

Language Training Programs Final Report 2003/2004
“Communicative Competence - From Comprehension to Production”
Calgary Immigrant Educational Society
Public Report Submitted to Alberta Learning

The objectives of “Communicative Competence - From Comprehension to Production” were met for the 2003 - 2004 year. Students were provided with a framework in which to learn and utilize the English language. Adaptation and integration skills were developed through the use of various subjects that reflected daily living and employability skills.

During the 2003 -2004 year, 312 students were registered in the ESL Drop-In program. Students were recruited through cooperation with other agencies, advertisements in community newsletters, and the distribution of brochures in various locations across the city. The reputation of the classes has also spread by word of mouth. A great deal of clients entered the program after hearing positive feedback from former or present students. Displays during the Calgary Stampede and other fairs or functions also provided a good marketing opportunity.

During the 2003 - 2004 year, a total of six classes per week were offered Mondays through Thursdays. Three different levels of classroom instruction were offered, both during the afternoons and in the evenings. These included Pre-Basic, Basic, and Intermediate/Advanced classes. All the strands of communicative competence were taught: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These competencies were taught in relation to practical life and employability skills. These skills are grouped under the following seven themes:

- I. Consumer Skills - Banking, Shopping and Money
- II. Living in Alberta and Canada –Understanding a New Place
- III. My Family and Me - Understanding and Expressing the Person
- IV. Employment
- V. Transportation
- VI. Health and Wellness
- VII. Housing

Adult immigrants come to our Drop - In Program for various reasons. Many cite a desire to be better able to communicate with their Canadian born children and their children’s teachers. Many want to improve their employability prospects while others wish to improve their English skills before pursuing further education. The common thread between all students, however, is the desire to improve their comprehension, speaking, reading and writing skills so that they may better integrate into Canadian society.

The Open access/intake drop - in format of the program accommodates adult learners who must fit classes around their work schedules or their childcare needs. A four-month membership card allows them to access the program whenever they wish during a typical week, for up to four classes per week. The program provides a service to a segment of the population that is unable to attend classes offered by other institutions. Some clients may not fit the entrance criteria of other services due to their immigration status and/or their length of residence in Canada. Still others may not be able to afford registration fees at other non-subsidized institutions. These clients find our program affordable as well as convenient. All residents of Calgary are welcome to join our program. The majority of students come from the Northeast and the Southeast quadrants of the city. The program operates at our location in the Forest Lawn District where a large number of new Canadians reside. Presently, there are very few organizations that provide ESL instruction in the area. Our building is located on regular scheduled bus routes and within walking distance for many newcomers.

The structure of the program allows Volunteer tutors/teachers to lead students in lessons that teach communicative competence. The program uses the Open Access Curriculum, which was prepared by Dr. Laura Ho and Dr. Esha Chaudhuri in 1997. Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development sponsored the curriculum. The objective of the curriculum is to teach communicative competence to immigrants through needs assessment and drop - in classes.

The role of the volunteer tutors has been and continues to be invaluable to this program. Each volunteer has been interviewed, trained, and supervised by the program coordinator to ensure quality of instruction for the students. During the 2003 - 2004 year, 90 volunteers have spent a total of 3135 hours in the classroom. Each volunteer makes a commitment to teach a minimum of one class per week. The classes are two and a half hours in duration.

The objectives of “Communicative Competence - From Comprehension to Production” were met this year. Students increased their English speaking abilities. Because of these improved abilities, confidence levels amongst the students increased as well. This will be beneficial to them as they become increasingly active participants in Canadian society.