorous reviews, validation, and field-testing. CLB experts and advisers conducted ongoing reviews during the revisions. The validation process consisted of three phases. In the first phase, CLB experts carried out a detailed review of the revised document to ensure that it was consistent with the theoretical framework it shares with the French equivalent of the CLB, the *Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens (NCLC)*. In the second phase, the document underwent a process of fine-tuning to eliminate any inconsistencies with the common theoretical framework.

The third phase began with the development of communication samples for the four language skills. The Listening samples (audio and video recordings) and the Reading samples (texts and documents) were produced by CLB experts with reference to criteria and descriptors in the revised CLB document. Speaking samples (recorded conversations with ESL speakers) and Writing samples (communicative tasks written by ESL writers) were also gathered. These samples were distributed to CLB experts and field practitioners for assignment of benchmarks based on criteria in the revised CLB document. They were then edited and produced as exemplars to support users and practitioners in understanding and applying the revised CLB document. As part of the validation process, the document was field-tested by practitioners and other experts.

The CLB Support Kit

This kit serves as background information for in-service training on the revised CLB for instructors working in programs funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The orientation will follow a train-the-trainer model of implementation that will take place across Canada.

The kit includes

- an orientation to the revised CLB;
- in-depth discussions on incorporating grammar, pronunciation, and pragmatics into CLB-based programs (as requested by instructors using the CLB);
- sections on using the CLB in specific contexts, including multilevel classes, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), language training for the workplace, and in classes that have special needs learners;
- exemplars for Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing for all CLB levels; and
- sample tools for program planning and assessment that can be adapted for individual use.

Orientation to the Revised CLB

This section includes the following:

- A. Overview of the Revised CLB
- B. Using the CLB for Classroom Planning: Getting Started
 - Needs assessment and the CLB
 - Lesson planning and the CLB
 - Assessment and the CLB
 - Using portfolios and the CLB
- C. Sample Classroom Planning Tools

A

Overview of the Revised CLB

What are the Canadian Language Benchmarks?

The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) are the national standard used to describe, measure, and recognize adult English as a Second Language (ESL) ability in Canada. The CLB provide a descriptive scale of communicative abilities, expressed as 12 benchmarks or reference points within three stages of ability: basic, intermediate, and advanced. They cover four skill areas: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, and organize competency statements into four broad competency areas. While the CLB standard presents a broad range of competencies at each benchmark level, it does not include all possible communication tasks learners may encounter or have to perform in their daily lives.

How are the CLB used?

The CLB can be used for a variety of purposes, including adult ESL programming and instruction, proficiency assessment, curriculum and resource development, test design, and occupational benchmarking, among others. The CLB help the professional field of adult ESL articulate language learning needs, best practices, and accomplishments.

For learners, the CLB provide a basis for understanding how their language abilities are placed within the continuum of overall language competence. The CLB can also assist them in setting personal language learning goals, developing learning plans, monitoring their progress, and adjusting their language learning strategies to achieve their goals.

The CLB are used by instructors to identify learners' language competence in order to develop program content that is relevant and meaningful to learners. The CLB inform language instruction and provide a common framework for assessing learner progress that will facilitate movement from one level to another.

Language assessors use the CLB to articulate the language abilities of adult ESL learners so that they are placed in suitable programs. Assessments based on the CLB facilitate the portability of ESL learners' credentials, as well as their movement between classes or programs, across provinces and territories, or between post-secondary institutions.

Test developers use the CLB to create assessment tools to measure and report on learner proficiency levels for a variety of purposes and stakeholders.

Benchmarking experts use the CLB to compare the language demands of an occupation to particular levels of proficiency to help various stakeholders (e.g., labour market associations, sector councils, licensing bodies and employers) understand how the language requirements for specific professions and trades are referenced to the national standard of language proficiency.

The CLB also provide a common frame of reference that helps to facilitate communication between the ESL community and other stakeholders, including instructors in related fields, applied college programs, TESL and other educational programs, employment and settlement counsellors, and program funders.

The CLB and placement assessment

The CLB describe English language ability in terms of 12 benchmarks, or reference points, along a continuum of communicative competence¹ for each language skill – Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Each benchmark represents a degree of ability in one language skill, and each ESL learner is assigned a separate benchmark for each of the four skills.

For initial placement in language programs, learners are assessed by means of CLB-based test instruments. These instruments assign benchmarks that indicate the degree of ability that a learner is able to demonstrate for each language skill on that assessment. In order to be assigned a benchmark, the learner must meet the criteria associated with that benchmark, meaning that she/he must demonstrate the abilities and characteristics of that benchmark to a sufficient degree.

When a learner is assigned a benchmark on a placement test, it means that on that particular day, under standardized conditions of administration, the snapshot of language ability provided by the learner corresponds most closely to the CLB descriptors for that benchmark. Based on a consideration of the four separate language skill benchmarks that are assigned by a test procedure, the learner is placed into the class level best suited to meet her/his needs.

Within a CLB-based class level, learners work on a range of competencies that include those described in the CLB document. The goal of class instruction is to support learners as they move along the continuum of communicative competence toward increasing degrees of ability for each language skill.

This concept can be illustrated by the following example:

A learner is assessed by means of a CLB-based placement test and determined to be at Benchmark 5 for the skill of Speaking. This means that the learner's speaking performance on the test corresponds more closely to the descriptors of strengths and limitations shown in the CLB **Profile of Ability** for Speaking Benchmark 5 than to any other set of benchmark descriptors. If the placement test is of sufficient length, comprehensiveness, and reliability, this result indicates with a high degree of probability that the learner is at Speaking Benchmark 5. However, because no placement test can cover all of the content that is taught in a language curriculum, and because there may be some degree of variability in a test result, a learner who tests at Speaking Benchmark 5 may be placed in a class where she/he is expected to work on consolidating and mastering the competencies for Speaking Benchmark 5. This placement ensures that the expectations of the curriculum are met.

¹ Note that the terms *communicative competence*, *communicative language ability* and *language proficiency* are used synonymously in this support kit.

Once a learner has been placed in a class, it is up to the instructor to determine when it is appropriate to promote the learner to the next level. The decision is based primarily on the learner's progress but may also depend on other factors such as goals and interests and the benchmark ranges that are addressed in the current class level and at the next higher level.

The CLB theoretical framework

The CLB document is grounded in the theory of language ability described by Bachman (1990), Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010) and Celce-Murcia et al. (1995). According to Bachman (1990), language ability requires a combination of language knowledge (i.e., knowledge of organizational and pragmatic rules of language use) and strategic competence (cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies for managing language knowledge). Language ability comprises the five main components described below.



Grammatical knowledge is the knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation at the sentence level. Grammatical knowledge is needed to construct accurate sentences and utterances according to the rules of syntax, semantics, morphology, phonology, and graphology.

Textual knowledge enables the connection of utterances and sentences into cohesive, logical, and functionally coherent texts and/or discourse. Textual knowledge is separated into two components: knowledge of cohesion and knowledge of rhetorical or conversational organization. Knowledge of cohesion involves the use of cohesive devices (such as connecting words, words that can replace different elements in a sentence, ellipsis, synonyms, and paraphrases) to produce or understand explicitly marked relationships between sentences. Knowledge of rhetorical organization refers to the conventions for sequencing units of information with regard to written texts. In conversation, it relates to the way interlocutors manage the conversation, for example, by taking turns.

Functional knowledge is the ability to interpret or convey the purpose or intent of a sentence, text, or utterance. Functional knowledge encompasses macro functions of language use (e.g., social interaction, getting things done/persuading others, giving information) as well as micro functions or speech acts (e.g., as warnings, compliments, requests, pleas) and the conventions of use.

Sociolinguistic knowledge focuses on the appropriateness of texts or utterances in relation to the social situation, the participants in the exchange, and the purpose of the transaction. Sociolinguistic knowledge includes the rules of politeness in discourse, sensitivity to register, dialect or variety, norms of stylistic appropriateness, sensitivity to "naturalness", knowledge of idioms and figurative language, knowledge of culture, customs, and institutions, and knowledge of cultural references.

Strategic competence manages all of the other components of language knowledge and use. Strategic competence is the use of meta-cognitive strategies to plan (set goals) and assess learning, avoid potential (or repair actual) difficulties in communication, and cope with communication breakdown.

Aspects of each component of language knowledge can be found throughout the CLB. They are evident in the **Profiles of Ability**, in the benchmark competency statements, and in the indicators of ability.

Guiding principles

The guiding principles of the CLB remain the same in the revised document.

The CLB are competency-based

CLB competency statements are broad statements of what a learner *can do* in English in the four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. CLB competencies are organized into four broad, universally relevant purposes of language use, referred to as competency areas. The CLB provide a representative sample of communication tasks learners will likely encounter in the real world.

The CLB are learner-centred

CLB competencies reflect real-life communication situations that learners will encounter. It is assumed that in a classroom setting, these competencies will be contextualized in tasks that are meaningful and relevant to the needs and interests of learners.

The CLB are task-based

Tasks require the use of language to accomplish a specific purpose in a particular context in the real world. When instructors or assessors describe communicative language ability using the CLB, they are describing a person's ability to accomplish communicative language tasks for particular contexts. Performance of these tasks provides learners, instructors, and assessors with demonstrable and measurable outcomes of performance.

The CLB stress community-, study-, and work-related tasks

The CLB recognize that language use occurs in specific social contexts. CLB competencies are presented as broad statements of a learner's abilities that can be applied to different contexts. Language instruction and assessment practices need to reflect the contexts that are relevant and meaningful to learners within community, work, and study settings.

What is the same?

Some concepts and features of the CLB 2000 have been maintained in the revised CLB document.

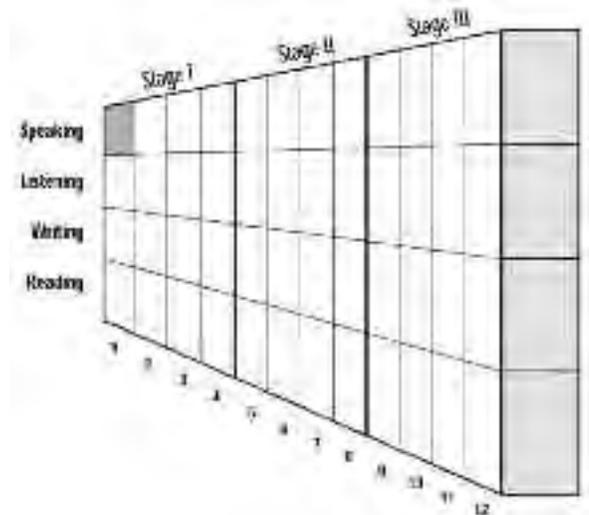
Benchmark levels are still organized into three stages of language ability: Stage I – basic language ability, Stage II – intermediate language ability, and Stage III – advanced language ability.

Language tasks become increasingly demanding as learners move from one stage to another. For example, in Stage I (CLB 1-4), learners can communicate within common, predictable, non-demanding contexts.

Communication focuses on basic needs, common everyday activities, and familiar topics of immediate personal relevance.

In Stage II (CLB 5-8), learners can function independently in some less predictable, moderately demanding contexts. Communication focuses on familiar situations of daily social, educational, and work-related life experience.

In Stage III (CLB 9-12), learners are required to communicate effectively, appropriately, accurately, and fluently in a wide range of contexts and situations (from predictable to unfamiliar) in demanding contexts of language. At this stage, communicating can involve using language within high-stakes or high-risk social, educational, and work-related contexts, and in situations in which features of the communication (such as diplomacy, tact, precision) can have significant consequences.



Benchmark levels

The revised CLB are still organized around 12 benchmark levels. Each benchmark level includes competency statements within four competency areas. The benchmark competencies listed under each competency area are still presented as statements of what a person can do in a particular skill (Listening, Speaking, Reading, or Writing) at a particular benchmark level.

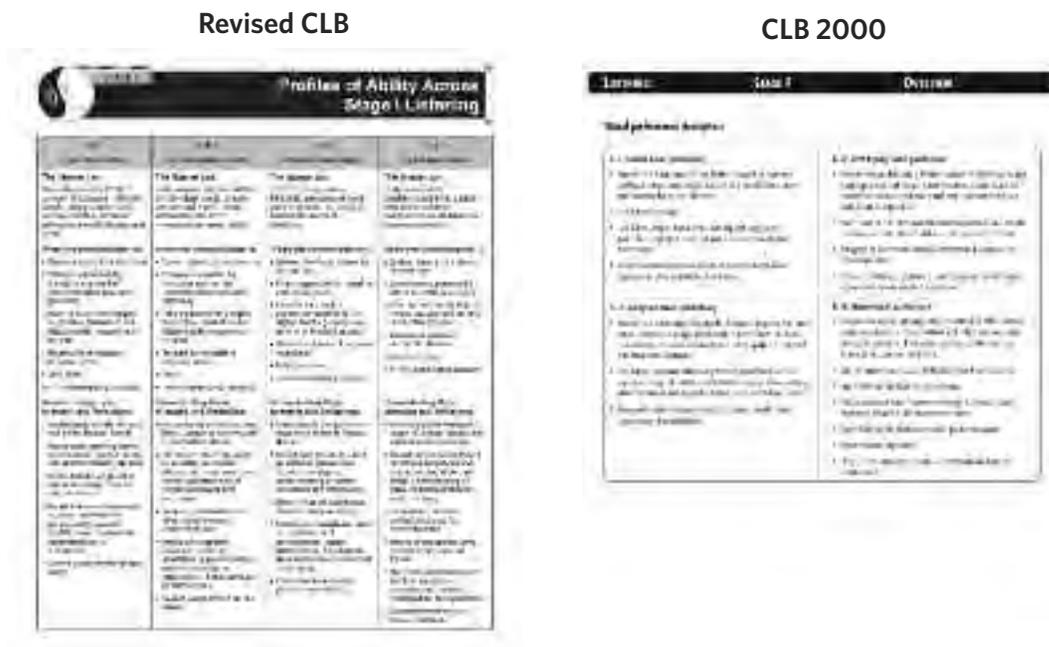
As in the CLB 2000, each benchmark level includes indicators of successful performance of a benchmark and features of tasks/texts, including the type of interaction (e.g., face-to-face, on the phone) or text (e.g., print, digital/online); the situation in which the interaction takes place (e.g., predictable/unpredictable); the complexity of the interaction/text, etc. However, the information is organized in a slightly different way in the revised CLB document.

What is new or different?

There are a number of changes in the revised CLB, including changes in how information is organized, changes to terminology, and revisions to content. The following pages outline the modifications to each section of the revised document.

There are a number of differences in the layout of the revised CLB document. The skills have been reorganized so that they appear in the following order: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Each skill now includes all benchmark levels from 1 to 12 and is colour-coded for ease of use: blue is for Listening, red is for Speaking, green is for Reading, and orange is for Writing.

The revised document also includes **Profiles of Ability** (formerly called *Global Performance Descriptors*). The **Profiles of Ability** are a snapshot of a learner's abilities at a particular benchmark level in a specific skill. At the beginning of each skill in each stage, there is a chart similar to the one below.



The **Profiles of Ability** are organized into three parts:

- *The learner can* is a broad statement of a learner's general language abilities in a particular skill (e.g., Listening, Speaking, etc.).
- *When the communication is* includes general information on performance conditions and types of text/interaction, topics, contexts, etc.
- *Demonstrating these strengths and limitations* provides additional information to *The learner can* statement.

The same type of information (rate of speech, amount of assistance required, etc.) is listed in the same order in the three categories across all levels of a stage so that progression between CLB levels is easily apparent.

Knowledge and Strategies (formerly referred to as *What may need to be taught or learned*)

Each stage includes a **Knowledge and Strategies** page with information on specific areas of communication that may need to be learned as an individual moves through a stage within a particular skill.

This section has been reorganized into five categories (Grammatical knowledge, Textual knowledge, Functional knowledge, Sociolinguistic knowledge and Strategic competence) reflecting the five elements of language ability. Organizing the information in this way helps to show the connection between the theory of communicative competence and what might need to be taught or learned in the classroom for the learner to achieve proficiency within a stage of the benchmarks in a particular skill.

Revised CLB



CLB 2000



Benchmark levels by skill

There are a number of changes to the benchmark level pages. The following illustration is an example of a CLB page from the revised document. A brief explanation of each section follows.

- All benchmark levels are presented on two facing pages.
- The **Profile of Ability** for the level from the stage chart that introduces each skill is repeated on the far left of the two-page spread.
- The titles of the competency areas have been changed to provide a more precise description of each area. The following are the new titles:
 - I. **Interacting with Others** (communication to maintain or change interpersonal relationships and to foster social cohesion)
 - II. **Comprehending/Giving Instructions** (in Listening, Speaking, and Reading, communication to understand and convey instructions and directions)
 - III. **Reproducing Information** (in Writing, communication to reduce or reproduce information to summarize, learn, record, or remember it)
 - IV. **Getting Things Done** (communication to get things done, to obtain services, to inform decisions, to persuade, or to learn what others want us to do)
 - V. **Comprehending/Sharing Information** (communication to inform others, to learn, to share, or to present information and ideas)
- Many of the competency statements were revised to show a greater differentiation of levels and to eliminate inconsistencies. In addition, examples of text types previously included in the competency statements in the CLB 2000 are now in parentheses to show that they are examples of possible text types and not part of the competency itself. Each text type does not necessarily have to be taught to achieve the competency.
- Some features of communication (previously known as *Performance Conditions*) are listed in square brackets under some of the competencies. These are features that apply only to the specific benchmark competency above it. If a feature applies to various competencies, it is listed in the **Profile of Ability** under *When the communication is*. Detailed information about features of tasks/texts that was previously found on the benchmark pages has now been moved to a section called **Some Features of Communication** (see page 17).

The length of time (for Listening tasks) and length of texts (for Reading tasks) have been removed in some of the competency statements in Stage III. At this stage, the complexity of a text has more significance than the length. Length is not a clear determiner of degrees of increasing complexity across Stage III benchmark levels.
- Sample indicators of ability (formerly called *Performance indicators*) are listed in coloured print to differentiate them from the competency statements. The indicators of ability are observable indicators of achievement. The indicators listed are specific to the competency statement above it. If an indicator applies to various competencies, it is listed in the **Profile of Ability** under *Demonstrating these strengths and limitations*.
- Each page includes updated **Sample Tasks** for community, work, and study settings. The tasks reflect current advances in technology. For example: *Listen to a short podcast for a class assignment* (Listening CLB 9) and *Copy a definition from an online dictionary* (Writing CLB 4).

Some Features of Communication represent some of the characteristics of the tasks/texts at each benchmark level in a particular skill. These include text/task length, complexity levels, types of topics, etc. The spiralling nature of the charts is designed to show progression in complexity and length of tasks/texts from one benchmark level to another. These charts can be found at the end of each stage for each skill.

Appendices

There are two resources in the appendices of the revised document: **Competency Tables** and a **Glossary**.

Competency Tables

The **Competency Tables** offer a different way of presenting the CLB competencies. They are organized by competency areas (e.g., **Interacting with Others**), and they list the benchmarks for each level within a stage in Listening, Speaking, Reading, or Writing. The information in these charts is the same as that in the CLB pages but without the **Sample Tasks**.

These tables are useful for planning lessons in multilevel classes where learners may be working on the same task but at different CLB levels.

The tables are also useful for developing rubrics. The indicators of ability for each level provide descriptive information about expectations at the target level as well as the levels before or after the target level.

The Glossary

The revised CLB include a brief **Glossary** of key terms and concepts that have particular relevance to understanding the CLB document. The **Glossary** does not include general ESL terms that can be found elsewhere.

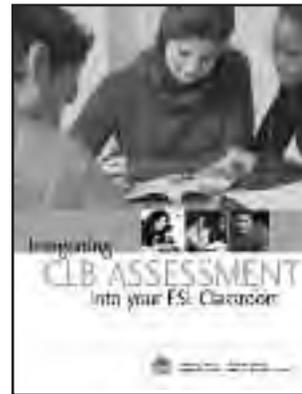
CLB-based assessment

The revised CLB document no longer includes the assessment pages found in the CLB 2000. The introduction provides some general information about CLB-based assessment. However, for specific information about assessment practices using the CLB, refer to the resources below, available through the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB). Additional resources will be developed by the CCLB in the future. Check the CCLB's website (www.language.ca) for updates.

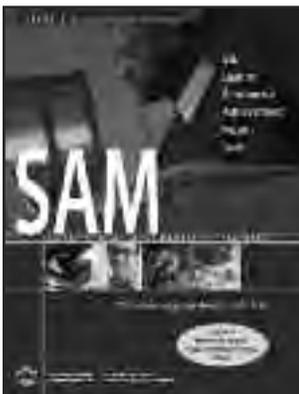
CLB 2000



The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: A Guide to Implementation offers practical suggestions for implementing a CLB-based program including needs assessment, planning, and classroom-based assessment.



Integrating CLB Assessment into your ESL Classroom focuses on formative assessment and includes examples of assessment practices in four different ESL classrooms.



SAM provides theme-based assessment tools and supports for programs at CLB levels 1-4. The themes are:

- Food & Nutrition
- Health & Safety
- Home and Community
- Work



Canadian Language Benchmarks 5-10 Exit Assessment Tasks includes assessment tools and supports for CLB levels 5-10 for community, employment, and academic-based programs.

B

Using the CLB for Classroom Planning: Getting Started

This section is a brief introduction to using the CLB for classroom planning. It includes information on how specific sections of the CLB document can assist instructors with needs assessment, lesson planning, and assessment but does not include in-depth treatment of any of these topics. For more detailed information about topics related to program planning, refer to the resources recommended under each topic.

Needs assessment and the CLB

Conducting initial and ongoing needs assessment is consistent with a learner-centred approach, one of the guiding principles of the CLB. Needs assessments are useful for instructors as well as for learners. For learners, a needs assessment provides an opportunity to reflect on language learning goals and have input into what gets taught in the classroom. An initial needs assessment also helps instructors get to know the learners in the class (their language learning and other goals, their short- and long-term plans, and their interests). Ongoing needs assessment throughout the program provides input into the planning process and will help to determine how much time to spend on certain competencies, topics, and structures. It will also help to ensure that the course is meeting the ongoing and sometimes changing needs of learners.

The principles of needs assessment

Effective needs assessment

- acknowledges that learners have diverse needs. These may be objective (the need to communicate in real-life situations outside the classroom) as well as subjective (related to affective factors such as confidence and self-esteem). In addition, learners have different learning styles and cognitive abilities that should be considered in the process of planning a program;
- involves ongoing negotiation of the curriculum between learners and the instructor. Learners are consulted on a regular basis using open-ended tools and strategies to invite their input;
- focuses on learners' accomplishments and abilities rather than on deficits. It acknowledges and builds on learner strengths to move them closer to achieving their goals;
- includes sharing information before and after the needs assessment to ensure that learners understand both the purpose and the results of the assessment; and
- is carried out in a timely, efficient, and appropriate manner for the circumstances of the class.

Initial needs assessment

An initial needs assessment should provide an instructor with enough information to have an overall picture of each learner in the class. The following is some of the important information about learners:

- their CLB levels. Learners' CLB levels are determined in different ways. Prior to entering the class, learners eligible for federally and provincially funded programs are assessed at an assessment centre using a proficiency test based on the CLB. Others may be assessed using a CLB-related assessment tool or some other method developed internally by language training providers themselves. Learners can also do a self-assessment of their CLB levels in Reading and Listening, using an online CLB self-assessment tool (CLB-OSA). In the case of learners being promoted from another class, information about CLB levels may be provided by the previous instructor and based on classroom assessments of individual performance;
- learners' background and current situation, including level of education, employment history, age, life circumstances, and first language (L1);
- their short- and long-term goals;
- specific language concerns they may have (pronunciation, writing skills, etc.);
- their communication needs (talking to a doctor about a health concern, filling out forms, etc.);
- themes/topics that interest them; and
- their particular learning style, level of confidence, attitude towards English, etc.

There are a number of different tools that can be used to conduct initial needs assessments, including questionnaires, surveys, one-on-one interviews with learners, and journals. The type of tools and strategies an instructor uses for an initial needs assessment will be determined by the type of program being taught and the level of learners in the class. For detailed information and sample needs assessment tools, see the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: A Guide to Implementation*, Chapter 3: Needs Assessment in a Learner-Centred Approach.

"I give my learners the Can Do Checklists at the beginning of the term and I ask them to check off their language learning priorities. Then we talk about what they checked off during a class discussion. In this way I know what language areas to target during the session."

BARBARA (BENCHMARK 3/4 INSTRUCTOR)

Ongoing needs assessment

Ongoing needs assessments ensure that learners are actively involved in decisions directly affecting their learning. They provide learners with a forum for negotiating priorities and preferences related to course content and future directions so that their needs can be met.

Ongoing needs assessments can be done in various ways: through class discussions, small group discussions, or through individual feedback forms, questionnaires, or checklists that learners complete on their own. Instructors can also do informal needs assessments by observing learners' interactions and performance in the class and adjusting their planning on the basis of what they observe.

Ongoing formative assessment is another way of determining specific language needs as they arise. The results of formative assessments can help instructors determine areas of communication that learners may still need to work on to improve their performance. For a sample self-assessment form that could be used for ongoing needs assessment, see the Sample Canadian Language Benchmarks Self-Assessment on p. 34-35.

Lesson planning and the CLB

The CLB support a task-based approach to lesson planning and implementation of course content. Benchmark competencies are statements of what a learner *can do* in English at different levels of proficiency. However, the competency statements are devoid of a specific context. It is through the performance of contextualized tasks that learners demonstrate their abilities.

Effective planning includes the following characteristics:

- It is learner-centred and includes learners in discussions around program content and priorities.
- It focuses on tasks that reflect real-life communication.
- It provides opportunities for learners to develop skills and abilities associated with the various aspects of language ability (grammatical, textual, sociolinguistic, functional, and strategic).
- It involves the use of authentic texts and other resources that learners may encounter outside the classroom.

The following is a brief discussion of a possible process for classroom planning using the CLB. For more detailed information about planning a course, module/unit, or daily lesson, see the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000, A Guide to Implementation*, Chapter 6 - Planning for Teaching and Learning: Linking the CLB to the Learner.

Each section of the CLB document includes useful information to assist in the planning process. The **Profiles of Ability** across stages and the **Knowledge and Strategies** pages are particularly useful when teaching a new level.

The **Profiles of Ability** provide an overall sense of learners' abilities in a particular skill situated within the broader perspective of three other levels. This serves to frame learners' abilities in relation to the levels higher and/or lower than the one being taught. The **Knowledge and Strategies** pages of the CLB include important language items relating to the five components of language ability and should be considered in long-range and daily lesson planning.

"I usually do a lesson about the CLB during the first week of classes - just so learners are familiar with what the benchmarks are and the competencies we'll be covering during the course".

SYLVIA (LINC 5 INSTRUCTOR)

Daily lesson planning

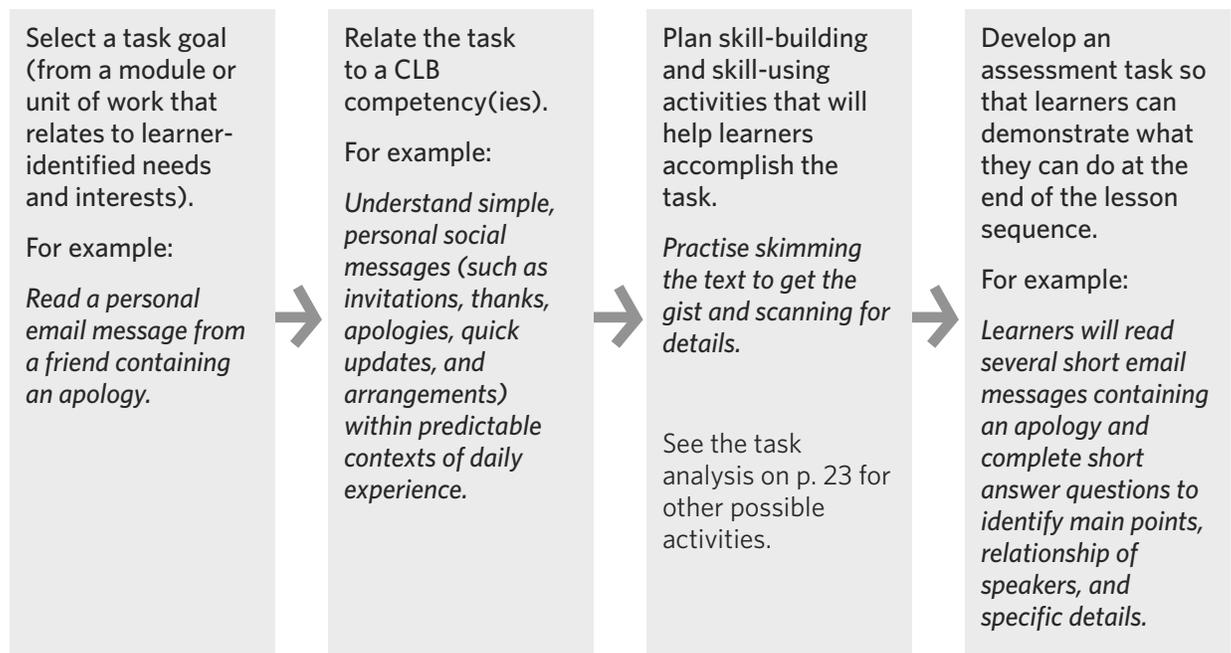
ESL courses are organized in different ways (i.e., around themes, functions, specialized content, or specific skills such as speaking or writing). Themes or topics are often grouped into modules or units that may comprise several classroom lessons. Modules/units and subsequent daily lessons could be planned around one competency area (e.g., **Interacting with Others**) or around different competencies from more than one competency area. They could also be organized around one task (e.g., making a doctor's appointment). However, regardless of how the course is structured, CLB-related tasks provide the foundation for instruction and learning.

"I use a curriculum based on the benchmarks when I'm doing my long-range or daily lesson plans. The curriculum has all the information I need for my level including the competencies I need to cover, the performance indicators, performance conditions, etc."

MARIA (LINC 1 INSTRUCTOR)

From benchmark competency to pedagogical tasks

Benchmark competencies are intentionally written as broad, general statements so that they can be applied to a wide variety of contexts. It is up to each individual instructor to contextualize the competencies through specific tasks that are relevant and meaningful to the particular learners in their classes. The planning process for a task-based approach for a CLB 4 Reading competency under **Interacting with Others** could look something like this:



The teaching and learning process

Each benchmark level for each skill includes **Sample Tasks** for work, study, and community contexts. These can give instructors some ideas of possible tasks that may be suitable for learners in the class. Instructors can also refer to *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Additional Sample Task Ideas*, produced by the CCLB, for other task ideas.

When creating a task for use in the classroom, it is helpful to refer to the features of communication, if any, listed in square brackets below the competency statement. For more detailed information about text/task features such as length, level of complexity, audience, etc., see the pages called **Some Features of Communication** at the end of each stage for each skill.

Once decisions have been made on what tasks to teach, it is useful to do a task analysis to determine which skill-building activities are needed for learners to be able to achieve the benchmark competency. A task analysis involves isolating discrete components of a task related to a specific benchmark competency. These components are the basis for possible skill-building activities that will prepare learners for successfully completing the task.

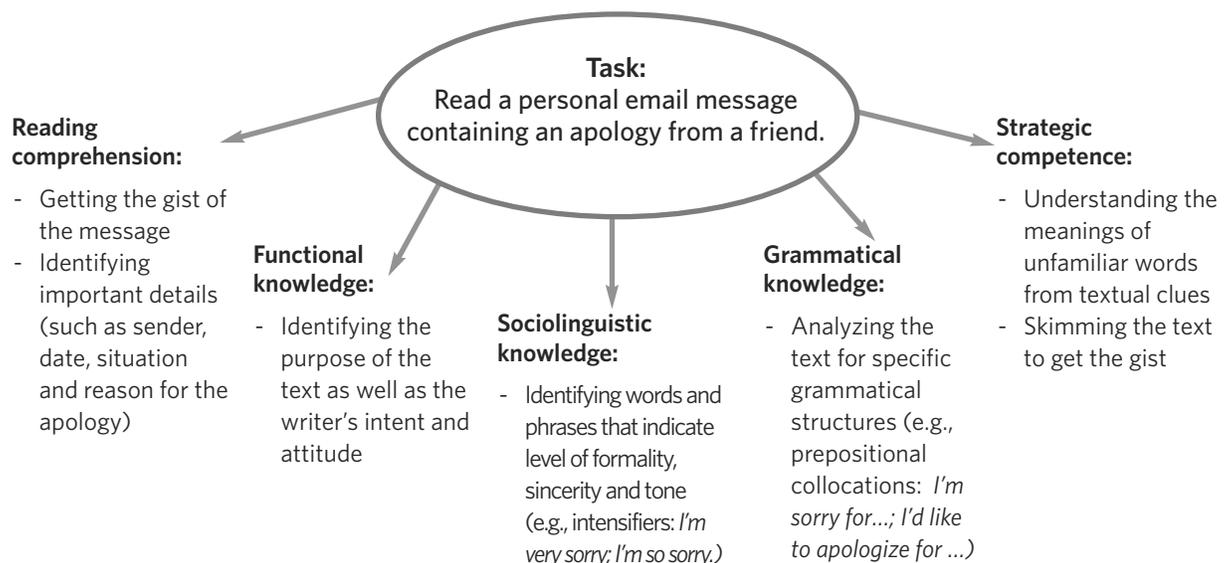
Some of these skills may also serve as criteria for assessment purposes later on. The indicators of ability under each competency statement as well as the generic indicators listed in the **Profile of Ability** can also be used as criteria for assessing learners on how well they can complete the task.

The diagram below illustrates one way of doing a task analysis for the previous CLB 4 Reading task.

I. INTERACTING WITH OTHERS

CLB 4: Reading

Understand simple, personal social messages (such as invitations, thanks, apologies, quick updates, and arrangements) within predictable contexts of daily experience.



Assessment and the CLB

Classroom-based assessment plays an important role in the learning and teaching process. It provides information about how well learners are progressing as well as insights needed to improve the effectiveness of classroom instruction. Effective classroom-based assessments are grounded in the following principles:

- They are continuous and ongoing so that learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate progress.
- They directly relate to course outcomes and what was taught and learned in the classroom.
- They are based on classroom tasks that approximate authentic, real-life communication relevant to learners' needs.
- They involve both learners and instructors in a collaborative process of planning and assessing learning.
- They include effective methods for providing feedback to learners that will help them identify their strengths as well as areas that need improvement in order to set future learning goals.
- They provide opportunities for learner self-evaluation and reflection.

Purposes of assessment

Learner assessment may serve many purposes. Typically, assessment has been associated with the tests given at the end of a unit or course. More and more commonly, this kind of assessment is being referred to as *assessment of learning*. This is the assessment that is used to identify what the learner has learned, understands, knows, or can do and is sometimes described as a snapshot of where learners have gotten to. It generally focuses on measurement and the product of learning and is most often translated into numbers, scores, and marks that can be used for outside reporting. It requires instructors to clearly understand the standards so that they can be commonly applied. *Assessment of learning* is considered to be effective when it is valid (it measures what it claims to measure) and reliable (when the standards are applied consistently by all instructors and programs that use them).

An increased emphasis on *assessment for learning*, rather than *assessment of 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 learning. This type of assessment is embedded in 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.

Assessment for learning requires instructors to analyze the gap between present and desired performance and break this down into comprehensible steps that can be communicated to the learner. It means that both instructors and learners need to have a shared understanding of the expectations and what meeting the standards means. Assessment is considered to be effective when learners are actually able to use assessment information to support their learning.

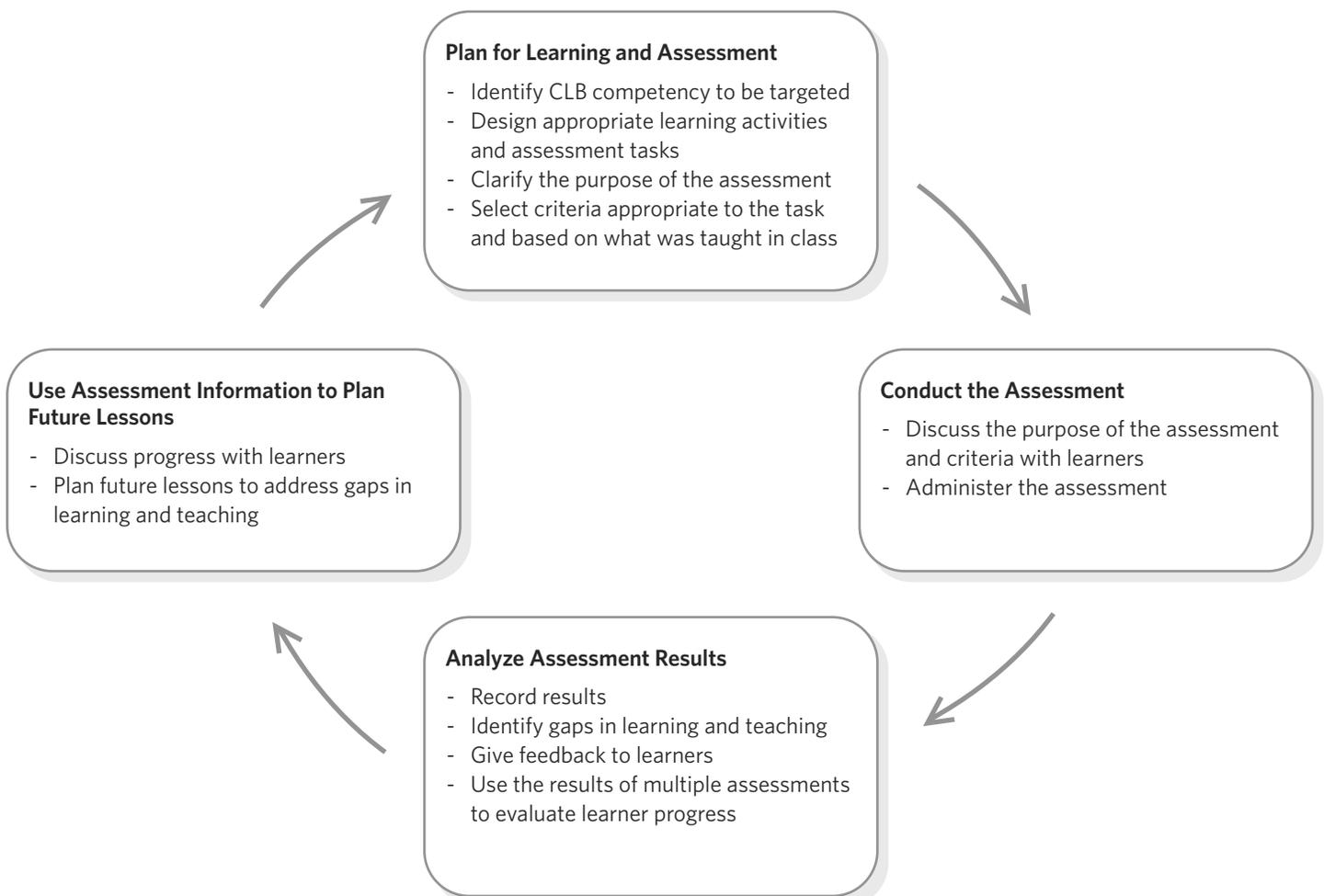
In practice, the distinction between the two forms of assessment is not always clear. For example, in some cases the same assessment task or test can serve both functions. An end-of-unit assessment task can provide both summative information (commonly in the form of ratings, scores, or grades) and can also be used for formative purposes. It becomes assessment *for* learning if instructors analyze where learners are in their learning and provide specific, focused feedback to learners regarding performance and ways to improve it. Instructors should also be able to use the assessment information to adjust their teaching and learning activities.

For detailed information about assessment, see the CCLB's *Integrating CLB Assessment into your ESL Classroom*.

Assessment within the teaching process

The chart below illustrates the ongoing and cyclical nature of assessment within the overall process of program planning. The process begins with planning the learning and assessment task, developing and administering the task, analyzing the results, and adjusting further instruction accordingly.

The following is a model for incorporating assessment into the teaching process:



The assessment process

Decide on the assessment strategy

Different strategies can be used for classroom-based assessments depending on the skill and the benchmark competency being targeted. Strategies for assessing listening and reading could include comprehension questions (e.g., true/false, short answer, or multiple choice). Speaking assessments could include oral interviews, group interactions, presentations, and role plays. Writing assessments could be short guided writing activities, paragraph-writing, or filling out forms.

Select/develop an appropriate assessment task

Each CLB level includes **Sample Tasks** for community, work, and study contexts that can be adapted for assessment purposes. However, it is important to choose an assessment task that relates to what has been learned in class.

Look at the features of communication in the CLB to ensure that the task is level-appropriate. Some of the CLB competencies include features in square brackets below the competency statement. Also refer to the **Some Features of Communication** pages for guidance on task/text length, complexity, audience, etc.

Determine the criteria for assessing the task

The assessment criteria should focus on what is important for communicative competence related to a particular task. For example, in a task related to making apologies, sociolinguistic knowledge (appropriateness and tone of voice to convey sincerity) is significant.

The indicators listed under each competency statement can be used as possible criteria for assessment. The **Profile of Ability** includes additional possible criteria. The criteria used for assessing learners' performance should reflect what was covered in class and could be selected in consultation with learners.

Develop/find an assessment tool

There are a number of assessment tools that can be used, including rubrics, checklists, rating scales, and anecdotal feedback forms based on the CLB. Samples of ready-made tools are included in this support kit. See pp. 36-38.

Administer the assessment

When an assessment is being administered, learners need to be clear about the purpose of it, the instructions for completing the task, and the criteria that will be used to assess their performance.

Provide feedback

Feedback to learners should include information that learners can use to improve their performance.

Record the results of the assessment

Recording assessment results facilitates the evaluation process at the end of the term. Instructors can choose a tool that works for them or create their own. A Sample Assessment Tracking Form can be found on p. 39.

Using portfolios and the CLB

Portfolio assessment is embedded in a view that assessment is an essential part of teaching and learning and has emerged in part as a response to a need for more authentic ways of assessing language than traditional methods permit. Portfolio assessment has also been influenced by a rejection of the traditional distinctions between *formative* (for learning) and *summative* (of learning) assessment and the recognition that all assessment should inform learning.

Portfolio assessment has been viewed as a process in which examples of learner language use are collected over time and used to determine a learner's progress. In programs using the CLB, assessment tasks aligned to the CLB should make up the contents of the portfolio.

In approaches to CLB-based portfolio assessment that reflect the emerging conception of assessment, instructors can do the following:

At the beginning of the term

- introduce portfolio assessment and tell learners that they will be assessed regularly throughout the term, not just at the end;
- have learners begin a portfolio with background information about themselves;
- have learners set a specific and achievable language learning goal, such as *my goal is to phone and make my own appointments* or *my goal is to fill out job applications*;
- begin a master list of the tasks that learners should include in their portfolios (to aid in portfolio review). This list might include the language tasks, the intended CLB level, and the specific CLB competencies being addressed; and
- set a regular time for portfolio assessment activities.

Throughout the term

- ensure that learners keep an updated inventory of the items in their portfolios to aid portfolio review;
- have learners add the language assessment tasks to their portfolio regularly;
- maintain notes or observations that may be helpful at the end of term or in discussions with learners;
- have learners regularly reflect on their learning activities, what they learned, and what helps them learn; and
- periodically review the portfolio and discuss it with learners.

At the end of the term

- review contents of the portfolio to make a decision about the learners' progress for reporting purposes; and
- discuss the final evaluation with learners, using the portfolio as supporting evidence.

Questions & answers about using portfolios

Q. *What kinds of items should go into a language portfolio?*

- A.** For CLB-based assessment purposes, portfolios should contain
- a copy of the learner's CLB levels at the outset of the program;
 - samples of what the learner can do at the outset of the program;
 - a specific and achievable language-learning goal so that feedback on progress can be related to where the learner started and to the learner's goal;
 - examples of assessment tasks for the four skills; peer- or self-assessed skill-using learning activities. (Items such as grammar exercises or spelling tests are not evidence of what learners can *do* in English. They are therefore not helpful in a portfolio for CLB assessment purposes.); and
 - samples of tasks across the various competency areas.

Q. *Can portfolio assessment be used with ESL literacy learners?*

- A.** Research suggests that portfolio assessment can be especially effective with ESL literacy² learners because of the focus on the development of meta-cognitive (learning to learn) skills. However, it also presents challenges. Instructors will need to develop the language needed for portfolio activities, such as specific vocabulary for instructions learners need to follow.

Q. *How many things should go into a portfolio?*

- A.** It will vary from instructor to instructor, program to program. In full-time programs, learners might add one to two items weekly. In part-time programs, it might be two to three items every two weeks.

Q. *I have very little time already. How do I fit portfolio assessment into my teaching?*

- A.** Portfolio assessment is an opportunity for learners to develop many important skills that are transferable to community, work, or study contexts, such as goal setting, describing skills, self-assessment, organizing material, and maintaining an inventory. Including portfolio assessment activities as a regular part of lesson planning is helpful in developing some of these skills. Instructors should approach planning for portfolio assessment in a manner that suits their teaching style and the needs and characteristics of their class.

Q. *Should learners or instructors select the items for a portfolio?*

- A.** Because instructors need to see certain kinds of items in the portfolio for CLB assessment purposes, they may specify the language samples to be included.

Q. *How do I include speaking assessments in a portfolio?*

- A.** Some recorded samples of speaking assessments could be used; however, a more common approach is to give learners the feedback form used for the assessment task. The form should include a brief description of the task and a checklist of the assessment criteria, along with suggestions to the learner on how to improve. See p. 36 for a Sample Assessment Feedback Form.

² See the CCLB's *Canadian Language Benchmarks: ESL for Literacy Learners* for information about ESL literacy learners.

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- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. (2010). *Language assessment in practice: Developing language assessments and justifying their use in the real world*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Celce-Murcia, M., Dörnyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 6(2), 5-35.

Helpful resources developed by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks

- Holmes, T., Kingwell, G., Pettis, J., Pidlaski, M. (2001). *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: A Guide to Implementation*. Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.
- Holmes, T. (2005). *Integrating CLB Assessment into your ESL Classroom* (2005). Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.
- Pawlikowska-Smith, G. (2001). *Summative Assessment Manual for Teachers*. Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.
- Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (2001). Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.
- Canadian Language Benchmarks 5-10 Exit Assessment Tasks* (2007). Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.
- Pawlikowska-Smith, G. (2001). *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Additional Sample Task Ideas*. Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.

C

Sample Classroom Planning Tools

The following section includes sample tools for classroom planning. The tools are also available in Word format on the CD included with this kit and can be adapted for individual use.

This section includes the following tools:

- Sample Planning Template
- Sample Canadian Language Benchmarks Self-Assessment
- Sample Assessment Feedback Form
- Sample Rating Scale
- Sample Rubric
- Sample Assessment Tracking Form

Sample Planning Template

Theme/Topic:

CLB Level(s):

Targeted Skills: (e.g., Listening, Speaking)

Estimated Time Required:

Task(s):

-
-
-

Language Focus:

Grammar:

-
-

Vocabulary:

-
-

Pronunciation:

-
-

Pragmatic Elements:

-
-

Materials:

-
-
-

CLB Competencies:

Listening:

-

Speaking:

-

Reading:

-

Writing:

-

Sample Planning Template *(continued)*

Learning Activities:

Activity 1:

Activity 2:

Activity 3:

Evaluation Task:**Reflections after the lesson:**

Sample Canadian Language Benchmarks Self-Assessment

Name: _____

Date: _____

CLB 5	I think I can do this	I would still like to practise this	I can't do this
LISTENING			
Understand the general idea and some details in formal and informal conversations that are not too difficult.			
Recognize compliments, offers, apologies, regrets, and excuses in dialogues.			
Understand everyday instructions that are about 7 to 8 steps long.			
Understand the main idea and some details in Listening texts (e.g., commercials, short presentations) that include advice, suggestions, or opinions.			
Understand the main ideas and details in short informal presentations (about 5 minutes long).			
SPEAKING			
Participate in conversations about familiar topics; comment on what others say and can change the topic.			
Take turns and interrupt politely in a conversation.			
Give and respond to compliments.			
Give, accept, or decline an invitation or an offer; give a reason if declining an invitation or offer.			
Use the phone for simple conversations.			
Give short, step-by-step instructions or directions for everyday activities and processes.			
Give suggestions and advice.			
Ask for and give detailed information about daily activities.			
Agree, disagree, and give opinions in a small group discussion or meeting.			
Give a 5-minute presentation about a familiar topic.			

Sample Canadian Language Benchmarks Self-Assessment *(continued)*

Name: _____

Date: _____

CLB 5	I think I can do this	I would still like to practise this	I can't do this
READING			
Understand the main ideas in notes, email messages, and letters that are about 2 to 3 paragraphs long.			
Understand written instructions or procedures that are about 7 to 10 steps.			
Get information from business texts (e.g., flyers, brochures, business letters) that are about two to three paragraphs long.			
Understand information in directories, forms, or schedules.			
Understand/find information in basic diagrams, graphs, flow charts, and maps.			
Understand a description, narration, or report (about 5 paragraphs long) about a familiar topic.			
Find information on the Internet.			
WRITING			
Write short (one paragraph) formal and informal messages for a variety of purposes (e.g., to express or respond to an invitation or give quick updates).			
Take notes from an oral presentation.			
Reduce a page of information to a list of important points.			
Write workplace messages to pass on routine information.			
Fill out longer forms that have about 20 to 30 items.			
Write a paragraph about a familiar event or to give a description (e.g., of a person, object, or routine).			

Sample Assessment Feedback Form

The following form is a sample of the type of feedback form that could be included in a learner's portfolio.

CLB Level 4

Theme: Education

Topic: Communicating with the School

Speaking Task: Leave a voicemail message for your instructor to explain your absence.

Criteria:

I could understand you easily.

You used a good greeting and good-bye.

You gave your name.

You said the day/date.

You said why you were calling.

You used these tenses correctly:

- Future tense: 2/3 times

- Simple present tense: 3/3 times

You used *because* correctly.

Self-Assessment: Record your message and listen to yourself.

Did you remember to speak clearly?

Did you stress important words?

Did you leave all necessary information, including a reason for your absence?

Sample Rating Scale

TASK (CLB 7): Give a 10-minute presentation about a researched topic related to own profession.					
<i>Assessment:</i>					
1. <i>Unable to do the task</i>					
2. <i>Still needs help</i>					
3. <i>Satisfactory completion of the task (pass)</i>					
4. <i>Performance exceeds expectations</i>					
Holistic Assessment:		<i>Learner was able to complete the task. Listeners could follow the presentation.</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Analytic Assessment:					
Criteria:					
Organization: Presentation had an introduction, well-developed ideas, and a conclusion.	1	2	3	4	Learner Comments:
	Instructor Feedback:				
Grammar: Signposts were used effectively to indicate transitions in the presentation.	1	2	3	4	Learner Comments:
	Instructor Feedback:				
Presentation included adequate vocabulary for the topic.	1	2	3	4	Learner Comments:
	Instructor Feedback:				
Presentation provided adequate information for the listener to understand the main ideas and important details.	1	2	3	4	Learner Comments:
	Instructor Feedback:				
Speaker used appropriate body language, eye contact with the audience, voice volume, and speech rate.	1	2	3	4	Learner Comments:
	Instructor Feedback:				

Sample Rubric

Writing: Benchmark 4				
Task: Write a short paragraph describing a family member.				
	1 Needs a lot more work	2 Good but still needs some work	3 (pass) Well done	Comments
Content (Holistic Assessment)	- Unable to give a basic description without guided prompts.	- Has difficulty giving a basic description in paragraph form.	- Gives a simple description of a family member so that the reader can follow.	
Organization	- Unable to write more than a few sentences. - Writing is not in paragraph form. - The paragraph has no clear introduction and conclusion.	- Description consisted of a few connected sentences. - The main idea of the paragraph is evident though not clearly written. - There is not a clear enough connection between the body of the paragraph and the opening and closing sentences.	- Uses basic paragraph structure. - Conveys main ideas and supports them with some detail. - Provides a clear connection between the body of the paragraph and the opening and closing sentences.	
Vocabulary	- Use of vocabulary inadequate for the task.	- Uses a very limited range of vocabulary for the task.	- Demonstrates an adequate range of simple, everyday vocabulary for the task.	
Grammar	- Has limited control of simple structures.	- Demonstrates a developing control of simple structures. - Difficulty with word order interferes with comprehensibility.	- Has adequate control of simple structures. - Uses mostly 1-clause sentences. - Uses a few connected sentences.	
Spelling and Punctuation	- Demonstrates limited control of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	- Demonstrates developing control of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization for the task.	- Has adequate control of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization for the task.	



Helping Learners Communicate Effectively

This section includes the following:

- A. Incorporating Grammar in a CLB-Based Program**
- B. Incorporating Pronunciation in a CLB-Based Program**
- C. Incorporating Pragmatics in a CLB-Based Program**

These topics represent important elements in overall communicative competence: grammatical knowledge (grammar and pronunciation) and sociolinguistic knowledge (pragmatics). As such, each topic warrants a longer treatment in this kit.

A

Incorporating Grammar in a CLB-Based Program

Introduction

The *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* defines grammar as “the structure of a language and the way in which linguistic units such as words and phrases are combined to produce sentences. It usually takes into account the meanings and functions these sentences have in the overall system of the language” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 230).

The importance of teaching grammar in ESL classes has taken various turns over the years depending on the methodology in vogue at a particular time. The Grammar Translation Method placed the mastery of the grammatical rules at the centre of language teaching and learning, while the Direct Method went in the opposite direction with little or no instruction of grammatical rules. The advent of communicative language teaching over thirty years ago, with its emphasis on meaning and comprehensive communicative competence, challenged the place of grammar for ESL instructors and learners alike.

The current focus on communication and meaning in language instruction has led instructors and researchers to pose a fundamental question: Does grammar need to be taught, or will learners simply and naturalistically acquire grammar according to an innate, in-built sequence (Ellis, 2006)? Some researchers, such as Krashen (1981), have argued that teaching grammatical forms will not lead to language acquisition and that comprehensible input and high learner motivation is all that is needed to improve language proficiency. Many ESL instructors (Borg, 2011), however, still believe that explicit grammar instruction will aid in the language development of their learners. Furthermore, the expectations and desires of ESL learners include instructor-led grammar instruction in their language classrooms (Schulz, 2001). In support of these classroom realities, research on form focused instruction has consistently reinforced the notion that targeted grammar instruction is beneficial for learners’ language development (Ellis, 2006; Norris & Ortega, 2000).

Additional questions about how to incorporate grammar into communicative language instruction remain for instructors. For example: Is grammar a body of knowledge to be analyzed or a skill to be practised like reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Larsen-Freeman, 2003)? Should grammar teaching consist of explicit explanations of grammar or be driven by the inductive reasoning of learners? Should grammar instruction always be fully integrated in communicative tasks or should it at times be an isolated activity?

Furthermore, instructors may question how the connection between communicative competence and grammatical accuracy is made in a CLB-based context where benchmark competencies are not explicitly linked to specific grammatical structures. These issues and others will be explored in greater detail in the pages that follow.

Concepts relating to grammar instruction

Accuracy and fluency

Accuracy can be defined as “the extent to which the language produced conforms to target language norms” (Skehan, 1996, p. 22). On the other hand, fluency is defined by Skehan as “the learner’s capacity to produce language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation.” Traditionally, a focus on accuracy in ESL classrooms has not led to learners being able to transfer their explicit knowledge of grammar rules to real world communication. Similarly, instructors who spend little time on grammar instruction may find learners who can communicate fluently but with little accuracy. The purpose of grammar instruction should not only be on developing learners’ knowledge of grammar and ability to do well on grammar tests but also their ability to be accurate under communicative pressure. To achieve this goal, grammar practice has to be more “transfer-appropriate” (Ranta, 2010), that is, it has to be similar in some way to the demands of real communication. An example of a transfer-appropriate grammar activity is the familiar ‘Find someone who’ task, which involves authentic communication but is focused on the production of questions using the present perfect. In contrast, the typical fill-in-the-blank grammar exercise is not transfer-appropriate to oral conversation because the processes involved in writing the answers are not similar enough to those needed for spontaneous speaking.

Explicit versus implicit knowledge of grammar

Many instructors have encountered learners who have a strong grasp of the rules and technicalities of English grammar yet still struggle to produce the same form accurately when speaking or writing. Explicit knowledge of grammar relates to these rules and facts about the language system whereas implicit knowledge underlies the ability to comprehend and produce rapid and comprehensible language (Ellis, 2006). As researchers have debated whether teaching explicit grammar rules and facts can impact implicit knowledge, instructors may have become confused about the role of grammar instruction. Ellis concludes that “a case exists for teaching explicit grammatical knowledge as a means of assisting subsequent acquisition of implicit knowledge” (p. 102).

Inductive or deductive explanations of grammar

In a deductive approach to grammar rules, the instructor provides the learners with an explicit rule, followed by practice of that rule. An inductive approach provides the learner with examples of the language that include a particular grammar point, from which the learner induces the rule. Thornbury (1999) provides some pros and cons for each approach. The instructor-led deductive approach is efficient, allowing for more forms to be covered in class time. It is adult-oriented and meets many learners’ expectations. On the other hand, an inductive approach, where learners induce the rules from examples of language, seems more likely to result in the rules being meaningful and potentially usable later on. It is more mentally engaging, more motivating, and well suited to learners who enjoy problem solving. It can be collaborative and interactive, and it promotes strategies that support learner autonomy. These pros and cons suggest that a balanced approach to grammar explanations might be best suited to instruction in a CLB-based classroom.

Input and output practice

Research suggests that a rich diet of meaningful exposure to target language input, which could be in the form of texts (read or listened to) or interaction with others, is needed for language learning to occur

(Ellis, 2008). An emphasis on input in grammar instruction can be used to draw learners' attention to target grammar items in a number of ways. Examples of the approach (Ellis, 2006) include

- providing numerous examples of the form in a text
- highlighting the form in a text (e.g., using italics, etc.)
- providing interpretation tasks where learners have to make connections between the form and its meaning

Input-based grammar activities help learners to notice the grammatical forms or patterns in the language that they are exposed to and to identify differences between language forms in the input and their own understanding or use of the grammar, sometimes referred to as "noticing the gap" (Schmidt & Frota, 1986).

Output is the oral or written language produced by the learner (Ellis, 2008) and allows for skill building to occur. Pushed output (Swain, 1985) refers to classroom activities in which learners are required to produce accurate language, focusing attention on meaning and form. This extra focus on the connection of meaning and form allows learners to process the target grammar structures in a bottom-up way. Through pushed output, learners can become aware of what they do not know and get feedback about their language. For example, learners may create a survey about study habits for their classmates. In conducting the survey, learners are required to ask and respond to questions about the topic and can be pushed to produce more accurate language through feedback from peers and the teacher.

Form focused instruction

Researchers who study the impact of grammar instruction within communicatively oriented language teaching usually refer to such instruction as form focused instruction or focus on form. Form focused instruction encompasses "any pedagogical effort to draw learners' attention to language either implicitly or explicitly" (Spada, 1997, p. 73).

Principles for planning grammar integration into a CLB-based program

Effective grammar instruction is grounded in research and literature

Most ESL instructors have experience as language learners, yet it is important to consider the current literature on grammar instruction and research in language learning in order to be able to move beyond one's personal apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1973) about what grammar teaching should be. In other words, an instructor's intuition about effective grammar teaching may rely on experience in a language classroom that included many hours of drills and decontextualized grammar explanations, rather than an understanding of what can have the most impact on language development.

Ellis (2006) has written an excellent article summarizing what is known about grammar teaching and the principles of grammar teaching. *The Grammar Book* by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) is another excellent resource for instructors as it contains grammar explanations and pedagogical considerations as well as frequent learner errors. *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Grammaticing* (2003) by Larsen-Freeman provides a readable grammar approach that discusses L2 acquisition theory and practical considerations for ESL instructors.

Effective grammar instruction is learner-centred

The focus of grammar instruction should relate to the communication needs of learners in the class. The selection of specific grammar items to target will be determined by the requirements of the tasks that learners are trying to perform and their level of language ability vis-à-vis the task. It is also determined by way of ongoing needs assessments and through negotiation with learners to ensure that their needs are being met.

Effective grammar instruction is task-based

The CLB use a task-based approach to language instruction that emphasizes communicative tasks and real-life communication rather than drilling knowledge about the language. Within this approach, grammar can be presented as an enabling skill to support the task performance or can be an extension activity once the task is completed. This approach views grammar as integral to a task-based approach and not as a disconnected area of study.

Effective grammar instruction includes reflective practice

Reflective practice means being introspective about both learner and instructor actions in the classroom and modifying teaching behaviours accordingly. Reflective practice indicates that an instructor is not simply repeating the same actions regardless of their outcome. It can be as simple as keeping a journal regarding the efficacy of different approaches to grammar with particular learner groups.

Selecting grammar items for the CLB-based classroom

The selection of which target grammar items to teach can be a problematic decision for ESL instructors (Ellis, 2006). Broad considerations for selecting grammar items for instruction include “the learners’ current linguistic competence (i.e., developmental stage, identified errors and gaps)” and “the learners’ communication needs (e.g., related to tasks that they will perform)” (ATESL *Best Practices*, 2009, p. 75). The CLB framework does not prescribe which grammar structures should be taught at any particular proficiency level. The CLB provide a framework for communicative competence, and there is generally not a one-to-one correlation between the communicative intent of language use and the required grammatical form. The communicative intent can often be realized by a variety of grammar forms.

The communicative text or task that is the focus of the lesson can help to determine the grammar structures that are required by the learners. If the task requires the use of a grammar item that is very advanced for the learners’ proficiency level, it is recommended that the instructor teach the structure as a formulaic chunk rather than avoiding it. For example, during a task such as completing a form, a Benchmark 2 learner may need to understand the phrase “I came to Canada in [year]” without a thorough examination of irregular forms of the simple past. There is widespread acceptance of the importance of formulaic expressions (Skehan, 1998) or phrases that provide learners with meaningful units of language to accomplish a task. Formulaic expressions also foster fluency and the internalization of the underlying rule system.

The following excerpt from the *Adult ESL Curriculum Guidelines* published by the Toronto Catholic District School Board (2003) suggests an approach to analyzing the task to determine the grammar items that may emerge from it:

A beginner level learner, for example, should not be expected to perform as proficiently as an advanced learner. However, both the beginner and the advanced learner may have to perform many of the same tasks outside the classroom. As far as programming is concerned, it is possible then to expect learners to complete similar tasks at different levels of grammatical sophistication.

In any communicative act there will be choices available. There is always more than one grammatical form for learners to use when performing tasks.

The following questions are posed to instructors to help them determine which grammar structures to target:

1. What do native speakers most often say when performing this real-life task?
2. What variations of these forms are my learners best able to produce given their current level of proficiency?

Planned vs. incidental grammar instruction

Grammar instruction in CLB-based teaching can be planned or incidental. In planned grammar instruction, an instructor develops a focused communicative task designed to elicit or provide practice with an identified target structure. In the following example from the *Adult ESL Curriculum Guidelines* published by the Toronto Catholic District School Board (2003), the instructor presents the target grammar structure first to enable learners to perform the communicative task:

PROCEDURES

Pre-communicative stage:

a) Introduction/presentation

The instructor presents the grammar structure in a meaningful spoken or written context. The aim of this stage is to get the learners to PERCEIVE the structure and its form and meaning.

b) Explanation

The instructor moves away from the context and focuses on the new grammar structure itself in order to explain its form, meaning, and how it is used. The aim of this stage is to help learners UNDERSTAND the new structure.

c) Focused practice

The learners manipulate the structure through form-based and/or meaning-based exercises. The purpose of this stage is to help the learners GAIN CONTROL of the new structure.

Communicative stage:

The learners USE the new structure in the communicative activity to accomplish a task.

Follow-up:

The learners' common errors are discussed, followed by one or more activities that serve as an EXTENSION to the main communicative activity and/or REINFORCEMENT of the grammar structure being taught.

A

Incorporating Grammar in a CLB-Based Program

Below is a description of how an enabling approach could be part of a planned grammar lesson in a CLB 4-5 class:

An instructor with a diverse group of learners at the CLB 4-5 level of proficiency is planning a communicative task around asking questions to find specific locations in the community. This real-world communicative task is part of a unit, "Getting to know your community." The instructor recognizes that this is a chance to develop learners' accuracy when asking questions and plans to review question forms by presenting the question forms at the start of the lesson.

The instructor creates two versions of a map of the downtown area of the community where the instruction is taking place. Version A has certain buildings such as the city hall and the library highlighted, while version B has other highlights such as the bus depot, the courthouse, etc.

The instructor considers what language is likely to be part of real-world communication around asking for directions. In addition to the pragmatic language around asking a stranger for directions (e.g., "Excuse me..."), the instructor wants to review question formation: "Can you tell me where...?", "How do I get to...?", etc.

CLB 5: Give instructions and directions for everyday activities and processes.

PROCEDURES/TASKS	TIME/NOTES
<p>Pre-communicative stage:</p> <p>a) Introduction/presentation The instructor presents the activity by asking if learners have ever had a difficult time finding a location in their new community. What did they do? How did they find their way? Asking questions about how to find your way is the quickest way to overcome this problem.</p> <p>b) Explanation The instructor reviews the formation of indirect questions.</p> <p>c) Focused practice Learners practise creating questions related to finding locations in the community using a variety of sentence structures.</p>	
<p>Communicative stage: Learners work in pairs to find different locations and give each other directions.</p>	
<p>Follow-up: The learners' common errors are discussed, followed by one or more activities that serve as an EXTENSION to the main communicative activity. This could focus on asking questions to clarify the directions given, such as "Which street is Main Street?"</p>	

Focus on form can also be planned to occur following the communicative task where it serves as an extension or follow-up activity. An experienced instructor can often predict what grammatical structures are likely to emerge during the completion of a particular task cycle.

Incidental grammar instruction

Incidental grammar instruction occurs in response to learners' emerging language needs as a communicative activity proceeds. It is an easy shift to see how the lesson procedures described previously could also fit well for incidental grammar instruction. Rather than planning or anticipating that a target grammar item is likely to emerge during the lesson, the instructor could simply create a language analysis based on whatever language gaps and errors emerge during a specific task. In the incidental approach, the instructor responds through brief explanations, corrective feedback, or possibly spontaneously created activities.

Using learner errors to plan grammar instruction

While the class is engaged in completing language learning tasks, instructors have an opportunity to take note of specific grammatical errors that learners are making so that these become the focus of future lessons. Observed problems should be prioritized, especially at the lower levels where multiple needs compete. Ways of prioritizing future lesson content include the following:

Widespread occurrence

The instructor can target linguistic elements that the majority of learners in the class are finding problematic. For example, if the majority of learners have difficulties with using *make* and *do*, the instructor could provide an oral or written text that contains multiple occurrences of the two verbs and ask learners to underline one and circle the other, before they discuss in small groups the patterns that they observe in the text.

Barriers to communication

The instructor can prioritize linguistic elements that prevent learners from communicating effectively. For example, if the lack of vocabulary or constructions at the phrase or sentence level is preventing learners from communicating their intended meaning, the instructor can provide some common expressions that are then practised first in controlled, then in increasingly freer contexts. Follow-up activities that recycle phrases and constructions can then be incorporated into future lessons for multiple exposures and practice.

Triggers of misunderstandings

The instructor can focus on grammar items that frequently trigger misunderstandings. For example, many misunderstandings occur in everyday conversations because a listener did not understand the use of a particular preposition in an utterance ("I need a babysitter at 8 o'clock" vs. "I need a babysitter before 8 o'clock"). A future lesson for this particular issue could focus on the use of temporal prepositions and, depending on learner level, adverbials of time.

Dealing with learner errors

Knowing when to draw learners' attention to errors depends on the purpose of an activity. If the purpose is to develop fluency, interruptions for error correction will likely discourage learners from speaking or writing and will do little to help them improve their language abilities. To compensate for this, it is a good idea to make fluency activities easy enough that learners will not make many errors. If the focus is on accuracy, error correction may be appropriate.

Different types of errors that occur in learners' production may be due to their evolving internalized or partial understanding of English. Some common error types include

- **Lexical errors:** errors at the word level. These could include an inappropriate word for the intended meaning or an error in the morphological form of the word.
- **Overgeneralization:** errors that occur because learners apply a grammar rule too broadly (for example, using *-ed* endings on irregular verbs in the past).
- **Grammar errors:** errors due to non-standard sentence structures, word order, verb tenses, references.
- **Interference:** errors resulting from transferring the rule system from the learner's first language to English.
- **Discourse errors:** errors resulting from the way sentences (or utterances in oral communication) are presented and linked in a written or oral text.
- **Systematic errors:** errors that occur regularly and that the learner, if given the opportunity, is unable to correct on her/his own.

Feedback on learners' errors

Feedback on learners' errors is one type of incidental focus on form. Loewen (2004) showed that offering incidental corrective feedback during communicative activities could lead to learners being able to identify and correct their own errors. Corrective feedback can be provided in different ways: through feedback from the instructor, through self-correction by the learner, and through peer correction. The following are some common strategies used by instructors when giving feedback on errors (see Lyster & Ranta, 1997):

- **Explicit correction:** indicating that an error was made and correcting it for the learner.
- **Clarification request:** indicating to the learner that the original statement was incorrect or unclear and asking for clarification.
- **Reformulation** (also known as recasting): guessing the intended meaning and re-phrasing it for the learner to model the desired formulation.
- **Metalinguistic feedback:** providing a brief explanation of the grammatical form to help the learner understand what was wrong with her/his original construction.
- **Elicitation:** eliciting the correct form from learners themselves or from others in the class.
- **Repetition:** repeating the sentence exactly as it was originally stated by the learner using special intonation to highlight the error in the sentence.

The topic of feedback during oral communication is a large field and the research by Lyster and Ranta (1997) offers a comprehensive overview of the types of feedback that can be given and the response of learners to such feedback. Understanding that different types of feedback can be used to provide incidental focus on form is important. Additionally, instructors have to consider that while some forms of error correction (such as recasts) may be minimally disruptive to the communicative flow, they may also be less noticeable to the learner. It may be helpful to offer a range of different types of feedback at various stages throughout a lesson.

There has been a lot of research aimed at determining the effectiveness of giving feedback on errors in L2 learners' compositions. A number of studies have investigated whether written corrective feedback that is focused on a particular type of error leads to improvement in students' writing over time.

So far, there is strong evidence that written corrective feedback focusing on the indefinite and definite articles in English can have a long-term effect on learners' accuracy with this form (Bitchener & Ferris, 2011). Instructors should consider including feedback on written errors as part of their approach to incidental grammar instruction.

Should grammar teaching always be integrated into communicative activities?

There are times when an ESL instructor can sense that there are simply too many demands being placed on learners who are attempting to communicate their meaning while trying to be grammatically accurate. There may be times when isolated grammar instruction might be most effective (Lightbown & Spada, 2008). Both stand-alone grammar instruction and integrated grammar instruction have a place in the ESL classroom.

Lightbown and Spada (2008) identified specific situations when either an isolated or integrated approach to grammar teaching might be most beneficial:

Isolated approach to grammar teaching may be indicated when	Integrated approach to grammar teaching may be indicated when
learners who share an L1 are experiencing interference from their L1 and perhaps reinforcing one another's errors during communicative activities.	target language items are complex to explain, especially in isolation from their use in communication.
target language items are simple to explain but not salient or noticeable in English.	the target form is an important carrier of meaning and misuse of it is more likely to lead to a breakdown of communication.
target language items are rare in ESL classrooms.	the form-meaning connection in the target language items is understood by the learner. An integrated approach is then most likely to lead to accuracy and fluency.
learners are older and expect an isolated approach as a result of previous experiences studying a language.	learners are younger and focused on content in their learning.
learners have poor metalinguistic skills.	learners have higher language aptitude.

Even in a situation where the instructor has elected to teach a stand-alone grammar lesson, the learners' needs remain central to the decision about what grammar to teach. Rather than simply selecting items based on a "grammar structure of the day" approach, the instructor is still guided by the communicative needs of the learners; in other words, the decision remains a learner-centred one.

Consider the example below describing how an instructor developed a stand-alone lesson on grammar that addressed the learners' grammatical needs within a meaning-focused activity.

An instructor has a group of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) learners preparing to enter post-secondary studies. Part of their program involves writing a paper with the CLB 9 competency outcome: *Write a coherent text to relate a sequence of events from the past*. The instructor has become aware that the learners are continuing to make frequent errors in their use of articles despite extensive feedback. She/he recognizes that articles are not "stressed" sounds in English and that their incorrect use is unlikely to lead to a breakdown in communication. For these reasons, she/he opts for a stand-alone lesson on definite and indefinite articles as follows:

Procedures	Comments
<p>1. Introduction Instructor discusses dangers in the natural world. Brainstorm activity – elicits tornadoes and severe thunderstorms among other ideas. Instructor pre-teaches six low frequency vocabulary items from upcoming text.</p>	<p>The instructor activates the learners' previous knowledge and vocabulary.</p>
<p>2. In pairs, learners read a short newspaper article about a tornado in Alberta. Pairs present a short summary of the main idea and three supporting details on chart paper. Class debriefing about the text and the main idea summaries.</p>	<p>The meaning of the text is attended to first. Learners perform the short and relatively straightforward communicative task of identifying the main idea as well as supporting details.</p>
<p>3. In groups of three, learners work through the news item once more and decide what article is missing and where the one zero article rule occurs.</p>	<p>In this news item, all of the definite and indefinite articles have been deleted and replaced with _____. Nouns with zero article are also displayed this way. No explicit review of the rules takes place because the instructor knows that the learners have well-formed explicit knowledge of the rules about article usage.</p>
<p>4. Learners use chart paper to list each missing article and write which rule of article usage helped them to determine this.</p>	<p>Learners are analyzing grammar, and the goal is to get them to compare their explicit knowledge to the language in use.</p>
<p>5. Learners post their chart paper responses and review the responses of other groups.</p>	<p>Opportunities for interaction and discussion.</p>

Procedures	Comments
<p>6. The instructor distributes the original newspaper article so that learners can compare their responses with the actual text. The instructor then clarifies any confusion or nuanced aspects of the rules.</p>	<p>The instructor has the role of resource person, providing language samples and grammar explanations.</p>
<p>7. Learners spend a few minutes in their groups reflecting on how this activity may support their language learning.</p>	<p>The extension goal here is for learners to become more reflective and to make their own connections between the explicit knowledge they are studying and the language they will use for their own communicative goals.</p>

In the stand-alone approach described above, the communicative demands of the task have been substantially lessened (i.e., scaffolded) in order to allow for attention to the target grammar item.

Conclusion

“Instruction needs to ensure that learners are able to connect grammatical forms to the meanings they realize in communication” (Ellis, 2006, p. 101). The role of the instructor is to structure ESL lessons to provide grammar instruction within a meaning-based context that takes into account what learners need to know in order to complete communicative activities. Instructors must be able to identify the grammatical structures to help in this language development. The CLB-based classroom provides the communicative context for lesson planning and, with attention to the variety of options for teaching grammar, an instructor can effectively support learners’ language development.

Helpful resources

Grammar resources that can support the development of grammar knowledge for ESL instructors

- Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (2006). *Cambridge grammar of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Celce-Murcia, M., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (1998). *The grammar book* (2nd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Lightbown, P., & Spada, N. (2006). *How languages are learned*. (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Parrott, M. (2010). *Grammar for English language instructors*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. Harlow: Longman.

Research-based articles and texts that can support an instructor's knowledge of pedagogical considerations around teaching grammar

- Ellis, R. (2006). Current issues in the teaching of grammar: An SLA perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40, 83-108.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2003). *Teaching Language: From grammar to grammaring*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Thornbury, S. (1999). *How to teach grammar*. Harlow, Essex: Pearson.

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- Borg, S., & Burns, A. (2011). Integrating grammar in adult TESOL classrooms. *Applied Linguistics*, 29, 456-482.
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- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2003). *Teaching Language: From grammar to grammaring*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
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- Loewen, S. (2004). Uptake in incidental focus on form in meaning-focused ESL lessons. *Language learning*, 54, 153-188.

- Lortie, C. (1975). *Schoolteacher*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lyster, R., & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classrooms. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 19, 37-66.
- Norris, J., & Ortega, L. (2000). Effectiveness of L2 instruction: A research synthesis and quantitative meta-analysis. *Language Learning*, 50, 417-528.
- Ranta, L. (2010). The Influence of Research and Second Language Acquisition Theory on Teaching and Teaching Materials. TESL Ontario Symposium.
- Richards, J., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd ed.). Harlow, Essex: Pearson.
- Schmidt, R., & Frota, S. (1986). Developing basic conversational ability in a second language: A case study of an adult learner of Portuguese. In R. Day (Ed.), *Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition*, (pp. 237-326). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Schulz, R. (2001). Cultural differences in student and instructor perceptions concerning the role of grammar instruction and corrective feedback: USA-Columbia. *Modern Language Journal*, 85, 244-258.
- Segalowitz, N., & Lightbown, P. (1999). Psycholinguistic approaches to SLA. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 19, 43-63.
- Spada, N. (1997). Form-focussed instruction and second language acquisition: A review of classroom and laboratory research. *Language Teaching*, 30, 73-87.
- Skehan, P. (1996). Second language acquisition research and task-based instruction. In D. Willis & J. Willis (Eds.), *Challenge and change in language teaching* (pp. 17-30). London: Heinemann.
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235-253). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
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B

Incorporating Pronunciation in a CLB-Based Program

Introduction

Pronunciation has been described as suffering from a “Cinderella syndrome” (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin & Griner, 2010), often hidden away or neglected in many ESL classrooms. A commonly cited reason for treating pronunciation as less essential than other language skills is that it conflicts with recent approaches to language instruction, which demand a focus on communication over linguistic form (Isaacs, 2009). In fact, many who advocate communicative approaches to instruction believe that knowledge of form, whether grammatical, pragmatic, or phonological, will naturally develop as learners use language in communication. It is now widely agreed that this is not the case for many learners. Unfortunately, the influence of this view on instructor training programs and curriculum designers over the past several decades has been profound. There now exists a generation of instructors who, in many cases, have not received adequate training in how to teach pronunciation (Murphy, 1997; Foote, Holtby, & Derwing, 2011). Yet these very same instructors face an onslaught of learners who need and even demand help in this area (Derwing, 2003).

Surveys of English language instructors and administrators in Canada reveal that views about the role of pronunciation instruction in communicative classrooms have been shifting (Breitkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2002; Foote et al., 2011). Instructors are overwhelmingly in agreement that pronunciation is important, and most now try to incorporate at least some pronunciation instruction into their classes. There is also a growing awareness among instructors regarding which aspects of pronunciation are most important for learners. Many instructors now report taking a balanced approach, incorporating both suprasegmentals (word stress, sentence level stress, intonation, etc.) and segmentals (consonants and vowels). This shift in orientation is significant, given growing acceptance in the research community that suprasegmentals are easier for learners to acquire and result in larger communicative dividends relative to the same time spent on segmentals (Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe, 1998).

The CLB do not explicitly prescribe discrete pronunciation features that should be mastered at each stage. Rather, the particular communicative task that a learner is engaged in will dictate what features of pronunciation should be targeted. Hence, while there are no magic solutions or “right” answers, this guide aims to provide a general framework and some helpful suggestions for places to start. Ultimately, reference to a more comprehensive professional development text for instructors is recommended for more detailed coverage of this topic.

Important concepts relating to pronunciation instruction

Intelligible versus accent-free speech

Although it is increasingly rare, some instructors and learners believe that the goal of pronunciation instruction is to acquire a native-like accent. Not only does this notion introduce the practical difficulty of determining which variety of English should be the target, it is based on the faulty assumption that adult learners can be taught to sound like a native speaker of any variety

(Flege, Munro, & MacKay, 1995; Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009). Evidence suggests that even instructional intervention cannot help most adult learners achieve what is, quite frankly, an unrealistic goal (Purcell & Suter, 1980).

Of course, a few individuals are notable exceptions, but native-like ability should not serve as the goal of instruction for most learners.

Experts have long argued that learners should aspire only to intelligible rather than accent-free speech (Abercrombie, 1949; Morley, 1991). Munro and Derwing (1995) empirically demonstrated the validity of this belief in a study that examined the relationship among *intelligibility* (the extent to which a speaker's message is actually understood as intended); *comprehensibility* (how effortful it is for listeners to process the speech); and *accentedness* (how foreign-sounding the speaker is). They found that English language learners often have features of speech that cause them to sound heavily accented without a corresponding loss in intelligibility or comprehensibility. This means that pronunciation instruction needs to focus only on those features of learners' pronunciation that affect intelligibility or comprehensibility, rather than address every feature that contributes to a foreign accent.

Individual differences and pronunciation

Individual traits and circumstances underlie differences in learners' pronunciation ability. Some differences stem from learners' L1 background, the amount of exposure they have to spoken English outside the classroom, their age, and their proficiency levels. Other differences may be related to variations in learners' motivation and natural aptitude for learning the sound system of another language.

Learners' L1 backgrounds

The interaction between the learners' L1s and English varies. Therefore, needs may vary in terms of what features of English pronunciation are most important to particular learners. In addition, particular ethnic groups may need more focused pronunciation instruction than others (e.g., Vietnamese speakers may require more attention than learners with other first languages, such as Dutch).

Exposure to English outside the classroom

Exposure to English outside the classroom is a strong predictor of ultimate achievement in English pronunciation. The more learners are exposed to and use English outside the classroom, the more likely they will see improvements in their pronunciation skills. It is important to encourage learners to listen to English media and use English as much as possible outside the classroom.

Learners' age and proficiency levels upon arrival in Canada

On average, learners who arrive as young adults, and at CLB Stage I, will experience greater improvement in their pronunciation than learners who arrive as older adults and at CLB Stage III. Apart from age and L1-related differences, Stage I learners also tend to be a somewhat more homogenous group because they are all beginners in English listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills. Stage III learners are far more heterogeneous as a group because some of these learners have progressed through the first two stages in Canada, picking up local pronunciation patterns along the way, while others have progressed to Stage III in their countries of origin. The latter group is more likely to have entrenched pronunciation

patterns that are quite dissimilar to the local Canadian variety and often reflect the negative influence of English spelling on pronunciation (i.e., learners have acquired English primarily through reading, without adequate pronunciation models).

Motivation and natural abilities

Social dimensions may also affect what can be expected of learners in terms of pronunciation. For example, some learners may be highly motivated because of an intrinsic desire to sound more like a member of the host community. Others may be motivated by a goal to work in an environment where more intelligible pronunciation is of particular importance.

Some learners do not need to make as conscious an effort to improve their pronunciation because they are surrounded by speakers of English on a daily basis (Flege, Frieda, & Nozawa, 1997). Others may deliberately choose to maintain some foreign accent, out of a desire to be clearly identified as a member of their own ethnolinguistic community (Gatbonton, Magid, & Trofimovich, 2005). Conversely, some learners may make larger gains for the opposite reason.

Given how individual differences will impact learning, instructors should be aware that perhaps more so than for any other language skill, variability in pronunciation across learners is the norm. Instructors need to be increasingly attuned to individual differences and the needs of individual learners rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach.

General principles for integrating pronunciation into a CLB-based program

The following are some general principles for including pronunciation instruction in a CLB-based program:

Effective pronunciation instruction is grounded in research

It is important to rely on basic knowledge of current research rather than intuition when it comes to teaching pronunciation. Two excellent instructor-friendly articles summarizing scientific research in the field have been written by Derwing and Munro in 2005 and 2009. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) and Hewings (2004) are two instructor texts that provide broad coverage of current trends in the field and give helpful suggestions for classroom implementation. They also include instructor-friendly introductions to articulatory phonetics, basic knowledge of which is essential.

Effective pronunciation instruction includes reflective practice

Reflective practice means being introspective about both learner and instructor actions in the classroom and modifying beliefs and practices accordingly. This can sometimes take the form of action-research (i.e., the instructor as researcher), but it can be as simple as keeping a journal regarding the efficacy of pronunciation activities. It is also essential for instructors to reflect on what they read about pronunciation. Many sources are written by non-experts and often contain poor advice. Furthermore, even experts can sometimes be wrong, and instructors may be the first to notice this. While there are many good commercial learner texts for pronunciation, none is perfect, and none can be implemented to full potential without following an evidence-based approach and without actively engaging in ongoing reflective practice.

Effective pronunciation instruction is learner-centred

Sometimes being learner-centred is confused with being learner-directed. In fact, learners often have misconceptions about pronunciation learning or may have previous experiences that influence what they think is important and how they think it should be taught. It is the instructor's responsibility to understand what the learners' most serious problems are, hear the learners' perspective, and attempt to meet their needs. At the same time, the instructor must correct any erroneous beliefs by raising learners' awareness of how pronunciation develops.

Considerations for incorporating pronunciation into a CLB-based program

Pronunciation does not easily align with particular CLB stages or levels. The CLB do not explicitly prescribe discrete pronunciation features that should be mastered at each stage. Rather, the particular communicative task that a learner is engaged in will dictate what features of pronunciation should be targeted. Despite the frequent misalignment between learners' proficiency and their pronunciation, there are some ways in which instructors can direct the focus of pronunciation instruction at particular CLB stages. These are described in greater detail below.

Address general speaking habits

Firth (1992) argues that even before addressing suprasegmental (e.g., word stress, sentence focus, intonation) and segmental (i.e., vowels and consonants) features, some learners may need to address poor general speaking habits, such as voice quality, speech rate, or even eye gaze. For example, if a learner with otherwise good pronunciation speaks with a high-pitched, raspy voice and constantly looks at the ground instead of the listener, communicative effectiveness can be severely impaired.

Address suprasegmentals

After addressing problems with general speaking habits, suprasegmentals should normally receive the most attention. As noted earlier, these features are typically easier for learners to acquire relative to segmentals and provide the greatest communicative dividend.

Focus on segmentals

In the teaching of segmentals, not all speech segments equally contribute to intelligibility. Brown (1988) describes a hierarchy of importance for individual vowels and consonants based on how frequently they occur in contrast in English. For example, contrasts such as "l" versus "r" occur frequently, and therefore these sounds are very important to communication. Conversely, contrasts involving voiced and voiceless "th" sounds occur infrequently, making them less important. This relative importance of particular sounds to successful communication is supported by empirical research (Munro & Derwing, 2006). Another useful rule of thumb is that vowels tend to contribute more to intelligibility than do consonants.

This suggests that more time should be devoted to vowels than to consonants and less time to "th" sounds than to "l" and "r". This advice conflicts with the emphasis on the interdental in many texts, which are some of the most salient features of accent, rather than those that contribute greatly to

intelligibility. For example, mispronunciation of “th” in a word like “the” is very salient because it occurs so frequently. However, it is usually perfectly intelligible since mispronounced versions of “the” are not easily confused with any competing word in English.

Following are some specific guidelines for how instructors can incorporate pronunciation into the curriculum, beginning with a needs assessment and followed by some suggestions for the type of activities and foci that can be employed at particular CLB stages. Examples of teaching pronunciation in the context of specific tasks are also provided.

Conducting a needs assessment

Assessing learners’ pronunciation before determining the focus of instruction is critical. For reasons discussed earlier, not all learners are alike, even if they speak the same L1. Commercially available learner and instructor texts often include their own set of diagnostic instruments, which can provide useful starting points for assessment. In many cases, however, published tools may need to be supplemented with other materials.

Whether instructors choose to use a diagnostic tool from a published source, create their own, or use a combination of both, assessment tools often include the following components:

Assessment of learners’ production ability

For example:

- Have learners read aloud from a prepared list of words or a text in which target English segmental and suprasegmental features are embedded.
- Have learners produce extemporaneous speech, by answering simple questions about familiar topics or by describing a set of pictures, or both.

Learners’ speech can be assessed immediately or it can be recorded for later evaluation. It is advantageous to take at least some notes while the learner is speaking or immediately afterward, as some speech is inevitably distorted in recordings and may not fully reflect live performance. At the same time, obvious note-taking during an assessment may cause some learners to become nervous, thereby negatively affecting their performance. Firth (1992) suggests that instructors pay attention to global speaking habits (e.g., voice quality, speech rate, and even eye gaze) as well as suprasegmentals and segmentals. Reputable pronunciation texts such as those listed at the end of this section provide lists of specific features that are typically assessed.

Assessment of the learners’ ability to perceive differences between sounds

For example:

- Test learners’ ability to discriminate between correct and incorrect suprasegmental features (e.g., word stress, sentence stress patterns, intonation, etc.).
- Test learners’ ability to discriminate between English vowels and consonants. Avoid using simple, minimal pair-type tasks where two words differ by a single sound (e.g., “pat” versus “pad”). These are not the best form of assessment. Instead, consider a task such as asking learners to listen to a list of words and pick the odd one out (e.g., which of the following words contains a different vowel sound from the others: “cap”, “pat”, “rack”, “talk”, “had”?).

- Be careful not to exaggerate suprasegmental and segmental cues (e.g., using really exaggerated rising intonation for testing yes/no questions). The goal is to assess what learners can do in natural rather than idealized contexts.

Assessment of learners' previous knowledge of pronunciation

For example:

Provide a short, targeted questionnaire to determine what basic rules of pronunciation learners already know (e.g., the difference in pronunciation between a wh-question and a yes/no question; linking in connected speech; the difference between /b/ and /p/, the rules for pronouncing -ed or -s endings).

Assessment of learners' self-perceived needs

For example:

Using an open-ended question or through reference to a list of possibilities with examples to illustrate, ask learners to indicate what they think their pronunciation difficulties or communication problems are.

Factors to consider

The nature of the assessment tools chosen must take the learners' CLB level into account.

For example, diagnostic tasks for beginners should not contain low frequency vocabulary items that may be unfamiliar to the learners. If a read-aloud task is being used with Stage I learners, one solution is to have them fill in the blanks of a short paragraph about a topic of personal interest that can then serve as the reading task used during the assessment. This will ensure that the text contains only vocabulary that the learners actually know. Similarly, if a word list is used, learners can be asked to indicate if there are any words they do not know. If questions are used to elicit learners' speech, the instructor should be prepared to probe further – beginners in particular may give only short responses that do not give a long enough speech sample to provide a reliable assessment.

Testing previous knowledge of pronunciation should be limited to Stage II and III learners.

At Stage I, previous knowledge will typically be quite limited, and lack of proficiency will make assessing any explicit knowledge difficult. With Stage II and III learners, one approach might be to provide several examples of patterns that follow a rule and ask learners what the rule is (e.g., why do the -ed endings in "talked", "played", and "heated" differ in pronunciation?). In some cases, it might be clear that learners have not received any pronunciation instruction in the past, in which case instructors may choose not to conduct this type of assessment until the learner reaches more advanced CLB levels. Similarly, learners at lower CLB levels may be able to respond only to open-ended questions about their pronunciation needs, whereas those with higher CLB levels are more likely to be able to answer specific questions. Note, however, that their answers may not reflect a clear understanding of their pronunciation difficulties if they have not had pronunciation instruction in the past.

The occurrence and importance of particular pronunciation errors in a needs assessment will depend on learners' proficiency levels.

For example, learners at CLB Level 1 can produce only very simple spoken language, consisting of highly familiar words and formulaic expressions. Consequently, it should be expected that these learners may

exhibit some anxiety which may affect their general speaking habits. Furthermore, many suprasegmental features will not occur in their speech samples since they have not yet acquired the grammatical structures associated with particular intonation and sentence stress patterns. For Stage I learners, the most obvious errors will manifest in terms of incorrect word stress and localized segmental errors. As learners progress through CLB levels, the types of errors they make during the assessment will become more varied. This will include more recognizable suprasegmental errors as linguistic forms associated with phrases, sentences, and larger oral texts emerge. Persistent global speech errors that need to be addressed will also become more obvious.

Derwing (2008) cautions against relying on textbook-based diagnostic tools to measure progress. These tools are not specifically designed for CLB classrooms and, therefore, while adequate for diagnostic purposes, may not accurately assess whether learners have actually improved relative to the content and focus of a particular classroom. Therefore, instructors should create their own tests which specifically measure what they have taught.

Linking pronunciation instruction to specific CLB competencies

CLB-based pronunciation instruction should be task-based. That is, it should be aimed at helping learners become more effective communicators in specific real-world tasks. It may very well begin with a focus on form but ultimately should end with practice in less controlled communicative contexts. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) provide a useful framework for teaching pronunciation communicatively, with the following recommended sequence:

- description of the feature;
- listening discrimination;
- controlled practice. These activities might include repeating target words and phrases after the instructor and receiving feedback;
- guided practice. This might include information gap activities where target features are elicited, or it could involve rehearsing cued dialogues (e.g., "Ask your partner to do the following ..."). The guided practice portion should occur within the context of a communicative task learners are doing in the class; and
- communicative practice. This involves having learners complete a communicative task (e.g., a role play) that includes the target features.

The remainder of this section gives some examples of what this approach might look like at each stage.

Stage I

In this stage, expectations for highly intelligible pronunciation are necessarily low. Therefore, instructors should not be alarmed when pronunciation difficulties often impede communication. This is to be expected. The goal of instruction should be to raise learners' awareness of English pronunciation patterns and allow them to practise in very limited communicative contexts.

For Stage I learners, more attention will naturally be given to segmentals as opposed to suprasegmentals. Beginning learners will be producing only very short utterances at a slow rate of speech. Thus, many suprasegmental features will occur less frequently. Furthermore, legitimate concerns will be difficult to isolate from limitations imposed by slow speech rate and language proficiency. This is also the ideal stage during which learners should establish good habits with respect to segmental features. Addressing problematic vowels and consonants during later CLB stages is more difficult, as many segmentals will have become automatized. The needs of the learners should determine which vowels and consonants should be taught, as well as the relative importance of individual sounds to overall intelligibility. Contrary to claims made in some materials, there are no particular vowels and consonants associated with particular proficiency levels. Simply teach any sounds that impede intelligibility and give less attention to other sounds.

Attention to suprasegmental features is important when teaching formulaic sequences during this stage. Proper pronunciation of formulaic language will impact learners' pragmatic skills, since these formulaic sequences are important in everyday conversation and for establishing and maintaining relationships. In less formulaic language, the most common suprasegmental features to emerge at CLB 1 and CLB 2 are word stress and basic English rhythm patterns, such as focus words in phrases. At CLB 3 and CLB 4, phrase level suprasegmentals, including intonation and connected speech, will start to become more common but need not yet be the focus of instruction. During Stage I, it may be difficult to separate real suprasegmental errors from pronunciation errors that are caused by limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge.

Sample Task from Speaking Benchmark 1 – Give a short instruction to a friend, co-worker, or classmate.

This task requires the use of a few memorized words and stock phrases as well as polite imperative expressions (e.g., "Please come in", "Please close the door", "Please help me", etc.). Pronunciation instruction might begin with a decontextualized focus on individual vowels, consonants, and consonant clusters from previously learned word lists. A useful strategy with beginners is to use well-known keywords or colour words as a reference for particular sounds. For example, the word "red" can be used as a keyword for the vowels in "bed", "said", etc. It is also helpful in this context to draw learners' attention to different ways of spelling the same sound. At Stage I, decontextualized practice of sounds in multiple contexts is important. However, this decontextualized practice should incorporate new vocabulary that will occur in the task. Similarly, decontextualized practice of word stress across numerous words can also incorporate any new vocabulary items that will be introduced. This is also a good context in which to teach learners to use a dictionary to look up stress patterns for new vocabulary.

Segmental focus

The instructions task requires repetitive use of the consonant cluster /pl/ in the word "Please". This is a good task for highlighting the pronunciation of consonant clusters which cause difficulty for many learners. The instructional sequence can include segmental discrimination activities in which the instructor produces both correct and incorrect forms of target words containing consonant clusters and has learners indicate whether it is correct or incorrect (e.g., "please" versus "p-uh-lease", "close" versus "c-uh-lose", "help" versus "hel-uh-p", etc.). The amount of repetition necessary will, of course, depend on the time available and whether these particular features are problematic for a given group of learners.

Suprasegmental focus

In the instructions task, using the imperative also requires appropriate application both of stress on specific words in the sentence and of intonation. Learners should be made aware that the word “Please” is normally stressed in these types of expressions. Furthermore, this language form uses falling intonation.

These examples of possible pronunciation foci also highlight the interaction between pronunciation, pragmatics, and grammar. Appropriate emphasis on the word “Please” could just as easily be taught in a unit on pragmatics, since misplacing this stress can be perceived as impolite by listeners (e.g., “PLEASE open the door” versus “Please OPEN the door”). Teaching falling intonation could just as easily be taught in a unit focusing on the imperative verb form.

Stage II

In this stage, expectations that learners will have intelligible pronunciation increase. Pronunciation difficulties may still sometimes impede communication, but by the end of the stage, these should be increasingly rare. The primary goal of instruction should be to address any remaining or persistent pronunciation characteristics that impede intelligibility, while providing a focused approach to a fuller range of suprasegmental features in a wider variety of contexts. During this stage, instructors might also begin raising learners’ awareness of more subtle nuances of pronunciation, such as how particular suprasegmental features can convey emotion or pragmatic intent.

While attention shifts from segmentals to a greater focus on suprasegmentals in Stage II, segmental instruction should not be abandoned altogether. Rather, instruction should continue to emphasize sounds that contribute to a loss of intelligibility and individual learners should be made aware of their own difficulties. In addition, when new vocabulary items are introduced, continued attention to all constituent sounds is important. Having learned given sounds in one word does not guarantee learners will be able to immediately produce the same sounds in new words. Stage II is also a good place to emphasize the pronunciation of inflectional word endings such as *-ed*, *-s*, and *-ing*, since learners can be expected to have acquired these grammatical suffixes. The first two forms, in particular, are notoriously difficult for some learners to pronounce, given the variation in their pronunciation across phonetic contexts.

During Stage II, learners work toward developing a better command of suprasegmental features. While accurate word stress and stress on particular words in a sentence remain particularly important for intelligible speech, there is a need for work on intonation, rhythm, reduced speech forms, and linking, all of which contribute to speech that is easier for listeners to understand. Intonation patterns also play an important pragmatic function in English.

As noted earlier, there will be far greater variation in pronunciation across learners at this stage. For those who received explicit pronunciation instruction during Stage I, fewer issues are to be expected, on average, than for learners who came to Canada at Stage II. Individual differences in natural aptitude for L2 pronunciation will also become increasingly obvious during Stage II. Therefore, it is important for the instructors to adjust their teaching strategies to target individual learners as much as possible.

Sample Task from Speaking Benchmark 6 – Answer questions about educational background, work experience, and skills in a panel interview.

This task requires the use of specialized vocabulary related to education and employment. It also requires the use of questions, statements, and continuous stretches of speech. As with Stage I learners, it would be useful to cover the correct pronunciation of key vocabulary, focusing on lower frequency words that may be mispronounced. Stage II learners can take greater responsibility for contributing to the development of vocabulary lists that are relevant to the task, with the instructor helping to fill in any gaps in their knowledge.

Segmental focus

The pronunciation focus of the lesson can begin with raising awareness of what sounds are present in particular words, but focusing especially on sounds known to be problematic for learners rather than on all sounds.

Suprasegmental focus

For suprasegmental features, attention could be drawn to differences in word stress patterns that signify parts of speech (e.g., word pairs such as “reCORD” (verb) versus “REcord” (noun) or “conDUCT” (verb) versus “CONduct” (noun). These word pairs, among others, may be important employment-related vocabulary, the mispronunciation of which can impact intelligibility. Intonation patterns associated with questions and statements could also be reviewed, including the use of rising intonation for yes/no questions and falling intonation for wh-questions and statements. Finally, learners’ awareness should be raised regarding how stress patterns and rhythm can be used to signal speaker stance, such as excitement or sarcasm.

Stage III

In this stage, many learners will have highly intelligible pronunciation. Any remaining pronunciation instruction should target only specific features that learners wish to improve, or it may need to be directed at those individual learners who, despite having nearly mastered other aspects of English, still have intelligibility problems in pronunciation. There may also be a need to focus on low frequency vocabulary items, the pronunciation of which may not be obvious from written forms. Continued work on teaching nuances in pronunciation, including pragmatic effects, should also be emphasized. Finally, continued work on linking across words may be important to help learners more closely approximate a native variety of English.

By Stage III, most learners will have reached a plateau in their ability to produce English vowels and consonants. Some remedial work may benefit individual learners, but further progress will be slow and require focused, individualized instruction.

Most learners at this stage will have adequate mastery of suprasegmental features of English pronunciation. Continued attention to linking in connected speech and reduction of unstressed syllables and words may result in more natural sounding speech. General fluency-building activities will also promote more comprehensible speech.

As with Stage II learners, there will be significant variation in pronunciation across learners, based on their L1 background, natural aptitude, and time since arrival in Canada. Therefore, instructors should

continue to address individual needs on a case-by-case basis. In larger programs, dedicated pronunciation courses should be offered to address the needs of those who struggle with intelligibility.

Sample Task from Speaking Benchmark 9 – Present formal proposals to address concerns or deal with problems.

This task requires very complex pronunciation skills that even native speakers do not all equally command. Providing examples of both good and bad communication styles can raise learners' awareness. Attention can be drawn to voice quality and suprasegmental features that may increase or reduce potential conflict. For example, how are excitement, anger, impatience, and regret signalled? What does speaking with a raised volume signal? What does speaking with a soft voice convey? How might a monotone voice be perceived? How might listeners respond to rising intonation on statements such as "We need to talk about salaries"? What sort of lexical fillers or formulaic chunks can be used to improve oral fluency and the perception of speaker confidence by buying processing time for more complex propositions (e.g., "I think___", "It's my opinion that___", "Our choices are___", etc.)? What effect might the use of non-lexical fillers have (e.g., "uh" and "um") on listeners' perception of speakers?

Segmental focus

Address the correct pronunciation of key words, focusing on those that are new or problematic. Special attention should be given to any individual learners for whom intelligibility remains an issue.

Suprasegmental focus

It might be helpful to have learners discuss how general voice quality (e.g., a speaker's overall pitch, a raspy voice, a monotone voice, etc.) and suprasegmental features work together to signal pragmatic content in their own language, and contrast these patterns with those found in English. This will highlight potential areas for negative transfer from the learners' L1s.

Assessment

Ongoing evaluation of progress can take several forms. Formative assessment should be conducted during the task cycle, both by the instructor and through the use of peer feedback. Care should be taken to help learners understand how to provide feedback respectfully and constructively. Feedback needs to be explicit, not simply repeating what the learner said using a more accurate pronunciation, which will often go unnoticed. Consequently, there needs to be a balance between activities that allow frequent interruption for explicit correction and activities that are more communicative and uninterrupted. Recordings can be very helpful, both to highlight particular problems for learners and to demonstrate progress over time. Recordings can be very motivating for learners as well. A wide variety of speaking tasks, including both controlled and extemporaneous contexts, should be used as the basis for recordings to measure improvement across tasks that differ in their demand for learner attention. Controlled tasks might include scripted or semi-scripted activities where specific word or sentence prompts are provided; extemporaneous tasks might include the telling of a story from a sequence of pictures with the intent of eliciting particular features of pronunciation.

Helpful resources

No pronunciation teaching materials are perfect and, as mentioned earlier, all activities should be evaluated by applying an evidence-based approach, tempered with ample reflection. The following list is far from exhaustive and is intended to provide only a starting point for novice pronunciation instructors or additional resources for more experienced instructors who want to expand their current library. Further literature cited in this section is provided separately in the reference list that follows.

Instructor professional development texts, print resources

Avery, P., & Ehrlich, S. (1992). *Teaching American English pronunciation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hewings, M. (2004). *Pronunciation practice activities: A resource book for teaching English pronunciation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yates, L., & Zielinski, B. (2009). *Give it a go: Teaching pronunciation to adults*. Sydney, Australia: AMEP Research Centre.

Instructor professional development texts, online resources

Fraser, H. (2001). *Teaching pronunciation: A handbook for instructors and trainers*. Sydney, Australia: TAFE NSW Access Division. Retrieved from <http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/565346>

Learner classroom texts (many with instructor manuals)

Baker, A., & Goldstein, S. (2008). *Pronunciation pairs: An introduction to the sounds of English* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Beisbier, B. (1994). *Sounds great: Low-intermediate pronunciation for speakers of English*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

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Hewings, M. (2007). *English pronunciation in use: Advanced*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Marks, J. (2007). *English pronunciation in use: Elementary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Miller, S. F. (2006). *Targeting pronunciation: Communicating clearly in English* (2nd ed.). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Reed, M., & Michaud, C. (2005). *Sound concepts: An integrated pronunciation course*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Online resource (funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council)

Thomson, R. I. (2012). English Accent Coach [This website provides a research-based tool for assessing and developing learners' ability to discriminate Canadian English vowels and consonants in over 3000 contexts but does not currently include suprasegmental activities]. Retrieved from www.englishaccentcoach.com

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Abrahamsson, N., & Hyltenstam, K. (2009). Age of onset and nativelikeness in a second language: Listener perception versus linguistic scrutiny. *Language Learning*, 59, 249-306.

Breitkreutz, J., Derwing, T. M. & Rossiter, M. J. (2001). Pronunciation teaching practices in Canada. *TESL Canada Journal*, 19, 51-61.

Brown, A. (1988). Functional Load and the Teaching of Pronunciation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 22, 593-606.

Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., Goodwin, J. M., & Griner, B. (2010). *Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Derwing, T. M. (2003). What do ESL learners say about their accents? *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 59, 547-566. Derwing, T. M. (2008). Curriculum issues in teaching pronunciation. In J. G. Hansen Edwards & M. L. Zampini (Eds.), *Phonology and second language acquisition* (pp. 347-369). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Derwing, T. M. & Munro, M. J. (2005). Second language accent and pronunciation teaching: A research-based approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39, 379-397.

Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2009). Putting accent in its place: Rethinking obstacles to communication. *Language Teaching*, 42, 476-490.

Derwing, T. M., Munro, M. J., & Wiebe, G. E. (1998). Evidence in favor of a broad framework for pronunciation instruction. *Language Learning*, 48, 393-410.

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C

Incorporating Pragmatics in a CLB-Based Program

Introduction

Pragmatics is the ability to use appropriate language in a given communicative situation and comprises functional and sociolinguistic knowledge. Pragmatic knowledge plays a crucial role in determining newcomers' integration into their social, study, and work communities.

Pragmatics is one aspect of communicative competence that is particularly difficult for learners to acquire; cultural knowledge does not develop through exposure alone and therefore needs to be taught. Learners need to develop an awareness of interpersonal norms in their new culture in order to establish and maintain social relationships, and lack of pragmatic fluency may severely limit the opportunities that are available to individuals. Instructors have many opportunities to incorporate pragmatics into the skills and competency areas in a CLB-based program (see *Speech Acts and CLB Competencies*, p. 84).

Pragmatics consists of sociopragmatics (e.g., the use of an appropriate speech act in a particular context; culture-focused) and pragmalinguistics (e.g., the use of appropriate grammar and typical expressions in a particular context; language-focused). Pragmatic knowledge may be demonstrated by the appropriateness of speech acts (actions performed through utterances). Speech acts include, for example, requests, apologies, complaints, excuses, invitations, and refusals. They are affected by factors such as social distance (the familiarity of the participants), relative social status (higher, equal, lower), degree of imposition (major, minor), modality (speaking, writing), age, gender, and physical setting. They vary, according to context, in the use of linguistic forms and expressions, amount of information provided, and degree of formality, directness, and politeness. Speech acts may differ significantly in use and expression across cultures, and they may be quite complex. For example, an oral apology in North American English might consist of the following strategies: (a) an expression of apology ("I'm sorry"), followed by (b) an acknowledgement of responsibility, (c) an explanation or account, (d) an offer of repair, and (e) a promise of non-recurrence (University of Minnesota, nd).

General principles for integrating pragmatics into a CLB-based program

Task-based instruction and real-world application

Instruction and assessment should focus on the use of pragmatics in contexts that are relevant to learners in community, work and study settings. Pragmatics instruction should be directly related to language tasks that learners accomplish in their everyday lives. For example:

- CLB 3 (Speaking) addresses a range of courtesy formulas and greetings used in very short, casual, face-to-face interactions.
- CLB 6 (Writing) addresses the formal and informal communication of personal messages for everyday social purposes, such as expressing congratulations, thanks, and apologies.

Linguistic choices and the degree of formality, directness, and politeness will depend on learners' individual needs and the context(s) in which communicative tasks take place.

Learner-centred approach

Learners' needs and interests should be taken into consideration when developing lessons in pragmatics. Instruction should be based on an initial needs assessment as well as a determination and ongoing review of learners' personal learning goals and objectives. When conducting an initial needs assessment, consult the CLB document to determine which speech acts/routines are to be taught at this level of proficiency (e.g., requests, apologies, greetings). Also determine in which contexts learners need to perform these speech acts/routines (at school? at work? in the community? with whom?). Make a list of these contexts and select or create input and tasks that will be relevant to learners' needs (see the section on p. 78: Designing or selecting materials for teaching pragmatics).

A learner-centred approach involves learners in the process of making decisions about what to teach (based on the needs assessment). Learners' individual pragmatic competence goals and objectives should be reviewed frequently and revised as their needs change.

Relating pragmatics to the CLB

Sample Task Analysis 1

Once learners' needs have been identified, appropriate materials should be selected to address those needs. For example, if learners need to be able to change appointments by phone and to make apologies and requests, the following text could be used (Note: Learners will already have learned how to make an appointment with the doctor). This dialogue is an example of a task that could be used in CLB 4–6. Some of the pragmatic elements in this task include openings, closings, apologies, excuses, requests, suggestions, agreement, and use of modals and intensifiers. The annotated dialogue on the following page illustrates pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features of the phone conversation.

SCENARIO

Imagine that...

You had a doctor's appointment at 8:00 a.m. Your car wouldn't start. You missed the appointment.

Instructions:

Phone the doctor's office. Explain what happened and why. Ask if you can make another appointment.

Telephone conversation

		<i>(Register?)</i>	
	<i>Routine</i>	<i>(Social distance?)</i>	
Receptionist:	<u>Good morning. Dr. Wilson's office.</u>		
Caller:	<i>Filler</i>	<i>Routine</i>	<i>expression of apology</i>
	<u>Oh... hello.</u>	<u>This is John Piquette calling.</u>	<u>I'm really sorry,</u> but
			<i>intensifier</i>
		<i>acknowledgement of responsibility</i>	<i>Grounder (explanation)</i>
		<u>I missed my 8 o'clock appointment this morning.</u>	<u>My car wouldn't start.</u>
		<i>Indirect request</i>	
		<u>I was wondering if I could come this afternoon instead.</u>	
	<i>Continuous form =</i>	<i>Modal =</i>	
	<i>softener</i>	<i>softener</i>	
Receptionist:	<i>Expression of apology</i> <u>Sorry,</u> what was the name again?		
Caller:	John Piquette. P-I-Q-U-E-T-T-E.		
Receptionist:	<i>Courtesy expression</i>	<i>Suggestion</i>	<i>Rising intonation (yes/no question)</i>
	<u>Thank you. Um...let's see...</u>	<u>Can you come at 3 o'clock?</u>	
Caller:	<i>Filler</i>	<i>Expression of apology</i>	<i>Grounder (explanation)</i>
	<u>Oh...I'm sorry,</u>	<u>but I have a meeting until 2:45.</u>	<u>I'm not sure if I can make it in time.</u>
	<i>Suggestion</i>	<i>Rising intonation (yes/no question)</i>	
	<u>Would 3:30 be okay?</u>		
Receptionist:	<i>Agreement</i>	<i>Attention-getter</i>	
	<u>Sure. So,</u>	<u>that's 3:30 this afternoon with Dr. Wilson.</u>	
Caller:	<i>Agreement</i>	<i>Promise of non-recurrence</i>	<i>Courtesy expression</i>
	<u>Okay. I'll be there.</u>	<u>Thank you.</u>	
Receptionist:	<i>Courtesy expression</i>	<i>Adjacency pair</i>	<i>Routine</i>
	<u>You're welcome.</u>	<u>See you this afternoon.</u>	

The chart below illustrates some of the pragmatic elements related to the CLB competencies for the previous task.

Task: Rescheduling a doctor's appointment Pragmatics (apologies, requests)		
Listening	CLB 4 learners will be able to	CLB 6 learners will be able to
	<p>Understand short social exchanges containing introductions, casual small talk, and leave-taking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify formal and casual style and register - Identify participant roles and relationships (social distance) based on courtesy formulas - Identify common routines for opening and closing conversations (e.g., <i>Good morning; Hello</i>) 	<p>Understand common social exchanges (such as openings and closings, making and cancelling appointments, apologies, regrets, excuses, and problems in reception and communication) in everyday, personally relevant situations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify formal and casual style and register - Identify language functions (apologies, regrets) - Identify feelings of regret (e.g., <i>I'm really sorry.</i>) - Identify situation and relationship between speakers (social distance) - Identify mood, attitude, and emotional states from tone and intonation
	<p>Understand short communication intended to influence or persuade others in familiar, everyday situations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify the purpose of utterances (requests) 	<p>Understand moderately complex communication intended to influence or persuade (such as suggestions, advice, encouragements, and requests) in everyday, personally relevant situations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify the functions of utterances (requests)
Speaking		
	<p>Participate in very short, simple phone calls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use appropriate greetings (e.g., <i>Good morning; Hello</i>) - Use appropriate closing remarks (e.g., <i>Thank you</i>) 	<p>Participate in short phone calls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use appropriate greetings - Close a conversation using appropriate conventions and expressions
	<p>Make and respond to a range of requests and offers (such as getting assistance, and asking for, offering, accepting, or rejecting goods or services) (e.g., <i>Can I come at 3:30?</i>)</p> <p>Make an apology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use appropriate polite expressions (e.g., <i>I'm sorry.</i>) 	<p>Participate in routine social conversations for some everyday purposes (such as apologies, excuses, requests, or making arrangements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide appropriate apologies and explanations when necessary

Speaking	CLB 4 learners will be able to	CLB 6 learners will be able to
	<p>Use pragmatic elements of apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apologize for missing appointment, using polite expressions (e.g., <i>I'm really sorry. I missed my appointment.</i>) - Explain the reason for missing the appointment (e.g., <i>My car wouldn't start.</i>) - Offer of repair (reschedule), using appropriate language (e.g., <i>Can/could I come this afternoon instead?</i>) 	<p>Use pragmatic elements of apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apologize for missing appointment and acknowledge responsibility (e.g., <i>I'm really sorry for missing my 8 o'clock appointment this morning.</i>) - Explain the reason for missing the appointment (e.g., <i>My car wouldn't start.</i>) - Offer of repair (reschedule), using appropriate language (e.g., <i>Can/could I come this afternoon instead?</i>) - Promise to commit to the rescheduled time (e.g., <i>Thank you. I'll be there at 3:30.</i>)
	<p>Use routine adjacency pairs (e.g., <i>Thanks; You're welcome.</i>)</p>	<p>Use routine adjacency pairs (e.g., <i>Thanks; You're welcome.</i>)</p>
	<p>Use fillers (e.g., <i>Oh...</i>) to signal hesitation or regret</p>	<p>Use fillers (e.g., <i>Oh...</i>) to signal hesitation or regret</p>
	<p>Use appropriate forms of agreement (e.g., <i>Okay; Sure</i>)</p>	<p>Use appropriate forms of agreement (e.g., <i>Okay; Sure</i>)</p>
	<p>Focus on form: Pronunciation and grammar</p> <p>Use intelligible pronunciation, stress, and intonation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spell name clearly - Use rising intonation for yes/no questions - Use stress intensifiers (<i>really sorry</i>) - Use formulaic phrases or chunks (e.g., <i>See you this afternoon</i>) to enhance fluency 	<p>Focus on form: Pronunciation and grammar</p> <p>Use intelligible pronunciation, stress, and intonation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spell name clearly - Use rising intonation for yes/no questions - Use stress intensifiers (<i>really sorry</i>) - Use formulaic phrases or chunks (e.g., <i>I was wondering if you could...</i>) to enhance fluency <p>Use modals and continuous verbs to soften requests (e.g., <i>Would 3:30 be okay?; I was wondering if I could...</i>)</p> <p>Use prepositional collocations for apologies (e.g., <i>I'm very sorry for ...</i>)</p> <p>Convey a developing ability to make indirect requests appropriately</p>

Sample Task Analysis 2

The following reading/writing task may be used in CLB 4–6. Some of the pragmatic elements in this task include direct and indirect requests, excuses, and determination of mood and attitude. Pragmatic features of the text are shown in the annotations to the message.

FOLLOW-UP SCENARIO	
John texts the babysitter to ask her to pick the kids up from school at 3:30.	
Text message	
<i>(Register?)</i>	<i>Disarmer</i>
Hi, Pat. I know it's short notice, but <u>would you mind picking Mark and Andrea up after school today?</u>	
	<i>(softener)</i>
	<i>Degree of imposition?</i>
	<i>Indirect request</i>
<i>Grounder (explanation)</i>	<i>Direct request</i>
I have a doctor's appointment at 3:30. Please let me know ASAP. Thanks,	
	<i>Courtesy expression</i>
John	

The chart below illustrates some of the pragmatic elements related to the CLB competencies for the previous task.

Task: Asking the babysitter to pick the kids up from school Pragmatics (requests)		
Reading	CLB 4 learners will be able to	CLB 6 learners will be able to
	<p>Understand simple, personal social messages (such as quick updates and arrangements) within predictable contexts of daily experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify the context - Identify the purpose - Identify specific important details - Identify words that indicate politeness and tone - Identify level of formality (e.g., <i>Hi Pat; Let me know ASAP.</i>) 	<p>Understand moderately complex social messages (such as those conveying requests) related to a personal experience or a familiar context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify mood and attitude of the writer and the urgency of the request (e.g., <i>Please let me know ASAP.</i>)
		<p>Classify pragmatic elements of requests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disarmer (e.g., <i>I know it's short notice, but...</i>) - Request (<i>Would you mind picking Mark and Andrea up after school today?; Please let me know...</i>) - Reason for imposition (<i>I have a doctor's appointment at 3:30.</i>)

Task: Asking the babysitter to pick the kids up from school
Pragmatics (requests)

Reading	CLB 4 learners will be able to	CLB 6 learners will be able to
		<p>Focus on form: Grammar Read a short text message and recognize common grammatical forms for making requests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modal form (indirect): <i>Would you mind...</i> - Imperative (direct): <i>Please let me know ASAP.</i>
Writing	<p>Convey short, personal, informal social messages on topics related to familiar everyday situations (such as requests)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use language appropriate to the intention of the message and the social context 	<p>Convey personal messages in short formal and informal correspondence for an expanding range of everyday social purposes (such as expressing requests)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use language appropriate to the intention of the message and the social context - Make a request in writing (e.g., <i>Please pick me up for class.</i>) and provide a reason for the imposition (e.g., <i>I have to take my car in to be fixed.</i>)
	<p>Copy or record an expanded range of information from short texts for personal use (e.g., copying a message into a day timer or a cell phone calendar)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Record time and location of pick-up, children's names 	

Adapting pedagogical materials

Classroom ESL textbooks may offer little support to instructors. Because so many popular textbooks are written for the international market, they may contain little culturally relevant communication. They often do not reflect regional socio-cultural variables and cannot be relied on to provide authentic pragmatic input (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001).

Surveys of textbook materials show that

- some linguistic forms are infrequent (e.g., politeness, LoCastro, 1997);
- characters are often stereotypical and lack depth (Washburn, 2001);
- explicit explanations of pragmatic norms and practices are rare (Vellenga, 2004);
- language is usually inauthentic (Koester, 2002);
- the expressions provided for performing speech acts are often restricted and simplistic (Vellenga, 2004); and
- situations are usually related to social rather than study or employment settings.

For these reasons, the onus is usually on the instructor to create or adapt materials for pragmatic instruction. In adapting textual input, instructors may

- have learners critically assess the listening/reading texts and identify aspects of the written or spoken text that support their answers:
 - Who are the participants (writer/reader; speaker/listener)?*
 - What is the setting (e.g., social, occupational, academic)?*
 - What is the purpose of the communication (e.g., request, apology)?*
 - What is the relationship between the participants (e.g., distance, status)?*
- provide learners with explicit instruction on relevant speech acts (see the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition [CARLA] website at <http://www.carla.umn.edu>, which offers pragmatics resources and explanations of a variety of speech acts).
- change the context of the lesson scenario (e.g., by varying status, distance, imposition/gravity of the situation, gender, age, and/or setting [social, academic, employment]) so that learners can practise expressing and responding to speech acts, using appropriate directness (use of modals, continuous verb forms), formality, politeness, or the correct use of intensifiers.
- have learners compare appropriate pragmatic options in English with those in their L1.

Designing or selecting materials for teaching pragmatics

Given that materials for developing pragmatic competence are limited, instructors may have to develop some of their own instructional activities. The following is a list of suggestions (adapted from Martinez-Flor, 2010) for selecting or designing materials to teach pragmatics (for additional examples, see the lesson plan on p. 85).

Materials should give learners an opportunity to notice authentic language in use (e.g., watching or listening to native speakers or fluent bilinguals request, apologize, greet, disagree, etc.). Types of authentic input include

- transcripts of dialogues from TV, movies, radio shows, plays, novels
- comic strips that illustrate a particular speech act, and
- language corpus or concordancer. A corpus is a database of naturally occurring language samples, oral and/or written; a concordancer is a software program that locates words or phrases in a corpus and displays them in a list. (See, for example, the Corpus of Contemporary American English at <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/> or Lextutor at <http://www.lexutor.ca>).

Awareness-raising activities should give learners the opportunity to analyze authentic language for

- sociopragmatic elements (e.g., social status, distance, level of directness, register, formality). (See sample rubrics on p. 92 for examples of continua and ranking scales that can be used for this purpose.)
- pragmalinguistic elements (e.g., the language used [e.g., softeners] when speakers make suggestions [e.g., I was thinking that *maybe* you should ask the supervisor before contacting the client.]).

- cross-cultural comparison of differences in
 - pragmalinguistics (e.g., in English we use modals and/or continuous forms to make requests; what forms are used in your L1?).
 - sociopragmatics (What are some of the ways in which social status and distance impact requests in your L1 versus English?).

Communicative activities for practice include

- role plays (video- or audio-recorded)
- discourse completion tasks (written or recorded)

Assessment

Grammatical and textual knowledge are commonly assessed in ESL classes; pragmatic knowledge is more difficult to assess. Pragmatics instruction should, however, be based on assessments of learners' pragmatic needs and goals. Assessment tasks could include the following:

- Discourse completion tasks (DCTs) are useful techniques for assessing pragmatic knowledge. For example, learners read descriptions of situations requiring speech acts (e.g., apologies); they then read a list of strategies for performing the speech act and (a) choose the best response or (b) rate each of the options for appropriateness. Alternatively, learners may be instructed to complete the discourse with an acceptable utterance. DCTs may be used for both instructional and assessment purposes (see sample rubrics on p. 93 for examples of DCTs).
- Role plays also provide a useful means of assessing pragmatic competence, as they reflect learners' actual language behaviour in a particular situation (see Sample Lesson Plan 2 on p. 88 for examples of role plays).

Assessment guidelines

The following are some general guidelines for assessment of pragmatic knowledge:

- > **Design assessment tasks that are consistent with CLB competency statements and indicators of ability for each speech act/routine.**
In all cases, the situations should be familiar and/or relevant to learners. Tasks should represent a range of situations, varying according to
 - relative power based on role, age, status, etc. (e.g., boss versus employee);
 - social distance based on similarities/differences, degree of familiarity, attitude towards the other (e.g., friendly store manager versus angry classmate); and
 - degree of imposition such as time, effort, cost, or stress involved (e.g., losing a friend's replaceable CD versus losing a friend's dog).
- > **Assess learners' pragmatic knowledge in the four skills. For example:**
Listening:
 - Have learners identify expressions (e.g., greetings, leave-takings) that are used to perform a particular speech act/conversational routine in audio or video recordings.

Speaking:

- Have learners perform role plays using relevant speech acts.

e.g., Role play scenario (request):

You have moved into a new apartment. The shower is broken. You need the manager to fix it. You go to the manager's office.

- Ask learners to provide appropriate speech acts in response to a picture (e.g., [a parent with a new baby] *What would you say in this situation?*) or to a video (e.g., [play a video to a certain point and stop it] *What would you say in this situation?*).
- Use oral DCTs in which learners listen to a description of a situation and audio-record their response.

Reading:

- Use DCTs in which learners read an email or a letter. Ask them to fill in each blank in the text by choosing the most appropriate expression from a number of options or by rating italicized words or phrases in the text as *appropriate* or *inappropriate*.

Writing:

- Use discourse completion tasks, in which learners read/listen to a description of a scenario and write an appropriate response; or complete a conversation by writing an appropriate utterance.

Example of discourse completion task for the speech act of *Interruptions*

(Context: *English for Academic Purposes*, CLB Level: 6+)

You are a student in a Canadian university. You need to ask your professor an important question about an assignment that is due tomorrow. You go to your professor's office. The door is open. Your professor is having a conversation in the office with another professor. You need to interrupt them. What do you say?

You:

- Include materials that provide opportunities for learners to perform self- and peer-assessments of both oral and written productions.

See sample rubrics beginning on p. 92 for assessment criteria and scales. Use technology such as Wimba Voice Recorder or Audacity to record responses to DCTs.

- As part of ongoing feedback, learners' individual pragmatics goals and objectives should be reviewed frequently and revised as needs change.

Discuss, reinforce, and recycle pragmatics in input and learner tasks used in class. Ideally, these tasks should vary in context so that learners can receive continuous feedback on aspects of their pragmatic knowledge. In addition, strategies for self- and peer-assessment of pragmatic knowledge should be developed and taught to learners (e.g., checklists, rating scales, rubrics, anecdotal comments).

Pragmatics assessment tasks should also be incorporated into formative and summative assessments.

Helpful resources

Print resources with pragmatics lesson plans and worksheets

Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A. D. (2010). *Teaching and learning pragmatics: Where language and culture meet*. Harlow, UK: Longman.

Kondo, S. (2010). Apologies: Raising learners' cross-cultural awareness. In A. Martínez-Flor & E. Usó-Juan (Eds.), *Speech act performance: Theoretical, empirical and methodological issues* (pp. 145-162). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Martinez-Flor, A. (2010). Suggestions: How social norms affect pragmatic behavior. In A. Martinez-Flor & E. Usó-Juan (Eds.), *Speech act performance: Theoretical, empirical and methodological issues* (pp. 257-274). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Tatsuki, D. H., & Houck, N. R. (Eds.). (2010). *Pragmatics: Teaching natural conversation*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

Online resources

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Mahan-Taylor, R. (n.d.). *Teaching pragmatics* [ESL/EFL lessons and activities for teaching awareness, conversational management, conversational openings and closings, requests, and other speech acts]. Retrieved from <http://exchanges.state.gov/englishteaching/resforteach/pragmatics.html>

Online Workplace Integration Language Resources (OWLS) (2010). *Video resources for teaching and learning pragmatics in Canada* [Includes a facilitator guide (with 2 CLB-reference lesson plans) and language study tables (highlighting sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic language in use)]. Retrieved from <http://www.norquest.ca/cfe/intercultural/owls/>

Tatsuki, D. H., & Houck, N. R. (Eds.). (2010). *Pragmatics: Teaching speech acts* [Supporting materials (audio files, transcripts)]. Alexandria, VA: TESOL. Retrieved from <http://www.tesolmedia.com/books/pragmatics>

University of Minnesota (n.d.). *Pragmatics/speech acts* [An in-depth exploration of apologies, complaints, compliments, refusals, requests, and thanks; extensive reference list, as well as references to speech acts in other languages]. Retrieved from <http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/>

Yates, L. (2007). *The not-so-generic skills: Teaching employability skills to adult migrants* [An 82-page guide targeting workplace communication skills, with sample lesson plans]. North Ryde, AUS: NCELTR, 2007. Retrieved from http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/docs/research_reports/teaching_in_action/Teaching_in_action_navigable_lowres.pdf

Other resources

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2001). Evaluating the empirical evidence: Grounds for instruction in pragmatics? In K. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 13-32). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goldman, L. (2009). *You're hired...now what?: An immigrant's guide to success in the Canadian workplace* [CLB 5-8]. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Kasper, G., & Rose, K. (2002). *Pragmatic development in a second language*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Koester, A. J. (2002). The performance of speech acts in workplace conversations and the teaching of communicative functions. *System*, 30, 167-184.

Laroche, L., & Rutherford, D. (2007). *Recruiting, retaining, and promoting culturally different employees*. Burlington, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Li, D. (2000). The pragmatics of making requests in the L2 workplace: A case study of language socialization. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 57, 58-87.

LoCastro, V. (1997). Politeness and pragmatic competence in foreign language education. *Language Teaching Research*, 1, 239-267.

Washburn, G. (2001). Using situational comedies for pragmatic language teaching and learning [TV sitcoms]. *TESOL Journal*, 10 (4), 21-26.

Other online resource

Vellenga, H. (2004). Learning pragmatics from ESL and EFL textbooks: How likely? *TESL-EJ*, 8(2). Retrieved from <http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume8/ej30/ej30a3/>

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Sample Tools for Incorporating Pragmatics in a CLB-Based Program

This section includes sample tools for incorporating pragmatics in a CLB-based program. Some of the tools are also available in Word format on the CD included with this kit and can be adapted for individual use.

This section includes the following tools:

- Speech Acts and CLB Competencies
- Sample Pragmatics Lesson Plan 1 (CLB 2)
- Sample Pragmatics Lesson Plan 2 (CLB 6)
- Assessment Rubrics for Pragmatics
 - Example A: Sociopragmatic evaluation
 - Example B: Sociopragmatics evaluation
 - Example C: Pragmalinguistic evaluation
 - Example D: Discourse Completion Task (DCT) evaluation
 - Example E: Other evaluation elements and scales
 - Example F: Analytic rubrics
 - Example G: Learner self-assessment
- Pragmatics Glossary

Speech Acts and CLB Competencies

The following chart is a quick guide to some of the explicit examples of speech acts in the CLB. Instructors can use this chart to identify the speech acts related to CLB levels, to connect speech acts to a particular unit theme and to have a general overview of the skills associated with each speech act.

L = Listening S = Speaking R = Reading W = Writing

I = Interacting with Others

III = Getting Things Done

IV = Comprehending/Sharing Information

Speech Acts	CLB Levels								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Apologies, excuses		W (I)	S (III) R (I) W (I)	R (I) W (I)		L (I) S (I) R (I) W (I)			
Complaints							L (I) S (I) R (I) W (I)	L (I) S (I) R (I)	
Emotional relations*	L (I) S (I) R (I) W (I)	L (I) S (I) R (I) W (I)	L (I) S (I)	L (I) S (I)	L (I) S (I) R (I)	L (I, III) S (I) W (I)	L (I) S (I)	L (I) S (I) R (I) W (I)	
Opinions, agreement, disagreement, approval, disapproval					L (I) S (IV)	L (I) S (I, IV)	L (I) S (IV) R (IV)	L (I) S (IV) R (I, IV)	S (IV)
Requests, reminders, orders, pleas, demands	L (III) S (III)	L (III) S (III)	L (III) S (III)	S (III)	S (III)	L (III) S (III) R (III)	L (III) W (III)	W (III)	S (III) W (III)
Suggestions, advice, recommendations, proposals				S (III)	L (III) S (III)	L (III) S (I, III) R (III)	S (III) R (III) W (III)	L (III) S (III) R (III)	L (III) W (III)
Thanks, appreciation, gratitude		W (I)	R (I) W (I)	R (I) W (I)	S (IV)	S (IV) W (I)	L (I) S (I, IV) R (I)	L (I) S (IV)	
Warnings, threats, caution		L (III) S (III)	L (III) S (III)				S (III) W (III)	L (III)	

*Emotional relations: greetings, welcome, farewell, encouragement, congratulations, compliments, condolences, comforting, reassurance, sympathy, empathy, regret, etc.

Sample Pragmatics Lesson Plan 1 (CLB 2)

Theme: Pragmatics	Topic: Warnings, cautions	Estimated time: 1.5–2 hours
Task: Learners give and comprehend simple warnings and cautions		
<p>Outcomes <i>By the end of this topic, learners will be able to</i></p> <p>Speaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use appropriate memorized expressions, simple sentences, and courtesy formulas to give simple warnings and cautions (CLB 2) <p>Listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand a range of expressions used to express and respond to warnings in situations of immediate personal need; respond appropriately with physical or verbal responses (CLB 2) <p>Functional knowledge (Stage I) <i>Beginning ability to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - convey intended purpose of an utterance through intonation, language, body language, vocalizations, etc. - use common expressions for attracting attention (e.g., <i>Stop!</i>) <p>Sociolinguistic knowledge (Stage I) <i>Understanding of and beginning ability to use</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some cultural references or information (e.g., learners contribute ideas of warnings they might need to give in Canada versus home country) - culturally appropriate non-verbal communication strategies (e.g., warning someone to stop, using hand gestures) - culturally appropriate strategies to give a warning (e.g., pragmalinguistics: use appropriate gambits, grounders, and intensifiers; sociopragmatics: factor in tone, register, social distance, power, etc.) 		
<p>Suggested resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pictures, comic strips, videos, films - instructor-prepared materials 	<p>Suggested community contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - friends, colleagues to create videos 	
<p>Language focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gambits: <i>(Be) careful...; Watch out...; Watch it...; Mind...; Take care..., etc.</i> - Grounders (explanations): <i>The floor is slippery; It's icy; It's slippery.</i> - Intensifiers: <i>really, quite, very</i> 		
<p>Developing the skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are 5 steps to this lesson plan: Presentation, Awareness-Raising, Explanations, Communicative Practice Activities, Revision/Feedback (adapted from Martinez-Flor, 2010). - The pragmalinguistic focus of the lesson is on gambits or chunks of language commonly demonstrated in warnings. - The sociopragmatic focus of the lesson is on how power and social distance influence how a speaker warns someone. 		

Sample Pragmatics Lesson Plan 1 (CLB 2) *(continued)*

1. Presentation:

In this part of the lesson, learners are exposed to authentic input from pictures, comic strips, videos, and films to highlight the use of warnings.

Tips for finding or making materials: Since the main task for this is to *warn a friend about a slippery floor*, instructors could

- film friends or colleagues performing this speech act in as authentic an environment as possible (variations include: a wet floor in the school hallway or cafeteria).
- take a picture of people next to a slippery floor with a speaker demonstrating a warning.
- find a video clip from a film in which a warning is being demonstrated.
- use examples that show sociopragmatic differences (e.g., learner-to-learner warning versus learner-to-instructor warnings).
- have learners fill in the blanks with the appropriate gambit, grounders, or intensifier while watching a video demonstrating a warning. (To increase difficulty level and to practise different thinking strategies, learners could predict which gambit, grounders, or intensifier will be used and check to see if they were correct as the video is replayed.)

Example of a script (to be accompanied by a video if possible)

Scenario 1: At school

Learner A: Be careful, the floor is really slippery. They just finished cleaning it.

Learner B: Thanks, I didn't see that.

Scenario 2: Inside a grocery store

Learner A: Watch out for the wet floor over there. It's really slippery.

Learner B: Thanks for the warning.

2. Awareness-raising activities:

In this part of the lesson, learners are asked some questions about the context and the social aspects of the conversation to raise awareness of sociopragmatic aspects (e.g., social distance [how well the speakers know each other] and power [learner to learner or learner to instructor])

Examples of questions:

Who are the speakers?

Do the speakers know each other? How? or How well?

What are they talking about?

Why are they having a conversation?

3. Explanations:

In this part of the lesson, the instructor gives learners examples of gambits and grounders for cautions and warnings. After reviewing the meanings of these terms, learners then practise listening to and identifying the gambits and grounders, which they will need to use in the communicative practice activities. The following are some examples of gambits, grounders, and intensifiers for cautions and warnings:

(Be) careful...	The floor is slippery.	really
Watch/look out...	It's icy.	quite
Watch your step...	It's slippery.	very

Sample Pragmatics Lesson Plan 1 (CLB 2) *(continued)*

Learners are then asked to identify the most appropriate warning for a variety of different scenarios. This can be done in either a multiple choice activity or a rank ordering activity.

Example of Rank Ordering Activity:

Scenario 1: You are walking with your friend on an icy sidewalk. You want to warn your friend that it is icy. Order the answers from most polite to least polite.

___ Look out! It's slippery.

___ Stop! Don't walk there!

___ Be careful, the sidewalk is really slippery over there.

4. Communicative Practice Activities:

In this part of the lesson, learners practise the sociopragmatic and the pragmalinguistic elements for warnings and threats by role playing a variety of scenarios.

Play a video of two people walking near a wet floor (instructors can film their own video if necessary) or show a picture of a wet hallway/aisle in a grocery store, etc. One person turns to the other as they approach the wet section to give a warning.

- Have learners prepare and then role play the scenario.
- Have other classmates circle (in a prepared handout) or write down the gambits and grounders being used in the role play and indicate high/low power and high/low social distance (see sample rubrics, p. 93).
- Record learner performances with video camera or audio-recording device.

Other scenarios:

A car is coming/there's an accident ahead/there's a pedestrian crossing/wearing appropriate clothing for cold weather/setting clocks to daylight savings time/that dog bites/the water's boiling/stove's hot/coffee or tea is hot/elevator's not working properly/vase (or mug) is cracked/(electrical) cord is frayed/the cup is going to fall/the ice is thin (for skating)

5. Final Revision/Feedback:

In this part of the lesson, learners receive feedback from the instructor and their peers about their pragmatic appropriateness. After learners have role played the scenarios from Activity 1 (see above), the instructor can

- transcribe (type) the role plays while the entire class listens again to the recordings/watches the video. As the instructor transcribes the role plays, learners can assist by calling out the words they hear the speakers using in the role plays.
- have learners watch or listen to the recordings of their role plays and evaluate the appropriate use of gambits, grounders, and intensifiers, as well as sociopragmatic elements of power and social distance (see sample rubrics on p. 95).

Sample Pragmatics Lesson Plan 2 (CLB 6)

Theme: Pragmatics	Topic: Thanking	Estimated time: 1.5–2 hours
Task: Learners convey short formal and informal messages of thanks orally and in writing		
<p>Outcomes <i>By the end of this topic, learners will be able to</i></p> <p>Speaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Express feelings (thanks, obligation) one-on-one (6) - Thank others for their contributions (6) <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use appropriate language and content to convey personal messages in short formal and informal correspondence (notes, emails) for the everyday social purpose of thanking (6) <p>Functional knowledge (Stage II) <i>Recognize</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - typical discourse formats for different situations <p><i>Be able to use</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interactional and interpersonal communication skills for giving and receiving thanks - effective and conventional formats for email messages and notes <p>Sociolinguistic knowledge (Stage II) <i>Recognize</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - different registers (formal/informal), styles, and some language varieties (e.g., language used by specific social and age groups) - socio-cultural knowledge relating to thanking - expanded colloquial and idiomatic language - paralinguistic signals (e.g., loudness, pitch, speech rate, body language, and other visual clues) <p><i>Understand</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sociolinguistic norms and culturally determined behaviours, such as attitudes towards hierarchy <p><i>Be able to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use appropriate language to indicate level of formality and to show respect - use socio-cultural communication norms, such as formality/informality and direct/indirect speech, etc. - use Canadian writing conventions about directness and formality in emails - adapt writing style for specific audiences and purposes 		
<p>Suggested resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - instructor-prepared materials - http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts - authentic emails, commercial thank-you cards, speeches, etc. 	<p>Suggested community contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - greeting card shops 	

Sample Pragmatics Lesson Plan 2 (CLB 6) (continued)

Language focus

- **Expression of thanks:** *Thanks for...; Thanks a lot; Thanks so/very much; I really appreciate...; I'm very grateful; I can't thank you enough for...*
- **Compliment to recipient:** *You're the best!; It was very kind/generous/thoughtful of you.*
- **Explanation of effect:** *It was [hilarious]; It meant such a lot to me; I couldn't have done it without you.*
- **Promise/offer to repay:** *I'll pay you back next week; I hope I can do the same for you one day; I hope I can return the favour someday.*
- **Response to thanks:** *You're welcome; Don't mention it; It's nothing; My pleasure; That's okay; Anytime; I'm sure you'd do the same for me.*

Developing the skills

This lesson includes awareness-raising, explicit instruction, cross-cultural awareness, authentic input, and output and interaction (adapted from Kondo, 2010, and the University of Minnesota).

1. Awareness-raising

Provide learners with two scenarios in which someone does something special for them.

- Your best friend just emailed you a link to a funny YouTube video.
- Your boss generously gave you the day off to take a friend to the LINC assessment centre. Your friend doesn't speak any English and didn't know how to get there.

Have learners (a) prepare thank-you notes to each of the people above and (b) email them to you. Then ask the learners to analyze how the notes differ. What are the reasons for the differences (e.g., formality, social distance, impact, power, intensity of emotion, amount of information)? Have learners discuss these issues as a class.

2. Explicit instruction

Which of the following elements (thanks, compliment, effect, promise to repay) and expressions did learners use in their emails? Which others would have been appropriate?

Thanks a lot! You're the best! (Thanks + compliment)

Hey, thanks for the video. It was hilarious! (Thanks + effect)

Thanks so much. I couldn't have done it without you. (Thanks + effect)

I can't thank you enough for helping me. I'll never forget your kindness. (Thanks + effect)

Thanks very much! I really appreciate it. I'll pay you back/return your book next week. (Thanks + promise to repay)

It was very kind/generous/thoughtful of you. I hope I can do the same for you one day. (Thanks + promise to repay)

I'm very grateful. It meant such a lot to me. I hope I can return the favour someday. (Thanks + promise to repay)

Sample Pragmatics Lesson Plan 2 (CLB 6) *(continued)*

Ask which learners have written thank-you notes. To whom? For what? Generate a discussion of when it is appropriate to send written thank-you notes and which expressions are typical in particular situations (varying with formality, imposition, etc.).

3. Cross-cultural awareness

Ask learners what they would say in the situations in Item 1 above (i.e., thanking someone for a YouTube video link and for a day off) if they were writing in their L1. Have them translate their messages directly into English. Then ask them to identify how the L1 messages differ from the English and which contextual factors influence the content and language of the messages (e.g., social distance, power, intensity of emotion, impact).

4. Authentic input

Provide learners with a variety of authentic expressions of gratitude to analyze: emails, commercial thank-you cards, speeches, etc. What do they contain?

- Expression of thanks? (e.g., *Thanks a lot!*)
- Compliment to the recipient? (e.g., *You're so kind/It was very generous of you.*)
- Explanation of the effect of the recipient's action? (e.g., *It means a lot to me.*)
- Promise/offer to return the favour/money/object? (e.g., *Just let me know if there's ever anything I can do for you.*)

5. Output and interaction

Speaking

a) Prepare a short dialogue with an expression of and response to thanks.

Irina: Hi, Jun.

Jun: Hi, Irina. How's it going?

Irina: Good! Thanks very much for lending me your notes from the class I missed.

Jun: No problem. I'm sure you'd do the same for me.

Irina: Sure, anytime! See you later.

Jun: Okay. Bye.

Ask learners: What are the contextual factors (e.g., formality, social distance, social status, imposition)? How does Jun respond to the thanks? What other responses could be used? (LIST: e.g., *You're welcome; Don't mention it; It's nothing; My pleasure; That's okay, etc.*)

Then have learners suggest a more formal situation. Ask the class to create a dialogue, write it on the board, and discuss it, sentence by sentence, choosing the best expression(s) for each. Which expressions (see Item 2 above, for examples of explicit instruction) would be appropriate?

b) Have learners create dialogues for real-life situations such as the following, expressing and responding to thanks:

- Thank a friend for a surprise birthday party.
- Thank a professor for a strong reference letter.

Then have two of them role play the conversations. Have the other learners discuss the appropriateness of the language and content for the given situation. What did they notice about the use of tone, stress and intonation, body language, etc.?

Sample Pragmatics Lesson Plan 2 (CLB 6) *(continued)*

c) Game: Spot the problem! (adapted from <http://exchanges.state.gov/media/oelp/teaching-pragmatics/edwardsedit.pdf>)

Prepare **role play** cards for pairs of learners: thanking a variety of individuals for such things as dinner, a gift, a \$20/\$500 loan, a raise at work, assistance moving furniture, babysitting, a promotion, a good reference, an award, etc.; and responding to thanks. For example:

Learner A: You meet your supervisor/friend in the cafeteria. She/he lent you \$10 for lunch last week. Greet your supervisor/friend and thank her/him. Promise to repay the money.

Learner B: You lent your employee/friend \$10 for lunch last week. It wasn't a problem for you. You were glad to be able to help.

Also prepare **problem cards**, each with a pragmatic violation or error that learners must deliberately incorporate into their role play. For example: a short dialogue with an expression of and response to thanks.

Problem card 1 – You are extremely grateful for the \$10. You want your partner to know how grateful you are. Give a lot of detailed information about what it meant to you. (Violation: amount of information given)

Problem card 2 – In your culture, personal space is closer than in this culture. Move in close to your partner during the conversation. If your partner moves away, go close again. (Violation: non-verbal language)

Have two learners practise and perform their role plays, incorporating the problem. Have the other learners watch and make a note of perceived errors in pragmalinguistics, sociopragmatics, and body language for discussion after each performance.

Writing

For homework, have learners compose a thank-you email/note to an individual who has done something meaningful for them in real life. Ask them to submit their notes for review and feedback before they are sent. (See examples of scales and rubrics for feedback in the Assessment Rubrics for Pragmatics section that follows.)

Assessment Rubrics for Pragmatics

Example C: Pragmalinguistic evaluation

In Example C, learners rate the appropriateness of the request based on the criteria in the column on the left. Instructors may also want to encourage learners to provide comments to explain their choices.

	Appropriate 	Somewhat appropriate 	Inappropriate 	Comments
How appropriate is the caller's request?				
How appropriate is the caller's word choice?				
How appropriate is the caller's organization of his message?				

Example D: Discourse Completion Task (DCT) evaluation

In Example D, learners rank order requests from most polite (softest) to least polite (least soft).

Note: Instructors might consider reducing the number of statements for lower levels and increasing the number of statements for higher levels.

Rank order the following requests from 1 (*most polite*) to 4 (*least polite*). Write the numbers 1 to 4 in the space to the left of each statement.

- ___ "So, change my appointment to this afternoon instead."
- ___ "I was wondering if I could come this afternoon instead."
- ___ "Afternoon is better for me. Book me then."
- ___ "Would it be possible to reschedule for this afternoon instead?"

(Adapted from Yates & Springall, 2010).

Assessment Rubrics for Pragmatics

Example E: Other evaluation elements and scales

Example E gives examples of both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic elements that can be assessed in the classroom, as well as possible scales that could be used when instructors create their own rubrics.

	Continuum	3-point scale	Emoticons	Ranking
Register and formality*	High  Low	3. Appropriate 2. Somewhat appropriate 1. Inappropriate	☺ Appropriate ☹ Somewhat appropriate ☹ Inappropriate	Rank order sentences from <i>most formal</i> (1) to <i>least formal</i>
Level of directness*	Direct  Indirect	3. Appropriate 2. Somewhat appropriate 1. Inappropriate	☺ Appropriate ☹ Somewhat appropriate ☹ Inappropriate	Rank order sentences from <i>most direct</i> (1) to <i>least direct</i>
Amount of information given	Too much  Too little	see above	see above	Rank order sentences from <i>too much</i> (1) to <i>not enough</i>
Strategies (i.e., elements of an apology: explanation, offer to repair, etc.)		3. Appropriate (all elements of apology are present) 2. Somewhat appropriate (some elements present) 1. Inappropriate (apology missing all necessary elements)	☺ Appropriate (all elements of apology are present) ☹ Somewhat appropriate (some elements present) ☹ Inappropriate (apology missing all necessary elements)	
Other elements to consider when instructors are developing their own rubrics				
Grammar forms (e.g., continuous forms, modals for making requests)	Vocabulary/ phrase choice (typical expressions)	Non-verbal language (e.g., distance, touch, eye contact)	Pragmatic tone (e.g., sarcasm, sincerity, intensity of emotion, volume level)	

*See the *Pragmatics Glossary* at the end of this section.

Assessment Rubrics for Pragmatics

Example F: Analytic rubrics

Example F may be used to assess learners' productions. Using this approach, instructors assess a number of specific features of pragmatics (e.g., directness, politeness, and formality; tone; amount of information), and each receives a score. Scores may be weighted, depending on the perceived importance of the feature in a particular context.

Analytic Rubric for <i>Directness, Politeness, and Formality</i>		
Criteria	Score	Instructor Comments
3 Excellent: Learner is appropriate in level of directness, politeness, and formality. Uses expressions common to most native speakers.		
2 Fair: Learner is somewhat appropriate in level of directness, politeness, and formality. Uses some typical expressions although not always in appropriate ways.		
1 Needs work: Learner is mostly inappropriate in level of directness, politeness and formality. Uses no typical expressions common to most native speakers.		

(Adapted from Ishihara, 2010.)

Assessment Rubrics for Pragmatics

Example G: Learner self-assessment

Learners may indicate their needs through a written survey, rating their knowledge, experience, and confidence in performing particular speech acts.

This “can do” list helps you to describe your knowledge, experience, and confidence using English in different situations.

Choose your best answer for each (knowledge, experience, confidence) 1 = *low level of knowledge, experience or confidence*; 5 = *high level of knowledge, experience, or confidence*.

I can	Knowledge	Experience	Confidence
complain about the weather to Canadians	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
ask my instructor for extra time to finish an assignment	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
say sorry to my instructor for coming late to class	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
start conversations with people I don't know in the community	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
disagree with my child's school teacher about homework	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Pragmatics Glossary

Attention-getter: A word or expression used to attract a listener's attention (e.g., *Hello; Excuse me*).

Body language: The use of facial expressions, eye or head movements, and gestures that communicate meaning between individuals.

Degree of imposition (major, minor): The burden that a speech act places on the listener/reader (e.g., when making a request, the degree of imposition is greater with a superior than with a co-worker).

Disarmer: An expression that shows the speaker's understanding of the problem that a speech act may cause the listener (e.g., *I'm sorry to bother you, but....*).

Discourse completion task (DCT): A task used for teaching and assessing pragmatics, in which learners may be asked to (a) complete a conversation for a given scenario, (b) choose the most appropriate response, or (c) rate completed tasks for appropriateness.

Grounder: An utterance used to provide the reason for a speech act (e.g., *I can't find my pen. Could I please borrow yours?*).

Intensifier: Words (usually adverbs) used for emphasis (e.g., *I'd be **awfully** disappointed if you couldn't come; You **really** must come.*).

Level of directness: Refers to how much context is given or how straightforward a speaker/writer is in communication. Language may range from very direct (e.g., ***Open** the door for me.*) to very indirect (e.g., ***I wonder if you would mind** opening the door for me.*).

Pragmalinguistics (language-focused): The use of appropriate grammar and typical expressions in a particular context.

Pragmatics: The ability to use language appropriately in a given communicative situation.

Register: The level of formality of oral or written communication (e.g., *Hi, Jane* versus *Dear Mrs. Miller*).

Relative social status (higher, equal, lower): A key factor in determining appropriate formality for a given context/communication (e.g., hierarchy within an organization).

Routine: A cultural language pattern or formulaic expression that native speakers use in everyday communication (e.g., *Nice to meet you*).

Social distance: The familiarity of the participants in a given communicative situation (e.g., the language used to communicate with family members, close friends, co-workers, employers, and university professors may differ because of social distance).

Sociopragmatics (culture-focused): The use of an appropriate speech act in a particular situation (including tone, volume, and stress, which can be taught as aspects of pronunciation).

Softeners: Words or expressions used to make an oral or written message less imposing (e.g., ***I just** need a moment of your time; It's **a little bit** bland – **maybe** add some more salt.*).

Speech act: An action that a speaker performs through communication (e.g., requests, apologies, complaints, compliments).

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Using the CLB with Specific Groups

This section includes the following groups and contexts:

- A. **Multilevel Classes and the CLB**
- B. **English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and the CLB**
- C. **English for the Workplace and the CLB**
- D. **Special Needs Learners in the CLB Classroom**

A

Multilevel Classes and the CLB

Multilevel language classes present one of the most challenging contexts for novice and experienced instructors alike. The professional literature includes a variety of resources that describe strategies instructors can use to teach multilevel language classes. This section focuses on how the CLB can be used for planning and teaching multilevel classes. It will begin with a brief overview of the multilevel class and go on to give examples of strategies that can be used in a multilevel context.

What is a multilevel class?

“Multilevel” is commonly used to describe classes where groups of individual learners have different levels of proficiency. All language classes are to some degree multilevel in that individual factors, such as previous education, other languages spoken, age, occupation, and motivation, affect how learners progress in the class. In this way, no language class is truly homogeneous. However, learners may also bring with them different levels of proficiency from the outset. In these contexts, some learners may not be challenged at all by classroom instruction while others may be completely lost.

Teaching multilevel classes

A cornerstone of much current teaching practice is the belief that comprehensible input (presenting just the right amount of challenge to learners) is essential for language acquisition. In multilevel classes, the instructor constantly has to assess the level of comprehension and the degree of challenge learners can handle. The goal is to avoid frustrating learners while encouraging them to maximize their potential.

Using the CLB in a multilevel class

The CLB are well positioned to address the challenges of teaching and learning in multilevel classes because they are task-based, and many tasks can be accomplished at varying degrees of difficulty. The CLB draw on a model of proficiency that views language development along a continuum, and the benchmarks represent hypothetical points along this scale of increasing language ability. This model is the foundation for various components and features of the CLB that can be used with different strategies to plan teaching and manage learning in multilevel classrooms. The following are specific sections of the CLB that provide useful references when planning for a multilevel class:

Profiles of Ability across a Stage

This one-page overview per skill provides a snapshot of learners’ abilities across different benchmark levels. It illustrates how learners will have fine differences in their abilities to manage specific classroom activities and meet expectations across different benchmark levels so that appropriate tasks can be planned. For example, across Listening Stage I, learners’ ability to comprehend a text ranges from understanding simple phrases and a few factual details (CLB 1) to understanding an expanded range of factual details and some implied meanings in Listening texts (CLB 4).

The **Some Features of Tasks** pages are included in a stage-wide chart at the end of each stage and offer an easy way to see the range of text/task features across different benchmark levels. These are useful for ensuring that tasks are appropriate to the different levels of learners in the class.

The **Competency Tables** at the back of the CLB document show the **competency statements** and **indicators of ability** for all four benchmark levels across each stage, organized by competency area. These tables show the differences and commonalities between specific competencies more easily. For example, **Giving Instructions** ranges from instructions and directions with “everyday activities” (CLB 5) to a “broad range of technical and non-technical tasks” (CLB 8). The tables also list the specific indicators of ability for each benchmark level, which are useful for selecting assessment criteria that are appropriate for a multilevel class.

Strategies for multilevel classes

Instructor resource guides outline many strategies for dealing with multilevel classes, ranging from how to create a community in the classroom to how to assess language outcomes for different learners. The following are some sample strategies that could be used with multilevel classes.

Consider different grouping strategies when assigning a task

One of the most common considerations in a multilevel class is how to organize classroom activities. Activities can be organized as whole group activities in which the entire class participates, small groups, and pairs of learners working together. The groups and pairs can bring together learners of same-ability or cross-ability proficiency levels. The decision often depends on the type of task and the particular skill, productive or receptive, that is the focus of the task. It is important to be aware of the benchmark levels of individual learners in order to customize grouping strategies for each activity.

Use material that draws on learners' previous knowledge differently and allows different learners to contribute in their own way

The following are some examples to illustrate this point:

Show a short film without the sound and ask learners to write down what they see. Then elicit vocabulary from lower level learners or ask them to put it on the board. Call on higher level learners to use the vocabulary to describe what they saw in the film. Put words on one side and expressions on the other side of the board. Writing on the board gives lower level learners the chance to copy down words and contribute to class interaction. For a second viewing, use the sound. Ask learners to listen for any of the words and information that are on the board. (This can be followed with more structured activities to address specific competency areas.)

Use a sequence of pictures that tell a story with no text: in same-ability groups, learners work together to construct a story from scrambled pictures and then write down as many words as they can to tell the story or describe what they see in each picture. Lower level learners will use simple words while higher level learners will write sentences for a story. Ask learners to write down words and sentences they may have created. If any of the words on the board have not been used in a sentence, ask learners to construct sentences using them. In this way, the contributions of both lower and higher level learners are recognized.

Create a bank of self-access materials that allow learners to target individual needs

Organize material according to specific areas. For example, provide worksheets that elicit vocabulary related to occupations, ask learners to descramble word order (Stage I), rewrite conversations using reported speech, or complete fill-in-the-blanks with the correct tense (Stage II).

Design open-ended tasks that allow learners to work at their own ability levels

Ask learners to listen to a recorded conversation of two people meeting for the first time and to write down what they hear and guess the relationship between them. Lower level learners will be able to identify some familiar words as they attempt to guess the relationship while higher level learners will identify an extended range of expressions and draw on socio-cultural knowledge of language to identify the relationship.

Use the same reading text for all learners but break it up into sections so that lower level learners can move through the text in fewer sections while higher level learners deal with more sections during the time allotted to the task.

Distribute a variety of pictures and ask learners to describe what they see and guess at the background information of the people in the pictures. Lower level learners will respond to the familiar topic in the task while higher level learners can extrapolate to more abstract aspects of the topic.

Allow learners to direct their own learning.

For example, in a task to develop competency in giving instructions, give learners a choice of topics from which to choose to prepare instructions. They can work in same-ability groups or pairs to construct a dialogue and perform it according to their capacity. Learners can be given a context and a list of possible discourse functions to include, and the whole class can participate in listening to the role plays being performed.

For instructors, part of managing learning in a multilevel class means being willing to relinquish some responsibility and control. It is important to recognize what learners contribute to classroom learning and to encourage this contribution. The CLB framework is aligned to a continuum of proficiency and thus encourages instructors to reposition their expectations of learning and teaching in multilevel classes specifically and in language classes in general.

Helpful resources

Print resources

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practices in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Bell, J. (2004). *Teaching multilevel classes in ESL*. Toronto: Pippin Publishing.

Hess, N. (2001). *Teaching large multilevel classes*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Online resource

Roberts, M. (2007). *Teaching in the multilevel classroom*. Pearson Education. Retrieved from http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/download/adulted/multilevel_monograph.pdf

B

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and the CLB

The main purpose of EAP courses is to help learners develop the language skills needed to be successful in an academic setting. However, many EAP classes include learners with a variety of goals. Some learners are internationally educated professionals who want to improve their English so that they can get back into their careers. Others may be in an EAP class to improve their general communication skills at a higher level of proficiency. In addition to academic and professional goals, all learners need to be able to negotiate the complex communication demands of living in Canada in order to form social relationships.

EAP and the CLB

The CLB support learners in meeting their broad, holistic language goals. CLB competencies can be adapted to an academic context so that learners practise tasks that will prepare them for post-secondary studies if that is their intention. Such tasks include understanding lectures, interacting with teachers and peers, researching and summarizing information, writing essays and reports, taking notes, giving presentations, and interacting in small groups, among others. Some of the micro skills needed to perform these tasks are transferable to workplace and social contexts, thus meeting the needs of learners with other goals.

EAP and CLB levels

EAP programs generally target Stage II (CLB levels 5–8). Many post-secondary institutions require learners to be at a CLB level 8 or 9 before they are accepted into a program. However, EAP skills can also be built into Stage I (CLB 3–4) through the careful selection of tasks and topics. Instructors can lay the foundation for the development of academic skills by focusing on tasks such as paragraph-writing, reading short texts and identifying key information, giving brief descriptions, accessing information in standard reference texts, and engaging in short conversations with classmates, among others.

Using the CLB to plan an EAP program

Different sections of the CLB document can assist with planning an EAP program:

To align learners' abilities with CLB levels

it is helpful to look at the **Profiles of Ability** charts for each skill to get information about learners' levels of ability and expected performance in each skill.

To develop EAP tasks based on CLB competencies

In an EAP program, CLB competencies and skills should reflect contextualized tasks that learners would have to be able to do in academic and professional environments. The CLB document includes **Sample Tasks** from which instructors can draw possible task ideas (also see the following pages for sample tasks related to an academic context). **The Knowledge and Strategies** sections can also be used to identify specific linguistic, textual, functional, sociolinguistic knowledge, or strategic competencies learners need to practise in an EAP program.

To ensure that tasks are level appropriate

To ensure that tasks are level appropriate, refer to the sections of the CLB that include features of communication. Specific features appear in square brackets following some of the competency statements as well as in the **Profile of Ability** under 'When the communication is'. In addition, there is a separate page at the end of each stage in each skill called 'Some Features of Communication Across Stage...which includes a detailed list of generic features of communication.

To develop assessment tasks using the CLB

The **sample indicators of ability** that appear under each of the competency areas can be used as assessment criteria. *Demonstrating these strengths and limitations* in the **Profile of Ability** contains additional indicators.

Sample tasks

The following pages list some sample tasks specific to an academic context. The chart below includes sample tasks that relate to **Interacting with Others**. This competency area includes communication intended to maintain or change interpersonal relationships and to foster social cohesion.

CLB 5	CLB 6	CLB 7	CLB 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to a dialogue between two classmates that includes a compliment. - Invite a classmate/colleague to lunch. - Read an email from a classmate talking about what she/he likes or dislikes about a particular course. - Write a letter to a friend describing your ESL class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to a classmate's reasons for not being able to complete an assignment. - Call a professor to ask about an assignment. - Read an email message from a classmate/colleague that includes an invitation to a social event. - Write an email message to a tutor to thank her/him for assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to a complaint from a classmate or professor and determine the nature of the complaint. - Introduce a guest speaker to a class. - Read an email from a classmate giving information about something that happened in class. - Write a message to colleagues/classmates updating them on work completed so far on an assigned (group) project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to an exchange between a student and a professor (worker/supervisor) and identify important details as well as nuances in attitude, emotional tone, and register. - Speak with a professor and give reasons for wanting to drop out of a course. - Read a letter of complaint about a professor and identify the nature of the complaint. - Write a personal note of sympathy to a professor/classmate/colleague who has experienced a loss.

The following are some sample academic tasks for **Comprehending/Giving Instructions** (in Listening, Speaking, and Reading). **Reproducing Information** refers to written communication to reduce or reproduce information to summarize, learn, record, or remember it.

CLB 5	CLB 6	CLB 7	CLB 8
Comprehending/Giving Instructions			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow a professor's instructions during a formal exam. - Give instructions to a classmate/colleague on how to use a photocopier. - Follow simple computer commands using word-processing software. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow directions to a specific location on campus (e.g., the library or cafeteria). - Give instructions to a classmate on how to find reference materials in the library or online. - Read instructions on submitting an application for post-secondary studies to ensure that you have the necessary documentation and prerequisites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow detailed instructions to complete a class project. - Give instructions to a classmate on how to cite references in an essay. - Read and follow instructions for submitting an application for a bursary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow instructions on how to file an academic complaint. - Give extended directions to a location on campus. - Read and follow instructions for participating in an online course.
Reproducing Information			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce a page of written information to a list of seven to ten important points for study purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write a summary of a page of information relating to a research topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write point form notes about important information in a short podcast. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take notes on the main ideas in a 30-minute student presentation.

The following are some sample academic tasks for **Getting Things Done**, which refers to communication to obtain services, to inform decisions, to persuade, or to learn what others want us to do.

CLB 5	CLB 6	CLB 7	CLB 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to a classmate's suggestions on how to organize work on a group project. - Request a copy of your schedule from the school administration. - Read a short notice about a workshop or seminar to decide whether or not to attend. - Write a lost, found, or for sale notice to post on a school bulletin board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to a pitch from a student encouraging others to join a school club. - Make an indirect request to a team mate/colleague who is not meeting her/his commitments on a group project. - Read descriptions of two courses of interest in a course calendar and decide which one to take. - Complete a form for a student loan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to a speech from a student running for a position on student council and decide whether or not to vote for the person. - Discuss study options with a guidance counsellor to make decisions about which courses to take. - Scan a course calendar (either online or in print) to locate eligibility requirements for a particular program, its start date, and any prerequisites. - Complete an admission application for a university or college that includes brief written responses to questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to a professor evaluating a fellow classmate's presentation and list specific details, suggestions, and advice for future reference. - Propose a change to a class routine and give valid reasons for the change. - Scan information about a school policy to find personally relevant information. - Complete a career profile assessment questionnaire.

The following are some sample academic tasks for **Comprehending/Sharing Information**, which relates to communication to inform others, to learn, to share, or to present information and ideas.

CLB 5	CLB 6	CLB 7	CLB 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to a professor give a short description of class assignments on the first day of class. - Give opinions about various courses or instructors in a conversation with a classmate. - Access and locate basic information online to research a topic. - Write a paragraph reflecting on own strategies for successful learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to a student presentation (about 10 minutes long) and take notes of important details for future discussions. - Express opinions and respond to the opinions of others in a small group seminar discussion. - Skim texts to identify the purpose and relevance of information for a class assignment. - Write one or two connected paragraphs describing long-term education and work-related goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to an informal class discussion about an academic topic and identify relevant and irrelevant information. - Give a short presentation (about 10 minutes long) that involves comparing and contrasting (e.g., two events, opposing viewpoints). - Read a short research report for an academic assignment and create Cornell study notes. - Write two or three connected paragraphs to describe procedures used for an experiment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen for the main points and supporting details in a tutorial presentation. Take notes to prepare for an exam. - Participate in a class debate about a controversial issue. Express opinions, doubts, and concerns. Qualify own opinions, and oppose or support the opinions of others. - Locate and interpret statistical data from an online reference source for use in an essay. - Write a paragraph to describe information in a graph, table, or chart.

Helpful resources

Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman grammar of spoken and written English*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman.

Conrad, S. & Biber, D. (2009). *Real grammar: A corpus-based approach to English*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman.

Dollahite, N. E., & Haun, J. (2006). *Sourcework: Academic writing from sources*. Boston, MA: Heinle Cengage Learning.

Glendinning, E. H., & McEwan, J. (2006). *Oxford English for information technology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Guse, J. (2011). *Communicative activities for EAP* [Includes CD]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Longman Academic Writing Series. [Levels 1–4: CLB 4–9]. White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman.

- Butler, L. (2006). *Fundamentals of academic writing* [Level 1: CLB 4–5].
- Hogue, A. (2007). *First steps in academic writing*. [Level 2: CLB 6]
- Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (2006). *Introduction to academic writing*. [Level 3: CLB 7]
- Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (2006). *Writing academic English*. [Level 4: CLB 8–9]

Munro, M., Burgess, C., & Tchizmarova, I. (2011). *Introduction to the description of English grammar*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing.

Williams, J. (2005). *Learning English for Academic Purposes*. Canada: Pearson Longman.

Zimmerman, C.B. (Series Ed.). (2009). *Inside reading: The Academic Word List in context* [A series of four reading texts for EAP learners]. New York: Oxford University Press.

C

English for the Workplace and the CLB

The CLB can be used as a framework for developing a variety of programs that help learners acquire the language skills needed to be successful in the workplace. This section briefly examines how the CLB can be used for two particular types of programs: workplace-based language training and classroom-based, sector-specific language training.

Workplace-based language training

This type of language instruction involves instructors delivering language training in an actual workplace. Course content is based on the needs of the workers and the workplace. This type of language training is unique for a number of reasons:

- Instruction may be one-on-one with individual learners or with a group of learners.
- Group classes sometimes draw together participants from different departments/occupations within the company who may have different communication needs.
- Classes almost always include learners with different levels of English language proficiency.
- Courses are sometimes short, so instruction is very focused and targets specific communication tasks learners are having difficulty with in their particular jobs.

In order for workplace-based language training to be effective, it needs to

- involve all stakeholders, including learners, employers, supervisors, and the union, if applicable, in defining course objectives and content.
- prioritize the immediate communication needs of participants as determined through a needs assessment.
- be flexible enough to accommodate the diverse needs and ability levels of participants in the class.
- be task-based and target authentic communication tasks related to the specific workplace in which the training is conducted.
- include authentic workplace materials (e.g., memos, safety notices, emails) that participants are exposed to in their day-to-day work environment.

Assessing and analyzing needs

In order to develop course content that is tailored to the specific communication needs of participants, it is important to obtain information from a variety of sources. A needs assessment is the first step in the process of developing meaningful course content. A needs assessment can be done through personal interviews or questionnaires (with the employer and participants) or through class discussions.

Information about the communication requirements of a particular workplace can be obtained in a variety of ways:

- through workplace documents such as policies and procedures manuals and training and orientation materials
- from industry information about the occupation as a whole
- through workplace observations (if possible)
- by shadowing prospective learners to find out who they communicate with and observing how others communicate in the workplace (e.g., formally/informally; verbally/in writing; in person/on the phone)

Using the CLB for workplace-based language training

The CLB document provides a framework for assessing learner proficiency levels and for developing and delivering appropriate content for workplace ESL training.

Assessing learner proficiency levels prior to language training

If learners do not have access to a standardized language assessment prior to entering a workplace language training program it will be up to the instructor to determine the CLB levels of participants. The CLB Online Self-Assessment (CLB-OSA) tool is one way to gather information on a learners' initial CLB levels if a standardized CLB placement test is not available. Another way is through initial diagnostic testing where learners practise completing sample tasks related to the CLB for each of the four skills. Learners' performance of the sample tasks can be compared to the expectations for individual benchmark levels listed in the **Profiles of Ability** charts found at the beginning of each skill in each stage. Once the results of the diagnostic have been compiled, instructors are able to draw conclusions about the general level(s) of ability required for each language skill. This will guide the expectations for performance of the tasks identified for the course.

Developing and delivering workplace-based ESL training

Various sections of the CLB document support the development and delivery of workplace-based language training. The competency descriptors in the CLB are framed in terms of what a person needs to do with language and can be readily applied and adapted to any new context, including the workplace. The CLB also include sample workplace tasks for every CLB level. **Some Features of Tasks** (across a stage) provide information about the parameters of tasks/texts for a particular CLB level and should be referred to when developing learning tasks.

Since participants in the course may be functioning at several different levels of language ability, it is important to refer to a range of levels in the CLB when deciding how to modify tasks so that they are level appropriate. One of the features of the CLB is the spiralling nature of competencies, which makes it easy to scale the complexity of lessons up or down for multilevel classes. To modify tasks so that they are more or less challenging for a range of learners, refer to the **Profiles of Ability** as well as the **Competency Tables** at the back of the CLB document, which present competency statements and

indicators of ability organized by competency areas. Also refer to the **Some Features of Tasks** charts for information on the length of the text/task, complexity, type of language (e.g., concrete, abstract, specialized) for different CLB levels.

Assessing learner performance

Ongoing assessment using the CLB will help to determine how learners are progressing. Accountability is often an important consideration in workplace-based language training, so ongoing assessments of learners' progress will also help to ensure that language training targets are being met.

Assessment tasks used to gather information about learners' performance should always relate to what was taught in the class. The indicators of ability for each CLB competency can serve as criteria for assessment. *Demonstrating these strengths and limitations* under **Profiles of Ability** also includes information that can be used as assessment criteria.

Sector- or occupation-specific language training

Sector- or occupation-specific language training is usually offered in an academic setting (e.g., colleges, universities, community-based agencies, boards of education) and includes language training for specific occupations (e.g., nurses, accountants) or specific sectors (e.g., technology, business). Courses often include predetermined content with some flexibility to ensure that learners' specific needs are met.

In order for sector- or occupation-specific language training to be effective, it needs to

- be learner-centred and involve learners in ongoing negotiations around course objectives and content related to their employment goals.
- be task-based and include authentic communication tasks that have real-life applications related to finding and maintaining employment in a learner's particular field.
- be developed and validated by subject matter experts with current expertise.
- be taught by an instructor who has the necessary background information about the occupation to be able to teach relevant and meaningful content.
- include authentic workplace materials (e.g., reports, letters, instructions) that learners will likely be exposed to on the job.

Using the CLB for sector-specific language training

The CLB can provide a useful framework for developing and delivering classroom-based, sector-specific language training.

Assessing learner proficiency levels prior to language training

Assessment of learners' English language proficiency may be done prior to the course to determine the benchmark levels of participants in the program. Ongoing assessments using the tasks learners practise in the class should also be done during and after the training to provide feedback on learners' performance and to measure their progress. Formal assessment will require accessing CLB assessment resources developed specifically for this purpose. For classroom-based assessment, the **Profiles of Ability** for each level and the indicators of ability can serve as useful guides for developing appropriate assessment criteria.

Developing and delivering sector-specific language training

The strategies for using the CLB to develop and deliver sector-specific language training are similar to those used for workplace-based training. After the initial needs assessment, an instructor determines which tasks will be addressed in the course and establishes corresponding lesson objectives.

The **Sample Tasks** provided in the CLB can be used for this purpose, or instructors may wish to develop their own to ensure that they are appropriate to the particular needs of the learners in the class. The Essential Skills (ES) profiles are also a source of occupation-specific task ideas. The ES provide sample tasks for over 350 different occupations. Each task is given a complexity rating from 1 (least complex) to 5 (most complex), and this provides a sense of what the demands are for each task. The Essential Skills have been aligned to the CLB to assist in cross-referencing. (See the CLB/ES Comparative Framework at www.itsessential.ca for more information.)

Another section of the CLB document that is an important reference for developing sector-specific language training is the **Knowledge and Strategies** section for each skill at each stage. This section organizes information about specific skills learners may need to develop in order to achieve the five components of language ability: grammatical, textual, functional and sociolinguistic knowledge, and strategic competence.

Helpful resources

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (2009). *Language for work: CLB and essential skills for ESL instructors* [A guide to using and integrating Essential Skills and the CLB in the ESL classroom]. Retrieved from http://www.nald.ca/library/learning/cclb/work_instructors/work_instructors.pdf and www.itsessential.ca

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (n.d). *Work ready: Resources for counselling, hiring and working with internationally trained individuals* [A collection of language-based tips and resources to facilitate the successful employment of internationally trained individuals]. Retrieved from www.language.ca

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks & Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. (n.d.). *Occupational Language Analyses* [A broad inventory of language competencies for different occupations, based on National Occupational Standards and Essential Skills Profiles]. Retrieved from www.itsessential.ca

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks & Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. (n.d.). *Sample workplace-based lesson plans* [This resource includes a template for lesson planning using the CLB]. Retrieved from www.itsessential.ca

Centre for Education and Training. (2012). *CLB online self-assessment (CLB-OSA)*. Retrieved from <http://www.tcet.com/clb-osa/index.php>

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. (2012). *Essential skills profiles* [The profiles describe the communication needs of over 350 different occupations. They also provide a useful bank of ideas for tasks related to each occupation]. Retrieved from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/profiles/profiles.shtml>

NorQuest College. (2010). *Common ground: Guide to English in the workplace* [A resource designed to support English in the Workplace programming; includes a how-to guide, training manual, and facilitator guide]. Retrieved from http://www.norquest.ca/cfe/intercultural/proj_commonground.asp

D

Special Needs Learners in the CLB Classroom

Individuals with special needs face a number of barriers and stigmas that can affect their success in an ESL class. Some learners come from cultures where attitudes and perspectives towards disabilities are different from those in Canada. They may be from places where individuals with special needs are excluded from educational settings and societal functions or where there is more of a stigma attached to having a disability. They could be from parts of the world where there is a lack of consistency in the identification of special needs and early intervention for this population. As a result, learners may be arriving in Canada without any formal education, intervention, or even diagnosis of their particular challenges.

It is estimated that 15% of adult learners in CLB classes have some type of “special need”, ranging from a mild learning disability to severe developmental delay. The concept of special needs also encompasses physical limitations such as visual or hearing impairments as well as mobility or other health issues. In some cases, exceptionalities are obvious (e.g., learners with physical disabilities); in other cases, they are subtle and noticeable only over time. It is worth stressing that the role of an ESL instructor is not to diagnose or label a learner with a special need but rather to provide support that will help the individual achieve success in language learning. The purpose of this chapter is to offer suggestions and strategies that will assist in providing language training for learners with special needs.

Placement options for learners with special needs

Learners with exceptionalities have two placement options. They are either placed in fully inclusive classes, possibly with extra help from volunteers and/or educational assistants, or they receive special education home tutoring support (not to be confused with the LINC Home Study program). Typically, there are two criteria for placing learners in fully inclusive classes: learners are able to get to school by themselves, with the help of a family member, support worker, or by special transit; and they are able to function at school with minimal help or with assistance from an educational assistant, volunteer, or special education teacher if available. Learners with exceptionalities are placed in a home tutoring setting if they are unable to attend school because of severe mobility or health issues. Currently, there is no standardized, consistent placement policy for learners with special needs in CLB-based programs.

Placement of special needs learners in fully inclusive classes with no additional assistance presents challenges for instructors and learners alike. Instructors are often frustrated because they feel they do not have the training or resources to recognize and/or meet individual needs. Learners may feel discouraged because their needs are not being met due to the lack of support.

Supporting learners with special needs

There are number of different ways an instructor can help learners with special needs, whether or not they have been diagnosed with a particular disability (and they are willing to share that information). The first step should always be to talk to the learners to determine if they are having difficulties in class. Ask questions to find out about their comfort level regarding different activities or grouping arrangements, possible adjustments to the curriculum that would help them meet the expectations of the course, or any

physical accommodations (e.g., changes in seating arrangements) that would be beneficial. Ask questions about what has worked for them in other learning situations. Learners themselves are often the experts on their own particular situation so it is important to involve them in discussions around supports that will contribute to successful learning.

In cases where a learner discloses information about a particular disability or if the disability is obvious, it is a good idea to contact community agencies that can provide useful information and resources that can be of assistance. Some communities may also have services that will diagnose a learning disability if a learner would like to be tested.

Special needs learners in CLB-based programs

All learners placed in a designated CLB level class are expected to work towards achieving proficiency in that level. However, in the case of learners with special needs, some accommodations or modifications to program delivery may have to be made. Accommodation refers to *how* learners learn and perform at school. Accommodating learners with special needs means that they are completing the same tasks as others in the class; however, the way the tasks are performed may be different. For example, a learner with a visual or physical impairment would complete the same classroom task given to everyone but in a format that uses Braille or text-to-speech software. A learner with a physical disability could be allowed to point to answers on a multiple choice test if she/he is not able to circle the responses.

Modification refers to *what* learners learn. In some instances, the instructor may have to make some modifications to the performance indicators of CLB competencies so that learners feel that they are making progress and do not get discouraged. For example, a learner with Down syndrome may require easier assessment tasks or shorter texts than others in the class. However, ultimately she/he will need to meet the requirements for the level in order to advance to the next CLB level.

Cultural sensitivity and learners with special needs

To study and function in two culturally different contexts can be exceedingly difficult for learners who have special needs, particularly if they have recently arrived in Canada. The following is a list of general strategies for teaching culturally diverse learners with special needs during their early transition:

- Try to ensure that learners are not out of their comfort zone during their first few weeks in class. Perhaps allow them to sit near other learners in the class who speak the same L1 or are from the same ethnic background.
- Consider the teaching style of the learners' home country as this may affect how they initially respond to particular activities and instructional approaches.
- Consider using realia and subject material that learners may be familiar with from their country of origin.
- Collaborate with community organizations that support the learners' particular ethnic groups.
- Seek the assistance of volunteers from the same ethnocultural background as the learners.

The following is a list of general classroom strategies that an instructor might use to help learners having difficulty managing in the classroom:

- Give clear, direct, and short instructions. Give written or visual directions in addition to oral directions.
- Break down instructions and tasks into smaller, more manageable segments.
- Allow additional time or reduce the amount of work required to complete tasks.
- Reduce distractions (e.g., seat the learner at the front of the classroom away from high traffic areas).
- Give sufficient notice for any type of transition, such as trips, moving to the next CLB level, schedule changes, or changes in staff.
- Maintain eye contact while speaking.
- Reduce noise distractions.
- Use a variety of formats for activities and instruction.
- Allow learners more time to complete tasks and tests or allow them to complete a test in a different way (e.g., listening to the test on a computer instead of reading).
- Provide a structured and predictable learning environment.

Helpful resources

Learn Alberta. (n.d.). *Understanding medical and disability Information* [This resource includes classroom strategies for a variety of disabilities]. Retrieved from <http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/inmdict/html/index.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2001). *Special education: A guide for educators* [This resource provides excellent information about special education for educators]. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/specedhandbooke.pdf>

