

Ontario

# CONTACT

Focus on LERN Projects

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## An Overview of the LERN Project

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### Background Information

LERN stands for Language for Employment Related Needs. The LERN pilot project was initiated in response to a funding priority identified in the "Funding Framework for the Additional Settlement Dollars", a 1998 Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) Ontario document which identified gaps in settlement services available to newcomers to Ontario and which provided a framework to address these gaps.

### Employment-related Initiatives

This theme was the most repeated and discussed throughout all the stages of the consultative process. Some employment-related initiatives, such as co-op placements and the provisions of loans and grants for retraining, included needs which are well beyond the mandate of the Settlement Directorate. Other initiatives related to providing services which address the need for language instruction geared to occupation as well as to information about workplace customs and practices could certainly be developed within the mandate.

A Call for Proposals (Language for employment-related initiatives/Language in the workplace) was developed based on the Funding Framework's recommendation that projects which respond to the

need for language **in**, as well as language **for** the workplace be piloted.

### Review Process

In total, 85 proposals were reviewed under this Call for Proposals.

A sub-committee of the Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC) made up of 9 members was tasked with reviewing the proposals. Assessment tools were developed based on the Call for Proposals and were employed to review the proposals. As a result of this process, 37 proposals were recommended for funding.

Thirty-one projects were ultimately contracted, and 25 service provider organizations (SPOs) in nine communities across Ontario piloted LERN projects. Most of the projects ran between September 1999 and February 2000. All projects had to run for a maximum of six months. All projects were to be completed by March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2000.

### Pilot Models

Three basic types of models were piloted:

- Language for employment purposes with a general focus
- Language for employment purposes with a sector-specific focus

(cont'd on p. 3)

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# From the Editor

Being evaluated is never easy. Despite having taught ESL for nearly 10 years, I still get really nervous when my lead instructor sits in on my class. Why couldn't she have visited yesterday when I answered that really tough grammar question so deftly? Instead, the brilliant lesson I spent hours planning seemed to fall flat on its face for no apparent reason. We know that the person evaluating us is not in the classroom day-to-day to observe the special environment we create or the bond between us and our students and among our students themselves. We know that this is an indispensable part of achieving our course outcomes.

What makes a course successful anyway? To some educators, it means scoring highly on a test of terminology taught. To others, (especially funders), it means that 70 per cent of our learners have found work within three months of completing the course. But we know that success can be measured in so other many ways, including increased confidence using English, learning about Canadian customs and employment norms, and, for many of our learners, working as part of a multicultural team for the first time in their lives.

I'm always surprised when learners who have not noticeably improved their English tell me at the end of a course how much they've gained. We know as teachers that our learners grow in some way with every class we teach, and to us, that spells success. And because we have so many satisfied "customers," we naturally assume that there is a great need and demand for our teaching.

I guess that's why it came as such a surprise to the instructors and service providers involved in the CIC-sponsored LERN projects last year that an independent evaluator found that newcomers outside of the classroom improved their English as much as did the learners inside and that there appeared to be a lack of demand for these courses. How could it have possibly happened, they question, if we've gone to so much work designing benchmark calibrated learning outcomes and needs-related curricula? Does it mean that we're not good teachers? Or that we should file those lesson plans under G, lock the

classroom door and seek a career counsellor's advice?

No. In fact, the process of being evaluated by a consultant outside the world of ESL is actually a very positive thing. It lends credibility to our profession. It offers a new perspective.

This issue, which has received a special grant from CIC, will feature an overview of the projects, explain how 37 of the 85 proposals received were selected for funding, as well as highlight seven of the 31 LERN projects that actually ran.

Then there will be an explanation of the evaluation process, how projects were assessed, and finally a summary of the results of four debriefing sessions held around the province, in which those involved in the projects heard the findings of the evaluator and got the chance to comment on the process overall. Finally, we'll see where the projects will go from here, and a Lessons LERNed section discusses how a similar project might run in the future.

Also in this issue, we will take a look at another language-for-specific purposes workplace preparation program called Steps to Employment and how it compares in content to the LERN project.

Our regular Conference Proceedings issue, run normally at this time, will come out in September. Have a safe and relaxing summer!

*Brigid Kelso*  
Contact Editor

(cont'd from p. 1)

• Language in the workplace

Language skills taught in LERN models had an employment and workplace focus, and included thematic content such as sector-specific terminology, job-search techniques, interpersonal communication and organizational skills, identification of personal and vocational objectives, access to labour market information, Canadian workplace culture, employment goal setting and action planning.

As earlier indicated, some LERN projects had a sector-specific focus. Examples of sector specific language training models included:

- health
- call centre (telemarketing)
- hospitality
- customer service
- high tech
- engineering
- manufacturing
- accounting
- general administration
- clerical
- business
- entrepreneurship
- banking

In addition to in-class instruction, some of the pedagogical activities employed by the LERN models to enhance language acquisition included:

- Job shadowing
- Job placements
- Site visits
- Guest speakers
- Mentorship

**Evaluation**

A comprehensive external evaluation of all pilot models and of LERN in general was carried out to, amongst other things:

- identify the employment-related ESL models that work best in terms of delivering

LINC training with an employment or in-the-workplace focus

- identify elements within models that might prove worthy of extension (best practices).

Generally, the evaluation of “for-the-workplace” models employed an experimental model, which involved comparing the group of learners that participated in the training program to a control group of people who did not participate in the training program. Both groups were randomly selected from a pool of candidates who met the eligibility criteria for each particular training model.

The evaluation of “in-the-workplace” programs was based on a pre-test and post-test evaluation model because the number of eligible learners in each workplace was insufficient to allow for use of an experimental model.

Each SPO was also expected to evaluate its own project(s) and to provide the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services (OASIS) with a comprehensive report describing the model as well as its various components including the curriculum employed, recruitment techniques, and important features of the model. Where partnerships with the private sector were established, as they needed to be for the in-the-workplace models, how to establish such partnerships was also reviewed in the service provider report. Finally, SPOs were to comment on the potential and financial costs for implementation of their models in other areas of Ontario.

Representatives from the SPOs had attended a one-day workshop provided by the external evaluator in order to assist them in the development of appropriate performance indicators for their projects.

**LERN Information Sharing Fora**

Four LERN Information-Sharing Fora were held in London, Ottawa and Toronto after completion of the pilots in order to provide all SPOs with an opportunity to share experiences and to discuss frankly the many challenges and successes of the pilots as well as the pilots’ evaluation. Laraine Kaminsky of Malkam Consultants Ltd. is to be credited for suggesting that such meetings be held. They provided all those

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involved, including OASIS, with invaluable insight into the process of piloting and evaluating new and not so new ideas for the delivery of ESL training.

**What Next**

An ORLAC sub-committee composed of ORLAC members, OASIS officers and external experts are reviewing the report from the external evaluator, the individual reports from the

service providers and any other relevant documents, for the purpose of developing recommendations to OASIS on whether and how LERN models or parts thereof might be incorporated into the LINC program and/or be used in subsequent pilots.

*Miriam Yaacov  
Program Consultant, OASIS,  
Citizenship and Immigration Canada*

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# Project Bridge – Language IN the Workplace

In order for ESL learners to achieve proficiency in English, they must acquire linguistic, sociocultural, strategic and discourse competence. For this project, it meant **using language with reference to meaning, appropriateness, cultural and social factors and norms.**

Project Bridge was an in-the-workplace new pilot project funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and developed by the Adult ESL Program at G.A. Wheable Centre for Adult Education of the Thames Valley District School Board. It was designed to assist adult ESL students at LINC 4 or higher to develop skills and language competency for future employment and training in the area of volunteerism through in-class sessions and a volunteer placement component. The rationale for proposing this project is presented in the following section.

## Rationale

- ESL students encounter many challenges in identifying with the workplace in Canada.
- The concept, benefits of and the commitment to volunteerism are essentially unknown or perceived as insignificant in many cultures.
- The concept of volunteerism often connected only to ethnic and/or religious organizations which is limiting for future opportunities.
- The goal of ESL teaching and learning is to provide the language required for the students to access opportunities and explore possibilities.
- In our partnerships with business and industry, it has been continuously stated that safety issues and liability are concerns.
- Among newcomers, team building, critical thinking skills, troubleshooting, and decision making are unfamiliar elements of employment.
- The children of immigrant parents frequently volunteer in the community; parents do not comprehend the importance since it is not related to money. Hence, such a project as Bridge will bring about positive benefits within the family.

## Objectives

*The objectives of the project are to have participants*

*understand the value and expectations of volunteering, to become aware of workplace situations and facilities, to develop skills and language competency for future employment, to obtain Canadian experience and to access opportunities for networking as related to job search.*

## Project Team and Instructors

Instrumental to the development and implementation of Project Bridge was an advisory group that provided assistance, guidance, and support to us, as the primary instructors, in the areas of administration, liaison and referral, community resources, volunteer placements, and curriculum design and development. As the two primary instructors for the project, our qualifications and experiences included:

- professional training, certification, and experience in ESL instruction
- in-depth knowledge of Canadian Language Benchmarks
- volunteer involvement in the community
- skills in promotion, marketing, and public relations
- ESL experience in a variety of contexts and settings (workplace training, ESL)
- maturity and diverse “life experiences”
- working as a member of a “team”

## Volunteer Component

The volunteer placement component was seen as an integral and essential part of Project Bridge which facilitated the ESL students’ development of skills for job search and future employment. It was also regarded as paramount that good public relations were established and maintained to ensure that successful and sustainable partnerships could be established.

During the eight-week period of Project Bridge, each student was required to work nine hours per week for a total of approximately seventy hours in a volunteer placement. Although three afternoons per week were allocated to the volunteer placement, it was expected that some of the students would be required to be flexible with regard to the scheduling of the volunteer placement.

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The concept, benefits of and the commitment to volunteerism are essentially unknown or perceived as insignificant in many cultures.

Initially, some students were skeptical and questioned the value of volunteer work, when their primary and urgent goal was employment and developing the skills necessary to achieve that goal. The value of volunteerism became clearer upon examining the benefits:

- becoming aware of workplace situations and facilities
- developing and practicing skills and language competency for future employment
- obtaining Canadian experience for their resume
- accessing opportunities for networking as related to a job search
- exploring new careers/jobs which could lead to an increased awareness of realistic and obtainable goals
- increasing one's sense of competence and self-esteem

A letter was sent a month prior to the start of Project Bridge to member agencies/organizations of the London Association for Volunteer Administration asking them to consider whether they would be able to place one or more of our students in their volunteer program. Many of the agencies responded with a diverse range of volunteer positions including office workers, receptionists, daycare assistants, recreation program workers, library assistants, typing and computer duties, and assisting in a charitable organization's retail store.

**Note:** *Other agencies such as those providing children's services and hospitals or other medical facilities were not able to accommodate any of our students in a volunteer placement due to a flood of high-school co-op program students, college and university practicum students and Ontario Works participants.*

Agencies that responded were personally contacted by one of the primary instructors to assess the appropriateness of the volunteer positions and to gather specific information and details such as:

- What types of volunteer positions were available?
- What skills, experience or other requirements were necessary for the volunteer position?
- Would the volunteer be in a situation where he/she would be with one or more speakers of English?
- Are orientation and/or training for the volunteer

position available prior to the placement?

- Would the volunteer position be available and suitable for an eight-week placement?
- Would out-of-pocket expenses be reimbursed? (e.g. parking)
- Were any pre-screening requirements in place (e.g. police check)?
- What were the agencies' intake procedures for new volunteers? (e.g. filling out applications, interviews, tours)
- Does the agency have liability insurance in the event that a volunteer is injured while participating in the placement?
- Does the agency have liability insurance in the event that the volunteer damages property or causes harm to a client of the agency?

Ongoing monitoring of the volunteer placement was done to ensure that the expectations of the agency, the student and Project Bridge were being met and that any problems which arose could be addressed in a timely manner. The monitoring process was done both formally and informally. Scheduled site visits were made by the instructors during the third and seventh week of the course at a time when the student was not present. This allowed for frank feedback from the agency. Informal site visits were made when the student was working so that the instructors could see the students "in action." Feedback from students about their volunteer placement was received in class through their journals and one-on-one interviews.

## Curriculum

Communicative competence for the "real world" is a primary goal of all ESL instructors. This theoretical construct was made very real for us, as Project Bridge instructors, in the course of preparing our students to address authentic and situational language needs.

The approach was from an ESL perspective, utilizing accepted current teaching practices, techniques and methods. ESL materials were used, when available and appropriate, and other materials were developed, adapted and refined as necessary. A great deal of realia (brochures, telephone directories, application forms, etc.) was used in the classroom because that is what the students would be dealing with outside the classroom. We attempted to provide the tools and skills with which to approach this

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material.

The four skill areas of listening and speaking, reading and writing were taught and practiced at various points in the eight-week course but different topics lent themselves more to one skill area than another. For example: interviewing (listening and speaking); resumes, covering letters and application forms (writing); want ads, job postings and telephone directories (reading). The eight-week curriculum was divided into two-week segments for the following categories:

- Volunteerism and self/skills assessment
- Resumes, covering letters and job applications
- Job search strategies
- Interview skills

Although this is a competency-based curriculum, it is valuable to have some guidelines for grammar items in order to teach and reinforce these that are related to the tasks that the learners are expected to perform. Hence, it is suggested that grammar be **interwoven** throughout the eight-week course, keeping in mind the appropriateness, cultural and social factors in each situation. In order to determine what grammar points to teach, instructors need to ascertain the structures that native English speakers use most commonly when performing a specific task and the forms most relevant to the level of proficiency of the students.

**Another aspect of the curriculum was the integration of basic computer instruction.** Computer technology and computer literacy have become a common and increasingly essential part of Canadian life and of today's job market. In Project Bridge, the goal of the computer skills component was to assist students to become aware of, and comfortable with, the technological demands of the workplace. In addition, it was hoped that using the computer would facilitate students' language development and communication skills.

The most important role of the computer skills component was the increased comfort level of the students with the use of technology. In addition, it helped raise their awareness of the need for further computer training and its availability in the community.

**In selecting supplementary texts and activities, we used the following guidelines:**

- How relevant are they to the goals and outcomes

of the project?

- Are the materials authentic?
- Do they introduce cultural and social elements?
- Will the activities facilitate language fluency?
- Is the activity reflective of real-life situations and communication?

**Guest Speakers and Field Trips were an influential ingredient in the project as the students were exposed to the larger community beyond the security of the classroom.**

**Guest Speakers** from a variety of backgrounds presented to the class on such topics as:

- Volunteering
- Cross cultural communication
- Managing stress during job search
- Starting your own business
- Discovering and achieving your potential

**Field Trips** were taken to several community workplaces that represented the areas of trade and technology, business and retail, health care, hospitality and education. The goal was to introduce the students to:

- a variety of workplace settings
- a range of employment opportunities
- different skill and training levels required
- the intensity and pace of work

The detailed curriculum for Project Bridge is presently on file with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Our notes and comments, as primary instructors, conclude with specific recommendations to be considered as fundamental to the successful implementation of this program.

## Outcomes

The end of the eight-week pilot project brought sad farewells, reflection, and of course, evaluation.

Project Bridge helped students to recognize and formulate a plan to make their short-term goals a reality, which is only one step in the process of attaining their long-term goals. For some, this meant recognizing the need to continue ESL classes. Others were prepared to, or had already begun looking for work. Many chose to continue with their volunteer work.

Because of the intensive, participatory, and coop-

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erative nature of the course, participants in Project Bridge developed a strong social network. The bonding and friendships that developed during the eight-week course were the result of a mutually supportive and nurturing environment. Subsequently, this contributed to improved quality, frequency, and fluency of language usage in the classroom.

Getting students out into the community for volunteer service provided them with the realization that their skills and acquired language competency, even a CLB 5, are beneficial to a charitable organization. The students increased their self-esteem as they connected with community agencies; they were provided an opportunity to practice their English skills outside of the ESL classroom and enhance their integration into the community.

**Students comments included:**

- “This course helped me feel more confident. I know how to ask the right questions about the job before I submit my resume.”
- “When I volunteered in a real workplace, I realized that I need to learn more English. I’m going to continue my ESL classes.”
- “It was fun to volunteer. I’m learning how to network and learn information from the people I meet at the place where I volunteer.”
- “I went to the job interview. I felt very nervous. I was surprised that the employer asked me the same questions that we practiced in class.”
- “I could use my English and be more comfortable.”
- “I felt like I was important in this organization and valued.”

**The agencies and organizations that provided volunteer placements were equally enthusiastic about their participation and offered the following comments:**

- “At this organization, we appreciate ESL student volunteers. We want our staff to be representative of the community we serve: a diverse mosaic of race, creed, language and colour. Thank you students! Well done!”
- “When the student’s placement time ended, we couldn’t imagine our front desk without this friendly, willing volunteer anymore. Fortunately, she has agreed to continue volunteering once a week.”

- “We are always seeking opportunities to involve people of diverse backgrounds and this was a great opportunity.”
- “Our organization gained valuable insight into cross cultural expectations and elimination of barriers.”
- “Having an ESL student in our organization regularly reinforced for us the importance of equal rights and access to all human beings who choose to live in Canada.”

As instructors, it was exhilarating and affirming to see classroom work become contextualized and immediate for the students through their volunteer placements and their job search activities. We were able to get valuable feedback from supervisors and co-workers with regard to:

- appropriate and necessary English language preparation for the workplace
- students’ gaps in English language knowledge and cultural awareness

As a result, strategies were implemented in classroom time to address these issues and valuable insights were gained in curriculum design and materials for a regular ESL classroom.

**Conclusion**

We feel that as a result of Project Bridge, a curriculum and program guideline have been developed that can be implemented in any LINC, school board or community sponsored ESL program. By adjusting and refining the curriculum and program structure to meet needs, as articulated by students and staff, Project Bridge is a very functional and effective program.

*Marianne Henstra and Ann Walker, Thames Valley District School Board, G.A. Wheable Centre for Adult Education, ESL Department*

**Choose three want ads from a newspaper and answer the following questions:**

**Want Ad Number 1**

1. What is the position?
2. What is the name of the company?
3. What qualifications are required?
4. What skills is the employer looking for?

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5. How do you apply?
6. When do you apply?
7. To whom do you apply?
8. Do you have the skills for the job?
9. List the skills that you have for the job.

**Want Ad Number 2**

1. What is the position?
2. What is the name of the company?
3. What qualifications are required?
4. What skills is the employer looking for?
5. How do you apply?
6. When do you apply?
7. To whom do you apply?



## DAILY ESL LESSON PLAN (sample)

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_  
Y M D

Term: 1 2 3 4 5 6 Summer  
Location:

Stage: I Benchmark Level: 4/5

Targeted Skills: Reading/Writing

Theme/Topic: Job Search Strategies  
- classified job ads

Task: Informational Text

### Expectations:

- student will understand the categories of job ads
- student will be able to find specific information in the job ad
- student will be able to accurately reproduce appropriate information to the task sheet
- student will be able to decide if the job is appropriate to him/her

### Materials/Texts:

- copies of newspaper job ads
- task sheets
- OHP

### Targeted Grammatical Structure(s):

- question and answer forms
- abbreviations

Procedure: ⌚ Time Required: 75 minutes

Using an overhead projector, show students examples of job ads. Discuss with them the information provided. (Refer to vocabulary list, want ad abbreviations previously covered.) Discuss as well, the information not given:

- nature of position
- location of job
- qualifications needed
- method of applying
- salary/benefits

Provide students with job ads. Discuss classified categories such as: restaurant sales, skilled trades, domestic, etc. Have them choose three ads of interest and complete the task sheet.

### Measurement Method:

The students are able to find the required information to complete the task sheets successfully.

### Observations:

### Alternative/Variation:

An information gap: using pairs, students fill in the missing information on task sheets. Altered job ads are provided.

### Follow Up:

Have students call in response to a specific job ad which only lists a telephone number and answer the questions on the task sheet. Report back to the class.



# Swiss Chalet/Canadian tire

## Local businesses eager to participate in project

Our LERN project was not a new one; we had one of those proposals which was adapted from an existing program to meet the criteria of the LERN funding. The ESL Partnerships program has been run with the Toronto District School Board (Etobicoke) since 1997 in partnership with Swiss Chalet and Canadian Tire. We originally developed the concept after recognizing the need for learners to make some connections in the job market. Research into future trends highlighted the growing need for service industry workers – this led us into the area of hospitality and retail.

We chose these companies for two reasons. They had multiple locations and are Canadian owned companies with a corporate mandate to give back to the community.

Each store had the potential to take four or five participants and I needed 15 to 20 learner placements per class. The stores offered entry level jobs – jobs that required good language skills. It offered the participants with backgrounds in the following areas from their own countries an opportunity to get into the job market here in Canada:

- hospitality service industry
- customer services
- restaurant business
- chef
- sales rep
- bridal consultant
- car mechanic
- retail store owner

Workers' Compensation was covered by the Ministry of Education because our participants were on a ministry register. Similar Board programs had been cancelled because they could no longer cover this expense.

On the last day a graduation was held and all store managers/support supervisors were invited to attend. The businesses were invited to class for other activities:

- a) mock restaurant luncheon

- b) presentation to the class on company expectations
- c) mock Canadian Tire Store

Holding the Swiss Chalet class in a home economics room of a school provided facilities appropriate to this class. Access to kitchen materials is helpful, but not essential. Collection of materials from businesses was the most essential.

The success of the program also came from participants discovering their personal strengths and team work building to learn to deal with people. True Colours was incorporated into the curriculum.

Another focus of the program was preparation for getting a job. Video-taping interview skills, covering letter techniques, resume writing, appropriate attitudes and appearance for the Canadian workplace were discussed and practised. Knowledge of the Canadian work environment/WHIMS/unions, etc. was also learned.

### CLB

Before participants went out for placement, they were given the evaluation sheets that their placement supervisors would be using to evaluate them. These were all CLB based tasks relating to the language they needed to perform their job. Their final evaluation was based on their language competency of accomplishing these tasks on the job.

The basic outline of the program involved nine weeks of language specific to the industry, followed by a six-week work placement. Curriculum followed the basic question, "What do these learners need to know in order to get a job with this company?" I developed language lessons based on material provided by the company – first the menus and promotional flyers, and later, training material including product and preparation knowledge.

The curriculum included a weekly visit to the different locations where the learners were

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The point was hit home very clearly when a learner asked a manager, "Would you fire someone if they missed a day and didn't call you?" His answer was, "I did it last week." My take-out girl called in sick Monday, but didn't call or come in Tuesday.

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I also found a barrier for some women who did not want to leave their current daycare situation (with LINC) to try something that didn't guarantee a job.

able to sit down with the managers and ask questions. In this informal setting, we were able to ask questions which lead into discussions of Canadian Business Norms. I knew that the learners were sick of my constantly telling them to call me if they were not able to attend class. The point was hit home very clearly when a learner asked a manager, "Would you fire someone if they missed a day and didn't call you?" His answer was, "I did it last week." My take-out girl called in sick Monday, but didn't call or come in Tuesday. "When she called me Wednesday for her schedule, I fired her. I didn't have that problem again."

### **Demand**

The Swiss Chalet program consistently ran with lower numbers, indicating a lower demand. I personally attribute this to a few things. I have seen that many immigrants view restaurant work as 'servant work', and do not understand there is money to be made with little responsibility. I also found a barrier for some women who did not want to leave their current daycare situation (with LINC) to try something that didn't guarantee a job. These programs are not for everyone – you need to have a certain personality to work with people, but they need to be promoted and supported in the LINC programs through information-sharing in the classroom.

Before the LERN project ended, I had been contacted by three managers looking for more information about getting involved. One of those locations includes Pearson International Airport, where CARA Operations is managing 18 separate food service sites.

### **Success**

I am happy to report that of those that have graduated from the program since 1997, 96% have found jobs. The encouraging thing about restaurant work is the flexibility of the industry – most positions are part time, but also used as stepping stones. Of the graduates, two have been promoted to managers, one has gone on to make connections in his profession (he is a professional chef now working in a hotel), three have funded their college education and continue to work weekends, and one has opened her own restaurant.

### **Challenges**

However, I feel there were a certain number of problems with our LERN project.

- limited time for getting a controlled group and getting participants pre-assessed
- the start date changed from April to Fall
- CIC's mandate would NOT cover monitoring of participants at the job site

We had internal TDSB problems as well because of the new structuring procedures; posting of instructor positions, (we had supply instructors the whole term), and a short time line for advertising.

My hope is that CIC will fund these valuable programs that fill a gap for new immigrants to go from language development into using the language on the job. But it is the 'whole' package that makes it work.

My response to Power Analysis is mixed. I agree with the need for accountability, so I tolerated the procedure. The results didn't really surprise me. In our project, the learners improved, on average, two benchmarks in listening/speaking, as we suspected they would.

*Lou-Ann Kablarevic, Instructor,  
TDSB LERN project,  
Mimico Adult Learning Centre*

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Of the graduates, two have been promoted to managers, one has gone on to make connections in his profession (he is a professional chef now working in a hotel), three have funded their college education and continue to work weekends, and one has opened her own restaurant.



# LERN Project with Youth Focus

## Customer Service for Youth

This program provided an opportunity for newcomers aged 18-30 to acquire employment-related language skills targeted at the Customer Service sector. During the 16-week program, students participated in language classes as well as a job shadowing opportunity once a week (total instruction: 345 hours; job shadowing: 55 hours.) Course highlights included: guest speakers from a variety of related occupations, access to computer lab, and field trips. The teaching team included two part-time ESL teachers and a Job Shadow Counsellor, all of whom worked as a team to address issues related to language and customer service. While this particular program was innovative, MALKAM Cross-Cultural Training has a 10-year history of providing language training in and for the workplace.

## Lesson Plan Example

Role playing was an integral component of this LERN project as students explored appropriate expressions to use when approaching or responding to a customer's request or complaint. Here are just some of the phrases we worked with:

### The ten best things to say to a customer:

- "I'll be happy to ...."
- "That's a very understandable problem."
- "I've had a lot of experience with that problem."
- "I'll get you an expert."
- "Here's what we'll do."
- "Can we do anything else for you?"
- "Thank you."
- "Nice to hear from you again. How are you?"
- Use the customer's name.
- "Come back if you need more help."

## The ten worst things to say to a customer

- "It isn't my job."
- "Did you read the manual?"
- "You don't understand."
- "I don't know what I can do about it."
- "What do you want?"
- "You'll have to call us back."
- "You're all set now."
- "That's an unusual request."
- "I have no idea."
- Silence

## Student Responses

- "It changed my fear of talking to people about selling things. Now I know how to do it and what to do in different situations."
- "More job shadowing!"
- "I enjoyed my job shadow placement, also the program was great. The proof: I passed an interview with success. Now I have a part-time job using my practical customer service skills. I now work 4 hours/day)"

*Virginia Taylor*  
*Language Training Coordinator*  
*MALKAM Cross-Cultural Training*  
*Ottawa, Ontario*

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# LERN – First Step in New Careers

The LERN Project at Conestoga College involved 10 candidates who were pre- and post-language tested using two tools: the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment Test (CLBA) and the International English Language Testing Systems Test (IELTS).

Two sessions of Canadian Language Benchmarks tests were administered, the first at the K-W Language Assessment Centre in the two weeks prior to the commencement of classes in September of 1999, and the second at Conestoga College during the first week of classes.

*Aside: It was a real rush to get enough qualified candidates before classes began after Labour Day – involving telephone interviews explaining things like:*

- the rigour of the EAP program and the inadvisability of trying to keep part-time work and study full time, and
- the need for family support in terms of child minding and housekeeping to allow female candidates time to study and complete assignments.

*I think we were one of the few – if not the only project – to begin on time, and with the total number of candidates we had projected.*

The IELTS pre-test was administered in the week prior to the first week of the semester. Based on these pre-tests, eight of the candidates were placed in Level 4, and two were placed in Level 3 of the English Language Studies program. The post-test IELTS was administered after final exams in December.

Each of the ten candidates was either a foreign-trained professional or trades-person. The barriers to employment in their fields of training were identified in the proposal as “difficulty in directly accessing college language training because of tuition difficulties” and “difficulty in accessing academic preparation required to successfully make the transition to college and/or university level studies which would then lead them to gain employment in their occupations through training or re-qualification”.

*Aside:*

*So, in short, ours was neither English “in” or directly “for” the workplace. I think one of the main issues for our project was to provide a correlation between IELTS and CLBA. The other issue was to see how candidates who had been selected as “advanced-level professionals” fared in an established EAP program when financial barriers were removed. As mentioned above, candidate selection was an interesting exercise. I became the coordinator of this project a few months after the proposal had been submitted, and so wasn’t involved in the original negotiations. Conestoga College made the submission because we were told that our community (Kitchener/Waterloo/ Cambridge) had a large number of foreign-trained professionals who couldn’t access further training or employment because of the language barrier.*

The KW Assessment Centre referred 17 candidates. Of those tested, six of the candidates’ English was too low, and one, who had been accepted, dropped out because of family commitments. Two candidates who were already enrolled in the English Language Studies Program, heard about the project, applied at the Assessment Centre, were interviewed, and were admitted to the project. One candidate who heard about the pilot project during the second week of classes asked to be put on a waiting list in case anyone else dropped out; however, nobody did.

*Aside: One key here was the testing to ensure that candidates had a fair shot at success in the EAP program. This was the same requirement for all participants in EAP – a pre-admittance English test is required.*

These low numbers would indicate that the College may have been misinformed about the number of foreign-trained professionals living in Waterloo County and needing access to professions. One explanation for this could be that candidates who are working don’t want to risk interrupting their work to pursue English studies for a semester. The question arises, “Is lack of English really a barrier to employment?”

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Each of the ten candidates was either a foreign-trained professional or trades-person.

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Ours was neither English “in” or directly “for” the workplace. I think one of the main issues for our project was to provide a correlation between IELTS and CLBA.

Like most of the other projects, we had no success in finding enough candidates to create a control group for comparative study purposes.

Of the 10 candidates selected, only two candidates had been in Canada a year or longer. Y.M., formerly a part-time teacher in Sudan, had been in Canada for two years, but was working in a factory. M.S., formerly a lawyer in Brazil, also had Teacher's College certification.

The other participants had been in Canada less than a year:

- I.L. - 8 months - a welder/car mechanic from Bosnia
- S. S. - 10 months - a Researcher at Toyota in Japan
- Z. R. - 7 months - a teacher from Croatia
- L.D. - 7 months - an elementary school teacher from Russia
- S.R. - 6 months - a Polytechnic Engineer from Croatia
- A.L. - 2 months - a Pharmacist from Poland
- P.C. - 2 months - an owner/manager of an export business in China
- E.D. - 5 weeks - a Mechanical Engineer from Romania

Only two of the ten had a background in LINC.

The IELTS test indicated that eight candidates were eligible for Level 4 and two were eligible for Level 3. Successful completion of English Language Studies, Level 4 could lead directly to post-secondary programs which share articulation agreements with Conestoga College (assuming that other prerequisites for programs are in place). The two Level 3 candidates would require another semester of English language studies.

Included in the courses for the Level 4 candidates were:

- Reading Comprehension Skills 4
- Communications 4
- Advanced Grammar 4
- Pronunciation 4
- Academic Writing 4

- a choice of two electives from:
  - Excursions in Math
  - Data Processing/Micro Computer Applications
  - Introduction to Social Psychology

Several students chose to take additional courses through Continuing Education. These were either general interest courses such as Travel and Tourism or computer related.

Included in the courses for the Level 3 candidates were:

- Reading Comprehension Skills 3
- Communications 3
- Advanced Grammar 3
- Pronunciation 3
- Academic Writing 3
- a choice of two electives from:
  - Canadian Perspectives I
  - Excursions in Math
  - Data Processing/Micro Computer Applications
  - Introduction to Social Psychology

Candidates were required to take the five English core courses and were encouraged to take two electives (DP Micro was required at Level 4). Several candidates declined to take the second elective, and one candidate, the pharmacist, declined to take any electives saying that she had family responsibilities and wanted to concentrate on her English.

There was no workplace component; however, the Student Services Department at Conestoga College provided individual counselling for academic, vocational and personal purposes. Candidates such as the car mechanic had identified a career goal of Business Management Studies or the Computer Numerical Control Program. When he began the Excursions in Math elective, he realized that his math skills were insufficient for post-secondary studies. Student Services counsellors recommended his being tested at the Waterloo Campus upgrading department, and based on those tests, in January 2000, he enrolled in the 15-week individualized Math upgrading program to complete his Grade 12 Math requirement for further studies.

Weekly and bi-weekly meetings with the LERN project coordinator also provided candi-

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There was no workplace component; however, the Student Services Department at Conestoga College provided individual counselling for academic, vocational and personal purposes.

dates with information as to where to access educational or career-related information. As a result of these meetings, four of the candidates sent resumes and educational documents to Conestoga's Prior Learning Office. Based on their recommendations, one student decided to change direction, away from law, and towards computer related careers (at least in the short-term). The Design Engineer, however, found that her previous experience provided the background necessary for the Quality Assurance Program. A meeting was arranged with the Coordinator of Engineering Technology, and he counselled her on the best course of action to follow to achieve her long-term career goal.

*Aside: As of February, I was a reference for her for several job interviews, and she began working as a Quality Technician in March.*

These students also participated in the Cross-Cultural and Community Services Pilot project entitled "Developing a Career Orientation Program for Newcomers". They met with the program coordinator to fill out the questionnaire for that program, and briefly discuss their planned educational or career directions.

Candidates in this project were also encouraged to access the Job Search Program at the K-W Multicultural Centre.

*Feedback from those who participated in these projects was very positive. In fact, the two who had the most success in finding employment in related fields, the Design Engineer and the Polytechnic Engineer, both took it immediately upon completing the LERN project. I should also note that they were also among the top three in terms of marks in EAP.*

### **Program Success**

Well, in terms of retention, I think we were the only project which started with our full slate of candidates, and ended without any dropouts, all candidates were from our projected target group.

*I think the stat that surprised me most stated that of the people who completed these projects, only 36.7 % were in the target group for which the LERN projects were intended.*

These are some of the suggestions we made if this type of project were ever to be repeated:

A Letter of Understanding between participants and the delivering institution should be signed before students are admitted to classes. This letter would outline areas such as the program/candidate responsibilities and expectations, pre- and post-tests, sharing of marks and attendance records with the funders, payment of fees and texts, payment of child minding costs wherever applicable, and items the program does not pay for (travel & parking), etc.

A pre-semester workshop involving faculty, students and the coordinator to alert candidates who had not attended post-secondary institutions in North America as to the protocols and effort required for post-secondary studies. Topics in this workshop could include things such as an outline of the program and the limited time (16 weeks) for course work to be completed; time management; how to access services such as educational and career counselling; OSAP loans and the prevalence of them among the general student population. Several candidates in this project who had been in previous ESL/LINC programs were surprised to find that they had to complete the program in 16 weeks, and that no extensions were possible. All students were unprepared for the amount of work required at the post-secondary level. Some participants were also unprepared and unwilling to consider the possibility of applying for OSAP loans in order to complete further studies (they expected "the government" to fund them).

Candidates should provide transcripts from previous educational institutions upon application to post-secondary studies. Eventually these documents will be required (either for Prior Learning Assessment, or for application to other post-secondary programs) and we found that at least in one case, the candidate could not provide these documents. This led us to question if she really had completed the degrees as she had claimed.

We found a direct correlation between attendance (i.e. absences, late arrival and early departure) and passing grades in the program. The prioritizing of college studies should be clarified at the outset.

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Several candidates in this project who had been in previous ESL/LINC programs were surprised to find that they had to complete the program in 16 weeks, and that no extensions were possible. All students were unprepared for the amount of work required at the post-secondary level.

We recommend teaching interactive classes which focus on higher level cognitive skills (application, analysis and evaluation rather than just recognition and comprehension).

### Student Testimonies

“I would like once again to say thanks to the people who made ESL course at Conestoga College possible to us. If since arriving in Canada graduated new immigrants could learn English at the colleges or universities it could be much quicker. If the Government intends that we work in Canada, to be productive here, they need to help us to have contact with our usual circle, that is with people of the same level. They can be others foreign as well as Canadians. When we go to Adult Schools we lose confidence. We feel inferior and we don't feel as a people of Canada. We don't face our problems, that is to talk to natives and that's not teachers fault but it's environment fault. Those good teachers could be teaching at colleges. When we get here and we need to study with people who didn't finish elementary school in their own country, this situation make our learning difficult and with no motivation. Sometimes I didn't go to school because I knew that I wasn't learning anything. At school teachers used to spend all mornings trying to make some students understand things that in a single explanation my friends and I understood. It used to be difficult because we needed to wait their “mind work/catch” and then to continue the class; when they didn't make us confused too.

I am not a language expert but I do believe that Adult Schools class need to be separated by level of English and background. I am saying that because I passed through this problem. I know what I felt there. I felt sorry for myself. People who are used to working with their mind and can catch easier and don't spend too much time in simple explanations need to take more elevated courses. That's why I really appreciate the opportunity that Language Assessment gave to us. In 3 months at Conestoga College I learned more than in a year at Adult Schools. If I could take this course before, probably nowadays I could be working. Certainly I didn't need to spend too many years just learning English.

This course made me more confident and because that in end of the semester I registered

myself in the Web Master Program at Conestoga College. I took Paint Shop Pro (at Waterloo campus), Introduction to Internet and Problem Solving and Programming Concepts (at Doon campus). I intended to take this program before but I just didn't have courage. Next semester I am going to take Internet HTML Primer, Internet Advanced, and Java.

I didn't take any long course because I really need to work soon and because I spent 3 years of my life just trying to speak and write without feeling too much embarrassment.

I hope that new landed immigrants can have better luck than me, and when proper, they can go directly to colleges. In this way they are going to produce much faster.

M.S. (the Portuguese Lawyer/Teacher)

*Update on M.S.: She is still going to school - has taken Introduction to Programming, Introduction to the Internet, HML, Paintshop Pro, and Problem Solving. She is working toward a program in Webpage Design.*

“The program has helped me and other to sort out thoughts. Before attending this program I was working in a factory. Meanwhile I was thinking about continuing my education in order to be more effective in my community, because I have the potential for this task. But the problem was that where I start. Through this program I gained practical experience which has helped me to make the right decision.

Moreover besides learning English language we also have learned more about Canada and it's culture, political system and ethics. This has helped us to understand Canadians and their logic. We become more comfortable in the communication process and gained self-confident.

I realized – after attending this program – that I have more native English speakers than before and that is due to my progress in English language. In a few words I would describe this program as a journey throughout Canada it's culture and language.

Y.M. (Sudanese part-time teacher)

*Update: has completed the General Arts and Science Technology Option, and has been accepted into the Computer Numerical Control Program at Conestoga.*

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Moreover besides learning English language we also have learned more about Canada and it's culture, political system and ethics. This has helped us to understand Canadians and their logic.

"This LERN program helped me to improve my English skills. The most problems that I have are grammar and lack of vocabulary. This course showed me also the ways how to improve my English skills. For me it was very hard and I needed a lot of help. The teachers were very kind and helpful and that was for me important. I learned a lot of new things especially how to write an essay and my computer skills had also improved. All and all, I don't have any complaints about this course and I would recommend everyone who wants to learn English language properly to attend this course. Through learning and having fun in the classes I achieved to overcome my cultural shock and I'm very, very, very happy about it. Finally, I would like to say thanks to all the teachers and you Carol and I will never forget you."

I.L. (Bosnian car mechanic/welder)

*Update: I.L. will complete his Grade 12 Math in July, and has been accepted into the Computer Numerical Control Program at Conestoga for September.*

"I'm working in Precision Resource Canada, in the Quality Control Department as a Quality Technician. On Monday I'm starting the 6th week. In the evening I'm taking courses in the Quality Program in Conestoga College. I already finished the first course, Fundamentals of Quality Assurance, which I took in the Winter semester. Now I'm taking the Metrology course, which deals with measurement of different types of variables and measurement devices.

After I finish at least 8 courses from the Quality Program I will get a certificate.

I also was involved in the New Canadian Program in Waterloo which is a program for newcomers. It helps people to make a resume, prepares for an interview and helps in the job search.

The LERN Program was very useful. My job, the Quality course and the New Canadian Program are based on the English, learned at this program."

*The Romanian Engineer is working as a Quality Assurance Technician at Precision Resources Canada (after having taken a course in Quality Assurance Fundamentals) this past semester. She is presently taking Metrology - the Language of Measurement.*

The Croatian teacher applied to Conestoga's TESL Program for September and attended the TESL 7 mini conference to 'get the feel' of what it was to be an ESL teacher. When she had her educational documents translated, they indicated that she didn't have an undergraduate degree, but rather a college diploma. The TESL program at Conestoga is a post-degree program, so she isn't eligible until she completes more education. *(I guess this situation supports one of our suggestions for further LERN projects - that all documents be translated before candidates begin post-secondary studies. It certainly would have saved her some disappointment!)*

When I spoke to her recently, she said that she had paid \$250.00 to have the College of Teachers do equivalency on her documents and she was waiting to hear back from them to see what courses she has to take. In the meantime, she's working as a volunteer in a nursery school and realizes from this experience just how much she wants to get back into the classroom with older kids than pre-schoolers.

*She also took the People Working and Learning program and found it very helpful.*

The Russian teacher (who was in Level 3) moved to White Rock, B.C. where she is taking more English classes.

The Polish Pharmacist is studying for the exams she needs to pass for the College of Pharmacists. She got a 6.5 on the IELTS and needs a 7.

*She got a job working as a Pharmacist Assistant shortly after she completed the LERN project. She's been there 3 months now and I was really thrilled to hear on the phone how her fluency in spoken English has improved. She was very shy and reserved in classes at Conestoga.*

The Toyota researcher is staying home with her young family.

*She told me that she and her husband have just bought a new house and she plans to stay home for 5 or 6 years. She says she may go back to the LINC classes which she took originally so that she can keep her English up. Question: Is that the purpose of the LINC? It sounds like she would benefit more from a Mom's and Pre-schooler's group.*

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The Chinese businessperson continues to take courses through Continuing Education.

### **Demand for Courses?**

*I have taught all levels of ESL from settlement English, to EAP. I've coordinated job development projects – one of them (11 years ago) involving 64 participants who were paid a living allowance to study English for 6 months, followed by a three-month job placement – they had 84% employment at the end of that project – many in their previous field of study and employment. After teaching for 32 years in this field, I've learned that if you ask newcomers what they need, they will always say “ I need to learn the English language. I need to study it full time right as soon as I arrive – it's the key to everything”.*

*I realize that the days of funding immigrants to learn the language have long passed – yet think the present system of funding short programs here and there just isn't effective. Language takes time to grow, and it grows faster if it is the main focus of a person's day. We either pay for newcomers to learn the language as soon as they arrive, or we pay for them later when they are unemployed or underemployed. But more importantly, THEY pay, in terms of wasted time and lost opportunities, loss of motivation, and loss of faith.*

With reference to the asides:

The original intention in paying immigrants a living allowance while they learned English was to enable them to be employed faster (and in fields related to their previous work experience). Better paying positions should garner higher taxes, which in turn would help to support the next contingent of English learners.

I think it's also important to note that the candidates had limited time to take advantage of this learning opportunity (e.g. it wasn't an endless proposition as many of the LINC programs appear to be with the same people cycling through the same classes over a two-year or three-year period). Attendance was critical, and so was attending to the task of learning English, homework assignments, etc. Participants would be discontinued if either of these were poor. Learning English was their “job”, and the same rules of employment applied. In applying this rather hard-line approach to learning English, the cultural expectations for employment were also subsequently taught.

*Carol Trotter,  
Faculty, English Language Department,  
Conestoga College, Waterloo Campus*

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After teaching for 32 years in this field, I've learned that if you ask newcomers what they need, they will always say “ I need to learn the English language. I need to study it full time right as soon as I arrive – it's the key to everything”.

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# WEST/LERN Project: The Connections Program

## WEST Organization Background

The Connections Program was started in response to the serious ongoing and consistent language needs of our participants. For many years, Women's Enterprise Skills Training (WEST) has supported learners with classroom instruction which reinforces their prior learning and strengthens their ability to function proficiently in an English-speaking environment. In short, our program grew out of an awareness of participant needs, a knowledge of the importance of practical language experience and years of working in the community to enhance the settlement experience of newcomers to Canada.

## WEST/LERN Connections Program

Specifically, the WEST/LERN Connections Program addressed the need for employment-oriented language instruction by offering a program which had three interrelated components. Specifically, the focus group was our usual client group, visible minority women within our community. The components were (A) an Initial In-class Session (two weeks, half days), (B) a Language Training Placement (six weeks, full days), and (C) a Follow-up In-class Session (two weeks).

(A) During the Initial In-class Session, the development of language for employment purposes and employment preparation were covered. These two topics were covered simultaneously and comprehensively in an attempt to: (a) produce employment-based material and documents useful for each individual participant (including professional-looking and accurate personal resumes, cover letters for the range of jobs that interested each participant, thank-you letters for interviews granted); (b) acquaint participants with interview and job-search skills and strategies (including becoming acquainted with all aspects of the interview process, with difficult interview questions that may contravene the Human Rights Code, in-class practice of interview questions and, finally, mock interviews conducted by managers of our community workplace partners); (c) prepare participants for authentic Canadian workplace experience

(including familiarizing all participants with issues arising in employment situations across the board, such as those related to the Canadian Human Rights Code and the Employment Standards Act, health and safety, punctuality and attendance, appropriate dress codes, attitudes toward observance of holidays not traditionally celebrated in Canada, sexism, racism, and general job expectations).

(B) The second component of the Connections Program was the Language Training Placement. All participants were placed with local community organizations and businesses, from both the public and private sectors, in order to have the opportunity to improve their language ability and to gain Canadian employment experience. Marketing the Connections participants to potential placement hosts was accomplished by providing information about the program and placement to the hosts via visits/ calls and correspondence. It was stated clearly in our marketing effort that this was a Language Training Work Placement project. Then each participant's abilities were matched with the proper placement host.

Employers were dealt with on a one-to-one basis in determining placement opportunities and suitability. Not only were the employers hand-chosen for their ability to provide appropriate training and opportunity for language use in the workplace, but each individual participant was counselled on the choice of a placement which best suited their future career and educational plans. The duties and responsibilities of participants on placement were thoroughly discussed. The next step was to accompany participants on placement interviews. Even though our classroom component included preparation for and actual mock interviews, this was in fact the first actual experience for most of our participants. We requested that placement hosts do a "real" interview with our students. This forced the participants to use their background preparation, and also their comprehension and speaking skills to express their suitability for the position. In some instances, English and computer tests were given

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Not only were the employers hand-chosen for their ability to provide appropriate training and opportunity for language use in the workplace, but each individual participant was counselled on the choice of a placement which best suited their future career and educational plans.

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WEST had never run a program exactly like this one before. It was unique for our organization in that the focus was on language development within the very specific context of employment and all the issues that are included within it.

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According to the statistics and evaluations, our participants developed in many areas, including language development, personal awareness and self-esteem, employment success, pursuit of further education and training and enhanced integration into the community.

by placement hosts. Participants were given a tour of the facility and were introduced to staff members and the direct supervisor with whom they would be working. After the interview, the participants were asked if they felt it was a suitable placement for them. Also, feedback on their interview performance was provided and discussed; suggestions for improvement were made. Individual contracts were drawn up with each placement hosts which stated the period of placement, hours of work, placement host responsibility and WEST responsibility in terms of monitoring, insurance and accountability. Time Sheets were also provided, which were to be filled out and signed by both participant and host. And, participants were required to call our office and their placement host in cases of absence. During the actual placement itself there were regular site visits to ensure that both the participants and the placement hosts were pleased with the progress of the placement. These "in person" visits were accompanied by an open phone policy; all parties were encouraged to contact us to discuss any issues or thoughts. Finally, thank you letters and evaluation forms were sent to the placement hosts. In addition, participants were asked to fill out an evaluation and express their opinions of the usefulness of the placement, their performance on placement, and if they recommended the host for future placement.

(C) The third and final component of the Connections Program was the Follow-up In-Class Session. This session allowed us to address all issues relating to follow-up of the placement and to refine skills introduced in the Initial In-class Session. Included here were the following: refining and bringing resumes up to date, preparing and saving on disc a list of References (including placement hosts, if appropriate) to aid in future job search, discussing appropriate contact with References, finalizing lists of potential job-search leads, being instructed in and using the Internet as a helpful job search tool, and further practice of cover letters. An important aspect of this session was that all participants had the opportunity to share their thoughts about their employment experiences and to discuss issues that arose. Above all, it was a wonderful forum on which all the participants could share their optimism about the future based on their experiences in their placements.

WEST had never run a program exactly like this one before. It was unique for our organization in that the focus was on language development within the very specific context of employment and all the issues that are included within it. Two instructors led the Program, both of whom have not only an extensive ESL background but also a background in employment preparation and placement coordination.

In terms of the measures of success of the program, we would like to include a few comments. According to the statistics and evaluations, our participants developed in many areas, including language development, personal awareness and self-esteem, employment success, pursuit of further education and training and enhanced integration into the community.

In addition, other successes resulted, successes which could easily be shared by all LINC communities across the province. One of these universally beneficial results was our ability to increase the awareness of public and private-sector businesses in Windsor and district regarding the skills, talents, abilities and potentials of new immigrants. Our program set out not only to advocate on behalf of all LINC-eligible participants in an effort to increase their employment opportunities, but also to provide practical assistance to employers by making them aware of a source of qualified, suitable, and most desirable applicants to consider when positions become available. Integration is a two-way street and we attempted to cover both approaches to its solution in order to achieve it.

Another valuable success of our program which could and should clearly be widely applicable in LINC programs, was the efforts made toward promoting equality of treatment and opportunity for, in our case, racial minorities, but generally, for immigrants to Canada. The Connections Program contributed to positive race relations by promoting a more genuine and realistic appreciation and understanding of Canadian immigrant populations.

### **Lesson Plan**

Because our Connections Program focussed on employment-oriented language instruction, many of our classes were dedicated to hands-on activities that would aid the participants in seeking and maintaining employment, not only

in the short term, but also in the future. That is, the concepts underlying employment-related activities were discussed. Several approaches and/or techniques were presented which would be useful in a variety of situations and in an ever-changing job market.

One such example was the preparation of cover letters. This activity was approached as follows:

1. The purpose and, thus, the necessity of cover letters was discussed. Participants were advised to always send a cover letter with a resume.
2. The following cover letter structure (a structure which, in fact, can be used generally in business communication) was presented:
  - A. Paragraph 1 to include: a statement of intent, why you are writing (specifically, here, to apply for a job); the exact name of the position as advertised; the source of the job advertisement; the date of the advertisement
  - B. Paragraph 2 to include: an overview/summary of your qualifications, skills, education/training, experience as it relates to the job being advertised
  - C. Paragraph 3 to include a polite closing, a thanks for the employer's consideration of the application, an offer of availability for an interview
3. After the mechanics were discussed, a careful analysis of the language of cover letters was made. In an effort to allow participants

to write original and effective letters, several examples of old (dated) letters and then more recently produced letters were presented and discussed. Changes in the use of language over time were noted. This entailed a brief historical perspective on the "balance of power", or the social nature of language use, in business communication. Language associated with the dated correspondence was commented on (items such as: Dear Sir, Faithfully yours, I would be grateful to you if; Would you honour me with a response, etc.). The shift to more modern communication practices was noted through an examination of the language used. The absence of social distinctions between writer and reader and the use of language which fails to assume gender, more precisely and directly states intention/need, and which "promotes" the writer's cause (especially in the case of cover letters) were discussed.

4. With the appropriate "tools" in place (structure and language), participants were asked to respond to ads from newspapers, brochures, journals and the Internet which were related to their particular areas of expertise. Several were completed and critiqued in class. Finally, participants were asked to write a cover letter for their language workplace placements.

*Ann Hedley,  
English/Placement Coordinator/  
WEST/LERN Project, Windsor*

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In an effort to allow participants to write original and effective letters, several examples of old (dated) letters and then more recently produced letters were presented and discussed.

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The absence of social distinctions between writer and reader and the use of language which fails to assume gender, more precisely and directly states intention/need, and which "promotes" the writer's cause (especially in the case of cover letters) were discussed.

# LERN Helps Foreign-Trained Engineers

The Peel Adult Learning Centre's LERN Project was designed to teach the language necessary to conduct a successful job search and function effectively in the Canadian workplace. It was determined that the appropriate target group would be 24 engineers with different educational levels, who were benchmarked at a post-LINC 5 level, and interested in finding employment.

## Goal

The goal of the two 12-week pilots was to facilitate the transition from (LINC Level 5) classroom to workplace for adult participants. Many of these participants said that they did not know what to do with themselves after LINC.

A curriculum was developed to address the linguistic, socio-cultural and employment needs of newcomers in Canada. The program was naturally divided into language, job search and technology components, each with its own socio-cultural underpinnings. Classroom sessions were held at the Peel Adult Learning Centre where an existing LINC program, levels 1-5, operates. One difference between the two programs, however, was the different expectations between LINC and LERN. For example, the LERN project was a lot more strict about attendance. This created a problem for parents trying to get their children to a daycare (because childminding is offered in LINC, but not LERN) and make it to class by 9 a.m. every morning.

## Instructor Background

Two instructors and a training consultant were hired with employment/ESL backgrounds.

## Results

By the end of the course, all participants improved by at least one benchmark in one language area, all attended an ISO 9000 workshop and all earned a WHMIS certificate. Ninety percent of the project participants expressed a commitment to actively seeking employment and created action plans (both short- and long-term). Fifty percent found meaningful jobs by the end of the session, and all learned seven technologies used in the workplace.

A representative from Brampton Labour Adjustment who works normally works with unionized employees who are laid off explained workplace law to the LERN program participants.

A representative from Peel Volunteer Centre also visited the class to discuss opportunities there.

## Learner Responses

When asked to write a journal response to the question "How do you feel coming into this class?," one participant wrote:

"It is an opportunity for me to learn how to succeed, to improve my language, to understand a new world with its people, to know more about myself, and to discover my real potential; I've had plenty of information about job markets. I learned how to write my resume and cover letter. Believe it or not, before this class, I didn't know what is cover letter and resume. I am glad to study in this new pilot program ...it gave me the feeling that I become more confident about job-searching process in new country."

The LERN project, however, was not without challenges. Control groups seemed to cause dissonance within the structure of the program. Last-minute changes to instructions, marketing, recruitment and assessments from CIC created a lot of problems too. And, by the time we got our web site up and running, the program had already finished.

I think my project was a huge success and I was hoping to continue this program as part of LINC.

*Effat Ghassemi,  
LINC Program Manager,  
Peel Adult Learning Centre, Brampton*

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Fifty percent found meaningful jobs by the end of the session, and all learned seven technologies used in the workplace.

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The LERN project, however, was not without challenges. Control groups seemed to cause dissonance within the structure of the program.

# LPeel Adult Learning Centre

## Sample Week 3 Schedule

	9:00-10:30	10:45-12:15	1:00-2:30
<b>Monday</b>	1. Phrasal Verbs	2. Computers – MS Word Writing Assignment	3. Telephone Calls to Employers – Discussion
<b>Tuesday</b>	4. Telephone Activity – practising with a partner	5. Vocabulary – Skills and Skills Scenarios	6. Employment Standards discussion
<b>Wednesday</b>	7. Employment Standards preparation	8. Computers – MS Word Tables Assignment	9. Resume Action Verbs/Resume Overview
<b>Thursday</b>	10. Resume Overview – Functional vs. chronological	11. Memo Writing	12. Employment Standards preparation
<b>Friday</b>	13. Resume – summary of qualifications/skills summary	14. Presentations – Employment Standards	15. Internet – Email and Search Engines

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Use appropriate expressions to respond to unexpected questions and comments.

Note: This material might require more or less than five days depending on the class level. Our Session 1 class took more than a week, and our Session 2 class took a week or less.

### Appendix I

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• experience in a simulated interview</li> <li>• speak with some comfort on an unfamiliar topic (“thinking on one’s feet”)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognize and respond to verbal cues</li> <li>• use appropriate expressions to respond to unexpected questions and comments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communication to convey information i.e. fax, phone, e-mail</li> <li>• use acceptable modes of expression courtesy</li> </ul>
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### Resources

- [www.kwmc.ca](http://www.kwmc.ca)
- The Internet
  - Directories, newspapers, publications, annual reports
  - Employment Resource Centres
  - Get Wired, You’re Hired – Mark Swartz
  - Video: Job Hunting: The Basic Fundamentals – Canadian Learning Company
  - Essential Skills for the Workplace – Level Two
  - Company Application Forms

### Sample Demonstration Tasks:

- Research a company they are interested in working for. This may include an information interview. Document findings in a paper and present to the class using a variety of media.
- Write a resume describing personal skills, education and experience.

## Appendix I

### Getting Down to Work

#### c. Getting on the Path

Understand the legislation related to job search and use strategies to deflect inappropriate questions or remarks).

Employability Outcomes	Related Language Structures and Functions	Socio-cultural Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access sector information (directories, newspaper, industry publications etc.)</li> <li>• Self-market their skills in cover letters, resumes, and phone work</li> <li>• Complete an application form</li> <li>• Identify different types of resumes and choose a suitable style</li> <li>• Prepare for an interview</li> <li>• Understand and be able to answer typical questions used in an interview</li> <li>• Use the proper format for a thank-you note</li> <li>• Clearly describe skills and work experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use appropriate language for obtaining and giving information in a variety of situations (job ad, cold call, directions)</li> <li>• record directions to a company</li> <li>• use a variety of appropriate verb tenses to describe work experience</li> <li>• use descriptive language to express ability in cover letters, resume, phone calls</li> <li>• use appropriate vocabulary to answer application questions</li> <li>• use phrasal verbs appropriately</li> <li>• clearly describe skills and experience in a job interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• choose appropriate mode and language of communication (small talk, political correctness, humour etc.)</li> <li>• use and understand common gestures</li> <li>• interpret correctly body language</li> <li>• understand the implications in dressing for success (or not)</li> <li>• understand the legislation related to job search and use strategies to deflect inappropriate questions or remarks)</li> </ul>

# London YMCA/YWCA LERN Project

From the day of arrival in Canada almost all immigrants express the concern that they must learn English “to get a job,” as this is what students identify as their first priority, work. And, in the current economy, it is very difficult for anyone to rise above the most menial type of labour without good language skills. But the job of getting a job is daunting. When we consider this, it becomes clear why a language transition to work is an important part of language instruction. In the classroom, we teach English as best we can but we cannot do justice to the myriad language demands of being in a workplace facing the communicative experiences peculiar to that job. Even when we try to bring employment topics and examples into our classroom lessons we fail to duplicate the real world. How can we predict with total accuracy what our students will face in the workplace unless we follow them there? So we did. For many years, the YMCA/YWCA have been providing work-placements to people who were unemployed or underemployed in our many different programs for Youth, Women and Immigrants.

The YMCA/YWCA’s LERN program’s priority was to find a relevant and appropriate placement for each individual, making a match as closely as possible to their former professional experience. For example, a person with a chemical engineering background worked in a chemical engineering position in a laboratory at the University of Western Ontario. The intent of the work-placement was to shift language training from a classroom environment with a general language focus to a workplace environment with a job language focus. The work-placement provided the context for focused language instruction and the demands of the work-placement increased and reinforced learning. Many of the participants left their work placement with a more realistic view of what skills were required and what strengths or weaknesses they had, giving them the ability to set more realistic goals.

Each work-site language teacher had a university degree with TESL training and experience working with immigrants and multicultural issues. They visited each participant at the

location of his/her work-placement for a minimum of two hours a week. A sample meeting for on-site language instruction included a brief meeting with the supervisor to identify any problems or concerns. The participant was required to keep a language journal identifying language difficulties they were experiencing, appropriate vocabulary, functional language, relaxed English and idioms, job search related language, all of which may have confused the participant through the week. For example, one person was asked how she found her boss? Her response was down the hall and around the corner. The co-worker laughed. Of course the co-worker meant “Did the student like her boss?”

How successful was the program? No doubt we felt it was effective and successful in terms of our participants immediately gaining Canadian work experience and reference letters. In addition, Agriculture Canada and Revenue Canada hired their participants on a contractual basis. Others, based on the perspective gained through the work-placement, made informed decisions to focus on other types of employment or in some cases, other cities. Many became more focused on finding work and with new confidence in their ability. Some participants went back to the classroom as the work placement reinforced their need for more English language training. The administration, teachers and participants are all eagerly anticipating the renewal of this program. It acted as a goal for our existing LINC students and provided a rewarding extension to our language classes.

*Ann-Marie Gdela  
Placement Co-ordinator  
London YMCA/YWCA*

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For example, a person with a chemical engineering background worked in a chemical engineering position in a laboratory at the University of Western Ontario.

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The participant was required to keep a language journal identifying language difficulties they were experiencing, appropriate vocabulary, functional language, relaxed English and idioms, job search related language, all of which may have confused the participant through the week.

# YMCA-YWCA of London Employment Initiatives

## Curriculum for On-site Work Placement Language Instruction (LINC 4 & 5)

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The work-site LINC teacher will also determine the specific language needs of participants based on an assessment of their individual language ability and prior experience.

### Description of the Program and its Purpose

This program will put participants in a work placement related as closely as possible to their former professional experience. The intent of the work placement is to shift language training from a classroom environment with a general language focus to a workplace environment with a job language focus. The emphasis will be on language skills development related to and used in a job situation. The needs of each student will be identified and developed as the specific placement requires. The work-site LINC teacher will also determine the specific language needs of participants based on an assessment of their individual language ability and prior experience. The work placement will provide the context for focused language instruction and the demands of the work placement will increase and reinforce learning.

### Lesson Format and Procedures

The LERN work placement program places students in non-wage work placements for a period of six to twelve weeks. The work-site language teacher will meet with the student prior to the placement to assess his/her level of language and individual needs. However, the

majority of language instruction will take place at the work-site. Therefore, language instruction will be one-on-one unless more than one participant is placed at a work site.

The work-site language teacher will visit each participant at the location of his/her work placement for a minimum of two hours a week. Each meeting will involve:

- a discussion with the employer or supervisor to address any problems or concerns related to the participant's language ability
- a meeting and discussion with the participant which will include: 1) a review of previous concerns and progress 2) a discussion of items noted by the participant in his/her work journal 3) a lesson related to needs identified (currently or previously) 4) an appointment arranged for the following week with any follow-up issues noted
- contact time with students may also include communications and assistance by telephone or e-mail or a lesson at another location such as at the YMCA-YWCA to use the computer lab. Students can request additional instruction or help with a specific topic or concern including job search issues such as updating a resume.

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The LERN work placement program places students in non-wage work placements for a period of six to twelve weeks.

### Placement Outcomes and Competencies

- Ask and answer questions about duties and responsibilities in the job.
- Understand instructions related to work duties.

### Performance Criteria: Structures and Expression

- May use structures such as: What would you like me to do now? Did I... correctly? I finished ... ing. What else would you like me to do?
- Responds with the appropriate action to instructions such as, "Would you give X a hand with the filing?" I need you to type this letter? "Finish this repair and then report back to me."

## Placement Outcomes and Competencies

- Understand and use job-specific vocabulary, words and phrases.
- Read labels, forms, instruction manuals or other materials in the workplace or related to the workplace.
- Complete, in writing, forms, schedules, letters, timetables and other materials in the workplace.
- Use repetition and rephrasing to clarify information.
- Interact orally with co-workers in typical work situations.
- Ask for permission.
- Understand more relaxed English and idioms spoken by co-workers.
- Use appropriate language while taking the necessary steps to pursue an ongoing job search.
- Identify and, as much as possible, correct persistent errors in own English which cause breakdown in communication.
- Improve other language skills (use of grammar, pronunciation, cultural norms with expressions of idioms) and identified as areas needing improvement.

## Performance Criteria: Structures and Expression

- Can describe actions performed at work or describe an activity on the job site, for example, "I completed the year-end reports and calculated all the late payments."
- Can follow written instructions left by supervisor or read directions on a photocopy machine.
- Completes a checklist of items delivered or fills out a chart recording duties finished.
- May use structures such as: "Did you say...," "You mean you went me to ... ?," "Let me get this straight. First I put the names on each form, then I file them over there?"
- This will include small talk on breaks and at lunch, asking co-workers for help, and offering assistance to co-workers.
- May use structures such as: May I go now? Is it alright if I take my break later?
- The participant will identify and record idioms and relaxed pronunciation examples as he/she encounters them at work and clarify them with the work-site teacher.
- The participant will be able to read and understand the language of job advertisements in his/her field of work, will be able to tactfully request a letter of reference, write an appropriate thank you note following the placement, update his/her resume and identify appropriate steps to continue the job search.
- The participant will discuss problems he/she encounters and address language solutions through instruction with the work-site teacher.
- The participant will work closely with the work-site teacher to make the most of the language learning opportunities while on placement.

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May use structures such as: "Did you say...," "You mean you went me to ... ?," "Let me get this straight. First I put the names on each form, then I file them over there?"

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The participant will identify and record idioms and relaxed pronunciation examples as he/she encounters them at work and clarify them with the work-site teacher.

## General Outcome: Overall Language Ability

At the end of LINC 4/5 work placement language instruction learners will be able to function more comfortably and capably in a work environment and communicate better with co-workers and supervisors. They will improve their ability to follow instructions, ask and answer questions about work duties, talk about their job activities with appropriate vocabulary, read simple materials and instructions related to their work, and complete written forms and reports as related to their work. They will also be able to determine in what ways their own language ability is lacking and work to improve those areas. Participants should finish the work placement with specific plans and goals for their ongoing job search or identify and pursue additional English language instruction if necessary for their career.

### Performance Outcomes Language Focus: Items to help participants achieve the outcomes

The purpose of the LERN project's work-site language instruction component is to deliver English language teaching to participants at LINC levels 4 & 5 as defined by LINC guidelines, and Canadian Language Benchmarks, with content individualized as necessary for individual work settings. The language focus will include the following items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

**vocabulary** specific to the placement (needed to identify specific machinery and equipment, to give and receive instructions, to describe job-specific topics, to comprehend reading materials encountered and to complete materials in writing),

**functional language** related to daily routine in the work placement (for example: words and phrases used to ask for assistance, request supervision, clarify a task, take orders on the phone, ask for repetition, and so on. Often such language includes particular opening, connecting and closing expressions ("gambits") used especially for that function.),

**relaxed English and idioms** (as encountered during interactions with co-workers, customers, supervisors and managers who speak English as a first language. This type of language often presents great difficulty when second language learners interact with native speakers of English in real life situations.)

**job search related language** as needed for the student to pursue further job search activities. This may include a review of in-class job search topics such as interviews, Canadian culture and methods of job search or understanding the language of the Want Ads. It may also involve applied concerns such as asking for a letter of reference or updating a resume.

**error analysis and correction** (as determined by difficulties encountered with communication on the work site. In addition to the teacher's diagnostic evaluation of areas of need, these problem areas will be identified through meetings with the employer or supervisor directly involved with the participant and the participant him/herself. It may include grammatical errors such as use of verb tenses, pronunciation errors or a lack of knowledge in the other skill areas listed.)

Although the job placement experience should enrich the participant's language in all skill areas, the majority of performance outcomes will be in the areas of speaking and listening. These will probably be the areas of greatest concern and need as the work placement will require the participant to use English in real life situations and to understand English spoken with typical relaxed pronunciation and idiomatic expressions. The English needed for reading and writing tasks will vary greatly depending on the type of job placement and the duties performed by the participant.

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Participants should finish the work placement with specific plans and goals for their ongoing job search or identify and pursue additional English language instruction if necessary for their career.

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Speaking and listening will probably be the areas of greatest concern and need as the work placement will require the participant to use English in real life situations and to understand English spoken with typical relaxed pronunciation and idiomatic expressions.

**A sample meeting for On-site language instruction may include:**

- A brief meeting with a supervisor which identifies that the participant needs to ask for help more frequently.
- An introductory discussion with the student in which the student describes and discusses his/her activities and concerns since the last meeting. The participant also asks for help to learn some specific verbs for actions performed while working on accounts (for example).
- A lesson on some specified verbs or an appointment to study these in the next meeting (if extensive research is required by the teacher),
- A discussion with the participant in which the problem of asking for help is addressed by a short lesson on expressions used to ask for help and practice in doing so,
- A review of items noted in the language journal including any idioms heard and recorded or any expressions which are confusing to the participant,
- Additional discussion or instruction as the time allows,
- An appointment made for the next meeting and suggestions of the work-site teacher that the student do further practice or “home-work.”

*Jinny Behrens  
On-site instructor*

# LERNing from Language Testing

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Tests were administered by a group of seven CLBA certified assessors who visited LERN sites across the province to administer the CLBA, content language tests and an evaluation survey prepared by Power Analysis.

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Test sessions were held for the most part in the classroom setting of each LERN provider and in most cases during regularly scheduled class times.

The piloting of Employment for Language Related Needs (LERN) projects was an innovative response to the need expressed during Settlement Renewal Consultations for improved access to employment for immigrant Canadians. Results of Newcomers Discussion Groups identified language and employment as two of the four most common settlement barriers. In discussions on issues concerning employment, focusing of language training on what newcomers require for effective job search and for carrying out chosen job/professions was recommended. (ICA Canada 1998 p.7). The LERN pilot called on language training providers to devise targeted programs that would address language for employability needs. The results of review of curricula of these projects show an encouraging start has been made in this work. A number of innovative, well-designed training programs have emerged, offering design models for future potential language training initiatives. As Cummins states, "The significance for policy resides in the fact that these (best practice) criteria can now be made available to all bidders for future LERN projects" (Cummins review). By definition, piloting implies a period of trial – of processes, procedures, methodology, material. The LERN initiative was a testing ground not only for new courses of instruction, but also for large scale evaluation of adult language training programs in Canada. Much has been learned through this piloting initiative that can provide a significant contribution to the future design of program and evaluation models.

Evaluation of the Language for Employment Related Needs projects has sought to determine the effectiveness of pilot programs by collecting qualitative and quantitative data with respect to a number of indicators. Among these are gains in language acquisition. CLBA Projects was contracted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to co-ordinate and administer testing protocol for LERN projects.

## Language Assessment

Power Analysis' evaluation framework posed the question, "To what extent has each LERN

project improved the language skills of participants?" To be considered, were post-project gains and comparison of experimental and control groups. The evaluation framework employed the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA) to measure project candidates' general language proficiency. Appreciating the limitations of a general proficiency test in measuring language acquisition relative to a contextualized training model, Power Analysis suggested the use of contextualized language tests to measure learners' language acquisition within the context of the subject matter of LERN programs – i.e. employability skills and in some cases sector or workplace specific language. The CLBA determined language proficiency relative to the Benchmarks criterion, while contextualized tests looked at acquisition of language for employability skills as defined in course objectives. This was an appropriate decision since gains in general language proficiency are not made quickly and the period of study for LERN projects ranged from 16 hours to five months.

Tests were administered by a group of seven CLBA certified assessors who visited LERN sites across the province to administer the CLBA, content language tests and an evaluation survey prepared by Power Analysis. Testing was held days, evenings and Saturdays during the period from August 28 to March 23. Seventy testing sessions were held to meet the requirements of pre/post and experimental and control groups. Test sessions were held for the most part in the classroom setting of each LERN provider and in most cases during regularly scheduled class times. On some occasions class time was extended, or testing conducted during two class sessions.

Assessors included CLBA training staff, CLTA assessors and assessors from Toronto YMCA A-LINC and York Region assessment centres. All were CLBA certified and experienced in working with ESL clients. Assessors were also trained to administer and score contextualized language tests for this project. This involved study of the nature of the tests, as well as discussion regarding optimum conditions and ways of

administering these tests. A core group of CLBA trainers and this consultant worked to devise a scale for scoring of responses to content language tests. This scale was tried out on a number of learner samples to establish its effectiveness in assessing test performance. A process of establishing inter-rater reliability followed, as all assessors worked with the scale to gain a common understanding of its application. It was decided that while all assessors would need to score the Listening/Speaking portion of the test, a core team would score the Reading and Writing to promote reliability. Following each test administration, assessors were required to return all tests and report results. Periodic meetings were held particularly in the early stages of the testing. All results reports were reviewed by the Project Manager and rescoring was done by assessors where indicated. All test results were collated and reported to Power Analysis.

## Language in Context Test Design

### Considerations

Best practices in language test design identify the need to create tests that are customized to fit the objectives of the training program, and the culture and ability levels of the learners. In the case of LERN pilots, a number of factors had to be considered in test design:

- Language level of learners as identified by CLBA scores
- Course objectives/learning outcomes as specified by providers for each separate pilot program model
- Relevance of all test items to employability – either generalized or occupation specific
- Length of the testing/evaluation process. Learners were required to spend up to 30 minutes completing an evaluation survey and up to two hours on the CLBA. Content tests had to provide useful information regarding language acquisition without taxing learners excessively.
- Testing situations – How much class time was available? Would testers and learners have to return to complete the test? Were facilities available and amenable to testing?
- Length and intensity of Program

## Process

Project Providers were expected to provide entry Benchmarks of their learners as well as Course Objectives for each of the program models provided. Many projects did so efficiently. Course objectives were studied and where necessary additional information including course materials was requested from providers. Test items were designed to reflect material submitted and factors described above. Both receptive-response and productive-response item prompts were used in all tests to address Listening/Speaking, Reading and Writing skills. To maximize content coverage and score generalizability, principles of language test design recommend a variety of item types. All tests included all item types and employed the language of course content in item design. In addition, it was important to use similar task types to those included in the CLBA. Question types for LERN content tests included both discrete – point (multiple choice reading as in CLBA) and integrative tasks (written and conversational response). Listening/ Speaking items were administered in conjunction with the CLBA interview, Reading and Writing tasks with administration of CLBA Reading tests.

## Conclusions

Language testing for the LERN evaluation was a complex undertaking. It involved considerable and extensive scheduling, very extensive record keeping, test design, assessor training, test scoring. Much has been gained from the LERN pilot and evaluation experience. Models for employability-targeted language training have been tested and reviewed by providers and evaluators. The LERN Sharing Fora reported many of the positive results and lessons learned in piloting. It is hoped that study of evaluation and testing processes will yield further insight into strategies for effective program delivery and evaluation.

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Carolyn Cohen, Consultant  
Testing Manager

# The Evaluation of LERN

The central problem for all outcome evaluations – evaluations that are meant to determine if the program’s objectives have been achieved – is to isolate the impact of the program from everything else that could bring about a change in the outcome of interest. Consider, for example, an ESL class where the average pre-program language level was at Canadian Language Benchmark 5 for listening/speaking. If a post-program assessment found the average post-program CLB rose to 7, should this improvement be construed as proof that the language program was effective in improving listening/speaking skills?

It is tempting to say yes. The students were at level 5, they took the class and now they are at level 7; obviously the class made the difference. But wait. The newcomers who took this class, upon arriving in Canada, became immersed in a sea of English. Just living in Ontario, interacting with English-speakers, watching TV, listening to the radio, and innumerable other activities could bring about considerable improvements in English language capabilities. All these activities could have caused some or even all the improvement noted.

To isolate the impact of the ESL course, we need to determine what would have happened in its absence. The only way to do this is to compare outcomes of the students with those of an equivalent group of people who have not participated (control group). The best way to ensure equivalence is to randomly select students for the class from a pool of eligible newcomers. Those not selected become the control group, whose post-program listening/speaking score represents what the students would have achieved without taking the class.

All this may sound academic, but it is of crucial importance to making informed public policy decisions. In the case of LERN, CIC spent several hundred thousand dollars to fund pilot projects to test the best models or ideas for providing employment-related ESL. The department also funded an evaluation to provide objective and reliable evidence on the merit of these ideas. By employing a weak evaluation design, an evaluator could easily do a great

disservice to the department, the taxpayer and ultimately to newcomers who will be taking these courses in the future.

No doubt most service providers felt they were doing the control group a great disservice by denying them entry into their LERN classes. They assumed their classes would be successful, so denying anyone access was a penalty. This is an understandable sentiment, but it is not one that an independent evaluator can share. In fact, it is precisely what the evaluator must test. Although it sounds heretical to organizations that provide this training, it could be the case that a course makes participants worse off than they would have been otherwise, so the control group could end up better off. This turned out to be the case for several LERN projects.

The results of the LERN evaluation were a textbook case of how the evaluator would have provided the wrong policy advice to the government had a pre-test/post-test evaluation model been employed. We would have concluded that LERN brought about significant gains in general language capabilities, when in fact it didn’t. Or more accurately, the students in the LERN classes were no better off on average in terms of general language skills than they would have been had LERN not existed.

Does this mean LERN failed? Absolutely not. LERN courses were intended to do much more than improve general language skills. Most focused on particular skills or content areas not necessarily related to language, such as occupation-specific vocabulary, job search assistance or even important job skills such as computer proficiency. The same strong “experimental” evaluation design (defined as one with random assignment to a program or control group) showed that most LERN projects brought about significant improvements in content knowledge among its students. Preliminary data also suggest considerable improvements in employability among LERN students.

Control groups will not be a feature of every future evaluation. They are best used in the context of pilot projects, which are supposed to be policy experiments designed to test new

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Control groups will not be a feature of every future evaluation. They are best used in the context of pilot projects, which are supposed to be policy experiments designed to test new ideas.

ideas. This is what LERN was meant to be, although many agencies used LERN to fund existing courses. In the context of existing programs, control groups tend to disrupt established routines. An evaluation of LINC, for example, would likely use a “comparison” group (defined as a group similar to LINC students who took no LINC class) to help isolate the impact of the program; sophisticated statistical methods would be required to account for the differences between LINC and non-LINC students.

Program evaluation was new to most organizations involved with LERN. It will be a requirement in the future as well, not only for accountability, but more importantly to help ensure CIC programs deliver the best possible services to newcomers who rely on them to settle into their new country. We trust that, upon reflection, LERN organizations will conclude that the requirements of the evaluation were reasonable and worth the effort to help CIC make well informed decisions on the future of LERN.

*Bob Power, Evaluator  
Power Analysis*

# Fora on LERN Pilots

## Summary of Main Themes

### A1. Language focus – occupation specific

- difficult to have a common curriculum with a varied occupation focus, so if have students with specific occupational interests, need a mix of standard curricula and personal tailoring (in and out of class) to fit the occupation
- on-the-job experience during course is critical to workplace language uptake and to reality test readiness of students
- use former newcomers, now in the occupational business, as speakers for motivation, topical learning and empathy

### A2. Language focus – general language

- address common workplace terminology drawing from available material (texts, company publications, web sites, etc.) and from on-site employer sources
- address cultural orientation, i.e., Canadian norms, issues in the workplace
- address workplace rules, laws and strategies to handle issues, e.g., harassment

### A3. Language in the workplace

- role playing (with VT & AT) helpful to giving pre-experience and problem solving orientation

### B1. Eligibility requirements

- CLBA benchmark requirements varied considerably. Because of the pressure on numbers (due to evaluation design), some pilots had to accept a wide range of language proficiencies which caused problems
- in general, should have CLBA level (L/S = 5/6, writing = 4) to really advance newcomers in language of work, but also need a clarification of the use of these levels, i.e., prefer to use the different specific skill descriptions (reading, writing, etc.) for better specificity of requirements

- need stronger links to assessment centres

### B2. Attracting/holding candidates/dropout reasons

- main reasons for dropout seemed to be:
  - creating the lottery pool (for evaluation purposes) took longer than some could wait for, so they found alternate sources of language education, etc.
  - students obtained jobs
  - family pressures, especially for women, e.g., lack of childcare
  - program shoppers, i.e., looking at different programs to meet needs
  - time period (i.e., September to Christmas) not conducive since work focus more likely then, or the course was perceived as too long
  - in general, males more inclined to dropout due to pressures of needing a job

### C1. Partnerships with private sector

- pilot providers able to build on history/existing relations with a number of companies
- used 'world skills' organization for job-search skilling (very good techniques)
- need to be clear about SPO and employer expectations and terms of reference (some type of letter or agreement preferred), guidelines on responsibilities of employers would be helpful
- this pilot can raise pent-up demand among other workers who have insufficient language skills and who are already/recent citizens (and hence not eligible for this program), especially in manufacturing settings

### C2. Partnerships with other agencies

- good success with employment placement agencies

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- good use of volunteer organizations for placements and for creating awareness of Canadian volunteer culture and practices

### **C3. Partnerships with funders**

- most often with school boards, colleges
- key issue for future is whether and how to coordinate with HRDC to address gaps in programming and to respond to local needs

### **D. Placements**

- job placement provides a reality check of what is needed and how ready the student is
- provides a degree of experience and an important Canadian entry in the CV
- regular (weekly) experience in the workplace brought great benefits. In general, start the experience early in the process and continue throughout
- placement in regulated professions or highly competitive ones (e.g., engineering) can be difficult, in part due to concerns for secrecy
- where unionized, must involve unions (preferably beforehand to gain acceptance)
- placement initiative can either be self managed by student (with some guidance) or highly coordinated by project coordinator
- the experience raised confidence that the newcomer can work and move ahead with further job search

### **E. Mentorship arrangements**

- Optional approaches for mentoring included: the teacher; project coordinator; employer professional (e.g., doctor); previous newcomers now employed who volunteered; specific technical staff in an employer environment during placement (e.g., IT staff)

### **F. Job search**

- resume/CV preparation and other job search techniques were standard in pilots
- need emphasis on the Canadian cultural norms of promoting yourself for a job
- mock job interviews helpful
- used job fairs and newspaper ads

### **F. Visits to job sites and guest speakers**

- guest speaker approaches included: specialists/professionals in related occupations; previous newcomers now employed in professions or who own a small business; placement/job search agencies; government workplace policy experts; volunteer agencies
- traded speakers with other classes or provided open access to other classes, e.g., in LINC or other centres

### **G. Use of videotaping/coaching**

- valuable application in rehearsing job interviews for terminology as well as style, providing feedback and building confidence
- used in 'before and after' approaches
- used to rehearse telephone activity for job search, etc.

### **H. Recruitment/outreach**

- promotion activities included: existing LINC, language education programs, clubs/associations with ethnic orientations, other agencies, assessment centres
- used print literature (brochure, etc.)
- developed joint promotion/recruitment initiative (one city) and all pilots shared in directing candidates to most relevant pilots
- open house, live faculty presentations
- used HRDC distribution channel
- word-of-mouth also effective (sometimes best)

### **General Comments and Suggestions on the Future**

1. Need a more complete communications approach, especially in lead-up to the program to address expectations, terms of reference, standards (e.g., allowable budget levels, etc.).
2. Process of responding to the pilot, preparing for and launching the pilot needed more time, especially in the lead-up.
3. Overall project needed a good full year to run well.

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4. Timing selected (April kick off, September course launch) not a good fit with student and employment activity and availability patterns.
5. A key measure of integration is employment, so our language and other integration programs in general, should have some focus on employment and desirably, with a range of occupational areas.
6. The student motivation for this type of course will likely be 'employment' or at least enhanced employability. However, we have to ensure that the course is focused on stronger language proficiency, albeit using occupational vocabulary and partial job experience as significant dimensions of the design.
7. This project requires a team of skills that include: language skill teaching, job search preparation, work experience placement, personal counselling, specific occupational expertise/experience, workplace policy experts, and experienced newcomers.
8. Temporary workplace placement is critical and should ideally be part of every course.
9. The issue of whether there is a large demand or not is unresolved. The pilot experience which had difficulty reaching targets and dropouts suggests lower demand than thought, but, the range of legitimate and observable reasons provided for the lower numbers suggests the experience may be inconclusive, e.g. the demand may vary by time of year. Certainly the expression of demand should be realistically stated and tested.
10. The experience of the pilot is too short to assess real shifts in language proficiency.
11. The resources provided range from somewhat tight to inadequate for the scope/objectives of the pilot.
12. It is easier to deal with a uniform group (i.e., same CLBA level, same general workplace or occupation focus) but if not totally doable, attempt similar CLBA entry levels and tailor individual counselling to fit different occupations.

## Evaluation Approach and Results

1. The evaluation approach was scientifically rigorous and credible, but was not well understood at the start, e.g., orientation should have been longer and included many aspects of these learning fora.
2. The double-size pool requirement (for control group) was a significant burden for most areas. Even more difficult was the painful task of telling 50% of prospective students that they couldn't access the pilot.
3. The post-course assessment of language proficiency is at a highly sensitive time. The results (if not progressive) can be highly discouraging. We need a better way to deal with this.
4. Pilot SPOs were pleased with the positive findings that showed significant success with the three C's: i.e.,
  - *confidence* in being able to search for employment;
  - *content* comfort and fluency with employment/workplace vocabulary;
  - *continuance* of employment in previous field/occupation was much more likely.
5. We need a success model that has more than the measurement of language proficiency. An example could be at the end of the course:
  - some level of better language benchmark;
  - finishing with a personal job planning package, i.e., CV, goals, list of employers, interview methodology, relevant rules and policies package, etc.;
  - a positive work placement experience as part of the course;
  - greater confidence.

*Lyle McCoskey,  
Interquest Consulting*

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# Lessons LERNeD

Robert Courchène<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

After reading through certain reports on the LERN Projects, it would be tempting to conclude that CIC really did not receive a very high return on its considerable financial investment. Such a conclusion, while tempting, would be neither accurate nor justified. According to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (1998), a pilot project is “an experimental undertaking or test, especially, in advance of a larger one” (p.1100). Based on consultations around the province, CIC decided to fund a number of special projects to meet what was perceived as a most important need – language training in and for the workplace. Both learners and teachers had identified work-related language and skills as being key factor in obtaining and maintaining a job in the new country of residence. CIC hypothesized, and rightly so, that by funding a number of innovative projects, it would be able to obtain examples of program models and curricula that could then be used on either a province-wide scale or in related contexts, thereby justifying the outlay of financial resources.

In what follows, I will confine my remarks to topics or aspects of topics not examined in other articles in this special issue. In doing so, my purpose is not to assign blame but rather to improve the delivery of such programs.

## Pilot Projects

Returning to the definition of pilot project as being “an experimental undertaking,” it was evident from reading the reports on the different projects that all the SPOs did not clearly understand what was involved or what CIC expected of them in terms of a pilot project. Using a LINC curriculum in the workplace does not qualify as a pilot project unless it is being implemented in an innovative manner in response to the needs of the specific context. What would have helped not only the SPOs but also the Selection Committee would have been a clearer definition of ‘pilot project’ – how it differed from the regular

LINC programs, areas for innovation, organizational structure, etc. (In a number of areas related to the project, clearer definitions of terms/expectations/procedures would have been helpful). Providing SPOs with examples of innovative program in this area (e.g., Jupp, Belfiore, Goldberg) would also have been very helpful.

Pilot programs are almost by definition messy – they often take longer than planned and come in over budget. The LERN Projects were no exception in terms of the latter criterion. One of the important lessons that I hope has been learned is that more lead time is necessary for the SPOs to prepare a response to the Request for Proposals (RFP) but also that more time is required between the awarding of the proposals and the actual implementation of the pilots. If one has to prepare a special curriculum (work on such documents usually only begins seriously after approval), one needs time to prepare the overall and specific objectives, find and develop materials, pilot them (under ideal conditions), etc. In many cases, SPOs did not have the time to adequately prepare for their pilots since contracts were awarded at the last minute or changes had to be made to the intake time thereby forcing a change in plans. While such situations are characteristic of pilot programs, in the next phase CIC must take this fact into consideration, and SPOs need to be aware that in proposing projects, they should have a Plan A-Plan B strategy to meet changing needs and demands.

## Innovation – A non-linear process

From conception to implementation, innovation is not always a linear process. Creating materials for use in new learning contexts involves a certain amount of trial and error; predicted needs turn out to be non needs and marginal needs often turn out to be eminently important. The LERN Projects were a first step in the development of new materials and models for language in and for the workplace. A good

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example of this type of non-linearity has been the piloting of the Automatic Reservation System developed by the Peel Board of Education in both Hamilton and Toronto. What worked very well in Peel had to be modified to meet the needs of the Hamilton Board. A number of problems arose with regard to the technology, the programming, and the inputting and retrieval of information. As a result of the lesson learned from the Hamilton pilot, implementing the system in Toronto was carried out without any serious difficulties. Innovation in educational settings results from a series of pilots in the same way that the development of new drugs result from a number of trials. Failure and success are both integral parts of innovation; we must have realistic expectations as to what will result from pilots.

## Evaluation

Easily the most controversial and contested part of the LERN Projects, evaluation remains an important and essential part of pilot projects. Despite considerable opposition to it, I believe that a number of important lessons have been (should have been) learned. First, as many perceive evaluation as threatening (If my pilot project receives a poor evaluation, will I also lose all my LINC programs?, or What if on the day the evaluator comes in the lesson does not go well; will the whole project be judged on the basis of one lesson?), it must be explained to the SPOs the purpose of the evaluation and the use the funder will make of the results (Power Analysis did this through its meetings with the SPOs). This type of preparation is doubly important for SPOs that have never been evaluated in the past. As one who is evaluated every time I teach a course, I understand the uneasiness and tension engendered by evaluation. Adequate preparation and information is the key to implementing evaluation processes.

Second, no single measure or evaluation model can capture the whole picture. From reading the different reports in this issue, it is evident that the evaluators', the SPOs, and the students' perceptions of the courses and their successes were not the same. This is not to say that formal evaluation of the projects was flawed – not at all. Rather, to be able to capture in a more complete way what happened in the projects, we need to use a combination of

qualitative and quantitative measures. For example, it would have been possible to ask both students and teachers to keep diaries; i.e., students who found themselves in different types of placements – job shadowing, coop, work placements – could have been asked to keep a daily journal of their experiences. While such qualitative measures would not have provided information about language gains, the information gathered could have been used in setting up new pilot programs. Diaries, questionnaires, or interviews could also have been used with the control groups in the program. As there were no significant language gains (overall proficiency) within the control or experimental groups, it would have been interesting to know what the control members actually did to improve their language ability. What the evaluation process has shown is not that evaluation should not be done but rather that the types of evaluation carried out on the different projects (with the instruments used being context-sensitive) should be expanded to include both qualitative and quantitative measures. The more information gathered, the more likely future pilots will be successful.

Evaluation needs to be inclusive in terms of all stakeholders; in terms of the LERN Projects this would include, funder, evaluators, SPOs, employers, students, teachers, program administrators, selection committee, consuming public. The more people involved in the evaluation of the program, the better the chances that a more complete and integrated portrait of the different projects will result. For example, it would be informative to know whether the students who were in job placements and have now been hired by the company, or who have found employment elsewhere, are coping with the demands of the job (follow-up interviews with students, employers, and clients would facilitate this objective). Information from such sources can be fed back into both the content and design of future programs. Evaluation in its truest form is as much, if not more, pedagogical than evaluative in nature.

In evaluating pilots, it is essential to keep in mind the principal goal(s) of each project. As indicated in some of the reports, physical conditions, administration, support services, and pedagogical resources all had varying degrees of influence on the implementation of certain

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In evaluating pilots, it is essential to keep in mind the principal goal(s) of each project. As indicated in some of the reports, physical conditions, administration, support services, and pedagogical resources all had varying degrees of influence on the implementation of certain pilots.

pilots. For example, as many of the school boards across the province are undergoing amalgamation (70% of ESL programs are delivered by school boards according to the analysis conducted by Power Analysis for CIC), program delivery, though not the quality of teaching, was sometimes affected by this factor. While it is important to identify how such factors can affect program delivery so they can be controlled in the future, pilots must not be judged on the basis of such factors but rather on their pedagogical merit. Furthermore, in project evaluation, one must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. While a pilot as a whole might not merit replication, certain aspects of it may. Part of a curriculum, a specific technique, or an innovative technology could be integrated into all or a number of programs even though the curriculum as a whole could not be. Or, what had been learned from other projects could be integrated into a given project to make it worth replicating.

### Conclusion

LERN was the most ambitious pilot project ever undertaken by CIC; it was also the first to be evaluated in such a systematic and rigorous manner. While certain projects may not have met the expectations of all concerned, the lessons learned were most valuable if similar projects are to be undertaken in the future. Problems identified in the above text and in other articles should not detract from the overall importance of this initiative. If examined using the right lens, even the worst class, the most dismal failure, the most flawed experiments, provide the most insight, are the most useful for they provide us with information about what we thought should work but did not ( I am certainly not implying that LERN was a dismal failure). If we look behind the mirror of LERN, we will find much to reflect on, many lessons to be learned, and much inspiration for future initiatives.

Robert Courchène  
Second Language Institute  
University of Ottawa

### References

Barber, K. (Ed.), (1998). *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

- 1 It should be mentioned that I was a member of the committee that selected the pilot projects; I have also been a member of ORLAC for the past three years and have participated in a number of meetings and discussions concerning the LERN Projects. Some of the ideas expressed in this reflection have certainly come from other ORLAC members with whom I have discussed the LERN Projects. I would like to acknowledge their contribution (although I will not mention them by name).

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While not a LERN project, the following program offers workplace to newcomers at Levels 4 and 5.

## Steps to Employment Bridges Gap between LINC 4 & 5 and the Workplace

Two major barriers that have prevented new immigrants from obtaining work in their field have been lack of knowledge of their sector and lack of language skills. Citizenship and Immigration Canada has contracted Language Curricula Resources Training Consulting Ltd., LCRT, a team of educational consultants, to produce the curricula for Steps to Employment workshops to help orient newcomers to their sector in Ontario and develop their language skills.

The Steps to Employment workshops are unique in that they target newcomers with basic proficiency in English, Canadian Language Benchmark 4 & 5, and are compatible with the performance outcomes in the LINC Curriculum Guidelines. This early orientation for newcomers is crucial in helping them access employment in their field. Steps to Employment II workshops target newcomers who have training or experience in their home countries or a similar skill set required for either call centre workers, or entrepreneurs, or finance clerks. CIC has identified these three target occupational groupings because they reflect areas in the economy that are going through profound work process changes.

The workshops are divided into two modules each containing five units. The first five units concentrate on orientation to the participants' field of work and the last five units focus on occupation-specific language training and terminology. The workshops are designed as an intensive 50-hour program: 25 hours per week for two weeks but can be adapted to other program models. As the curricula is based on the LINC 4/5 Curriculum and CLB-based outcomes these workshops can easily be incorporated into LINC programs or any other language training programs based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks. The following is a synopsis of the workshop:

### Workshop Format

#### Component 1 – ORIENTATION

- labour market information & trends
- entry level qualifications for your job in Ontario
- employment rights & standards
- self-employment opportunities, requirements, & legal responsibilities
- training & upgrading

#### Component 2 - TERMINOLOGY

- basic workplace language
- basic workplace topics
- technical vocabulary
- health and safety vocabulary

The design and development of the workshop curricula occurred from February to May and field tested in June. During the different stages of the project, consultations with advisory committees have occurred. We believe that the inclusion of sector-specific representatives such as employers and workers as well as settlement workers and ESL instructors as members of the advisory committee, is critical to the success of this project.

LCRT Consulting has developed three workshop manuals. The learner workbook contains a variety of communicative exercises. The language learning tasks have been carefully crafted to reflect real life situations and activities. Throughout the learner workbook the vocabulary and the information will recur for reinforcement. Upon completion of the workshops, participants will receive certificates. The instructor's guide will contain detailed step-by-step lesson plans for each topic that describe tech-

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niques, activities, and extra materials for classroom use and a resource section. Workshop instruction is theme-based and the planned activities reflect a learner-centred approach. The Coordinator's guide has a step-by-step guide on how to implement the workshops into other programs. In November 2000, the manuals will become available for use.

LCRT Consulting has previously produced Steps to Employment I workshop manuals for computers, construction, and home health care. These manuals can be downloaded from Alphaplus at [www.alphaplus.ca](http://www.alphaplus.ca).

*Monika Etzler, Outreach and  
Recruitment Consultant  
LCRT Consulting*

**Materials  
for  
Review**

**Lee, William B., and John Sivell. *French Elementary Education and École Moderne*. Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 2000. 130 pages.**

Who was Célestin Freinet and what is the École Moderne? The short answers are that Célestin Freinet (1890-1996) was a French educator and the Ecole Modeme is a child-centred, social-activist education reform movement that he founded in the 1920s and still exists today. The long answers to these questions are the subject of this new volume, the sixth in the PDK International Studies in Education series, begun in 1994.

Readers will recognize regular Contact book reviewer, John Sivell, a Canadian who became a naturalized French Citizen. He discovered the École Moderne in the early 1980s through a copy of Freinel's L'Ecole Moderne Française that he read in connection with the comparative education class he was teaching at the Institute for American Universities in Aix-en-Provence.

**Ashworth, Mary (2000). *Effective Teachers, Effective Schools: Second-Language Teaching in Australia, Canada, England and the United States*. Toronto: Pippin. 173 pages.**

In this interesting international survey of educational policies, programs, and practices, Mary Ashworth demonstrates once again the wisdom and humanity that readers have come to expect of her. *Effective Teachers, Effective Schools* has two quite distinct but complementary foci that operate simultaneously: it is not only a compendium of factual information about English-as-a-Second-Language instruction in each of the countries under study, but also an insightful assessment of the contextual factors – social, cultural and historical – that have given rise to effective second-language education in each setting.

Some sections of the book are generally descriptive, such as chapter 1 on “History, Laws and Policies” or chapter 2 on “The Evolution of Policies”, but more often the style is analytical. For example, the chapter on “Students” explores policies and practices for the reception, placement and orientation of ESL students, based on the principle that “[s]chools that make an effort to welcome ESL students and ensure their needs are met reap rich rewards” (p. 71): the chapter’s survey of administrative strategies keeps returning to the win-win theme of individual students’ right to the best possible opportunity to flourish in their new home. And the chapter on “Programs” begins with an inquiry into “What Makes a Program Effective?” The answer to that question – that an acculturation model, with freedom for learners to “develop in two languages and two cultures” (p. 94), will probably be most satisfactory – sets a characteristically demanding standard for evaluation.

With the complexity of content that this book presents, I suspect that many readers will wish it had a thorough index of concepts and themes, which in fact is lacking and which would no doubt have made the text considerably easier to use as a research tool. Still, there are a number of very valuable appendices,

including a table of abbreviations, a country-by-country list of contributors (institutions, not individuals), and a detailed chapter-by-chapter outline of sources. And in fact the style of the book is certainly readable enough to make it a very welcoming resource.

Above all, each section of *Effective Teachers, Effective Schools* bears the mark of Mary Ashworth’s critical, witty and curious mind. She plainly respects good ESL teachers, admires effective ESL programs and policies, and is deeply concerned about the experience of ESL learners. As such, she is a powerful advocate for our profession, with the capacity to inspire us to our own very best practice. Bright little vignettes of practical experience highlight each segment of the book. When the author describes a school where “the walls between the foyer and office were papered with notices. All of them began with Don’t...” (p. 92), we are right there with her, experiencing the same emotions. When she recounts an interaction with a thoroughly insensitive administrator, prefacing her reply to that individual with the phrase, “After peeling myself off the ceiling” (p. 68), we know precisely how she felt. And when she concludes her book by addressing the reader directly, saying, “The future lies in your hands” (p. 144), we are immediately encouraged to accept that challenge by giving our best to our calling as ESL teachers.

This one book, therefore, repays reading on a number of levels. It offers a truly impressive documentation of ESL policies, programs and practices. Also, it develops a careful and insightful analysis of best practices. And finally, it presents an inspiring account of the challenges and rewards of our profession. Certainly, readers will come away from *Effective Teachers, Effective Schools* with a richly expanded understanding of what we do. This is a very good book.

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*John Sivell is a professor of Applied Language Studies at Brock University, St. Catharines.*