

**EDMONTON MENNONITE CENTRE FOR NEWCOMERS (EMCN)
ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE AT PERFORMANCE APPAREL CANADA
(PAC - formerly Prof Canada)**

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Language Training Programs Public Report**

Summary of Project Objectives,
Activities and Outcomes

Project Objectives

The purpose of this project was to be innovative in its provision of contextualized English language training in the workplace to multi-barriered immigrants who have had little or no opportunity to access regular LINC or ESL programs in the past. Its aim was to provide an environment in which learners could acquire and/or improve essential everyday interpersonal communication skills, the lack of which has previously prevented them from becoming more active and successful participants in the workforce, at home, in their communities, and in Canadian society in general.

More specific project objectives were as follows:

- * Provide quality English language instruction and a positive learning environment to company workers.
- * Facilitate the process of workers acquiring and improving basic everyday reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.
- * Focus on developing learners' interpersonal communication skills in order to ease difficulties among staff and between management and staff.
- * Use relevant workplace knowledge, skills and resources as a vehicle for English language instruction.
- * Create a syllabus that is reflective of the needs of company employees and management.
- * Establish and maintain a cooperative and effective working relationship between PAC and EMCN.
- * Encourage participants to use English as much as possible at the work site.
- * Use learner centred teaching activities and materials.
- * Create opportunities for learners to practice and build their confidence in using English.
- * Facilitate learners' success in the workplace and integration into Canadian society by improving their basic everyday English language abilities.

Project Activities

Project activities aimed to develop employees' English language skills in two main areas:

1. Workplace Culture and Communication

2. English for Everyday Purposes Project activities consisted of highly contextualized materials and resources drawn from the workplace in addition to learners' everyday lives and were carried out using learner centred teaching methods that focused on increasing learners' communicative competence in English. The four skills areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening were taught in an integrated fashion in each class, and the instructor was responsible for conducting regular on-going assessment of learners' skill development. *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* and *English as a second language - for adults* was used as a guide throughout in developing project activities and in establishing and assessing outcomes.

The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers offered four ten-week sessions of English in the Workplace classes to a total of twenty learners from September 2002 to June 2003. Classes took place twice weekly for 1 ½ hours each day. In total, 120 hours of English language instruction were provided. Program planning and needs assessment were conducted during the month prior to program start up. Report writing and follow up interviews took place during the month following the end of classes. EMCN's ESL Manager and ESL Program Coordinator along with PAC's Human Resources Manager were responsible for all aspects of project management and implementation. All language training and meetings took place at the company work site.

Project Outcomes

The global desired outcome from delivery of an English in the Workplace Program at PAC was to see learners progressing at least one Canadian Language Benchmark level in one or more skill areas (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). In order to assess learners' language skills, the Workplace English Language Proficiency Assessment (WELPA) was administered to all students upon entry to the class and scores were recorded. Assessments were also done during the middle and at the end of the program in order to track progress. Test scores indicate a progression from Level One to Level Two in all skill areas. Learner performance and progress was also evaluated on an ongoing basis using assessment tools such as oral interviews and written evaluations.

More specific outcomes resulting from this progress include:

- * Increased use of English in the workplace for interpersonal communications.
- * Increased communication among all staff.
- * Increased chances of performing work safely and successfully due to improved English skills.
- * Better understanding of workplace culture, norms, expectations, policies, procedures, etc.
- * Better understanding of skills and knowledge needed to maintain or secure other employment.
- * Increased self-confidence in the workplace and in everyday situations.
- * Continued provision of opportunities for staff at PAC to develop their English language skills after the completion of this pilot project.

The Human Resources Manager as well as the President of PAC expressed their desire and willingness to continue providing English classes to its employees after the completion of this project. Learners also expressed a strong desire to continue attending English classes at the work site. Learners reported a high level of satisfaction with the EWP program, the quality of instruction and the support given to them by company management and by EMCN. In addition, resources purchased for this program were well used and will provide an excellent base for future language programming at this work site. The company expressed an extremely high level of satisfaction with the instructor as well as with the support received from EMCN on this project. Program success was evaluated on an ongoing basis through regular discussions and meetings between EMCN and PAC staff as well as with learners in order to address any problems and concerns and to assess learner needs and progress.

In conclusion, the English in the Workplace program at PAC was highly successful. The project met its expected outcomes both quantitatively, in terms of producing an observable and measurable increase in learners' knowledge and skills, and qualitatively, in terms of producing increased learner satisfaction with both home and work life. As one student quoted his instructor, Yangsheng Guo, "Language is power." It has been a great pleasure to be involved in such a worthwhile project for which the most valuable outcome of all is perhaps just that which this student brings to light: language training programs provide tools which have the potential to empower people, and that is why they are so essential.