

Course
ANG-5104-1
Writing Skills I

English as a Second Language



Introduction

The goal of this 25-hour course, the first of two courses related to written communication and for which adult learners can earn supplementary credits in second language, is to allow adult learners to improve their English writing skills. Through a variety of learning situations and activities, adult learners will be given the opportunity to:

- broaden knowledge of informative, expressive and persuasive texts
- write paragraphs that convey clear messages related to places, objects, feelings, situations and events

By the end of this course, adult learners will be able to apply their knowledge of the English language, such as language functions, grammar and vocabulary, in order to give and understand definitions, instructions, descriptions of places, objects, feelings and understand and report information on given situations and events.

Subject-Specific Competencies

The two subject-specific competencies targeted in the course *Writing Skills I* are shaded in the table below.

| Competencies | Key Features |
|---|---|
| <i>Interacts orally in English (C1)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Engages in oral interactions – Constructs the meaning of the message – Monitors own development as a communicator |
| <i>Reinvests understanding of texts (C2)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Broadens knowledge of texts – Constructs the meaning of the message – Carries out a reinvestment task – Monitors own development as a reader, listener, viewer |
| <i>Writes and produces texts (C3)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Broadens knowledge of texts – Uses writing and production processes – Monitors own development as a writer/producer |

For information on these competencies, please refer to the following sections:

- *Interacts orally in English (C1)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.2
- *Reinvests understanding of texts (C2)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.3
- *Writes and produces texts (C3)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.4

Although only C2 and C3 are targeted in this course, C1 is implicit as speaking activities may complement the learning situations.

Competencies are developed and demonstrated through the mobilization and effective use of various resources that include functional, linguistic and textual knowledge as well as language processes, communication and learning strategies.

Processes and Strategies

Language processes are series of actions or operations that support competency development and help adult learners become more effective speakers, listeners, readers, viewers, writers or producers of texts. Although all four language processes (Oral communication, Response, Writing and Production) are important resources for adult learners, the two processes suggested for this course are illustrated in the table below.

| Processes | Phases |
|-----------------|--|
| Response | Planning (tasks) |
| Writing | Mobilizing resources (performing tasks) Reflecting (on completed tasks) |

Strategies are actions, behaviours, steps and techniques that enable adult learners to overcome obstacles, attain goals and achieve success. Communication and learning strategies are important resources that adult learners may use to become more effective speakers, listeners, readers, viewers, writers or producers of texts.

The communication and learning strategies suggested for this course are illustrated in the table below.

| Strategies | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Communication | Verbal | Rephrasing Simplifying |
| Learning | Cognitive | Activating prior knowledge Comparing |
| | Socioaffective | Asking for and giving constructive feedback |
| | Metacognitive | Directing/paying selective attention Making transfers to new contexts |

Additional information on processes and strategies is provided in the following sections:

- Chapter 3, Section 3.5
- Appendix (Inventory of Strategies)

Cross-Curricular Competencies

Cross-curricular competencies are generic skills that can be developed and used outside the school setting. They are developed in tandem with subject-specific competencies. Given the nature of this course, the shaded cross-curricular competencies listed horizontally could easily be developed simultaneously with the shaded subject-specific competencies listed vertically. Since teachers have the option of choosing learning situations other than the ones suggested in this program, they may also decide to develop cross-curricular competencies other than those shaded in the table below.

| Cross-Curricular Competencies → Subject-Specific Competencies ↓ | Uses information | Solves problems | Exercises critical judgment | Uses creativity | Adopts effective work methods | Uses ICT | Cooperates with others | Achieves his/her potential | Communicates appropriately |
|--|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|----------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Interacts orally in English | | | | | | | | | |
| Reinvests understanding of texts | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | | | | |
| Writes and produces texts | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | | | | ■ |

For more information on the key features and manifestations of the cross-curricular competencies, please refer to the General Introduction to the Programs of Study.

Subject -Specific Content

The subject-specific content includes knowledge and cultural references. The prescribed functional, linguistic and textual knowledge for the development of the competencies targeted in this course is provided below.

While any of the knowledge elements from preceding courses may be necessary to carry out the learning tasks for this course, some have been repeated in this list for emphasis. The list below is not restrictive; teachers may complement it with knowledge they feel might be beneficial to adult learners. However, it must be understood that any additions to the lists are not subject to evaluation.

Functional Knowledge

Families of Learning Situations and Language Functions:

Informing

- Giving and understanding factual information about future situations/events
- Reporting factual information about past and present incidents/situations/events

Expressing

- Giving accounts of and describing feelings related to incidents/situations/events

Persuading

- Giving and understanding instructions
- Giving reasons

Linguistic Knowledge

Grammar and Syntax

Adjectives

- Types:
 - Attributive/predicative (e.g. *an interesting subject; the subject is interesting*)
 - Compound
 - Proper
- Placement/order

Adverbs

- Adverbs of degree, frequency, manner, place, reason, time
- Formation
- Placement

Conjunctions

- Coordinating, subordinating, correlative

Interjections

- Expressing surprise (e.g. *oh; wow*)

Nouns

- Nouns: collective, compound, proper
- Plurals including irregular forms

Prepositions

- Prepositions of movement (e.g. *to, from*)
- Prepositions of place/position (e.g. *in, on, at, over, under, above, below, across*)
- Prepositions of time (e.g. *in, on, at, before, during, after*)

Pronouns

- Impersonal (e.g. *it, you, one, they*)
- Indefinite (e.g. *something, anything, everything*)
- Reciprocal (*each other, one another*)

- Reflexive (e.g. *myself, yourself, himself*)
- Relative (*who, which, that*)

Verb/Time References:

- Past, present, future and conditional verb tenses

Other Linguistic Structures

- Single-clause sentence structure (affirmative, negative, interrogative, exclamatory)
- Compound sentence structure (affirmative, negative, interrogative, exclamatory)
- Complex sentence structure (affirmative, negative, interrogative, exclamatory)

Vocabulary

- Broad areas of learning (e.g. Health and Well-Being; Career Planning and Entrepreneurship)
- Cross-curricular competencies (e.g. *Uses information; Adopts effective work methods; Communicates appropriately*)
- Immediate environment (e.g. social, commercial, educational, vocational and/or recreational)
- Interests/needs (e.g. employment, education; entertainment, recreation, lifestyles; personal experiences)

Semantics

- Abbreviations and acronyms (e.g. for companies, organizations)
- Antonyms (e.g. *old/new; buy/sell; enjoy/dislike; slow/fast; near/far*)
- Cognates (e.g. *large; chance; patience*); and false cognates (e.g. *form; sensible*)
- Homophones (e.g. *add/ad; made/maid; real/reel; inn/in*)
- Phrasal verbs: separable/inseparable according to meaning (e.g. *pass on; get through*)
- Prefixes/suffixes (e.g. *dis- :dislike; -cian: musician*)
- Synonyms (e.g. *tiny/little; clothes/garments; purchase/buy; fast/quickly; near/close to*)

Orthography

- Abbreviations for familiar organizations, corporations, countries; specific dates, times, numbers and amounts
- Basic punctuation: periods, question marks, commas, quotation marks
- Basic spelling rules
- Capitalization of abbreviations; proper nouns; titles and subtitles of books, movies, songs
- Plurals: regular and irregular

Textual Knowledge

Coherence/Cohesion

Coherence and cohesion include agreement, use of conjunctions, organization of ideas, use of parallel structure and transitional expressions. The list below provides information that is pertinent to this course.

- Agreement: person, number, gender, case
- Conjunctions

- Organization of ideas: appropriate order for context (i.e. chronological, spatial, climactic, specific-to-general, general-to-specific)
- Parallel structure: nouns, infinitives, gerunds
- Structured paragraphs: topic sentence, supporting sentences and concluding sentence
- Transitional expressions

Textual Organization

Selected text types: informative, expressive and persuasive (i.e. information-based, popular, literary)

- Knowledge of internal features
 - appropriate language register for the context
 - text development for notes, letters and messages; reports and explanations; accounts of situations and events (e.g. salutation, body, complimentary closing and signature for short letters; topic sentence, supporting details and conclusion for reports)
- Knowledge (i.e. recognition) of external features
 - context (e.g. recounting details of an event; making requests; explaining how to do something)
 - purpose: informing, expressing, persuading (i.e. any of the bulleted items under Functional Knowledge)
 - target audience (i.e. determine whether the text is intended for a specific gender, age group, social class or social group, e.g. business people, coworkers, friends)

Cultural References

In this course, adult learners may explore the sociolinguistic aspect of English culture by considering the level of formality required for written texts related to specific contexts. However, any other cultural aspect may be used if deemed more appropriate.

Families of Learning Situations

In this program, “families of learning situations” correspond to macro-functions of language use, i.e. communicative intents that can be classified into three categories. The families of learning situations tied to subject-specific competencies targeted in this course are shaded in the table below.

| Families of Learning Situations | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| ▶ | Informing |
| ▶ | Expressing |
| ▶ | Persuading |

All three families of learning situations are targeted in this course. **Informing** is associated with identifying, understanding, reporting and explaining factual information. **Expressing** relates to recounting personal experiences and describing feelings and reactions. **Persuading** is associated with giving and understanding instructions, explanations and reasons.

Additional information on the families of learning situations is provided in Chapter 2, Section 2.2 of the program.

Broad Areas of Learning

The table below illustrates the broad areas of learning. These five areas are significant contemporary issues selected on the basis of their importance to society. Health and Well-Being and Career Planning and Entrepreneurship (listed horizontally) are well suited to this course, as demonstrated in our examples of learning situations. Both areas could easily serve as a springboard for the development of the subject-specific competencies listed vertically.

| Broad Areas of Learning → Subject-Specific Competencies ↓ | Health and Well-Being | Career Planning and Entrepreneurship | Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities | Media Literacy | Citizenship and Community Life |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Reinvests understanding of texts | ■ | ■ | | | |
| Writes and produces texts | ■ | ■ | | | |

Each broad area of learning comprises an educational aim and focuses of development that may help teachers delineate the knowledge that might be explored in certain learning situations.

By considering issues related to Health and Well-Being, adult learners may develop better knowledge of themselves and their basic needs (e.g. awareness of their need to express their feelings).

By considering issues related to Career Planning and Entrepreneurship, adult learners may develop greater knowledge of their potential and how to fulfill it (e.g. awareness of their talents, strengths and interests).

Since teachers have the option of choosing learning situations other than the ones suggested in this program, they may decide to develop broad areas of learning other than those suggested for each course in the program.

For more information on the broad areas of learning, their educational aims and focuses of development, please refer to the General Introduction to the Programs of Study.

Examples of Learning Situations

The following examples of learning situations illustrate how a broad area of learning may serve as a springboard for the development of subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies. The development of a competency requires the use of a variety of resources.

In the case of the subject-specific competencies, these resources may include, for instance, oral, written and multimedia texts; functional, linguistic and textual knowledge of English; as well as language processes, communication strategies and human resources.

In these learning situations, adult learners are presented with the following scenarios:

a) Dear Diary...

Set up a personal journal. Develop your ideas for each entry into a paragraph. Suggestions for entries are as follow:

- A childhood memory (include facts and feelings related to this memory)
- Winning the game (explain how you won and your feelings)
- Something funny that happened today (give facts and reactions)
- Something new you learned today (explain what you discovered and how you came to learn or understand it)
- Your plans for the future (what you want to do and how you will accomplish this)
- A problem you have (include facts and your feelings regarding this problem)
- Your thoughts at this moment (explain what you are thinking about and why)

b) I would like to...

Write a short letter, respecting the form of a well-developed paragraph, to:

- Apologize to a friend/coworker for not being able to attend an event; explain why
- Solicit a local business for financial support of a fund-raising event for a non-profit organization; explain what the funds will be used for and instructions for making the donation
- Thank a local business for their contribution to a fundraising event for a non-profit organization; explain the importance of their support
- Invite a friend to an important personal event such as your graduation or a birthday celebration, explaining why his/her presence is important to you

End-of-Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, adult learners will be able to demonstrate their development of the competencies *Reinvests understanding of texts* and *Writes and produces texts* by employing a range of resources to:

- broaden knowledge of informative, expressive and persuasive texts

- interpret information conveyed in informative, expressive and persuasive texts that they read, listen to or view
- write short paragraphs that convey clear messages related to objects, people, feelings, places, situations and events

Adult learners will be able to identify (in writing) the context, purpose and target audience of a text and recognize the text components. They will also be able to answer questions by identifying and communicating pertinent information (e.g. main characters, problems, causes, solutions, outcomes) using past, present, future and conditional forms.

Texts used for broadening knowledge of informative, expressive and persuasive texts may consist of:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| ○ definitions | ○ diary entries |
| ○ descriptions | ○ short letters/notes |
| ○ instructions | ○ movie synopses |

Adult learners will be able to write short paragraphs in order to convey clear messages related to places, objects, feelings, incidents, situations and events. They will be able to properly organize and develop paragraphs (topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence; methods of development); write simple, compound and complex sentences (affirmative, negative, interrogative, exclamatory forms); appropriately conjugate verb tenses (past, present, future and conditional forms); employ proper grammatical agreement (person, number, gender, case); adequately use conjunctions, transitional expressions and prepositions and apply parallelism rules (nouns, infinitive, gerunds). In this course, writing tasks can include personal and business-type notes, letters or electronic messages; written reports of different types; written accounts of situations and events that are composed of 150 to 250 words, depending on the text type and context.

In order to allow adult learners to improve their English writing skills, teachers will need to integrate grammar practice through guided writing and editing activities on elements such as:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| ○ agreement | ○ parts of speech |
| ○ clauses and sentences | ○ punctuation |
| ○ parallelism | ○ transitional expressions |
| ○ paragraphing | ○ verb conjugation |

Evaluation Criteria for the Competencies Targeted by the Course

| Competencies | Evaluation Criteria |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Reinvests understanding of texts (C2)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration of understanding through the response process • Pertinent use of knowledge in a reinvestment task |
| <p><i>Writes and produces texts (C3)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherence of the content • Clear formulation of the message |