

Overview

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) was created by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission in 1992. Its mandate is to provide basic language instruction to adult newcomers in both official languages and to facilitate the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees into Canadian society.

The LINC program originally included levels 1 to 3. In 1993, a draft version of the LINC 1–3 Curriculum Guidelines was developed and in 1997, this document was revised according to the *Canadian Language Benchmarks Working Document (1996)*. In that same year, the LINC program was expanded to include levels 4 and 5 and a corresponding curriculum, also based on the working document of the Canadian Language Benchmarks, was developed in 1998.

In August 2001, Citizenship and Immigration Canada contracted the Toronto Catholic District School Board to combine the two curriculum guidelines for LINC levels 1 to 3 and LINC 4 & 5 and make the guidelines consistent with the new *Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) 2000*. These guidelines are intended to help LINC instructors and program coordinators in the province of Ontario establish measurable outcomes so that the standards in LINC programs across Ontario are consistent and reflect the needs of ESL learners.

The revised document is different from the original LINC 1–3 and the LINC 4 & 5 Curriculum Guidelines in a number of ways:

- there are slight differences in the LINC/benchmark alignment
- five levels are included under one cover
- this document is organized according to themes rather than levels
- the level outcomes have separate competencies for all four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Previous documents listed listening/speaking together as one competency
- all topic outcomes have been rewritten in accordance with the CLB 2000
- sample tasks are included for each of the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Previous curriculum documents combined listening and speaking together
- computer tasks are fully integrated into the sample language tasks
- computer tasks now include a variety of activities such as spreadsheets and presentations, as well as speaking and listening activities
- all topic pages include relevant pronunciation items
- more resources appear on the topic pages
- new resources for planning and evaluation have been added

The themes, topics, and resource materials presented in these curriculum guidelines are based on questionnaires distributed to LINC instructors and learners across the province. All, or parts of the document were critically examined by various groups at different stages of its development. Forty-two instructors from 17 different centres across the province participated in field testing topics and provided feedback. An expert panel, comprised of four members with expertise in CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000*, and curriculum development reviewed the document. A larger advisory committee representing LINC administrators, assessors, instructors, curriculum, and CALL experts provided input on an ongoing basis.

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Theoretical Framework

This document is a competency-based curriculum that focuses on **what learners can do**. According to the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000*, competencies are the “demonstrable application of knowledge and skills gained by individual learners.”¹

These guidelines are also based on the theoretical foundation of communicative competence. Communicative competence is the ability to use language to function effectively in society. It is comprised of five competencies:²

1. **Linguistic (also called grammatical) competence** is concerned with both accuracy and fluency in the use of vocabulary, in word and sentence formation, in pronunciation and spelling, as well as in linguistic semantics.
2. **Textual (also called discourse) competence** is the ability to connect oral or written language into a unified spoken or written text. Unity of text is achieved through cohesion in form (e.g., using the proper structures) and coherence in meaning (e.g., building logical units of language that convey the intended meaning of the text). These meanings may be literal connotations, communicative functions, or attitudes.
3. **Functional (also called actional) competence** is understanding the intent (or function) behind a sentence, utterance, or text at both a macro level (for giving information, social interaction, and suasion) as well as at a micro level (for making requests, understanding threats, warnings, pleas) and the conventions of their use.
4. **Sociocultural (also called sociolinguistic) competence** involves understanding the social context and significance of language use. These include such things as rules of politeness in discourse, sensitivity to register, knowledge of cultural references, idiomatic and figurative language, and the general use of language in social relationships.
5. **Strategic competence** requires mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communication or to enhance the effectiveness of communication (e.g., gesturing or paraphrasing to convey meaning).

The topic pages in each theme include **Topic Outcomes**, **Language Focus** items, **Topic Development Ideas**, and **Strategies for Learners**. These four sections support the development of communicative competence by including elements of linguistic, textual, functional, sociocultural, and strategic competence.

¹ Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 (Ottawa: Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000), p. viii.

² Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: A Guide to Implementation (Ottawa: Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2001), p. 3.

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Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 and the LINC 1-5 Curriculum Guidelines

Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 is the national standard by which an adult learner's proficiency in English as a second language is measured. The CLB 2000 describe the learner's ability to perform particular language tasks at increasing levels of complexity from Benchmark 1 to Benchmark 12 in four skill areas: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It also outlines the specific performance and situational conditions under which these tasks are to be performed. The levels of proficiency in the Benchmarks range along a continuum from "initial basic proficiency" to "fluent advanced proficiency."

Before entering a LINC program, learners are assessed according to the CLBA (Canadian Language Benchmark Assessment) tool which assigns CLB (Canadian Language Benchmark) ratings for each of the four skill areas (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). "When a new learner is assigned a specific benchmark, it is to be assumed the learner falls within the competencies of that benchmark, and will work towards achievement of the complete range of competencies defined by that standard. (E.g., a learner assessed at CLBA 2 is placed in LINC 2, working towards full achievement of the CLB 2 outcomes.)"¹

The following table explains how the LINC levels correspond to the CLB:²

Skill Area	LINC 1	LINC 2	LINC 3	LINC 4	LINC 5
Speaking	Entrance Pre-CLBA, CLBA 1	CLBA 2	CLBA 3, 4	CLBA 5	CLBA 6, 7
	Curriculum Objectives CLB 1	CLB 2	CLB 3, 4	CLB 5	CLB 6, 7
	Exit CLB 1	CLB 2	CLB 4	CLB 5	CLB 7
Listening	Entrance Pre-CLBA, CLBA 1	CLBA 2	CLBA 3, 4	CLBA 5	CLBA 6, 7
	Curriculum Objectives CLB 1	CLB 2	CLB 3, 4	CLB 5	CLB 6, 7
	Exit CLB 1	CLB 2	CLB 4	CLB 5	CLB 7
Reading	Entrance Pre-CLBA, CLBA 1	CLBA 2	CLBA 3	CLBA 4	CLBA 5, 6
	Curriculum Objectives CLB 1	CLB 2	CLB 3	CLB 4	CLB 5, 6
	Exit CLB 1	CLB 2	CLB 3	CLB 4	CLB 6
Writing	Entrance Pre-CLBA	CLBA 2	CLBA 3	CLBA 4	CLBA 5, 6
	Curriculum Objectives CLB 1	CLB 2	CLB 3	CLB 4	CLB 5, 6
	Exit CLB 1	CLB 2	CLB 3	CLB 4	CLB 6

¹ Policy statement from the CIC-ESL Benchmarks Interpretation Meeting, March 27th, 2002.

² Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002. This grid is the result of a CIC - ESL Benchmarks Interpretation Meeting, March 27th, 2002.

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For the purpose of this document, a learner's communicative performance is measured by **Level Outcomes**. The Level Outcomes describe what the learner can do at the end of each level and are based on the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000* that have been assigned to each level. Learners achieve the Level Outcomes through classroom activities within various themes and topics that contextualize the competencies. An outcome related to a specific topic is referred to as a **Topic Outcome**.

Spiraling

The CLB 2000 requires the learner to accomplish communicative tasks in increasingly demanding contexts and with progressively higher expectations. Four general competency areas: social interaction, instructions, suasion (getting things done), and information can be found in the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000* at different levels of complexity for each skill area (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). This aspect of the CLB 2000 is also evident in these curriculum guidelines where spiraling linguistic tasks and thematic content give instructors an opportunity to review competencies and skills on an ongoing basis with different expectations at each LINC level.

Organization of the LINC 1-5 Curriculum Guidelines

These guidelines are organized in the following manner:

1. **How to Use the Guidelines:** instructions for using various sections of the guidelines
2. **Planning:** a section that includes tools for long-range and daily lesson planning
3. **Evaluation:** information about evaluation and assessment, and tools to help instructors evaluate learners
4. **Level Outcomes:** the language competencies learners are expected to achieve at each level
5. **Themes:** 12 themes each with three topics for all five LINC levels
Each **theme** includes three **topics** with the following:
 - **Topic Development Ideas:** ideas for developing additional lessons related to the topic
 - **Strategies for Learners:** strategies to help learners deal with difficult situations relating to the topic
 - **Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic:** classroom resources to assist in planning
 - **Topic Outcomes:** a list of possible CLB 2000 competencies that relate to the topic
 - **Language Focus:** a list of possible grammar and other language items to help learners achieve the topic outcomes
 - **Sample Tasks:** ideas for language and computer activities