

English Language Resources



— TOOLS FOR LIVING —

**The
Working
Centre**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE JOURNEY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING



The journey of advanced English language learning in a new culture is not easy to describe. It is not linear. It is full of adventure and discovery, but also potentially full of frustrations. On one hand, acquiring more advanced English is highly specific learning about the tools and structure of language; on the other hand, it is broad, alert immersion into the subtleties of the culture itself. As you settle into the community, and as you seek to improve your prospects in the world of work, you will often be advised to “work on your English.”

How often have you heard this phrase? What does it actually mean for you as a worker, a professional in Canada? It may depend on your unique situation. Well meaning persons from many sectors of the community will find different ways of sharing this message with you, sometimes in ways that are direct and blunt, other times in polite and indirect ways. Sometimes it is perfectly obvious to you yourself that advancing rapidly in English is key to your success as a professional and a citizen. But proceeding in such a journey is still challenging.

This guide was prepared to help build your confidence so that you can persist in setting your own goals, matching your language learning goals to significant personal and professional goals that you may have had in coming to this country. Your dreams are closely tied to how you proceed in this dimension of effort. Do not overlook them.

A Language Navigation Map

There are many classes all over the community that help you work on your English. This booklet shares many of those resources. But selecting

classes is only one of many options. Life does not stand still. The number and quality of learning tools you choose to use will be directed by your own ambitions, your own evolving goals, and your own learning style. How do you learn best? There is no automatic door to ideal language learning – only a series of doors and windows that you yourself choose to open as the journey progresses. There are many levels of advanced language learning, depending on the kind of profession you wish to pursue. There are both formal and informal ways of making language learning a lifelong journey. This booklet, along with honest dialogue with your counsellor or mentors in the community that you have come to know, is a starting point to encourage both reflection and action on your part.

From Survivor Job to Professional Career

One of the most overlooked problems that we have noticed in our work with New Canadians at The Working Centre is that the same level of English language that works for a survivor job simply does not work for career paths that require highly fluent, sensitive communications in both speaking and writing. We are interested not only in your first year of settlement here, but in your first ten years in Canada -- the many years that you will advance from basic English knowledge to highly advanced English expression. These are the years of crucial importance, years where we know that you aspire to attain your hopes and dreams. Therefore, these are also the years in which one must especially “take responsibility” for effortful personal learning. Few well paying, rewarding careers are exempt from this rule. We feel it is our

job to make this clear to you. On these pages, you can benefit from the experiences of other New Canadians who have moved forward in these steps of effort. The stories of a number of New Canadians are shared to give you ideas as to how others have pushed forward, despite busy jobs and family lives.

What Do I Hope to Achieve?

As you proceed in your journey of language learning, stay alert and attentive to the actual language levels in speaking, writing, and reading that movement forward in an advanced career path may demand. Such alertness should be completely honest. Without exception, requirements are rather high and demanding in all Canadian “new economy” jobs - jobs that have a high emphasis on expert communication. There are reality principles that do not change in the labour market. This fact is true whether you are a highly technically trained person, an administrator, a teacher, a nurse, or a tradesperson. Do your research. Talk to people. Gather information from those you respect. What kind of job do you actually hope to get? At what level of responsibility and salary do you hope to work? In other words - what do you actually hope to achieve? The answer to this question is not something that you will figure out in one day. Your English language learning goals may change as your professional ambitions change, requiring careful analysis of your own learning style, the way you learn best, and the kind of resources you can access while you are also working hard to make living.



Taking Responsibility

There is one theme that links all of the quotes and stories that you will read in this booklet – the theme of “taking responsibility.” The individuals who shared their stories with us as we prepared

this booklet recognized that “if it is to be, it is up to me.” Was this easy? No. They were often exhausted as they continued to study advanced reading, speaking, and writing. They understood what they had to do to meet the language levels used in the range of occupations that interested them. Lionel La Roche, a French engineer now settled in Toronto, has written and lectured extensively in Toronto and the Kitchener-Waterloo area on the question of career development in diverse cultures. He explains that in North America, it is generally accepted that the path of a career is directed by a person himself or herself -- taking full responsibility. If your career is blocked in this community, if there are many disappointments and frustrations, there can be many reasons. Not all of these reasons are fair. But the advanced written and spoken language skills required in professional work cultures are a core part of the professional identity that you are cultivating. These forms of expression build credibility, so that people can fully appreciate what you have to offer.

The Question of Soft Skills

You may have noticed employers put a huge emphasis on “soft skills” in professional work. These skills, also linked to the term “employability skills,” are closely linked to mastering advanced English. If you hear the phrase “soft skills” over and over again, it is frequently a polite signal to you that enhanced communication skills are completely necessary for your professional development. Be curious and extremely alert about this signal. Ask questions, seeking specific clarifications. What is the person talking about? Can they be specific, in order to help you understand better what to work on? Can they share specific examples that you can discuss? Try not to be defensive. Canadians are sometimes soft spoken in the way that advice is given, and do not wish to give offence as they discuss your level of fluency with you.

Stay tuned as they describe exactly what it is that you can improve. The phrase “soft skills”, although vague sounding, can actually refer to a precise range of well developed human relations skills that are specifically asked for in the labour market. For instance, high level team work in Canada can involve learning language skills in well crafted emails to peers, the use of encouraging yet directive respectful phrases, and a number of engaging verbal and written tools that can express the flexible “shades of grey” in team communication that an experienced project manager would use.

In summary, it is impossible to function ably as a professional without being absolutely committed to the nuances of workplace language that you would strive to use in your dream occupational role. Other professionals that you will work side by side with are working with a set of written and verbal tools that express the core attitudes, habits, and points of view of that specific work culture. You are advised to carefully study that culture in every way you can. Your knowledge base and expertise is simply overlooked if you are unable to share the ideas you love in appropriate ways. In fact, promotions and increased project or management opportunities in the Canadian workplace are often directly connected to the mastery of soft skills rather than technical skills.

Books, Magazines, and Media

Good books, expert trade magazines, and a solid range of reputable English-speaking media are necessary for your development, both socially and in terms of broad language arts. Reading and writing levels will evolve as your sense of the different audiences and styles of writing in the English language becomes more sophisticated. High quality materials such as these tell you a great deal about the culture that you are living and working in. Be curious about



written expression of all kinds. Read up on subjects you love, but in English! Without reading the same materials that professionals in your own field in Canada read, layers of subtle cultural understandings are next to impossible. You will feel excluded rather than included in everyday discussion. Remember, each profession and each workplace culture typically has its own vocabulary, its own habits of expression, both friendly and formal.

You will acquire “soft skills” partially by studying the kinds of expressions and humour typically used in published written communications. What are people in your field concerned about? What issues do they enjoy discussing? How do they express their concerns? Do not read only internet articles, although these can be valuable. There are authors and experts in print that you will want to absorb. Talk to persons who are especially knowledgeable in your field or persons from whom you learn a lot to develop recommended lists of such books and media.

Seeking Inspiration: Role Models and Mentors

The individuals who have shared their stories with us have found special people to help them on their way. These are individuals who are especially open to your struggles. They take a genuine interest in who you are, where you have come from, what your hopes and dreams are. They help you “weigh the facts”. They listen carefully while you debrief upsetting experiences. They encourage you to keep going. They help you practice new behaviours or new expressions, and try on the subtle or risky things you have not attempted before. Sometimes, New Canadians tell us that they have found such inspiring individuals in volunteering environments, or in community or business settings. An excellent role model can be a person who has “been there”, who has settled in Canada a number of years preceding your own arrival, who has already



been successful in tackling some of the obstacles. Look for people who are direct and trustworthy, who share some of your values and interests, who you can turn to for honest feedback. Ask them many questions. If you miss the meaning of a joke or an idiom, an ally or mentor can try to explain that joke to you.

The point of role models is shared in a few of the stories that you will read on the following pages. You can ask such role models “what worked for you? How did you advance in your English and in your soft skills? What did you do when you encountered such and so obstacle?” There is much satisfaction in working closely together with persons you have come to trust.

The Good Fortune of Good Friends

There is both good fortune and sincere personal effort involved in making English speaking friends as you settle in the community. In Chapter 3, you will read stories of persons who took the trouble to cultivate friendships with Canadians who spoke lots of English with them on an everyday basis. How do they do this? Each personality approaches this challenge in a different way, as time and life circumstances permit. But each personality, whether outgoing or more reserved, must be a little brave. For instance, we have noticed that “feeling the fear and doing it anyway” is a key principle in the stories that you will read on the following pages. The New Canadians that were interviewed expressed much emotion as they recalled how much the matter of making friends was critically important to them. They described that it was a matter of seizing an everyday opportunity, and then taking a chance. Your language skills will not be perfect as you approach others – they do not have to be.



Simple shared human connections can go a long way. You can communicate with a willing smile, an

attitude of openness, and everyday phrases as you share mutual topics or discoveries that delight you. Some have met others on a city bus, asking them everyday questions about neighbourhoods and grocery stores and sports facilities. Others are friendly and deliberately outgoing with staff they may meet at recreation centres and community centres in the city. Many New Canadians are parents, so they meet teachers, volunteers, and many other parents in the schools. Some spark conversations with their own ESL teachers, and ask them for extra materials to read, thus building a strengthened relationship. Hundreds of newcomers volunteer in places like The Working Centre, Participation House, public libraries, thrift stores, schools, community centres, the House of Friendship, churches or mosques, according to their own unique skills and interests. All are focused on opportunities that offer warm verbal interaction. Expressing a strong interest in aspects of Canadian culture, such as newspaper topics, songs, food and issues of public or local interest is a common thread in the stories that follow. Such genuine interest says “I am willing to chat with you, to learn a lot more about you – also, to share things about myself.”

In a number of cases we have heard of at The Working Centre, New Canadians who wished to learn English actually bartered their knowledge of their own mother tongue with Canadians who wanted to learn more about an additional language. So look around for Canadians who take a special interest in acquiring new cultural knowledge, or a new language. You may be able to create a relationship based on reciprocity, forming meetings where language skills are exchanged and goals are set. And though there will be times of disappointment, when you sense that people in Canada are simply not interested in taking the time to get to know you, try to persist. There are indeed friendly and curious Canadians who will be open-hearted, who want to learn along with you. Active social learning and situational learning are important themes in the stories of the New Canadians featured on the following pages.

Language in the Family

While we understand that it can be important to help your children maintain their language of origin in their growing up years, consider how many hours per day you can benefit from speaking English in the home as a family. New Canadians who move ahead on their English often tell us that they practice English at home for many hours a day. Young people in the school system bring home many interesting expressions and idioms! These can be discussed and interpreted as a family. Speaking English at home is a personal choice that takes discipline, but the results can be impressive. In the stories on the following pages, you will meet New Canadians who intentionally restricted their intake of news media in their own language of origin, in order to discipline themselves to listen and to read for hours in advanced English. As well, they made as many Canadian friends as they could, in order to force themselves to speak English. They spoke English daily with their families. If you multiply the daily situations in which you are practicing English, progress is accelerated.



Engaged Volunteering

The stories that are shared on the pages that follow place a very high emphasis on volunteering. Language learning happens in highly specific situations, and volunteering is one way that you will discover exactly what levels of English are used in your own professional circles. This can be a satisfying learning journey. What unusual or favourite expressions are people using? What are some specialized idioms and “buzz words” that they employ? What kind of writing do they produce on the job, and how is that writing targeted to internal or external audiences?

The joy of the work itself can also be inspiring, as you make steps to get back into your own field. For instance, you will be able, in some cases, to see the documents and emails that are created in everyday workplace communication. If you choose a volunteer situation that really pushes you, as some of the people who are featured in this booklet did, the motivation to “keep going” really builds. Survivor jobs alone do not tell you the levels of written and spoken language use you will need in a professional workplace. Joining committees, attending public lectures on subjects which fascinate you, and studying documents that are produced in specialized workplace cultures that connect to your occupation are all activities that can flow out of an engaged, committed attitude to volunteering.

CHAPTER 2

LEARNING ENGLISH AS A LIFESTYLE: TIPS FOR THE JOURNEY

Find a buddy to meet with regularly.

This will help with accountability. One of the pitfalls of self-directed learning is keeping motivated and focused on language goals in our busy lives. Participating in local conversation circles, such as the Speak English Cafe at The Working Centre, is a great way to build your circle of support with other language learners.

Create a routine.

It takes three weeks to create a routine.

Create space.

Talk with your family members about the importance of this goal for you. Negotiate to create space within the house where you can be focused on your learning. Shape your space into a place where you want to spend time. Make sure it is comfortable. Add music if that helps you learn.



Step outside.

You may wish to take advantage of quiet space within the community for studying. Consider using the library, a local café or space at The Working Centre.

Combine language goals with career path.

Network with people in your field to find out what materials are recommended for your professional development. As emphasized in the stories shared by three New Canadian professionals, reading at a



high level is key to improving your English for the level required in today's workforce.

Create an environment of immersion.

Speaking English at home is essential to improving your language skills. This is not always easy – and certainly keeping your first language alive through use

at home is important – but aim to devote at least an hour a day at home to speaking English. Talk with family members about how important this is for you.

Double duties.

Doing the dishes? Turn on the radio! Scrubbing the floor? Have the TV on in the background. Walking to the bus? Listen to a Podcast on your MP3 player if you have one.

Balance your approach.

Make sure you are using both *input* (reading and listening) and *output* (speaking and writing) activities when learning English.

Get out of your comfort zone.

Make sure you are taking a varied approach to language learning. Try new ways to improve your English instead of sticking to the ways that are most comfortable. You might choose to research new strategies – use a search engine to locate words such as “learning strategies”, “steps for studying” or “second language acquisition”. Beware of getting lost in cyberspace, however. And remember that not everything on the Internet is reliable. Ask your local librarian for ideas.



Watch out for saturation.

Make sure you are using strategies that are helpful. For example, learning new vocabulary is an important part of strengthening your use of English. Reviewing 50 new words every day, however, is not an effective way to go about it. Ask others what has worked for them.



Ask for feedback.

In the advanced stages of improving one's English, written language becomes a challenge. Make sure you are asking people you trust to offer feedback on your writing. Email is an excellent way to achieve this.



Talk to yourself.

Keep your vocabulary on the tip of your tongue by describing the world around you in English while you are on the bus or walking around. Reading books aloud is also an excellent way to absorb not only new vocabulary but also the patterns of a new language.

Keep a notebook in reach.

Our days are filled with learning moments. Keep a notebook close by so you can record new vocabulary and concepts to revisit. This is also helpful for capturing both formal and informal language.

Repetition is key. Repetition is key.

We forget new information without repetition. Review your notes and make an effort to incorporate new vocabulary as soon as you learn it.

Choose your dictionary wisely.

A dual language dictionary is helpful for beginners, however using an English only dictionary promotes thinking in English and also helps expand your vocabulary quickly.



Press Record.

Record yourself speaking in English. This can bring to light some areas you can improve on right away on your own. It can also serve as a way to document your progress.

Mapping It Out

- **Track how you spend your time for a week.** How much time is needed for family commitments? How much time do you need for household chores? How much time can you realistically set aside for language learning?
- **Use a blank schedule for one week to start building your plan.** There is a sample included on the next page, but be sure to use a style that works for you. Start by putting in any formal classes that you take.
- **When blocking off time for language learning, consider when you learn and absorb new ideas more easily.** Are you a morning person? Or are you better off hitting the books when the sun goes down?
- **The Internet is a good resource for language tools – but don't get caught in the web!** Try limiting yourself to surfing for new resources once a week. Or skip the surfing time altogether and ask other language learners what sites they recommend. The Working Centre's resource is a good place to start.
- **Remember to make time to exercise.** Regular exercise can improve memory and learning. Getting some fresh air can help revive us after a long day.
- **Build in time to volunteer as a way to improve your English.** Don't make the mistake of seeing volunteering as being 'in addition to study time.' The real-life, authentic learning that happens through applying language and skills in a workplace is essential for taking language learning to the next level.

Schedule for the week of: _____

Week Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

CHAPTER 3

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Story 1

Master of Social Work Student, Kitchener

The story of my learning advanced English is the story of strongly wanting to be a professional social worker. For many years, before leaving Pakistan, I was determined to obtain a Canadian Masters of Social Work, as this is the work I loved to do. I knew my fluencies were limited for a person who wished to have a post-graduate degree in a field where communication is so important. I had always studied back home in Urdu, not in English.

On arriving here, I immediately had my English assessed. My writing was 6+, speaking was 8, and listening was 7. I wanted to move forward from these benchmarks! I was told I could start TOEFL preparation anytime, but did not feel quite ready. Also, I was checking into various pre-requisites I needed for the Masters level program, and there was much complexity in figuring this all out.

A step I took in 2007 that really increased my confidence and skill was Advanced English classes at Conestoga College. There were about 12 units of instruction, and the teacher shared strategies and tips for the testing process of both TOEFL and IELTS. Yet, I needed to practice to really gain mastery, and this was tough – I had a survivor job and a busy family of four children. So, as much as I could, I listened to radio in English, watched the news in English, and borrowed library books to advance my reading level. I was also lucky to meet an ESL teacher at my night shift in RIM, and she and I exchanged words and meanings.

After my survivor job ended, The Working Centre set me up with a placement at the Kitchener



Multi-Cultural Centre to help me bridge over into my profession step by step. Again, my spoken and listening English levels improved – I had to get used to funny expressions like “it’s pouring” and “it’s raining cats and dogs!” I did not always hear the “full meaning” of what was said in these idioms, so I took time to explore with co-workers the specific meanings of words and expressions in the workplace – there were so many. This was a great experience in my overall workplace and language learning.

Finally, I made steps to increase writing skills further. I got a job at The Working Centre, and worked hard there to strengthen the craft of professional emails in daily communication. I learned how important this “art of emailing” was to professional team work. I took another course at Conestoga College, this time working with advanced writing technique so I could stay true to my goal of working toward the Master’s degree. We practiced styles of essay writing, sentence structure, and some grammar in these classroom experiences. I am still using these workbooks for reference purposes today.

My journey of advanced English language learning is not over. I am now fortunate to be, 3 years after coming to Canada, in a Master’s program at Laurier, so have accomplished some important gains in my journey. Although things have been hard many times, I have learned that all of us New Canadians must challenge ourselves, that it’s really not so bad to learn from scratch. We must carry forward the attitude that we are on a path, that we are not perfect, that new culture learning is exciting and challenge ourselves constantly with sophisticated fluency goals. I have learned that here in the community we are competing with local people and also

strong contributors from all over the world. I am prepared to continue to stretch myself so my contribution is strong in my field.

Story 2 Employment Counsellor, Waterloo

My story starts in 2003, when my husband and I arrived in Pittsburgh (USA) from Colombia. I had little English. I had been trained in economics. The plan was that I myself wanted to pursue a Master's degree in Environmental Economics, and for that I needed advanced English quickly. So I studied for a year and half, figuring out how acquire the necessary background in advanced English language speaking and writing.



Part of the initial challenge of navigating how to study English was sorting out when to use free public resources, and when to pay for private classes. I found that the adult education resources that were free were useful at the basic level, but that as soon as more intermediate or advanced levels were needed in an accelerated path of learning, the private classes were better – classes for which one paid a fee. So this is the approach I took. When I was ready for the intermediate and advanced language learning, I enrolled in communication classes at a university in Pittsburgh. In those classes, I learned grammar and structure. These were fee paying courses. I also figured out that supplementing my learning with books of all kinds was really important. I read children's books and watched children's shows -- anything that I thought would help me! Pronunciation and inflection are two things you can learn from TV shows and from good CD's. I learned to slow down my speech.

The next, incredibly important step in my language learning was the courage to start volunteering, even when my language was still

somewhat shaky. I wanted to volunteer in a role that matched my education, my background in economics. This was important to me for how I was feeling about myself. I found a unique group called Sustainable Pittsburgh – they had a small staff, and they were willing to work with volunteers who could help produce strong environmental indicators. In my work with this group, I was challenged to use high level English each day, and to write in English in very professional ways. The beautiful thing I learned here was all about me in relation to other people in professional organizations. Not all people can take the time or trouble to figure out what I was saying – there are obviously disappointments along the way. Most importantly, I learned through trial and error that in each situation, you find people who will help you generously with your English, and others who are too busy or distracted in their own lives to try to help. One has to accept this. I was lucky in that the person I worked closely with was so dedicated to helping me improve my written English, and she in turn counted on me to come up with good measurement indicators in my field of expertise – we were strong friends and allies. She also clearly showed me I needed even stronger English – which I would need to advance even more. Meeting a person like this, working side by side with her for close to 12 months gave me a leap of confidence that I will never forget. It was a great experience.

Finally, with all this behind me, I felt I was developed enough in English language to tackle admissions into university. So I studied for TOEFL. Of course, once I was admitted, it was brutal – it would take me so long to read one page or to write even one page effectively. I worked so hard during my studies, it was unbelievable. But it is amazing how fast my English improved, how much I accomplished in that two intensive years of graduate study. I met a professor who tore apart a draft of an unacceptable essay I had written. This was a shock to me – but a good shock. He took the time and trouble to offer clear tips for a structure, so I could produce the style and format expected in the department.

Story 3

IT Coordinator, Community Agency, Kitchener

There are conclusions, though no easy ones, that I can offer from my own experiences. Sometimes, when I had intensively negative experiences, where people did not understand my best communication efforts, I had to tell myself: "Okay. There is a rock in front of me. What can I myself do to change this difficult situation so that things actually improve for me?" So I had to stop, to think, to review and analyze. I had to change strategies at times, as there is no straight linear path through all these efforts. I also had to be honest with myself. I had to ask myself, any time I assessed a situation, how much advanced English language was needed to do well in that situation. I had to carefully analyze employment opportunities in the same way, learning that some sectors in the labour market are less friendly to those who speak imperfect English with an accent than in other sectors. I can also state without hesitation that doing something you love – for pay or without pay, depending on circumstances - is a fantastic way of accelerating beautiful, advanced English learning. So I believe in volunteering, as it counted so much for me as a human being and as a professional.



Finally, I learned from friends and role models to help me interpret the culture when I could not figure everything out by myself. At times it is terribly difficult to make sense of what is going on, and for that, a very honest friend or honest teacher is exactly what is needed. As I look back on these steps, I know there were times of hardship and struggle. Language learning can make you so tired! But I also realize in all of these adventures that as long as I could keep flexibly adapting my strategies, staying creatively open to possibility – the answer I needed to figure out the rest of the journey was actually inside myself.

As a German, I came to Canada after an extended period of travel and work in South America. I had worked on community development projects in Ecuador, so it was not new to me that language was important. I had studied some English back in school, in Germany, yet knew that my English was definitely not developed enough for the work I wanted to do here in Canada. Being used to a crafted level of wordsmithing in my own mother tongue, I knew that so much of personal knowledge, thinking, and the quality of my ideas - all of this was trapped in a linguistic straitjacket – a limitation. And so I realized how deeply language is a crucial part of my identity.

In my first year here, I volunteered in three places at once – Participation House, The Working Centre, and Steckley Homestead -- to learn about the community, and to make my steps ahead into the work of paid employment. Once I received my work permit, I became a camp director of a children's camp, and did the job pretty well, I thought. Then, one day, I answered the phone. Someone said to me on the phone "What language are you speaking, anyway?" Though I felt somewhat stung by this comment, the unpleasant incident strongly motivated me to get more training in improved pronunciation in my words and sentences. I took a class in pronunciation at Conestoga College, and this helped quite a bit. I also learned to really slow down my words and phrases when answering the telephone, a practice that I still am careful about to this day.

From there, I progressed as rapidly as I could on my own. I restricted my reading in German to ten minutes per day, shifting deliberately to English media as much as I could. At one of the volunteer jobs, I had a lot of opportunity to write professional documents, which helped strengthen written

English. Workplace communication in all of the volunteer placements helped so much in every way – I was connecting with diverse people who used many wonderful expressions and idioms that I acquired. In all ways, I pushed myself daily to improve as much as I could. I could always tell when I was tired, because my pronunciation accuracy that I was working so hard on would slip a little.

What would I tell other newcomers about this journey of language learning? I would tell them that I really pushed myself to advance in English for two reasons, despite the fatigue I felt. The first were the intrinsic reasons - I simply wanted to express myself well at all levels, from concrete to abstract levels. I enjoy playing with words, using language as a tool. The second reason of course was more extrinsic, having to do with employment advancement in Canada. I realized that

professional employment demanded advanced skill in such areas as proposal writing, and wanted to address gaps of that kind.

At this point, I am a coordinator of an Information Technology team at a growing, thriving not for profit community agency. I am fluent in writing complex documents, email writing, and the dozens of different written internal and external workplace communications that are produced by myself and other members of the IT team. I socialize daily with diverse groups of Canadians and newcomers in my job and in my social life. All of this is enjoyable and rewarding! I do strongly feel that the subtleties of excellent team communication with co-workers are the soft skills that we need advanced language skills for, in order to do our best, to connect beautifully with other human beings. For me here in Canada, this has been essential.

CHAPTER 4

TOOLS FOR THE JOURNEY

4.1 ESL Classes

ESL (English as a Second Language) learning is provided in a classroom environment that is instructor based. ESL classes are open to anyone whose primary language is not English. Ask around to learn which classes may suit you. If you are thinking of going back to school, focus on writing as well as conversational skills. Talk to your counselor and to a broad range of newcomers to discover what worked well for them. Read the stories in chapter 3 to see how much effort each New Canadian assigned to such study.

Detailed below are programs organized by educational institutes providing different levels of structured and formal English learning.



Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo. See contact information below.

- Cambridge: 150 Main Street, 1st Floor, Tel: 519-740-8797
- Kitchener: 800 King Street West, 3rd Floor, Tel: 519- 886-3300
- Waterloo: 145 Lincoln Road, 2nd Floor, Tel: 519-886-3300.
<http://www.conestogac.on.ca/about/newcadians/langprog.jsp>
- **International English Language Testing System (IELTS)** - Conestoga College has an IELTS preparation/testing centre testing centre. Talk with a counsellor to decide if IELTS is right for you.
<http://www.conestogac.on.ca/ielts/>

Community ESL Classes and Programs

Conestoga College offers a number of different ESL programs that are affordable and accessible.

- **General Arts and Science: English Language Studies** – this program offers language preparation for aspiring college/university students.
<http://tinyurl.com/y968jw9> (full-time program) and <http://tinyurl.com/yjujuls> (part-time programs)
- **Intensive English Language for Academic Studies** – this is an 8 week intensive program to prepare students for academic studies in English. <http://tinyurl.com/yhqzuj5>
- **Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC)** classes from literacy to level 7 in

St. Louis' Adult Learning Centre is an adult learning institute provided by the Waterloo Region Catholic District School Board. This institution offers a number of programs for adults including:

- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for adults
- Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) classes
- Computer classes
- TOEFL Preparation classes

Consult <http://stlouis.wcdsb.ca/programs/esl.html> for more information.

English at First offers Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) classes in Waterloo.

<http://englishatfirst.com/>

I needed to practice to really gain mastery, and this was tough – I had a survivor job and a busy family of four children. So, as much as I could, I listened to radio in English, watched the news in English, and borrowed library books to advance my reading level. I was also lucky to meet an ESL teacher at my night shift in RIM, and she and I exchanged words and meanings.

- *Master of Social Work Student, Kitchener*

4.2 Community Advanced English Classes and Programs

It is often less obvious where your ESL path of study should go as you step into Advanced English. Many of these programs are designed for a specific occupation or sector.



Research institutions and programs, talk to others in your profession, gather information and weigh your options with your counsellor or mentor. Advanced study is absolutely essential for career success in a career path that continues to evolve in the new economy. Advanced writing skills are essential. Practice these, study these, and bond with others who have similar goals.

The following is an extensive, though in no way complete, list of advanced English programs in the community.

Conestoga College offers a number of programs for advanced English learning.

- **Enhanced Language Training for Engineering Professionals** (Jan-Mar 2010) is a 6 week program providing language and mentoring opportunities for engineers.
<http://www.conestogac.on.ca/about/newcanadians/langprog.jsp>
- **English for Business: High Technology Option** (part time) is a credit program exploring oral/written skills, workplace

culture and expectations for the High Tech sector.

<http://www.conestogac.on.ca/ce/catlg/pgmdetails.jsp?ProgramCode=1228&v=0909>

- **The Language Interpreter Training Certificate Program** (part time) is designed for bilingual individuals who wish to work as spoken language interpreters in the legal, health care, social service and domestic violence prevention sectors in Ontario.
<http://www.conestogac.on.ca/ce/catlg/pgmdetails.jsp?ProgramCode=1188&v=0909>
- **The Ontario College Graduate Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language** is a full-time, post-degree certificate program designed for students who wish to teach English as a Second Language in Canada and/or overseas.
<http://www.conestogac.on.ca/fulltime/prograsmoverview.jsp?SchoolID=6&ProgramCode=1008>

Renison University College, English Language Institute (on the University of Waterloo campus) offers a number of programs for advanced language learners.

- **English for Academic Success (EFAS)** offers intensive English classes for prospective students whose first language is not English. It is designed to meet the needs of students pursuing studies at universities where English is the primary language of instruction and research.
- **English for Success** - Every August, students from around the world take part in Renison's intensive one-month English as a second language program, English for Success.
- **English for the Workplace** - This 25-hour course for non-native writers of English consists of 10 classes, with a focus on ESL business writing, and includes detailed instructor review of student writing.

- **Online IELTS Test Preparation** – This course consists of over 1000 hours of IELTS test preparation.

<http://www.renison.uwaterloo.ca/english-language/english-program/index.shtml>

- **ESL Credit Courses** are available to University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University students.

<http://www.renison.uwaterloo.ca/english-language/credit-courses/esl.shtml>

Other Resources

You can also access a comprehensive list of English language programs and classes from Newcomers Waterloo Region.

<http://www.newwr.ca/education/Pages/EnglishLanguageServices.aspx>

Part of the initial challenge of navigating how to study English was sorting out when to use free public resources, and when to pay for private classes. I found that the adult education resources that were free were useful at the basic level, but that as soon as more intermediate or advanced levels were needed in an accelerated path of learning, the private classes were better – classes for which one paid a fee.

- *Employment Counsellor, Waterloo*

4.3 Speaking Skills

Interacting and communicating with people in an English speaking environment enhances speaking practice. It is an interesting way to make learning English a part of building relationships, networking, and learning a new skill or hobby with a friend. Speaking skills improve when you take risks, when you ask others what they mean, when you write down every new expression and attempt to use new phrases in conversation.

Conversation Circles

One excellent way to practice speaking and listening is through Conversation Circles, which are informal groups of people who meet to practice speaking English. You will find welcoming, friendly people who can help you develop your English skills. The chart on the following page lists English Conversation Circles organized by local community organizations:

English Conversation Circles		
Name, Address, and Contact Info	Facilities	Meeting Times
Speak English Café Queen Street Commons Cafe 43 Queen Street South, Kitchener (519) 749-9177 ext. 237	Open to all Drop-in No cost No childcare available, but children welcome.	Thursdays 6-8pm
English Conversation Circle Kitchener Public Library 85 Queen Street North, Kitchener (519) 743-0271 ext 253 *Lower level	Open to all Drop-in No cost No registration necessary No childcare	Tuesdays 7-8:30pm
English Conversation Circle Waterloo Public Library McCormick Branch, 500 Parkside Drive, Waterloo (519) 885-1920 contact Christine Brown	Open to all Drop-in No Cost No childcare	Wednesday 6:30-8pm
ESL Conversational Circle 3 rd floor KW YMCA, 800 King Street West, Kitchener (519) 579-9622	Open to all No cost Drop-in Childcare available with notice (3 day notice is best)	Wednesdays 4-5:30pm
Conversation English Classes Victoria Hills Community Centre 10 Chopin Drive, Kitchener (519) 741-2717	Open to all Drop-in No cost for class Children are welcome but no childcare is provided	Saturdays 1-3pm
Café Conversation Centreville Chicopee Community Centre 141 Morgan Avenue, Kitchener (519) 741-2490	Open to all Drop-in - \$1/visit Free childcare available	Mondays 6:30-8:30pm
English Conversation Circle The Journey Ministry Centre 162 Victoria Street South, Kitchener (519) 886-4680 Contact Barb	Open to all No cost Children are welcome but no childcare available	Mondays and Wednesdays 7:00-8:30pm

The next, incredibly important step in my language learning was the courage to start volunteering, even when my language was still somewhat shaky. I wanted to volunteer in a role that matched my education, my background in economics. This was important to me, for how I was feeling about myself. I found a unique group called Sustainable Pittsburgh – they had a small staff, and they were willing to work with volunteers who could help produce strong environmental indicators. In my work with this group, I was challenged to use high level English each day, and to write in English in very professional ways. The beautiful thing I learned here was all about me in relation to other people in professional organizations.

- *Employment Counsellor, Waterloo*

Toastmasters

Toastmasters is an international organization focused on practicing public speaking. Many New Canadians as well as many Canadians benefit hugely from joining Toastmasters. We are told by persons who graduated from Toastmasters that they grew in confidence and poise as they acquired the habit of making small speeches in front of others. By joining this friendly group, you also acquire skills in how Canadian meetings are run, and how feedback is effectively given.

You can learn more about Toastmasters at <http://www.toastmasters.org/>. Contact a club to join as a guest or a member.

- The Black Walnut Toastmasters have been hosting a Speechcraft course at The Working Centre. You can find information about the Black Walnut Toastmasters at <http://blackwalnut.freetoasthost.com/>
- On the following page is a list of Toastmasters Clubs in Kitchener/Waterloo:

Toastmasters Clubs				
	Club Name	Address and Contact Info.	Meeting Time	Club Status
Waterloo				
1	AGFA Cheers Toastmasters Club	455 Phillip St, Waterloo, ON, N2L 3X2 (519) 746-2900	12:00 p.m., 1st & 3rd Wed	Membership eligibility criteria required - Contact club
2	Black Walnut Toastmaster	Sun Life Building 227 King Street South, Waterloo, ON, N2J 4C5 (519) 886- 5110 X 8145 - Ask for Poornima	7:30 am, Wednesday	Open to all
3	Concordia Club	St David Catholic High School 4 High St, Rm 207, Waterloo, ON, N2N 2W4 (519) 634-9668	7:00 pm, Wednesday	Open to all
4	Energetics Toastmasters Club	Sunlife Building 227 King Street S, Waterloo, ON, N2J 4C5 (519) 888-3900 x 2825	4:30 p.m., Thursday	Open to all
5	Kitchener-Waterloo Toastmasters	Boardroom, 2nd Floor, TechTown Building 340 Hagey Boulevard, Waterloo, ON, N2L 6R6, www.kwtoastmasters.ca	7:00 pm, Tuesday	Open to all
6	Manumax Toastmasters Club	Manulife Financial 500 King Street N, Waterloo, ON, N2J 4C6, www.manumax.com	12:00 p.m., Thursday	Open to all
7	University of Waterloo Toastmasters	200 University Ave W Waterloo, ON, N2L 3G1 uwtoastmaster@gmail.com	5:30 p.m., Thursday	Open to all
8	Waterloo Silver Tongue Club	Police Building upstairs 14 Erb St W, Waterloo, ON (519) 880-1280	7:30 pm, Thursday	Open to all
Kitchener				
9	Speechcraft (introductory program through Black Walnut Toastmaster Club)	The Working Centre 58 Queen Street S., Kitchener, ON, N2G 1V6 Contact: Julia at 519-743-1151x114 juliab@theworkingcentre.org	6:00 pm, Mondays	Registration Required
10	CCRAzy Talkers Club	Canada Revenue Agency 166 Frederick Street, Kitchener, ON, N2G 4N1 (519) 896- 5885	12:05 pm, Wednesday	Open to all
11	Talk Of The Town Club	Kitchener City Hall, Conestoga Room 200 King St W, Kitchener, ON, N2G 4G7 (519) 741-2844	12:05 pm, Thursday	Open to all

Communication Anxiety

Speaking in a different language can produce a feeling of nervousness and anxiety. Here is an article on adjusting your breathing to ease nerves and prepare yourself to communicate.

http://www.pe2000.com/breathe_sigh.htm

Assertive Communication

Do you have trouble saying 'no'? Are you afraid that you'll sound rude by expressing your opinion? Here is an article describing assertive communication, its use and effectiveness.

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Assertive-Communication--6-Tips-For-Effective-Use&id=10259>

Canadian Specific

While you might speak English very well, you will likely find a words and expressions used in Canada that you are not familiar with. Feel free to ask people what these words and phrases mean. Be curious. Dig deep. Let other people know when you want to know the precise meaning of a phrase.

Here is a short list of words, phrases and idioms that you will likely hear in Canada.

<http://canadianimmigrant.ca/justforfun/canspeak>

Wikipedia has a long list of Canadian vocabulary divided up into categories. Remember that Canada is a big country and some words and expressions are regional. Consult a friend or mentor about appropriate use in this region.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_English#Vocabulary

Thinking in English

Translating words and their meaning into your mother tongue is difficult and exhausting. A goal for English language learners should be to 'think' in English. This won't happen overnight, but by thinking in English you will be able to communicate more quickly and fluidly. The following discussions and articles will provide you with strategies that you can implement to excel this journey. Using language in different ways

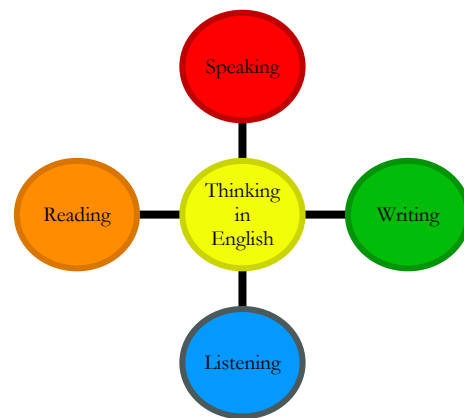
(writing, speaking, listening and reading) will accelerate your journey towards thinking in English.

- For ideas and strategies on thinking in English, explore this message board discussion where other ESL speakers give their advice about how to think in English.

<http://www.english-test.net/forum/ftopic4855.html>

- This URL will link you to a short article which provides advice on how to practice thinking in English.

<http://searchwarp.com/swa9345.htm>



I did not always hear the "full meaning" of what was said in these idioms, so I took time to explore with co-workers the specific meanings of words and expressions in the workplace – there were so many.

- *Master of Social Work Student,
Kitchener*

4.4 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is an important part of verbal communication. Knowledge of how words are pronounced, and the speed with which ideal sentences should flow, impacts the understanding of what they mean. English uses different sounds than other languages and often reading an English word does not reveal how it is pronounced. Pronunciation may also vary depending on the country and the different regions within a particular country. Seek feedback on how you pronounce words. Listen for inflections in the phrases as important meanings are emphasized. Work as carefully as you can with the rhythms and pacing of the language, and get feedback on how you pace sentences and phrases.



The resources given below will guide you in understanding and practicing generally used pronunciations in English communication.

General Pronunciation Resources

- This is a comprehensive pronunciation website with instructions on making English sounds and using proper word stress. The website has many multimedia exercises.
<http://www.soundsofenglish.org/index.html>
- Consult this excellent website for cross-section animations and audio/video examples on how to make English sounds.
<http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/#>
- Pronunciation Resource Package: *American Accent Training* by Ann Cook (Barron's). This package, which includes a book, CD and teaching aids, will guide you to fluency in spoken American English. Topics include intonation, word connections and sounds.

This book is available at the Kitchener Public Library.

- Pronunciation Software: *Pronunciation Power 2* (intermediate to advanced). *Pronunciation Power* is a comprehensive program that teaches the 52 sounds of English to ESL learners, with an American English accent. It can be used at The Working Centre without cost, or may be purchased online.
- Pronunciation Resource Package: *Clear Speech* by Judy B. Gilbert. This is available both in CD and book format, and helps with pronunciation and listening comprehension. The book and CD are available at the Kitchener Public Library.
- Ted Power has created lists of common pronunciation challenges organized by first language. If you don't find your first language, click on the 'All Languages' link to see common pronunciation challenges. You can use this list to determine possible sounds which may be challenging for you. Use the resources listed above to practice making these challenging sounds.

<http://www.btinternet.com/~ted.power/phon.o.html>

Then, one day, I answered the phone. Someone said to me on the phone "What language are you speaking, anyway?" Though I felt somewhat stung by this comment, the unpleasant incident strongly motivated to get more training in improved pronunciation in my words and sentences. I took a class in pronunciation at Conestoga College, and this helped quite a bit. [I could always tell when I was tired, because my pronunciation accuracy that I was working so hard on would slip a little.] I also learned to really slow down my words and phrases when answering the telephone, a practice that I still am careful about to this day.

- IT Coordinator, Community Agency,
Kitchener

4.5 Listening Skills

Effective and active listening is a key element in interpersonal communication. Good listening skills practiced at work ensure effective and positive interactions. The ability to listen carefully lets you better understand projects or assignments and what is expected of you; it helps build rapport with supervisors, coworkers and clients and facilitates team work; it helps clarify queries and resolve concerns or misunderstandings successfully.

The resources provided below will help you get familiar with listening to commonly used workplace language and naturalize the process of active listening in day-to-day communication.



General Listening Comprehension Resources

- This website has free audio and video clips of dialogues with English speakers, often with text and some comprehension exercises.
<http://www.elllo.org/>
- The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has created listening comprehension lessons with a focus on Canadian culture.
<http://www.cbc.ca/ottawa/esl/index.html>
- The Kitchener Public Library offers access to Audiobooks online so that you can practice 'reading' through listening.
<http://www.kpl.org/ebranch/eAudio.html>
- It can be difficult to comprehend different accents. This website offers many recordings of English conversations by speakers with many different accents.
<http://englishconversations.org/>
- This is a website with many English conversations with transcripts that you can follow along with.
<http://www.betteratenglish.com/>

- Did you say ship or sheep? Tin or ten? This website provides English pronunciation/listening practice with minimal pairs. <http://www.shiporsheep.com/>
- It's important to show that you are actively listening and understanding when you are having a conversation with somebody. This is a small list of phrases to demonstrate active listening.
http://www.careacademy.org/learningresources/cc_activelt.pdf
- You can't expect to understand every word or phrase that you hear. Using these listening strategies you can increase the amount that you comprehend in a conversation. Click on the link to read about the difference between top-down (listening for meaning) and bottom-up (listening to words and sentences) listening.
<http://eltnotebook.blogspot.com/2007/02/teaching-listening-top-down-or-bottom.html>
- Surround yourself with English while you're driving, working in the house or just relaxing! Use this website with links to free English talk radio programs.
<http://www.englishpage.com/listening/>

Being used to a crafted level of wordsmithing in my own mother tongue, I knew that so much of personal knowledge, thinking, and the quality of my ideas - all of this was trapped in a linguistic straitjacket - a limitation. And so I realized how deeply language is a crucial part of my identity.

- *IT Coordinator, Community Agency, Kitchener*

4.6 Reading Skills

Reading skills help in understanding and interpreting written information in a meaningful manner. Developing reading skills is crucial to perform everyday activities which may include tasks such as reading signage, instructions or directions. In the workplace, good reading abilities are required to interpret written communication, safety information and formal reports. Reading can be especially important in understanding protocol and instructions in emergency situations such as a fire drill or an illness. Advanced reading skills are not optional. You will not be able to move forward in a career without working with complex documents. As well, without reading current media in general public interest areas and areas of speciality in your field, you will be lost in everyday workplace conversations.

The resources below encourage practice in developing vocabulary and reading comprehension.

I progressed as rapidly as I could on my own. I restricted my reading in German to ten minutes per day, shifting deliberately to English media as much as I could.

- *IT Coordinator, Community Agency, Kitchener*

General Reading Resources

- The following is a collection of vocabulary lists organized by category and difficulty (easy to difficult), including lists of acronyms.
<http://a4esl.org/q/h/vocabulary.html>
- Thinking about formal English testing? Looking to practice for the test or just looking to improve your reading comprehension? This is a very comprehensive collection of advanced reading comprehension exercises taken from the major English examinations including TOEFL, IELTS and Cambridge ESOL.
<http://www.usingenglish.com/comprehension/>

- The BBC created this collection of exercises that integrate reading, listening and pronunciation.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/howto/>
- This is a site with links to English language periodicals which you can read to develop your vocabulary and reading skills.
<http://www.englishpage.com/readingroom/readingroomintro.html>
- Whether you're preparing for a test or just practicing, these reading comprehension exercises for exam preparation will be helpful.
<http://www.testprepreview.com/modules/readingtest2.htm>
- This site has 5 timed TOEFL preparatory reading comprehension tests.
<http://www.testpreppractice.net/TOEFL/Reading-Comprehension-TOEFL-Practice-Tests.aspx>
- This site also has a TOEFL reading comprehension preparatory quiz.
<http://www.englishclub.com/esl-exams/ets-toefl-practice-3.htm>

I figured out that supplementing my learning with books of all kinds was really important. I read children's books and watched children's shows -- anything that I thought would help me! Pronunciation and inflection are two things you can learn from TV shows and from good CD's. I learned to slow down my speech.

- *Employment Counsellor, Waterloo*

4.7 Writing Skills

Advanced writing skills are often overlooked by newcomers. The Canadian workplace puts a huge emphasis on skilled written communication. Even day to day email skills can “make or break” a newcomer, as the craft of email is quite important in a workplace. People often judge you by how you write. Can you communicate your ideas in writing? Flawless writing skills are vital when you need to express ideas and thoughts or share information in written format. Writing practice is required to complete official forms, reports and documentation accurately. Exploring English writing can help you to understand the difference in formal or workplace written communication and informal written communication. Do not overlook this area of competence in your evolving professional career path. Ask for honest feedback on your writing from Canadian mentors or teachers that you trust, and seek instruction in the writing and grammar skills at levels you need to work on.

The resources provided below outline various aspects of writing practice.



- This is a website that provides quick tips on writing, grammar and punctuation challenges. <http://www.betterwritingskills.com/writing-tips.html>
- This is an article with tips on effective proofreading (reading your writing to ensure clarity of meaning, correct grammar, spelling and punctuation). <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/proofreading.aspx>

Plain Writing

(writing in a clear and understandable way)

- The Plain Language Association International provides resources and links to learn about Plain Writing. <http://www.plainlanguagenetwork.org/networkindex.html>
- An article: *Clear Writing: Ten Principals of Clear Statement* provides an introduction to plain writing. <http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=CM201>
- This is an extensive resource on plain writing, called *The Writing Style Guide and Dictionary of Plain English*. <http://www.techcommunicators.com/pdfs/style-diction.pdf>
- This is an introduction and guide to using Plain Language Writing. <http://www.web.net/~plain/PlainTrain/IntroducingPlainLanguage.html>
- This article is an introduction to using plain language in public relations. <http://www.ereleases.com/prfuel/using-plain-language-in-public-relations/>
- Book: *How Not to Write: An Office Primer for the Grammatically Perplexed* by Terence Denman.

General Writing Resources

- This site provides a comprehensive list of writing resources divided up into categories (e.g. grammar) and faculties (e.g. writing in Engineering, Social Sciences, etc.). You can also post brief writing questions. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
- Summarizing can present challenges. Use this article: *How to Write a Summary, and Why* as a guide. http://www.webpagecontent.com/arc_archive/174/5/

I made steps to increase writing skills further. I got a job, and there worked hard to strengthen the craft of professional emails in daily communication. I learned how important this “art of emailing” was to professional team work.

- *Master of Social Work Student, Kitchener*

4.8 Grammar

English grammar explains the nature of words, their forms and their uses and relation in a sentence. Understanding grammar helps in organizing and communicating ideas in a clear and meaningful way. Strong grammar skills also increase understanding of written and spoken communication.

The resources given below explore the different aspects of sentence structure and meaning.

General Grammar Resources

- Grammar Girl provides podcasts of short, friendly tips to improve your writing. <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/>
- English Page is a website with many links to information and exercises on various areas of grammar. <http://www.englishpage.com/grammar/>
- A huge and comprehensive resource on writing, grammar and punctuation divided into writing levels (word and sentence, paragraph, and essay/paper). <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>
- HyperGrammar is an extensive online grammar course offered by the University of Ottawa. <http://www.arts.uottawa.ca/writcent/hypergrammar/>



- Quizzes can be helpful in identifying areas to work on. This is an extensive list of self-study grammar quizzes for home practice. <http://a4esl.org/q/h/grammar.html>
- LearnEnglish Central provides great learning activities, quizzes and games on various areas of English including grammar <http://www.britishcouncil.org/central.htm>

Word Order

- This is a step-by-step series of instructions and exercises on English word order. <http://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/grammar/word-order/questions>

Gerunds/Infinitives

- Follow these instructions and practice exercises on using gerunds and infinitives. <http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/410/grammar/gerinf.htm>
- This is an interactive cloze exercise on gerunds and infinitives. <http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/410/grammar/gerinfl.htm>
- The following is a very comprehensive resource with explanations, exercises and tests on gerunds. <http://www.englishpage.com/gerunds/index.htm>
- This is a quick, basic guide on when to use gerunds. <http://www.ltn.lv/~markir/accademicwriting/l2ger.html>

Verbs

- English Page is a very comprehensive resource with explanations, exercises and tests on conditionals. <http://www.englishpage.com/conditional/conditionalintro.html>

- English Page is a very comprehensive resource with explanations, exercises and tests on modal verbs.
<http://www.englishpage.com/modals/modalinintro.html>
- English Page is a very comprehensive resource with explanations, exercises and tests on verb tenses.
<http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/verbtenseintro.html>
- Search and study this dictionary of irregular verbs.
<http://www.englishpage.com/irregularverbs/irregularverbs.html>
- Search and study this dictionary of phrasal verbs.
<http://www.englishpage.com/prepositions/phrasaldictionary.html>
- You can also search and study this dictionary of phrasal verbs. <http://eslcafe.com/pv/>



Prepositions

- English Page has a very comprehensive resource with explanations, exercises and tests on prepositions.
<http://www.englishpage.com/prepositions/prepositions.html>
- Search and study this verb + preposition dictionary.
http://www.englishpage.com/prepositions/verb_preposition.html
- Read and study this guide to using prepositions.
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/printable/594/>

Articles

Many ESL speakers find articles confusing and challenging to use, particularly in speech. Study these resources and continuously work on using articles correctly.

- This is a guide on the correct use of articles.
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/540/01/>
- Sometimes you should not use articles. Study this guide to zero articles.
http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammarchallenge/pdfs/gc_30_zero_articles_explanation.pdf
- The following is a large guide to using articles, determiners and quantifiers.
<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/determiners/determiners.htm>

Vocabulary

- English Page has a site with links to English language periodicals which you can read to develop your vocabulary.
<http://www.englishpage.com/readingroom/readingroomintro.html>
- On this site you can study lists of words divided into categories (with exercises).
<http://www.englishpage.com/vocabulary/vocabulary.html>
- This is a categorized list of phrases for use in conversations.
<http://www.eslgold.net/speaking/phrases.html>
- Idioms are very important to learn. Using idioms can reduce the number of words you need to express yourself and show a stronger master of English. Search and study this dictionary of idioms.
<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>

- This is a dictionary of idioms arranged alphabetically and categorically.
<http://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/>
- Read this article with advice on how to use “high caliber words”, words which will have greater impact on your communication.
<http://www.verbalenergy.com/vocabulary.html>

I really pushed myself to advance in English for two reasons, despite the fatigue I felt. The first were the intrinsic reasons - I simply wanted to express myself well at all levels, from concrete to abstract levels. I enjoy playing with words, using language as a tool. The second reason of course was more extrinsic, having to do with employment advancement in Canada.

- *IT Coordinator, Community Agency, Kitchener*

4.9 Occupation Specific Resources

Customer Service

Bridging Programs

The Ontario government supports programs that can help newcomers get their license or certificate in their profession or trade so that they can work in Ontario.



These programs have been put together by employers, colleges and universities, occupational regulatory bodies, and community organizations. They are called 'Bridging Programs.'

- Think that a Bridging Program may be for you? Talk to your counselor, ask people in the industry and do your research.
<http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/working/experience/>

- This article discusses techniques to deescalate volatile situations and effectively communicate with upset customers.
<http://www.articlesbase.com/self-help-articles/deescalation-techniques-how-to-take-the-wind-out-of-their-sails-92797.html>
- This is an article on effectively using positive, non-accusatory language in customer service.
<http://www.work911.com/articles/poslan.htm>

As I look back on these steps, I know there were times of hardship and struggle. Language learning can make you so tired! But I also realize in all of these adventures that as long as I could keep flexibly adapting my strategies, staying creatively open to possibility – the answer I needed to figure out the rest of the journey was actually inside myself.

- *Employment Counsellor, Waterloo*

4.10 Wanting to Work in a Regulated Profession?

In Ontario there are 38 self-regulated professions. Each profession has a regulatory body with statutory authority to establish requirements for entry to the profession or professional designation as well as standards of practice and competence. To practice as a member of a regulated profession or use a professional designation, all applicants - whether Canadian trained or international - must meet the requirements of the relevant regulatory body. This often requires obtaining a license to practice and/or a certain level of English proficiency.



Language Testing

Almost all Occupational Regulatory Bodies (ORB) expect some degree of fluency in English or French. The ORB may explicitly or implicitly demand a level of fluency.

Explicit requirements usually involve a specific score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language

(www.toefl.org) or other standardized English or French language test.

If a regulatory body does not have a stated fluency requirement, it usually means that the ORB's own examinations will test your fluency. Consult your ORB to determine what testing will be required for certification in Ontario.

Resources for Regulated Professions

- Is your profession regulated? Consult this list of regulated professions in Ontario to find out.
http://www.accesscentre.ca/List%20of%20Regulated_Eng.html
- If your profession is regulated, you can find a link to your governing body in this list of governing bodies in Ontario.
http://www.accesscentre.ca/List%20of%20Regulatory_Eng.html
- Gaining certification in Ontario, recognition of your credentials and relevant Canadian work experience can be difficult and time-consuming. For some people a bridging program can be a path into their field in Canada. Work with your counselor to find and decide on bridging programs. For a list of bridging program in Ontario, consult.
<http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/working/experience/>

On arriving here, I immediately had my English assessed. My writing was 6+, speaking was 8, and listening was 7. I wanted to move forward from these benchmarks! I was told I could start TOEFL preparation anytime, but did not feel quite ready. Also, I was checking into various pre-requisites I needed for the Masters level program, and there was much complexity in figuring this all out. A step I took in 2007 that really increased my confidence and skill was Advanced English classes at Conestoga College. There were about 12 units of instruction, and the teacher shared strategies and tips that for the testing process of both TOEFL and ILETS.

- *Master of Social Work Student, Kitchener*

CHAPTER 5

THE BIGGER PICTURE

5.1 Canadian Expectations

In Canada, workplace expectations are sometimes quite different than many other countries and cultures. Canadian workplace culture expects you to be good at speaking, listening and socializing with other people; to know the etiquettes of working harmoniously with co-workers, colleagues and supervisors; and to understand a good range of cross cultural differences in the workplace. There are resources which could help you in addressing the above issues in practical and knowledgeable ways. The following is a list of selected resources.



safety rights, enforcing your rights and employer responsibilities.

Contact the KW YMCA for workshop schedules at (519) 579-9622 Ext. 244 or

lmyers@ckwymca.ca

- Focus for Ethnic Women offers Language in the Workplace Workshops. These workshops include pronunciation, vocabulary,

body language, communication and business etiquette. www.few.on.ca/programs.html For further information call (519) 746-3411.

- This article (and sub-articles) encourages reflection in defining and understanding the culture of your workplace. http://workplaceculture.suite101.com/article.cfm/defining_workplace_culture
- The following chart is copied from the book *You're Hired...Now What?* by Lynda Goldman. It is a comprehensive guide to understanding and adjusting to work culture in Canada. While we recommend reading the entire book, this chart will provide a brief introduction to some of the differences in work values in Canada compared with the rest of the world.

General Canadian Information

- This website provides news, information and interviews for new Canadians. <http://www.canadianimmigrant.ca/>

Understanding Workplace Culture

- In the KW area the KW YMCA provides workshops four times a year on Orientation to Canadian Workplace Culture. It addresses workplace values and expectations in the workplace, work relationships, written/verbal/non-verbal communication and employee expectations.

The KW YMCA also offers the Legal Rights at Workplace workshop four times a year. Topics included in these workshops are the interview and hiring process, wages, hours of work, vacation time, workplace health and

Canadian work values compared with values in other cultures

Common Canadian Values	Contrasting Values Of Some Other Cultures
<p>Directness, honesty, openness: People should be open and honest and say what they think, but they should be polite and speak in a way that is considerate of other people's feelings.</p>	<p>Indirectness / increased directness: In many Asian cultures, saving face is most important. People are taught to be diplomatic and put the feelings of others first. Honesty isn't necessarily the best policy.</p> <p>In Russia and some Eastern European countries, people are even more direct than in Canada. They see directness as a sign of honesty and respect, but can seem rude to people from less-direct cultures.</p>
<p>Equality: All people are equal. In the workplace, status is observed in a less-obvious way than in other cultures.</p>	<p>Rank or status: Roles are defined in terms of one person being subordinate or superior to another, as in Russia or China.</p>
<p>Self-direction: Employees are often given a task and expected to figure out how to do it. They should be willing to work hard and show initiative.</p>	<p>Hierarchy: Employees are told exactly what to do and how to do it. Cultures such as those in East Asia and South Asia have a steep pyramid. The boss or chief at the top gives detailed directives which employees are expected to implement.</p>
<p>Change: New ideas are often well-received. Many organizations change constantly.</p>	<p>Tradition: In some Asian culture people are taught to respect their ancestors and observe the rituals, customs, and beliefs from their past.</p>
<p>Time flies: People must save time and be organized, using schedules and time management techniques. In business, it's important to be punctual.</p>	<p>Time walks: In many South American cultures and countries such as Indonesia, people take it easy and don't rush. They have more flexible hours and feel that what isn't done today will get done tomorrow.</p>
<p>Short-term outlook: Companies focus on short-term goals. They measure success on a quarter-by-quarter basis.</p>	<p>Long-term outlook: Companies sacrifice short term gain for long-term goals. The Japanese auto industry, for example, has longer-term goals than the North American auto industry.</p>
<p>Individualism and privacy: Respect individual needs, personal property and privacy. For example, people do not discuss their salaries with co-workers.</p>	<p>Group: The group's needs are most important. Individual needs and property are sacrificed for the group.</p> <p>In the Chinese culture, for example, people tend to consult the group before making decisions. In group cultures, salaries are public knowledge.</p>
<p>Work: Many people define themselves by the type of work they do. They work hard and make work a priority, often giving up personal time for their jobs.</p>	<p>Being: People don't define themselves by their work. It's acceptable not to focus on work. In the Scandinavian countries, family life in considered more important than work.</p>
<p>Action and achievement: Action and accomplishment are highly valued. Being productive is a great asset.</p>	<p>Relationships: Relationships are more important than action and accomplishments. In the middle east, business leaders take much longer to get to know each other than North Americans do before they conduct business together.</p>
<p>Self-improvement: People try to improve their own lives. Continued learning is encouraged; many companies offer seminars and workshops, and pay for employees' evening courses.</p>	<p>Birthright or fate: People are born into wealth or poverty as determined by fate. It is difficult to change their positions in society. This view is part of Indian culture, although it is changing in some places.</p>

Material good: Acquiring material possession is important. (Whoever has the most toys, wins.)	Spiritualism: Spiritual and intellectual goals are more important than material goods.
Informality: People relate in a casual way, often using first names, and wear business-casual clothing. There are not many formal rituals.	Formality: People are polite with each other. They dress more conservatively, use formal titles and have many rituals. The British and some Europeans are more formal than North Americans.

Meetings

- The National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) designed a meeting planner guide to assist meeting and conference planners infuse principles, content and themes related to cultural and linguistic competence.
http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucc/hd/nccc/documents/Planners_Guide.pdf
- Formal meetings can be confusing and adding to these meetings can be anxiety inducing. This is a guide which outlines the order and procedures of a formal meeting.
<http://www.afcs.ca/PDF/RobertsRules1.pdf>

Presentations

- Expectations for business presentations vary by culture. Connect with colleagues and your mentor on what is expected in Canada. Enjoy this article on presentations called *10 Tips for a Killer Presentation*.
<http://www.quicksprout.com/2007/09/01/10-tips-for-a-killer-presentation/>

Emails

- Emails can very quickly reveal weaknesses in writing and knowledge of cultural professional expectations. Practice emailing with your mentor and counselor and study Canadian email etiquette. Read this broad, comprehensive article on email etiquette.
http://www.answeremail.com/email_etiquette.html

- This is a short article called *Pause Before You Send*, offering advice on editing and using appropriate language.
http://www.webpagecontent.com/arc_archive/179/5/
- Enjoy this collection of articles from Yale University explaining 'Netiquette', or internet/email etiquette.
<http://www.library.yale.edu/training/netiquette/index.html>

My journey of advanced English language learning is not over.... We must carry forward the attitude that we are on a path, that we are not perfect, that new culture learning is exciting and challenge ourselves constantly with sophisticated fluency goals. I have learned that here in the community we are competing with local people and also strong contributors from all over the world. I am prepared to continue to stretch myself so my contribution is strong in my field.

- *Master of Social Work Student, Kitchener*

Cross-Cultural Communication

- The Government of Canada's Centre for Intercultural Learning provides insights into the culture and communication of various nations, including Canada.
<http://www.international.gc.ca/cfsi-icse/cil-cai/index-eng.asp>
- This is an article on using inclusive intercultural language in website content.
http://www.webpagecontent.com/arc_archive/184/5/

5.2 Volunteering

Volunteering is an important way of life in Canada. Such rewarding activity offers you an opportunity to acquire valuable Canadian work experience that employers are looking for. It provides a platform to learn and practice workplace communication and to experience workplace culture specific to the community and the sector you hope to work in. Read the stories in Chapter 3. All three individuals interviewed by The Working Centre in late 2009 found volunteering to be a big part of their successful strategy, not only for practical reasons, but for improved self-esteem in times of hardship, and for making valuable new friends in Canada.



I do strongly feel that the subtleties of excellent team communication with co-workers day are the soft skills that we need advanced language skills for, in order to do our best, to connect beautifully with other human beings. For me here in Canada, this has been essential. [All of this is enjoyable, rewarding!]

- *IT Coordinator, Community Agency, Kitchener*

Volunteering Resources

- The KW Volunteer Action Centre connects potential volunteers with agencies and organizations in need of volunteers.
www.volunteerkw.ca
- Volunteer Canada is a national organization promoting volunteerism in Canada.
www.volunteer.ca
- The Working Centre thrives on volunteers! Talk to a counselor about volunteer opportunities at The Working Centre.
www.theworkingcentre.org

I can also state without hesitation that doing something you love – for pay or without pay, depending on circumstances - is a fantastic way of accelerating beautiful, advanced English learning. So I believe in volunteering, as it counted so much for me as a human being and as a professional.

- *Employment Counsellor, Waterloo*

Finally, I learned from friends and role models to help me interpret the culture when I could not figure everything out by myself. At times it is terribly difficult to make sense of what is going on, and for that, a very honest friend or honest teacher is exactly what is needed.

- *Employment Counsellor, Waterloo*

5.3 Find Community Events

There are many free community events that offer stimulating educational experiences. Public lectures at the city's two universities are often easy to attend. They offer networking and rich learning opportunities in highly specialized areas. The public libraries in Waterloo and Kitchener host a range of events each month of the year where newcomers can learn a great deal, hear professional English spoken on topics of interest, and learn more about the community as they do so. Check out flyers and bulletin boards. Keep your



eyes and ears open for events that draw you. Talk to your counselor or mentor about the interest areas you would like to learn more about.

- Keep up to date with this listing of events and festivals in the community from Newcomers Waterloo Region.
<http://www.newwr.ca/Activities/Pages/Activities.aspx>

- Read these tips on where and how to get involved in your community and keep up to date with event listings.
<http://www.settlement.org/topics.asp?section=COMREC>
- This is a tourism website for Waterloo Region with tips and ideas of things to see and do in the Region.
<http://explorewaterlooregion.com/>
- Consult your local newspaper for listings of events and festivals in the community.
<http://www.therecord.com/entertainment/events/index.html>
- Your local library will often hold events including readings, movie nights and discussion groups. Talk to your librarian or check your library's website for information.
www.kpl.org (Kitchener) and www.wpl.ca (Waterloo)

I admit that learning an entirely new culture is not so easy. There were moments when I was in a mood of low self-esteem, discouraged, and tired. However, I found the support of my family and friends very helpful in keeping my self-esteem high, and in staying focused on my goals. I seek role models within my community as well as in other communities to get inspiration and guidance, as many immigrant professionals go through the same hardships. This has been important to me. I found that the qualities of believing in themselves, working really hard, and acknowledging their own strengths, finally made them successful.

- *Master of Social Work Student, Kitchener*

CHAPTER 6

RESOURCES FOR GREATER IMMERSION

You've finished the whole document. Congratulations! As we've learned from the personal stories included in this document, attaining an advanced level of English requires dedication and exhaustive study. While reaching this level will be difficult, the positive effects of your commitment will far outweigh your efforts. It's a long journey, but it will be worth it.

Review the advice and resources listed in this document and talk about them with your counselor, mentor and friends. Don't stop there! There's a universe of resources at your fingertips through classes, books and videos available at the library or online and through the people you meet. It would be impossible for us to list all of the excellent resources available for you so we'll just list a few of our favorites.

Books

- **How to Find a Job in Canada** by Efim Cheinis and Dale Sproule is part of the Canadian Newcomer Series. Finding work in each country is different and each country and region has its peculiarities. This book will give you a comprehensive introduction to finding a job in Canada.
- **You're Hired...Now What?** By Lynda Goldman is part of the Canadian Newcomer Series. This is a highly recommended, comprehensive and essential resource for newcomers who are preparing for every aspect of working in Canada.



- **Recruiting, Retaining and Promoting Culturally Different Employees** by Lionel Laroche. While this book is geared towards employers, it can be helpful for a New Canadian jobseeker/employee to understand and gain awareness of what

issues and challenges they may face in the workplace.

Videos

- These are clips of a presentation by Lionel La Roche. In this presentation, he outlines his ideas for improving intercultural understanding in the workplace. This is informative for both employers and employees.

Part 1: <http://blip.tv/file/1590748>

Part 2: <http://blip.tv/file/1590979>

Part 3: <http://blip.tv/file/1590824>

Part 4: <http://blip.tv/file/1590883>

Periodicals/Newspapers

What is happening in Canadian society and politics? What are Canadians talking about and how can you get informed so that you can enter the conversation? Keep up to date on news and events from a Canadian perspective.

- MacLean's Magazine is a weekly Canadian magazine. You can find issues in offices and libraries and you can subscribe for a reasonable price.

You can find newspapers at the library, The Working Centre and many other organizations and offices. When you see a paper on the bus, pick it up! Free paper at a restaurant? Read it! We have a few recommendations.

- The *KW Record* is the largest local newspaper and is a great source for local news.

- *The Toronto Star* is a well written paper providing news and opinions covering Toronto, Ontario, Canada and the world.
- *The Globe and Mail* claims to be Canada's national daily newspaper. It's a great source for national and international news.

CHAPTER 7

COUNSELLOR SUPPORTS

Strategies for Addressing English Language Concerns in Job Search

A Tool for Employment Counsellors

	Someone who is...	Some Notes and Strategies
1.	<p>Eager to improve basic English</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • someone who names English as a main issue they want to address • someone who is looking for ways they can improve their English in addition to classroom learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore handout with resources and websites together • Bridge to language assessment centre to determine Canadian Language Benchmark and possible classes • Determine capacity and willingness (this will help determine pace and amount of self-directed options) • Keep English on the front burner by asking regularly how ESL classes are going • Encourage continued focus on career path; reinforce that research and preparation are a big, time-consuming part of job search and it is best to start networking, volunteering and researching the local labour market while continuing ESL classes
2.	<p>Newly arrived and is tempted to jump immediately into survival work but is not aware he/she could really benefit from more focused English studying</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone receiving government assistance who is eager to be more financially independent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress importance of creating a strong foundation in English before entering the workforce when this is financially possible • Share written stories, framing journey concept • Encourage them to speak English in the home for faster progress • Explore source of income – if the person is eager to stop accepting government assistance (i.e. OW or 1 year of funding for government-funded refugees) delicately probe around this and help frame this assistance as a way to create a strong foundation; with stronger English skills individuals will have more opportunities to choose from in the labour force • You may wish to include the concept of a social wage – earning income through government assistance and choosing one’s own way to contribute back
3.	<p>A visitor to Canada</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The spouse of an international university student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible for formal subsidized classes • Explore handout together • Brainstorm with Julia and others the possibility of one-on-one volunteer support (please have this brainstorm before building individual’s hopes as this step often takes time) • Highlight immersion opportunities – KPL activities, volunteering, Queen Street Commons activities, etc.

<p>4. Pursuing a high level professional job and does not have the advanced language level needed to compete in the labour market</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A nurse, engineer, architect who seeks to move forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the journey framework – advanced written and spoken English needs may be a surprise to them • Use email as a way to address written English needs; offer layers of feedback (first – address capitalization in emails; second – address general layout and use of paragraphs; third – address level of formality; fourth – address consistent errors one at a time (e.g. always forgetting to add ‘the’) • Encourage person to pursue media and book reading in English on challenging, high level topics of interest to them • Emphasize self-directed learning journey with available supports in libraries, at TWC, in classes, in media sources • Emphasize Job Connect money may be available for resources depending on eligibility
<p>5. Well settled in Canada; has worked only in survivor jobs, so lacks advanced English skills</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone who arrived in Canada a long time ago and found survival work in a workplace with little exposure to English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a range of handouts to emphasize significant points • Match your comments to the person’s style - what do they care about? How do they learn best? • See list of counsellor questions to deepen the framework of conversation, provide insight • Use email as a tool to highlight strengths and opportunities to improve written English • There may actually be some significant ‘unlearning’ of consistent errors in written English
<p>6. Professional struggling with soft skills and language issues as a merged concern</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone with a high level of English but frustrating conversational strategies (i.e. too brisk, too indirect, interrupting, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show the clips of Lionel La Roche’s presentations on this subject • Share written stories from TWC that emphasize the subtle points of communication in individual journeys • Emphasize lateral teamwork as a key workplace culture issue • Encourage advanced classes in English language • Encourage attendance at many public networking events • Encourage the art of information interviewing, with lots of counsellor coaching on this topic

Integrating Language Topics into Counsellor Best Practices

Step 1 - Clarify Counseling Framework

- Recognize that people are in very different places with language learning.
- Highlight and compliment what the individual has already accomplished with regards to improving his or her English. It will give you the opportunity to present other

tools and aspects of the learning process in a most natural way and avoiding presenting them as a formula.

- Recognize that persons locked into survivor jobs may be highly unaware of the implications of poor written and spoken English.
- Anticipate confusion, lack of awareness, lack of interest, or defensiveness - person may be quite innocent to implications of this topic for their overall journey.

- A good practice to leave a positive impression while giving feedback is to carefully use the words “but” and “however.” In most cases those words take the attention off the positive and put the focus on the negative, turning the overall tone of the message, or the message deliverer, negative. These and other contradictory words cause defensiveness and fail to offer motivation. Try substituting the word “but” with “and” or “also.” It helps to end with a positive and encouraging comment.



- Develop probes to assess where person is at around language issues; develop sensitivity in figuring this out. Probe. Investigate.
- Language learning must be clearly tied to “hopes and dreams” in Worki’s *Getting Started* section
- Go step by step but keep “shining the lamp” on this topic in imaginative ways.
- Recognize that motivational drives in this area for individuals may vary hugely. Some individuals are intrinsically motivated to strengthen language approaches; others need concrete labour market reasons.
- Language learning is a journey of both practical progress and self-actualization. Work on two levels at once – the practical, and the inspirational. The stories make this clear!
- Language learning and the process of gaining Canadian experience are very effortful and often frustrating. Validate this reality as a way of building rapport. Doing so will demonstrate that you are sensitive to the situation and will set you apart as a support and an ally instead of a part of this difficult system. Honest and thoughtful validation is

crucial otherwise your words run the risk of seeming empty.

- Role models are critical. Cultivate examples you can use at the right time and place. Our booklet may help with this, as convincing stories and quotes are presented.
- Do not think of the language learning journey only as a compartment tied to a prescribed TOEFL level. It is far more than that. Generally, people who wish to attend university understand that they need these prescribed levels. Their post-admissions challenge continues to be high level immersion in advanced writing skills and speaking skills, in learning the full depths of subtle professional communications in English.

Step 2 - Practical Probes and Tools

Opening Probes

- In what area of language development are you actively concentrating?
- Can you say more about that please? (probe)
- Here is Tool 3.2 (our matrix of steps of the journey). What stage would you say you are at? What language level would you like to function at as an architect? How would you like to go you go about this? Can we talk about this in the weeks to come?
- What stimulates you most, in terms of language learning? What do you notice works best for you? How can you keep at this in your own home, when the kids are in bed? Could you and your spouse set aside one or two hours a day where you speak only English to each other?
- I notice that some of your emails could use a bit of work. Would you like to work on this with me? (Explain how this working relationship can develop, show examples of emails)

Going Deeper

- What specific subjects do you like to read about to learn the specialized terms of your field in English?
- Are there books and magazines that draw your attention?
- Do you read the local newspaper, for labour market information and a sense of what is going on in the community? Can you include this in your daily routine?
- Do you read a national newspaper, in order to acquire a sense of the issues being debated in Canada that may relate to the bigger picture?

Agreeing on Practical Steps for the Action Plan: Closure

- Do you set aside time for listening to English speaking media such as BBC or CBC? How many hours a day? What time of day would be good for this, do you think?
- What can I do to help you stay excited about this area of your development?
- What else can Working Centre do to support you in this area?
- Next time we will talk about volunteering at the Cafe as a way of advancing in English. Can you think about that please?
- Can I check back in with you about your next step when you get registered for those classes at the College?
- Let's keep discussing the strategies shared in these stories.... can you read them for next time please? These people had goals very similar to yours!
- I look forward to you next email, and I will keep helping you revise them. Has this worked well for you so far? Do the emails seem to be coming along better, from your point of view?

Step 3 - Soft Skills and Gentle Confrontation Strategies

When someone is unaware of the way their soft skills (or lack of soft skills) may be impeding their job search, gentle confrontation is important. It isn't always easy, so here are some ideas to help in a difficult situation:

- Determine the level of awareness the individual has regarding soft skills. "What do you think about when you hear the term 'soft skills'?"
- Ask probing questions to keep this conversation alive: "What are some ways you feel your soft skills are a good match for the workplace? What are some ways you would like to improve your soft skills?"



- Being blunt about a soft skill deficit is difficult. Instead of drawing someone's attention to their deficit, you may wish to encourage them to reflect on their soft skills. "I encourage you to take some time over the next week to reflect on your soft skills. You don't need to tell me what you are thinking now. We can pick this conversation up the next time we meet." This technique can be helpful for diffusing tension.
- Look for ways to connect the participant with someone working in their field who can speak to the importance of soft skills and other important details about the profession in Canada. Having the message about the importance of soft skills reinforced by someone in the field is very valuable. It may be heard in a way that is not possible when it is coming from an employment counsellor.
- Being direct can be effective when it is done in the right spirit. One method can be to

highlight the safe relationship with the employment counsellor, but to indicate that this action might be misinterpreted in a workplace context. “In Canada we have rather large boxes of personal space around us. You and I have been working together for a while and we have an understanding relationship. In a workplace, a co-worker might be uncomfortable with how close we are sitting.”

- When all else fails, let the individual know they can always come back. “Job search isn’t an easy process. Try using the techniques you have now. If you are feeling stuck you can always come back and we will revisit your job search.”

Step 4 - Reflective Summary Work for Counsellor Role Review

An important part of our role as Employment Counsellors is to offer encouragement and support during the difficult job search process. However, there are times when we need to confront people, modify expectations and push them to face the challenges of our competitive job market.

When someone with English as a Second Language is tackling the beginner level, our role is to be a “Supportive Encourager” through stories of our own struggles with language, through emphasis on successes, through identifying language improvements.

Intermediate and advanced level goals require different counsellor skills. At this stage, we are “Firm Coaches and Mentors”. We cannot varnish the truth: the reality of what is required in a new economy culture in terms of language skills is challenging. Firmly coaching development in the area of English language learning requires the courage to help the person face head-on what they are up against and what is required of them.