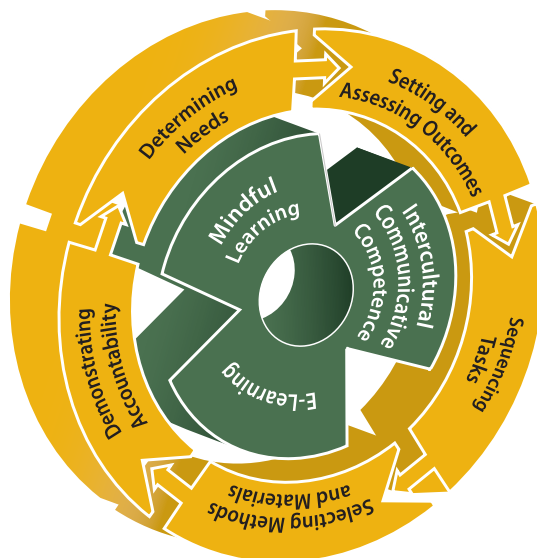




# Selecting Methods and Materials

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## ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework





# Section 4: Selecting Methods and Materials

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## Overview

Following from *Sequencing Tasks*, this section of the *ATESL Curriculum Framework* takes a principles-based approach to selecting methods and materials for inclusion in the ESL curriculum. Like outcomes, assessment, and tasks, materials are often recommended or included in curriculum documents (i.e., curriculum-as-planned) and are selected to meet identified learning needs. However, final decisions regarding materials and methods often take place while a course is being taught (i.e., curriculum-as-lived) in response to the preferences of the instructor, the immediate interests of the learners, and the learning context. In this section, *Selecting Methods and Materials*, we seek to

- Highlight a responsive approach to instructional practice that focuses on effective teaching and learning strategies rather than relying on specific methods or approaches.
- Offer a set of principles to consider when selecting effective learning materials to contextualize and support ESL curricula.

## Instructional methods and beyond

“ There is no best method out there ready and waiting to be discovered.”<sup>1</sup>

Choices about methodology relate directly to the goals, learning outcomes, and learning tasks of your program, as well as to the selection of materials for instruction and the organization of the curriculum.<sup>2</sup> In addition, instructors' moment-to-moment decisions regarding methodology are informed by their assumptions and beliefs about the nature of language learning and teacher/learner roles.<sup>3</sup> Thus, methodology and instructional practices are neither fixed nor static. Instead, they are fluid and responsive.<sup>4</sup> In interviews with ESL program managers in Alberta and an ATESL member e-survey, many respondents acknowledged the importance of a flexible, responsive approach to teaching methodology. These responses highlight a view that is also supported in the literature, that is, that instructional practices tend to include a range of teaching and learning approaches rather than rely on one specific method as a model for instruction.<sup>5</sup>

### **Method-based instruction**

The search for the *best* method to effectively teach language has resulted in a number of methods and approaches surging in popularity and subsequently declining over the decades. Some of these include the Audiolingual Method, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT),<sup>6</sup> Communicational Approach,<sup>7</sup> the Natural Approach,<sup>8</sup> Total Physical Response,<sup>9</sup> Suggestopedia,<sup>10</sup> and the Lexical Approach.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: A guide to implementation* (Holmes, Kingwell, Pettis, & Pidlaski, 2001) offers a thorough explanation of the methodological considerations and practices for programs guided by CLB outcomes.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, learner-centred approaches tend to focus on instructional techniques that foster an active, meaning-focused approach characterized by learners interacting and collaborating with one another. In contrast, teacher-centred approaches are generally characterized by learners passively receiving knowledge from the instructor.

<sup>4</sup> Richards, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006; Nation & Macalister, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Breen & Candlin, 1980; Littlewood, 1981; Munby, 1978; van Ek, 1987.

<sup>7</sup> Prabhu, 1987.

<sup>8</sup> Krashen & Terrell, 1983.

<sup>9</sup> Asher, 1969.

<sup>10</sup> Lozanov, 1978.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, 1993/2002.

Despite the appeal commonly associated with method-based approaches to teaching and learning, a number of shortcomings have been identified in the literature and noticed by practitioners in the adult ESL classroom. For instance, Nunan (1988) notes that there is often a mismatch between methods with learners at the centre and learners who are accustomed to or prefer more traditional teacher-fronted approaches to instruction.<sup>12</sup> Methods have also been criticized for presenting a static view of instruction, specifying teacher and learner roles, and prescribing activities.<sup>13</sup> Method-based approaches do not consider the dynamic, fluid nature of the ESL classroom that arises from the interactions between learners and their instructor, and engagement with tasks, activities, and materials.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Moving beyond methods***

The *ATESL Curriculum Framework* considers curricula to be both planned and lived. Given this perspective, curriculum design should be flexible enough to allow for a variety of methods and approaches that will suit different learning and teaching styles. Within the curriculum-as-planned, the development of language proficiency, intercultural communicative competence, learning strategies, e-learning, and content area knowledge are considered in an intentional, responsive, integrated way. We propose, then, that curriculum developers and instructors avoid a one-size-fits-all approach, moving beyond a view of methods as fixed and static to a view of methods that takes a flexible, responsive approach.

Table 1 provides an overview of language-centred, learner-centred and learning-centred methods represented along a continuum. A responsive approach to instruction recognizes there is movement between these methods/ approaches depending on the linguistic and communicative focus of the task. For instance, it may be suitable to use a substitution drill as an enabling activity to focus learners' attention on a particular language form, such as the simple past verb tense (a common Audiolingual technique). The substitution drill could then be paired with a meaning-focused role-play allowing learners to build and practice communicative fluency using the target language form (a common Communicative Language Teaching technique). While the three broad categories included in the Methods Continuum have a distinct focus, there is considerable cross-over, particularly between learner- and learning-centred approaches.

The task-based approach<sup>15</sup> described in the *Section 3: Sequencing Tasks* section of the *ATESL Curriculum Framework* is not considered an instructional method; rather it is an approach to curricular content,<sup>16</sup> much like theme-based or project-based learning. A task-based curriculum, however, may include a combination of language-centred, learner-centred, and learning-centred tasks and activities.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Nunan, 1988; Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006; Richards, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> Richards, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> Candlin & Murphy, 1987; Nunan, 1989, 2004; Prabhu, 1987; Willis, 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Kumaravadivelu, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Kumaravadivelu, 2006.

**Table 1. Methods Continuum: Overview of language-centred, learner-centred, and learning-centred methods.<sup>18</sup>**

	<b>Language-centred methods</b>	<b>Learner-centred methods</b>	<b>Learning-centred methods</b>
<b>Primary focus</b>	Linguistic forms	Grammatical accuracy and communicative fluency	The learning process
<b>Language focus</b>	Language forms (i.e., linguistic/ grammatical structures)	Language forms and functions (i.e., pragmatic or meaning-focused)	Language forms and functions developed through communicative practice
<b>Guiding principles</b>	<p>Language develops in an additive and linear manner through conscious effort.</p> <p>Language learning is considered intentional.</p>	<p>Language develops in a (mostly) additive and linear way.</p> <p>Language learning is largely intentional and based on the needs, interests, and goals of the learner.</p>	<p>Language develops in a non-linear way through meaning-making.</p> <p>Language learning is more incidental than intentional.</p>
<b>Classroom practices</b>	<p>Explicit, form-focused instruction moving from simple to complex linguistic structures</p> <p>Presentation, practice, and production of discrete grammatical features and vocabulary.</p>	<p>Meaning-focused activity</p> <p>Use of authentic materials</p> <p>Tolerance of errors</p> <p>Integration of all skills within learning activities</p> <p>Open-ended tasks</p>	<p>Open-ended, real-world-based communicative interaction developed through problem-solving tasks</p>
<b>Methods</b>	Audiolingual Method	Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	<p>Communicational Approach</p> <p>Natural Approach</p>
<b>Learning and teaching activities</b>	Fill-in-the-blank, memorization, restatement, repetition, replacement, substitution drills, decontextualized drills	Information gap, scrambled sentences, language games, role play, contextualized drills and pattern practices	Reasoning gap, opinion gap, information gap, projects

<sup>18</sup> Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006.

## Principles for selecting materials

“Materials may contribute to both goals and content but they cannot determine either. What is learnt, and indeed, learnable is a product of the interaction between learners, teachers and the materials at their disposal.”<sup>19</sup>

Materials are a lasting portrayal of language and culture, and within ESL programs, effective materials are often passed from instructor to instructor to support learners from session to session. Materials are not the driver of the teaching and learning process; rather, they provide *support* and *context* for learning outcomes and tasks.

In an e-survey of the ATESL membership, respondents were asked “What kinds of materials do you use with your learners?”<sup>20</sup> Not surprisingly, results indicated that 100% of the respondents use teacher-prepared materials in their programs. In addition to using teacher-prepared materials, 94% of respondents also use authentic materials, 85% use published materials, 84% use online materials, and 34% use course packs. When ESL program administrators in Alberta were interviewed,<sup>21</sup> they reported that a wide variety of materials are used in their programs, and specifically, they referred to textbooks (with Canadian content, when available), dictionaries, web-based resources such as online repositories and websites, CLB-based documents,<sup>22</sup> profession-specific materials (e.g., professional literature, textbooks, case-studies), in-house generated materials and resources, and learner-generated materials. The following challenges were raised by the program administrators as they spoke about materials:

- Limited resources to support Canadian Language Benchmarks-based curricula and instruction
- Limited profession-specific resources
- Lack of correlation between ready-made materials and the specific outcomes identified within the curriculum
- Lack of textbooks and other published learning materials that include Canadian and multicultural content
- Limited funding to support training initiatives for learners and instructors to effectively use educational technologies<sup>23</sup> (including technology-based materials and resources)

The following section addresses nine principles for selecting materials to support and contextualize curricular goals, learning outcomes, and tasks (see *Figure 1*).<sup>24</sup> Accompanying each principle is an explanation of its role and importance, examples illustrating the principle in practice, and a set of questions that highlight key considerations to bear in mind when selecting materials. The principles are relevant for selecting, adapting, or creating materials.

<sup>19</sup> Crawford, 2002, p. 82.

<sup>20</sup> The survey was conducted from September 13-23, 2010. Eighty-two members responded, or 13.7% of 597 members contacted through the ATESL Listserv.

<sup>21</sup> Interviews were conducted from June-September, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> For examples see, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Additional Sample Task Ideas* (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002), *On Target* (Mitra, 1998), and *SAM – Summative Assessment Manual for Canadian Language Benchmarks* (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Garrison and Anderson (2003) define educational technologies as: “those tools used in formal educational practice to disseminate, illustrate, communicate, or immerse learners and teachers in activities purposefully designed to induce learning” (p. 34).

<sup>24</sup> This is not an exhaustive list, but rather a selective list to serve as a point for discussion, reflection, and evaluation of choices being made. Also, the principles are not organized hierarchically by their relative importance, and there is considerable cross-over between the principles.



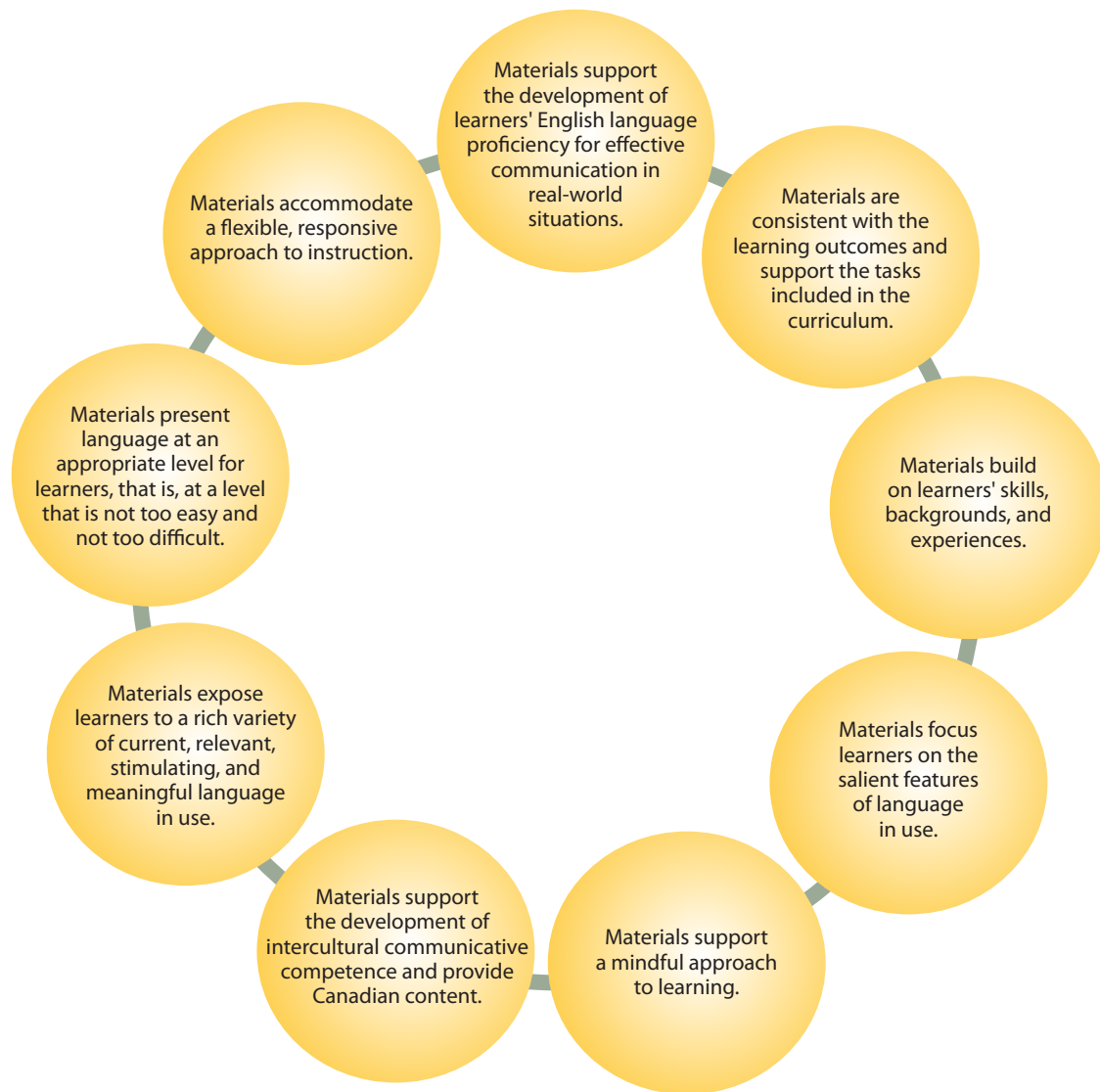


Figure 1. Nine principles for selecting materials for ESL curricula

**Materials support the development of learners' English language proficiency for effective communication in real-world situations.**

The goal of materials within any adult ESL program is to help learners build language proficiency to communicate effectively, appropriately, fluently, and accurately. This requires that learners be exposed to language use across genres and for a variety of purposes.<sup>25</sup> The goal, then, is to select materials that provide authentic or authentic-like contextualized uses of language, and to select materials that connect to learners' real-world needs,<sup>26</sup> interests, and future goals.

<sup>25</sup> Tomlinson, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> As identified by stakeholders (learners, instructors, employers, government agency representatives, and so on) in a needs analysis.



**Select materials that provide authentic, contextualized uses of language.**

Authentic materials are “materials that are not written or spoken for language teaching purposes.”<sup>27</sup> However, it is recognized that materials used in ESL classes may be “modified by simplification, elaboration or reformulation while retaining the natural properties of authentic material.”<sup>28</sup> The following are some of the advantages of including authentic or “authentic-like” materials in the ESL curriculum:

- Learners become familiar with language forms and functions, genres, and language varieties (e.g., dialect, register) used in real-world contexts. For example, some features of natural speech, including pauses and fillers, are generally not presented in published materials (e.g., textbooks).
- Learners’ confidence for communicating in real-world contexts increases when they have time to build and practice their language skills and knowledge using authentic materials in the language classroom.
- Learners recognize the relevance of instruction because they see that what they are learning will help them achieve their communicative goals outside the classroom.

**ATESL Best Practices for Adult ESL/ LINC Programming in Alberta No. 43**

*Classroom activities and tasks reflect authentic communicative, real-world interactions and tasks that learners could expect to participate in, in specific community/social, work or academic settings. (Indicator 5)*

*Reading or listening materials*

- *Appeal to the interest of learners.*
- *Are authentic, including resources from community, workplace or further education settings. (Indicator 3)*

Authentic materials focus learners’ attention on language input used in the context in which it occurs. Providing this context allows learners to see how language is actually used, and often provides enough information in the context (e.g., through formatting, photographs and images) for learners to make sense of the meaning, even when the language is somewhat beyond their level. For example, travel brochures may be used in a high intermediate ESL course to draw learners’ attention to the use of participial phrases (e.g., “Flanking Alberta’s western border with their rugged peaks and ranges, the Canadian Rockies are home to alpine meadows, emerald lakes, wild waterways, backcountry wilderness, and some of the best hiking and skiing in the world”<sup>29</sup>). The headings and pictures, as well as the context of a “travel brochure,” can help learners make sense of the content, even when the grammatical constructions and vocabulary are challenging. In contrast, decontextualized examples of language do not provide enough information for learners to guess or predict meaning. For example, a sentence about the mountains “flanking” a border in a decontextualized grammar exercise would be much more difficult for learners to understand, as would the phrases “rugged peaks and ranges,” “emerald lakes,” and “wild waterways.”

One consideration to bear in mind when selecting authentic materials, however, is that they may be protected by copyright and their inclusion in the curriculum may violate privacy or confidentiality regulations.<sup>30</sup>



**For information about providing context through theme- and project-based learning, see Section 3: Sequencing Tasks.**

<sup>27</sup> Tomlinson, 1998, p. viii.

<sup>28</sup> ATESL, 2009, p. 69.

<sup>29</sup> Travel Alberta, 2007-2011.

<sup>30</sup> Alberta educational contexts must adhere to the Copyright Act (Department of Justice Canada, 2011), the Personal Information and Protection Act (PIPA) (Government of Alberta, 1995-2011), and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) (Government of Alberta, 2004-2011).

**Select materials that connect to learners’ real world needs, interests and future goals.**

Learners have expectations about what they will need to know as they pursue their educational, employment, professional, and/or personal goals. Whether an elderly learner enrolls in a part-time ESL evening course to build his confidence to speak English within his community, or a foreign-trained engineer participates in an Enhanced Language Training program to build her professional language proficiency in order to find an engineering position in a Canadian firm, each learner is seeking to fulfill a particular goal. ESL programs vary widely across the Adult ESL/EAL Continuum<sup>31</sup> in terms of the learner cohorts they attract and serve, and even within a particular program, learner cohorts may differ from one class to another. In some settings it is possible for curriculum developers and instructors to ask learners about the types of materials they find meaningful and useful;<sup>32</sup> in other settings this may not be possible, as materials and course books may need to be ordered months in advance of a class.

**ATESL Best Practices for Adult ESL/ LINC Programming in Alberta No. 43**

*Class content (e.g., themes, listening/reading texts, speaking/writing topics, communicative tasks) is meaningful, appealing and engaging, with a transparent connection to the learners’ real-world needs and future goals.*

The goal is to select materials that align with curricular outcomes and tasks while also attending to the learners’ real world needs, interests, and future goals. Using authentic materials that are typically found within particular communicative contexts will serve to connect language with learners’ goals. For example, within LINC programs designed to help “newcomers to become oriented to the Canadian way of life,”<sup>33</sup> authentic materials that support language development may include grocery, furniture, and hardware store advertisements; application forms (e.g., employment, driver’s license, credit card); postal and courier forms; video clips; and listening materials such as webcasts, radio or educational podcasts.<sup>34</sup> When curriculum developers are able to select relevant authentic materials that connect to learners’ real world needs, interests and future goals, programs are better able to provide effective and responsive learning experiences.

Use Checklist 1 to help determine whether the materials you have selected, created, or adapted support the development of learners’ English language proficiency for effective communication in real-world situations.

<sup>31</sup> Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2008.

<sup>32</sup> It is important to acknowledge that learners may not be able to provide this information because they themselves do not know what their language needs will be. This is why it is important to consult a variety of stakeholders when determining learning needs. (See *Section 1: Determining Needs.*)

<sup>33</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> For example, Learning English with CBC Edmonton (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2011a) offers newscasts, and BBC Learning English (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2009) provides video and podcasts.

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**Checklist 1. Do the materials support the development of learners’  
English language proficiency for effective communication in real-world situations?**

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- Materials reflect the learners’ real-world communicative goals and interests.
- Materials are relevant to the learners’ future contexts.
- Materials contextualize language use in a meaningful way (e.g., through formatting and the appropriate use of quality photographs and images).
- Materials are “oriented to adults.”<sup>35</sup>
- Materials include authentic language in use or language that has been modified while retaining the properties of the authentic material (i.e., authentic or authentic-like).
- Materials provide opportunities to develop and practice language skills that are transferable to other areas of study or to professional and leisure pursuits.<sup>36</sup>
- E-learning tools and resources provide authentic language in context and expose learners to language in use consistent with their real-world communicative needs and goals.

**Materials are consistent with learning outcomes and support the tasks included in the curriculum.**

Materials must be consistent with and support the learning outcomes and tasks included in the curriculum.<sup>37</sup> The communicative goals and real-world contexts focused on in the curriculum will vary among programs represented across the Adult EAL/ESL Continuum.<sup>38</sup> Table 2 gives examples of authentic materials which could be used to support specific learning outcomes in a variety of contexts.

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<sup>35</sup> Holmes, Kingwell, Pettis, & Pidlaski, 2001, p. 136.

<sup>36</sup> Tomlinson, 2010.

<sup>37</sup> For example, LINC programs focus on developing the communicative skills required for engagement in the community, including going to the grocery store, attending parent-teacher meetings, requesting information from community or government agencies. ELT programs, on the other hand, focus on profession-specific communicative contexts, such as eliciting information from a patient, conducting a meeting, gathering feedback from peers. EAP programs focus on building the academic language skills needed for success in future educational endeavors.

<sup>38</sup> Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2008.

**Table 2. Authentic materials to support learning outcomes within a particular real-world communicative situation**

<b>Real-world communicative contexts</b>	<b>Learning outcomes</b>	<b>Types of authentic materials</b>
In the community	Learners will identify key words and information (e.g., date, time, location, event, cost, items to bring) in a short formatted text.	Sample fieldtrip forms for elementary school children sent home for parents to sign.
In educational programs/institutions	Learners will correctly cite sources to support their own opinions in writing.	Published articles, sample research papers, APA/MLA guidelines.
In the workplace	Learners will correctly and accurately complete a moderately complex, formatted order form.	Sample purchase and sales order forms, job applications, medical or dental benefits forms.
In professional or trade workplaces	Learners will create a PowerPoint slideshow providing detailed safety procedures suited to their target workplace.	Safety brochures, emergency protocols, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System documents, images.

Use Checklist 2 below to help you determine whether the materials you have selected, created or adapted are consistent with the learning outcomes and support the tasks included in the curriculum.

**Checklist 2. Are the materials consistent with the learning outcomes and do they support the tasks included in the curriculum?**

- Materials serve the course; materials are not the driver of the course.
- Materials are tied in some way to one or more learning outcomes.
- Materials support the learning outcomes and tasks in meaningful, intentional ways with real-world communicative goals and contexts in mind.
- Materials are related to and organized by the themes, projects, or tasks presented in the curriculum.
- Materials support both skill-building and meaning-making tasks and activities.
- Materials support the building of both receptive and productive language skills within each theme, project, and/or across tasks.
- Materials promote both language learning and language use.
- If relevant, e-learning materials support the development of digital literacy.
- As appropriate, materials include answer keys and provide annotations to guide instructors as they plan.

**Materials build on learners' skills, backgrounds, and experiences.**

Adult ESL learners bring with them a diverse range of language and literacy skills, cultural backgrounds, educational experiences, and life skills that impact their learning experiences and expectations. While some learners may come to the second language classroom with post-secondary education or training, others may have experienced interrupted education or perhaps have never had an opportunity to attend a formal school. A range of factors such as individual learning styles, multiple intelligences,<sup>39</sup> attitudes, openness, and flexibility also influence how learners learn. Needs analyses can help you identify the strengths, abilities, skills, and expectations of learners, and this information can guide your decisions as you select materials that will support curricular goals, outcomes and tasks, and build on the background and experiences of your particular learners.



**For more about needs analyses, see *Section 1: Determining Needs*.**

Materials provide opportunities for learners to prepare for learning, as well as facilitate the learning process. For instance, asking learners to consider what they already know about a topic (or what their past experiences have been in a particular situation) works to connect their background knowledge<sup>40</sup> and previous knowledge<sup>41</sup> to new information. This may be done in a number of ways, for example, by including visuals (e.g., photos, images, maps) and graphic organizer templates<sup>42</sup> as a part of the learning activities. When visuals and graphic organizers are included as a part of the curriculum package, instructors are able to select those best-suited to the learners, the tasks, and the instructional approach. Table 3 below provides examples of how visuals and graphic organizers can be used at different language levels.

<sup>39</sup> Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999.

<sup>40</sup> e.g., learning-to-learn strategies learners currently use, knowledge about their first language.

<sup>41</sup> e.g., content based knowledge.

<sup>42</sup> Graphic organizers are tools for visually organizing and communicating ideas. Examples of graphic organizers include fishbone diagrams charting cause and effect; Venn diagrams showing how events, issues, and concepts overlap; semantic/concept maps showing the relationship between ideas and concepts; timelines; storyboards; K-W-L and K-W-H-L charts.

**Table 3. Select materials that include visuals and graphic organizers.**

**Language level**

**Example**

Beginner

Use a K-W-L chart<sup>43</sup> as a pre-reading and post-reading activity.

- As a pre-reading activity, learners examine the title and a short descriptive paragraph, and then complete the **K**now column of a K-W-L chart. Learners then complete the **W**hat column describing what they want to *learn* about the topic. This pre-reading activity serves to link what learners already know with what they want to know or learn about the topic. It also helps them anticipate what they might read about in the short text. This builds on learners’ previous knowledge and prepares them to learn something new.
- As a post-reading activity, learners complete the **L**earned column of the K-W-L chart, stating what they learned about the topic from the reading.

<b>K</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>
<b>What I know</b>	<b>What I want to learn</b>	<b>What I learned</b>
•	•	•

Advanced

Use a series of authentic pictures of well-known “moments frozen in time” (e.g., Terry Fox running along the TransCanada highway, Neil Armstrong walking on the moon, Japanese students folding cranes for the Peace Park in Hiroshima) to prompt learners to use manner clauses in descriptions.

- Distribute a few photos to each group of two or three learners. Using the pictures as prompts, learners describe the people or the scene in the photo using manner clauses “as if” and “as though.” After discussing the photo using manner clauses, learners write their descriptions in two or three sentences.
- Groups then trade their pictures and their sentences. The new groups correct the existing sentences and add to the list of sentences using manner clauses.
- Groups continue to trade the pictures, with learners correcting the sentences of others and adding new ones until all groups have had an opportunity to view each picture. Each group presents the sentences written for the picture they end up with and discusses the corrections.

Use Checklist 3 below to help you determine whether the materials you have selected, created, or adapted take learners’ skills, backgrounds, and experiences into consideration.

<sup>43</sup> Another version of this graphic organizer is a K-W-H-L chart, representing ‘What I know,’ ‘What I want to learn,’ ‘How I will learn’ and ‘What I learned.’

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**Checklist 3. Do the materials consider learners' skills, backgrounds, and experiences?**

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- Materials selected for inclusion within ESL curricula build from the learners' background and previous knowledge.
- Materials address a variety of ways of learning (i.e., appeal to different learning styles and intelligences).
- Materials are sensitive to potentially disturbing content (e.g., images depicting war scenes, refugee camps).
- Visuals and graphic organizers prepare learners for learning and facilitate the learning process.
- Materials are inherently engaging and appealing to learners.
- E-learning materials accommodate a range of digital literacy levels.

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**Materials focus learners on the salient features of language in use.**

Materials may be selected to support a skill-based course that focuses exclusively on developing one language skill (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, or writing), or materials may be selected to support an integrated skills approach. In both approaches to curriculum design, the selected materials should draw learners' attention to the salient features of authentic language in use. There is general consensus in the literature that drawing learners' attention to particular features of language will eventually lead to the acquisition of the target features.<sup>44</sup> However, if learners are to "be ready to acquire the points being taught,"<sup>45</sup> they need to

- Have some prior knowledge of a language structure to support new learning.
- Be willing to actively notice new language features.

To support learners as they develop language proficiency, materials should focus on the target language skills, forms, and functions in a sequenced and spiraled way. In this way, instruction and learning build on learners' background and previous knowledge and move them through increasingly more demanding tasks and activities, building language proficiency and content area knowledge. As discussed in *Section 3: Sequencing Tasks*, materials and the tasks they support may be sequenced to move learners from form-based instruction to meaning-making practice, and from receptive to productive skills. In addition, materials that appeal to the learners' interests are more likely to engage learners and motivate them to notice new language features.

While it is important to select materials that present language in an authentic (or authentic-like) context,<sup>46</sup> at times it may be useful to expose learners to a particular language feature in a less authentic context. For example, a short text can be adapted by removing "extraneous" or distracting information and emphasizing or glossing particular vocabulary words in order to scaffold learning and maximize language learning opportunities. The example below illustrates how an authentic piece of text may be simplified and formatted to focus learners on prepositional phrases and adjectives:

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<sup>44</sup> Schmidt, 1990.

<sup>45</sup> Tomlinson, 1998, p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> See "Select materials that provide authentic, contextualized uses of language" above.

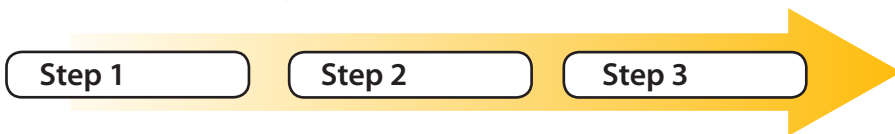


- **Original, authentic sentence:** “Flanking Alberta’s western border with their rugged peaks and ranges, the Canadian Rockies are home to alpine meadows, emerald lakes, wild waterways, backcountry wilderness, and some of the best hiking and skiing in the world.”<sup>47</sup>
- **Simplified sentence:** Flanking Alberta’s **western** border..., the Canadian Rockies are home to **alpine** meadows, **emerald** lakes, **wild** waterways, [and] **backcountry** wilderness.

The goal is to focus learners’ attention on the salient aspects of language, and provide the scaffolding they need to build the targeted language skills. Subsequent exposures to the language feature may then be provided through authentic texts.

**Table 4. Sample tasks using authentic materials to focus learners on language features.**

Language level	Sample task
Beginner	Group learners into pairs or small groups and provide each with a set of photos showing road signs. To activate background and previous knowledge, ask learners to discuss the meaning of each road sign within their group. Introduce new vocabulary (e.g., yield, stop, caution) and the grammar point for constructing imperatives to give directions (e.g., do not enter, go straight, stop ahead, turn left/right). Using Google maps, <sup>48</sup> take learners on a virtual road trip to tour a destination of their choosing. As the tour progresses past road signs, learners provide directions about where they want to go next.
Intermediate	As a pre-listening activity, provide learners with a list of time clauses (“Once you have ____, you can ____”). In pairs or independently, ask learners to look at the construction, practice pauses and intonation before the comma, and then listen to an authentic recording (a podcast) regarding how to resolve a dispute. In this way, the salient feature of language that the instructor wants to focus on (time clauses) is highlighted. Ask learners to listen to the recording once to identify the time clauses, then to listen a second time, taking notes. In small groups, learners create a flow chart of steps showing how the dispute was resolved.



To provide more communicative practice and make the task meaningful, ask learners to give their own instructions for handling disputes in the workplace using a minimum of 3 time clauses, for instance.

<sup>47</sup> Travel Alberta, 2007-2011.

<sup>48</sup> A computer with Internet access is required, preferably connected to a LCD projector and screen so all learners can experience the virtual road trip together.

**Advanced** As a pre-viewing activity, ask learners to brainstorm for phrases (i.e., language functions) speakers use to interrupt one another as they listen. As learners view a video recording of a talk show that covers a controversial topic, they add to their list. Together, the instructor and learners compile a list of expressions for interrupting including, for example, extended fillers, clarification requests, and so on. As a post-viewing activity, pairs of learners write and present a dialogue on a relevant topic incorporating these communicative techniques. Learners debrief by listing the situations (e.g., heated budget meetings) in which it might be necessary to interrupt in order to have one’s say.

Use Checklist 4 below to help determine whether the materials you have selected, created, or adapted help learners to focus on salient features of language.

**Checklist 4. Do the materials help learners focus on the salient features of language?**

- Materials build on learners’ previous knowledge about target language features.
- Materials are selected to provide multiple exposures to the target language (e.g., skills, forms, functions), offering learners repeated language practice in novel or different contexts (i.e., recycling).
- Materials present opportunities for learners to build accuracy and fluency by accommodating a focus on forms, functions, and meaning to prepare for real-world communication.
- Materials include language input that is contextualized in a meaningful way (i.e., do the materials draw learners’ attention to the use of language features).
- Materials encourage learners to explore different contexts in which new language may (or may not) be appropriate and useful.



For more information about sequencing, spiraling, and scaffolding, see *Section 3: Sequencing Tasks*.

**Materials support a mindful approach to learning.**

To support the development of mindful learning skills, select materials that promote the use of socioaffective, metacognitive and cognitive learning strategies. This will enhance learners’ abilities to retain, recall, and apply new information, as well as encourage learners to be motivated, confident, open, engaged, and interested in learning – important aspects of active, mindful, self-directed language learning. Although materials may address the development of language learning strategies, learners may not notice this focus. It is important, then, that instructors explicitly address strategy learning in class.



For more about socioaffective, metacognitive, and cognitive learner strategies and for more about the eight aspects of mindful learning, see *Section 6: Mindful Learning*.

As previously mentioned, materials that build on learners' background and previous knowledge, and materials that scaffold learning by using graphic organizers and images, promote active learning.<sup>49</sup> Another way to promote active learning in the ESL classroom is through materials that focus attention on the social and collaborative nature of learning. Collaboration is mindful as it requires learners work together to achieve some ends.<sup>50</sup> Collaborative learning involves "joint work on tasks, creation of shared definitions, pooling and sharing of knowledge, and creation of emergent outcomes"<sup>51</sup> with the purpose of creating common communicative practices and common understandings to achieve the goals or outcomes of the group. Select materials that engage learners intentionally, purposefully, and collaboratively in communicative practice to making meaning within a dyad or small group. For example,

- Present a stimulating text (e.g., magazine article, essay) for learners to read and share as a jigsaw activity.
- Provide case studies or simulations for learners to investigate, discuss and reach consensus as a group.
- Present a problem that requires that learners collaborate to negotiate a solution (e.g., writing a Dear Abby column or resolving an interpersonal conflict in the workplace).

Themes and projects are ideally suited to engaging learners in collaborative learning opportunities to promote mindful learning through carefully selected materials.



**For more information on themes and projects, see Section 3: Sequencing Tasks.**

**For more information on active learning, see Section 6: Mindful Learning.**

Use Checklist 5 to help you determine whether the materials you have selected, created, or adapted support a mindful approach to learning.

#### Checklist 5. Do the materials support a mindful approach to learning?

- Materials promote positive affect among learners.
- Materials integrate learning strategies (and instructors make these explicit in the class).
- Materials help learners develop the skills they need to become autonomous learners.
- Materials present content in a conditional format, rather than as a series of absolute truths.<sup>52</sup>
- Materials provide opportunities for learners to consider how their attitudes and approaches shape their learning experiences.
- Materials encourage self-reflection.<sup>53</sup>
- Materials provide opportunities for learners to make discoveries about language.
- Materials support active rather than passive participation.
- Materials support learner involvement in the learning process by including opportunities for interaction and collaboration.
- Selected e-learning tools and resources emphasize collaboration and the co-construction of knowledge.

<sup>49</sup> For more information, see "Materials build on learners' skills, backgrounds, and experiences" above.

<sup>50</sup> While it may be tempting to equate interaction with collaboration, these are not interchangeable terms. Interactive activity may or may not focus learners' attention in an active, mindful way; in other words, learners may be interacting with one another, but this may not be contributing to the efforts of the group or the development of language knowledge or skills.

<sup>51</sup> Haythornthwaite, 2006, p. 12

<sup>52</sup> Siegel, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Tomlinson, 2010.

**Materials support the development of intercultural communicative competence and provide Canadian content.**

*“Language materials nowadays can have an enormous social impact in terms of making learners aware of the value of communication in modern multicultural societies as well as in promoting the idea of mutual understanding, tolerance and respect towards difference in diverse multicultural scenarios.”<sup>54</sup>*

Results from interviews with ESL program managers in Alberta revealed that ICC is often not articulated as a learning outcome within the curriculum; instead, instructors generally address culture in the classroom on a moment-to-moment basis. Furthermore, instructors may not be well prepared for teaching culture and, therefore, often rely on published materials, specifically textbooks, for cultural information.<sup>55</sup> One of the mandates of LINC programs is to teach “Canadian values” to newcomers to Canada. However, in their study of textbooks used by these programs, Thomson and Derwing (2004) found that 64% of the textbooks “had little or no substantive Canadian content,”<sup>56</sup> and when texts did focus on Canadian culture, it was generally on big ‘C’ manifestations of culture (i.e., cultural facts, behaviours, dress, food, traditions). Texts did not address “the complexity and ambiguity of the cultural experience as a social construct.”<sup>57</sup> The published materials used to support LINC programs, the largest Canadian ESL initiative, do not necessarily include the content they were selected to provide.<sup>58</sup>

**ATESL Best Practices for Adult ESL/ LINC Programming in Alberta No. 63**

*Instructors have convenient access to an organized and regularly updated collection of teaching/learning/assessment resources that are relevant to the curriculum and the needs of adult ESL learners and include Canadian/local content.*

While it is often challenging to select published materials that present Canadian content and culture, other types of materials may be selected or developed. Table 5 lists a sample of authentic materials that could be used to support ICC objectives.



**For a detailed discussion of C/c culture, and for more information on making intercultural awareness and competence explicit in the classroom, see Section 7: Intercultural Communicative Competence.**

<sup>54</sup> Troncoso, 2010, p. 83.

<sup>55</sup> Thomson & Derwing, 2004.

<sup>56</sup> p. 23.

<sup>57</sup> Thomson & Derwing, 2004, p. 23.

<sup>58</sup> Thomson & Derwing, 2004.

Table 5. Authentic materials that support ICC within the (adapted) Massachusetts Model.<sup>59</sup>

Learners will...	Types of authentic materials
Analyze everyday behaviours in Canadian cultures and compare and contrast these with their own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use film clips or podcasts to focus on cultural conventions (such as greetings and leave-takings, politeness strategies, use of reported speech) in Canada and in the cultures represented by learners in the class.</li> </ul>
Recognize cultural stereotypes – favourable and discriminatory – and describe how they impact their own and others’ behaviours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the cultural profiles prepared by the Government of Canada (<a href="http://www.cp-pc.ca/">http://www.cp-pc.ca/</a>) to discuss cultural stereotypes.</li> <li>• Use Newseum (<a href="http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages">http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages</a>) to read and view the front page of world newspapers to discuss cultural stereotypes.</li> </ul>
Identify and describe the significance of cultural images and symbols in Canadian cultures and their own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Canadian and foreign currency to focus on the images and symbols used to represent Canada and other countries.</li> <li>• Invite members of a local cultural association to share cultural information and artifacts.</li> </ul>
Identify culturally-determined behaviour patterns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have learners take note of culturally determined behavior patterns (e.g., related to personal distance, eye contact, physical touch, posture, listenership, interrupting, etc.) while on fieldtrips, volunteer opportunities, or work placement programs.</li> </ul>
Compare and contrast differences and similarities in the values and beliefs of their own cultures and Canadian cultures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use “Letters to the Editor” to highlight current controversies that reflect often conflicting Canadian values (e.g., individual rights versus the good of society). Have learners participate in role-play activities (simulations, decision dramas, responding to letters to the editor, posting comments to an article) that allow them to engage in the debates that Canadians are discussing.</li> <li>• Use excerpts from the Rick Mercer Report, “Canada Explained”<sup>60</sup> to stimulate discussion about how Canadians are being portrayed (or how they portray themselves), and whether learners agree with that perception.</li> </ul>
Analyze and describe diversity in Canadian cultures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask learners to find three photographs to illustrate a brochure promoting a particular profession. The photos they choose (e.g., iStock.com, photos.com, Microsoft Word clip art) should reflect the diversity that exists or that they wish existed. They present reasons for their choice of photos.</li> <li>• Use Google maps of culturally diverse areas of your city (e.g., Chinatown, Little Italy) to prompt a discussion or writing activity in which learners analyze and describe diversity found in Canadian cities.</li> </ul>

<sup>59</sup> An adapted version of the Intercultural Knowledge and Skills strand from the Massachusetts Model (Massachusetts Department of Education & Adult and Community Learning Services, 2005) is offered in *Intercultural Communicative Competence* as a guide to how ICC may be made explicit and developed in the classroom.

<sup>60</sup> Rick Mercer Report, 2009

Examine their own cultural adjustment process and the personal balance that must be struck between acculturation and preserving their own culture.

- Use immigrant stories,<sup>61</sup> reflections, or interviews to prompt learners to reflect on others' experiences. Learners can be encouraged to also explore their own experiences and choices related to acculturating into Canadian culture and their views on preserving their own culture (e.g., through journaling).

Materials provide context for language learning, and at the same time, materials convey culture in both explicit<sup>62</sup> (big "C" culture) and implicit<sup>63</sup> (small "c" culture) ways. Materials and resources can be used to support learners as they build English language proficiency and knowledge for communication in real-world contexts that reflect the multicultural nature of Canadian society. While supporting the development of intercultural communicative competence and learning about Canadian culture, it is also important that learners' own cultural backgrounds are respected, validated, and represented in the materials selected for instructional use.

Use Checklist 6 below to guide the selection (or adaption and creation) of materials that support the development of intercultural communicative competence and provide a Canadian perspective.

**Checklist 6. Do the materials focus on intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and include Canadian content?**

- Materials present real-life situations and issues that challenge learners to think about different ideas and world views.
- Materials support learners as they widen their cultural knowledge and awareness by addressing both big "C" culture and small "c" culture.
- Materials support learners' tolerance of cultural ambiguity, for example, by respecting different viewpoints and understanding different cultural identities.
- Materials are sensitive to diversity issues, for example, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and religious views.
- Materials encourage learners to engage in self-reflection about their experiences in Canadian culture.
- Materials represent the multicultural nature of Canadian society (e.g., presenting the diverse cultural and linguistic nature of Canada).
- Materials show the regional diversity of Canada (e.g., geographic areas, local events and festivals).

<sup>61</sup> For example, *NorQuest student success stories* (CBC, 2011b), *Immigrant stories* (2011), and *Immigrants of distinction award recipients* (Immigrant Services Calgary, 2011).

<sup>62</sup> Explicit cultural content may, for example, focus on geography, history, government, laws, and cultural facts (Thomson & Derwing, 2004).

<sup>63</sup> Implicit cultural content focuses attention on consciousness-raising, for example, through exposure to shared values (Thomson & Derwing, 2004).

**Materials expose learners to a rich variety of current, relevant, stimulating, and meaningful language in use.**

“*Ideally materials at all levels should provide frequent exposure to authentic input which is rich and varied. In other words the input should vary in style, mode, medium and purpose and should be rich in features which are characteristic of authentic discourse in the target language.*”<sup>64</sup>

### **Select materials that expose learners to a rich variety of language in use.**

Language learners need exposure to language in a wide variety of ways and for a variety of purposes.<sup>65</sup> To create a learning environment that is linguistically rich, consider including materials that expose learners to a rich variety of language in use.

- Provide a selection of spoken materials that includes different pronunciations, accents, or dialects (e.g., regional, generational) that are reasonably representative of the range of English language varieties found in Canada. Different spoken discourse types may include formal (e.g., speech, lecture), semi-planned (e.g., radio talk show, store announcements), or informal/spontaneous (e.g., “water cooler” conversations, telephone messages). Include listening materials that include both scripted and unscripted speech.
- Include a wide variety of written genre types that support the learning outcomes and accommodate learner interests and goals, for example, literature (e.g., short stories, novels, poems, folktales), essays, profession-specific journals and readings, reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, thesauri), guides and manuals, newspaper and magazine articles, recipes, newsletters and notices, advertisements, songs, telephone books, maps, and schedules (e.g., bus, festivals, sporting events).
- Incorporate web-based or educational technologies that allow instructors and learners to explore both spoken and written language in use, while also encouraging collaborative language output. Technology-based materials may include e-mail, e-surveys, podcasts, web sites (both static and interactive), wikis, weblogs, webcasts, webinars, video, and social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).

Incorporate a wide array of spoken and written materials across a range of registers and genres that work to support the learning outcomes, tasks, themes and projects that are likely to be relevant, stimulating and meaningful to the learners.

### **Select materials that are current, relevant, stimulating, and meaningful.**

Learners benefit most when a wide variety of relevant and engaging materials are available. While it is important to ensure that materials address the language skills, strategies, and content outcomes of the course, it is also important to ensure that the materials selected have content that is current, relevant, stimulating and meaningful for the learners. However, what is meaningful and motivating for one group of learners may not be so for another group. For example, a well written, attractive text which explores the topic of UFOs may be rejected by a group of immigrant professionals because the topic of the unit is deemed to be irrelevant to their goals to enter a profession in Canada – this despite the fact that the reading skills of the activity (determining the main idea, distinguishing fact from opinion)

<sup>64</sup> Tomlinson, 1998, p. 13.

<sup>65</sup> Tomlinson, 2010, p. 87.



may be relevant to their profession and may have been identified as learning outcomes in the curriculum. In contrast, a group of EAP learners may enjoy exploring this topic as they practice the academic skills that are valued in the next stages of their education. No matter how well materials are prepared, or how closely they align to curricular outcomes, if learners do not perceive the topic to be relevant, engaging, stimulating, and meaningful, new materials will need to be selected or recommended.

In addition to providing appealing content for learners, when selecting materials for inclusion in the curriculum it is also important to evaluate the presentation and the quality of the materials, which can reflect the professional standard of your program. Curriculum developers may want to consider the following types of questions to guide their evaluation of materials:

- Are written materials visually appealing and inviting? Is there sufficient white space?
- Is the formatting clear and easy to follow, with appropriate headings and subheadings?
- Is the font size and style appropriate for the learners?
- Are the images and graphics appropriate? Do these add to rather than detract from the text?
- Is the content accurate and free of editing errors?
- Are audio recordings clear and easy to understand?

Checklist 7 provides additional issues to consider when selecting engaging materials to support ESL curriculum.

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**Checklist 7. Do the materials expose learners to a rich variety of current, relevant, stimulating, and meaningful language in use?**

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- Materials provide extensive exposure to spoken and/or written language within the context of tasks, or themes and projects.
- A sufficient number of materials are provided to allow instructors and learners to make choices based on learners' interests, future communicative contexts, and goals.
- Online learning materials provide learners opportunities to develop written and spoken language skills across a range of genres (e.g., social networking, wikis, weblogs, podcasts, webcasts).
- Materials provide opportunities for learners to develop written and spoken skills for communicating with a variety of audiences.
- Materials used to support themes, projects, and topics are relevant to the types of learners who generally take the course.
- Materials are relevant to the learners' future contexts.
- Materials are meaningful and connected to learners' interests and goals.
- Materials include stimulating and interesting content/topics for learners.
- Materials reflect current content, references, graphics and images (e.g., modern clothing, hairstyles).
- Materials present content that is accurate and error free.

- Materials are visually appealing, inviting, and inherently motivating.
- Materials present clear and easy-to-follow formatting, with appropriate use of font sizes and styles, headings and subheadings, images and graphics.

**Materials present language at an appropriate level for learners, that is, at a level that is not too easy, and not too difficult.**

The level of difficulty or complexity of language input is one of the more challenging factors to consider when selecting materials. For courses that are benchmarked to the CLB, performance conditions are a useful way to judge whether materials are at an appropriate level. In *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a second language for adults*,<sup>66</sup> performance conditions are listed for each skill (i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking) at each benchmark level. These performance conditions can help one select (or create) texts, activities, and tasks that are at an appropriate level for a particular class. They can also help one judge whether the texts, activities, and tasks in published materials are appropriate for a particular benchmark level. For instance, see Table 6 for lists of performance conditions that could serve as checklists to judge whether listening texts and tasks are appropriate for Benchmark 2, reading texts and tasks are appropriate for Benchmark 9, speaking materials and tasks are appropriate for learners at Benchmark 1, or writing materials and tasks are appropriate for learners at Benchmark 5.

**Table 6. Sample Performance Conditions (Reprinted with Permission)**

**CLB 2 Listening Performance Conditions<sup>67</sup>**

- \_\_\_ Listening texts are short monologues and dialogues on familiar everyday topics.
- \_\_\_ Speech is clear and at a slow to normal rate.
- \_\_\_ Context strongly supports the utterances with visual clues: face to face, video mediated, or both.
- \_\_\_ Learner is adequately briefed for focused listening.
- \_\_\_ Instructions are mostly simple and compound clauses.
- \_\_\_ Some tasks require oral or physical response.
- \_\_\_ Some tasks are in a “guided” writing format (e.g., circle or match items, fill in blanks).
- \_\_\_ Learner may require some repetitions.

**CLB 9 Reading Performance Conditions<sup>68</sup>**

- \_\_\_ Context and topic may be partially familiar and unfamiliar.
- \_\_\_ Text is complex, on complex sociocultural, economic, or political issues.
- \_\_\_ Text is three to five pages in length.
- \_\_\_ If handwritten, text is legible, easy to read.
- \_\_\_ Instructions are in clear, explicit and coherent prose, but not always presented in a sequential step by step form.
- \_\_\_ Process is familiar to the learner (e.g., learner has been briefed).
- \_\_\_ Text is printed or electronic.
- \_\_\_ Topics and language may be abstract, conceptual or technical
- \_\_\_ Texts are descriptive, narrative, evaluative; reports, expository and argumentative essays, problem-solution papers, research papers.

<sup>66</sup> Pawlikowska-Smith, 2005.

<sup>67</sup> Pawlikowska-Smith, 2005, p. 25.

<sup>68</sup> Pawlikowska-Smith, 2005, p. 134.

**CLB 1 Speaking Performance Conditions<sup>69</sup>**

- \_\_\_ Interactions are short, face to face, informal, and with one person at a time.
- \_\_\_ Learner’s speech is guided by questions from the interlocutor.
- \_\_\_ Learner’s speech is encouraged by feedback from the interlocutor.
- \_\_\_ Instruction is a short two- to three-word utterance.

**CLB 5 Writing Performance Conditions<sup>70</sup>**

- \_\_\_ Circumstances range from informal to more formal occasions.
- \_\_\_ Addressees are familiar.
- \_\_\_ Topics are of immediate everyday relevance.
- \_\_\_ Letter is one paragraph long.
- \_\_\_ Note is short (four to six clauses)
- \_\_\_ Texts may be short oral texts on concrete factual matters with five to seven details.
- \_\_\_ Information to reproduce is up to one page long, with easy layout; is in legible handwriting or print.
- \_\_\_ Forms are moderately complex in format, 20 to 30 items long.
- \_\_\_ Messages are three to five sentences long.

The Essential Skill “levels of complexity” can also provide guidance when determining whether materials and tasks are at an appropriate level for particular courses; however, it is important to note that the complexity levels do not correlate directly to the CLB levels. In contrast to the twelve CLB levels, there are four levels of complexity for the Oral Communication essential skill, and five levels of complexity for Writing, Reading, and Document Use. The document *Relating Canadian Language Benchmarks to Essential Skills: A Comparative Framework*<sup>71</sup> contains tables which compare CLB proficiency levels with each Essential Skill complexity level, for speaking, listening, reading, writing, and document use. The “Global Descriptions” in the Comparative Framework for each level of each Essential Skill can be helpful when determining the complexity levels of texts, tasks, and materials.

For the most part, Essential Skills complexity levels correlate with CLB levels 5-8. The *Essential Skills Primer: CLB Stage 1*<sup>72</sup> is a guide for incorporating Essential Skills into classes at lower CLB benchmarks. It contains diagnostic tools for each of the Essential Skills at lower level benchmarks, and suggests tasks to help learners build towards Complexity Level 1 Essential Skill competencies. The descriptions of Essential Skills building tasks for each of the different benchmark levels can assist curriculum developers and instructors when they are making decisions about the appropriateness of materials for courses at lower CLB levels.

Use Checklist 8 to help determine whether the materials you have selected, created or adapted present language at an appropriate level for learners.

<sup>69</sup> Pawlikowska-Smith, 2005, p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> Pawlikowska-Smith, 2005, p. 100.

<sup>71</sup> Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2009.

**Checklist 8. Do the materials present language at an appropriate level for learners?**

- Materials expose learners to new language (forms, functions, vocabulary, expressions, etc.).
- Tasks, enabling activities, and texts (length, complexity) are challenging but not overwhelming for learners (i.e., they require some effort, but are not discouragingly difficult).
- Sufficient scaffolding and context is included to support learners as they listen, read, and perform tasks and activities.
- If relevant, speaking and writing tasks, and listening and reading texts/tasks conform to the performance conditions listed for the relevant CLB levels.
- If relevant, materials based on Essential Skills tasks conform to the global descriptions listed for the ES complexity level that correlates to the CLB level of the class.<sup>73</sup>



For more information on the Canadian Language Benchmarks, see *Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2011*.

For more information on the Essential Skills Profiles, see the *Essential Skills Profiles* on the HRSDC website.

For more information on relating the CLB to the ES, see the *Comparative Framework at ITSESENTIAL.ca*.

**Materials accommodate a flexible, responsive approach to instruction.**

To meet the practical needs of instructors, whenever possible, present materials in the curriculum as a digital collection or repository of resources that instructors can “personalize and localize.”<sup>74</sup> When materials are presented in this way, instructors are able to make decisions about the materials they use in the classroom, and they have flexibility to adapt and/or sequence materials in ways that best address the learning needs of their students.<sup>75</sup> For instance, an instructor may choose to personalize the materials she presents to her particular learner cohort by substituting learners’ names or the names of local places into a written or oral story or into a grammar or vocabulary worksheet to add interest and familiarity to the activity. Personalizing and localizing materials in this way works to bring relevancy and interest to the materials, so learners are likely to be more engaged in the materials and better able to relate to the content. Further, when graphic organizer templates are included in the curriculum package, instructors can adapt them as necessary to support specific tasks or enabling activities. When instructors are given the flexibility to personalize the materials, they are able to cater to the various learning styles, preferences and intelligences of their learners as well as better address their needs, interests, and learning goals. Curriculum designers may want to provide suggestions and examples to guide instructors’ choices for localizing and personalizing materials.

<sup>73</sup> For CLB levels 5-12, see the “Tables for Comparison of Canadian Language Benchmarks” for speaking, listening, reading, writing and reading & writing (i.e., document use) (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2005). For CLB levels 1-4, see *Essential Skills primer: CLB Stage 1* (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2005).

<sup>74</sup> Tomlinson, 2010, p. 96.

<sup>75</sup> Tomlinson, 2010.

Use Checklist 9 below to help you determine whether the materials you have selected, created, or adapted accommodate a flexible, responsive approach to instruction.

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**Checklist 9. Do the materials presented in the curriculum accommodate a flexible, responsive approach to instruction?**

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- Whenever possible, materials, particularly those generated in-house, are offered to instructors in a digital format.
  - The materials are presented with suggestions and examples for their use in supporting tasks and enabling activities.
  - The materials are presented with suggestions and examples for personalizing and/or localizing the content to address a particular cohort of learners.
  - Materials may be adapted to reflect changes in learner demographics, immigration trends, trends in education, institutional requirements, and so on.
  - Materials are presented with adequate guidance for instructors to use without increasing their preparation time.
-

## Materials Aligned with the CLB or Essential Skills

As mentioned earlier, one of the challenges noted by program administrators was a lack of resources and materials to support CLB-based curricula and instruction. In actuality, much material has been developed specifically for LINC and CLB-based classes, and some teaching materials have been developed that relate to the Essential Skills (ES). Table 7 below provides a list of some of these materials.

**Table 7. CLB and ES teaching materials.**

Document	Description	Source
<b>Alberta LINC 5 Curriculum</b> <sup>76</sup>	<p>A free, downloadable document that includes (among other things) an implementation guide with sample topics, tasks/activities, project ideas, resources, scheduling suggestions, rubrics, and evaluation forms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 6 listening and speaking</li> <li>• CLB 5 reading and writing</li> </ul>	<p>NorQuest College</p> <p><a href="http://www.norquest.ca/pdf/edresources/linc5_aug08.pdf">http://www.norquest.ca/pdf/edresources/linc5_aug08.pdf</a></p> <p>Also available on the ATESL database <a href="http://www.atesl.ca/resources">www.atesl.ca/resources</a></p>
<b>Learning English with CBC</b>	<p>Free, downloadable ESL lessons tied to news stories. It includes lesson plans with listening and vocabulary activities based on shorter weekly newscasts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 4+</li> </ul> <p>Free downloadable lesson plans based on longer monthly feature stories (including background readings and newscasts). These lesson plans focus on the 4 skills, as well as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, along with suggested websites for further learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 6+</li> </ul>	<p>CBC Edmonton</p> <p><a href="http://www.cbc.ca/edmonton/eal/">http://www.cbc.ca/edmonton/eal/</a></p>
<b>LINC 1-5 Curriculum Guidelines</b>	<p>A free, on-line curriculum resource that includes 12 themes with three topics for each LINC level. Each topic includes development ideas, strategies for learners, resources, outcomes for skills, language focus, and sample tasks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 1-7 speaking/listening</li> <li>• CLB 1-6 reading/writing</li> </ul>	<p>At Work Settlement.Org</p> <p><a href="http://www.settlement.org/downloads/linc/LCG1to5/themes.htm">http://www.settlement.org/downloads/linc/LCG1to5/themes.htm</a></p>

<sup>76</sup> Capune, 2008.

<p><b>LINC 1-4 Classroom Activities</b></p>	<p>Four free downloadable documents with supplementary language learning activities organized by the 12 themes of the LINC 1-5 Curriculum Guidelines, including audio files. The LINC 3 &amp; 4 activities are available to learners and instructors on-line.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 1-5 speaking/listening</li> <li>• CLB 1-4 reading/writing</li> </ul>	<p>At Work Settlement.Org  <a href="http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_detail.asp?doc_id=1004978">http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_detail.asp?doc_id=1004978</a></p>
<p><b>LINC 5-7 Curriculum Guidelines</b></p>	<p>Free downloadable documents that include 20 units for teaching language in specific communicative situations (academic skills, business writing, interacting with others, looking for a job, managing information, meetings, telephone calls), linked to the Essential Skills, along with ideas for thematic content related to the 12 themes from the LINC 1-5 document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 7-8 speaking/listening</li> <li>• CLB 5-7/8 reading/writing</li> </ul>	<p>At Work Settlement.Org  <a href="http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_detail.asp?doc_id=1004400">http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_detail.asp?doc_id=1004400</a></p>
<p><b>LINC 5-7 Classroom Activities</b></p>	<p>Free downloadable documents that include a collection of reproducible activities based on the communicative situations and themes in the LINC 5-7 Curriculum Guidelines (also includes audio files).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 7-8 speaking/listening</li> <li>• CLB 5-7/8 reading/writing</li> </ul>	<p>At Work Settlement.Org  <a href="http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_detail.asp?doc_id=1004967">http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_detail.asp?doc_id=1004967</a></p>
<p><b>LINC 5-7 Classroom Activities e-Resources</b></p>	<p>Interactive on-line activities based on selected chapters of the LINC 5-7 Classroom Activities. Includes a large selection of listening, reading and writing activities related to academic skills, business writing, looking for a job, managing information (reading), and telephone calls.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 7-8 speaking/listening</li> <li>• CLB 5-7/8 reading/writing</li> </ul>	<p>At Work Settlement.Org  <a href="http://www.settlementatwork.org/lincdocs/linc5-7/index.html">http://www.settlementatwork.org/lincdocs/linc5-7/index.html</a></p>



<p><b>Computer Assisted Language Learning: A Software guide for the LINC classroom</b></p>	<p>A free downloadable document that includes instructions and explanations regarding incorporating following software into the LINC 1-5 curriculum: Explore Canada, ELLIS, Tense Buster, Microsoft Word, and Windows 95.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 1-4/5</li> </ul>	<p>At Work Settlement.Org  <a href="http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_detail.asp?doc_id=1002363">http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_detail.asp?doc_id=1002363</a></p>
<p><b>LINC-Parenting Program: Manual and Curriculum Guidelines</b></p>	<p>A free downloadable document that includes thematic content on parenting topics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 1-4</li> </ul>	<p>At Work Settlement.Org  <a href="http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/linc/ParentP.pdf">http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/linc/ParentP.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>Module Bank</b></p>	<p>Free, downloadable module plans organized into 12 themes, referenced to the CLB.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 1-8</li> </ul>	<p>Immigrate to Manitoba, Canada: For EAL Teachers.  <a href="http://www2.immigratemanitoba.com/browse/eal_teachers/module">http://www2.immigratemanitoba.com/browse/eal_teachers/module</a></p>
<p><b>Resources: Lesson Plans</b></p>	<p>Free, downloadable documents that include teaching tips for novice teachers and activities for listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and strategies. Also includes Rural Settlement lesson plans and Staying Safe at Work lessons, referenced to the CLB.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 1-4/5</li> </ul>	<p>Immigrate to Manitoba, Canada: For EAL Teachers.  <a href="http://www2.immigratemanitoba.com/browse/eal_teachers/resources/eal-teacher-resource-plans.html">http://www2.immigratemanitoba.com/browse/eal_teachers/resources/eal-teacher-resource-plans.html</a></p>
<p><b>The Adult ESL Curriculum Guidelines</b></p>	<p>A competency-based thematic curriculum aligned to the CLB. Among other things, it includes 10 thematically based units and spiraling grids for competencies and grammar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLB 1-12</li> </ul>	<p>TCDSB Adult Education Program: Publications  <a href="http://www.tcdsb.org/adulted/publications.html">http://www.tcdsb.org/adulted/publications.html</a></p>

**Beyond the Textbook II and III by Jean-Paul Bedard**

Textbook II includes theme-based lessons covering the 4 skills (photocopiable activities, answer keys, and instructor notes).  
Textbook III includes additional photocopiable activities on a variety of topics (e.g., famous Canadians, anger management, noise pollution)

- CLB 5-8

TCDSB Adult Education Program: Publications  
<http://www.tcdsb.org/adulted/publications.html>

**TESL Canada Teachers Resource Centre**

Free, downloadable listening, vocabulary, reading, writing, and grammar worksheets, referenced to the CLB.

TESL Canada Federation  
[http://www.tesl.ca/Secondary\\_Navigation/Teachers\\_Resource\\_Centre\\_\\_TRC\\_.htm](http://www.tesl.ca/Secondary_Navigation/Teachers_Resource_Centre__TRC_.htm)

**Language for Work: CLB and Essential Skills Lesson Plans for ESL Instructors**

25 free, downloadable lesson plans referenced to both the CLB and Essential Skills (part of the *Language for Work: CLB and Essential Skills for ESL Instructors*).

- CLB 1-7

ITSESENTIAL.ca  
[http://www.itsessential.ca/itsessential/display\\_page.asp?page\\_id=398](http://www.itsessential.ca/itsessential/display_page.asp?page_id=398)

**CLB/Essential Skills Lesson Plans: Assorted Lesson Plans**

23 free, downloadable ESL lesson plans related to a variety of occupations and referenced to both the CLB and Essential Skills.

ITSESENTIAL.ca  
[http://www.itsessential.ca/itsessential/display\\_page.asp?page\\_id=217](http://www.itsessential.ca/itsessential/display_page.asp?page_id=217)

**On the Job: ESL and Essential Skills for Work**

Ideas and activities for incorporating each of the Essential Skills into ESL classroom activities.

ITSESENTIAL.ca  
[http://www.itsessential.ca/itsessential/display\\_page.asp?page\\_id=409](http://www.itsessential.ca/itsessential/display_page.asp?page_id=409)

**How Do Your Skills Measure Up?**

Online activities for self-assessment and practice of the following Essential Skills: Reading Text, Document Use, and Numeracy.

Measure up?  
<http://measureup.towes.com/english/index.asp>

<b>Easy Reading Job Profiles</b>	24 Alberta occupational profiles written for adults with low literacy skills. Each profile includes the typical duties, conditions, requirements, pre-requisites, and wages of the occupation, along with the story of a person in that occupation.	Alberta Learning Information Service <a href="http://alis.alberta.ca/ec/cp/oi/EasyReading.html">http://alis.alberta.ca/ec/cp/oi/EasyReading.html</a>
<b>Learning English with CBC</b>	10 ESL listening lesson plans based on CBC video and audio clips on topics related to Canadian heroes, history, symbols, and debates. Each lesson plan includes an introduction, and before-, while-, and after-you-listen activities. <sup>77</sup>	CBC Ottawa <a href="http://www.cbc.ca/ottawa/esl/index.html">http://www.cbc.ca/ottawa/esl/index.html</a>

## Conclusion

In this section of the *ATESL Curriculum Framework*, we have presented nine principles to guide curriculum designers as they select materials to support the learning outcomes and tasks included in the curriculum. Materials, which have a significant influence on the teaching and learning that occur in a course, can support and build learners' language proficiency and intercultural communicative competence. Key considerations for selecting appropriate materials that support the teaching and learning context include

- Ensuring that materials address identified learner needs, interests, and goals.
- Offering materials that provide a rich variety of opportunities and support for the development of language proficiency within real-world contexts.
- Selecting materials that address learning outcomes and support tasks and activities.
- Supporting a flexible approach to planning and practice by providing instructors with a curriculum package that includes materials and accompanying notes.

While materials provide support for learning, it is the instructors and the learners who use the materials in context to create an enduring learning experience. Trends in the literature and reports from practitioners in Alberta show that when instructors move beyond a method-based approach to instruction, they are more able to provide a flexible, responsive teaching and learning environment. The next section of the *ATESL Curriculum Framework* addresses ways to **demonstrate accountability** and maintain transparency to stakeholders throughout the curriculum development process.

<sup>77</sup> Although these lesson plans are not referenced to the CLB, they are included here because of their focus on Canadian content.

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