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ABSTRACT

A guide to program planning and administration of instruction in EWP (English as a second language (ESL) in the workplace combined with varying degrees of general ESL/orientation information) is intended for management and union representatives, EWP coordinators, and ESL administrators as well as teachers. Its primary purposes are to bring together issues, ideas, and work of importance in EWP in the form of descriptions of recent Canadian EWP programs and valuable work from other countries, to present specific classroom practice ideas, and to emphasize the importance of coordination and cooperation among the partners in EWP. The first three chapters discuss the participants in the process of developing and implementing EWP programs (learners, company, union, educational institution, and teachers), program negotiation between sponsor and provider, and educational need analysis. The subsequent chapters on curriculum development discuss designing a syllabus, developing materials, classroom sequences, and assessment and evaluation. A concluding chapter outlines questions and issues for further research. Lists of additional resources are appended. (MSE)

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# TEACHING ENGLISH in the WORKPLACE

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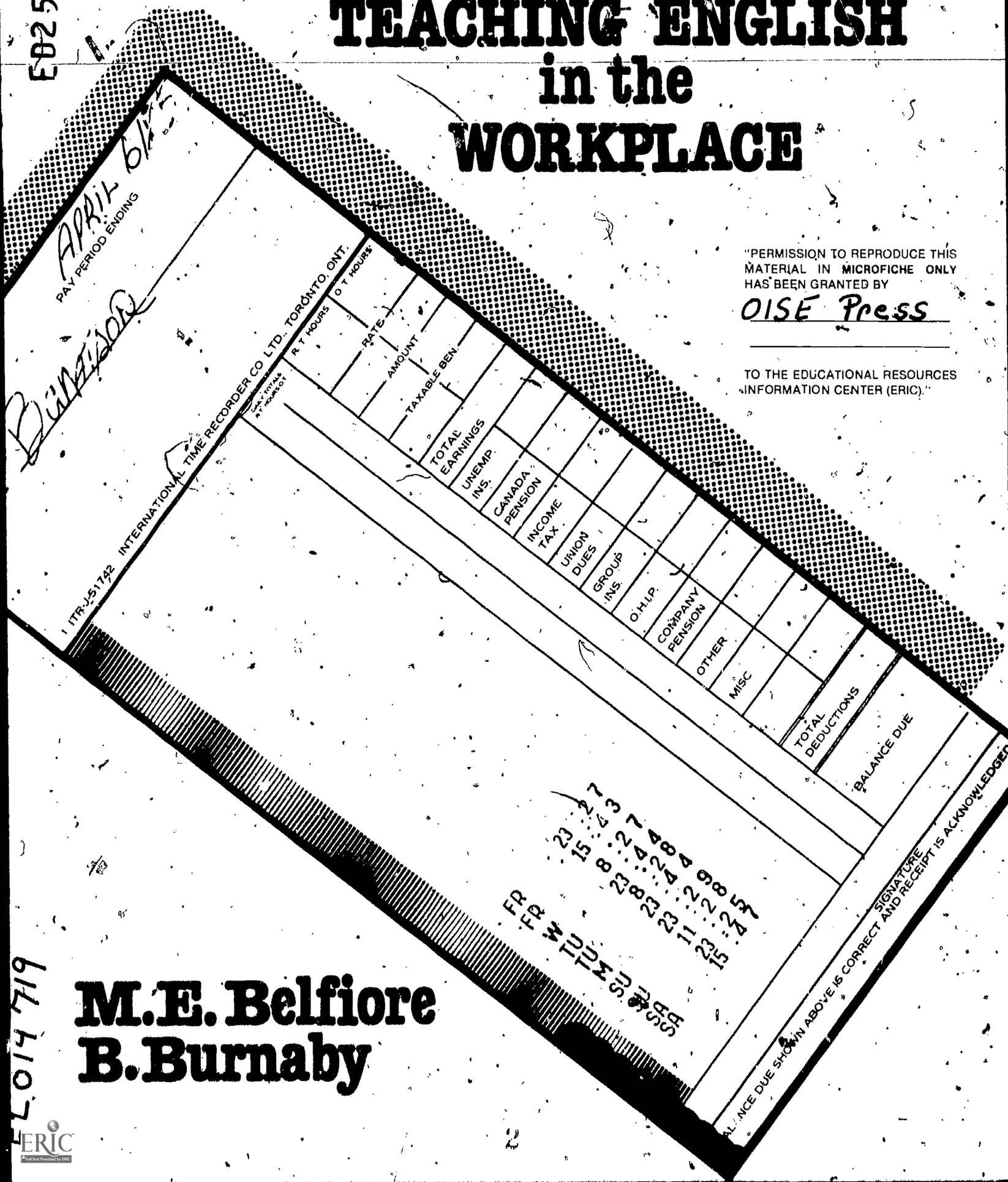


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# TEACHING ENGLISH in the WORKPLACE

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FL004719

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# INTRODUCTION

This book is written primarily for all of us who teach or are interested in teaching English as a second language in the workplace (EWP). It is hoped that management and union representatives, EWP coordinators and ESL administrators will also find the book helpful in planning and delivering courses for and in the industrial and service sectors.

As a term, English in the Workplace can include many types of courses from pre-vocational to adult basic education. In this book, EWP refers primarily to ESL courses which focus on communication in the workplace combined with varying degress of general ESL/orientation information. The learners are already employed and although the course may not be offered exactly at their worksite, it does address specific and current job communication problems. The EWP population is more frequently semi-skilled or unskilled, unlike English for Special Purposes (ESP) whose population usually needs language skills for further academic or work-related training in technical and professional fields. However, these distinctions should not be applied rigidly. As more varieties of ESL courses are offered in workplace settings, the boundaries between all these vocationally-oriented programs may become inappropriate and counter-productive. Whatever changes in courses may occur, the constellation of players and arrangements will remain -- sponsors, educational administrators, teachers and learners will still have to negotiate, determine needs, design materials and evaluate in a manner satisfactory to both worlds of education and employment.

The main purpose of this book is to bring together issues, ideas and work of importance in EWP. Discussions of the problems and solutions regarding negotiations, needs analyses and curriculum development are based on ideas and examples from practitioners in the field: learners, teachers, administrators and sponsors. In this regard, the work of the authors has been of an editorial nature - gathering the best of what is presently available in EWP not only for ideas but also for concrete examples of procedures, materials, assessment and evaluation forms and so on. The information is presented as a description of recent Canadian EWP programs and of valuable work from abroad rather than as a step by step "how to." It is hoped that this descriptive approach will raise awareness, especially in the education sector, of EWP programming and will also be a springboard for action on the problems and issues discussed in the final chapter.

There are two other purposes in writing the book. One is to offer some specific

ideas for classroom practice through language tasks designed for communicative interactions. The other is to emphasize the importance of communication and cooperation among the partners in EWP and to see teachers and learners as equal cooperating partners in the planning and delivery of courses.

It is not in the scope of this present book to discuss the promotion and selling of EWP courses to companies and unions nor the development of cross cultural courses offered to native speakers of English. Although these are considered to be of intrinsic importance, they are not currently a large part of most EWP programs in Canada. It is hoped that these two areas will be well treated in future publications with the spread of EWP programs. To encourage the growth of such programs, the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture hosted a two-week intensive EWP Training Institute in August 1984. Staff from the Industrial Language Training Service in Britain were invited to instruct ESL/EWP teachers and administrators from across Canada. Building on that valuable experience, especially in the areas of marketing, cross cultural training and nation-wide networking, EWP will certainly be a field of change and expansion in Canadian ESL prgoramming.

By way of explanation, two points should be made. First, the events and the profiles of learners used throughout the text may be composite pictures and thus do not necessarily reflect the complete experience of only one learner, administrator, teacher or sponsor. Second, the footnotes often cite the comments made by the ten readers of the first draft. In reviewing the draft prior to publication, the readers highlighted controversies and provided additional information that we, the authors, felt would be of interest to anyone using the book.

# Chapter 1
# ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE: THE PARTICIPANTS

"It's the nature of our job to be part of the life of the factory." This comment by a teacher in the textile industry captures that dynamic between workplace and classroom that distinguishes our work as ESL teachers in the workplace. We join a team of participants which includes the learners, their company and union, the educational institution and ourselves. In this chapter, let's first look at how and why employers and unions get involved. Then, who the learners are and why they come to class. Finally, the link between the educational institution and our expanded role as teachers in the workplace.

## Recognizing Communication Problems

English in the Workplace classes exist because the management, the union or the workers have recognized a communication-related problem.

> The hotel general manager escorted his business clients into the grill room for a late night snack. After they sat down they were told by the busgirl, who spoke rather limited English, "No, very late. We closing. I go home, get bus. You go."

The possibility of an English in the Workplace course for the restaurant staff was investigated by the hotel and a program was initiated soon after. From the hotel's point of view a language course would offer practice in the kind of communication that was needed to ensure quality service to its patrons.

> A small city hospital changed its meal service procedure to offer a more restaurant-like atmosphere. The catering staff would now have to read the menu order forms and serve each patient individually. When management found that several employees were not able to read the forms, they contacted a local board of education for assistance.

The EWP program offered here was open to all employees and the resulting classes also included nurses' aides and orderlies.

> A union local at a textile plant tried to recruit rank and file members for shop steward training. When the recruitment did not produce a healthy number of trainees, they took a closer look at the language background and needs of their members. The majority of their members had not received formal ESL training in Canada and used their native languages at work to communicate with their peers. Without a good command of English, they did not feel confident enough to handle training or to deal with union issues on a daily basis.

The resulting EWP course was held in the union hall. The union's first initiative to recruit and train shop stewards had to be delayed in favour of an ESL course that used union-oriented content to help rank and file members develop language skills and to raise their self-confidence in communicating with others.

> Narciso always counted on the bank teller to fill out his deposit and withdrawal slips. Then he was asked by the teller to please fill out the forms himself in the interests of efficiency. If his children weren't available to help him, Narciso had to request assistance, even though the teller was annoyed at the inconvenience.

When a jointly sponsored union and management ESL course was offered at his workplace, Narciso signed up determined to learn to write in English.

> Elena's six-year-old daughter needed extra attention at school because of her allergy problems. Since her daughter's previous teacher had been able to speak Portuguese, Elena had no trouble talking to her about the doctor's orders, medication, warnings, etc., in her native language. But her next teacher could not speak Portuguese, and Elena felt uncomfortable about communicating with her solely through an interpreter.

An EWP course for housekeepers had been running for two months at the hospital where Elena worked. Although her co-workers had urged her to sign up when it began, she felt at that time that she couldn't stay after work for an extra hour. She did register for the following session with a definite purpose and commitment to learning English.

Although the specific incidents which highlight the need for an ESL program vary, in most cases communication problems related directly to the workplace or to life in the community are the common trigger.

## Rationale: The Views of Management and Unions

In the hotel example mentioned above, management clearly linked communication problems and attitude with the quality of service being offered by the hotel restaurant. In other cases, new procedures (often those involving new technology) may highlight an immediate need for specific language skills. In many instances though, the connection with communication skills is not so evident. It may take several major accidents before management realizes that the employees are not able to fully understand health and safety regulations, to follow instructions or to ask questions regarding safety measures. Management does not usually associate time and money factors involved in productivity with effective communication. For instance, unnecessary time may be spent using translators to relay messages between employees and supervisors. Expensive materials can be wasted if workers do not understand spoken or written instructions. Difficulty in recruiting supervisory staff internally may also be linked to the language proficiency of the employees who are better than average at their own jobs but are not confident that they can handle the oral and written language demands at the supervisory level.

In Britain, language training sponsored by the National Council for Industrial Language Training (NCILT) plays a pivotal role in examining and reducing racism in the workplace. English language courses for immigrant workers are combined with cross-cultural training for English-speaking supervisory staff in an effort to ease racial tensions through improved communication. In other cases management may offer or agree to sponsor an EWP program as a morale booster or a public relations vehicle to instill loyalty, ease tension on the shop floor, attract new employees or to counteract contract demands and drives for unionization.

Unions often see English in the Workplace courses as part of their entire educational program. As in the example cited, unions may view the EWP course as a first step in involving the members in on-going training for union positions. But more often, the union offers the course either independently or jointly with management to provide a learning environment in which communication skills can be developed in a labour context with content focusing on workers' rights and procedures for solving work-related problems. For instance, health and safety issues discussed in class from a labour perspective would emphasize the employer's responsibilities as well as those of the workers. Such discussions would also teach learners to use the methods for reporting and changing an unsafe worksite. With the emphasis on retraining in many industries, unions have begun to view EWP classes as part of the larger issue of job security. Workers are able to take advantage of retraining only if their language proficiency level can meet the demands of the training programs. Upgrading skills or learning new ones will enable union members to keep pace with the changes in their

workplace. Communication skills are also central to full participation at membership meetings, in committees and other union activities. For many union-sponsored classes, building self-confidence and self-esteem is the starting point for participation.

**Personal Motivation**

In the case of Narciso, self-esteem was part of his motivation for signing up for the workplace class. Narciso wanted to take full responsibility for his banking; other people need to improve their language skills to apply for higher positions or for retraining courses. Some feel that they need to understand their rights and responsibilities in the workplace in order to protect themselves. Some need basic survival language learned in a familiar context which fosters a sense of community and mutual support. Communication within a context, not just isolated language training, is the definitive mark of English in the Workplace programs.

**Who Are the Learners?**

Learners in English in the Workplace classes are adult immigrants as well as French-speaking Canadians from a wide variety of backgrounds. They can be in their early twenties and just entering the workforce in Canada or people within ten years of retirement who have finally found the right opportunity to learn. A large percentage are women who have not been able to attend language classes because of ineligibility for government-sponsored ESL training, work schedules, home responsibilities or as a result of cultural barriers which deny women access to continuing education. For many learners, traditional classroom education may be very much a childhood experience if they have only completed grade 3 or 4. They may have no experience with formal learning at all in their native language so that pre-literacy training is the first step. Generally, learners in EWP classes have some degree of native language literacy; that is, they can read and write in their native language to a greater or lesser degree. But in English, their second or additional language, they may have lower levels of literacy. Often, they have survival reading and writing skills in English, but are not functionally literate. Or, they may feel comfortable with basic reading and writing in their present job, but do not have the skills to handle more extended reading and writing needed perhaps to advance to a higher level job. (To help them improve their literacy skills in English, it is important for the teacher to be aware of their familiarity with reading and writing in their native language.) In most cases, learners are at the entry or basic level in oral interaction or reading and writing skills in English. Usually, basic level learners can speak and listen better than they can read and write. Very often they are unskilled or semi-skilled workers who don't seem at first sight to rely on communication skills to perform their jobs. They may avoid communicative situations whenever possible. They may lack confidence regarding learning and have a low self-image regarding their abilities to tackle the wider world

of communication. But once they make the first step by agreeing to take the course, their open, determined commitment and exposure to a sensitive teaching-learning process can overcome fear and develop self-assurance.

Satvant is a 30-year-old Punjabi woman who came to Canada 5 years ago with her husband and two children. Despite her desire to return to India, the family becomes more settled every year and Satvant has begun to feel the pressure to "learn Canadian ways." Soon after arriving in Canada she started working in the garment industry. For the last 3 years she has worked in a large, high pressured factory as a sewing machine operator.

During the interview for the EWP class she was confident and able to interact quite well orally. With help from a friend she filled in the written questionnaire adequately, so she was placed in the most advanced of the three classes running in that factory. After three days of instruction, Satvant was finally forced by frustration and determination to announce: "I can't read. Please, I want to." From that crucial request came a new emphasis on literacy training which prepared her for her first big challenge. She had always handed her pay cheque to her husband who cashed it, gave her $50 and accounted for the rest himself. The day she opened her own account and deposited her salary was her first tangible success in dealing independently with the demands of a literate society.

Pui Kwan's afternoon and evening shift as busgirl in the city's largest hotel was a far cry from her responsibility as a cook and businesswoman in Hong Kong. At 28 she seemed to be falling far behind her desired goals in the food service industry. Management insisted that she attend the workplace English classes because they found her troublesome, disruptive and insensitive to customers' needs. Her English, they said, was "loud and terrible." The teacher found Pui Kwan bright and perceptive although somewhat disruptive in class at times. Her good listening skills were offset by real problems in oral communication especially pronunciation. Pui Kwan was pregnant, in a fast-moving job, and having to cope with family problems as well as reprimands from her supervisor at work. It wasn't any surprise that sometimes she just "refused to comprehend." In class, Pui Kwan could command attention by clowning or by exercising her charismatic qualities. Her Chinese-speaking peers were very supportive and understanding although somewhat cautious. They felt that management had assumed a generalized view of all Chinese workers in

the hotel based on Pui Kwan's behaviour. Pui Kwan's abrupt request in class one day to work specifically with the teacher and not with the aide was acknowledged by the teacher who provided concentrated and sensitive assistance at that moment. A dramatic turning point! Trust was established and gains in self-confidence and oral expression soon followed.

Armando is an outdoor worker with the city's transportation system. After two and a half years with the transit company, he's still considered a "new man" on the job so he follows the accepted ways of doing things even though he would sometimes like to take the lead and change them. He often feels that his job is unsafe because he frequently has to work alone without a flagman to warn oncoming traffic of his presence. With 30 years ahead of him, a growing family and a job that he is uneasy with, Armando would like to take advantage of the company training courses to secure a safer and higher paid position. Until now his jobs in construction in Italy and Canada have not demanded any writing skills. During the 12 years that he's been in Canada he's developed adequate oral skills to talk his way through any situation. Even with very little formal education his reading in English is well beyond the survival level. Before he attended the workplace classes, he depended on his children to help him with any activity that involved writing. He had never really tried to write in English, so with a lot of courage and with many apologies for his incomprehensible scrawl, he began to produce words. He keeps looking for new ways to learn more words, to master their spelling and to make meaning on the page. He is a proud adult learner who comes to classes even on his days off and carries his reading and writing exercises with him everywhere he goes.

**Program Deliverers**

Once a company or union decides to investigate and remedy their communication problems, they often approach an educational institution directly for assistance. Some boards of education and community colleges have well-established programs which they advertise either by word-of-mouth or through their program brochures. In some provinces the industrial-institutional link is usually made through the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) office under the provisions of the National Training Act. Companies or unions can also turn to smaller, semi-independent organizations such as English in the Workplace (London, Ontario) and English in the Working Environment (Kitchener, Ontario). These organizations specialize in language education for improved communication at the

workplace. Although they are financially dependent on boards, community colleges or government grants, they operate more or less autonomously. They develop the market, promote their services in the community and train their staff to assume the responsibilities required of workplace educators. In the Centre for Labour Studies at Humber College (Toronto, Ontario), the EWP organizer operates in a similar fashion except that they work primarily through unions to promote and develop communication courses with a labour perspective.

Outside of the small, semi-independent organizations, educational institutions in Canada at this time are not actively engaged in doing market surveys to determine which employers and unions would be most likely to need and want EWP courses. Nor are they actively promoting and selling courses as the NCILT does in Britain. Perhaps the next stage in Canada, now that some EWP programs have been run successfully here, is to get the necessary support to do promotion and sales.

## More than Teaching: The Roles of EWP Teachers

As teachers in the workplace, our job goes well beyond the traditional classroom walls. Since we are in contact with the learners, the sponsors and the educational institution, we are the link among all the participants in the program.[1] In this key position, it is certainly desirable that we take on new roles and responsibilities by participating in the initial negotiations, needs analysis, curriculum development and evaluation of programs.

In some workplace programs the teacher and the coordinator from the educational institution share the responsibilities. For instance, a coordinator may assume responsibility for negotiating the contract and doing a needs analysis, and then hire a teacher to follow through. Even if we as "teachers" enter at this stage we are responsible for developing and teaching a course based on the findings of a needs analysis and the results of the negotiations. We are also responsible for building relationships with the major partners sponsoring the course so that we can integrate language development into the working environment and improve overall knowledge and communication in the workplace.

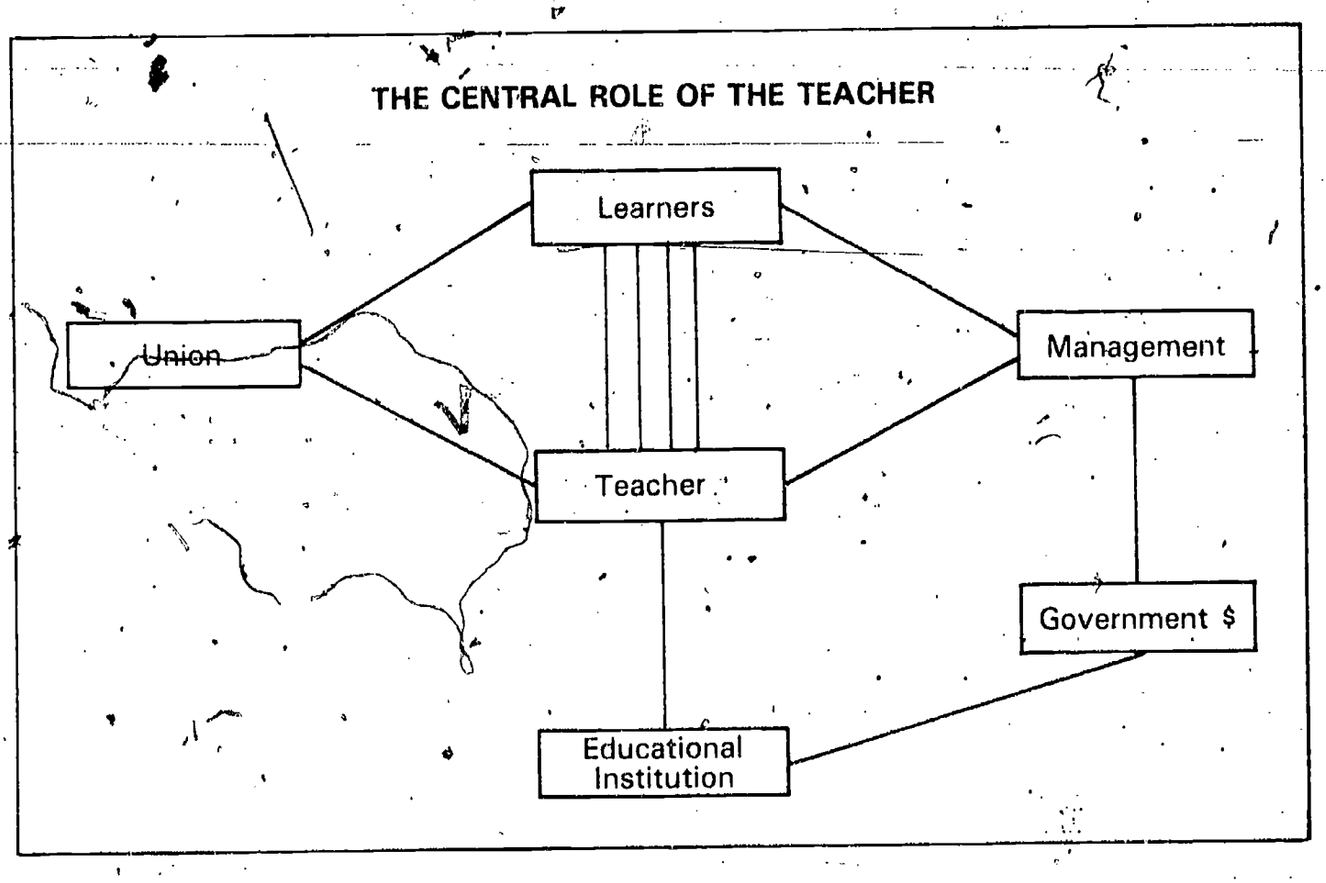
In other programs teachers are part of the initial procedures and have the responsibility for carrying out the needs analysis, for deciding on the levels and participants in the course and for determining the hours and place of the class. No matter what the division of roles, we have to be aware of all the ingredients in the process and of their results before we can design our course effectively. At a very

[1] One reader expressed the central role of the teacher in this diagram on page 8.

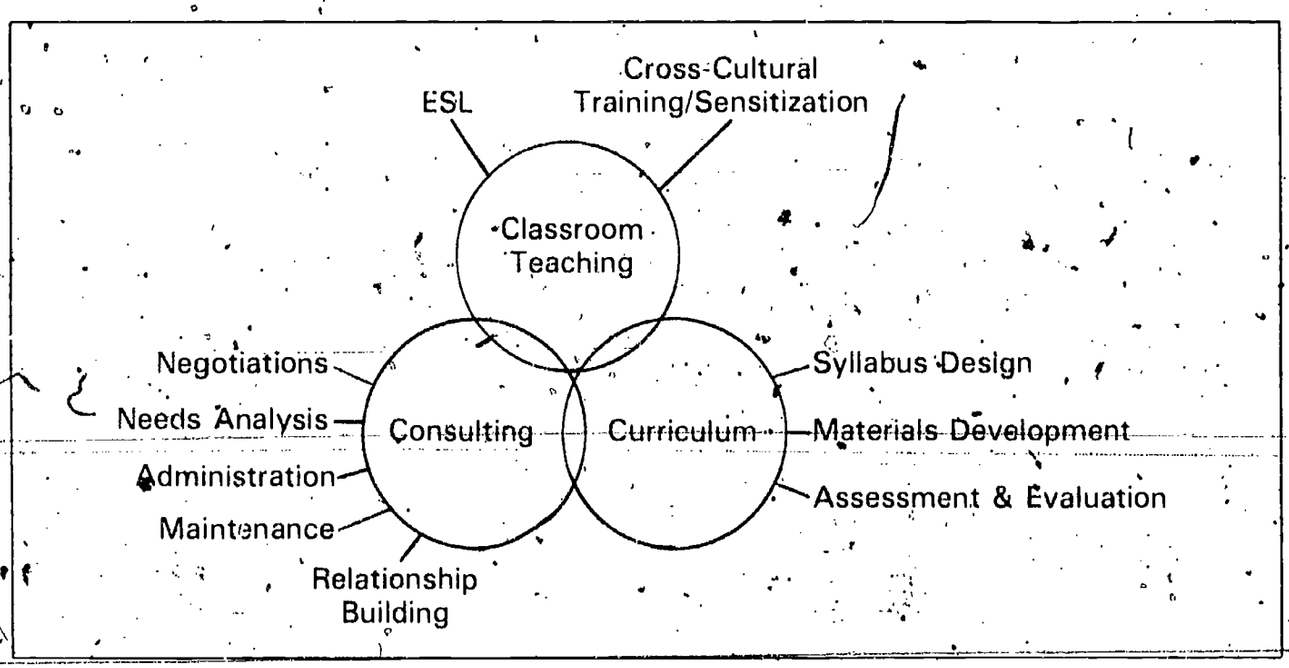
general level, for example, do the discussions with industry and/or union identify a special need for oral as opposed to written skills? Do the future participants in the course express the same needs?

Teaching in the workplace, we may find that our responsibilities increase with each new project. After teaching two or three classes we may be called upon to take part in the negotiations or needs analysis or perhaps prepare a syllabus and materials for other similar projects. Since EWP programs are fairly recent additions to ESL in Canada, our experience is valuable to people entering the field and to those interested in expanding EWP services. We can assume then that as our experience grows, so will our responsibility. The field is exciting and demanding, offering us the opportunity to be part of a team of people engaged in teaching and learning communications skills.

Virginia Sauvé, an experienced workplace teacher from Alberta, likes a model in which the educator is a consultant specializing in communication. As educators in the working environment we can take on the roles of negotiator and needs analyst,



program designer and evaluator in addition to classroom teacher. The diagram below, adapted from Sauvé's model, illustrates the extent of our job. More importantly, it shows that we are called upon to perform duties in areas of expertise not traditionally associated with the classroom but vital to the workplace setting.[2]




[2]Sauvé's original model is described as a "change agent" model in which evaluation is part of the consulting function. Sauvé also makes the distinction between project and program; the former referring to communication within the company itself and the latter to aspects dealing with language course design. For instance, she sees the first and essental needs analysis within the industry at the project level. Next would come the program needs analysis related specifically to one course within that company. The model shown here would function at her program level.

# Chapter 2
# NEGOTIATIONS

Whenever we hear of contract negotiations taking place we usually think of money and productive working conditions. Similarly, negotiations with management and/or unions as the sponsors of EWP programs involve matters of finance and good teaching/learning conditions. Once the sponsor (company and/or union) has recognized the need for improved communication and has contacted a provider of language training services, discussions begin on an appropriate course.

Usually sponsors delegate one employee to be the "contact person," the one responsible for the EWP program. Often, the management contact person is part of the personnel or staff development department in a large industry or service institution. In smaller workplaces, the general manager, a department manager or a line supervisor could be the contact person. For unions, the service agent, a member of the local executive, the head of the education committee or a shop steward is often the link between the teacher and the rank and file membership. These contact people are usually the key players for the sponsors during negotiations to set up a workplace program. The educational institution delivering the course can be represented by an EWP program coordinator, by a "lead instructor" (teacher/administrator responsible for a small group of teachers) or by the actual teacher of the course. Coordinators of EWP programs often do the negotiating themselves without the assistance of a teacher. With no firm commitment from the company/union at that stage, coordinators may be reluctant to hire a teacher. They may be unable to obtain the funds to pay a teacher to participate in the negotiations or feel they do not have enough time to interview and hire a teacher before negotiations begin. The job of negotiating is part of the "consulting" role which is just one aspect of working in EWP programs.

## Financing

In most EWP programs across Canada the sponsors have not been required to make significant financial contributions. The bulk of the financial commitment to cover teaching and administration has traditionally been met by the public sector, often through school boards and community colleges. Their funds are often

supplemented by provincial ministries already involved in other ESL programs and by federal departments such as Secretary of State and Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

Management may assume some financial responsibility by offering the course during company time so that employees receive full or partial wages for their attendance. A commonly sought after formula is 50/50 shared time where the employees are paid for half the class time and volunteer their time for the remaining half. In a workplace that has a 4:30 quitting time, for instance, a 3:30-5:30 class might be scheduled with the first hour paid study time and the final hour on the workers own time. Occasionally, employers pay full or partial wages for classes after work hours or give bonuses on completion of the course. In one EWP program, management offered financial assistance by paying for an extra teacher to reduce the class size to an 8:1 ratio.

On the request of the educational institution, sponsors (company and/or union) may agree to help finance the needs analysis or curriculum development. Although this is not currently the accepted practice in Ontario, there has been a definite change recently in sponsor willingness to accept some financial responsibility for curriculum development. This has turned out to be a controversial issue. Some teachers and coordinators feel that since the sponsors benefit from the course, they should be asked to carry some of the costs. Historically, part-time teachers (the status of most EWP teachers) have been paid only for their contact hours with the class and not for curriculum development, staff meetings, evaluations, etc. These teachers feel that the sponsors could provide an additional source of funds which could pay for their curriculum development work on a set fee or hourly basis. Others feel that curriculum is too sensitive an area for sponsors to finance directly. If sponsors pay for the curric-

ulum, then they may want to exercise final control over its content, methodology or use. For this reason, some teachers prefer to request additional funds from their educational institution which they see as a more neutral and responsive body. Sponsors may help to meet immediate classroom needs by providing copying facilities, blackboards, flip charts, cabinets for supplies/materials and perhaps refreshments.

**Working Conditions**

Working conditions in relation to EWP programs should be understood in the broadest sense; that is, the conditions necessary for effective teaching and learning. To establish suitable working conditions, there should be a clear identification of who is involved in the negotiation process, a mutual understanding of why the course is being offered and a good sense of the aims of the negotiations. Aims include setting a contract for the course, establishing the responsibility of each player and so on.

The first meeting between the sponsor(s) and the EWP consultant not only establishes a working rapport but also outlines the working conditions. A working rapport is based on a mutual understanding of why the course is being offered and how best it can be delivered. The sponsor may have recognized the need for improved communication through some specific incident, but probably does not realize the intricacies of the communication network the employees are required to use, involving both linguistic and social behaviors. For instance, when one hotel management requested an English course because the housekeepers could not read the new order forms, management viewed the communication problem in terms of one reading task. As it turned out, the problem was not simply in reading the form but in actually using it. In reality, even the performance of that single task required oral interaction skills between supervisor and housekeeper, and possibly even more advanced reading and writing skills. The network involved contact with supervisory staff, laundry staff, personnel officers and the hotel's customers as well as among the workers themselves. Management was also not aware of the housekeepers' language needs for their wider communication network in the hotel. The question of why the course was being offered required further discussion, exploration and finally agreement by both sides. Interactions within these networks became subject matter for the course only after the EWP coordinator helped management expand their view of communication in the workplace. So, even in our initial meeting with the sponsor we should be prepared to help them locate their own perceived communication need in a large network. Once the sponsor has accepted this more comprehensive view of a communication problem, we can then make a solid case for adequate pre-course development work in the form of a needs analysis.

In the first meeting with the sponsor we, as the educational consultants, are ideally negotiating for:

- Paid time for pre- and post-course development work
- Access to the sponsor's human and material resources such as supervisory and training personnel, documents, handbooks, etc. for information about the industry, the process and the product.
- Shared responsibility in determining the number and level of classes as well as the make-up of each class.
- Shared responsibility in determining a suitable location, hours and support facilities

**Paid Time for Pre- and Post-Course Development Work**

To ensure that appropriate course objectives can be set, we should present the pre-course needs analysis as the first stage in a language and communication training program and as the basis for other aspects of the program. The results of a needs analysis feed into curriculum development and course delivery. Finally, the course is evaluated in light of the original objectives that were established during the needs analysis. In practice, these stages are not isolated but interactive. Although the bulk of the needs analysis work can be done before the actual teaching begins, we are always investigating new needs, incorporating them into the course and evaluating their results throughout the course. Many sponsors are anxious to see the course begin right away once they have committed themselves. They may have already made promises to the prospective learners or obtained a somewhat tentative approval from their superiors. "If classes don't begin next week the course may not be offered at all!" If we are clear on the importance of a needs analysis we can present a convincing argument.

During the pre-course needs analysis we familiarize ourselves with the overall working environment so that we can locate our prospective learners and their jobs in the larger structure. We then focus on the more specific communication needs expressed by the sponsor and the learners, exploring them in relation to the total communication network. If both union and management sponsor the course, then we need ample time to investigate the views of both organizations in this manner.

At the end of the course we also need adequate evaluation time to analyse our original objectives and the effects of the course on the learners and on the sponsoring organization(s). The more the sponsors are involved in the planning of the course, the more interested they will be in its outcome. Was the time and money invested in planning and delivering the course used wisely? A thorough review of the objectives and results of the course forms the basis for improved needs analyses at other sites. It can also determine the objectives of a follow-up course in the same workplace.

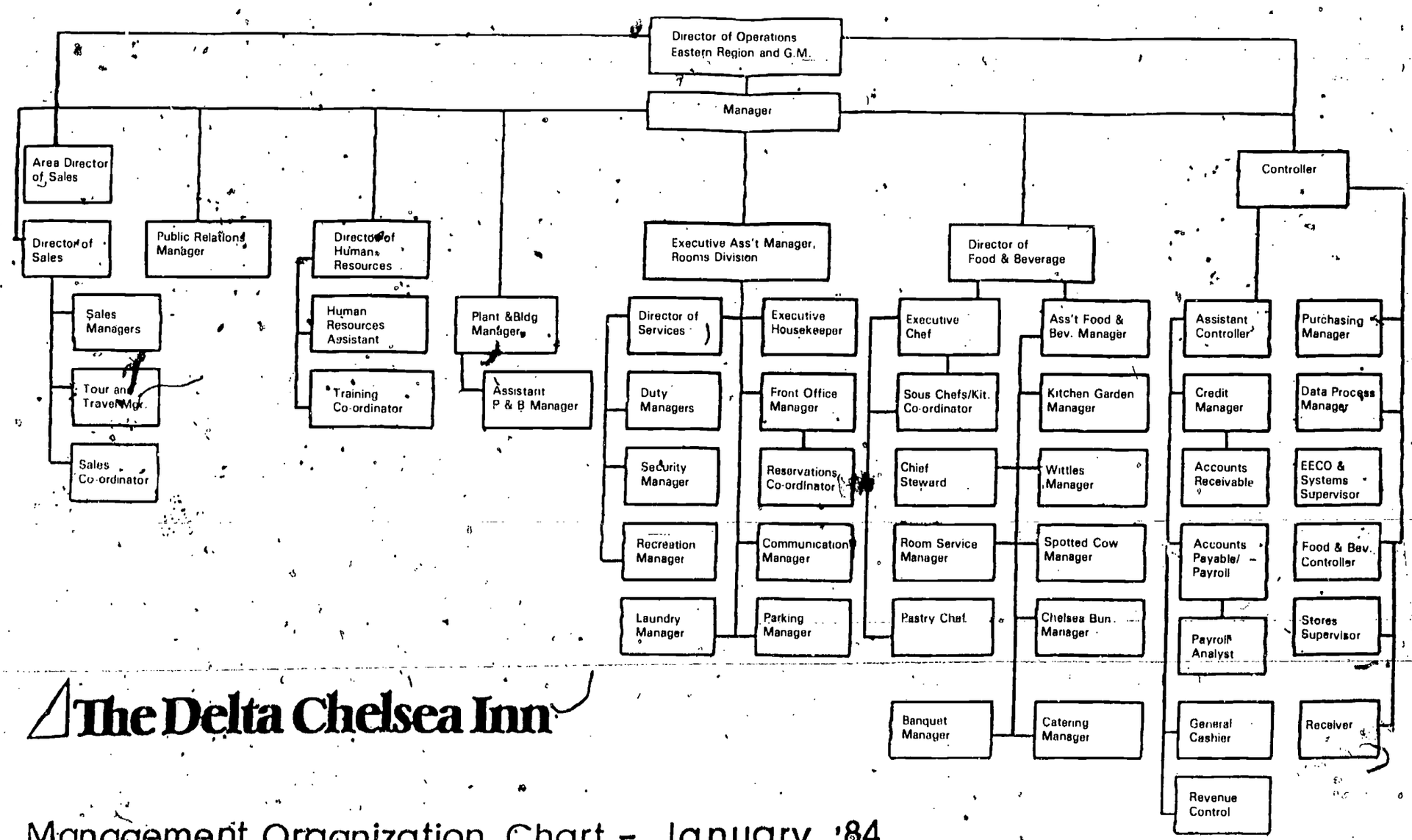
## Access to Human and Material Resources

To do pre- and post-course development work adequately we need access to the human and material resources of the sponsoring organization(s), that is, to all levels of personnel and to as many relevant documents and A-V materials as possible.

In our early negotiations we should become familiar with the channels of communication in the organization so that we can inform the right people of what we will undertake in the various phases of the course. An organization chart on page 15 with the names of personnel is one of the most useful pieces of documentation to request. In a larger industry or service organization we might have to speak to supervisory staff at several different levels to ensure that each link person has been notified and consulted about the course. For instance, during negotiations with a large municipal department, one workplace teacher had arranged to meet the superintendent and the foreman of a particular section. The foreman was somewhat uncomfortable because his immediate superior (the supervisor) had not been contacted to discuss the program. The next day the supervisor complained that his foreman had been asked to cooperate on a program that had not received his (the supervisor's) approval. Obviously, more thorough work during negotiations would have identified this supervisor as an important link in the line of command. Whole courses can be put in jeopardy if the right protocol is not followed by educators.

In a union-sponsored setting we may have to inform the regional executive about the course as well as the local executive depending on the size of the union. Meetings of the education committee or the health and safety committee might also provide a good opportunity for us not only to become familiar with the issues but also to engage the committee members in the development of the course. Once again it is important to follow through in the accepted line of command. In one jointly sponsored program, for example, the union was largely responsible for advertising the course. The EWP coordinator and the teacher spoke with the local's vice president but unfortunately not with the shop stewards who would be receiving the notices for the course. As a result, very few of the shop stewards were able to be real assets during recruitment. The learners informed them of the details of the course rather than vice versa.

During negotiations with a large organization where learners may be drawn from a variety of departments, an efficient way to advertise the course and to introduce ourselves is to arrange for introductory group meetings with middle-level management or union representatives - those people who are in daily contact with the prospective learners. Individual foremen or shop stewards can be approached later for detailed information after the learners for the course have been selected.




The Delta Chelsea Inn

Management Organization Chart - January '84

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To understand how specific communication needs relate to the wider network we should request access to the actual job site for at least part of one day. In a textile factory, we want to be on the floor and at the various machines to observe the interactions. In a hotel or hospital we want to go through the routines with the housekeepers or service workers and make note of the types of activities and the range of linguistic and social skills demanded. One teacher who accompanied a hotel chamber maid during her morning duties commented on the unseen pressures associated with the job relating to the number of rooms to be cleaned in a period of time. This insider's view is one of the important results of being on the shop floor. It helps explain the tension, fatigue and worries of workers which often become part of class discussions. Observation can begin with a tour of the site but should not end there. Of course, access to job sites may be a sensitive issue if a manufacturer is worried about protecting industrial secrets, for instance. Attending unit meetings, orientation sessions or special committees can also help us gain a more thorough understanding of the communication network within the working environment.

Access to the actual job site also means that we have the opportunity to discuss communication needs with the specific individuals that the learners relate to on a daily basis. This network usually goes well beyond the immediate supervisor or shop steward. It can include personnel staff, receptionists and secretaries, cafeteria staff, members of special committees and so on.

In addition to the human resources that the sponsor has to offer, we should investigate the material resources available for use in the course. Management is usually more than willing to offer health and safety manuals, employee handbooks and company benefit forms but is often somewhat reluctant to assist in our obtaining job descriptions and blank pay cheques. For the final evaluation phase it is helpful either to have access to the sponsor's records or to ask management to check their records in regard to certain questions. Has absenteeism on the job been affected by the language program? Have attendance rates at union meetings improved? In the Jantzen project in Vancouver, for example, extensive documentation supported evidence of the overall positive attitude towards the course. In an EWP evaluation report by Brishkai Lund, figures show a noticeable decrease in absenteeism for workers who took part in the course: "...the clear advantages of the course can be discerned in the supervisors' and the trainees' attitudes, in the high morale among the trainees, and in the decrease in the use of interpreters and in the rates of absenteeism" (Lund 1982:46). Evaluation reports that draw on information of this type can be helpful in maintaining on-going programs and in initiating new ones because they indicate the value of the program to management. In our initial negotiations we should investigate access to information that would help us prepare such an evaluation.

**Shared Responsibility in Selecting Learners**

In instances where the sponsors request language training, they will probably have pre-selected the learners. They may be people from one unit or department as in the case of the hotel housekeepers who had to use new order forms. Or they may be people drawn from a variety of departments who will be involved in a specific task common to all of them. For instance, a union local may want to recruit more people for a shop steward course. Frequently though, this apparently clear-cut division of needs becomes more complex as information about the course spreads throughout the workplace. In one hospital a course initially designed solely for the catering staff was subsequently opened to the orderlies and dietary staff upon their request.

During the early negotiations we can arrange for time to assess the language competence of the prospective learners, even if assessment is done informally. More formal oral interviews and brief reading and writing tests require at least one group meeting as well as private meetings for the oral interviews. (See chapter 3 for details on pre-course assessment.) The final selection and placement of learners is best done by examining the results of this assessment in conjunction with the needs analysis.

We should also caution management about the negative effects of requiring employees to attend classes, especially when the class is held on the employees' own time. Employees who are forced to participate in a course may feel embarrassed at being singled out and resentful at being asked to give their own time for training which they didn't request. Or, they may feel that their job security is threatened and that good performance in class is the only way they can keep their jobs. In such cases the teacher may have to spend many weeks in class trying to gain their confidence and trust. Instead of making attendance compulsory, a strong recommendation to take the course explained in terms of long-term benefit to the employees would certainly lead to a more productive result as would the offer of paid time or a bonus.

Alternatively, if the course is open to a wide range of people on a voluntary basis then publicity is a major factor. Who will be advertising the course? How will they describe it? How will they promote it? Language and communication courses can be advertised incorrectly as "brush up your grammar" courses. Sign up sheets with introductory course information in English (rather than the native language) can never reach the potential learners who have very limited English. A written notice, even in the prospective learner's native language, may not be comprehensible to workers with a low level of literacy. If the management or the union is responsible for recruitment and publicity, then our collaboration is necessary to ensure that the most accurate information gets to the appropriate people.

Class size is another variable open to negotiation. Due to present funding arrangements, we may find that the educational institution is negotiating with government rather than with the sponsor on the issue of class size. For instance in some EWP programs, the provincial government funding scheme requires an average attendance of 15 learners to initiate a course or to provide an additional class in an existing course. Classes may start out with 15 or more but often drop back to half due to layoffs, shift work, home responsibilities, inconvenient hours, etc. In these cases, some workplace coordinators have negotiated for reduced student-teacher ratios and have successfully maintained classes with 10 learners or less. This smaller size class is preferable since there will be a variety of educational backgrounds and individual problems no matter how homogeneous the class appears to be. Class size is a particular issue when some or all of the learners need a good deal of basic literacy training since beginning literacy learners need a lot of individual attention. Because classes are work-specific or even problem-specific, learners view workplace courses as a one-time opportunity to take advantage of language training tailor-made for them. With these considerations and expectations in mind, classes usually function best with no more than 12 learners.

A few more thoughts on attendance are worthwhile mentioning. Because attendance can vary significantly, we should be aware of the reasons for high and low attendance rates since at some stage we will probably be reporting to the sponsor and/or the educational institution. Important factors are the economic environment which could produce layoffs and the industry's specific conditions such as production cycles, job rotation, shift work and so on. Although we are usually sensitive to class attendance (realizing that attendance plays a role in the evaluation and maintenance of programs), we should also be aware of additional factors regarding attendance. If we are working with a formula funding scheme from a government source, what are the benefits of that particular scheme to workplace classes? What are the drawbacks? In some cases sponsors prefer to use their own attendance policies established for their staff training programs. For instance, if employees miss more than x number of classes in a period of time, then they are dropped from the rolls. Once again, what are the advantages and disadvantages for a language course? In other cases, the sponsor asks the teacher to suggest a policy. For example, one teacher, approached independently by a multi-national corporation to set up a class for cleaners, was asked about an attendance policy. Management had already agreed to a 50/50 shared time basis for the class, so in effect a deal was being made between management and employees: each one contributed half time. Here, the details of a policy might best be left to management and the employees to decide. The teacher's suggestions might be most helpful if they are made on the basis of good classroom practice. For instance, if one employee has to miss the first hour of every class, the teacher could consider that

issue by asking if that is practical and beneficial from a teaching and learning point of view.

Courses of 9 to 12 weeks are most popular because they fit in with school board and college sessions and allow the sponsor(s) to review and evaluate frequently so that they stay in touch with the aims of the program. For courses of this length to be successful, we will have to become very adept at analysing needs and specifying objectives that are realizable in limited time periods. Sponsors have shown more willingness to commit themselves to short term courses with limited objectives, a format they often use in their own staff development programs. It can also be easier to motivate learners in short spurts so that they can see and evaluate the results. It is important with short term courses, however, to try to provide ongoing classes so that learners can move through a series of levels. After twelve weeks, basic level learners are just beginning to feel comfortable with the classroom and the opportunity to continue learning should be provided. A series of short courses does offer the possibility of regrouping, changing location, scheduling in relation to the workplace's busy and light seasons and mounting special courses - for workers who have been laid off, for example. If EWP classes can be integrated into company/union programs, then short language courses can be bridges into other courses. In Britain, the Linked Skills Working Party has created a variety of courses which link ESL and skills for community, craft and industry purposes. Their efforts are well worth investigating in their new publication, Linked Skills: A Handbook for Sk[illegible]d ESL Tutors (1983).

**Suitable Location, Hour and Support Facilities**

Since most workplace classes are housed on company property management must give final approval in selecting a suitable location unless, of course, the program is sponsored solely by the union and held in the union hall. Clean, quiet and private rooms are ideal and can often be obtained in hospitals, hotels, municipal departments and large-scale industrial workplaces. Boardrooms, staff training rooms and cafeterias have all housed workplace classes. However, in many small industries, textile factories for instance, there is often only one space suitable for group meetings, the lunchroom or an area set away from the machines. In these relatively open spaces, noise can be a problem if the factory is still operating during class hours. Even in unionized shops, teachers have reported that the supervisory staff can take advantage of these situations to observe the class, the content of the lessons and the remarks of the learners. Predictably, the learners become reticent, sensing that they are being watched, tested and kept in line by management's presence. Dealing with this problem, one teacher felt that the only answer in her particular situation was to request that the next course be offered off the property in a nearby community house or school. In another case the union took up the complaint, spoke to management and

eased the tension so that a more supportive learning environment was restored. In unionized and non-unionized worksites teachers have found that inviting curious supervisors into the class is the best way of dispelling their fear and suspicion. Although learners may feel unable to speak freely about their problems and complaints during that class, gaining the confidence and trust of the sponsor will serve the course better in the long term.

Selecting the hours for the classes depends on the availability of the learners, the shared time or voluntary nature of the course as well as access to a suitable location. Classes often tend to be most convenient at the end of the work day or at the end of a shift. Learners must then battle fatigue and also, in the case of many women, make special arrangements at home for their late arrival. If learners are attending on volunteer time at the end of their work day, one to two hour classes are most common. The benefits of a one-hour class three or four times a week is that it provides frequent exposure to language in short concentrated sessions. It also encourages a more conscious integration of language training into the daily work routine. Some programs prefer a one-and-a-half or two-hour class twice a week because there is more time to explore issues and more possibilities for setting time aside to work with the specialized needs of individual learners. Another alternative is a lunch time session which reduces the fatigue factor but has its own drawbacks. Half-hour classes do not provide adequate time to get into the material in any depth. Furthermore, lunch is often a more social time, the only real break from concentrated work. When the course is on a volunteer basis the choice of the learners and their commitment to learn help overcome these drawbacks. In one textile plant, half-hour lunch-time classes were scheduled for each of the three shifts. Since learners were grouped according to shifts rather than language competence, classes had mixed levels as well as continuous intake. The boardroom location and good support facilities offset some of these drawbacks, but the commitment of the women and the teacher was the key factor in the success of this course.

Supporting facilities are also open to negotiation. Sponsors can provide access to copying facilities, blackboards, flip charts, secretarial assistance and refreshments such as coffee, tea and juice. Storage space for materials is of great assistance and can often be arranged more easily than a blackboard. Many teachers still carry their flip charts and materials from home to class to home and have not enquired about available storage space. Since these support facilities are usually a matter of convenience, obtaining them can depend on the good working relations established between the sponsors and ourselves.

Considering the importance of negotiations, if we as teachers are not directly involved in this process, then we should be well-briefed on the procedures followed, the personnel involved and the results. Without direct involvement in the negotiations, the teachers, as the final course deliverers, may find it necessary to negotiate with educational institutions for paid pre- and post-course development work for it is during these phases that good working relations are developed and resource information obtained. More importantly, when teachers are involved throughout the entire process, communication between participants is recognized as a key factor in delivering and maintaining successful language programs.

# Chapter 3
# NEEDS ANALYSIS

In doing a needs analysis we investigate the workplace by collecting information and by interviewing sponsors and learners. We then follow up with an analysis of the data that have been gathered.

## I. INVESTIGATING AND COLLECTING THE DATA

Curriculums for English in the Workplace programs grow out of the learners' language needs in an employment situation. In this regard developing and teaching an EWP course is radically different from the most full- and part-time ESL programs which usually focus on general language needs and where the learners usually fit into a predetermined curriculum. To determine the language and communication needs of a workplace, we have to involve ourselves in the employment situation so that we come to know and "feel" the unique aspects of the workplace. The results of this investigation into the learners' communications needs are the basis for curriculum planning. Successful negotiations result in pre-course development time to investigate and collect data on learners' needs, to analyse those needs and to prepare course objectives based on the findings.[1]

A needs analysis in the workplace usually involves three processes: interviews, observations and language assessment. These processes may overlap or happen concurrently rather than in a step-by-step fashion. They are presented here as isolated items so that we can explore each one thoroughly.

### Interviews

Interviews with the prospective learners and with a variety of personnel from the sponsoring organizations (company and/or union) serve a double purpose: access to information and access to the people in the larger communication network. Through our investigations we gather information on the structure and operation of the workplace, on the learners' relationships and job responsibilities within that structure

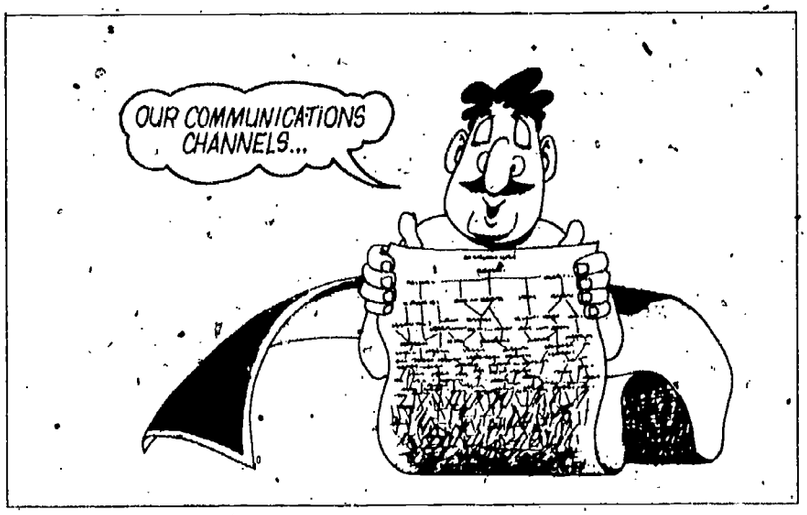
[1] One reader argues for some pre-set linguistic objectives even if they are minimally stated. For example, all EWP learners should be able to know and use certain stated grammatical structures.

and on the language and communication requirements of the learners. We also have the opportunity to meet key people in the sponsoring organization(s). By clearly describing the aims of our course we can win their support and enlist their assistance--in short, build relationships that will ensure their cooperation and involvement. It is helpful to tape record the interviews with sponsors and learners as long as they have agreed beforehand and do not feel awkward or uncomfortable about being recorded.

Interviews with Sponsors

In order for us as efficient investigators to approach these key people, preliminary discussions with our contact person(s) should provide us with some standard, basic information:

> Company details: products, structure of the company, number of departments and employees, quality of working life programs, types of jobs, labour turnover, work schedules (shifts and layoffs), method of payment, benefits, promotion opportunities and requirements, health and safety instructions and records, orientation and other in-company training programs
>
> Union details: structure of the union and affiliations, number of members and their participation at regular meetings, active committees, important points in the collective agreement relating to seniority, pension, health and safety, etc., relations with management, method of communicating with members (especially non-English-speaking members), the election, duties and accessibility of shop stewards.

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With our contact person(s)we should also identify the specific people in the company and/or union to be interviewed, if this was not done during negotiations. In a large organization it is best to start with top level personnel. They will probably have already discussed the course since they are responsible for its final approval. Our purpose in meeting them is to make personal contact, to describe the needs analysis and to request that information be passed through the appropriate communication channels. If the latter works smoothly, then by the time we reach the foremen and shop stewards, they will have been informed and will be expecting us. Top level administrators often have interesting information highlighting the long-term goals of the organization. For instance, one high-level superintendent from a municipal department in discussion with the workplace teacher mentioned that in a few years the company was going to have real difficulties in recruiting foremen in the janitorial department. Company policy was to promote from within the section but there seemed to be very few qualified candidates from among the janitors. He saw the EWP course as one step in upgrading their qualifications for promotion. In a subsequent meeting, shop stewards reiterated that 85% of the janitors did not have adequate English-language skills necessary for obtaining either jobs with lighter manual work or higher paid positions. The same problem had been defined from two different perspectives.

Our next interviews are with people who have direct, daily contact with the learners. Company interviews would be with the learners' foremen or immediate supervisors; for the union, usually their shop stewards. (This requires, of course, that the learners have been at least tentatively identified.) We should be particularly observant and sensitive in these meetings, since people at this middle management level usually are not consulted on the advisability of offering the course. They may have been told that the company has decided in favour of the course, but not <u>why</u>. They may receive some information about the course but they are often not told that they will have to spend some time talking to us or even perhaps have to release their employees from work for interviews and assessments. If production has been upset or inconvenienced, foremen can react negatively to the very approval of the course:

> "I don't know why they need a special program. Everybody else makes it on their own, don't they?"

Or, they may feel that somehow the course is an indication of management's criticism:

> "I really don't see why my people need this course. The section runs smoothly. They're doing O.K. After all, they don't need to read and write to do this job."

Or, in cases where the job is of an assembly-line nature, foremen or supervisors may have negative reactions to a class because of the pressure from a production quota

system. Or, they may see no immediate use for language training. From their perspective communication is not really part of the job:

> "For the work they do, they don't need to read English. They don't even need to speak English. It's bad enough when they talk to each other in their own language."

If our experiences at this level are often negative, then we can predict some of the conflict situations that may surface in the classroom. Negative comments from supervisory staff can be somewhat diffused by focusing initially on their job, their responsibilities and their problems in dealing with a multilingual/cultural workforce. Their comments, though sometimes difficult to respond to, are useful in "getting a feel" for the working environment and the atmosphere in which our learners work. Does prejudice result in actual discrimination, or is it usually expressed more indirectly through jokes and apparently harmless remarks? Will the environment be supportive for learning? If we ask ourselves such questions, we will certainly be more sensitive during subsequent interviews and observations at the worksite.

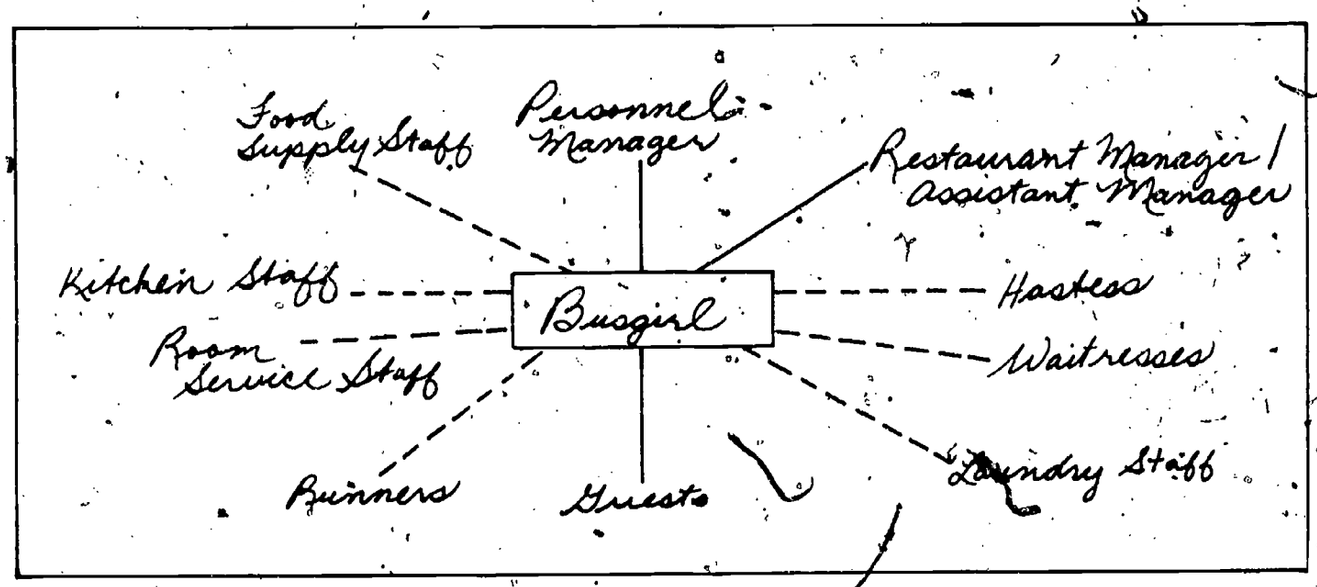
Even supportive supervisors may find it difficult to be specific about communication problems since they probably have made many accommodations over the years for poor communication. Using interpreters, miming, or gesturing may have become standard practice by now. Basically, they have accepted (through use) a low level of communication with immigrant workers that they would never accept as standard or sufficient with native speakers.

Elizabeth Laird in Introduction to Functional Language Training in the Workplace (Laird 1977:10) suggests that interviewers ask HOW questions to enable the supervisor (or shop steward) to describe their communication systems. "How do you tell people about a new safety measure?" or "How do you complain about and remedy poor workmanship?" Answering these questions can be revealing for the supervisors and shop stewards themselves. They may become more conscious of their frequent need for interpreters or of the inadequacy of the simple nod and "O.K." they took for understanding from workers who are unable to ask for clarification. General questions such as "Can everyone follow instructions?" might get an immediate "Yes." While a more specific question such as "How do workers tell you when they don't understand instructions?" helps the supervisors to analyse their own interactions with workers. Some EWP programs distribute written questionnaires to supervisors and shop stewards, especially in large organizations where learners are drawn from a variety of departments. If they take the time to fill out these questionnaires (independently or with our assistance), then they more consciously become part of the pre-course development process. Their involvement and awareness at this stage encourage them to see themselves as partly responsible for the success of the course.

The best way to use the two questionnaires reproduced on pages 27 and 28 from the Toronto Board of Education and and the NCILT (Hoadley-Maidment 1978) is in individual interviews or as a follow-up to a group meeting with supervisors or stewards where the aims of the program are discussed.

Diagrams of Communications Networks

Elizabeth Laird (1977:5) also suggests making a communications network diagram for each group of workers with the same job. The diagram indicates all the people that the workers communicate with in the performance of their jobs. Here is the network diagram that illustrates Pui Kwan's communications in her job as hotel busgirl (see section I).




Only a few of these channels of communication play major roles in Pui Kwan's performance on the job: restaurant manager/assistant manager, guests, and personnel manager. In conversations with her fellow workers she almost always speaks Chinese. Her communications with managers and guests are always in English but for different reasons and under different circumstances. The communication with the restaurant manager is task related: assignment of station for the day and any special chores such as running for linens, making coffee and replenishing the buffet table. Her communication with the guests, however, is of a much more social nature: at the non-verbal level there are smiles and acknowledge-

## THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR THE CITY OF TORONTO

## SUPERVISOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT

EMPLOYEE'S NAME: _____ PHONE NO. ____
DEPARTMENT: _____ SUPERVISOR: _____
NATIVE LANGUAGE: _____

1. What language skills are necessary for the proper performance of the employee's job?

   Listening Comprehension: (e.g.) understanding instructions/giving information/greetings/partings _____

   Speaking: (e.g.) asking for assistance/for information _____

   Reading: (e.g.) reading menus, reports, instructions _____

   Writing: (e.g.) writing reports/accident forms _____

2. Which skill is most important? _____
   Suggest particular content areas where the employee must use this skill (e.g.) speaking skill — this employee needs to know when and how to phone in when s/he is sick/how to use the phone to report to supervisors _____

3. Which job responsibilities involving language skills need the most improvement? _____

   (e.g.) telephone communication — home to hotel/within hotel/within home _____

   memos _____
   reports _____
   evaluations _____
   speaking to supervisors _____
   dealing with peers _____
   dealing with workers _____
   dealing with patients _____
   dealing with guests _____
   dealing with students _____
   dealing with customers _____
   dealing with clients _____

4. Please note the level of English proficiency for this employee by checking the most relevant answer:

   a) Does this employee call in to report when s/he is absent?
      yes usually rarely no

   b) Does this employee understand instructions (i) given over the telephone
      yes usually rarely no

      (ii) given in person
      yes usually rarely no

      (iii) concerning safety/health regulations
      yes usually rarely no

   c) Does this employee initiate conversation
      (i) with the supervisor
      yes usually rarely no

      (ii) with other workers
      yes usually rarely no

      (iii) in English/in a native language

(prepared by S. Applebaum '82)

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## APPENDIX II

### QUESTIONNAIRE ENQUIRING ABOUT LANGUAGE/CULTURE SITUATION

**Questions for supervisors and foremen**

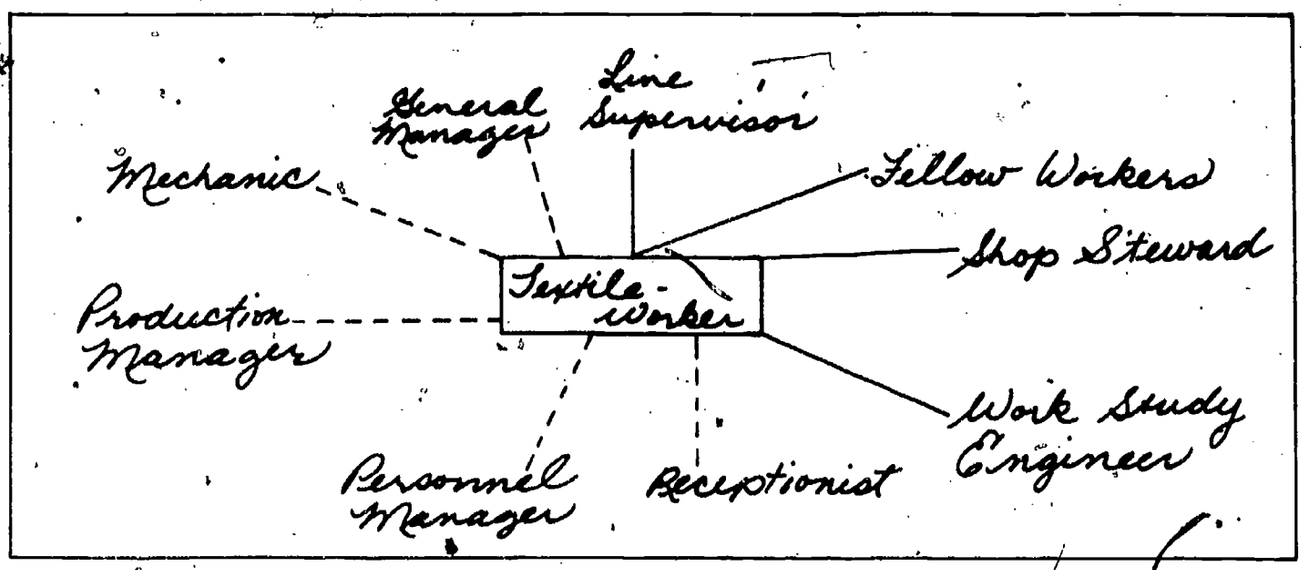
1. Do you have workers in your section who:
   a) Appear to understand English, but carry out some instructions wrongly?
   b) Say "Yes" when you give them an instruction, then consult other workers in their own language before carrying it out?
   c) Bring an "interpreter" when they come to see you about a problem or disciplinary matter?
   d) Seem to understand some things you tell them, but not others?
   e) Give long explanations which are difficult to understand?
   f) Fail to come to you with grievances, personal problems, etc?
   g) Fail to phone in when sick, late, etc.?
   h) Fail to ask you for permission to do something, and then do it anyway?
   i) Fail to report machine breakdowns, etc., adequately?
   j) Fail to report accidents, safety hazards, etc.?
   k) Sound over-aggressive in any non-routine or stressful situation (e.g. disciplinary situation)?
   l) Write poor reports, or fill in forms badly (where these duties are part of their job)?
   m) Ask for, or do, something forbidden by company rules (e.g. holiday at wrong times etc.)?
   n) Generally can't seem to identify with the factory or appear indifferent to problems of production?
   o) Seem to *use* you rather than want to build up a relationship with you?
   p) Fail to speak English even when you are present?
2. Do you have to cope with ~~any~~ of these situations:
   a) Communication networks which by-pass the normal factory hierarchy (e.g. workers taking a grievance to people other than their immediate superior in the first instance)?
   b) Lack of job flexibility, in the sense that you have workers whom you would like to put on new job, but cannot, because they are unwilling or unable?
   c) Misunderstandings between the ethnic groups?
3. Which of the above cause you most difficulty? (You can write as many as you like.) Give examples of what actually happened.
4. Are there any other points not covered in questions 1 and 2 which you would like to mention?
   List those, and give examples.
5. What kind of background information, if any, about West Indians, Indians, Pakistanis, Italians, etc., would you find useful in managing your workforce?

Source: National Council for Industrial Language Training (Hoadley-Maidment, 1978). Reproduced with permission.

ments, and at the verbal level, small talk, enquiries about food and requests for directions. With the personnel manager, communication is usually job-related such as enquiries about pay cheques, vacation, benefits. Communications of a more personal or counselling nature may result from these enquiries if family life or home environment affect job performance. The diagram then makes us more conscious of the range and style of language use required of our learners.

The teacher in Pui Kwan's hotel EWP course also used the communications network diagram as a guide for determining who to interview. The personnel manager, her company contact, produced the diagram with some basic information about the content of each of the communications. During the needs analysis the teacher interviewed the restaurant manager, hostesses, waitresses, runners in the stewards' department and the laundry staff. She herself was a customer in the restaurant several times so that she could observe the interactions between the busgirls and the customers. On the basis of these interviews, she chose the three lines of communications already mentioned as the most important in terms of frequency of interaction, variety of tone and diversity of content.

If we look at Satvant's communication network in the garment factory we find once again an extensive network but only a few lines of communication used frequently. This large-scale unionized garment factory manufactured heavy industrial garments, club jackets and uniforms for heavy industrial work.




With the help of the work study engineer, who was the company contact, the teacher sketched out the network diagram and decided who to interview. The most frequent

communications were with the line supervisor, the engineer, the shop steward and fellow workers. Other contacts were minimal although some were identified as important for basic oral tasks. For instance, although normally contact with the receptionist was infrequent, the workers spoke to her when they called in sick. Discussions with her revealed that many of the prospective learners were unable to describe their illnesses and usually had their children phone in for them. Communication among fellow workers at lunch time and coffee break was usually in their native language. Satvant, with a better command of English, could circulate among groups more easily and encouraged her co-workers to practice their English together.

In the diagram, we sketch out the lines of communication and assign priority to certain ones. Later, when we analyse the data we will detail the types of communication that takes place as the basis for curriculum planning. The people we interview can supply some of those details from their own experiences in communicating with our learners. Social language forms a considerable part of the communication in most jobs. Is contact with the learners social as well as work-related? How much socializing are our learners currently capable of and now much is expected of them? Interviews with their co-workers who are native speakers might provide some useful information in this area. At the basic level, language learned could be as simple as greetings and complimentary statements. At the higher levels, socializing might involve following up on an individual's particular interests, instructing a co-worker in a task such as knitting, cooking or home repair, or perhaps understanding company/union "in-jokes" within the company or union: Our interviews help us fill in the learners' communication picture and provide direction and material for class. Equally important, we are building relationships within the sponsoring organization at all levels, encouraging input and participation in this first phase of the course. In the textile factory, for instance, the receptionist can be asked about the procedure for calling in sick. We can tape a few of her calls so that we have listening materials for class. (Be sure to obtain the consent of both parties before using the tape.) In addition, we have gained an ally in the course. Having contributed to the planning of the course, she will certainly be interested in its outcome and evaluation.

Printed and A.V. Materials

During these interviews with management and union staff, we should enquire about the printed documents and A.V. materials produced by the sponsor and of value for classroom use. Commonly available from management are:

> maps of the physical layout of the site, advertising brochures, employee handbooks with a history of the company and its regulations, benefit plans, safety

manuals, training manuals, fire regulations, applications, payroll slips, employee newsletters/ newspapers and job descriptions or descriptions of routines with the names of equipment used on the job.

Printed material specific to individual jobs always varies with worksites and should be requested in each interview. A waitress, for instance, may have to read daily specials in addition to the regular menu. She may have to write in a log book as well as write customers' orders. In some hotel restaurants ordering has been computerized and waitresses have to learn the codes for items and how to key them in. Maintenance workers may have to fill out work tickets and list any items with defects that need repair. Other items that are job specific include production tickets, clock-in sheets, piece work rates, and the like. Some of these materials might also be available from the union as well as the following:

collective agreements, health and safety manuals, regular bulletins, newsletters/newspapers, brochures on specific topics such as seniority, pension, work schedules, etc.(Permission is needed to use the collective agreement in class.)

Large companies and unions often have films or slide shows for orientation purposes and staff development or in-service training. Of course, not all these printed and A.V. materials are useful in the classroom but they can supply us with information about the sponsor, the requirements (from the sponsor's point of view) for effective performance and, in the case of management, the relationships between authority and the workers. They usually make fairly interesting reading and viewing for newcomers such as ourselves in a workplace.

Interviews with Learners

In our pre-course interviews with the prospective learners, we can obtain necessary background information as well as their perceptions of their language and communication needs. These interviews are ideally not for language assessment but rather for collecting data to determine course objectives. Unfortunately, due to limited time and resources in many programs, these initial interviews focussing on personal information and educational background often serve as the language assessment. (For further details on pre-course language assessment, see page 40.) Learners may be asked to fill in a short form with name, address, ESL training, job title, etc. - all necessary information but not adequate for determining language competence. If learners help each other fill in these forms, as they often do, the results can lead to some major misconceptions about an individual's competence in English. Recalling Satvant's profile in section I, we can see how the teacher was misguided about her apparently strong reading skills. In fact, Satvant had compensated for her

poor reading skills by getting assistance from her co-workers as she had always done in the past. Furthermore, these form questions have become so familiar to most immigrants that their responses are not indicative of understanding in an interactive situation. Thus, if learners are capable of filling in these forms themselves or of answering similar questions orally, this is not necessarily a reliable indication of their level of competence.

Interviews with potential learners are rich sources for determining course objectives as well as important opportunities for raising their awareness of themselves as learners. In cases where learners have low oral/aural skills or have great hesitancy about using English, it would be best to conduct the interview in the native language, if possible. If they can begin to think about their language and communication needs before the course, then they will be better able to set reasonable goals, evaluate their progress throughout the course and continue learning after the course. Focussing on language needs, we can refer to the communications network diagram and confirm the information we have received about the frequency and content of their contacts. If the learners are beyond the basic level, who do they speak English to now? Who would they like to speak English to? Do they express most concern about oral or written language? General questions such as "What do you want to learn?" can serve as an ice-breaker but usually will not produce any concrete information. The answer may be "everything" or "more words." We can focus on the tasks they perform in English by asking more specific questions:

- "Do you speak English to your supervisor?" "About what?"
- "Can you call in when you are sick?"
- "What do you do if your machine breaks down?" "Who do you talk to?" "What do you say?"
- Or more generally, "Who did you speak to in English today?" "About what?"

At higher levels, learners may be able to specify what reading and writing they have to do on the job. With our assistance they may be able to assess their competence and begin to think about their goals. Is English needed for promotion or training within the company or for committee work with the union?

Some of the information we request in these interviews may require a willingness and trust on the learner's part. Although learners are frequently willing to be more open with teachers than with supervisors, it is important that we begin by introducing ourselves and explaining why we are having the interview. Whatever help they can give us will make the course more useful for them. The NCILT

"Working Paper #16, Analysing Student Needs" (Hoadley-Maidment 1980) provides useful information on rationale, content and techniques for interviewing learners. This paper also comments on the practicalities of mother-tongue interviews, especially the choice of interviewers/interpreters. The questionnaire from English in the Workplace, London, is one example of personal and educational background information that might be discussed in an interview. The Toronto Board of Education's general needs assessment is focussed on language needs and skills. These questionnaires point to areas of information that are useful to explore, but it is crucial that we explore them sensitively. We should be aware of literacy problems and any areas in which workers might feel uncomfortable. These forms on pages 34 and 35 might best be used as interview schedules rather than questionnaires for people to fill out independently.

Selections on pages 36 and 37 are from the learner's questionnaire used in a English course for francophone managers at McDonald's. The course was offered through the Centre for Applied Language Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa. Item VI on this form could be expanded so that specific skill areas are mentioned with additional space for the learners to add their own comments.

Learners can also supply printed materials or information about these materials for the course. They can bring to the first class any handbooks, manuals, agreements, etc.; that the company or union has given them. Simply finding the material at home and noting what they have received yet never read raises their awareness of their needs as learners. Armando, the municipal worker described in chapter I, realized that some of the reading tasks in class were based on safety books that he had at home. His supervisor gave him the books when he started in the department but up to that point Armando had never really looked at them. He left class that night eager to find out what else he had at home that could serve his new interest in reading.

## Observation

The second component in the needs analysis is observation in the workplace, first in a general tour of the entire site and then more specific observation in the areas where the learners work. In some programs the tour is combined with a photo-taking session so that the photos can be used for class materials later on. In a small industry this procedure may produce adequate results, especially if most of the workers are familiar with the entire production operation. In large industries where learners may be drawn from a variety of departments, taking photos at this stage may be too hasty. Of course, in some workplaces photographing the equipment or process is not allowed because of security and patent reasons or because of working conditions that might violate employment standards regulations. Regardless of the setting, it is important to get permission, verbal or written, to photograph the site and the employees.

EMPLOYER DATE

1. NAME _____ (FAMILY) _____ (FIRST) SEX F ☐ M ☐

ADDRESS _____ (No.) (Street) (City) (Postal Code)

PHONE NO. _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____ AGE _____

MARITAL STATUS: (check one) Single ☐ Married ☐ Widowed ☐ Separated ☐ Divorced ☐

2. WORK HOURS _____ JOB TITLE _____

DATE STARTED _____ PRESENT DUTIES _____

PREVIOUS EMPLOYERS IN LONDON _____

TRANSPORTATION TO/FROM WORK BUS ☐ CAR ☐ WALK ☐ RIDE ☐

3. COUNTRY OF BIRTH _____ OTHER COUNTRIES LIVED IN _____

DATE OF ARRIVAL IN CANADA _____ STATUS: CITIZEN ☐ LANDED IMMIGRANT ☐

4. LANGUAGE(S) SPOKEN _____ READ _____ WRITTEN _____

YEARS AT SCHOOL _____ WHERE _____ OTHER TRAINING _____

OCCUPATION BEFORE COMING TO CANADA _____

ENGLISH COURSE(S): WHERE _____ WHEN _____ HOW LONG _____

REASON FOR ENDING COURSE _____

5. SPOUSE'S NAME _____ EMPLOYER _____

WORK HOURS _____ WORK DUTIES _____

CHILDREN:

| NAME(S) | AGE(S) | SCHOOL/EMPLOYER |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

6. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO LEARN IN THIS COURSE?

speaking
listening
reading
writing

1. at work
2. talking to people at work (e.g.)
3. doctor & dentist
4. bank
5. school
6. reading newspaper
7. other

Source: English in the Workplace, London, Ontario. Reproduced with permission.

## THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR THE CITY OF TORONTO

## GENERAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____
DEPARTMENT: _____ POSITION TITLE: _____
BRIEF JOB DESCRIPTION: _____

NATIVE LANGUAGE: _____

1. What language skills do you need to perform your job efficiently?
   Listening Comprehension _____
   Speaking _____
   Reading _____
   Writing _____

2. Which of these skills are you having most difficulty with? _____

3. Do you have trouble with any part of your job because of language problems? If yes, please explain. _____

4. What skills do you feel are the most important to your job? _____

5. Circle the areas that you would like discussed in thin English in the Workplace course:
   a) Speaking on the telephone.
   b) Speaking to your Supervisor.
   c) Speaking to other workers in English.
   d) Understanding instructions.
   e) Understanding routines.
   f) Understanding your paysheet.
   g) Understanding company benefits.
   h) Understanding diners/patients/customers/guests
   i) Reading (menus, reports . . .)
   j) Writing letters, memos, reports.
   k) Using correct grammar.
   l) Using correct pronunciation.
   m) Explaining what you need.
   n) Other suggestions.

(prepared by S. Applebaum '82)

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II. b. To do your job, do you have to communicate with:

| | NEVER | SOME TIMES | OFTEN | ALWAYS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Operations Manager | | | | |
| Supervisors | | | | |
| Managers | | | | |
| Assistant Managers | | | | |
| Crew members | | | | |
| Other McDonald's employees (Secretaries, etc.) | | | | |
| Customers | | | | |
| Other business people | | | | |

III. a. When you communicate with the following people, do you do so by *speaking* to them?

| | NEVER | SOME TIMES | OFTEN | ALWAYS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Operations Manager | | | | |
| Supervisors | | | | |
| Managers | | | | |
| Assistant Managers | | | | |
| Crew Members | | | | |
| Other McDonald's employees | | | | |
| Customers | | | | |
| Other business people | | | | |

III. b. Do you have to communicate with the following people by *writing* to them?

| | NEVER | SOME TIMES | OFTEN | ALWAYS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Operations Manager | | | | |
| Supervisors | | | | |
| Managers | | | | |
| Assistant Managers | | | | |
| Crew members | | | | |
| Other McDonald's employees | | | | |
| Customers | | | | |
| Other business people | | | | |

c. To do your job, do you have to *read*:

| | NEVER | SOME TIMES | OFTEN | ALWAYS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Memos | | | | |
| Telephone messages | | | | |
| Letters | | | | |
| Reports | | | | |
| Evaluations | | | | |
| Magazine articles | | | | |
| Operating instructions | | | | |
| Procedures | | | | |
| Other material _____ | | | | |

IV. a. To do your job, do you have to talk to people?

| | NEVER | SOME TIMES | OFTEN | ALWAYS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Individually | | | | |
| In a group | | | | |

b. Do you have to talk to people

| | NEVER | SOME-TIMES | OFTEN | ALWAYS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Face to face | | | | |
| On the telephone | | | | |

V. At work, do you talk to your co-workers about

| | NEVER | SOME-TIMES | OFTEN | ALWAYS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Work | | | | |
| Outside interests in general | | | | |
| — movies / TV | | | | |
| — sport | | | | |
| — politics / current affairs | | | | |
| — family matters | | | | |
| — hobbies | | | | |
| — personal problems | | | | |
| — other | | | | |

VI. What do you hope to get out of this course?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Source: J. Pagurek and B. Fitzgerald, "McEnglish: Design and implementation of a communicative ESL course for francophone managers." Paper presented at TESL Ontario conference, November 1983.

The use of the photos in class is often linked to describing job procedures and safety measures. The most useful photos are usually job-specific, capturing the learners in their own work routines. In a large government department, for example, the tour and photo sessions were arranged before the teacher had an opportunity to interview the students. The final package of photos had a wide range of jobs and locations but few of them actually matched the learners' jobs. Photos that document the chronology of a worker's day are also useful in class but depend on our knowing what door workers use to enter the building, where they go on arrival, where they spend coffee breaks and lunch hour, who they talk to throughout the day and how they get to and from work. This type of information is more easily obtained through specific on-site observation or from the learners themselves rather than from a general tour. For this reason, some teachers prefer to wait until classes begin to take photos or to have the learners be responsible for photographing their own workplace. Other teachers have suggested that the sponsor take the photographs and either mount them or prepare a slide show as a contribution to the course materials. Photographs could also be taken of the different signs that people have to read at the workplace. They are particularly useful in working with basic level literacy learners.

On-site Observation

A general tour should give us a good sense of the physical layout of the workplace, especially if we have obtained a map beforehand. Where are the facilities such as lunchrooms, washrooms, aid stations, in relation to the learners' actual work sites? Tours can provide an overview of the entire process or service so that we can locate our learners' jobs in the whole. Tours of hotels and hospitals help us understand how the job of housekeepers, for example, relies on the work done by a variety of other departments. Conversely, which departments depend on their work? Like interviews, these tours also function as opportunities for advertising the course and for meeting the wide variety of people involved in the successful operation of any company. In a management-union sponsored program a tour of the union local office is the best way to meet the staff, the committee members and secretaries, who could provide suggestions and assistance during the course.

More specific on-site observations could take a half day to several days depending on the size of the sponsoring organization(s), the diversity of learners' jobs, the variety within those jobs and the number of people in the learners' communications network. Basically, through these observations we hope to gain a perspective somewhat closer to the "insider's" view. We are interested in the unseen demands of the work itself which may cause undue fatigue, frustration and complaints. In preparation for one EWP course the teacher worked in a hotel restaurant during the morning shift. She finished her shift with a new understanding

of the inter-dependence of all the jobs and of some of the demands and pressures everyone faced. In a textile factory, a teacher went through the entire process of making a garment herself. She used all the machines under the instruction of the supervisor and her future students. Besides getting the experience of doing a job and living through its frustrations, the teachers in these workplaces certainly gained a new visibility and respect among management and among their future students. Unfortunately, not all educational institutions or sponsoring organizations are willing to approve this type of participation More commonly, teachers can accompany some of their learners through their daily routines as in a hospital or hotel setting or follow learners through their various procedures in an industrial setting. For complicated procedures and the names of equipment and materials used, it is helpful to have a supervisor and/or shop steward or the company and/or union contact person available for explanations.

Our observations can also help us fill in the specifics of the communications network diagrams. We should look for the occurrence of social language - when, where and with whom in our diagram? What language corresponds to the performance of certain routines and procedures? What are the gaps between the language that is required and the language that our learners can use? For instance, can they get quick assistance if their machine breaks down? Can they respond to "Where is the telephone" in a hotel or hospital setting? In what circumstances are interpreters needed for our learners? How often, on what issues, and what procedures are followed? These exact situations may not arise during our visit but there will cetainly be other opportunities for observing their language competence in initiating and responding in oral interactions. What written materials do they deal with on a daily basis? Are reading and writing significant for carrying out their jobs? If they can deal adequately or even automatically with the printed material required for their job (e.g. time sheets, work tickets, order forms, etc.) then that can be the starting point in class for improving their reading and writing skills.

Observations can also give us a feel for the interaction dynamic of the workplace. First, we might take notice of the physical environment - the noise level, the physical distance between people, the number of opportunities for communication between fellow workers, and so on. One teacher, scheduled to work in a course for hotel restaurant staff, spent a few hours "incognito" in the restaurant at tea time and lunch time. Her future students waited on her and responded to her requests in their normal manner. Besides monitoring language use and needs, she was also able to observe the tone of the verbal communications between native and non-native speakers as well as the non-verbal cues such as eye contact, gestures and facial expressions. She found, for instance, that one waitress always frowned and raised her eyes in frustration whenever she had to talk to the busgirls. She appeared impatient; her attitude often

demeaning. Cues like these are especially indicative of people's attitudes and of the general atmosphere of the working environment. Virginia Sauve recommends that needs analyses incorporate anecdotal records "to demonstrate attitudes and specific relationships. ...If the atmosphere is tense, what seems to make it so? If, in the eyes of one person or group, you detect hostility, are there any clues as to why this is so? Who communicates with whom and under what circumstances? Who appears not to communicate with others?...These are some of the kinds of questions an observer should be asking" (Sauve 1982a:39). For some of the other questions we as observers should be asking, consult Jupp and Hodlin's Industrial English (1975), unit one, section 6.4, "Observations in the relevant sections or departments."

**Language Assessment**

We assess workers' language competence in a workplace setting to select and place learners, to diagnose language problems and to evaluate progress. At the needs analysis stage we are primarily interested in selecting and grouping learners although tests designed with the identified language needs in mind would also be useful in diagnosing weaknesses in certain skills. Some workplace teachers have expressed a particular reticence about placement testing because they feel it is too intimidating for the learners, especially for those who have volunteered to attend classes. This can be true particularly for learners whose formal education is many years behind them or whose previous language learning situations have not been satisfying. Some teachers feel that an informal talk with prospective learners is sufficient to place them in basic or intermediate classes. One method that has been tried successfully (in textile factories where the majority of learners were at a very basic level in all four skills) is to talk to learners in small groups of three or four. Everyone introduces themselves and personal information is exchanged with the help of bilingual teachers or interpreters if necessary. Learners can be asked to write their names on cards and then after more informal talk they can try and write their addresses or the name of the country they come from. In this way, some information about oral and written skills can be obtained although, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, we should be aware of the possible problems in using this informal method for placement. For diagnosing literacy problems more formal procedures can be carried out in the first few days of class.

In programs where there is little direction and pressure from the sponsoring organizations and no obligation on the teacher's part to satisfy their demands, this informal procedure is often successful. On the other hand, sponsors may insist on formal tests because they must be accountable for the time and money spent on the program. Recently, a large urban hospital requested an EWP course for non-unionized staff in nutritional services. Management selected the participants for the course,

shared time on a 50/50 basis and insisted on formal testing procedures. It is possible for us in administering formal tests to reduce the negative aspects of testing by being straightforward and clear about why we are testing. As in the learner interviews described previously, preparing for the test by explaining its purpose in the overall design of the course may help the learners to become more conscious of their needs right from the start. We should also make sure that time is set aside to review the test or talk about the results to learners individually or in small groups. This personalizes the test for them and highlights the role of the test in raising their awareness. (Sample tests can be found on pages 44-49. For assessment procedures related to final evaluation, see chapter 7.)

Reasons

Why test at this stage? If we relied on past practice in ESL, we would aim for homogeneous classes with the learners at a fairly similar stage of language development. However, it is almost never the case that the EWP learners who appear at the door on the first day are all at the same level in oral English or in English literacy. Therefore, we have to decide how to group learners according to skills either within one class or to separate them into two or three classes. Although ESL practice has relied on grouping learners according to their language levels, there are other possibilities for grouping which may be necessary or even more workable for EWP settings. For instance, classes are often determined by job descriptions - housekeepers, waitresses, janitors. Due to limited enrollment, the class can be a mix of literate and non-literate learners or fluent and limited speakers. Within a mixed level class we can establish different groups for different learning tasks. For example, for orientation information, we could pair learners who have just arrived in Canada with those who have lived here for many years and are familiar with Canadian life. Or, we could group the "experienced" ones and have them prepare orientation information which they can later present to the newly arrived immigrant. Although the preference among many teachers is still for homogeneous classes and for a series of levels based on language competence, this practice is being modified. Recently, there has been a strong emphasis on interdependence among learners as well as on learner autonomy. Since mixed level classes are the norm in EWP programs, this new direction in ESL should offer some helpful suggestions for classroom practice. (See chapter 5, Developing Materials, for more detail.)

In order to group learners it is necessary to find out where they are in the broad range of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Some learners may have speaking and listening skills adequate for job performance and survival in the wider community but do not have adequate reading and writing skills. Even within these skill areas we may be able to identify topics where the learners have good control. Jill

Bell (1982b) found in her placement testing in a Levi Strauss garment factory that the majority of people scored higher on oral tests than written ones but that nearly everyone did well on personal information and job-related vocabulary. Other learners may be at the absolute beginning stage in all four skills, even perhaps in need of pre-literacy training if they do not have much experience with the printed word.

The uses of pre-course tests vary depending on the particular workplace situation. In some instances the test results can be helpful in determining which group of learners will be selected for language training. In one electronics factory more than a hundred women signed up for classes, but the sponsoring organizations and the educational institutions were only able to provide two classes at that time. After initial testing they decided to begin at the literacy and basic level where the need was the greatest. When all the learners can be accommodated in programs with a series of levels, test results can help place learners in classes appropriate to their level. Even in situations where we have no flexibility in the selection or placement of learners, initial tests help us determine which levels exist in our own class and also provide information for planning classroom activities that cater to different groups. Pre-course tests complement the other needs analysis procedures in planning of overall objectives as well as the specific classroom objectives.

Constraints

Unlike more formal ESL programs in educational institutions, testing for selection and placement in the workplace is subject to a wide variety of constraints. To begin with, if the selection of learners is predetermined by the sponsoring organization they may see no need for pre-course assessment. For example, ten hospital housekeepers are identified by management as course participants with a 50/50 shared time arrangement. These housekeepers must upgrade their skills to cope with new technology or lose their jobs. In such a case we would want to test the housekeepers first to see the range of their language skills. If we have not been able to negotiate pre-course time for testing, then informal tests on the first day of class may be most appropriate to identify strengths and weaknesses, for grouping learners and for curriculum planning. This same procedure may be suitable if work shifts determine the selection and placement of the learners.

Even when pre-course assessment has been successfully negotiated for, unexpected problems often arise. Delays in starting a program may mean that learners originally tested are no longer employed when the course begins. Crowded conditions during testing make it easy for learners to consult with each other on the written test, thus reducing its validity. Tests designed for one group of learners (for example, those with more oral than written fluency) may not be challenging enough or suitable for another group of learners. By predicting possible problems in a given

situation, we can be better prepared and request a suitable testing time and quiet area large enough to hold groups but also with private space for individual testing. In addition, we should also consider who will notify the prospective learners of the time and place of testing and how they will be notified - in a formal letter, bulletin or informally on the shop floor?

Access to test results is a matter of concern and importance, particularly in programs where progress statistics are crucial either as part of the employees' work records or as data which may support the continuation of EWP courses. In some courses, the teachers are the sole users of the test results which never go beyond the classroom. In other courses, the results are used by the educational institution for compiling program statistics or for use with post-testing in a final evaluation. If management requests access to the results either directly or in the form of a final evaluation, then decisions must be made in regard to the privacy of the learners. Learners may be justifiably fearful that management will not use the test results in their interests, but rather as a cause for demotion or dismissal. At the very least, learners should be informed if management will have access to the results of their tests.[2]

Types of Tests

The placement tests and checklists available for the workplace display some common characteristics. The content is usually a combination of personal information plus workplace-specific communication. Both oral and written tests are often task-oriented, sometimes requiring an integration of two or more skills (e.g. listening and written or reading and speaking). Some common work-specific tasks for speaking ask the learners to:

- describe their jobs or one of the processes in their jobs
- give short instructions on how to perform one part of their job
- respond to instructions that draw on job-related vocabulary
- deliver messages
- perform a task requiring knowledge of company policy and/or social appropriateness

Examples of the latter would be:

[2]One reader argues strongly for keeping all test results private.

- What do you do if you're sick and can't go to work?
- What would you say if your supervisor asked you to work overtime and you couldn't?
- What do you do if your pay cheque is wrong?

In such tasks we can measure their knowledge of correct procedures and their ability to use language in carrying out the procedures.

Scoring Tests

Scoring for these oral interaction tests is often done on a scale of 1-3 or 1-5 giving marks for intelligibility, fluency, accuracy and appropriateness. Or they may simply be scored according to class levels with the basic level determined by the learners' inability to perform the task: cannot follow simple directions, cannot describe their jobs intelligibly, etc. Such tests are administered individually and tape recorded so that they can be scored afterwards. This allows the teacher to be more responsive to the learners throughout the test, noting and dispelling fear or discomfort that inhibits performance. Reading and writing tasks often use work-specific forms, labels or bulletins to assess basic language skills. Some writing tasks at a higher level require learners to take messages, write notes requesting time off or write a brief description of an accident on the job. These tasks are realistic in terms of what the learner might be expected to write in the workplace. For example, asking a learner to write a paragraph about what they did last night would not be appropriate. If the placement tests are designed to assess the learners' competence in tasks that have already been identified as needing improvement in the investigations, then some of these same questions can be used in a post-course test to assess progress. In a hospital setting, if reading and understanding labels has been identified as a need, then incorporate these into the pre- and post-tests. In a hotel restaurant setting, if interacting with customers for waitresses or busgirls is an identified need, then oral tasks aimed at social appropriateness can be included in the tests.

Examples of Tests

Here are some examples of tests, which might be useful in deciding what is suitable for a particular workplace setting. Jupp and Hodlin in Industrial English (1975) discuss issues in the assessment and selection of learners for company-wide or smaller scale testing. Tests used for elementary and all levels assessment are also included. These tests concentrate on spoken English in social conversation, instructions and work-specific procedures. Since the emphasis is on oral language, they point out that the reading and writing tests give only a "crude assessment" and general background information about the learner. Jill Bell's tests for Levi Strauss build on the Jupp and Hodlin model but measure more specific listening and speaking

**LEVI'S** LEVI STRAUSS OF CANADA, INC.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

PERSONAL

NAME (Print) LAST FIRST MIDDLE MAIDEN NAME

Mr. Miss Mrs. SMITH MARY JOAN

ADDRESS 162 DAVIS ST. HAMILTON POSTAL CODE

TELEPHONE NUMBER 539-2461

TYPE OF WORK DESIRED Sewing

MARITAL STATUS Single ✓ Married ☐ Other ☐

HEIGHT 5'4" WEIGHT 135

AGES OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN 6, 8

SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER 462, 131, 568

BIRTH DATE DAY MONTH YEAR 12 11 53

Are you legally entitled to work in Canada Yes ☒ No ☐

Hourly Rate Expected $5.00

Right Handed ☒ Left Handed ☐

Date Available Immediately

State any continuing ailments or physical handicaps which you have — None.

Are you interested in — Full Time ✓ Temporary ☐ Part Time ☐ Summer ☐

What lost time Workmen's Compensation cases have you had? None

Are you willing to work Week-ends Yes ☐ No ✓ Overtime Yes ☐ No ✓

List any relatives employed here

Name PAT SMITH Relationship SISTER

Name Relationship

**Section A Test Four**

**Reading Comprehension**

Students are given the sample job application form and the sheet of questions. They are instructed to follow the directions on the sheet.

Look at the Job Application form. Write the answers to these questions.

1. What is the first name of the girl who is applying for the job? .....
2. Does she have any children? .....
3. How tall is she? .....
4. Is she married? .....
5. Does she want to work full time? .....
6. Does she live in Hamilton? .....
7. Does she know anyone who works at Levi's? .....
8. When was she born? .....
9. What is her telephone number? .....
10. Will she work overtime? .....

Scoring.

Score 2 points for each correct answer

Highest possible score 20

Source: Jill Bell. Report on language proficiency testing of students in English classes at Levi Strauss, Hamilton. (1982). Reproduced with permission of the author and Levi Strauss of Canada Inc.

skills as well as reading skills that are developed in the Levi Strauss materials kit. Here is her reading comprehension test.

Reading and writing are paired in the test on pages 47 and 48 from the McDonald's course for francophone managers from Carleton University.

From the Classroom to the Workplace: Teaching ESL to Adults is a publication from the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington D.C. It argues for an interview format over more formal tests to determine the communicative abilities of learners in respect to the workplace. Interviews are preferred because they are less threatening and do not assume a sophisticated educational background. Two sections from their elementary level interview with questions on personal and job-specific information are on pages 49.

In many workplace programs, literacy training has top priority. A Handbook for ESL Literacy by Bell and Burnaby (1984) is recommended for suggestions on measuring literacy skills in native language as well as pre-literacy skills in English. The handbook offers general guidance and specific examples of test questions, checklists for recognizing language demands in a basic ESL class and for determining the level of pre-literacy skills. In addition, there are models for developing more formal literacy placement tests.

## II. ANALYSING THE DATA

Analysing the data we have collected entails identifying common concerns about communication that come out of our investigations and relating them to the results of the language assessment. What problems are repeatedly mentioned by learners and by sponsors in our interviews? What common language requirements are referred to? Does our own personal observation in the workplace confirm these commonly stated concerns? Do the learners and sponsoring organizations express similar needs? If not, it may be best to find the overlaps rather than consider the two points of view mutually exclusive. Information from our interviews with management, union, learners and their co-workers, plus the assessment scores, indicate where the learners can and cannot cope with the language demands of their workplace and perhaps of their wider community.

For example, an EWP program in a municipal service commission drew skilled and semi-skilled workers from a large variety of departments. In the interviews the most commonly stated concerns involved reading and writing skills. Management felt that the workers should be able to read safety manuals and important memos relating to job performance. In an effort to maintain the high safety standards of the commission, they were proposing annual safety exams for all their employees. Over

Read the letter below. Then circle the correct answer to the questions which follow.

1930 Main St.,
Ottawa, K1N 302,
January 5, 1983

J. B. Smith,
Manager
McDonald's Ltd.,
____ St.,
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Mr. Smith:

I visited your restaurant at noon on Sunday, January 2, and was very disappointed. I was especially upset because we had visitors from overseas with us.

The parking lot was messy -- the garbage cans were overflowing. Inside, things were just as bad. There was a very long line-up because the girl at the cash couldn't cope with the crowd. Obviously, she was overworked and didn't have enough assistance. When we finally ordered, there was a long delay because the fish filets were not ready. Although we were extremely hungry by the time we got our lunch, we couldn't eat it because the buns were stale. I didn't say anything at the time because there seemed to be no one in charge.

I thought McDonalds wanted its customers to come back. This customer won't return.

Yours truly,

(Mrs) Margaret Jones

**Questions**

1. In this letter, Mrs. Jones is a) making a complaint.
   b) saying thank you.
   c) asking for information.
2. She a) enjoyed her visit to McDonalds.
   b) didn't enjoy her visit to McDonalds.
3. Mrs. Jones came a) alone.
   b) with one person.
   c) with more than one person.
4. The parking lot was a) clean.
   b) dirty.
   c) full.
5. In the restaurant there were a) a lot of
   b) a few customers.
   c) some
6. At the cash, the girl didn't have enough a) hamburgers.
   b) help.
   c) money

Source J. Pagurek and B. "Fitzgerald, McEnglish: Design and implementation of a communicative ESL course for francophone managers". Paper presented at TESL Ontario conference, November 1983.

## Writing Test

Name _____

Do either question A or question B.
You may use an English-English dictionary.

A. Read Mrs. Jones' letter again (Reading Test Part II) and write a reply.

or

B. Read about the crew member, Phil Jackson, below and write a performance review based on the information.

Phil Jackson

- has worked at McDonald's for two months
- is very enthusiastic about the job
- wants to make a career at McDonald's
- sometimes uses incorrect procedures because he thinks he can work faster that way
- makes many suggestions
- appearance is sometimes untidy. His hair has grown until it overlaps his collar
- has already learned to work 4 stations
- his uniform is often wrinkled. Sometimes he wears brightly coloured socks.
- is never late for work
- sometimes wears his name-tag upside down
- once, forgot to call in sick
- doesn't take correction very well

The following example is for the elementary level. Other, similar tests would have to be devised for higher levels.

*(1) Social Contact*

| *Instructor* | *Learner/Worker's Replies* Acceptable | Unacceptable |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Opening greetings | 1 | 0 |
| 2. Self-identification: What's your name? | 1 | 0 |
| 3. How do you spell your name? | 1 | 0 |
| 4. Where do you live? | 1 | 0 |
| 5. Which country are you from? | 1 | 0 |
| 6. Do you have family here? | 0 | 1 |
| 7. How long have you worked here? | 1 | 0 |
| 8. Where did you work before? | 1 | 0 |
| 9. What's the name of your supervisor? | 0 | 1 |
| 10. How do you spell that name? | 0 | 1 |
| TOTAL SCORE: | 7 | 3 |

*(2) Job Specifics*

A similar outline can be made for the instructor to question the learner/worker on his or her job. The questions can be as follows:

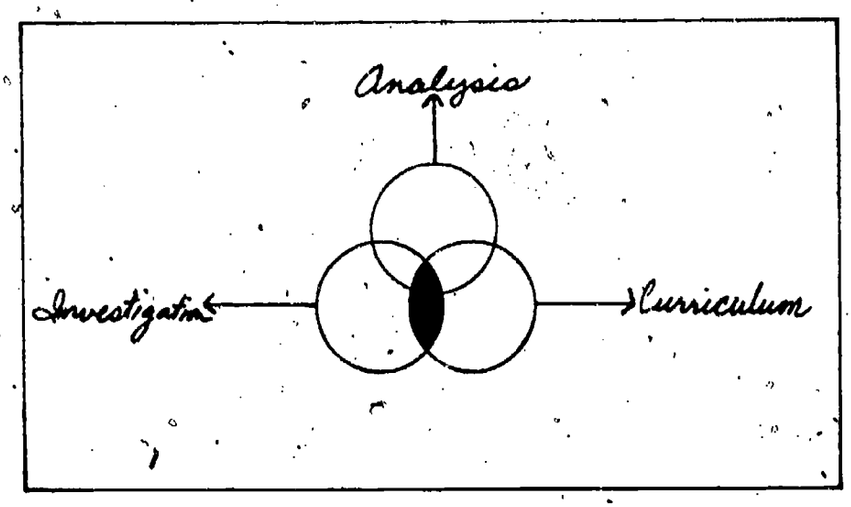
1. What's your job?
2. What do you do in your job?
   On an assembly line, for instance?
3. What happens to the product before it reaches you?
4. What do you do to it?
5. What happens to the product after it leaves you?
6. What time do you start work?
7. What's the first thing you do when you get to your work station?
8. Do you get more work done in the morning or in the afternoon?
9. What problems do you have in this job?
10. Who do you go to if you need help?

Source: Center for Applied Linguistics, From the Classroom to the workplace: Teaching ESL to Adults (1983), pp.83-84. Reproduced with permission.

the long term, they hoped that the EWP course would upgrade the reading skills of the semi-skilled, hourly-rated workers. Many of these workers had been commission employees for over ten years and might now find their jobs in jeopardy if they couldn't pass the safety exam. Only one foreman gave listening and speaking skills top priority. He used the telephone almost exclusively for communicating with the workers. The union echoed the main concerns of management but also felt that improved reading and writing skills were necessary for retraining workers to ensure job security. The workers themselves wanted to begin where they felt their skills were weakest - writing for the job and for personal use. Placement tests partially confirmed their own assessment of themselves: writing was the weakest area, reading for thorough understanding also needed improvement and oral interaction skills varied widely. Fortunately, the classes divided naturally on the basis of skills and job location. While both classes worked on reading and writing skills, group A, operating out of a different location than group B, put an equal emphasis on the oral interaction skills identified by their foreman.

A communications network diagram helps us describe the general language requirements in terms of communication tasks. It also provides a framework for asking questions and recording and categorizing information so that there is an interplay between investigation and analysis. What similar items were mentioned in different network channels? How many people mentioned the same communication task as a source of difficulty? Since many communication tasks overlap channels and involve a variety of people, we are likely to hear the same problems repeated For instance, reporting a machine breakdown in a textile factory can put the worker in contact with the mechanic, the line supervisor and possibly the union representative (if continued requests for assistance are not met). Understanding oral and written instructions might involve contact with the line supervisor, the mechanic, the union health and safety person and the personnel manager. Calling in sick usually requires communication with the receptionist and with the supervisor. Do several communicators comment on language and/or culture-related problems associated with one task? When one channel of communication reports a problem, do the other channels involved in that task agree on it as a priority item?

The examples above illustrate the interplay of investigating and analysing; of course, they will next become involved with the process of curriculum planning. Ongoing analysis during the collection of data helps us focus our questions and observations in the interests of curriculum development. Each is in the service of the other, structurally linked but highlighted at different times throughout the development and planning of a course.

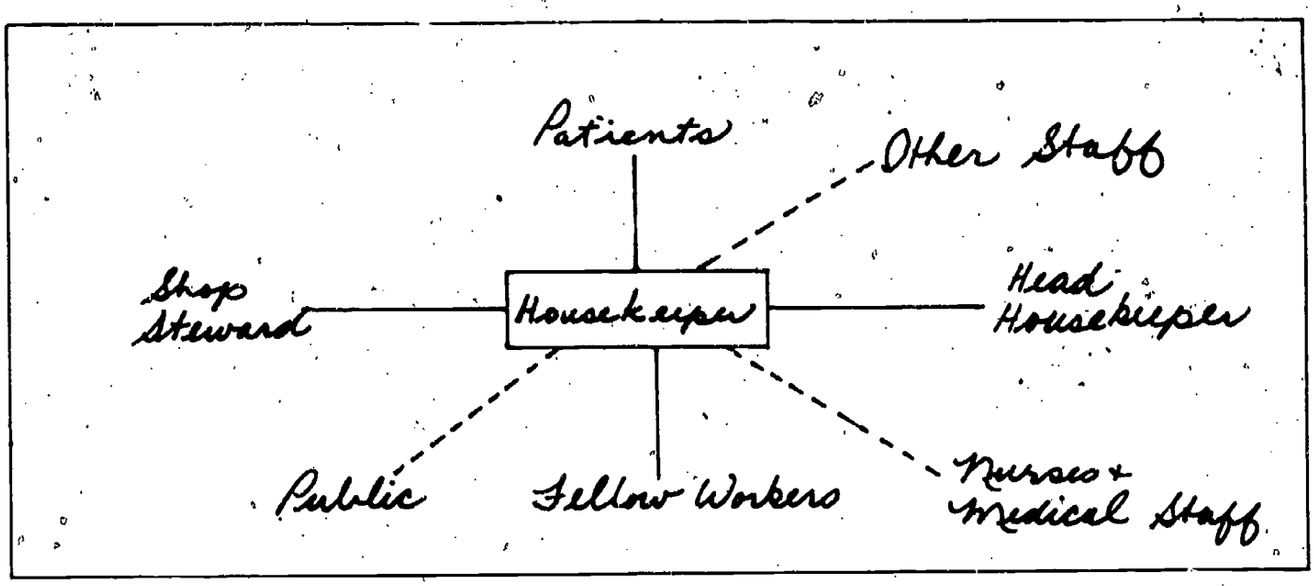



We begin with an emphasis on investigation informed by analysis and by our future goal of planning an appropriate curriculum. During the concentrated analysis stage we study the collected data carefully for the purpose of writing objectives. A curriculum with overall course objectives and more specific classroom objectives is actually not a static document but rather a working document. Its first form is based on the results of our needs analysis. With the variety of interests to be served in every EWP program, inevitably new interests and needs come to light as the course progresses. Investigation and analysis continue, always informing our choices and our reflections on the working curriculum. In addition, if we and the learners are evaluating the objectives regularly throughout the course, we need a curriculum that can be responsive. Are the original objectives relevant or not? Too broad? Too narrow? A keen awareness of the ongoing and interactive role of investigation, analysis and evaluation with curriculum planning helps to ensure a responsive curriculum.

**Example: Hospital Housekeepers**

Now, let's look at some of the data collected during investigations in a union/management sponsored course for housekeepers in a medium-sized hospital. The EWP program was initiated by management because supervisory staff noticed persistent difficulties in following instructions and reporting damages as well as the continued use of interpreters in complex personnel and payroll problems. The union agreed to the course primarily because they saw a need for more health and safety education. At that time they were also in arbitration on an issue that could affect the housekeepers. The shop steward, a native speaker of English, felt that improved

language skills would help the housekeepers stay abreast of the issue. Here is the communications network diagram that was produced:




The lines of communication most frequently used were with the patients, fellow workers, the head housekeeper and the shop steward. Although socializing with the patients is not actually part of the housekeepers' job description, this interaction was the most frequent and often the most satisfying of all communications. Initiating comments by the housekeepers could include enquiries about health, family, the daily T.V. soap opera as well as cheering up and sympathizing. In responding to patients, housekeepers might be asked about their families, their job or to react to complaints ("my family never visits me") or requests ("close the blinds","call the nurse") and even insults ("you people are so rude. You never answer me".) A good relationship with patients relies on an understanding of the importance that attitude, perception and emotions play in communication. In this particular hospital, the housekeeping staff represented a wide variety of ethnic groups so socializing with fellow workers was usually in English. At coffee breaks and lunch the topics of conversation could cover family concerns, health issues, entertainment (bingo), daily work-related matters, and current union issues. Their relationship with the head housekeeper was such that communication between them was strictly business. There was little inclination on either side for informal conversations. Their communication focussed on complaints about the quality of work, health and safety requirements, scheduling, ordering supplies, reporting damages and procedures such as phoning in sick, reporting accidents and requesting vacation time. So, although contact with the head housekeeper was not as frequent as with the patients and fellow workers, the

information exchanged was essential for good job performance. Contact with the shop steward was especially frequent during the initial stages of this course due to a union arbitration on behalf of nutritional services workers. This arbitration was followed carefully by the housekeepers because it involved layoffs that might affect their jobs in the future. With a rather rigid hierarachy in the hospital, the housekeepers felt that they rated little esteem from those above them. Their relationship with the nurses and other medical staff was observably cool. Nurses did not expect or invite communication with the housekeepers. The only real contact was that initiated by the nurses regarding job-related commands ("do that room first"). Once again, communication, although infrequent, was crucial for job performance. Of the office personnel, only the payroll department had any significant contact with the housekeepers when there were discrepancies in pay cheques. Communicating with the general public (usually with visitors about directions to the cafeteria, etc.) was infrequent and not considered a priority area.

The specific problem areas that were noted during interviews and observations fell into four broad categories: job routines, personnel-related procedures, socializing and informal contacts and communication in the wider community. (The letters before each item below indicate the source: S=supervisory staff, U=union, H=housekeepers.)

Job Routines

| | |
|---|---|
| S,H | -can't always follow instructions or ask for clarification |
| S,U | -can't read names of materials, so can't order |
| S,U | -not sure of the health hazards associated with materials used |
| S | -don't know names of furniture and items in rooms |
| S | -don't know colours to identify coding for cleansers, etc. |
| S,U | -don't understand all the health and safety regulations |

Personnel-related Procedures

| | |
|---|---|
| S | -don't understand the procedures for vacation requests |
| S,H | -have difficulty phoning in sick; can't make themselves understood |
| U | -aren't always aware of issues affecting their job category |
| S,U | -don't know procedures for filing accident report |

Socializing and Informal Contacts

| | |
|---|---|
| H | -don't feel comfortable with some patients who want to talk |
| H,S | -can't always respond to patients' enquiries, requests, insults |
| H | -can't converse easily with fellow-workers on topics of common interest |

Wider Community

| | |
|---|---|
| H | -can't fill out bank forms |

H -have difficulty making appointments with doctors, dentists

This information, along with the variety of resource materials available from the hospital and the union, provided ample content for curriculum planning. The language assessment pointed to a common need for basic reading and writing skills. The initial reading and writing levels ranged from literacy to high basic. Oral interaction skills were more noticeably divided between basic and high intermediate.

Two classes were recommended with the division based on listening/speaking skill levels - the skills which were more dissimilar in testing and more frequently mentioned in the investigations. The basic class could pursue priority content information in tasks emphasizing oral interaction with basic reading skills. The intermediate level class could use tasks that more fully integrated the four skills with slightly more emphasis on reading and writing.

In summary, an informal or an in-depth needs analysis involves an ongoing effort to collect and analyse data. Through interviews, observation and assessment, we can get information to help us develop relevant lessons and materials. Just as important, we can establish a presence in the workplace by building relationships within the organization and by finding our place in the communication network.

---

[3]One reader compiled this list of "rules" from the NCILT and other readings for interviewing sponsors and learners:

| Rules: Sponsors | Rules: Learners |
|---|---|
| 1. start at the top of the organization and have them direct their subordinates to cooperate | 1. explain who you are (i.e. you are not a harbinger of redundancy) |
| 2. recognize competence of supervisors, stewards etc. | 2. tape interview if possible |
| 3. listen for clues to atmospherics, voluntary cooperation, bonuses for good ideas, racism, sexism etc. | 3. mother tongue an asset where possible but requires training of interviewer |
| 4. be patient if expectations of learners are low on part of supervisors, stewards. | 4. keep it spontaneous and flowing with minimum amount of participation by you |
| 5. "Don't you find that...?" a bad form of question | 5. listen with a third ear for what is unconsciously omitted |

6. "How do you teach a new procedure" - a better one.

7. group meeting with sponsors if possible

8. pre-course questionnaire leads to more "ownership" of content of programme

9. sociograms are vital

10. don't forget social language needs

11. get all available A.V. materials, floor plans, brochures, newsletters, etc.

6. start with descriptive (easier) than analytical (requires more confidence in self and in you)

7. use situational problems to wrinkle out info. if necessary

8. back track as necessary

9. avoid prepared questions which can intimidate interviewee

10. 30 to 40 minutes maximum

# INTRODUCTION TO CURRICULUM DESIGN

EWP teachers are also curriculum designers as the diagram in Chapter 1 suggests. Curriculum designers determine objectives for their courses; that is, what has to be achieved overall and what has to be accomplished on a daily basis. Designers choose the content or subject matter of the course which can include knowledge and skills about language, the workplace and the community. Designers of curriculum decide on different ways or methods of getting at this subject matter. The methods chosen are evident in the materials and lessons plans developed for the classroom. Designers evaluate their choices not just at the end of the course but throughout the entire process (Breen 1983). Let us consider all of these activities as being part of curriculum design--so we are taking a broad view of curriculum. These activities do not occur in a linear fashion with objectives followed rigidly by materials development and then evaluation. Rather, each one informs the other. When we write objectives, we outline subject matter to be covered. When we evaluate, we look back to our objectives and perhaps revise those objectives and the subject matter in light of our findings.

Who are the designers of curriculums? Traditionally, curriculum specialists and textbook writers have been largely responsible for the activities described above. Currently in second language teaching, teachers and learners are assuming more responsibility in curriculum design. Together we can discuss and agree on the overall goals of the course and on individual goals for each learner. Learners can be at least partially responsible for contributing materials to be worked on in class. And with the teachers, learners can be more active in monitoring the progress of the course through on-going evaluation.

For English in the Workplace programs we have to add another player in the design process--the sponsor who also has a role to play in setting objectives, providing content materials and evaluating the results.

With the number of players and the variety of communication needs in EWP programs, teachers usually find that a new curriculum evolves or is designed for each course. This situation is different from most general ESL adult programs. Large-scale general programs of this type usually have predetermined objectives and subject matter corresponding to different language levels. The objectives are often stated in terms of grammatical structures (past tense, possessive pronouns), or language functions (greeting, requesting, refusing), or a combination of the two. Topics, themes or situations might be suggested to help place the language learned in a realistic

setting. For classroom materials, teachers often use commercially available textbooks which are geared to the general ESL program.

In an EWP program, on the other hand, all the players actively engage in curriculum design. They can determine the objectives and subject matter most suitable for the specific group of learners and work with appropriate materials that are often tailor-made for each course. Each workplace and each group of learners is unique. In EWP programs, we have the good fortune to be in a position where the uniqueness of each program is seen as a benefit and as the motivating force for curriculum design.

In the next chapters we will look at three curriculum activities:

1. designing a syllabus (that is, writing course objectives)

2. developing classroom materials and planning lessons

3. evaluating the entire process and the results.

Since the activities are so interrelated, it is somewhat misleading to talk about each one separately. Each chapter has its focus but makes reference to the other activities which necessarily complement it.

# Chapter 4
# DESIGNING A SYLLABUS

When we design a syllabus, we write course objectives. This involves selecting and organizing the content for a course. As the preceding chapter implied, there is a great deal of discussion among teachers, researchers and writers on such questions as who should be setting specific course objectives, when they should be set and how they should be set. Some educators prefer doing an extensive needs analysis to determine the goals of the course and to help organize course objectives in teaching and learning units. As described in chapter three, a needs analysis for the workplace would be done mainly before the course begins and would draw on as many information sources as possible so that all the participants in the program contribute to the design of the syllabus. Other educators feel that the syllabus should be much less predetermined. They see teachers and learners developing and evaluating goals throughout the course so that the syllabus emerges as the course unfolds. For them, the syllabus itself is a process of defining, analysing and treating needs. In this approach to syllabus design, a needs analysis is not a preliminary step carried out by teachers and coordinators. Rather, it is an on-going activity that teachers and learners are engaged in throughout the course. The needs and the desires of the participants become topics of negotiation in the classroom with decisions made jointly on how to fulfill them. EWP courses have been run successfully on both bases although more often syllabuses are designed by drawing on both models. For instance, if the sponsor of a program has very definite aims which can be realistically incorporated and achieved, then we begin that course with some predetermined outcomes in mind. This does not eliminate the emergence of new objectives but rather forces us to integrate the original and the developing objectives. As the preceding chapter on needs analysis indicated, the process of writing objectives is an interactive one: investigation and analysis of needs leading to a preliminary syllabus which is responsive to the results of ongoing evaluation and reflection. The whole curriculum as a "working document" is meant to capture that sense of constant interplay between analysis, objectives and evaluation.

A workplace syllabus is also dynamic in another more practical sense: it can respond to and incorporate a learner's daily needs. The day that Anna's paycheque is incorrect is the day to begin working on the problem. It is often in these specific problem areas that a change in behaviour, an increase in self-confidence and the

learning of coping skills can be achieved. When we respond immediately, we acknowledge the ability of the learners to identify what is important to them and provide an opportunity for them to exercise some of their controlling interest in the course. EWP teachers often act on the belief that their first obligation is to the learners. Responding to Anna's paycheque problem as a language learning activity for the whole class is one expresssion of that belief.

**Writing Objectives.**

In many EWP programs, sponsors and/or educational institutions request some statement of course objectives either formally presented in a written report or informally agreed upon in discussion. Even if the sponsors do not make a specific request, it is important to show them the course objectives before classes begin. We can get their confirmation and assistance before further detailed drafts and classroom materials are developed. Equally as important, we set their expectations for improvement in the learners' communication.

The syllabus can be formal or informal, fine-tuned or roughly outlined. The shape of the syllabus depends on its purpose as well as a variety of other factors such as personal preference, time limitations, financial arrangements and the demands of the sponsors and educational institutions.

Syllabuses can have different purposes and different audiences. For instance, a syllabus can be written for a course that will be offered repeatedly to similar groups of learners. In this case, the syllabus is for the future teachers of the course and usually is designed only after several courses have been offered and objectives have been priorized. An example is A Curriculum Outline for an ESL Program for Adults Integrating Office English and Typing by Laylin and Blackwell (1978) (for an excerpt see page 64). This type of course is usually offered at the pre-vocational stage, although its orientation is to a specific worksite. With information from a needs analysis, a syllabus can be written before a course begins by the teacher or an outside designer. For instance, in a program for city hall property department workers, the local board of education received funding to carry out a needs analysis and design a syllabus two months prior to the course. In this case, the syllabus was designed to indicate the objectives and the content to be taught. In other cases, rather than offer objectives for teaching in the classroom, a syllabus could be designed to help the teacher write materials for a course.

A syllabus for a workplace sponsor could be simply a list of the communication tasks that have been identified as problem areas (socialize with customers, get meal orders from patients, etc.). For some teachers this rough outline is sufficient for their own teaching purposes. Other teachers prefer to break down these task objectives into

smaller units so that they can develop classroom materials and activities with a specific focus.

## Examples of Workplace Syllabuses

Since there are many ways of stating objectives, let's examine a variety of syllabuses from different workplace programs. Some are course-specific while others can be more accurately described as overall institutional guidelines from which course objectives can be drawn. Some helpful questions to ask ourselves are: What subject matter is chosen? How are the objectives categorized? Is a methodology implied?

If we are starting with the results of a needs analysis from the workplace, then we will probably have a variety of communication tasks that have been identified as important and needing improvement. For instance, here is the list of objectives from the Jantzen ESL project in Vancouver. This was a twenty-four-week course for female textile workers.

**I. Functions**

Students should be able to:

1) communicate effectively with supervisors, office personnel, co-workers and other support staff in the job setting;
2) deal with the broad range of job-related problem situations;
3) identify and carry out daily work responsibilities and procedures in response to direction, and demonstrate knowledge of specific job-related terms and expressions;
4) identify wage policies and benefits, and calculate earnings;
5) identify functions, procedures, policies, etc., of the company;
6) provide information about selves and family;
7) demonstrate understanding of equipment and materials (functions, operation of, etc.)
8) describe problems and procedures related to machine/equipment maintenance;
9) participate in informal social exchanges;
10) identify and understand work-related forms (e.g., daily earnings slips, work order cards) and other written material;
11) fill out work-related forms (e.g., time sheets, requests for standard checks) and write other information as required.

**II. Enabling skills**

Students should be able to:

1) form questions (e.g., request permission, assistance, clarification, instruction, make inquiries, etc.)
2) respond to questions and make statements of explanation and clarification;
3) respond to directions appropriately (i.e., demonstrate comprehension);
4) produce structures which result in adequate communication (i.e., use proper verb tense, word order, etc.);
5) produce language with a fluency (i.e., pronunciation, rhythm and stress) sufficient to ensure comprehension;
6) identify relevant written language;
7) write relevant language;
8) use lexical items and idiomatic expressions appropriately (i.e., demonstrate understanding and produce);
9) express themselves appropriately in informal social exchanges.

Source: Jan Laylin, "An approach to on-the-job learning," Tesl Talk, 9(3) (1978), 39-40. Reproduced with permission of Tesl and the author.

Some teachers prefer to jump right in by choosing one of these objectives and developing exercises and activities to enable learners to perform them. They make the transition to the next objective by linking it through a commmon topic or a function or a skill (listening, speaking, reading or writing). They prefer this very loose organization because it provides them and the learners with the most opportunities for incorporating new ideas, evaluating and changing direction. Other teachers who work in this fashion do so not out of preference but because no time or money has been allotted for more detailed organization of the syllabus.

Given the time and money, some teachers prefer to categorize the objectives so that they can plan units of work more easily. For the Levi-Strauss course, the teacher and materials writer Jill Bell lists the following job-specific objectives that were identified by the learners and other employees:

The specific topics identified by the students and other employees as being necessary, included:

- thorough knowledge of job related vocabulary
- explaining problems on the job such as machine breakdowns
- following oral instructions either to remedy a problem or as part of job training
- asking permission of the supervisor to leave the floor or have time off
- phoning in sick
- explaining that one had not understood instructions
- handling minor social problems such as refusing a request or apologizing for an accident
- handling rebukes from supervisory staff
- various types of orientation information including the payroll system, health and safety, etc.

Source: Jill Bell, "The Levi Strauss project: Development of a curriculum," Tesl Talk, 13(4) (1982a), 87. Reproduced with permission of Tesl and the author.

When she prepared the materials for the course, she developed five sections that covered both social and work-related situations. She found that language for social interaction provides non-threatening situations for increasing self-confidence, incorporates most of the basic structural patterns and motivates learners by raising passive knowledge to the active level (Bell, 1982a). After establishing this base, more specific job-related topics were covered.

## Outline of topics covered

The materials are designed in five sections, to be taught sequentially. Each section breaks down into a number of units which can be taught in one lesson, or covered in greater detail over a number of lessons with more basic students.

*Section One* covers some of the basic ground rules of the language. It aims to activate the passive knowledge which many students will have and thus increase their confidence in their ability to learn. It also familiarizes the students with the learning techniques which will be demanded of them.

*Section Two* concentrates on the use of everyday social conversation with peers. The language items covered are those indicated by the language needs assessment as being most frequently required.

*Section Three* provides the basic language necessary for the work to be performed correctly and efficiently and reinforces the social conventions covered in Section Two.

*Section Four* concentrates on the use of language on the job, applying previously learned structures to the situation on the factory floor. It also provides orientation information on company policy in areas such as safety and sickness.

*Section Five* deals with the use of language in high pressure situations such as disagreements or discussions with superiors. Orientation information on quality requirements and the payroll system is also introduced.

Source: Jill Bell, "The Levi Strauss project: Devlopment of a curriculum," Tesl Talk, 13 (4), (1982a), 89. Reproduced with permission of Tesl and the author.

Looking solely at job-related communication, the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington D.C. offers these categories for organizing objectives that are common to many vocational ESL courses:

***Language used in routine social interaction***
**Greetings, farewells, ways of addressing coworkers, talking with coworkers in the cafeteria, working as a part of a team**

***Language used for a specific job***
**Responding to instructions, making requests, helping others, keeping records, following safety regulations**

***Language for flexibility and increased responsibility***
**Describing the process of the whole plant, addressing a variety of people, giving messages, carrying messages, writing notes, using the telephone, initiating conversation**

***Language for inquiring about formal procedures***
**Questioning about wages, holidays, leave, fringe benefits; using the clinic and credit union; discussing grievances**

Source: Center for Applied Linguistics, "From the Classroom to the workplace: Teaching ESL to Adults" (1983), pp. 81-82. Reproduced with permission.

The examples of syllabuses we have looked at so far were written to describe courses or were meant to be used as reports to the sponsor. In the next example from Laylin and Blackwell, the syllabus was written as a guide for the teaching itself. In their course on office English and typing they chose five "communication skills" which were required of most office workers. The example on page 64 is from "Dealing with Instructions and Directions" and illustrates one way of breaking down overall objectives into manageable units.

Now let's look at some overall program outlines where objectives have been organized by themes and topics.

The Centre for Labour Studies at Humber College in Toronto describes the goals of its courses as the development of the four language skills with the important addition of building learners' self-confidence (see page 65). The subject areas of work and the larger community are organized thematically with subtopics identifying more specific issues. The classes in this program are union sponsored and promote a pro-worker attitude. The subtopics reflect that approach in encouraging awareness and understanding of rights as well as procedures to follow to protect those rights. The learners in this program explore those themes and topics and learn the language to help them do this. The language component is therefore a tool rather than the aimed-for product and is worked out only after the themes and topics have been decided upon. In practice, this outline is used as a guide, and teachers and learners select topics that are of interest for development in the classroom or topics that relate to needs identified in pre-course investigations.

Using this outline as guide for the grammatical component of a course, we may find that it is too heavily weighted with verb tense practice and too rigidly defined. Perhaps a more organic or evolving development in the grammatical component would better suit the presentation of themes and topics in the style mentioned above.

The next example on 66 from Themes for Learning and Teaching, a Freirian-based guide, is also more of an overall guide than a course-specific syllabus. Like the previous example, the content is organized according to themes and topics, but the methodology is explicitly stated. In the Freirian approach to learning, the writers choose relevant themes as the basis for building a critical consciousness. (Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and theorist, based his method of teaching literacy to adults on a belief in education as a process of liberation through developing a critical consciousness. See Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Education as a Practice for Freedom.) The methodology is outlined in the steps corresponding to each topic: A. Descriptive; B. Problematising; and C. Alternatives. The main objective is for the learners to develop this consciousness through the practice of analysis on topics of common concern and interest.

D. Dealing with Instructions and Directions

1. Learning Objectives

a. giving instructions

b. following instructions

c. asking questions of clarification

d. providing clarifying information

2. Structure

a. imperative, e.g. "Switch the machine off."

b. prepositions, e.g. "The supply room is next to the personnel office."

c. modal verbs e.g. "You have to dial 112 before a long-distance call."

d. question formation:
direct - How many copies of this report do you need?
indirect - Could you tell me where the Royal Bank is?

3. Content Areas

a. changing a typewriter ribbon

b. operating office machinery

c. setting margins

d. making a long-distance call

e. performing general job duties in an office

f. operating a switchboard

g. using a phone with more than one line

h. locating office supplies

4. Classroom Activities

Listening
a. repeating oral or taped instructions
b. answering questions about instructions
c. carrying out instructions

Speaking:
a. explaining to another student how to do something
b. asking clarifying questions of another's instructions

Reading:
a. completing worksheet based on written instructions
b. carrying out written instructions

Writing:
a. writing a series of related instructions or directions
b. writing a letter or memo giving instruction/directions*

5. Classroom Aids

a. written instructions for office equipment

b. a variety of office equipment and supplies

c. a map of the business area of town

d. access to a switchboard

e. access to an inter-office phone system

f. floor plan of an office.

Source: Jan Laylin and Margaret Blackwell, A curriculum outline for an ESL program for adults integrating office English and typing (Vancouver: Vancouver Community College, 1978), pp.8-9. Reproduced with permission of Vancouver Community College.

## ENGLISH AT THE WORKPLACE — COURSE OUTLINE

**General Description**

**Goals:** To develop English language skills relevant to the work situation and for general competence.
Specifically (a) to develop listening and speaking skills and the ability to verbally communicate work-related problems to both management and union officials.
(b) to develop reading and writing skills, particularly those related to the workplace and to union procedures.
(c) to develop self-confidence to enable workers to better assert themselves at word and within their union.

**Course Outline** — 10 weeks

English at the Workplace is concerned with the functional method of language teaching. Classes are conducted around particular themes relevant to the students, and the appropriate grammatical structures are then built into these themes. The majority of units focus on the theme of work with some additional themes of more general relevance.

| | THEME | EXAMPLES OF STRUCTURES PRACTICED |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Work — a) Your job and work experience | Descriptions: tenses (Present continuous) |
| 2. | Work — b) Overall production — how the process works | Tenses — interrogative forms |
| 3. | Work — c) Time — how it affects the workplace | Habitual present and present continuous tenses; Telling time |
| 4. | Work — d) Communication in the workplace — between employees; employees/employer; | Reporting; Giving and receiving instructions; the Imperative |
| 5. | Work — e) Wages & earning — payslips, banking, understanding benefit plans, etc. | Past tense/comparisons/explanations |
| 6. | Work — f) Role of the union — The grievance procedure; union structure, services; women and unions | Present perfect tense/use of the conditional |
| 7. | Work — g) Health & Safety discussion of procedures to follow, awareness of rights | Imperatives/negatives/conditionals/reporting skills |
| 8. | Work — h) Out of work — UIC, job interviews, etc | Reporting/oral skills |
| 9. | Family Life — Family tree, routines, cultural background, leisure time, etc. — remembering the experience of immigrating to Canada | Past perfect tense; adjectives; adverbs; |
| 10. | Housing — renting, owning a home, community awareness, etc. | Future tense; Infinitives |
| 11. | Consumption — basic necessities for well-being; information about goods and services | Future perfect tense; Idioms |
| 12. | Immigration & Citizenship — understanding laws, electoral system | Passive voice; Indirect speech; |

Source: Centre for Labour Studies, Humber College. Reproduced with permission.

WORK

| TOPICS | A. DESCRIPTIVE | B. PROBLEMATISING | C. ALTERNATIVES |
|---|---|---|---|
| I EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT | Looking for a job, applying for a job; job interviews.<br>Different kinds of jobs. | Obstacles to finding employment.<br>Unemployment<br>Rules and Regulations of U.I.C. - applying for U.I.C. benefits<br>Under - Employment<br>The employment situation in city, province, Canada as a whole. | Job creation, Training and upgrading,<br>Legislation - political options. |
| II CONDITIONS of WORK | Wages - rates of pay - calculations - minimum wage<br>Benefits<br>Health and Safety | Limitations of Employment Standards Act: -<br>- Wages vs Purchasing Power.<br>- Hazards to Health Safety.<br>- Job & Income insecurity. | Organization of Workers<br>More active participation in Labour Unions.<br>Effecting change through the political process,<br>(Remembering that Workers have a history). |
| III SOCIAL RELATIONS at WORK | Relationship between workers themselves.<br>Relationship between workers and management<br>Labour Relations Act | Causes for divisions between workers.<br>- Communications between Workers and Management<br>a) general barriers<br>b) in Union Contracts | |
| IV WORK AND SOCIETY | Goods<br>Raw materials and their transformation into the finished products<br>Services | Profits -<br>- alienation<br>- consumerism<br>- overproduction<br>- waste<br>- pollution | Working towards change and a better economic order. |

Source: ESL Core Group, Themes for learning and teaching (Toronto: ESL Core Group, 1979), p. 191. Reproduced with permission.

A similar three-step process drawn from a literacy approach popular in Central America shapes the materials being prepared by the Core Foundation and the Board of Education for the City of North York under the direction of Deborah Barndt. In each of the five units the themes and sub-themes are developed according to the methodology of looking at, analysing and then acting upon experiences. As outlined below, each unit has a tool to help explore the theme, to assist teachers and learners in doing their own needs analyses and to serve as a model for developing their own materials.

| TOOLS | UNIT THEMES | SUB-THEMES |
|---|---|---|
| "History Book" (Stories) | OUR HISTORIES AS IMMIGRANT WORKERS | Personal immigration histories. why we came to Canada<br>Comparing jobs there and here<br>Contribution of immigrant workers to Canadian economy<br>Job interviews |
| "Photo Packages" (Photographs) | OUR JOBS WITHIN OVERALL PRODUCTION (OR SERVICE) PROCESS | Job descriptions, tasks (technical language needed on job)<br>Step-by-step review of production process<br>Decision-making and communications structure within workplace |
| "Radio-Novels" (Audio Tapes) | OUR WORK RELATIONSHIPS (WITH MANAGEMENT, PUBLIC, WORKERS, UNION) | Relations with supervisor<br>Client relations<br>Relations with other workers<br>Union |
| "Cartoon Card Game" (Drawings) | OUR WORKING CONDITIONS | Wages and benefits<br>Health and safety<br>WCB/UIC<br>Upgrading/educational opportunities |
| "Day in the Life" (Poster) | IMPACT OF OUR WORK ON HOME LIFE AND COMMUNITY LIFE | Double day: outside work, housework<br>Banking/shopping<br>School/doctor<br>Community activities |

Source: Deborah Barndt.

One question we can ask is how a needs analysis fits into the design shown in these last three examples. During the needs analysis we look for communication problems that are evident in the way language is used. At the same time, we are also building relationships within the sponsoring organizations. Every workplace program, irrespective of its teaching and learning methods, benefits from a healthy relationship with the sponsors. As for the specific communication needs identified, they can be treated in the context of the larger framework. "Calling in sick", for example, can be part of a section on problems related to health and safety or to home and family life. Are people frequently off work because of conditions on the job, because of family responsibilities or, more likely, a combination of the two? Learners practice the steps in phoning in sick so they are competent in this task but the overriding objective is to follow through on a process of enquiry and problem-solving. When using this approach, we should be particularly conscious of allotting time to deal specifically with communication tasks.

## Communication Tasks

As we have seen, the objectives and subject matter for each workplace program are different. Likewise, the format for organizing those objectives can vary according to personal preference, program guidelines, preferred methods and the types of needs identified. If we choose to identify learners' needs in terms of their competence in certain communication tasks, then we can easily translate those needs into course objectives. The use of task-oriented goals seems particularly well-suited to the workplace where job descriptions are stated in terms of tasks and success on the job is measured in terms of how well these tasks are performed. For use in the classroom these overall course objectives must be further specified into teaching and learning objectives.

For example, let's look at what is involved in teaching and learning how to call in sick. To perform this task, learners have to be able to:

| | | LIST/SP. | READ | WRITE | ASSOC. TOPICS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CALLING IN SICK | 1. identify parts of body | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Work Environment<br>- job illnesses associated with light, temperature, noise, ventilation, etc.<br>- substances used<br>- feelings about work: common problems and feelings<br>- cultural factors at work (e.g. degree of info appropriate to give about medical conditions)<br>• right to privacy<br>• need to learn how to make a general statement without going into particulars<br>• need to learn to cope with inappropriate personal questions |
| | 2. identify common ailments | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| | 3. talking to receptionist/ switchboard | ✓ | | | |
| | 4. report/respond about illness | ✓ | | | |
| | 5. understand/give information about return | ✓ | | | |
| | 6. end conversation<br>- understand signal to end<br>- use appropriate formulas | ✓ | | | |

If we outline the language components of the tasks in this manner, then we know what the task demands and how much the learners can already handle. To present these items in class, we can design activities for listening, speaking, reading and writing. Outlining the language components also gives us a better idea of where tasks overlap so that we can make links between tasks. Several further examples of tasks that are often taken up in EWP courses are outlined below. The associated topics might be useful if these tasks are presented in a topic or theme format.

| | | LIST/SP. | READ | WRITE | ASSOC. TOPICS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| REPORTING AN ACCIDENT | 1. identify parts of body<br>2. identify common accidents<br>3. explain why accidents occur<br>4. offer preventative action<br>5. describe procedure:<br>· who to talk to<br>· forms to fill out<br>6. follow the above procedure in example: call/explain/form | ✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓ | ✓<br>✓<br>✓ | ✓<br>✓ | Health & Safety:<br>- calling in sick<br>- government/union protection & rules<br>- feelings at work: common problems<br>- stress at work<br>- workman's compensation |
| REQUESTING TIME OFF | 1. identify days of week/dates<br>2. identify times of day/hours<br>3. ask for time to talk to supervisor<br>4. make request<br>5. give reasons<br>6. understand/respond to hesitancy - persuade<br>7. understand/respond to refusal or acceptance<br>8. give appropriate thanks/regrets<br>9. end conversation | ✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓ | ✓<br>✓ | ✓<br>✓ | - common reasons<br>- flexibility of job; other schedules for work<br>- reasons for refusal: understanding the system<br>- their job schedules: shifts, change of jobs |
| INTERPRETING PAY SLIPS | 1. identify numbers/amounts of money<br>2. identify dates/month, day, year<br>3. describe wage system<br>- salary/piecework/hourly<br>- cash, cheque, bank deposit<br>4. be familiar with computer format - boxes<br>5. identify boxed items: UIC, CPP, Income Tax, Union<br>6. calculate their wages for day/week<br>7. identify overtime calculation | ✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓ | ✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓ | ✓<br>✓<br>✓ | - advantages/disadvantages of pay system<br>- shifts: disadvantage of schedul<br>- overtime: frequent, desirable, law-related issues, how requested, consequences if refused<br>- deductions: benefit plans, use of taxes |
| REPORTING A PAY PROBLEM | 1. above<br>2. ask for time to talk<br>3. explain problem & give proof<br>4. understand/respond to positive and negative from authority<br>5. if negative:<br>- check calculation<br>- consult union rep | ✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓<br>✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - holiday & vacation pay; adequate or not<br>- disposal of income: budget, banking, savings/spendings |

| | | LIST/SP. | READ | WRITE | ASSOC. TOPICS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SOCIALIZING | 1. understand/produce, greetings farewells, compliments. | ✓ | | | Leisure:<br>- activities<br>- amount of time<br>- desirable: how to get more leisure time |
| | 2. identify members of family: age, school, work | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | 3. talk about their own history: arrival, why to Canada, country, language, work history | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | 4. talk about daily activities and getting to work: transportation, cooking, shopping, parenting (daycare), weekends | ✓ | | | |
| | 5. complain, request in social situations as needed | ✓ | | | |
| | 6. identify cultures and attitudes toward other cultures | ✓ | | | |
| RESPONDING TO ENQUIRY RE: BEHAVIOR | (Example: late) | | | | |
| | 1. tell time | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - concepts of time and social behavior<br>- cultural differences re: time |
| | 2. identify hours of work: start/finish | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | 3. identify common reasons for being late | ✓ | | | |
| | 4. describe procedure - who to talk to | ✓ | | | |
| | 5. understand/respond to supervisor enquiry | ✓ | | | |
| | 6. state reasons why | ✓ | | | |
| | 7. indicate accept/reject penalty | ✓ | | | |

Depending on what needs were identified, task objectives for textile workers and for hotel and hospital housekeepers could include some of the above and perhaps others like the following:

| HOSPITAL | | LIST/SP. | READ | WRITE | ASSOC. TOPICS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SOCIALIZING WITH PATIENTS | 1. understand/produce greetings, farewells, compliments | ✓ | | | - feelings re: hospital care, long-term illness, fear of dying, etc., to better understand patients |
| | 2. enquiries re: health that day, compliment, cheer up, sympathize | ✓ | | | |
| | 3. recognize/respond to requests for assistance | ✓ | | | - parts of body |
| | 4. understand/deliver messages | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - line of command re: delivering messages |

| TEXTILE | | LIST/SP. | READ | WRITE | ASSOC. TOPICS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| REPORTING MACHINE BREAKDOWN | 1. identify parts of machine | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - piece work |
| | 2. identify possible malfunctions | ✓ | ✓ | | - technological change |
| | 3. call/get attention of floor lady | ✓ | | | - pace of work |
| | 4. describe the malfunction | ✓ | | | - machine & body stress |
| | 5. request repair/help | ✓ | | | - favouritism |
| | 6. persuade/insist if response is negative | ✓ | | | - production process |
| | 7. fill out form: relate sequence of events | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |

| HOTEL HOUSEKEEPER | | LIST/SP. | READ | WRITE | ASSOC. TOPICS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MAKING ENQUIRIES | 1. interrupt/get attention with enquiry: "excuse me, can I clean the room..." | ✓ | | | - interrupting: social behaviour |
| | 2. understand/produce time related phrases: not now, come back later, hour or two | ✓ | | | |

It is always difficult to state course objectives, to decide what to include and how to organize the ideas. The language component in these syllabuses are presented in a variety of ways - some as grammatical structures, some as functions or a combination of the two. Remember that structures and functions are just one aspect of communication, the grammatical aspect. There are also other important aspects which most of these syllabuses do not illustrate. They are sociolinguistic competence involving issues of appropriateness, strategic competence involving strategies to avoid breakdowns in communication, and discourse competence involving the use of certain markers and formats to produce connected and coherent speech and writing (Canale 1983). In Chapter 5 there are suggestions on how to develop materials and plan classroom activities incorporating these four aspects.[1] Looking back over these syllabus statements, we should keep in mind that most of them are really draft documents and, in practice, change and are adapted with each new group of learners. They may appear abstract on paper but they become concrete through activities which incorporate the objectives and enable the learners to become competent in all four aspects of communication.

**Looking Ahead to Activities**

The language level of the class or group determines which teaching/learning items need to be emphasized or explored in depth. For instance, in "requesting time off" a basic class would need more work on days of the week, dates and time. We can develop a variety of communication activities, games and exercises that provide practice for these items. For example, if a special event is being planned in class (speaker, party, visitor, etc.), have learners work in twos or threes with a calendar to determine which day would be best. Language can be as simple as:

Is Tuesday a good day?

Which Tuesday?

January 12th.

No; I'm busy. I'm going to the doctor.

For the remaining teaching/learning items (making the request, giving reasons, responding to the answer), we can set easier listening and speaking exercises which introduce one or two formula phrases such as "Could I...?"

In an intermediate class we could explore the varieties of structuring a request,

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[1] For materials/activities which incorporate sociolinguistic aspects, see Chapter 5, pages 81-83, 88, 95, 102, 103-105. For discourse aspects, see pages 84-86, 86-88, 89-91, 95, 100, 102-103. For strategic aspects, see pages 81, 84, 88, 103-105.

of supervisors' responses and more persuasive comments in case of refusal. For instance, as a listening exercise learners might listen to two taped dialogues, one in which the worker gets a positive response to a request for a day off and the other a negative. In small groups they can try to identify two or three uses of language that account for the response. They can be instructed to listen to how the conversation begins, the tone of voice of the supervisor (friendly, busy, angry), the actual phrasing of the request and the substance of the reasons given. They can rewrite the negative dialogue and then present their version to the whole class which then decides if it would be successful or not. Basic and intermediate classes differ not so much in the number of teaching/learning objectives covered but rather in the depth in which they are explored. The same objective can be tackled by a basic and intermediate class with more difficult tasks set for the latter. For mixed level classes, these examples could be applied for basic and intermediate learners working in groups.

English for Work, a curriculum from British Columbia's Ministry of Education, does precisely this in setting teaching/learning objectives and devising lesson plans. Here is a sample from the module on "Dealing with job-related problems: special requests." The overall objective for the module is written in terms of a task-oriented goal:

OVERALL OBJECTIVE:

1. Make a special request to a supervisor and understand his response.

FUNCTIONS:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Describing a Future Action: | "My mother and father are arriving from Lebanon on Friday." |
| 2. Requesting Permission: | "Could I have the day off, please?" |

CULTURAL NOTES:

1. Granting time off for personal matters is done reluctantly and is often considered by the boss to be a favour. In asking for time off, employees may put themselves in employer's debt.
2. Time off in these circumstances is usually without pay. Sometimes time can be "made up".
3. When getting supervisor's attention, greet him by name.
4. When we give a refusal, we usually give a reason.
5. What the worker considers a matter of personal importance (e.g. meeting a relative at the airport) may be of no consequence to employers.

Source: English for Work (1982), p.13-1. Province of B.C. Ministry of Education, Continuing Education Division, Victoria, B.C. Reproduced with permission.

A chart on page 75 details language components with teaching/learning objectives further defined by their functions. At all three levels the task is accomplished but with different emphases.
The particular lesson plans on page 76 are supplied for each teaching/learning objective. They give instructions and ideas for classroom activities that provide practice in the language components related to the performance of that task-oriented goal.

In the next chapter we will consider lesson planning and materials development in more detail. Here, it is important to point out that our plans for lessons and the materials we design to use in class are always informed by our view of the teacher's and the learner's roles. In a workplace setting the sponsoring organization(s) also has a key role to play as does the specific resource material provided for us. Since these roles are crucial in determining how our classes will operate, let us look at the possible responsibilities of each player as outlined on page 77.

In summary, in designing a syllabus we select and organize content. In EWP programs we can work cooperatively with the learners and the sponsors in this process. As language teachers, we operate in the broad framework of communication. In designing a syllabus for communication needs, we integrate knowledge of the workplace and of the community with language skills. In the latter, we join the more familiar grammatical aspect of language with its sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic aspects. In the next two chapters, these four aspects of language and the roles outlined above will be illustrated in suggestions for classroom practice.

## LANGUAGE COMPONENTS

### LEVEL 1:

| Function | Objective | Structure | Vocabulary |
|---|---|---|---|
| Describing Future Action | 1. Make a statement about an event in the future. | N + Ving and complement<br>My mother and father are coming from Lebanon on Friday. | family names<br>possessive pronouns e.g. my, our<br>countries<br>days of week |
| Attracting Someone's Attention | 1. Use polite forms to attract attention. | Excuse me _____.<br>Pardon me _____.<br>What's it? | forms of address Mr., Miss, Ms., Mrs; vs. informal first name. |
| Requesting Permission | 1. Request permission and understand yes/no replies. | Could I have the day off?<br>Yes, I guess it's O.K.<br>No, I'm sorry. We're too busy. | day off<br>too + adjective e.g. too busy |
| | 2. Request permission to borrow something. | Could I borrow your _____? | classroom objects e.g. pen, dictionary<br>homework |

### LEVEL 2:

| Function | Objective | Structure | Vocabulary |
|---|---|---|---|
| Requesting Permission | 1. Ask boss for time off. | Could you spare a moment?<br>Would it be possible?<br>I understand t .<br>_____.<br>That's not possible because _____. | spare a moment<br>have a word<br>request<br>causes<br>short-staffed |
| Respond to Affirmative and Negative Replies | 1. Ask boss about his decision and understand yes/no replies. | Can you give me _____?<br>Have you had time to think about _____? | expected<br>personnel |
| Make Suggestions | 1. Use can't and couldn't as forms of suggestion. | Couldn't you _____?<br>Can't you _____? | |

### LEVEL 3:

| Function | Objective | Structure | Vocabulary |
|---|---|---|---|
| Requesting Permission | 1. See Level 2 | See Level 2 | See Level 2 |
| | 2. Develop strategies and create follow-up dialogue for:<br>- positive response<br>- negative response<br>from supervisor. | I realize _____.<br>I appreciate _____.<br>I think _____.<br>You told me to _____. | treating<br>deserve |

### NOTES TO THE TEACHER

1. Objective #2 in Level 3 provides a useful opportunity to discuss subtleties of raising a difficult point. Consider feelings, consequences and how these situations might be handled in students' countries.
2. Intonation is significant in these kinds of situation.

   e.g.: "Could I have the day off?" is acceptable intonation.

   "Could I have the day off?" is not acceptable and creates the impression of a demand rather than a request.

   Similarly in Appendix D, correct intonation is very important when George asks for an explanation.

   "Can you please tell me why?"

Source: English for Work (1982), p.13-2,3. Province of B.C. Ministry of Education, Continuing Education Division, Victoria, B.C.





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SAMPLE LESSONS FOR THREE LEVELS

| DEVICES | LEVEL 1 |
|---|---|
| LEVEL 1<br>. picture of parents at airport, map, calendar<br><br>LEVEL 2 AND 3<br>. Appendix A, B and C. | 1. Enabling Objective: Describe future actions.<br><br>Procedure:<br>. Show students drawing of George's mother and father arriving at the airport. Give them some background information using map and calendar.<br>. If students can make "wh" questions, have them ask instructor:<br>Who is coming?<br>Where are they coming from?<br>When are they coming?<br>Use answers to create sentence:<br>My mother and father are coming from Lebanon on Friday.<br>. Review vocabulary for family names -<br>brother, sister, aunt, uncle, etc.<br>Flash cards with one name per card are useful.<br>. Extend this basic sentence using cue words from students:<br>brother, Fiji, Saturday<br>grandparents, Hong Kong, Tuesday<br>Students work in pairs using "wh" questions from above to make new sentences.<br>. Expand with singular form and possessive if appropriate.<br>My mother's sister is coming ....." |

| DEVICES | LEVEL 1 |
|---|---|
| LEVEL 1<br>. pop bottle<br>or<br>. bean bag<br>***<br>. picture of airport<br>. teacher-made worksheet of dialogue with blanks<br><br>LEVEL 2<br>. Appendix D<br>. Dyad Activity (Appendix E)<br>. language master cards<br><br>LEVEL 3<br>. Phrase Sheet (Appendix F) | 2. Enabling Objective: Attract someone's attention.<br><br>Procedure:<br>. Have a more fluent student attract your attention using:<br>Excuse me _____.<br>Respond with reply:<br>Yes _____, what is it?<br>. Make list of names of other people (instructors, custodians, secretary) for practice.<br>. Have students practise with one another, alternating between "Excuse me" and "Pardon me". Use of a bean bag or pop bottle can add some fun to this simple activity.<br>* * * * *<br>3. Enabling Objective: Request permission and understand affirmative and negative replies.<br><br>Procedure:<br>. Show picture of George's parents. Review statement of this.<br>. Draw picture of George talking to supervisor. Role-play dialogue.<br>G: My mother and father are coming from Lebanon on Friday. Could I have the day off?<br>S: Yes, I guess it's O.K.<br>. Have students practise questions and answers in pairs.<br>. Return to picture and statement, and question. Add new response.<br>S: No, I'm sorry. We're too busy.<br>. Read whole dialogue from blackboard. Divide class for roles. As practice continues, erase one or two words at a time until only one or two words per line remain. Students go to blackboard to fill in missing words.<br>. Have students fill in worksheet with blank spaces in dialogue. |

Source: English for Work (1982), p.13-4,5. Province of B.C. Ministry of Education, Continuing Education Division, Victoria, B.C.

**Role of t' learner**

– to work [illegible] atively with teacher and fellow learners in assigned tasks
– to seek out opportunities to use language learned in the workplace
– to report on the successes/failures of the application of classroom learned material to the workplace
– to evaluate classroom activities according to interest and value in terms of usefulness
– to express their language needs as they see them at work, now and for the future
– to suggest areas/topics of interest to be taken up in the class
– to contribute to the class by relating their experiences and concerns whenever possible

✱

**Role of the Teacher in the workplace/in the educational institution**

– to investigate and report on the workplace regarding language needs
– to establish working relationships with management and union
– to inform all levels of management and union of the class preferably through personnel contacts
– to maintain frequent communication with immediate superiors and union reps of the workers
– to engage the assistance of the above in language practice for the learners
– to prepare tests for language assessment (pre- and post-course) and an evaluation of the course in conjunction with the educational institution
– to encourage the educational institution to provide paid time for regular meetings among workplace staff
– to encourage the educational institution to see the many demands on the teacher in EWP with the hope of enlarging the role of teacher to include the responsibilities of consultant
– to select the learners in conjunction with the educational institution and the sponsoring organizations according to sound professional and pedagogical principles
– to become familiar with the negotiation process used by the educational institution, the personnel involved in the negotiations and the outcome of the negotiations (if the teacher was not included in the negotiation process)

✱

**Role of the Teacher in class**

– to integrate the communication needs of the learners and the sponsoring organizations
– to provide resource materials appropriate to the identified needs
– to design learner materials (to accompany the resource materials) which will engage the learner in communicative tasks
– to provide a learner-centred environment
– to prepare a working curriculum based on the needs identified in the assessment and to refine it as the course progresses
– to provide opportunity for evaluation of the course by the learners throughout or at the very least at the end
– to design and/or administer initial language assessment interviews/tests
– to lead the learner to a role of responsibility for language development
– to encourage a non-threatening atmosphere
– to recognize and make use of the past experience of adults in their learning and working lives
– to recognize the learning behaviours the adults are accustomed to and to draw upon the good points of that methodology

✱

**Role of Sponsoring Organization in Workplace**

– to provide information on the organization of the company and/or union with names of key personnel
– to arrange personal contact meetings between the teacher and various levels of management/union to inform and promote the class
– to arrange meetings with the teacher and the immediate supervisors/shop stewards of the workers involved to establish the link between classes and workplace and to obtain information for the needs analysis
– to appoint one or more persons who will be responsible for the EWP program and to whom the teacher can communicate for administrative needs
– to recruit learners in conjunction with the educational institution
– to view themselves as partners in the program with the learners, the teacher and the educational institution with equal but not sole responsibility for the selection of learners and content
– to provide an adequate facility for learning and teaching (clean, quiet)
– to provide supporting materials that learners use in their normal work activities (printed material, A-V, audio, etc.)
– to provide blackboard, flip chart, duplicating and secretarial service whenever possible

✱

**Role of the Materials** (resources from sponsors and from students as well as teacher-made materials)

– to serve as the basis for language development tasks which are linked to the workplace and the wider community
– to provide opportunities for real communication in tasks designed to engage learners in increasing their content and language knowledge
– to reflect the language level of the learners as they progress
– to provide concrete evidence of progress and information learned for the learners

# Chapter 5
# DEVELOPING MATERIALS

One of the exciting yet demanding opportunities in EWP programs is for teachers and learners to develop materials for language learning. The individuality of each workplace environment, the specific demands of the sponsor(s) and the unpredictability of learners' needs and interests make it difficult to find a textbook that would be appropriate and would cover all the various needs throughout the course. We may find that commercially prepared materials are useful to meet some of the specific needs of particular learners in the class. For instance, a group that requires pre-literacy reading or writing skills or another that needs pronunciation practice may both benefit from following different prescribed courses for a period of time during each class. In mixed level classes, these materials relieve some of the preparation time necessary when the teacher has to cope with two or three different groups of learners. But, on the whole, we as teachers are responsible for integrating the sponsor's demands, the learners' desires and the educational institution's requirements in materials that are individually suited to each course.

## Accommodating the Learning Environment

Before looking at examples of materials, let's define the learning environment in workplace settings more precisely. The constraints of a particular environment influence the materials and the lessons we design. Amidst the variety of needs, interests and language levels of the learners, there is at least the one common factor of a single employer and usually of one union. (We can not always count on one single union since, in a large company, there may be several unions representing different groups of workers.) In a class with people from different departments who do not know each other and the jobs they do, we can capitalize on the fact that they all work for the same employer. We can have learners describe their jobs and relate them to the overall process of the workplace. In some instances, the class has been able to tour the worksite so that each person describes the work he or she does. This works particularly well in large industries or hospital and hotels where workers are more likely to come from different departments. Not only are people interested in what their co-workers do but they also take pride in telling others of their own responsibilities. This type of activity is especially effective for building self-confidence

and for developing a sense of community in the class by encouraging mutual respect (Sauve 1982a).

Fatigue

If classes are scheduled at the end of the work day then fatigue is almost a certainty. Learners need a transition to relieve that end-of-the-day tiredness and to change the pace of work. To achieve this transition teachers have tried short physical exercises for relaxation and for setting a different pace for learning. Other teachers suggest a few minutes for refreshments so that people can re-orient themselves as well as socialize before they tackle concentrated learning.

Irregular Attendance

Irregular attendance is another factor to be considered in any pre-planning. In small industries layoffs, overtime and shift changes often account for classes of twelve people one week and three or four the next. In institutions like hospitals and hotels where we do not expect so many sudden changes, there is still the normal pressure of home responsibilities that can affect attendance, expecially when classes are on the learners' own time. In such a situation we can encourage practices that counteract a potentially demoralizing effect on teachers and learners if the class dwindles. Those who attend the classes regularly can be responsible for keeping their co-workers up to date. Peer pressure rather than teacher-pressure might encourage some people to return to class. People who rotate days or shifts might come to class on their days off or even when they are laid off (when the company allows it).

Unexpected Problems on the Job

We can deal with the unexpected at the level of lesson planning by thinking of a lesson as a complete unit containing a number of tasks. If our plans for a lesson change due to an unexpected problem (reprimand, notice of layoff, incorrect payslip), then in our next class we can try to relate what was covered in class that day to what had originally been planned. Or, perhaps we can relate it to another topic that we had intended to cover later on. If we follow up with a related item, then the language learned can be reviewed in a new context. For instance, if there is a misunderstanding about shift changes, we can take it up in class and perhaps be building on work with days of the week and time that we had done before in describing the work day. Describing the problem and exploring the causes, solutions and various forms of requests could provide a model for other similar tasks such as requesting time off. With lesson planning such as this, learners who have missed a few classes can get some practice with material covered in their absence through reviews and recycling of topics and tasks.

Mixed Levels

EWP programs do not usually have the number and range of classes which allow for consistent homogeneous grouping. We may find that even in a basic class, for example, there is a mixture of language competencies. Some learners may need literacy or even pre-literacy training while others may be able to cope with the written language at a basic level. In an intermediate class where oral interaction skills may be fairly even but the demand is for more reading and writing, there may be a wide range of interests and competence in these skills. This was precisely the situation in a course for municipal workers. Although reading skills were fairly similar, writing skills varied from two men who had never tried to write in English to those who were responsible for writing reports. Group work is an effective way of handling such diversity. For example, oral work on reporting an accident could include small group discussions on what types of accidents frequently occur, why they occur and how they are reported. These discussions could then lead to different writing tasks catering to different groups. Learners who want to practice writing extended prose could write up an accident report either as a group, or individually and then exchange reports. The more basic level writers could fill in a single accident report form with a one sentence description of what happened. If the company's accident form is too complicated, then they can fill in only certain sections, or they could work with a teacher-prepared simple form like the following:

ACCIDENT REPORT

NAME: _____

DEPARTMENT: _____

TIME of accident: _____

LOCATION of accident: _____

DESCRIBE briefly what happened:

_____

TYPE OF INJURY: _____

Did worker go to hospital?: _____

More advanced learners could be available to assist others so that peer dependence is encouraged rather than teacher-dependence.

Autonomy

Equally as important as a healthy peer dependence is the development of autonomy and independent learning strategies that will take learners beyond the

classroom. Considering that EWP programs are part-time and usually shorter than adult intensive courses, the need to become an autonomous learner is heightened. Autonomy can be encouraged by acknowledging the rich experience that adults already have in learning (in and out of the classroom) and by starting with that experience and then providing more input to help them grow in knowledge and skills. Course participants can also learn how to assess their own progress and how to evaluate the course's effectiveness in meeting their needs, thus developing their own analytical and critical skills and helping the teacher to tailor the course to their perceived needs.

**Language for Interaction**

If we see meaningful, appropriate communication as the primary function of language, then our classroom practice should present language as communication and stress the interaction between communicators in getting meaning across. For example, in developing a lesson about requesting time off, we can shift the focus from grammatical accuracy or formula phrases (Could I...? Would it be possible...?) to learners making a request by deciding who they are talking to, understanding the difficulty/ease of fulfilling their request and predicting the response. At the intermediate level, learners can talk about whether their supervisors are easy or difficult to get along with and when the best time is to catch them in a good mood. If this direct approach is not suitable in a specific workplace, then pick up on spontaneous comments from learners about their supervisors or generalize about people's moods - what affects them, how they react in stressful situations and so on. They can also discuss the likelihood of getting time off, which is often dependent on the workload of the factory at that time of year, the number of employees on holidays, etc. Depending on these factors, what kind of request do they want to make? Our role is to provide them with the language they need for what <u>they</u> want to do. Before they actually role play the situation, they can listen to some simulated dialogues on tape where some requests are successful and others are not. They might try and predict the outcomes so that they must listen to tone of voice, hesitancy, reactions, etc. Having analysed these dialogues, they can be more sensitive when they produce their own. At this level we are encouraging learners to discover independently how language is used - good practice for life-long learning.

Realistically, learners at the basic level cannot talk about the situation in such detail unless it is a bilingual class. Yet even at this level we can indicate the importance of context by preparing exercises which present requests in two different situations. For example, language for requests can be introduced by using pictures or brief stories of a social situation contrasted with the work situation. Do the workers have coffee breaks together and do they socialize? If so, one request involving peers

could be in that context (getting a coffee, asking where something was bought). The other requests could be between the employer and the employee (time off, clarification, assistance). Perhaps there are people in the class who can take a stab at making the request. Their ideas along with ours can introduce the variety of language use. If possible, the class can be divided into groups and one group can suggest more situations for another group to study and determine appropriate request forms. In this task learners are in a sense creating materials by identifying situations that are most immediate for them. Even though the learners do not have a wide repertoire of language to work with, the task encourages them to analyse the situation before deciding what to say.

Dialogues

If language is the communication of meaning and a process of analysis and creative solutions, then our classrooms should enable the learners to analyse and create through specific tasks. For example, let's look at this pre-scripted dialogue for hospital housekeepers to help them socialize with patients:

(basic level)

Housekeeper: Hello, Mrs. Darnell, how are you today?

Mrs. Darnell: A little better, I think.

Housekeeper: Oh, that's good. It's a lovely day today.

In the past we were encouraged to work with dialogues in the following way. First the learners listen to the teacher read the dialogue. Then practice follows in choral repetition, paired repetition and perhaps substitution of names - all leading to memorization. Finally, the focus is turned to aspects of form such as the use of contractions (that's, it's) or formula phrases such as "How are you today?" With this treatment, the dialogue is incidentally about interaction and more about grammatical rules and functional phrases. The housekeepers see language as matching learned structures and formulas to situations - a rather limited and closed system.

Another way to work with a dialogue is to focus on meaning rather than form so that we encourage learners to think about what they want to say, who they want to talk to and how it might be said. Oral interactions do not exist as isolated items but are part of a context involving knowledge and emotions. What is the context of our housekeeper's dialogue? Who is Mrs. Darnell and what is her problem? How does she feel today and why? We want learners to think about these variables so that they can realize the breadth of language as well as its constraints. We can ask them to describe one or two patients that they see on a daily basis. Perhaps Mrs. Darnell is a little deaf

and often has difficult nights but is basically a friendly person. If we use a partially controlled dialogue rather than a fully controlled one, then learners have to look for meaning before they can express themselves. Grammatical accuracy is not the focus, but rather understanding what was said and deciding how to respond. In the example below, learners work in pairs, one taking the housekeeper's part and the other the patient's part. The dialogue begins with a single "Good morning". Then each person has to decide which line would logically follow that opener. Taking turns, the learners choose one of the two responses that makes sense.

H: Good morning, Mrs. Darnell

Mrs.D: -What?
-No. I didn't call the nurse.

H: -I said, good morning. How are you?
-I was sick yesterday.

Mrs.D: -Is breakfast ready?
-Not too bad. But I didn't sleep again last night.

H: -Oh, that's too bad. But it's a sunny day today.
-I have to clean your room.

Mrs.D: -I can't eat right now.
-Yes, it's nice to see the sun.

Another possibility with a partially controlled dialogue is to leave the final response blank so that learners have a chance to choose their own response.

Mrs.D: Maria, help me get out of bed, will you?

H: Wait a minute and I'll call the nurse.

Mrs.D: I can't wait for her.

H: _____

In groups of two or three, learners can decide what they want to say with either the teacher or a more advanced classmate helping out if necessary. Groups can then compare their dialogues, acknowledging variety but making sure the responses are sensible and appropriate. With a more advanced group they can find Mrs. Darnell's own voice by using their experience with patients to recreate a character they already know. Their dialogue can be more of a role play which develops on the spot, is taped and then analysed. Group members should be encouraged to pursue questions such as "What did you really mean here?" or "Why did you say it that way - are you angry with her?" Discussion begins as learners look critically at the language they have produced. In this example, the task is not to come up with the right response, but to go through the process of negotiating meaning to produce an appropriate response that communicates meaning in context - a more open-ended task.

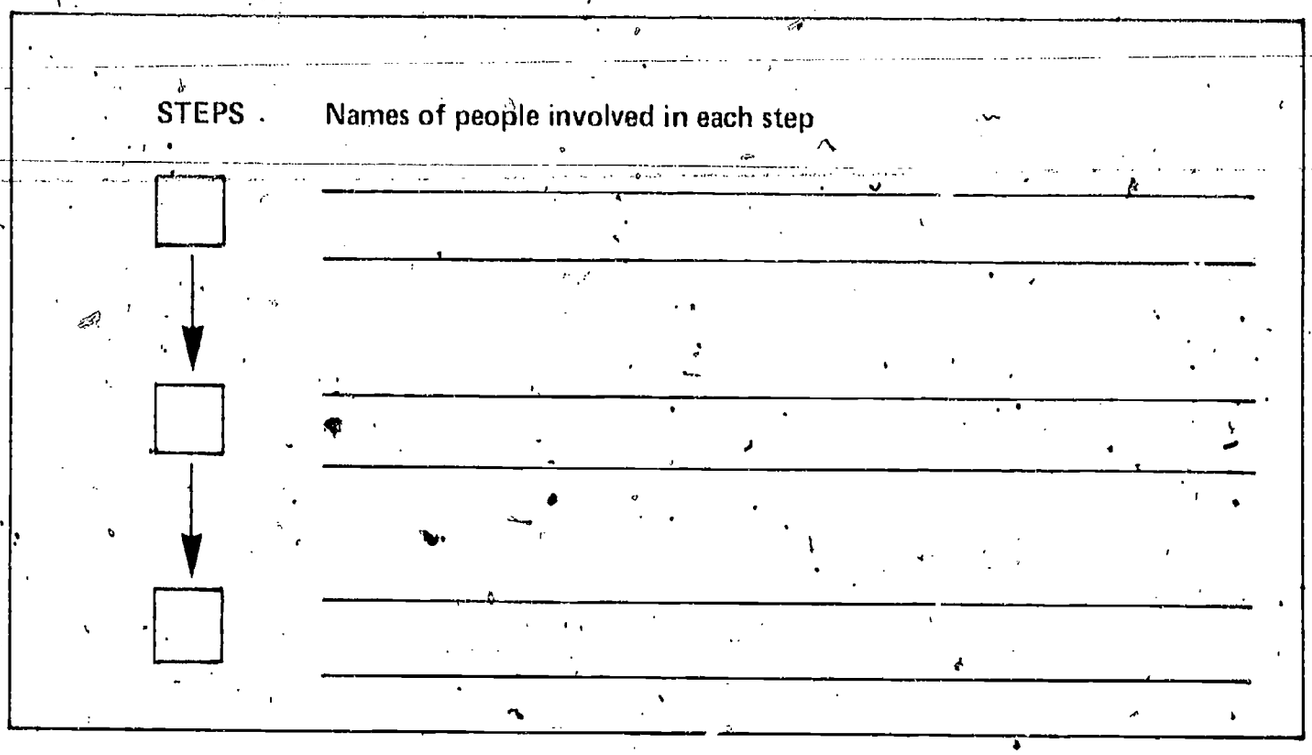
In these tasks, language is presented not as a closed system of rules and behaviours but rather as a dynamic, interactive one. When we talk to other people, for instance, we are constantly interpreting what we hear so that we can respond or choose how we should say things. Here is the unpredictability of language. We as native speakers can cope with it, but our learners have to recognize and develop the confidence to do the same. Learning language as communication is learning to operate in a dynamic situation where we are continually thinking about what was said and deciding how to respond. These abilities have been called interpretation, expression and negotiation (Breen and Candlin 1980). If we view language as an open, dynamic system then our teaching/learning situations should be the same.

## SOURCE MATERIALS

### Photographs

Depending on the communication needs that have been identified in initial investigations in the workplace, we can develop tasks based on the source materials we have gathered. For instance, supervisors in a small manufacturing plant comment that they often feel that their instructions regarding production are not understood. Since following instructions requires an understanding of context, we could begin with the production process. Photographs of the entire process can be used to help learners see where their particular job fits in.

We might begin with an intermediate level class by asking a small group to identify the steps in the production process and note the steps they are involved in.




Then they compare their steps with those in the photos to ensure that every important step has been covered. Naming the steps involves technical vocabulary and seq ing markers such as "first", "then", "after that." At a more basic level, we could begin with the photos and have them sequenced before moving on to oral work that would name the various steps. See how many of the steps they already know by working orally with the whole class or with learners in small groups. To fill in the remainder we could have a more advanced worker review the process with them so that listening skills would be used to complete the task. Learners would be listening only for the specific information they themselves need. Requesting repetition and clarification could be practiced beforehand, so that important information will not be missed. If we feel that sequencing or naming needs to be reviewed, the photos could then be used in a variety of ways to complement listening or reading exercises. Short sentences (or even one word) could be presented in a scrambled fashion. Learners working alone or in groups match up the sentences with the sequenced photos. Or in pairs, one person might silently read a slightly different description of one step and then ask the partner for the correct picture by describing the step in their own words. Here, the photos play a key role in devising tasks which integrate a variety of skills - listening, speaking and reading. The tasks themselves depend on each other, following a natural progression of skills - for example, oral to reading or oral to writing; or a sequence such as identifying/matching/copying/sequencing independently.

Photos can be used to identify parts of machines, tools or materials that are being processed. Learners can produce their own list of parts, tools, materials or safety equipment by referring to the photos. If they have very little technical vocabulary, then try writing simple descriptions that contain the basic names: "The wire connects to..." "Gloves protect hands." Then, by reading and looking at the pictures the learners should be able to identify the object and its name and write up a list. The workers know what parts of the machine break down, what tools often need repair - in other words, what items on the list create problems for them. Perhaps they are not aware of all the safety equipment that is available/required as pictured in the photos. Naming items may not be difficult, but the overall objective is to understand instructions which incorporate them and relate them to the whole job process. The photos are integrated into a sequence of tasks which depend on the completion of one step before tackling the next. In this last example, naming the items is a prerequisite to identifying the problem areas. These problem areas might be the focus for more concentrated work on giving and following instructions.

**Tape-recorded Interactions**

In some workplace situations teachers are able to record authentic conversations as they take place on the shop floor, over the telephone, in the supervisor's office or at health and safety meetings. If conversations relevant to the identified needs are taped, then we have an invaluable source for analysing interactions. For example, in one workplace the foreman communicated with his workers mostly by telephone because of the variety of work locations. He had identifed problems with listening comprehension directly related to enquiries, instruction and reports communicated over the telephone. He agreed to have some of his conversations tape recorded so that a few of them might be used in class (after he and the worker involved had given permission). Tasks based on these tapes could involve listening for specific information (such as location, time, names, specific requests, orders), for sequence, for changes in tone of voice or simply for getting the drift of the conversation. We might begin by asking the class what is communicated in these telephone conversations (reports, enquiries, instructions) and write up their comments on the board/flip chart. Does their list match the foreman's? What does a report or enquiry include? They could role play a few conversations for the purpose of identifying what kind of information is related in each of these conversations. Can they identify which interactions cause problems? If so, then start with those conversations. Perhaps they don't feel there are any comprehension problems. Do the tapes confirm or negate that? In either case we begin by setting the stage for listening through oral work that draws on their knowledge and perceptions of situations and problems, thus preparing them to listen. Worksheets to accompany the tapes can be prepared so that small groups can work together to analyse the conversations. If the class has mixed levels, different

tasks can be handled by different groups. A more basic group might only be able to get the drift of the message and a few points of specific information. For instance, if the message is a reminder of a health and safety meeting with information on the agenda, then a worksheet for basic learners could be:

GETTING THE DRIFT

Listen to the conversation and try to get the drift or the general idea.

Is this a message about...

_____ a change of shift?

_____ a meeting?

_____ a holiday?

LISTENING FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Now listen for the following:

Day _____

Time _____

Place _____

More advanced learners could listen for the sequence of the agenda. By providing them with the language markers used in the conversation, they can focus on the content of the messsage when they hear the cue:

AGENDA:

First _____

After that _____

The last thing _____

If we prepare a sequence or chain of tasks, each task can depend on the information conveyed from the previous one. Here, for example, the more advanced group might pass on the agenda information in their own words to the basic group.

The basic group can use the tape to confirm what they have written down. If a written bulletin is available, both groups might use it to check all the information they have heard and recorded. Or, the advanced group could draw up a written bulletin and pass it on to the basic group for checking.

If we then focus on the points that indicate successful communication or breakdowns we can lead from listening comprehension to speaking or production. The tapes themselves will guide us on what to highlight:

- Is there an obvious breakdown in communication? What is said to indicate that?
- Does the listener use any strategies to compensate for faulty comprehension such as requests for clarification, repetition, paraphrasing, etc.?
- How does the listener indicate that the information is understood and will be acted upon? By repeating the important point to confirm? Is "O.K." enough to indicate thorough understanding?
- Does tone of voice change to indicate impatience, anger, confusion, etc.? What was said and how was it said that could cause this abrupt change?

Through successive tasks learners can focus their efforts on analysing these points in the conversation. In preliminary steps they could establish the context by defining the communicators, their status, the location, the topic. Then different groups can revise the conversations so that the communication is successful and appropriate. In this sequence of tasks, learners first discover and describe the problem area. They then analyse the causes of the communication problem and working together suggest various solutions. Their own revised conversation (which can be recorded) then becomes the topic of a similar analysis.

In cases where authentic conversations are not available or where company personnel are not able or willing to cooperate on making tapes, then simulations could provide the necessary input material. Try recruiting some co-workers who are native speakers to help in a recording session that simulates a conversation without prepared scripts. For example, if informal socializing at work poses problems, then establish the setting (lunch room, break-time), the players (native speaker and non-native speaker) and the topic (bingo, weekend, etc.) and let the participants carry on independently. Or try pairing a native speaker with a class member ~~or a more~~ advanced learner with a basic learner. Make sure they understand the setting and have the necessary information to communicate, but don't script the conversation. See how it develops and use the language that results.

## Printed Materials

During the needs analysis teachers can usually acquire a variety of printed material such as was suggested in chapter three. While much of the material may only provide background information on how the company/union operates, some of it may provide the input for certain tasks. Job descriptions, for instance, often describe responsibilities in terms of activities, tools or materials used and possible hazards on the job. This resource could be used in sequencing tasks aimed at describing the job process and responding to enquiries about the quality of work. Many workers never get an opportunity to read their own job descriptions, so they are often surprised to see a discrepancy between what is written and what they actually do. It is precisely for this reason that companies are sometimes hesitant to provide them. The company may be demanding more of their workers than is actually stated in the job description. If the atmosphere is conducive to this type of enquiry, then tasks can be structured that start with the learners defining their jobs orally, followed by an examination of the job description in light of what they have already noted. If this results in an uneven slate, then the process of enquiry can continue by identifying specific examples of work that are not part of the job description and establishing reasons why they are asked to perform them. The outcomes of a task sequence of this nature will be varied but individual learners will have the opportunity to find a resolution that satisfies them - acceptance, a request for a pay increase, consultation with colleagues or with the union, etc. On issues such as this one above, it is important to remember that we and the learners should consider the possible and probable consequences of our resolutions to the problem. For instance, is there adequate protection for the worker complaining.

In one workplace setting management, union and the workers had put the primary emphasis on reading and writing skills. One commonly stated reason was the need for these skills in obtaining any job advancement. Management was interested in promoting from within the ranks, the union wanted to protect workers' security and the workers themselves wanted promotions for better working conditions and higher salary. These promotions required not only more reading and writing responsibilities on the job but also a passing grade on a variety of written tests. Learners expressed their need and desire to practice test-taking and working under pressure because they had been unable to complete the tests on previous attempts. Although the teacher was able to look briefly at some of the tests, they were not allowed to be used in the class. Instead part of the format of the test was adopted (multiple choice) with content drawn from the learners' own safety manuals. The reading passage in the manual was on artificial respiration with illustrations and instructions of the steps to be followed.

# ARTIFICIAL RESPIRATION

## (RESCUE BREATHING)

Artificial Respiration means helping or making a person breathe when their normal breathing has stopped. Normal breathing can stop immediately following any one of many mishaps. A heart attack, drowning, choking, chemical fumes or asphyxiation and electric shock are reasons that cause a person to stop breathing. In giving help to an electric shock victim, special care must be taken to be sure you are not electrocuted by touching him. Disconnect the power quickly if you can or by using a dry piece of wood, lift or push the electrical conductor and the victim apart. A dry rope or leather belt could be used to pull a man away from an electrified wire or machine.

A word often used with artificial respiration is "resuscitation" which means "reviving" or "bringing back to life". The following procedure has saved many lives and is quite easy to apply if you know how. Read it often until you completely understand it. Be ready to save a life. The knowledge is free.

**RESCUE BREATHING (MOUTH-TO-MOUTH)**

THE CANADIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

*Start immediately. The sooner you start, the greater the chance of success.*

Open airway by lifting neck with one hand and tilting the head back with the other hand

Pinch nostrils to prevent air leakage. Maintain open airway by keeping the neck elevated

Seal your mouth tightly around the victim's mouth and blow in. The victim's chest should rise

Remove mouth. Release nostrils. Listen for air escaping from lungs. Watch for chest to fall

- REPEAT LAST THREE STEPS TWELVE TO FIFTEEN TIMES PER MINUTE
- IF AIR PASSAGES ARE NOT OPEN: Check neck and head positions. CLEAR mouth and throat of foreign substances
- For infants and children: cover entire mouth and nose with your mouth. Use small puffs of air about 20 times per minute.

USE RESCUE BREATHING when persons have stopped breathing as a result of: DROWNING, CHOKING, ELECTRIC SHOCK, HEART ATTACK, SUFFOCATION and GAS POISONING

*Don't give up. Send someone for a doctor. Continue until medical help arrives or breathing is restored.*

Source: Safe Practices in Overhead Linework, Toronto Transit Commission Plant Department (n.d.), pp. 80-81. Reproduced with permission.

In the past we were encouraged to treat reading material in the following way. First, present difficult vocabulary words from the reading, give their meanings or see if anyone in class knows the meanings. Then have the class read the passage silently or out loud. Finally, test the learners on their comprehension by asking multiple choice questions or questions with simple, direct answers. In this type of reading exercise, the learners are tested on their comprehension rather than guided in how to read for comprehension. The passage is an isolated text with no immediate context other than a list of vocabulary words which preceded the reading. Instead of guiding learners to develop strategies for guessing the meanings of words from the context, the vocabulary is given to them. Let's look at what this teacher did to establish context and to direct the learners toward reading for meaning.

Before the reading and questions were attempted, the teacher discussed artificial respiration with the class. One person had taken a short course several years ago and described the steps accurately. The language used in his description of the steps was quite different than in the written information above, but it served as a totally accessible introduction to the topic. Subsequently, most of the learners were able to guess at the meaning of the words in the written description (pinch, nostril, airway) by referring to what they had just heard and to the accompanying pictures. In the tasks on page 92 the learners not only developed reading and test-taking skills but they also discovered information in their manuals that they had never read before.

The second part of the reading passage emphasizes the sequence of steps in giving artificial respiration. The worksheet on page 93 uses the visual representation to help the learners understand the sequence and the prose. Further steps, not shown here, would be to have the learners sequence a scrambled set of pictures and prose and, finally, to actually practice giving artificial respiration.

We can also incorporate company/union materials into literacy training. In cases where basic literacy needs are the primary factor for requesting an EWP program, there will probably be some specific items that learners must become acquainted with. For example, in a hospital EWP program described previously, the dietary staff were given new responsibilities which involved reading menus. When new ordering and repair reporting procedures were introduced in a hotel, the housekeepers were responsible for filling out forms where previously they had made reports and ordered supplies orally. Rather than start with these unfamiliar forms which might prove overwhelming, we could begin with commonly recognized signs and symbols in the community such as street signs and public information signs ("no smoking"). Photographs or drawings of the signs could be matched with places where they are found. Laundry symbols on clothing labels can be worked out by learners in small groups with vocabulary supplied by more advanced learners if possible. Then, learners

1. Read the information on artificial respiration below.

2. While you read, look for the definition of artificial respiration. Underline any sentences or phrases or words that give the meaning.

## ARTIFICIAL RESPIRATION
### (RESCUE BREATHING)

Artificial Respiration means helping or making a person breathe when their normal breathing has stopped. Normal breathing can stop immediately following any one of many mishaps. A heart attack, drowning, choking, chemical fumes or asphyxiation and electric shock are reasons that cause a person to stop breathing. In giving help to an electric shock victim, special care must be taken to be sure you are not electrocuted by touching him. Disconnect the power quickly if you can or by using a dry piece of wood, lift or push the electrical conductor and the victim apart. A dry rope or leather belt could be used to pull a man away from an electrified wire or machine.

A word often used with artificial respiration is "resuscitation" which means "reviving" or "bringing back to life". The following procedure has saved many lives and is quite easy to apply if you know how. Read it often until you completely understand it. Be ready to save a life. The knowledge is free.

Answer the two questions after you have read the information. Circle all the answers that are correct.

1. Artificial respiration
   a. is "bringing someone back to life"
   b. is used when normal breathing has stopped
   c. occurs just before a heart attack
   d. happens prior to most accidents.

2. If someone has been electrocuted, use a dry piece of wood or rope or a leather belt to move them because
   a. these don't conduct electricity
   b. electricity can flow from the person's body to yours
   c. electric shocks multiply.

BEST COPY

## RESCUE BREATHING (MOUTH-TO-MOUTH)

THE CANADIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

*Start immediately. The sooner you start the greater the chance of success.*

Match the pictures with the descriptions printed on the right.
Put the letter on the space next to the picture.

Step #1

_____

Step #2

_____

Step #3

_____

Step #4

_____

Step #5

_____

(A) Pinch nostrils to prevent air leakage. Maintain open airway by keeping the neck elevated.

(B) Seal your mouth tightly around the victim's mouth and blow in. The victim's chest should rise.

(C) Open airway by lifting neck with one hand and tilting the head back with the other hand.

(D) Remove mouth. Release nostrils. Listen for air escaping from lungs. Watch for chest to fall.

(E) REPEAT LAST THREE STEPS TWELVE TO FIFTEEN TIMES PER MINUTE. IF AIR PASSAGES ARE NOT OPEN: Check neck and head positions. CLEAR mouth and throat of foreign substances.

can draw up their own labels for certain types of fabrics using the international symbols.

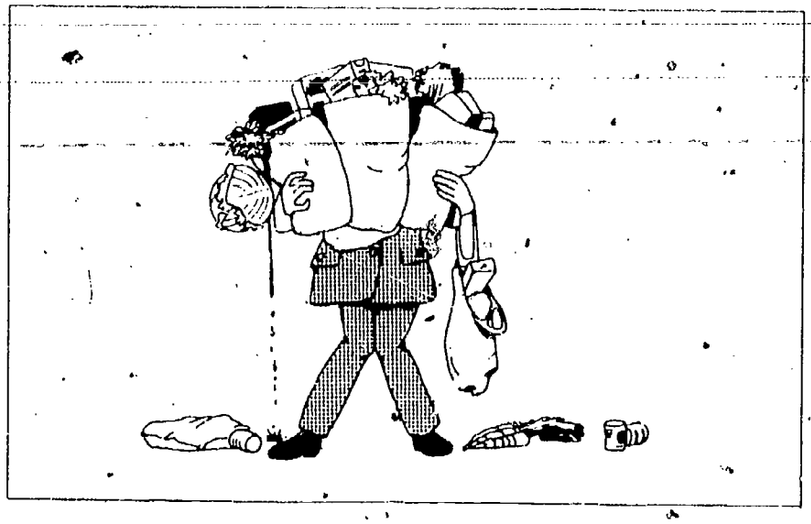
Labels and signs that are common at the workplace might include colour-coded labels on chemicals or detergents, warning signs on machines (caution, danger, hazard), door signs (employees only, visitors), etc. Either the labels or signs themselves or photographs of them can provide initial reading material that is familiar and non-threatening to the learners. We can ask learners to go out and copy some signs from the workplace. They can bring in ones they understand and ones they are not familiar with. Working in groups, they can explain the signs they are familiar with and get assistance from their peers with those they find difficult. In this activity learners are encouraged to identify their own needs and to offer assistance as well as be instructed.

## LEARNER-PRODUCED MATERIALS

We have been looking at ways of using source materials obtained from the sponsoring organization or from the wider community. Now let's turn to material produced by the learners themselves and consider two points: how to elicit it and how to design tasks based on this material.

### Photostories

Photostories can be records of events as they happen (class tour of the worksite, citizenship hearing, etc.). Or, a topic for a photostory can be decided on and the photostory can be a representation of daily routines (getting to work) or "a day in the life of..." Photostories capture the expression, the feelings and the attitudes that often words cannot. They can add humour, pathos or sympathy to a situation. If Anna complains about food shopping and how exhausted it makes her, she might say: "Too heavy. I tired at home" A picture capturing her with 4 or 5 grocery bags and an expression of awkwardness or frustration could evoke humour or sympathy. Not only do people relate more quickly to photos than to oral stories, but the photos stimulate their own stories and language comes into play. Discussion about what to photograph provides useful language practice, particularly in description and justification.



Taking photographs of class-related events as they happen not only provide good material for subsequent class activities but also build a sense of community in the class. The teacher might start out by taking the photographs initially to give people an idea of what scenes to capture and then learners can easily take on the responsibility. We are looking for scenes of humour, expressions of joy, puzzlement, frustration, pleasure and of expressive interactions with other people. Making a photostory could be an activity for the whole class or for one or two small groups. They can focus on an event, perhaps one outside the work situation. Maybe someone's relative is arriving from another country to live in Canada or maybe one class member is becoming a citizen. Getting outside the classroom is often difficult, so another possibility is to photograph role plays that are of particular interest.

Once the photos are developed, we can create activities to accompany the story, especially for listening/speaking and writing. Working in groups, learners can concentrate on movement and arrange the photos in sequence so the story can be retold or written. Dialogue can be added or role plays can re-enact scenes of emotion or when communication was difficult. Pictures that capture feelings can provide a good starting point for a discussion about causes and effects. We can contrast two different settings in photos (for example, the cafeteria vs. the personnel office) and focus on sociolinguistic aspects of communication. A series of photos with a clear, logical argument within them can be used to concentrate on discourse aspects.[1]

---

[1] For further illustrations of how to use photostories, see the special issue of Tesl Talk on English in the Workplace, Fall, 1982, pages 24 & 34 as well as the EWP modules being prepared by the Core Foundation and the Board of Education for the City of North York.

Photostories and follow-up discussions can also explore issues and problems that people are concerned about. In this regard, they offer good material for problem-posing tasks which are useful in developing autonomy as a learner. These tasks offer the opportunity to work through a relevant problem, to puzzle over the possible routes toward a solution, to learn the language necessary for following through on the process and to reach a solution which learners determine as a group or as individuals. Problem-posing tasks share many of the same characteristics as communicative language tasks. They engage the learners actively by drawing on their prior knowledge (content and linguistic) and on their feelings and attitudes. They operate on an interactive basis so that working through the task is a group effort requiring negotiation, analysis and evaluation even though the outcomes or the solutions of the task may be multiple. A book of photostories and teaching activities, Getting There: Producting Photostories with Immigrant Women by Barndt, Cristall and marino (1982), is a good example of materials based on this method. The book itself is the result of a particular problem - the need for relevant resource material in employment-orientation programs for immigrant women. Immigrant working-class women from factories and offices and women community workers were involved in the production. Getting There includes two photostories of immigrant women seeking employment and also advice and instructions on making photstories and how to use them in a variety of educational settings. The photostories are based on the telling of personal stories and the text accompanying the photographs was developed by the storytellers and the authors. According to the authors, the stories offer a methodology for "another way of learning."

> We are not supporting the telling of personal stories only for self-expression or therapy; we are supporting the sharing of daily experiences, which can lead to a clearer understanding of social structures, a critical analysis and a readiness to act collectively.

Source: D. Barndt, F. Cristall, d.marino, Getting there: Producing photostories with immigrant women (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1982), p.15.

The activities that they suggest using with the photostories lead learners through a step-by-step analysis: describing the feelings in the stories, identifying a similar personal experience, recognizing other people's similar problems, analysing the causes of the problems and coming up with suggested solutions. Here is an example of a specific activity based on a quote from the photostory text of "Gloria's Story":

"AFTER I CAME TO CANADA FROM PORTUGAL MY HUSBAND AND I SEPARATED. I HAD TO FIND A JOB."

1. Describe your first year in Canada.
   Did you come with your family?
   Did you come alone?
   What effect did the move have on your relationships (with your husband, your children, your parents)?

2. Describe a typical day in your household.
   Who does what in the house?
   What is the most difficult part of your day?
   The easiest?
   Why?

3. Why are you looking for work?
   Make a list of the reasons.
   Talk about the similarities and differences between your lists.

4. How do you go about getting a job?
   List the things you might need to know "How to do".
   For example, how to:
   - use the employment and immigration office.
   - look on the job board.
   - make inquiries by telephone.
   - dress for an interview.
   - describe your skills and experiences.

5. Role-play a visit to a manpower office. One person takes the role of receptionist, another the role of the manpower counsellor, another the role of the person seeking work.

Source: D. Barndt, F. Cristall, d. marino, Getting there: Producing photostories with immigrant women (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1982), pp.96-97. Reproduced with permission

For effective use in an ESL class, we would have to structure a variety of tasks to help learners work through some of the questions. For example, in question #1 we could start out by having small groups of learners interview each other and fill in a simple chart:

| Name | When did you come to Canada? | Who did you come with? | What did they do the first year? | Why did you come to Canada? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |

If the class is familiar with Gloria's story and has understood her feelings, then they might be prepared to describe their own experiences. Gloria's story takes place on the first day she travels to her factory alone. The focus of the photostory is the process of "getting there" and how her anxiety and loneliness are overcome by courage and assistance. Question #1 encourages learners to come up with their own story illustrating how they have adapted to their new environment. If Gloria's story hasn't triggered a story of their own, then they could explore their feelings further:

I felt afraid

I felt alone

I felt confused

I needed help to (do something)...

Discussing their responses in small groups, learners could be stimulated by the similarity or differences among them and thus be encouraged to participate. Writing down experiences of one of the learners is easier after it has been explored orally. Depending on the language levels, the writing task could take a variety of forms. With non-literate learners, we could write down the story as it is told to us or have it

taped and then transcribed for further work. We can ask learners with more advanced writing skills to include how they felt, what caused the problems and what the outcome was. Members of this group could exchange written work to confirm that all three content questions have been answered. Feedback is assured and revisions can be done based on what we as teachers and other learners have noted. Basically then, question #1 can result in learners recounting the process of dealing with problem circumstances to better understand causes and outcomes.

**Learners' Oral Stories**

There are various ways of collecting and using the learners' own spoken stories depending on the language level of the class and the purpose of the activity. These stories are usually stimulated by an oral discussion on a topic of interest. The topic may have come up at that moment or it may have been prepared for and introduced by the teacher with an experience of his/her own, with another learner's story, with a picture, newspaper article or any other aural or visual catalyst. The learners can recount an incident, a period of life or a particular experience related to the topic. It may be about their past experiences (coming to Canada, finding their first job, comparing work in their native country to work in Canada) or about today's events (dealing with the foreman's remarks, explaining reasons for returning a faulty item to the store). A story is distinct from an interview which asks for particular information through specific questions. Stories can also be produced in a variety of teacher-learner relationships. The teacher can be working one-on-one with a learner who is producing his/her own story. Or, the teacher can be working with the whole class in which either a group story is produced or individual stories are produced from different learners.

Let's look first at a class of learners with basic level listening, speaking, and literacy skills and consider the different ways of collecting or documenting the stories. The learners will probably tell their stories slowly, in simple sentences, with lots of hesitation. We will probably take a strong role in eliciting the content and selecting what will be written. There will be grammatical errors and inappropriate vocabulary. In this case, we can document the story by writing it down on the board or flip chart if it is a whole class activity. Whether the story comes solely from one person or is a group effort, we have to consider our participation and the learners' in editing the story as it is being written down. If the learners are at a beginning literacy level, then usually we must write down exactly what they say (I home 5 o'clock), otherwise the authors themselves will not be able to read it. Working with a little higher level of literacy, we may find that some learners in the class offer grammatical changes or re-ordering of sequence. As the transcribers, we can incorporate these changes if the speaker agrees and understands the reasons for them. In this way, we ask the class to consider alternatives, but we are faithful to what the speaker decides since we are only

writing for them not deciding for them. In a one-on-one situation with a learner at this level, we might suggest and discuss changes and then write what the speaker feels comfortable with. Since building self-confidence in reading and writing is one of the main reasons for using the stories at this level, we should see that as the primary goal rather than "correct English" and let it guide our decisions on editing and transcribing.[2] Also, learners should understand that writing doesn't come out perfectly the first time and that editing skills are useful.

Another way of documenting the story is to use a tape recorder and then transcribe the story, once again using the exact speech as presented. This works particularly well with more fluent speakers whose storytelling might be constrained by having someone writing down their words as they speak. Some teachers tape record every class so that this rich material from students is never lost and can always be incorporated into future classes. Depending on the use of the stories and the writing abilities of the learners, we can do all the transcribing ourselves or have learners do part or all of their own story or another person's story. With these more literate learners, the teacher can encourage learners to develop skills in editing and correcting material for themselves.

Oral Stories and Reading Skills

Once collected, these stories can serve a variety of purposes. Their use in teaching reading skills at the basic literacy level is familiar in an approach called the Language Experience Approach (LEA). In this method, the teacher writes down the story exactly as the learner delivers it. There is a good deal of integration of speaking, reading and writing. Sentences are read aloud by the teacher after each contribution and the whole story can be read aloud several times to help connect the written and the spoken word. The Handbook for ESL Literacy (Bell & Burnaby 1984) describes the LEA method in detail and comments on the advantages of literacy work based on the language and the experiences of the learners themselves. Some follow-up activities for reading and writing with LEA stories which the authors recommend are to be found on page 101.

[2]One reader argued firmly against this method for ESL literacy. She maintained that it worked well for native speakers but was misleading for second language learners who could be unaware of their major grammatical errors.

1. When a class has completed the oral reading of a story, the story can be transcribed by the teacher for further work. It should be photocopied, so that each student receives a copy of the story for a file for silent reading later.
2. Students can copy all or part of the story for writing practice.
3. Working with the teacher's transcript of the story, students can underline all the parts which they can read. This not only helps the teacher assess progress, but demonstrates progress to the student.
4. The teacher can transcribe the story leaving blanks to represent certain words (a *cloze* exercise). The blanks can replace certain types of words, such as nouns, or can be spaced regularly throughout the story. Students then attempt to read the story orally, supplying each missing word or an acceptable substitute. This exercise provides excellent practice in prediction. Students may also tackle the cloze exercise as a writing exercise, although the missing words may need to be provided (in random order) on the blackboard to help with spelling.
5. The teacher may focus on one sentence of the LEA story for further work. The sentence is written on a large strip of card, and individual words in the sentence are written on index cards. The teacher reads the chosen sentence aloud, or asks for volunteers to read it. Students then attempt to match the individual words on the index cards with the master sentence, reading the completed sentence as they do so. In this way students learn to recognize individual words and the way in which they are put together to make a sentence. (It is usually easier if one of the more grammatically sound sentences is chosen for this activity.)
6. The students can be given the cards in random order and work in groups to recreate the sentence with or without reference to the master.
7. The word cards can be rearranged to make new sentences, particularly if one or two extra cards using other words from the story are provided.

Source: Jill Bell and Barbara Burnaby, A handbook for ESL literacy (Toronto: OISE/Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), pp. 49-50.

Pat Rigg and Liz Taylor who teach literacy to native speakers of English also advocate the LEA method as well as other techniques. In their work for T.V. Ontario's Out of the Shadows (Rigg & Taylor 1983:45-9), they also recommend using four other techniques: rereading, retelling, assisted reading and sustained silent reading. They are well worth investigating and experimenting with in ESL literacy contexts, especially if the learners have had a good deal of exposure to English and can speak adequately.

Oral Stories and Writing Skills

The use of the learners' own oral stories for improving writing skills was mentioned in the basic literacy activities above. Even at more advanced levels of writing, learners can work with their own oral stories and incorporate that experience into a more structured writing exercise, such as an accident report, a letter of complaint, a newspaper article, etc. They could get the main points for their written exercise by listening to the tape or reading the transcript. This provides some practice in organizing and editing prior to composing. For instance, if some learners are responsible for writing up accident reports or weekly reports in their jobs, but have a difficult time organizing and composing what they want to say, then they could begin by talking about the accident and tape recording their description. The story can be transcribed by the teacher or the learner(s), so that the ideas and the content are down on paper. Learners may feel more at ease talking rather than writing about the accident, so that they probably would cover many more points orally. The next step is to help the learners transpose that spoken language into the appropriate written form for an accident report. For the accident report form they have to follow a different format and also pay more attention to grammatical accuracy, to choice of vocabulary and to a coherent statement of ideas. If spelling is a problem, the learners can use the original transcription as a reference for correct spelling. Again as a reference, the transcription can be used to confirm that all the important points are covered in the report.

Comparing the final report and the transcription of the oral story will help learners see some of the differences between the the two modes of communicating, speaking and writing. For instance, readers may have a lower tolerance for inaccuracies in grammar, word choice and appropriateness than listeners do. A speaker also has more opportunity to clarify the misunderstandings of the listener by responding to the listener's questions and by observing how well the listener is attending and following. Realizing this, learners can then consider their own goals in speaking and writing.

For intermediate and advanced levels, oral stories can be used to improve listening and speaking skills. We can use the tape of a learner's story for listening exercises with the same class or with another class entirely. In this case, we could design worksheets to guide the listeners through the tape by asking them to listen for the general idea, for specific information, for sequence of events, etc. If we want to then focus on speaking and how to tell stories, we could pair learners' taped stories with those of native speakers. What are the different ways that native speakers use to order the events of their stories? What tenses do they use? How do they keep the listener interested? Keeping these types of questions in mind, learners can listen to

both tapes first. Then they can try incorporating some of the native speaker's strategies and style in their own storytelling.

In Getting There, the authors and the learners edit the original oral histories and chooose relevant text to accompany their photos. Here the emphasis is on using the oral stories as a stimulus for further discussion of issues and for more accounts of personal experiences. In an EWP class we might choose to type up and hand out an oral story from one of the class members simply as a refresher to lead into a discussion of the causes and the solutions to a problem in the story. Or, we can review it as preparation for more detailed and more careful reading on a topic. Classes sometimes collect the stories and prepare booklets to document the progress of the class and the issues discussed. Or, they team the stories up with photos or tapes of the stories to make a multi-media production for their own use and for the many classes that come after them.[3] The common thread among all these uses is that the learners begin by working with their own experience in their own words precisely so that they can gain the confidence and the skills to move beyond them.

## Role Plays

Pre-scripted dialogues may be satisfactory in situations which are so highly formalized that they are almost totally predictable. For example, buying a ticket at the movie theatre would involve mostly formula phrases:

- Two adults, please
- (name of movie)

-Which movie?

-$10, please

Many situations which involve oral communication at the workplace and in the community are not so predictable. Our relationship with the other participant and the outcome of our interaction is open to negotiation. Also, pre-scripted dialogues are usually developed to illustrate a structure or function and often do not indicate the flow of real speech. Oral interaction is an interplay of interpreting and expressing: a process of expressing what we want to say based on our interpretation of what we hear. We can never fully predict language in this regard, so we are always negotiating meaning, both received and produced. Role plays provide the format in which to capture the flow of real language so that learners can develop their ability to interpret, express and negotiate.

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[3]For examples of collected work from learners, see the special issue of Tesl Talk on English in the Workplace. Fall, 1982, especially articles by Barndt & marino and Nettle.

If learners play themselves in role plays (rather than other characters) then they are communicating in a situation which is as close to real life as is possible for the classroom. Being themselves in a situation which is immediately relevant, learners can use language to expresss their ideas, their attitudes and their emotions - in short, to be totally involved. It also encourages them to speak and to listen as they would in their own language; that is, to listen for meaning and to be attentive to the attitudes and emotions of the other person so that they can respond appropriately.

As we all know, work is full of problems and very often it is the problems that people bring to class. Denise Gubbay from the Pathway Industrial Unit in Britain sees role play as a highly effective tool for addressing those problems in a language learning context:

> Role-play was evolved to enable the teacher to meet the students at the point of strongest motivation - the point at which they must speak or else lose self-respect; that is why it is problem-centred, not language centred. It has four objectives:
>
> 1. To make people more aware that there are always two sides to a problem and to help them to identify with both sides so they understand the forces at work;
> 2. To give people information about the situation and their rights;
> 3. To give them skills or strategies so they can use this awareness and information to influence their environment;
> 4. To show how these skills can be extended to other situations.

Gubbay (1980)

In her book, Role Play: The Theory and Process of a Method for Increasing Language Awareness, Gubbay (1980) pairs the teacher and the learner in role plays. The teacher has enough control in the role play to introduce unpredictable elements and thus to force the learner to deal with the unexpected. For example, in role playing "calling in sick," let's suppose the worker usually talks to Louise who answers the phone. They might start out by saying, "Louise, this is ...." The teacher would then say, "Sorry, this isn't Louise, she's sick today." Gubbay feels it is important to introduce unpredictables at an early stage in language learning. This may be disconcerting at first, but once learners have handled the unpredictable their confidence increases which makes for better performance the next time.

Gubbay has developed two methods for conducting role plays. Method A is most suitable for the lower level learner who lacks confidence and may need to rely more on a framework initially. In Method A the teacher and the learners build up a dialogue together. At the same time the teacher is analysing the structure or flow of the dialogue in terms of language functions for the learners. At this stage, there is no pressure of the unexpected so that learners develop an understanding and an awareness of the exchange. Once the learners are familiar with the flow and the language of the dialogue (can reproduce it confidently and fairly accurately), then is the time for them to experience and cope with the unpredictability of a role play. The teacher then introduces responses such as "you must have the wrong number." Learners are forced to cope and to develop strategies to avoid a total breakdown of the conversation.

Method B works particularly well with learners whose English appears to be fluent but who really are not effective because they are not attentive to the other person's responses. Method B is more challenging and has the learners under pressure at all times. Assuming that there is an understanding of how the conversation should proceed, the teacher and the learner start the role play with no preliminary analysis or guidance. The teacher stops the role play whenever there is a growing crisis in communication, for instance, when negative feelings are aroused. The intent of this method is to make learners feel that a mechanical response is not enough - they have to exhibit feeling and attitudes through language as well as understand the feelings and attitudes of the other person.

In these two methods the focus is on learning how to get through the exchange and on developing the confidence to deal with the unpredictable through analysis and practice. Learners develop strategies for coping and become better able to interpret and express the total response of an involved communicator. Gubbay's book provides a very thorough explanation of each method as well as transcripts from lessons - a book well-worth investigating.

**Questionnaires/Charts/Diagrams**

In supplying information for questionnaires/charts/diagrams learners are also bringing into play their experience and knowledge of the workplace and the community. The format this time requires classification or categorization rather than extended prose. Simple interview questionnaires are often good "get acquainted" tools with a class that has adequate literacy skills. In pairs or groups of three, learners can interview each other and record the information on the questionnaire.

| Name | Arrival in Canada | First Job | | Started at this company |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Year | Date | |
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |

The learners might need a model to follow in asking the questions and writing the answers. If so, we can reproduce the questionnaire on the board/flip chart, interview one member of the class, asking simple questions and recording them: "What's your name?" "How do you spell that?", etc. The written answers only require a few words or a date rather than sentences so the fear of forming complete sentences is reduced. Important to remember when gathering information of this nature is the purpose to which it will be put. Once learners have provided the information, how will it be used, transformed or integrated into future lessons? In this case we can ask learners to introduce the people they have interviewed to the rest of the class. We might even ask the others to record the information as it is presented so that everyone will have a class list at the end. Observing the pairs or groups interacting during this task will give some indication of their competence in producing and understanding questions to elicit information, requests for spelling and repetition, numbers, etc. Although people may work in the same factory they often have little opportunity to get to know each other because of shifts, language and cultural barriers and the like. With learners with a moderate degree of oral competence, this simple questionnaire can often turn into more than straightforward questions and responses.

In one large workplace with multiple locations, job safety was repeatedly stressed during the needs analysis. An early questionnaire asked for more work-related information:

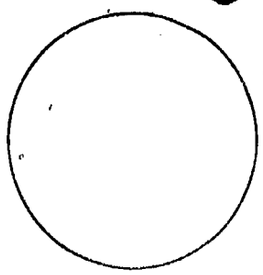
| Name | Location | Job title | Activities | Safety Hazards |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

The learners in this class came from different locations and had a wide variety of jobs. The information gathered was later pooled, typed up and distributed to serve as a class list for everyone. It also served as a reference sheet when the class worked on the overall production process. When accident prevention was first taken up, it provided the source material for a task aimed at identifying hazards associated with particular jobs and suggesting methods of prevention. In addition, everyone in the class referred to it when they had spelling problems with job-related vocabulary.

Diagrams can also help learners interpret their knowledge and experience by providing a visual display that is often more compelling than words. If comments about fatigue and multiple responsibilities at home and at work are frequent, then we might begin exploring the causes of stress with a diagram like this:

| Activity | Hours |
|---|---|
| work | _____ |
| shopping | _____ |
| cooking | _____ |
| cleaning | _____ |
| child care | _____ |
| sleeping | _____ |

Where does your time go?



= 24 hours

Learners can start by doing their own graphic descriptions which involves practice in numeracy (fractions, percentages, ratios). Then in small groups learners can compare their diagrams to discover similar patterns. A diagram of this type can be one step in a problem-posing activity which then investigates the causes of stress and its effects and concludes with suggestions for reducing stress at home and at work.

The value of these questionnaires/charts/diagrams is twofold: content information for the course is provided by the learners themselves and they are introduced to reading and using formats of this type. When they are faced with a diagram or chart in the newspaper or in work-related materials, they may be encouraged to read it over.

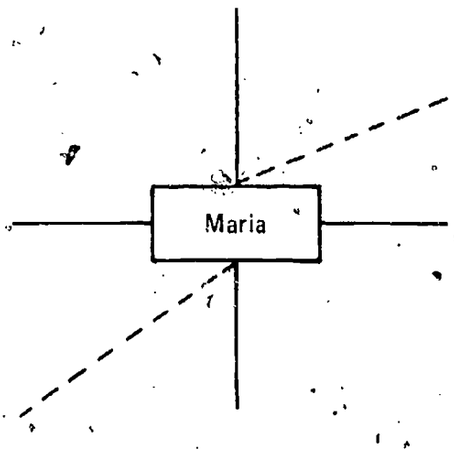
**Learners as Researchers**

In one sense we are encouraging learners to become researchers and investigators by analysing their experience and recording the data in a particular format. We can also focus this research work on communication and language learning by having learners analyse their own needs in much the same way that we did in the needs analysis. Learners with similar jobs can work together to produce their own communications network diagrams (chapter three). If the course is weighted in favour of listening and speaking, then they can make a diagram identifying the people they communicate with or would like to communicate with orally. Next, they can chart the interactions they have or would like to have as indicated on page 109.

Later, we can assist them in detailing the topics they itemize. If paycheque is mentioned with a personnel officer, we can help them identify requests and complaints. By doing their own communication diagrams, learners can begin to assess their present competence, determine priorities for learning, set goals and measure progress. This type of task along with problem-posing activities mentioned earlier encourages "learner-training" to ensure that learning continues well beyond the classroom.

In summary, we have looked at different types of source materials - authentic materials from the workplace and the community, some commercially prepared materials and learner-produced materials. In all three instances, the tasks that we design to help learners interact with the material --to understand it, comment on it and enquire beyond it-- are crucial. Tasks can be written for objectives that define performance such as "calling in sick". They can also be designed for problem-solving objectives that define a method of enquiry. A checklist of characteristics follows for use in designing communicative tasks.

Who do you talk to at work?




What do you talk to your supervisor about?

| I ask/tell her about | She asks/tells me about |
|---|---|
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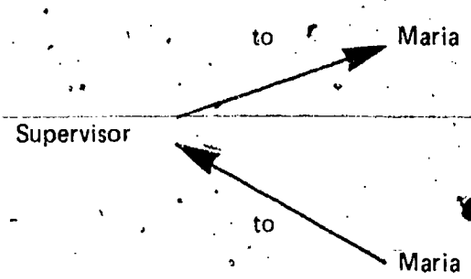


- involving the learners in finding out new information
- starting from the learners' own experiences and knowledge of the world, work and language
- integrating various skills in a natural sequence of tasks
- varying the difficulty of the task rather than the authentic material to suit the level of the learner
- making tasks dependent on each other so that the information from one task is used in the next
- transfer information from one mode (production/reception) to another (reading to writing or listening to speaking)
- provide different types of participation over a series of tasks (whole class, group work, individual work)
- as often as possible providing for a process of enquiry and resolution.
- design problem-solving tasks with a variety of outcomes: from the pre-planned and expected solutions to the completely individual and unexpected solutions.
- share and evaluate the creative outcomes of activities in some public forum (small group or whole class)
- evaluate (learners and teacher) the activities and the work cycle itself to check progress and to determine appropriateness.

(based on Breen 1983 and Johnson 1982)

As writers of materials, we could develop language activities with some of these characteristics in mind or we could evaluate exercises and activities that we have prepared previously. As buyers of commercially prepared materials, we could use these characteristics as a guideline to critique and evaluate textbooks. Sandra Savignon in Communicative Competence: Theory and Practice (1983) offers a checklist specifically for evaluating commercially available materials which is well worth investigating.

The last chapter on resources includes suggestions for classroom materials that would be suitable in a workplace setting.

# Chapter 6
# CLASSROOM SEQUENCES

The following classroom sequences illustrate communicative activities which combine a variety of tasks.[1] In both sequences we see learner-teacher interaction over a two-day period. In the first sequence, the focus is on reading but the tasks involve a good deal of listening and speaking which support the reading in a natural sequence of skills. In the second example, listening and speaking skills are the focus and the tasks, involving analysis and production, offer a variety of arrangements - whole class, small group, pair and individual.

## SEQUENCE 1

Class Profile

- municipal workers - 10 men from a variety of departments.
- union initiated but co-sponsored by union and management
- voluntary time
- cafeteria with flip chart, blackboard and supply space provided by employer
- 2 hours per class; 2 times per week
- native languages: Italian and Portuguese
- range of ages: 32-60
- levels of education in native country: grades 4-10
- years in Canada: 6-25

[1] For a classroom sequence illustrating activities for basic literacy level learners (using the LEA method) in a textile factory, see Handbook for ESL Literacy by Bell and Burnaby (1984).

Language Levels and Needs

-All the men are used to communicating orally in English. They can make themselves understood as well as argue a point in English, although their language is often grammatically incorrect and, at times, inappropriate for the situation. When they discuss very personal matters or upsetting incidents at work among themselves, they initiate the conversation in their native language.

-They all want to focus on reading and writing where they feel their performance is weak and where they lack control over the language. They also need reading and writing skills to obtain better jobs and to take qualifying exams.

-Their English literacy skills vary, although everyone can read and write in their native tongue at a basic functional level. One man has never tried to write in English and another displays noticeable hesitancy about writing at all. Some can write paragraphs; others cannot fill out cheques and banking forms. One foreman needs to write reports in English. Some buy newspapers regularly and read all the bulletins from the company and the union. All of them can function adequately on the job with their reading skills but want to read faster and feel more secure in their reading comprehension, especially for testing purposes.

In the previous class, Vincenzo had arrived late and upset because of a near accident that day. Eliana, the teacher, had encouraged him to discuss the situation which revolved around his working alone on a job that required two people. His fellow workers comforted him by acknowledging the dangers on the job and offering alternatives, while Michele recounted how he felt when his friend was killed on the job a few years ago. Michele's purpose was not to make Vincenzo more apprehensive but to illustrate an alternative - to request another work location, at least temporarily. This story was taped and Eliana intends to transcribe it and then use it for individualized writing work. For instance, Luca, the temporary foreman, can use it to write up a report, while Joe might use it just as a catalyst to tell and later write his own story.

In the two classes this week, the men and Eliana have decided to look at the legislation involving the right to refuse hazardous work, particularly in regard to Vincenzo's situation. Many of them are not aware of their right or familiar with the official procedure. During the union interviews in the needs analysis, Eliana was given a copy of Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act, Bill 70, as well as a labour studies' booklet interpreting the bill. The men suggested having a union representative visit the class after they have become familiar with the law and the process involved in refusing unsafe work. These two classes will provide that groundwork.

Even though there has been a fair amount of discussion about unsafe incidents and accidents on the job, Eliana decides to prepare the class for the reading tasks by some oral work focussed on the steps in refusing. Following up on the previous day's stories, she asks if these accidents or any others had resulted in a refusal to do unsafe work. Angelo comments on a refusal in his department and Eliana writes down the steps on the blackboard as Angelo describes what happened:

1. worker reported to foreman and to member of health and safety committee
2. government inspector was called
3. company told to put in new ventilation

The other men are surprised to hear the government ruled in favour of the worker. Apparently, the informal channels of communication at the workplace had not carried this news. They ask if the worker got paid but Angelo doesn't know. Eliana suggests that they might look for information on that particular question while they read. She notes down the question on the board.

Once the men are enthused and curious about the details of the procedure, Eliana divides them into groups of four (two are absent today). In each group there is a strong reader who can assist the people with lower level skills. One group is going to look at portions of the government's Guide to Bill 70 on page 114 which is dense but with an accessible format of question and answer.

The other group is going to read a union interpretation of the bill, a booklet prepared for workers and educators by a labour studies centre. Although the language is not so dense in this reading selection, it does tend to be more "wordy". This aspect, combined with long stretches of unbroken prose, sometimes makes it more difficult to find specific information (see page 115).

Eliana asks the men to briefly look over the reading material while she hands out the worksheets to accompany it (see page 116).

She reads over the worksheet with the class to make sure the directions are clear and to ensure that everyone understands that they are only looking for specific information. In previous reading tasks, the class has practiced skimming, scanning and reading for thorough understanding. She is anxious to see if they use these skills (without being directly instructed to) in working with fairly difficult material. The groups quickly fall into their own pattern of working. One group (working with the Guide to Bill 70) talks about each question and searches for the answer together. The people in the other group decide to work alone and then review their answers together.

# Refusal to Work Where Health or Safety Is in Danger (Sections 23-24)

*Can a worker refuse to do dangerous work?*

Yes, if the worker has reason to believe that:

- the equipment or machinery to be used is likely to endanger the worker or another worker;
- the physical condition of the workplace is likely to endanger the worker, or
- the equipment, or machinery or physical condition of the workplace are likely to endanger any worker and contravene the Act or regulations.

The Act does not entitle a worker to refuse work due to anticipated or actual conduct or health of another worker.

*What is a worker to do if he or she refuses to work in these circumstances?*

The worker must immediately inform the employer or supervisor of the circumstances of the refusal.

*Must the employer or supervisor respond?*

The supervisor or employer must immediately investigate the situation in the presence of the worker and

- a designated member of the health and safety committee, if there is one, or
- a health and safety representative, or
- a worker selected for his or her experience and training by the trade union or the workers.

If the situation is resolved at this stage, the worker will return to work.

*What if the worker is dissatisfied with the result of the investigation?*

If the worker has reasonable grounds to believe that the circumstances are such that the work is dangerous, the worker may continue to refuse to work.

The worker or employer must notify a Ministry of Labour inspector. Inspectors can be contacted by telephoning the nearest district office as listed in this booklet or in the government listings of the telephone book.

Source: A Guide to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1978, p.21. Ontario Ministry of Labour.

The law requires the employer, the supervisor, a union representative or the worker to call in the government inspector. Because this duty is not assigned to a specific individual by the law, unions should develop a policy regarding who is responsible for calling in an inspector. The simplest policy may be for this job to be done by the health and safety representative or committee member. The union should also attempt to ensure that the phone number for the appropriate District Ministry Inspectors office is posted and is known to all stewards.

During the time it takes for an inspector to arrive and give a decision, the law allows the employer to assign the refusing worker another job. If another job is not available the employer may give "other directions" to a worker so long as these other directions do not constitute a penalty. It is our belief that any assignment that changes a wage rate or otherwise costs a worker any money or benefits would be a penalty and therefore, a violation of the law. Similarly any change of shifts or assignment to a job with significantly harsher working conditions in our belief, would also be a penalty. Redress for this penalty would, however, be left to an arbitration board or the Ontario Labour Relations Board. (Sec. 23(10))

When the inspector arrives he or she must inspect the circumstances of the refusal in the presence of the employer or a supervisor and the worker and the representative or committee member who was present at the earlier investigation. The inspector is required to give a written decision "as soon as is practicable" and provide a copy of the decision to the worker, the worker's representative, and the employer. (Sec. 23 (7) and (9))

Source: The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1978: Questions and Answers, p.12. Center for Labour Studies, Humber College. Reproduced with permission.

Right to Refuse Unsafe Work

Directions:

- Read question #1
- Find the section in your reading that answers the question.
- Read that section and write a short answer.

1. Read the reasons why a worker can refuse to do dangerous work. Which reason would cover the problem of working alone?

_____

2. What is the procedure in refusing to work? List the people the worker must speak to.

   1.
   2.
   3.

3. What work can an employee do while waiting for the inspector?

_____

4. What can happen to a worker if he/she refuses to work? Can the employer take any action against him/her?

_____

5. Does the worker get paid when refusing to work?

_____

6. Can another worker be asked to do the same job when it has been refused? What is the responsibility of the employer?

_____

As she visits the groups, Eliana notices that the four men using the government guide seem to be stymied by its "official" presentation - partly a result of their previous unsuccessful experiences with other government documents (income tax, workmen's compensation, unemployment insurance). The question and answer format strikes them as unusual and at first is a hindrance rather than a help. Luca exclaims, "How do I find anything on this?" Eliana, picking up on the request, asks the group to tell her what they are looking for in question 1. When they tell her, she reiterates that they only have to read the section that gives the answer to that question. "But how can we find the section?" - Luca. Eliana replies with another cue, "How do you know what's being talked about in each section?" Vincenzo discovers the use of the format: "By the questions." Luca is pleased that his frustration has been relieved and sums up the instructions: "Ah, so we read over the questions to find what we have to read." Everyone gets down to work.

The other group has reached the stage of reviewing their answers and an argument is in progress over the ambiguity of one section dealing with paying a worker who refuses. Eliana asks them which points are unclear and helps them identify the words and phrases that create ambiguity ("It does not however specifically state..." and "...it is our belief..."). Other questions encourage them to try and explain why it is ambiguous (Why make a law that is vague and unclear? How does the union interpret this section? How do you think the government interprets it?). The group is still divided over the issue and she suggests that they note the problem and discuss it in the next stage of the activity.

Work goes on longer than usual and only 45 minutes remain in the class. Eliana suggests that everyone take a 10-15 minute tea break before the next step.

When work resumes, she integrates the groups so that new groups form with two members from each previous group. Following her oral instructions, the men go through each question and look for inconsistencies and differences in government and union statements. The point of argument from the previous discussion is brought up in both groups but only one group seems to resolve it by comparing the two reading passages. Eliana then brings the whole class together and asks for any problems that couldn't be worked out. The one point of ambiguity is raised and the group offers its resolution reached by interpreting the government bill in light of the union comments. With five minutes left, Eliana comments on the follow-up activities planned for the next lesson. Angelo asks for the reading material and worksheet for an absent classmate and Luca says he'll check out the Health and Safety poster that's in his department. Class ends with, "Who's bringing in the milk next time?"

**Sequence 1 - Subsequent Class**

Aldo, who missed the previous session, returns with apologies - his daughter's birthday. Eliana asks about the party details while the other men arrive and make tea. Vincenzo shows her some written work that he did at home and Eliana, pleased with his ongoing efforts, mentions that they'll have a chance to look over it in the last part of class.

With everyone refreshed and ready to begin, Eliana reviews the highlights of the last session. Aldo feels somewhat more prepared and Eliana assures him that he'll have the opportunity to do the reading he missed later on in the class. Having dealt with some of the issues in refusing unsafe work, Eliana would like to use this class to focus on the actual procedure. The labour studies booklet provides a case study on an unsafe chemical in diagrammatic form (see pages 120 and 121).

To guide the class in reading through the diagram, Eliana has made a worksheet (on page 119) which emphasizes the sequence in the procedure.

She asks the class to divide into groups of three and encourages them to join up with people they haven't worked with recently. She directs Aldo to a group of people whom she knows will be able to assist him, if necessary. Eliana explains the diagram, shows the book it was taken from and reviews the worksheet. Being familiar with similar tasks, each group sets their own rhythm and work begins in earnest. Eliana visits the groups and offers guidance, trying not to give answers to the reading questions but to elicit ideas from the other people in the group or to lead them to a discovery of their own. One group is having difficulty labeling the steps in procedure A. Eliana first asks them to describe the procedure in their own words. Step 2 is the stumbling block, especially the words "agree" and "consult." They understand step 3, the result, so she advises them to use what they know from step 3 to help figure out step 2. "What had to happen before the hazard was controlled?" "What is the relationship between the employer and the committee?" With these cues and Aldo's suggestion of "like agreement", the group is left to figure it out.

After tea break, Eliana brings the whole class together to review the answers and to discuss any problems. She refers back to the steps outlined by Angelo in the previous class and everyone recognizes procedure B. Vincenzo, whose problem of working alone originally sparked this investigation, asks for some further explanation of the appeal procedure. Although the class decides to pursue this when the union rep visits, it does lead easily into a final 10-to-15 minute discussion on the problems and consequences related to exercising this right. The procedure has been effective in the company in the past, but would it be so now? If not, why not? Vincenzo, for instance, is not prepared to take this type of action yet, but he does feel more informed.

Understanding Procedures:

Directions:

1. Follow the arrows across the top of page for Procedure A.
   . look at the pictures and read about each one.
2. Look at picture #1 again and follow the arrow that points down for Procedure B.
   . look at the pictures and read about each one.
3. Look over the words and phrases below.
   . do you understand them all?
   . if not, look back at the pictures to help you.

| | |
|---|---|
| inform & investigate | order company to change |
| correct unsafe work | dangerous work is done more safely |
| not satisfied | dangerous work is avoided |
| call inspector | |
| inspect the workplace | |

4. Fill in the charts below. Use the vocabulary above to describe what happens in each picture.

PROCEDURE A

| Step #1 | Step #2 | result |
|---|---|---|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

PROCEDURE B

| Step #1 | Step #2 | step #3 |
|---|---|---|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| step #4 | step #5 | result |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

PROCEDURE IN EXERCISING RIGHT TO REFUSE HAZARDOUS WORK

This chemical seems unsafe

REFUSE TO WORK

INFORM SUPERVISOR AND INVESTIGATE TOGETHER WITH WORKER MEMBER OF COMMITTEE

CALL GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR- there is a 'refusal to work' at our workplace

GOVERNMENT INSPECTION WITH WORKER, HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEMBER, AND EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVE

We have a 'refusal to work' and would like to appeal the inspector's report.

CALL GOVERNMENT DIRECTOR TO APPEAL

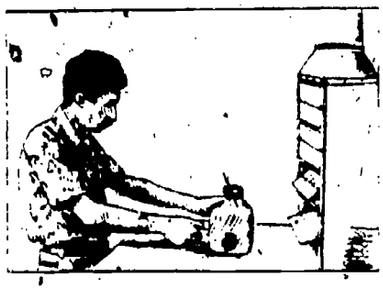


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

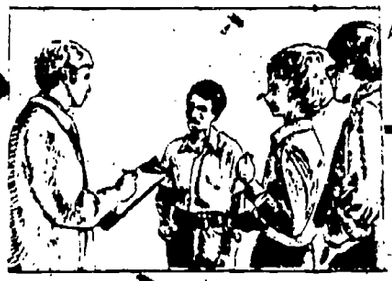
Employer agrees chemical unsafe. Will consult with committee and correct

Hazard temporarily controlled

there doesn't seem to be a problem



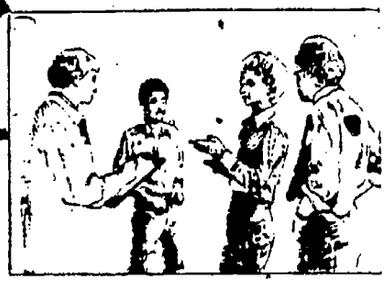
The company must install ventilation or substitute chemical



Another chemical could be used that is safe

HAZARD AVOIDED

It doesn't seem like the situation is serious.



WRITTEN DECISION

Source: The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1978: Questions and Answers, pp. 10-11. Center for Labour Studies, Humber College.

In the remaining half hour, the men choose to do their own work. Aldo wants to begin reading what he missed in the previous class. Angelo writes a brief report based on the earlier story about unsafe working conditions while two other men pair up to practice spelling words related to their work tickets. Joe works on some citizenship materials which Eliana has gathered together in preparation for his hearing. Eliana works with Vincenzo on the writing he did at home and then has 10 or 15 minutes for advising other people in the class and assisting them in evaluating their progress to date.

## SEQUENCE 2

Class Profile

- hospital workers, 8 women from housekeeping, 2 men and 1 woman from laundry
- management-sponsored
- 50/50 shared time at the end of the work day
- boardroom facilities with blackboard, flip chart, refreshments and supply space provided
- 1 and 1/2 hours per class; 2 times per week
- native languages: Chinese, Polish, Tagalog, Portuguese
- range of ages: 34-55
- levels of education in native country: grades 2-6
- years in Canada: 6 months to 18 years

Language Level and Needs

-Most of the people in the class are at a basic literacy level in English. There is very little reading and writing demanded on the job and what is required can be managed by everyone. Literacy is usually dealt with in class in a community context rather than a work context.

-Oral interaction skills vary. One woman is just beyond survival English, two or three speak rather haltingly, and the rest have a fluency marked by many grammatical and sociolinguistic errors but for the most part comprehensible. The hospital requested the course after a few complaints by supervisors and patients about the inability of a few housekeepers to communicate (speaking/listening) adequately. Requests and instructions had not been understood and therefore had not been acted

upon. Most of the people in class recognize their need for improved listening/speaking skills although the more fluent speakers specifically requested literacy work. If this three month session is successful, then the hospital is willing to continue classes and increase the hours if desired.

People start arriving 5 or 10 minutes early, some with their coffee from the cafeteria. Diana, the teacher, welcomes back Mr. Wong after a two-week absence and she joins him for a brief chat about the illness that kept him from work. When everyone has taken their seats, Diana introduces the literacy work she has prepared for that day.

Katarzyna, one of the newer workers, and her friend are speaking Polish in what appears to be an intense conversation. When Diana approaches them with the handouts for that class, she enquires about any problems. Katarzyna, who can make herself understood although with some difficulty, tells Diana that the head housekeeper just reprimanded her for working too slowly. Before getting the details, Diana asks the rest of the class to review their reading and writing homework in the usual manner (small groups self-correct and then report any major problems). Diana talks to Katarzyna for a few minutes and figures that the head housekeeper had probably said something like: "You don't have to spend so much time in the rooms. Either you work too slowly or you talk too much." Katarzyna felt unable to defend herself adequately and could only offer the fact that she was working as quickly as she could. This had not been satisfactory for either party and so the issue seemed unresolved. Diana asks Katarzyna if it would be all right to deal with the problem in class and she agrees. Diana decides to put aside today's lesson since this issue is precisely at the heart of the hospital's motivation for initiating the course.

After the small groups report on the homework and problems are cleared up, Diana takes up Katarzyna's problem. To put the problem in the larger context of responding to enquiries and reprimands, she asks the class who else has had similar problems either at work or outside of work. She decides to tape record the rest of this class since there could be rich material in the experiences to be told. She tells everyone why she wants to record and with no objection, the discussion continues. One of the men comments on a misunderstanding about the weekend shift which had made his supervisor furious. Since that incident, he always confirms his schedule with the supervisor. With some occasional help from her Chinese co-worker, Mrs. Li tells of the time she did not understand the nurse's instructions to clean one particular room first. Fortunately, there was no emergency involved and the nurse offered understanding and assistance rather than a reprimand.

By this point Katarzyna does not feel isolated by her experience or by her

reaction but has gained the support of the class. For the last half hour, Diana suggests that they focus on Katarzyna's interactions with the head housekeeper. Briefly they establish the background for the interaction:

- What was the complaint: not quick enough
- Any other complaint implied?: talk too much with patients
- What is her relationship with the head housekeeper?: workable, but rather cool. Katarzyna is outgoing and the head housekeeper doesn't appear to be sociable.
- What kind of day was it?: very hectic - short-staffed
- How did Katarzyna feel that day?: O.K. but almost arrived late because of a problem at home.

With these factors in mind, Diana sets up a role play between herself as the head housekeeper and Katarzyna.

D: Katarzyna, I'd like to talk to you for a minute.

K: Yes.

Diana stops the tape and asks her what she means. Is it a question? "Yes?" - implying "what would you like to talk about?" Or does she mean "O.K.?" - implying I understand? Katarzyna indicates the latter and motions to Diana to start again. This time she uses O.K. but Diana thinks it sounds a bit abrupt, especially considering that the head housekeeper is "touchy" today. She asks the class how the reply sounded. "Surprised" and "scared" are the answers. Other women start giving replies with a different tone, more noticeably neutral. Mr. Wong suggests, "Want see me now?" Katarzyna agrees and tries again with Mr. Wong's addition, "Do you want see me now?"

Once Katarzyna has been guided to notice her tone as well as the content of her reply, she begins to correct herself as the role play moves on. Diana tries to keep the exchanges to a minimum so she won't lose the interest of some women with less speaking and listening skills. A few more exchanges and Katarzyna is still unable to answer the head housekeeper's reprimand - "You're too slow or you talk to much." Katarzyna can only say,"I can't work more fast." Diana stops to explore the problem a little deeper. Do you feel in a hurry? Do you want to talk to the patients? With a little help from her Polish friend, she explains that she finds it hard to leave the room when a patient is talking to her. Why not tell the head housekeeper, suggests Diana, and encourages Katarzyna to try. Katarzyna laughs and shrugs her shoulders. One

woman suggests, "I want leave but no can say to patient." Katarzyna agrees that this is one part of the problem and offers it as a reply. Jose, taking the head housekeeper's role, says humourously, "Then go to English class!" With a good laugh, the tension is relieved. The role play is reviewed once more between Katarzyna and Diana and everyone agrees to practice "getting out of rooms" in the next class.

**Sequence 2 - Subsequent Class**

Before this class, Diana has been fortunate in contacting two other housekeepers, both native speakers, who had enthusiastically offered their assistance. Diana decided to make two short tapes simulating interactions between patients and housekeepers. She explained the type of language problem encountered and the housekeepers agreed to try the simulations. One even offered to involve a patient (with permission) but, with time at a premium, Diana decided to save that for another situation. Diana decides to use two of the simulations - one in which the patient accepts the housekeepers reason for leaving the room and another in which the interaction is not satisfactory and the patient is left abruptly.

In class Diana begins by replaying the role play that was taped in the last session. Laughing one more time at Jose's remarks, the class recalls what their work is today - to practice talking to patients. The class breaks up into groups and Diana asks Mrs. Li if she can try working without her friend this time for a listening exercise. She agrees to give it a try, laughing but a bit nervous. Diana makes sure that Katarzyna is in the same group since she is supportive and understanding in her assistance to other learners.

The groups work with the two simulated conversations made by the other housekeepers; each group listens to a different tape. The first time they listen for the general drift of the interaction - what's happening between the housekeeper and the patient. Then Diana asks them to listen for the specific requests from the patients ("You don't have to go yet?" and "You want to hear a good story?") and the responses of the housekeepers ("We're short-staffed today so I really have to go ..." and "I can't stay now."). Then she asks them to listen again for tone of voice and obvious indications of being willing or unwilling to listen to the patient.

The groups exchange tapes and the second analysis is easier after doing the first. Diana brings everyone together to compare their ideas and reactions. She notes on the board the different language used by the housekeepers to start and end the conversations and to indicate their attention while listening ("Oh really", "Yes, I know..."). She asks the class to consider other possible options and a few are recommended which she notes down with discussion on the inappropriate options.

After a short break for refreshments, the class divides into pairs to create some similar short role plays. Following Diana's suggestions, some choose to rework the unsatisfactory version they have just heard with a successful outcome while others choose different situations to explore, picking up on the problems discussed in the previous class. Diana visits the pairs and asks two groups to tape their role plays. One is a humorous and successful conclusion to the former dialogue.

> Patient: Want to hear a good story before you go?
> Housekeeper: We're short-staffed today so I really have to go.
> Patient: The story's funny. Make you a good laugh.
> Housekeeper: Oh, tell my supervisor. She need a good laugh!

The second role play is another instance of a housekeeper's inability to respond. The patient says abruptly, "Get me the nurse." Diana notices that the class has gone a few minutes overtime. She calls a halt to the work and explains that the taped role plays will be used in the next class. A few people ask for the tapes to use over the weekend and Diana encourages them to listen and analyse first and then to tape new conversations with their families or co-workers.

While everyone is preparing to leave, Diana jots down a few ideas about how she'd like to use the class role plays. By splitting the class, the more able speakers can analyse the humorous tape for why it is a successful interaction while she works with the more limited speakers in creating some responses to the patient. She can take them through the exchange by labeling and writing each turn, thus allowing them enough time to think and practice without pressure. Then she can introduce the unpredictable element in a structured role play while the other group follows up on their literacy work.

# Chapter 7
# ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

In this chapter, assessment refers to the measurement of the learners' performance and progress. Evaluation refers to the measurement of success of the entire program (with assessment as just one factor). An assessment of the learners' performance and progress either through formal testing or more informal procedures is often the only type of evaluation that we do. Since EWP courses involve many more relationships and more specific needs than most general ESL courses, progress is dependent on a variety of factors. The support of the sponsor, the process of negotiations, the identification of learners' needs related to the workplace and the materials incorporating those needs all play a role in determining the progress that learners can make. Judging their performance and progress is best done when it is carried out as part of an overall evaluation of the entire EWP program. Both assessment and evaluation can be done on an on-going basis as well as at the end of the course. In both time frames, a number of participants is involved in each procedure:

Assessment of Learners:

- by the learners themselves (self-assessment)
- by the teachers
- by the supervisor and/or union representative

Evaluation of the Program:

- by the learners
- by the teachers
- by the sponsors
- by the educational institution

## ONGOING ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

If we adopt the idea of syllabus design as a dynamic process (chapter 4), then our classroom objectives and language activities are the result of a constant interplay of investigation, analysis and evaluation. The latter component includes an ongoing assessment of learners and an on-going evaluation of the program. Daily class objectives can only be determined by considering the learners' performance in each previous class as well as the constraints and possibilities within the overall program. A rigidly pre-planned syllabus does not allow for the flexibility needed to accommodate learners' needs and interests as they emerge. With a more flexible syllabus we can plan for next week based partially on the results of this week.

For evaluation, we might have to consider if our classroom objectives are appropriate in light of the particular workplace setting or if the materials we use and develop are suitable for the level, interests and needs of the learners. For instance, in one non-unionized textile factory, there was a history of management resistance to EWP classes. Management felt that efforts might be made to unionize workers directly or indirectly through the English classes. Later, pressure from within the industry itself forced management to reconsider and offer the classes. The teacher at this site had to consider the hesitancy on the part of management in planning every lesson. If supervisors overheard a particular lesson, how would they interpret it? In one class, the rights and regulations regarding unemployment insurance were the focus of language activities. The workers had requested this topic because many of them faced lay offs during the slack times of the year. When management asked the teacher to justify her choice, she was able to turn the situation to her advantage. Instead of defending her choice in terms of class requests and factory lay offs, she invited the supervisor to look over her lesson plan and materials. Her openness effectively deflated management's concern. Although some trust had been established, she still had to consider the management factor in determining just what topics could be covered in class and in what depth. In another instance, commercially prepared books were banned in textile factory courses (both union and non-unionized factories). An industrial advisory council (a liaison between management, government and the union) decided that some of the text in these books did not reflect well on the garment industry and demanded that the educational institution remove them from the classroom. In the interest of maintaining the classes, this was done. Here is an example of the crucial need for educational institutions to have standards and policies in regard to English in the Workplace, so that they can protect and main-

tain their classes and their teachers for the benefit of the learners.[1]

## Techniques

Observation is the most flexible and readily available tool that the teacher can use for on-going assessment. During each task that the learners are working on, we can observe how well they perform in listening, speaking, reading or writing.

- Can they handle and produce more language than they did a few weeks ago?
- What types of tasks continue to present problems for certain learners?
- Are learners at the basic literacy level increasing their store of sight words?
- Are learners recognizing communication breakdowns and beginning to cope with them?

Our daily observations of successes and difficulties create an emerging profile of each learner. There are several ways of informally documenting this development. Virginia Sauvé (1982a:89) suggests that we keep a daily journal which can be used to note down comments about the learners' performance and behaviour. (To keep close track of a learner's development more consistently, try noting comments in individual files prepared for each person in the class.) We can also use the journal to record requests and suggestions from supervisors/stewards, questions that we might have or "bright ideas" that we don't want to forget. Making journal entries after every class also provides the necessary time for reflection. Reflection ensures that our next class will build on the strengths of the previous class and provide extra support for the weaknesses observed in that class. In terms of overall program evaluation, the

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[1]From one reader: This account does not reflect the number of issues related to the problem of censorship. Consider these:

1. How far can books/materials which reflect the real life situations of workers be used in the factory's classrooms. What about students' stories which are not favourable to the industry?

2. How far can the teacher go? It is an issue of methodology or philosophy. Unless the educational institutions have clearly stated policies and objectives for EWP programs, similar instances will occur again.

3. Teachers' jobs are jeopardized and become increasingly insecure when differences of philosophy and methodology are not accepted by the educational institution's administrators.

4. Policy-making and decision-making by whom? If the teachers' responsibilities as you have outlined them in this book are so broad, what role can the teacher play in areas of consultation and decision-making?
(edited version)

reflections in journals are invaluable for reviewing what we have done and deciding where to go next.

When writing skills are the focus, try keeping separate file folders for each learner. The files are their property and contain all their written work, drafts as well as the final products. For instance, their worksheets and LEA stories with comments from ourselves and other readers can be kept in the files. At times we can review all the work and carry on a dialogue with the learner by writing to each other. Not only do the files document their growth but they also serve as reference material that the learner can use for spelling, vocabulary, sentence structure, etc. For oral work, tapes can serve the same function as the folders. Tape-recorded items might be their language experience stories, their role plays or their interviews with other class members. With control over a body of their own work, learners can then be guided to assess their own progress. Perhaps mid-way through the course we can assist them in reviewing their work to date in order to build awareness of what they can now do and what still needs improvement. This type of review and self-assessment can only be effective if we have encouraged them to assess their own performance and others' throughout the course.

How can we do this? In the chapter on materials development, activities were described in which learners worked with each other and with the teacher to evaluate performance. For example, learners can listen to the roleplays and dialogues of others and comment on their performance. When did communication break down? Who handled it best and why? They can read what others have written, looking for meaning and commenting on how well their peers were able to get an idea across and how well they organized facts and events to make their points (rather than grammar and spelling). If we work with small groups or individuals in this process, then together we can determine what standards for performance might be.

Learners can also be guided to assess their own progress by reviewing their achievement at the end of each unit of work. If class objectives have been developed through performance tasks, then learners can assess themselves by judging how well they can perform those tasks. For example, in English for Work, each module contains an asessment form for learners and teachers to use. The purpose of these forms is stated below, followed by an example from the module "Preventing Accidents."

The evaluation forms within each module are directly related to the objectives of the lessons. Their purpose is to enable the students, their peers and the teacher to monitor individual student and class progress. The instructor may find indications of need for more review, reinforcement or additional practice. The objectives listed in the modules can be used as a classroom tool to give students a sense of accomplishment and to help them set personal goals related to the course. The evaluation agreed on between the teacher and student could then become part of the individual student's record of achievement. When the student moves to another class or institution, the record will enable future instructors to see what he can do and what group or class he should be placed in.

The evaluation is in this format for each level. The learning outcomes are listed and the student's performance is assessed.

| | Accurately and or Fluently | Intelligibly but Inaccurately | Inadequately |
|---|---|---|---|
| e.g. – identify his occupation | | | |

"Fluent" means that the student can produce the language without undue hesitation, clearly and understandably. He may have minor errors in grammar as would a native speaker. "Intelligible" means that the student can make himself understood but may still need to improve pronunciation, intonation, grammar, choice of words or speed. Because the objectives in the modules are related to the lessons, they are more specific and detailed than would be needed for overall assessment of language competence.

LEVEL 1: EVALUATION

The student can:

| | Accurately and/or Fluently | Intelligibly but Inaccurately | Inadequately |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. State a need for a piece of safety equipment. | | | |
| 2. Follow verbal warnings to use safety equipment. | | | |
| 3. Ask about the location of safety equipment. | | | |
| 4. Explain about non-verbal warning signs using safety equipment. | | | |

LEVEL 2: EVALUATION

The student can:

| | Accurately and/or Fluently | Intelligibly but Inaccurately | Inadequately |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. State the need for a piece of safety equipment. | | | |
| 2. Explain verbal and non-verbal warning signs about the use of safety equipment. | | | |
| 3. Follow verbal warnings to deal with common job hazards. | | | |
| 4. Identify safety equipment and procedures used in own occupation. | | | |
| 5. Identify some strategies for dealing with unsafe conditions on the job. | | | |

LEVEL 3: EVALUATION

The student can:

| | Accurately and/or Fluently | Intelligibly but Inaccurately | Inadequately |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. State a need for a piece of safety equipment. | | | |
| 2. Explain non-verbal warning signs. | | | |
| 3. Follow verbal warnings to deal with common job hazards. | | | |
| 4. Identify safety equipment and procedures used in own occupation. | | | |
| 5. Identify some strategies for dealing with unsafe conditions on the job. | | | |
| | Completely | Partially | Inadequately |
| 6. Understand instructions for safety procedures on hazardous products. | | | |

Source: English for Work (1982), pp.8, 9-18, 19. Province of B.C. Ministry of Education, Continuing Education Division, Victoria, B.C.



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An example (on page 133) of a mid-course self-assessment form used in a class that had a reading and writing focus.

Self-assessment of performance and progress is part of the process of setting short-term and long-term objectives. Do we agree with the learners' assessment of themselves? Do we have time to talk with them about it? Having judged themselves, learners might then be able to look critically at the entire course. Basically, we want to determine if they are satisfied with the topics and the activities in class. If at the beginning of the course, learners contributed to setting objectives, then we could all review those first thoughts. Do we want to change them in light of progress made, of new interests or of changes in the work situation?

If the sponsors have been part of setting the objectives, they can be valuable critics in on-going assessment and evaluation. If a cordial and supportive working relationship has been established between ourselves and the sponsor, then they can be part of the learners' language development. Teachers suggest not only informing them about topics covered in class each week but actively involving them in creating

opportunities for learners to use the language they have learned. One teacher, for example, makes a practice of giving the supervisor a weekly review sheet every Monday. She asks him to look over the topics, the problem-solving activities and the language items covered in the previous week. He can then be more aware of the natural situations in the workplace where that language is used. His comments on how well the learners are handling the language situations is valuable feedback for the teacher and for the learners. If the sponsors have this type of role in the process of language development and assessment, then they will naturally make evaluative comments throughout the course. They may find that their expectations are changing: from "Get them to read and understand their safety manuals" to "Learning

SELF-ASSESSMENT Reading and Writing

| | easily | with some difficulty | lot of difficulty | not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I can write the name of my job and the activities I do. | | | | |
| 2. I can write the types of safety hazards in my job. | | | | |
| 3. I can write the names of safety equipment I use. | | | | |
| 4. I can write the name of my location and of the location of others | | | | |
| 5. I can find important information in a bulletin from the union. | | | | |
| 6. I can find specific information in a newspaper article. | | | | |
| 7. I can find specific information in safety information. | | | | |
| 8. I know the procedure for certain safety issues - for example refusing to work in unsafe situations. | | | | |

Rate the work the class has done so far according to interest and value. Circle a number from one to ten. Ten is the highest.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Learning vocabulary and spelling | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Reading newspaper article | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Reading information on safety | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Writing short paragraphs from class information or pictures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Discussing procedures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Writing cheques and bank slips | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

1. Of the six activities above write the one that interested you most.

to ask for explanation when safety measures are not understood" or, perhaps that increased self-confidence may be the first step and even the primary goal of an entire course. If sponsors have been involved throughout the course, they will be able to make a fairer and more realistic evaluation at the end.

## FINAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

### WHY?

If assessment and evaluation have been on-going then those procedures at the end of the course should hold no real surprises in terms of learners' performance and course objectives. Final assessments and evaluations have much broader uses for teachers, sponsors and the educational institution. These procedures can satisfy demands for accountability in regard to current and future financing. One large hospital that was sponsoring its first EWP program insisted on pre- and post-tests because the course was a pilot project. Sponsors may not request the results of final assessments or express the desire to be part of a final evaluation. Educational institutions may insist on learners' assessment but not allow time or money for overall program evaluation. EWP teachers, on the other hand, may argue strongly against formalized testing but plead for the opportunity to get together to review the materials and evaluate their past efforts. Of course, formal testing is just one possible technique for assessing learners' progress. If we see final assessment as one component of the larger procedure of overall program evaluation, then its role is integrated rather than highlighted.

Besides satisfying demands for accountability, final evaluations give all the participants (learners, teachers, sponsors and the educational institution) the opportunity to review the original and the achieved goals. The results can be used to improve the entire process of needs analysis, syllabus design and materials development for future courses at the same site or at other locations. Final evaluations can also have implications for negotiation procedures, for in-service teacher training, for the marketing of courses and for other types of communication training beneficial to the sponsor. Follow-up assessment and evaluation after six months can provide a further indication of the success of the program, of the willingness on the part of supervisors to accept some responsibility for maintaining the gains of their employees and of any need for further language training.

### FINAL ASSESSMENT

Techniques

Learners, teachers and supervisors can all be part of a final assessment of progress. For learners, the process of self-assessment at this stage should highlight

autonomy and the need to continue learning beyond the specific course. They can begin by looking at what they have accomplished in the course, at what they can do now and couldn't do at the start. To help them become more autonomous learners, they can judge their gains and then consider what they will do to contine improving their skills. The final self-assessment form shown on page 136 was used in the class of municipal workers pictured in Chapter 6, Sequence 1. The last question had been a topic of conversation a few days earlier. The teacher felt that asking the men to identify what methods appealed to them would be another step in a commitment to continue learning.

If learners are at a basic literacy level then this type of questionnaire is unsuitable, but similar questions can be discussed orally. If oral skills are too basic , bilingual assistance would probably be needed to obtain the kind of information we are asking learners to think about. In another type of self-assessment, learners can be encouraged to think about specific instances where communication once blocked is now possible. In one workplace setting, a kitchen worker noted the first time she had the courage to try and read the waitresses' written orders rather than rely on verbal orders from the chef. She succeeded in reading the order correctly, and for the first time carried out the entire process herself. This focus on achievement could logically be followed up by talking about instances where communication still needs improvement.

If we are going to use more formal tests for a final assessment, then we should ensure that they are consistent with the methods and the content of our course. If we are teaching language as communication through problem-solving activities or through performance tasks, then tests should reflect that practice. In other words, we should test what we teach. Some workplace programs prefer to administer the same or very similar pre-and post-tests. They often require learners to show their competence in describing their jobs, in following instructions (work or non-work related) and in solving a problem that requires oral communication (e.g. pay cheque error). Using a predetermined set of items and criteria makes it easier to measure progress. Unfortunately, this procedure reflects a static rather than a dynamic syllabus design. If we start a course knowing how and what learners will be finally judged on, then we will teach to that content. That focus may cause us to overlook learner needs and interests that do not fit in easily. Or, it may dissuade us from involving the learner and the sponsor in on-going assessment and evaluation. In short, this type of pre- and post-testing does not reflect changes in objectives and may discourage us from even

Self Assessment

Directions:

- Look over the reading and writing work you have done in class
- Are you improving?
- Answer the questions below. Put a check (✓) in one or more boxes.

I. Reading Safety Information

1. I understand safety procedures at work.
   - ☐ better than before
   - ☐ same as before
   - ☐ want to know more

2. I can read safety information from the company, union and government.
   - ☐ better than before
   - ☐ same as before
   - ☐ want to practice more

3. I feel more comfortable reading:
   - ☐ government forms
   - ☐ government booklets
   - ☐ company rulebooks
   - ☐ company notices
   - ☐ union bulletins
   - ☐ union information booklets

II. Reading in a Testing Situation

1. I can read and understand questions on a test
   - ☐ better than before
   - ☐ same as before
   - ☐ want to practice more

2. I can read quickly when I'm under pressure.
   - ☐ better than before
   - ☐ same as before
   - ☐ want to practice more

3. I know how to pace my time in a test.
   - ☐ better than before
   - ☐ same as before
   - ☐ want to practice more

4. Write down a few ways you can practice writing at home.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

contemplating them.[2]

Other issues to be considered in administering formal tests include:

- Who will administer and score the tests. Possibilities include: the teacher doing both procedures, a third person doing both procedures, or the teacher administering the tests and a third person scoring them. The last possibility offers the likelihood of establishing a relaxed and familiar atmosphere plus a more objective analysis.

- Explanations to the learners about the reasons for testing and if the tests are required by the sponsor or the educational institution.

- Information for the learners regarding the actual results of the tests. If tests are given before the last class, then learners can review the results and use them in their own self-assessments. In this way tests results can be incorporated into the self-assessment process and provide learners with another measure of their success. Final tests should aim at assessing what learners can do and not emphasize their weaknesses.

- As was mentioned in regard to pre-course tests, learners should be aware of the use of test results. Results may become part of a final report prepared for the industry or for the educational institution. Or, they might be consulted when the industry considers lay offs, promotions, retraining, etc.

Final assessments should incorporate the initial language needs mentioned by the sponsoring organization. If the course was initiated because hospital dietary workers could not read menus, then some indication of their progress toward this target is necessary. Perhaps at the end of the course, some learners will feel comfortable with reading and discussing the menus while others may not be at the same performance level. This brings us to the sponsor's role in the final assessment of learners' progress. If our relationship with representatives from the sponsoring organization has been a healthy and working one, then frequent discussions over needs, objectives and assessment may have taken place. In these discussions we and the sponsors move closer to a common understanding of what is worthwhile pursuing and what are the criteria for success. It is likely that the sponsor(s) will not be able to judge just how much can be learned in a twelve-week session, for instance. One sponsor requested that hotel housekeepers learn to read and write basic English in a twelve-week course that met for two hours a week., Without on-going discussions

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[2]One reader comments: "Students very often want some formal testing to see how they have progressed. The teacher should find out how the class feels about this. The problem with end-of-course testing is that it leads nowhere. Students should have the 'award' of being able to move on to a higher level class. This is very important since the work/family life (especially for women) means that EWP classes are the only feasible way for them to take any classes at all."

around this objective, they would judge learners' progress based on their initial expectation. On the other hand, for some sponsors the slightest indication that some learning has taken place will satisfy them. "How are you?" or "Where is the Phillip's screwdriver?" is often enough to indicate progress (Sauvé 1982a). In both cases, on-going communication with the sponsor(s) can help bring their expectations in line with classroom work and provide direction for a more relevant measure of success.

One technique for assisting sponsors in judging progress is the "critical incident." The National Council for Industrial Language Training in Britain uses this technique to help supervisors identify specific incidents that cause problems. Supervisors are encouraged to keep diaries of these communication incidents and to see if they are still faced with the same problems at the end of the course (Roberts 1976:5). We can turn the critical incident technique into a positive commentary by noting when supervisors express pleasure and surprise over improved communication channels. A comment from the restaurant hostess about how successfully a waitress handled a customer's complaint is really an observation and measure of progress. These observations also reflect on the course as a whole and become a valuable tool in the final evaluation of the EWP program.

**Final Evaluation**

Program evaluations tend to be placed at the bottom of the priorities list unless the sponsors demand a written report at the end of the course. Frequently, surviving from one EWP course to the next requires all the energy that teachers and coordinators can muster. Unfortunately, they may not realize that final evaluations are the key to survival and success, since the ultimate use of any program evaluation is to make the next program better.

Each of the stages of an EWP program can be evaluated for its effectiveness: the negotiations and needs analysis done to set up the course, the determination of overall objectives and more specifically syllabus design, the development of materials to be used in class, the roles of teachers and learners in the methodology; the role of communication and classroom interaction in language teaching, the relevance of the subject matter content and the language content to the workplace and the wider community, the assessment and evaluation procedures themselves and the degree of preparation and readiness of all the participants to mount and teach such a course.

In each of these stages the various participants in an EWP program have certain responsibilities to fulfill. Learners, teachers, sponsors and the educational institution can evaluate the success of each stage depending on their respective roles. In a report for Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, Virginia Sauvé outlined the "typical roles of key participants" seen on page 140. We can use her descriptions as a

checklist to see what possible roles each participant can have and then how successfully these responsibilities have been fulfilled.

An exercise of this type, even if carried out informally in post-course discussions, can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of a program and help determine possible remedies.

Techniques

Questionnaires are probably the most common way of eliciting information on course evaluation. The educational institution and/or the teachers often produce questionnaires for learners and for the sponsors. "English in the Workplace," the program in London, Ontario, has used the general course evaluation on page 141 for learners.

As mentioned previously, for learners at the basic literacy or basic oral levels, questions may have to be discussed orally with the assistance of a bilingual person if necessary. Learners can also be asked to comment on the course objectives and individuals goals as shown in the questionnaire on page 142 used in a municipal EWP program.

The following examples of questionnaires for management or union representatives were designed for specific courses. The first on page 143 was for a hospital housekeepers' program in London, Ontario. The second on page 144 is the evaluation form and the results of an EWP program in Marv Holland Industries in Edmonton, Alberta.

Questionnaires are much more successful if they are teamed with or followed up by a personal interview. Since the written form is static, we usually get only what we ask for. The interview can provide the opportunity for anecdotes that point to critical incidents and for explanations that would never be found in print. Supervisors may feel uncomfortable with written questions, may not be used to dealing with them or may be illiterate themselves. In these cases, oral interviews based on points in the questionnaire are best. Also, the questionnaires shown above focus solely on language development. Interviews can explore the other stages of the EWP program such as the negotiation process, the advertising and recruting procedures, scheduling, etc.

Compiling statistics from industry can also provide evaluative information. Industry often judges the success of a program by performance on the job and by work-related behaviour. Statistics on the following might be indicators of success: absentee rates, health and safety figures, punctuality, staff turnover, promotions, raises, use of interpreters, etc. We should be cautious ,though, in our reliance on these

## V. Typical Roles of Key Participants

Since no two projects are alike, nor should they be, there is no one model for assigning responsibility within a project. The following represents a typical roles description.

### A. Industry Contact

- requests program in E.W.P.
- negotiates funding agreement with educational agency
- assists in instructor orientation to plants and personnel
- informs all workers in the plant about the project
- encourages supervisors to be as helpful as possible
- assists instructor in setting of objectives
- finds most appropriate facility for classes
- supplies refreshments for after hour classes
- receives regular feedback as to course content and practices those items with workers whenever possible, encouraging supervisors to do likewise
- supplies work-related memos, training manuals, diagrams, tools, pay stubs and other materials as requested
- cooperates in project evaluation

### B. Instructor

- does needs assessment, if not already done
- participates in negotiations re: level, length of course, etc.
- does extensive observation within the industry; learns as much as possible about product and process, with special attention to communication patterns on the floor
- designs curriculum in consultation with plant personnel
- creates materials for instruction
- teaches
- maintains regular liaison with supervisors and industry contact, giving weekly feedback on course content and soliciting suggestions.
- evaluates students formally at the beginning and end of the course, and informally throughout giving feedback on progress to students and the employer
- keeps administrator/coordinator informed as to curriculum and progress
- seeks to provide opportunities for increasing language skills, learning skills and self-confidence, and for acquiring information relevant to effective job performance and community life
- writes final project evaluation

### C. Administrator/Coordinator

- participates in initial negotiations
- may do needs assessment, if has expertise in E.W.P.
- makes funding arrangements
- does "paperwork" necessary for the project
- sees that instructor has sufficient development time to prepare for the course
- sees the instructor is provided with necessary resources, clerical help and consultation
- maintains contact with the instructor re: progress of course
- participates in final project evaluation

### D. Supervisors/Foremen

- cooperate with instructor in communicating the kinds of communication problems they experience with immigrant workers
- encourage those workers who choose to participate in E.W.P. classes
- try to practice with workers items learned in the classes, as given to them in writing by the instructor or industry contact each week
- assist instructor in evaluating progress and modifying course content
- atend socials when invited by worker/students and/or instructor
- sit in on the occasional class, if possible

### E. Worker/Students

- apply themselves with enthusiasm to the task of learning the language
- try to practice on the job what is learned in class
- contribute some free time to the classes, as well as some paid time
- try to do homework, if practical to do so
- give instructor ideas as to what they need and want to learn
- participate in project evaluation upon course completion

Source: Virginia Sauvé (1982b)

## COURSE EVALUATION

1. At work, the English classes helped me

| UNDERSTANDING | READING | SPEAKING | WRITING |
|---|---|---|---|
| a lot _____ | a lot _____ | a lot _____ | a lot _____ |
| some _____ | some _____ | some _____ | some _____ |
| not at all _____ | not at all _____ | not at all _____ | not at all _____ |

2. Outside work, the English classes helped my

| SPEAKING | READING | WRITING |
|---|---|---|
| a lot _____ | a lot _____ | a lot _____ |
| some _____ | some _____ | some _____ |
| not at all _____ | not at all _____ | not at all _____ |

3. I have a problem with (check NO MORE than 2)
   understanding English _____ spelling English _____
   speaking English _____ writing _____
   reading English _____

4. In class, we spent most time on (check NO MORE than 2)
   learning to understand English _____ spell English _____
   speak English _____ spell English _____
   read English _____ write _____

5. I wanted: less homework _____ more homework _____ no homework

6. During class, I understood the teacher: most of the time _____ sometimes _____

7. The English we learned was: too hard _____ too easy _____ O.K. _____

8. I would like to: continue classes at work _____
   go to English classes outside work _____
   stop going to English classes _____

9. Comments: (Use the back of the page)

Source: English in the Workplace, London, Ontario. Reproduced with permission.

EVALUATION OF COURSE

Name of course: _____

Location of course: _____

Sponsored by: _____

1. What did you learn a lot from? Check off the activities that you feel were important to you in learning to read and write better.
   - reading the newspaper _____
   - reading in a testing situation (safety information) _____
   - reading my job description _____
   - reading the health and safety bill _____
   - writing my own stories _____
   - writing and reading forms _____
   - writing and reading forms:
     - banking _____
     - minor accident forms _____
     - application form _____

2. Do you feel more confident about your reading and writing?
   a lot more ____ a little more ____ no ____

3. Why did you sign up for the course in September?
   _____

4. Has the course helped you do that? _____

5. Would you recommend this course to others? _____

6. Do you want to continue in January? _____

7. If yes, do you want to work on ...
   speaking and listening _____
   reading and writing _____

8. How can we make this course better?
   _____
   _____

## SUPERVISORS' EVALUATION

Name _____

Dept _____

1. Did the course help the students in the following areas:

| | Yes/No | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| a) Understanding Verbal Instructions | _____ | |
| b) Understanding Written Instructions (e.g. memos, work procedures) | _____ | |
| c) Ability to communicate in English | | |
| i. regarding work situations | _____ | |
| ii. in other situations; e.g. socializing) | _____ | |
| d) Writing reports (e.g. extra duty sheets, repairs, needed, supply lists | _____ | |
| e) Attitude e.g. self-confidence, getting along with co-workers, interest in work | _____ | |

2. What recommendations do you have if another English course were offered?

Source: English in the Workplace, London, Ontario. Reproduced with permission.

**Supervisor's Evaluation**

| | Worse | No Change | Better | Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-confidence | | | 10 | |
| Understanding Instructions | | | 10 | |
| Asking Questions | | 4 | 6 | |
| Expressing Problems | | 1 | 9 | |
| Speaking to Supervisor | | | 10 | |
| Making Mistakes on the Job | | 8 | 2 | |

**Comments:**

- "Doesn't rely on interpreters".
- "More open and friendly".
- "Attempts to get by with a little English and gestures".
- "Self-confidence improved".
- "Much happier at work".
- "Understands supervisor much more easily".
- "Offers information back instead of just answering the questions".
- "Communication is now a 2-way process".
- "100% for the English Course".
- "Everyone benefits from the course".
- "Much more co-operation between workers".
- "Morale booster".

Source: M. Christianson and S. Thompson, Final Evaluation and Report: English in the Workplace Project #2 at Mary Holland Industries (Alberta Vocational Centre, 1982). Reproduced with permission of the Alberta Vocational Centre.

as total measures of success since very often the most obvious and beneficial result of a course is an increase in self-confidence. This can be observed and valued but certainly not measured in the same way as absentee rates. Furthermore, statistics of this type can be misleading unless the content is fully explained. Health and safety figures may remain low because of poor safety conditions, despite improved communication and knowledge about safety on the shop floor. High absentee rates for some employees may have more to do with problems at home than poor communication at the worksite. Promotions may depend not so much on language facility as on the turnover of employees, the financial health of the industry, personality considerations or discrimination.

**Outcomes and Recommendations**

Evaluations provide the opportunity for each of the participants in an EWP program to review their roles throughout the life of the course. During this review, recommendations for future planning can emerge. Based on the strengths and weaknesses of the current program, recommendations could be made for subsequent programs at the same site or for new programs at different sites. These recommendations would probably redefine the roles of the participants - clarifying the responsibilities of learners, teachers, sponsors and the educational institution. For instance, in regard to the recruiting and advertising of the course, one EWP coordinator in a union/management-sponsored program decided that more personalized publicity was needed. Before the next session the teachers and the coordinator met with supervisors and with shop stewards to explain the goals of the courses and enlist their support. Suggestions from these meetings led the teachers and the coordinator to employee health and safety meetings at 7:00am and 10:30pm. This pre-course field work resulted in two additional classes at that worksite.

Each stage of the EWP program could be examined for its effectiveness in terms of the responsibilities of the participants. It may be that principles based on sound educational practice need to be set by the teachers and the educational institution to guide the negotiation process. What are the minimum requirements for a successful EWP program? It may be that many of the teachers are new to the workplace setting or even to ESL and thus perhaps in-service training would be useful. In two separate programs, the teachers got together and with the help of the coordinators began organizing materials production workshops. The idea developed further with requests for paid leave for curriculum development and then, for a series of workshop/seminars for certification of EWP teachers. Teachers often recognize the need for more specialized training in ESL literacy or in dealing with racism in the workplace, for instance.

We may find that recommendations for training soon go beyond the teachers and learners in the language classes. Virginia Sauvé comments that "EWP is more than a classroom activity. It is an intervention into the affairs of an organization." (Sauvé 1982a:37) This intervention may result in the sponsors taking a second look at their own organization to assess the need for some type of communication training for native-speakers of English. In Britain, language courses for immigrants are frequently paired with cross-cultural training for native speakers. The NCILT has developed this model to assist industries and unions in dealing with racism through an understanding of what communication is as well as how to improve that communication. Cross-Cultural Training by Yates, Christmas and Wilson (1982) is a multi-media training package for use in seminars with native-speaking white workers, trade unionists and management. Through films, tapes, readings, problem-solving activities and straightforward discussion, participants are given the tools to analyse communication in terms of language, culture and the workplace. Their stated objectives are:

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

Our overall aim is to enable our trainees to communicate more effectively at work with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This aim can be broken down into specific objectives:

(a) to get trainees to look at the role and significance of communication, spoken and written in their jobs

(b) to give trainees the analytical tools to examine communication in terms of language and culture

(c) to examine negative assumptions and stereotypes and get trainees to relate to people as individuals

(d) to establish what background information is needed in order to communicate better with the workforce

(e) to engage their sympathy for the problems a person from a different linguistic and cultural background faces in trying to communicate effectively in English

(f) to get them to reappraise their own behaviour towards ethnic minorities in their work in the light of what they have learnt

(g) to look at the systems operating in the workplace to see how they can be changed to suit the workforce.

Source: V. Yates, E. Christmas, P. Wilson, Cross cultural training (Southall: NCILT, 1982), p.6. Reproduced with permission.

Classroom objectives and lesson plans are explicitly laid out for in-depth examinations

of the language used in interpersonal communications at work. Although the context is Britain and the groups focussed on are Asian workers and white supervisors, this two-pronged model is certainly worth studying.

In Canada, the Cross Cultural Communications Centre has produced Combatting Racism at the Workplace by Thomas and Novogrodsky (1983). In contrast to the NCILT, racism is not approached through a study of interpersonal communication but from the wider perspective of individual experience, history and rights. This manual for workers also offers classroom objectives and lesson plans for a full course on identifying and fighting racism on the shop floor and in the community. The context is Canada with units on immigration history and policy, legislation against discrimination and union contracts and practices to resist racism.

In summary, evaluations may raise more questions than we can answer. We may find that as teachers our share of responsibility is ever expanding. In this regard evaluations highlight the varied nature of our job - negotiator, needs analyst, course designer, materials developer, teacher and evaluator. Evaluations show us where we have been and help us determine where we want to go. Progress may mean exploring the resources we have or turning to other models for inspiration. Evaluation provides the opportunity to reflect, and in reflection to gain the insights we need to grow and improve.

# QUESTIONS AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The readers of the first draft of this handbook indicated a need for further research and documentation on a variety of issues. Their comments were offered as criticisms of the text and as suggestions for supplying additional information. Although we, the authors, were unable to carry out the research required to incorporate some of these suggestions, the issues are noteworthy. We feel not only that they deserve mention in the handbook but also that they are fertile areas for important and necessary research. We thank our first draft reviewers for their thoughtful comments and pass on their ideas to you, the reader, for your consideration and future work in EWP.

**ISSUE: Current Profile of EWP**

Several readers comment on the low profile of EWP as an option for language training. In most locales, companies and unions are not aware that such training is even available and, unless there is active promotion by an educational institution and/or initiatives taken by government, potential sponsors will remain uninformed. One reader wonders if the kind of cooperation among sponsors, learners and educators advocated in the handbook is in fact possible given such a low profile at present. Here are some suggestions, as additions to the usual selling and promotion techniques, for raising the profile of EWP.

- documentation on the learners and on all phases of the program in recently held programs. This documentation would provide a realistic picture of present EWP programs in the consulting, curriculum development and teaching functions. It would also provide ideas, resources and successful precedents for educational institutions starting up new programs.

- a variety of information meetings with employers and unions such as large meetings with management representatives from several factories with the same union. At these meetings, the educational institution could plant the seeds for future management/union-sponsored courses.

- for ongoing union-sponsored classes, the teacher could attend local union meetings and act as a kind of interpreter for the members in the EWP class. The presence of the teacher would not only support the learners but also sensitize the native speakers to their communication with non-native speakers. It might be one step in raising awareness on the issues of discrimination and non-participation by one portion of the membership.

This cooperation between the teacher and the local membership might also encourage recruitment to the EWP class.

- more emphasis on the role of sponsors in improving communication at the workplace. Programs to train English speakers as well as second language speakers should highlight the role of culture and values in communication and raise awareness on these levels.

## ISSUE: What Makes an EWP Program Successful? [1]

In the search for a workable structure to plan and deliver effective EWP programs, one reader expresses the need for several models of coordination. These models would reflect the structures of current programs around the country and would offer educational institutions concrete examples to analyse, adopt or adapt. Here are some questions to consider in drawing up these models:

- place of EWP in overall adult ESL programs
- roles and responsibilities of coordinators and teachers in decisions affecting planning and delivery
- policy-making procedures: who is involved and how are the procedures carried out
- funding schemes

With several models to consult, educational institutions would be more likely to start out successfully, avoiding commonly repeated errors. Teachers could also benefit directly if educational institutions made efforts to overcome certain drawbacks such as short-term employment, insecure positions, and lack of internal resources.

Resources available for use in the classroom also need to be documented. There is a need for an annotated bibliography of relevant texts, films, video, slide/tape and audio material which can be purchased or rented from a variety of sources such as publishers, government departments, film boards, community agencies, unions and EWP programs.

Procedures in the classroom also deserve special attention considering the number of constraints on workplace classes. One reader requests a closer look at why

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[1] The Center for Applied Linguistics (1983:72-3) includes a summary of the characteristics of successful vocational ESL programs. It addresses organizational issues as well as curriculum issues.

learners do not progress by relating classroom teaching and learning to the unique workplace setting. The role of bilingual classes is another area worthy of research - from the benefits of bilingual classes for adults to teacher-training for bilingual teachers.

**ISSUE: EWP Network**

Following up on EWP interest groups at provincial conferences and on various reports which have collected experiences across the country,[2] one reader makes a final call to establish a Canadian network of EWP teachers and coordinators. With an "official" network, there would be a bona fide place to collect course outlines, materials, evaluations and to publish documentation, articles and research to keep everyone in the field updated and informed.

In the preparatory stages of the handbook, suggestions were made to include a list of contact people in EWP. An active network would, of course, override this need. Perhaps the list of acknowledgements and the chapter on resources can be a starting point for contacting some key people in the development of a Canadian EWP network.

[2]See the numerous reports referred to in Tesl Talk, Fall, 1982 as well as Sauvé (1982), and the results of a survey carried out by Donna Payne of EWP, London, Ontario.

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