

Spoken Workplace Language: Perspectives of Newcomers from Diverse Language Backgrounds

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May 30, 2017

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Research Funding Provided in part by:
Paragon Testing Enterprises (F150-3467)
UBC Language Sciences (F160-4071)

The Okanagan



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_tallest_buildings_in_Kelowna#/media/File:Kelowna_panorama.jpg

Guiding Inquiry Question

What are some spoken English language competencies and challenges for newcomers from linguistically diverse backgrounds in non-professionally regulated workplaces in the Okanagan?

Stag II Speaking (Benchmarks 5 – 8) (CLB, 2012, p. 50)

CLB 5: Initial Intermediate Ability

CLB 6: Developing Intermediate Ability

CLB 7: Adequate Intermediate Ability

CLB 8: Fluent Intermediate Ability

Your Thoughts ...

What do you think newcomers from linguistically diverse backgrounds can do and are challenged by in relation to speaking in the workplace?

Stage II CLB: Can Do	Stage II CLB: Challenged By

Theoretical Framework

- The study is contextualized within:
 - Additional language socialization understanding of language acquisition
- Exploring the process, in relation to community, by which newcomers develop:
 - Communicative competence in English
 - Community membership
 - Perceived legitimacy
- Participation in the community is an important part of the learning process

(Duff, 2007; Duff & Kobayashi, 2010; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998)

Communicative Competence and the CLB

- Language Knowledge
- Organizational Knowledge
 - Grammar
 - Text
- Pragmatic Knowledge
 - Functional
 - Sociolinguistic
- Strategic Knowledge

(Bachman, 1990; Bachman and Palmer, 1996; 2010)



Communicative Competence: Dynamic and Interlocking

- Discourse competence
 - How words are put together
- Sociocultural competence
 - How messages are appropriately conveyed
- Linguistic competence
 - Phonology, vocabulary, morphology, and syntax
- Formulaic competence
 - Fixed chunks of language
- Interactional competence
 - How to do speech acts and have conversation
- Strategic competence
 - How to learn and maintain language use

(Celce-Murcia, 2007)



The Study

- Three research sites: Okanagan, Kingston, Halifax ($n \approx 45$)
- Interview 1: Background information and self-assessed ELP
- Interview 2: Exploring how language is used in the workplace
- CELPIP-General LS
- Interview data coded and analysed, with codes gathered together to illustrate emergent themes relating to varying levels of spoken ELP
- Compare emerging themes to the CLB descriptors (mapping)
- Today sharing qualitative anecdotes related to competence and challenge for six participants from the Okanagan

Assessing Spoken English: The CELPIP-General LS

- Assesses functional listening and speaking proficiency
- Each component given a separate CELPIP Level
- Accepted by IRCC as proof of English language proficiency for citizenship



CELPIP General LS: Speaking Component

- Speaking section = 15 – 20 minutes
- Practice task + 8 tasks
 1. Giving advice
 2. talking about a personal experience
 3. describing a scene
 4. making predictions
 5. comparing and persuading
 6. dealing with a difficult situation
 7. expression opinions
 8. describing an unusual situation



Sample CELPIP-General LS Speaking Task


Speaking Task 5: Comparing and Persuading

Preparation: 60 seconds

NEXT


i Your family is relocating to another area, and you are looking for a new home there. You found two suitable options. Using the pictures and information below, choose the option that you prefer. In the next section, you will need to persuade a family member that your choice is the better choice.

If you do not choose an option, the computer will choose one for you. You do not need to speak for this part.



New Downtown Townhouse

- \$250,000
- 3 bedrooms and 1 bathroom
- 1,850 square feet
- close to public transportation and shopping malls



Detached Home in Quiet Neighbourhood

- \$300,000
- 3 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms
- 2,800 square feet
- 30 minutes from downtown; 5 minutes from shops

BACK

Calibrated to the Canadian Language Benchmarks

CELPID Level	CELPID Descriptor	CLB Level
12	Advanced proficiency in workplace and community contexts	12
11	Advanced proficiency in workplace and community contexts	11
10	Highly effective proficiency in workplace and community contexts	10
9	Effective proficiency in workplace and community contexts	9
8	Good proficiency in workplace and community contexts	8
7	Adequate proficiency in workplace and community contexts	7
6	Developing proficiency in workplace and community contexts	6
5	Acquiring proficiency in workplace and community contexts	5
4	Adequate proficiency for daily life activities	4
3	Some proficiency in limited contexts	3
M	Minimal proficiency or insufficient information to assess	0, 1, 2

Okanagan Participants

	Juan	Lauren	Michelle	Beatrice	Shelby	Jason
Gender	M	F	F	F	F	M
Age	25-30	27-32	19-24	45-50	35-40	38-43
Arrival	2015	2014	2012	2013	2011	2016
Origin	Mexico	Mexico	Philippines	Cameroon	South Korea	Tunisia
1 st Language	Spanish	Spanish	Tagalog	French	Korean	Arabic
Employment	Farm/Retail	Grocery	Office	Hotel	Translator	Lab Assistant
Previous	Photography	Dietician	Student	Teacher	Engineer	Student
LINC?	No	No	Not sure	No	Yes	No
CELPIS S/L	6/7	6/6	7/11	8/7	5/7	6/10

Canadian Language Benchmarks Stage II Speaking

Benchmarks 5 – 8

“Stage II spans the range of abilities required to communicate with increasing effectiveness and confidence in a broadening range of situations that may be less familiar and predictable (moderately demanding contexts of language use).” (CLB, 2012, p. 49)



CLB 5: Initial Intermediate Ability

The speaker can:

- Communicate with **some effort** in short, **routine** social situations, and present **concrete** information about **needs** and **familiar** topics of **personal** relevance.

When the communication is:

- Face-to-face, on the phone, or via digital media
- Informal to somewhat formal
- In familiar small groups
- In **moderately demanding** contexts

Demonstrating these strengths and limitations:

- Clear evidence of connected discourse
- Adequately fluent for some moderately demanding contexts; speech rate is **slow to normal** with some **pauses** and **hesitations**
- A range of **common everyday** vocabulary, which may include a limited number of idioms
- Some variety of grammatical structures, with good control of simple structures and initial control of some more complex structures
- Grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation **difficulties sometimes impede** communication
- Some awareness of appropriate non-verbal cues and signals

Language Competence: Shelby (CELPPIP Speaking 5)

... I always successful if I'm **prepared**. Like a presentation. Right? So I know what we're gonna have tomorrow at work then I prepare and I pre-study and those word I have to use and what I have to search and what I have to speak, toward my boss or my colleagues, then I don't have problem.

Also, if I **use idiom** like, I can example, I can't bring up perfect example but let's say ran to, you know, oh yesterday I ran into somebody, you know, and keep, the conversation going like, okay I did a pretty good job.



Language Challenge: Shelby (CELPPIP Speaking 5)

... they thought someone trained me. I couldn't ask someone because they are busy, so I just sit down there like oh my goodness, what I'm doing here? My **heart beating** you know. And then someone phone me and I don't know which button I have to click to answer, my goodness, I answer the phone. And the lady answered the phone and she **wasn't happy**. She was in her own place, but I can see her. Yeah, she kind of glanced me, you know, and ... she hung up and she look at me and I was just thinking her, like the stupid facial expression, what, you know. ... I couldn't answer at all, and she finally came out from her office and asked, what are you doing? I'm just sitting here, no one trained me, but you know I don't know how to answer the phone and I never learned the program. And then she said, oh, that's so **useless**. Yeah, so I was so confused. She, she pointed at me and say, you're useless or this system is useless. I wasn't sure and I was so confused and I wasn't very happy **instead of she's upsetting**, she has to, so easy, when you when, when someone point you, you just got to answer the phone and when you, um, if the person's phone me, want to chat with someone else then you know, how can I say, put it on hold, transfer, is so easy right, to let me know, just, just to probably two minutes. She phone another you must trained her! I heard it. Yeah, I heard it and she, the lady who got a phone call, she came to me, **she wasn't very happy**, she said phone, it wasn't, it wasn't proper um, training. Right? So I wasn't very happy so, yeah, I, I still **don't know, they were angry at me or angry at the system** in that situation. That's why I **quit**. I said, I'm done, you know.



Language Challenge: Shelby (CELPPIP Speaking 5)

I wasn't sure. I didn't know how I have to react in that situation, so for four hours, my hours were for four hours, you know, so they only gave me four hours minimum, for four hours I was kind of, you know, **blinking my eyes**, and I, **my heart was beating really fast** for four hours. I was **really upset** and I **wasn't very happy**, and I wanted to say something, you know, their system [inaudible] right? But every time I have to speak to someone in English, because I am upset and I'm not happy, **my sentence was terrible, totally terrible** because there is a thing, real thing I want to say but I have to overcome and bring up really good mood, you know. Very challenging.



CLB 6: Developing Intermediate Ability

The speaker can:

- Communicate with some confidence in **routine** social situations, and present **concrete** information in some detail about **familiar** topics of **personal** relevance.

When the communication is:

- Face-to-face, on the phone, or via digital media
- Informal to somewhat formal
- In mostly familiar small groups
- In **moderately demanding** contexts

Demonstrating these strengths and limitations:

- Clear evidence of **connected** discourse
- Reasonably fluent for some moderately demanding contexts; speech rate is **slow to normal** with a few hesitations
- A range of **everyday vocabulary**, which may include some idioms and a few common cultural references
- Some variety of grammatical structures, with **developing control** of more complex structures
- Grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties may **sometimes impede** communication
- Developing use of **appropriate non-verbal** cues and signals
- **Adapts** speech to reflect some degrees of formality appropriate to the group



Language Competence: Juan (CELPPIP Speaking 6)

Oh, well, sometimes ... it's hard to me to understand properly what he want to say ... first you try to, to figure what he wants, and then you, I try to explain him to what we can do it with the work. **You repeat in different way what he ask you**, so you repeat, okay you want this, this, and this in short terms, I mean short phrases to, to explain him, if I understand right. I just try to repeat and figure out if I understand all that he wants to, to do. Normally, they **react by the good way because, they understand you try to keep a good customer service**, right, so it's better repeat the things than forget something, right?

Language Competence: Lauren (CELPPIP Speaking 6)

I remember one time that a lady arrive with me and she asked me why my fermented protein is better than another kind of proteins, and then I need to say, explain to her why the fermented products aren't good for your digestion. And was a really big answer I could say because I was talking with her how the fermented products were in your intestine and it was difficult for me to explain a little bit because I have the vocabulary in Spanish but then when I want to speak that in English, it's little challenging, but **when I was with her she really understand the point**, she really understand what, why fermented products are better, and, and then **she decided to buy the protein**. She had already one for to buy and then she decide just to change it. Yeah, it's successful.



Language Competence: Jason (CELPPIP Speaking 6)

- When I **prepare** my presentation, if I prepare I mean I have my slides and I prepare my talk, I will not find difficulty to go through and explain the whole, model and, the problem and, the results and the object of my work, but I think that will come later, the difficulty. So if it is a **prepared situation**, I don't find any difficulty in that.

Language Challenge: Juan (CELPPIP Speaking 6)

Sometimes when you try to explain very specifically, sometimes you have problems or when you try to put together two ideas to want to explain, sometimes it's hard. It's difficult, not too hard, but a little bit difficult. You know basically it's more about the customer service, no in the technical language about the photography. It's not too hard for me because you know, **my boss, luckily, she knows all about the technical language of photography** so I can, I can speak with her appropriately about the, the terms. But with the people it's sometimes they didn't understand the terms, but the trouble is **when you try to explain, for a while, plainly the idea, sometimes is when, when comes the trouble.**

Language Challenge: Juan (CELPPIP Speaking 6)

You know today, the guy bought the diesel ... it's a company to fill the, the tank from fuel. They give us diesel. It's a metal container in the property and for sure they come to fill the tank with diesel and today I feel a little bit confused or I have trouble to speak properly with the guy. **I feel uncomfortable** because, you know, I want to speak with the guy, but I can't answer, I can't reply his answer properly. The guy ask me this tank, this container is just for diesel or gas? Oh man, I don't know ... **I had troubles to explain him about I was newer in the vineyard** and I didn't know if his, that container just contain diesel or diesel and gas. I feel a little bit **uncomfortable**.



Language Challenge: Lauren (CELPPIP Speaking 6)

Sometimes the **people arrive with a short bit of time**, I mean they just are walking and doing things pretty fast and they don't have time for a lot of explanation about things, and they just say 'yes' or 'no'. Yeah, so **harder to, to convince somebody when they don't have the time to listen.**



Language Challenge: Jason (CELPPIP Speaking 6)

- If it is in, maybe in **one to one** meeting, that will be more difficult to, than a general audience, because if we will talk one to one, you will need to, you need to **enter into details, really into details and expand step by step**. For example if I'm trying to simulate a problem with one of my colleagues ... I'm working with and explain it for example, not the problem because mathematically that will not be difficult to explain, but **explaining the insights**, maybe that will create some problems.



CLB 7: Intermediate Ability

The speaker can:

- Communicate **with some confidence in many daily routine** social, educational, and work situations, and present **concrete and some abstract** information on an expanding range of **familiar** topics.

When the communication is:

- Face-to-face, on the phone, or via digital media
- Informal to formal
- In **somewhat** familiar groups
- In **moderately demanding** contexts

Demonstrating these strengths and limitations:

- Clear evidence of **connected discourse**
- Reasonably fluent for moderately demanding contexts; speech rate is slow to normal with **few hesitations**
- An **expanding range of concrete and idiomatic language**, which may include some **common cultural references**
- Increasing variety of grammatical structures, with developing control of complex structures
- Grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties may **occasionally impede** communication
- Adequate use of appropriate non-verbal cues and signals
- **Adapts** speech style and register to different audiences and situations



Language Competence: Michelle (CELPPIP Speaking 7)

I had to find out if a client has to apply in the Los Angeles visa office, and my boss told me to **call the office** to ask them for that information, and so I did, and then I had a **good conversation** with a person there, and yeah, I understood what he was saying, I told him what we needed to know. I would think he is **Latino**. Also his name was Jose, so ... whenever I, I call people, actually know, that particular, instance, right, when I called him and I heard that his, he was Jose from Los Angeles, I was like yes, I can mess up my English and it **won't seem nervous** about it. I was like **yes! A brown person**. Like I feel like it's **easier to talk to**, like people who **didn't have English as a first** language as well. I guess it's easier cause I have to talk slowly anyway for them, and yeah, so I'm not too worried about it. And yeah, like, native English speakers, they talk fast so you have to think about like what they're saying. It's a speed issue, and also like you know what **I'm feeling, we don't know this language we're both speaking** [laugh], yeah.



Language Challenge: Michelle (CELPPIP Speaking 7)

Like at work, this happened earlier today cause like one of the websites that we usually use was down and so we would be like, **hey, is it up yet** and then things like that, and then I think one of my coworkers asked me if, if I would try logging into the site yet to see if it was working, and then **I didn't really hear what she said**, and it happens quite a bit I think, like were you asking me if I logged on the site or did you ask me, or are you telling me that you logged in the site already? Maybe when I hear sentences, I hear the main words and then like the smaller words. Like if it was a question, like if it was a why or like how, **I usually don't pick it up unless I'm really paying attention ... then like, wait, what was the sentence you said again?**



Language Challenge: Michelle (CELPPIP Speaking 7)

Whenever I **try to explain myself** or something, like this is a client, this was the problem with the client, and then if I like, um, **just say it quickly** or something, they usually don't get me. Maybe I **didn't really think of what to say before** saying the sentence, and so it's, it comes out funny, or I probably say it like, remember um, like the spouse back there, and then they were like what, what are you trying to say? Cause I should have said it in a full sentence or something like that.



Language Challenge: Michelle (CELPPIP Speaking 7)

Like when, like for example you just be like doing your work, and then **some co-worker start talking about something random** and then you just aren't coming yet, like the idea's there. I was like, **I wanna make this joke but I don't know how to say it in English**. Especially while I'm working, I'm like the work mode and then someone kind of like says a joke, and it's like, ah, **I want to joke too, but ...**



CLB 8: Fluent Intermediate Ability

The speaker can:

- Communicate with **confidence** in most daily routine social, educational and work situations, and present **concrete** and some **abstract** information on an **expanded** range of familiar topics.

When the communication is:

- Face-to-face, on the phone, or via digital media
- Informal to formal
- In unfamiliar groups
- In **moderately** demanding contexts

Demonstrating these strengths and limitations:

- Clear evidence of connected discourse
- Fluent for moderately demanding contexts; **speech is often at a normal rate**
- An expanded range **of concrete, abstract and idiomatic language**, which may include some common **cultural** references
- **Adequate** variety of grammatical structures, with **adequate** control of complex structures
- Grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties **seldom impede** communication
- Good use of appropriate non-verbal cues and signals
- **Adapts** speech style and register to a range of different audiences and situations

Language Competence: Beatrice (CELPPIP Speaking 8)

I went back to work this morning for example I was speaking with two ladies from, one from Saskatchewan who came to Kelowna just to relax the beach, not used to Kelowna and she was **very happy because of the weather** and I **started talking to her** and I knew that she was from Saskatchewan is willing to move because of the weather and she's inviting me to go to Saskatchewan, but I, not in winter, because it's too cold in winter. So this **morning was perfect for me because I interact** with, interacting ...



Language Challenge: Beatrice (CELPPIP Speaking 8)

One of my colleagues she asked me she gave me some food and then **she said can you wrap this for the guests**, because the guests would like to take this home. So what I heard was can you, **I went straight and I dump everything in the trash** because, I, that was what she wanted me to do she was speaking so fast, I just **guessed**. I didn't get what you were saying and I **didn't want to ask her what can you say it again**, because at that moment it wasn't easy for me to say please can you say it again, so I just went and I dump everything in the trash. I said what, what did you ask me to do!? Then we had to make another meal for the guests. Yeah, then **it wasn't funny**, because I said oh my goodness, **what am I going to tell the guests** . Then we call the leader, one of the leaders on the floor and say **ok this happened**. They say, ok let's make another.



Language Challenge: Beatrice (CELPIP Speaking 8)

A lady who phoned, she was so **fast**. Please can you say that again because I didn't get that. "**Which** kind of customer service is this? You don't get me, **where** are you from?" I said ok I cannot serve you if I don't get what you are saying. Can you **slow** down? That's the only way for me. Then she said, "Can I **talk to someone else**?" Once in the room, my name is Beatrice I'm at your service, may I come in? Maybe she **forgot my name**. She didn't even get my name. She didn't remember because she say just that **the woman down there maybe she's a Chinese**. I say I am the one you spoke to. She said ohhhh. That's she only thing she said. She was embarrassed because she was talking like she didn't know that I was the one. **Over the phone, I struggle a lot with the guests**. They don't get me because most of the time because of my **accent**. That's what they tell me. When they **see me it change everything** because you can read the body language. And sometime I have to go to the room, to take the order, and one is completely different. Then they speak and I get what they say, **but over the phone they are fast** and there are some words that they don't pronounce.



Language Challenge: Beatrice (CELPPIP Speaking 8)

One day I was at the end of my, no my colleague was at the end of her shift. I was starting at two and she was leaving at two, so **she gave the phone**—the in room service phone to take orders from guests. So the guests phone at the moment she was leaving so I answer the phone. I took the order but **I wasn't quite sure** so I called her. Please just a minute before you leave I will need your help, so she came back, there was a word, I wanted to make sure that I was doing the right thing. I don't know what she heard but she say, maybe I think she heard popcorn, and then she ask me, **you don't know what is popcorn?** Yes she was **mean!** Do, you don't know what is popcorn? I said ok I don't know what is popcorn. You don't know, so I say good, I didn't even let her. So I say I'm going to take care of everything so I went back to the order. So things like that you are just going to shut up. No **I don't want her to behave the way she behaved with me ...**



Your Thoughts ...

- What do these anecdotes mean to you in relation to what the participants can do and are challenged by in the workplace as it related to their spoken English in use?

	Juan	Lauren	Michelle	Beatrice	Shelby	Jason
Gender	M	F	F	F	F	M
Age	25-30	27-32	19-24	45-50	35-40	38-43
Arrival	2015	2014	2012	2013	2011	2016
Origin	Mexico	Mexico	Philippines	Cameroon	South Korea	Tunisia
1 st Language	Spanish	Spanish	Tagalog	French	Korean	Arabic
Employment	Farm/Retail	Grocery	Office	Hotel	Translator	Lab Assistant
Previous	Photography	Dietician	Student	Teacher	Engineer	Student
LINC?	No	No	Not sure	No	Yes	No
CELP S/L	6/7	6/6	7/11	8/7	5/7	6/10

Discussion: Competence

- Preparation
- Strategies to outperform measured competence
- Goals
- Face-to-face encounters
- Lower affective filters
- Perceptions of equality
- Perceptions of legitimacy and humanity

Discussion: Challenges

- Social versus technical language
- Discomfort and affective issues
- Interlocutor impatience
- Conditions in which communication takes place
- Misheard and misunderstood
- Social situations / humour
- Phone communication
- Perceived accent
- Impatience
- Vocabulary

Preliminary Insights

- Newcomers are creative communicators in the workplace, maximizing their linguistic resources to achieve multiple and shifting workplace goals
- Language use in non-professional working contexts is dynamic and socially situated
- Communicative competence is not only dependent on internal factors within the speaker, but also on external factors, such as how the speaker is perceived by an interlocutor.

Implications

- Expand models of communicative competence away from a sole focus on an individual's particular language competencies to include an understanding of the interlocutor's role in fostering or hindering a communicative event.
- Consider the social context in which communicative events take place.
- Consider an interlocutor's
 - Attitude
 - Perceptions
 - Empathy
 - Patience
 - Compassion

Final Thought from Shelby

... I don't want people say, oh, **how long have you been here**, and say, almost **ten years**. I don't think oh, ten years and still she's speaking **broken English**, you know. I know because of my pronunciation they can see I am here, **I'm not a English person**, they can tell, but and this, I don't want to give them the idea, no, maybe they, you know, the **immigrants are, you know, maybe lazy** even though they're here 10 years, what did they, you know, what they've done, right, for ten years? Ten years, you know, **time to learn something** but you know, so...



Final comment

- Onus isn't only on newcomers from linguistically diverse backgrounds to acquire English language skills.
- The onus is also on the community.
- Being denied access to meaningful and equitable communicative encounters that are the engine for additional language acquisition has detrimental effects not only for newcomers but also for a community that claims to welcome diversity and embrace multiculturalism.
- Expand the analysis to include the wider social conditions.

Limitations and Future Directions

- Analysis presented is preliminary and not on the complete data set
 - Communication events based on self-reported, interview data
 - Longitudinal data would better inform the linguistic profiles of participants from an additional language socialization perspective
 - Not major urban areas (i.e. not Vancouver or Toronto), but interesting insights can be gleaned from the findings.
-
- Complete recruitment, interviews, and testing in the Okanagan
 - Complete coding and analysing data to generate emerging themes
 - Compare data across the three research sites
 - Map anecdotes onto the corresponding CLB levels

Thank you ...

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a place of mind

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Research Funding Provided in part by:
Paragon Testing Enterprises (F150-3467)

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