



Lesson Plan 10

Asking for Clarification: Understanding the Message

CLB Level(s): 3-4

CLB Skill(s): Speaking, Listening, Reading

Essential Skill(s): Oral Communication, Working with others

Objective(s)	Audience
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ To assist learners in asking for clarification when they don't understand, whether due to lack of understanding the meaning or because they could not hear what was said■ To assist learners politely interrupting when they need clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Learners who often mistake what is said when they are given instructions■ Learners who may be reluctant to ask others to slow down or to repeat what they said
Grammar/Language Focus	Time Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Modal verbs used to politely ask for information	2 hours
Vocabulary	Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ I'm sorry, Pardon me, Excuse me, May I interrupt...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Appendices 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3■ Transparency of Appendix 2.3■ Overhead projector

Workplace Culture

Newcomers often find it difficult to ask for clarification.

- They are shy about their level of English and feel it is an imposition to ask for special attention.
- They feel it shows lack of respect to interrupt or question the speaker, particularly to someone in leadership.
- They feel it will result in loss of face to show that they do not understand.
- They may not realize that speakers expect interruptions and requests for clarification when the listeners do not understand clearly.





Learning Activities

Activity 1: Determining Appropriate Language Used to Interrupt and Ask for Clarification

1. Distribute Appendix 1.I
2. Have learners read each situation silently and then review for comprehension.
3. Elicit from the learners the central commonality and difference in each situation. Refer to the table below for the answer.

Commonality	Difference
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ In both situations, the listener does not understand the message.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ In situation A, the listener does not understand because he/she lacks the language proficiency required.■ In situation B, the listener does not understand because he/she simply cannot hear due to background noise.

4. Brainstorm the language (words/expressions) that could be used to interrupt and ask for clarification in each situation. For some expressions, it may be appropriate to organize the expressions into two columns, one for each situation.

Activity 2: Interrupting Politely

1. Distribute Appendix 2.I.
2. Review the questions for vocabulary and comprehension.
3. Instruct students to listen to your announcement and then answer the questions. Read Appendix 2.2 aloud. As you give the instructions, provide interference (mumble, turn you head away, speak quietly or make noises by coughing or dropping things) while the learners are trying to hear the information.
4. Ask the group why they were unable to answer the questions. Discuss the different reasons you might **not** get the information you need when someone speaks to you in English. Explain that in Canada people expect you to ask questions if you have not understood clearly.



Learning Activities

5. Project Appendix 2.3 on an overhead to discuss when and how to insert polite interruptions and questions. When you come to each blank, ask learners what question they could ask to clarify. Write the suggestions on the board. The following questions provide an example for the first blank:

Was that Saturday or Sunday?

Did you say Saturday?

What day was that?

-
6. Go back to step a., repeating the same announcement. Pause from time to time to encourage learners to ask for clarification.
 7. Repeat the announcement at normal speed and intonation, obliging learners to interrupt normally. Discuss **how** you can interrupt politely. Mention body language.

I'm sorry! Was that Saturday or Sunday?

Pardon me, Rick. Did you say Saturday or Sunday?

Sorry! I didn't catch that. What day is it?

Excuse me. Did you say Parking Lot B?

May I interrupt a moment? Was that Saturday?

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8. On the overhead, find **when** you might interrupt the speaker.

At the end of the sentence

At the end of the paragraph

How can you tell by the speaker's voice that he is going to pause? Model the intonation that shows a "paragraph" in the speaker's voice.

How can you signal to the speaker that you want him to pause?

Activity 3: Asking for Clarification

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1. Brainstorm different ways of asking for clarification. See the list provided for some ideas (Appendix 3.1).
 2. Write the words 'Fire Drill' on the board and elicit meaning from students.
 3. Distribute Appendix 3.2. Clearly explain this is not your school's policy, it was made for the classroom activity.
 4. Have learners work in pairs to read through and understand the procedure, for both students and teachers. Check comprehension of the text.
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Learning Activities

5. Ask learners to identify which steps would be difficult to follow because they are not explicit or clear enough.

Note – If learners are having trouble identifying which steps are unclear, tell them explicitly which steps need clarification without revealing the details.

6. Learners use the expressions and questions you have learned during this lesson to obtain the details required. Use Appendix 3.3 as a guide in providing the answers.
7. Provide an example by doing the first one with them. See example below.

Fire Drill A: Handout

When the fire bell rings...

Students

1. Students leave the classroom using both doors.
2. Do not take anything.

Fire Drill B: Teacher's Copy

When the fire bell rings...

Students

1. Students leave the classroom using both doors.
2. Do not take time to gather your personal belongings, such as books

Number 2 is not clear because it is not stated what students should not take. Learners should ask, “Excuse me, what do the students not take?” or “What do you mean, do not take anything?” and so on.

*Note – This activity can be extended by having learners note the answers on the list and then using their notes to create complete sentences of additional steps or modifying the steps and sentences that already exist. The teacher can project version B on an overhead for self-correction.



Learning Activities

Additional and/or Extended Learning Activities

- Discuss with the class when it is not appropriate to interrupt a speaker and what they can do to get the information they missed.

Reflective Evaluation

Learners demonstrate ability to:

- interrupt politely
- ask concrete questions about points they have not understood

Debriefing/Wrap-up

- Discuss the importance of information and safety. Offer case histories, for example, a worker who does not understand instruction about wearing steel-toed boots and ends up with a crushed foot. Pictures may be helpful.

Skill Descriptors

Canadian Language Benchmarks Skill(s)	Essential Skill(s)
Speaking What the Person Can Do (Social Interaction) <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Indicate problems in communication. (CLB 3)	Oral communication Functions <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Obtains specific information (ES I)■ Limited oral communication demands in a basic work-related social interaction. (ES I)
Listening Global Performance Descriptor <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Often requests repetition (CLB 4).■ Needs a little assistance such as speech modification or explanation. (CLB 4)	Information <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Information content is simple; limited number of details. (ES I)
Reading What the Person Can Do (Instructions) <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Follow one-to-six step common everyday instructions and instructional texts. (CLB 4)	

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Hypothetical Situations

Situation 1

Anna is in the kitchen with her colleagues during a break. She understands most of the conversation. Suddenly, one of her colleagues says something and everyone starts laughing. Her colleague used an unusual expression. Anna does not laugh because she does not know the expression.

Situation 2

Juan is at the grocery store. He needs to buy some chilli peppers but he does not have time to search for them. He sees an employee and asks him where he can find the peppers. As the employee tells Juan the answer, there is a very loud announcement over the speaker and Juan can not hear the answer.

Handout: Questions about the Field Trip to Fort Whyte

1. On which day is the field trip?

2. Where is everybody meeting?

3. At what time is everybody meeting?

4. Do they have a bus this year?

5. If you are planning to go on the field trip, by which day do we need to know?

6. At what time will we be back home?

Announcement: Field Trip to Fort Whyte

Good morning, everybody! Next Saturday we are planning a field trip to Fort Whyte. It's a chance to see all kinds of animals that are typical here in Canada. It's a great place to take the kids.

We are getting together in Parking Lot D at 6:30 in the morning. Be on time! We want to be ready to leave by seven.

Your friends and families are welcome to come along but please let us know how many people are coming. We don't have a bus this year so if you don't have a car, let us know so that we can carpool. It's important you let us know by Tuesday if you are planning to come.

The social committee is providing soft drinks and ice cream but bring your own lunch. We'll be there all morning and be back here at about three in the afternoon.

Announcement Cloze for Overhead: Field Trip to Fort Whyte

Good morning, everybody! Next _____ we are planning a field trip to Fort Whyte. It's a chance to see all kinds of animals that are typical here in Canada. It's a great place to take the kids.

We are getting together in Parking Lot _____ at _____ in the morning. Be on time! We want to be ready to leave by seven.

Your friends and families are welcome to come along but please let us know how many people are coming. We _____ a bus this year so if you don't have a car, let us know so that we can carpool. It's important you let us know by _____ if you are planning to come.

The social committee is providing soft drinks and ice cream but bring your own lunch. We'll be there all morning and be back here at about _____ in the afternoon.

Expressions

- Expressions to practice:

Sorry! Could you repeat that please?
Would you mind repeating that please?
I'm sorry, but would you speak slowly please. My English
is not very good.
Did you say lunch will be provided?
How many people can we bring?
Sorry! I don't understand. What does "carpool" mean?
Where can I get more information?

- When is it all right to interrupt and ask questions?

At a large assembly where the speaker is on a podium?
One-on-one with your supervisor?
In a small group meeting with your colleagues?
In a lunch room discussion?

Handout: Fire Drill Procedure

When the fire bell rings...

Students

1. Leave the classroom using both doors.
2. Do not take anything.
3. Go outside.

Teachers

1. Take your folder and cards.
2. Check that all students are out.
3. Check that all exits are clear.
4. Check all windows.
5. Check all lights.
6. Close classroom doors.
7. Take attendance.

Answer Key: Fire Drill Procedure

When the fire bell rings...

Students:

1. Leave the classroom using both doors.
2. Do not take time to gather your personal belongings, such as your books.
3. Go outside and meet at the area chosen in advance (designated area).

Teachers

1. Take your emergency folder and attendance cards.
2. Check that all students are out.
3. Check that all exits are clear.
4. Check that all windows are closed.
5. Check that all lights are off.
6. Close classroom doors but do not lock them.
7. Once everyone is outside, take attendance.