# Lesson Plan – Using Canadian Plays

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| Theme: Employment | Module: On the Job | Level: CLB 5 |
| Approximate Total Time: ?? hours | | |

### Background Notes to Instructor

This lesson is designed to get students actively collaborating in the classroom and to offer a bit of excitement about language learning. This lesson features an original scene that focuses on diversity in the workplace (specifically dealing with tattoos), but the core concept is that any scene can be swapped out and the lesson will still work. Read various Canadian plays (Theatre Alberta has an excellent library of plays) and try to find interesting themes for your students. Canadian plays are highlighted in this lesson because they typically use Canadian vernacular. Since the students are here in Canada, it’s another way to get them used to the way Canadians speak.

This lesson originally relied heavily on the use of the English Phonetic Alphabet (EPA). Although it is no longer part of this lesson, for the sake of universality, it is a good idea to spend time prior to the lesson teaching your students how to use the EPA. It will help you when doing this lesson and empower your students. You can read all about it in the PDF *English is Stupid, Students are Not*, by Judy Thompson, that goes with this lesson. This book is distributed for free online and is an excellent resource for teaching speaking.

The first time you do the lesson, teach each part. Afterwards, you could feasibly only do Parts 1 and 6 while briefly reviewing the middle segments. The lesson is meant to be flexible and something that can be revisited with different themes.

The lesson is fairly straightforward. Follow the steps in order. Titles in bold, such as **Tattoos 1**, indicate a handout. Some of the handouts are also CLB-related activities.

## Module Overview

**Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) competencies developed during the learning activities:**

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| CLB 5 | Statements | Part # |
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| **Listening (L)** | **I** Understand the gist and some details in moderately complex common and predictable social exchanges. | 4, 5, 6 |
| **Speaking (S)** | **I** Participate in basic social conversations for some everyday purposes. | 2, 4, 5, 6 |
| **S III** Give and respond to informal requests, permission, suggestions, and advice. | 6 |
| **IV** Agree, disagree, and give opinions in a small group discussion. | 1 |
| **Reading (R)** | **R I** Understand simple to moderately complex personal and public social messages related to a familiar context. | 5 |
| **III** Understand simple to moderately complex personal and public social messages related to a familiar context. | 3 |
| **IV** Understand simple to moderately complex descriptive or narrative texts on familiar topics. | 1, 5 |

### Outcomes

**By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to …**

1. Demonstrate an awareness of what the laws around tattoos are and what rights you have in the workplace
2. Demonstrate an awareness of the stress-based nature of English and an ability to utilize stress when speaking
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the difference between written and spoken English
4. Successfully identify keywords in sentences to interpret meaning
5. Use some non-verbal cues, emotional cues, and different registers when speaking
6. Show an ability to recognize different registers and paralinguistic signals (emotion, pitch, etc.)
7. Express their feelings on a subject in an appropriate way for the workplace
8. Demonstrate the ability to advocate for themselves or others in the workplace

## Activities

### Activity 1: What do Canadians think about tattoos?

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| This activity supports outcome(s): | **By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to …**   1. Demonstrate an awareness of what the laws around tattoos are and what rights you have in the workplace |

| Objectives: In this activity, learners will begin to … | |
| --- | --- |
| CLB | **S IV** Agree, disagree, and give opinions in a small group discussion  **R IV** Understand simple to moderately complex descriptive or narrative texts on familiar topics |

1. Write the word “tattoo” on the board.
   1. Have students discuss what the word means.
   2. If you have tattoos, perhaps show them to the class. If you don’t have tattoos or don’t wish to show yours to the students, show them some examples.

**Note:** *This TED-Ed video, entitled* The history of tattoos – Addison Anderson*, is a bit complex but might help you if you want some background information about tattoos:* <https://youtu.be/MYn15yDBvxM>

1. Write the word “discrimination” on the board.
   1. Have students discuss what the word means.
   2. Ask students to discuss these questions in groups:
      1. When do people usually get discriminated against?
      2. What are some types of discrimination?
      3. Are tattoos protected against discrimination?
   3. Go over the answers and make lists of situations in which people are discriminated against and the types of discrimination.
      1. Explain that they will be focusing on tattoos in the workplace for this activity.
2. Hand out the reading **Tattoos 1** and the question sheet **Tattoos 1a** (RIV activity).
   1. Have students work alone first.
   2. Then have students work in groups to answer the questions.
   3. Finally, go over the answers as a class.
3. When answering the questions, make sure to discuss whether the laws seem fair and just. This will help them connect to the next activity.

### Activity 2: Stress-Based Language

The next few sections are adapted from *English is Stupid, Students are Not* by Judy Thompson. These sections are crucial for building the skills needed to accomplish the tasks at the end of the lesson.

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| This activity supports outcome(s): | **By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to …**   1. Demonstrate an awareness of the stress-based nature of English and an ability to utilize stress when speaking |

| Objectives: In this activity, learners will begin to … | |
| --- | --- |
| CLB | **S I** Participate in basic social conversations for some everyday purposes (such as expressing feelings; making, accepting or declining invitations; and engaging in small talk) |

1. Write “play” on the board and discuss.
   1. Explain that a play is what Canadians call “theatre.”
   2. Explain that students will be performing a play in class to practise their speaking.
2. Read the play out loud.
   1. Make sure to use emotion and to have fun with it.
   2. Explain to the students that your goal is to have them performing this piece as energetically and fluently as you just read it by the end of the unit.
   3. They will probably not believe you—all the better.
3. Teach the following (stress-based language):
   1. There are two types of languages: sound-based and stress-based
      1. Sound-based languages require the pronunciation of individual sounds (for example, Chinese).
      2. Stress-based languages rely on the **specific production of important syllables**for meaning. Sounds just aren’t that important!
   2. Rule 1: Syllables (refer to Chapter 3 of *English is Stupid*, p. 80)
      1. Syllables are the **beats** of words. There’s one beat for every **vowel** **sound**, **not**for every vowel.
      2. For example, interview = in/ter/view/
   3. Rule 2: Stress (refer to Chapter 3 of *English is Stupid*, p. 82)
      1. All syllables are **not** created equal. Some SYllables are more imPORtant, and they are STRESSED.
      2. Three specific voice qualities determine stress: **pitch, volume, length***.*

For example, it’s *IN ter view*, not *IN TER VIEW* or *in ter VIEW*

* + 1. Stress conveys **meaning**.
    2. It doesn’t matter how long a word is, there is only **one** major stress syllable.

1. Hand out **Tattoos 2** (skill-building)
   1. Have students break apart the words into their individual syllables and find the stress.
      1. Get them to work alone first.
      2. Put them into groups and so they can correct each other.
      3. Go over the answers as a class.

**Note:** *It’s important that students work alone first so they develop the skill of breaking apart words into syllables. All the activities use examples from the play script, which will get them familiar with parts of the text before they dive into the entire piece.*

### Activity 3: Sentence Stress

This section is also adapted from *English is Stupid, Students are Not* and will help students distinguish between written and spoken English.

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| This activity supports outcome(s): | **By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to …**   1. Demonstrate an understanding of the difference between written and spoken English 2. Successfully identify keywords in sentences to interpret meaning |

| Objectives: In this activity, learners will begin to … | |
| --- | --- |
| CLB | **R I** Understand simple to moderately complex personal and public social messages related to a familiar context  Identify main ideas and important details; identify implied meanings |

1. Grammar is for writing, not speaking.
   1. It’s important that students make the distinction between writing and speaking.
   2. In writing, every word in a sentence is important.
      1. In writing: How did the interviews go?
      2. Speaking: How’d th’ interviews go?
   3. The important words, or **content words**, are pronounced while the smaller,   
      less-important words, or **function words**, almost disappear.
2. Content words
   1. If words have *stress,* then it only makes sense that sentences do as well.
   2. The words in a sentence that are stressed are called **content words**.
   3. These words contain the **meaning** of a sentence.
   4. They are made up of nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, negatives, and intensifiers.

**Note:** *Question words are not on this list, but they get a minor stress—just enough to indicate what kind of information the speaker wants. Essentially, the initial sound is stressed, and the rest is “schwa’d.”*

1. Function words
   1. **Function words are important for** **writing**; they are the glue that connects content words together.
   2. But when speaking, the vowel sound in a function word turns into a schwa: /uh/
      1. For example, **you** becomes **/yuh/**, **to** becomes **/tuh/**, **do** becomes **/duh/**
   3. They are made up of articles, conjunctions, pronouns, the verb “to be,” modals, auxiliary verbs, and one-syllable prepositions.

**Note:** *Two-syllable prepositions must be pronounced simply because a two-syllable word needs a stress somewhere.*

1. Content and function words exercise (skill-building)
   1. Hand out **Tattoos 3** and have students identify the content and function words
      1. When finished, have them write out the pronunciation above each word.
      2. Those who finish the fastest can also separate the words into syllables and mark stresses (optional).
   2. Have the students go over the answers in groups, and then correct them as a class.
   3. Make sure to practise pronunciation with the students (this is where having taught EPA in advance can be very useful).
2. Full sentences activity (skill-using)
   1. Explain to students that now that they understand what content and function words are, they should try to find the content words in the play dialogue.
   2. Hand out **Tattoos 4**.
      1. Have students work in pairs for this activity.
      2. Correct the activity together.

**Note:** *The key takeaway here is that you only need to focus on the content words in order to understand what someone is saying. Students usually feel relieved when they realize that they don’t need to focus on every little detail. When correcting, it can be fun to just read the content words to see if the students understand. It will sound funny, but they’ll get the meaning.*

### Activity 4: Introducing Emotions

Listen to the “Tattoos Audio” file to get a good idea of the different tones. Reading is of limited use when talking about spoken emotions.

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| This activity supports outcome(s): | **By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to …**   1. Use some non-verbal cues, emotional cues, and different registers when speaking 2. Show an ability to recognize different registers and paralinguistic signals (emotion, pitch, etc.) |

| Objectives: In this activity, learners will begin to … | |
| --- | --- |
| CLB | **S I** Participate in basic social conversations for some everyday purposes  **L I** Understand the gist and some details in moderately complex common and predictable social exchange. |

1. Emotions are a very important part of communication.
   1. In English, we convey emotion through body language (facial expressions) and through the tone of our voice.
2. Teach tone (or pitch)
   1. A higher tone is usually considered unthreatening or pleasant.
      1. For example, when being cheerful: “Hiii!”
      2. Or if someone is upset but not angry (imagine someone on the verge of crying): “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to break it!”
   2. A neutral tone is just that—neutral.
      1. Think of saying something in a monotone: “Hello.”
      2. In Canada, this can come across as impolite.
   3. A lower tone is usually considered threatening or sad.
      1. For example, when someone is angry: “Back off!”
      2. Or depressed: “Leave me alone …”

**Note:** *Volume and tempo are also very important. You can teach volume easily—loud indicates more intense emotion, whereas quiet indicates a softer, gentler emotion. Feel free to include this in your lesson. Tempo can be mentioned but it is unrealistic to expect your students to be able to play with tempo. Most will be unable to speak very quickly, and speed should only be encouraged after they are able to do volume and tone at a slow pace. Baby steps.*

1. Elicit from the class different kinds of emotion words.
   1. Using a few different scales (preferably one that goes from –3 to 3), chart the different tones for different emotions.
   2. For example, a scale indicating levels of anger might be as follows:

3 Distraught or hysterical (high-high tone)

2 Whining (mid-high tone)

1 Hurt or frustrated (low-high tone)

0 Stern or annoyed (neutral tone)

–1 Cautioning or warning (high-low tone)

–2 Threatening (mid-low tone)

–3 Violent or mad (low-low tone)

* 1. There are no correct answers for this exercise—it should be fun, and you might not even need to label with words what these levels mean. Demonstrating with your students is usually enough for them to understand.

Make sure you go through several emotions, though—at least happiness/excitement and sadness/anger. Go crazy with it!

1. Return to handout **Tattoos 4**.
   1. Tell your students to practise with their partners some of the different emotions you have written on the board.
      1. Read out the first sentence as an example, highlighting the tone on the content words (remember, vowel sounds are elastic, so they are the easiest to use for demonstrating emotion).
   2. After students have done this for a while, start to read the page out one sentence at   
      a time.
      1. Point to a different emotional level with each new sentence.
      2. Encourage the students to go big with it. This is a lot of fun!
2. Using the **Tattoos 4** handout, ask the students try to decide what the appropriate tone is for each line.
   1. Let them practise a few times.
   2. Have each pair go up and present their page.
   3. As a class, try to decide whether the tones/emotions felt natural or not.
      1. This is a good opportunity to get students to start thinking critically about the tones they hear.
   4. Ask the students who listened what tones they heard.
      1. Ask the students who presented to decide whether or not their classmates were correct.

**Note:** *If students are moving quickly through this activity, feel free to use more pages from the “Tattoo Script.”*

### Activity 5: Speaking – Body Language and Bringing It All Together

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| This activity supports outcome(s): | **By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to …**  5. Use some non-verbal cues, emotional cues, and different registers when speaking  6. Show an ability to recognize different registers and paralinguistic signals (emotion, pitch, etc.) |

| Objectives: In this activity, learners will begin to … | |
| --- | --- |
| CLB | **R I** Understand simple to moderately complex personal and public social messages related to a familiar context *(Tattoo Script)*  **R IV** Understand simple to moderately complex descriptive or narrative texts on familiar topics *(Tattoos 5)*  **S I** Participate in basic social conversations for some everyday purposes *(Tattoos 6)*  **L I** Understand the gist and some details in moderately complex common and predictable social exchanges *(Tattoos 6)* |

1. Let’s bring in the final piece of the puzzle: body language.
   1. Body language is probably the most important part of communication.
   2. It is different in every culture, and there are a couple key things for Canada.
2. Canadian body language
   1. Making eye contact for more than three seconds will make the other person uncomfortable.
   2. Typically, Canadians don’t stand directly in front of someone when they’re speaking; we allow about two feet of space between people and stand slightly to the side to the other person on an angle.
   3. Canadians use their hands CONSTANTLY to show what they’re talking about.
3. Elicit examples of gestures that the students have seen in their daily lives.
   1. Go over your emotion charts and try to come up with some gestures that seem to match the different emotions.
      1. For example, hands on the hips for frustration
4. Now, let’s combine everything we’ve learned.
   1. If you haven’t already, hand out **Tattoo Script**.
5. Tell the students to first go through the script and find the content words.

**Note:** *If you feel that your students need more scaffolding to understand the script at this point, feel free to do handout* ***Tattoos 5*** *with them now. It is completely optional but can be a good PBLA activity.*

* 1. Once the students have found the content words, they should isolate the important stress in each one.

1. Split the students into groups of four.
   1. Have them go through each line of the script and, using the content words, try to summarize what is happening in the play.
      1. Go over with the class what they think is happening and clarify where needed.
   2. Get the students to now identify in each line what type of emotion the character is feeling or trying to express.
      1. Ask them to try to think of at least five gestures to use as well.
   3. Once they have completed this, split the class into pairs.
      1. Allow them to practise their script for as long as needed.
2. Have each pair of students present their scene to the class.
   1. Give the rest of the students the **Tattoos 6** handout to do a peer assessment.
   2. After each pair, ask one student to give feedback based on the peer assessment sheet.
   3. You can use this opportunity to start giving them basic direction as well. Using the emotion scales you created, ask the students to change the way they read a line to make it more natural or to show the class the difference that slight emotional changes can make. I encourage you to experiment and develop a language shorthand with your class—it will become extremely useful in all the speaking activities that you do.
   4. Repeat for each pair and have the students put the peer assessment in their binders afterwards.

### Activity 6: Making Your Own Scripts

Now that the students have had practice with some scaffolding (the play script), it’s time to open things up for some fun and CLB-specific activities. At this point, it’s up to you to decide which direction to go in. There are many different types of assessments you can do with this activity; the focus here will be on speaking and listening, but there are suggestions at the end for other types of assessments.

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| This activity supports outcome(s): | **By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to …**  5. Use some non-verbal cues, emotional cues, and different registers when speaking  6. Show an ability to recognize different registers and paralinguistic signals (emotion, pitch, etc.)  7. Express their feelings on a subject in an appropriate way for the workplace  8. Demonstrate the ability to advocate for themselves or others in the workplace |

| Objectives: In this activity, learners will begin to … | |
| --- | --- |
| CLB | **S I** Participate in basic social conversations for some everyday purposes *(Tattoo Assessment 2)*  **S III** Give and respond to informal requests, permission, suggestions, and advice *(Tattoo Assessment 2)*  **L I** Understand the gist and some details in moderately complex common and predictable social exchanges *(Tattoo Assessment 1 and Tattoos 6)* |

1. Ask the students if they can think of any other topics people might disagree about at work.
   1. Encourage them to think about things young people do that might be different from what they do. (If they have children, ask what their kids do that they don’t understand.)
   2. Write down a few on the board that you find compelling.
      1. This can be as simple as someone eating another person’s lunch or as complex as homophobia in the workplace. You know your class best, so you can decide what topics are appropriate.

**NOTE:** *Don’t necessarily shy away from topics because they are difficult—the classroom is often the safest place to tackle them in constructive ways.*

1. Explain to the students that they are going to their own scenes.
   1. Assign pairs one topic each
   2. Tell them that they will need to make a short scene (one to two pages) about the topic.
   3. The scene must be a dialogue between two co-workers at work.
   4. They will present it to the class.
   5. The scene must include at least three gestures and three different emotions.
   6. Have the students use the handout **Tattoo Script** as an example.
2. Have students to research their topic using computers and the **Tattoos Computer** handout. The research should investigate the following:
   1. Whether there are any workplace rules about their topic
   2. What Canada’s laws are on the topic
   3. What the keywords of the topic mean

**Note:** *This is optional and requires the students to have previous experience with computers.*

1. Using a recording device, have students record their practice conversations with each other.
   1. Get them to listen to the recording and write down the content words they hear first.
   2. Then try to fill in the function words.
   3. This works well for students who are stronger at speaking and gives them some built-in listening practice at the same time.
2. It’s important that the written dialogue have the following:
   1. A greeting (e.g., “Hi!”)
   2. An opinion about the topic (e.g., “I think it’s wrong for you to eat my sandwich.”)
   3. A relevant question (e.g., “How am I supposed to know it’s your sandwich?”)
   4. An agreement or disagreement (e.g., “I don’t think eating it is so bad.”)
   5. A closing (e.g., “Goodbye.”)

**Note:** *If students are having difficulty, choose one of the easier topics and try creating a sample dialogue together*.

1. After the students have written their dialogue, ask them to start to identify the emotions in their dialogues and to practise.
   1. While they practice, visit each group and help them make corrections.
   2. Spelling isn’t vital—it’s most important that the dialogue is comprehensible, so focus on comprehension corrections.

**Note:** *Things can go in many different directions here. Some suggestions are given below.*

1. Now the students will present their dialogues for the class. They have essentially created a Speaking I (or III, depending on the criteria you chose) and Listening I assessment.
   1. OPTION 1: Students present their dialogue with the text in hand or memorized.
      1. The other students listen and fill out **Tattoo Assessment 1**.This functions as a listening assessment for the students.
      2. Each pair is assigned a different pair to listen to and fill out the assessment information for.
      3. Suggestion: Have the groups repeat their presentation at least once.
   2. OPTION 2: Give the students random topics and have them improvise a dialogue (the dialogue they wrote becomes practice).
      1. Assess the students on speaking based on the criteria in **Tattoo Assessment**
      2. Have them do the attached self-assessment afterwards.
   3. OPTION 3: Have the students use the dialogues as a listening activity.
      1. Use handout **Tattoos 6** again.
      2. Afterwards, put students in groups of three to five.
      3. Choose a random topic that was presented on and have them discuss it. Tell them to follow the same format as the scene they wrote.
      4. Assess them using **Tattoo Assessment 2**.

**Note:** *Technically you could do this with Options 1 and 2, but it is probably best not to overload them with assessments.*

1. As you can see, there are many ways you can use this exercise with the CLB. Get creative—you can create writing and reading assessments with this as well, though it’s   
   a much stronger speaking and listening tool.

## References

Thompson, J. (2011). *English is stupid, students are not*. Niagara Falls, ON: Thompson Language Center.

**Tattoos 1** handout was adapted from the following source:

KCY at Law. (n.d.). *Tattoos and piercing in the workplace*. Retrieved from <https://www.kcyatlaw.ca/tattoos-piercings-workplace-canada/>

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