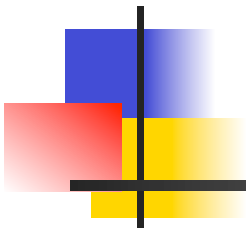


# Challenges for LINC from the Viewpoint of Immigrants and their Co-workers



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# Acknowledgements

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- SSHRC



# Changes to Immigration Numbers in Alberta

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## Immigrants & Temporary Foreign Workers

- 2003 - 24,089
- 2004 - 24,183
- 2005 - 28,025
- 2006 - 31,134
- 2007 - 57,000



# Petrochemical Companies

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- Hiring foreign-trained engineers from a wide range of countries
- Incorporating them into existing staff
- Language requirements:
  - oral skills while working in project teams with other employees
  - writing reports for clients



# Workplace Stories

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I don't know how to start a relationship with Canadian people. I don't know, because sometimes I think they are very polite. They don't want to your, talk too deep, too deeply to them. It's hard for me. I don't know, I don't know, because maybe this is a culture different. Yeah. ... Sometimes on the surface say like, 'How are you, how are you, how are you doing?'



# Workplace Stories

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Maybe I'm not work for a long time, just new to there. But, but I heard my friend said they, she worked in his office about more than half years, still they can't talk deeply. Yeah, just, maybe just she have a problem or computer problem, they, they like to help her ... So I don't know how to, what kind of topic I can talk them.



# NNSs' Perceptions of Problems

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- **Humour:**

When we are coffee time, we are talking about some funny story, I don't understand.



# NNSs' Perceptions of Problems

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- **Details:**

And sometimes they gave me some detail some job I, I will think about suddenly I don't understand what I gonna do.



# NNSs' Perceptions of Problems

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- **Repetition & paraphrase**

And sometimes they gave me some detail  
some job I, I will think about suddenly I don't  
understand what I gonna do. So I just asked  
my supervisor repeat, use the other sentence.



# NNSs' Perceptions of Problems

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- **Need to get on with the work at hand**

I try to find some way I can talk a little bit more with Canadian people. But sometimes, in the workplace, I can't talk too much, because I'm working, it's a job. I must get the job done, not spend time to talk.



# NNSs' Perceptions of Problems

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- **Cultural differences/misunderstandings**

Now I think most difficult thing is that cooperation with a Canadian. Working together with Canadian, because also is culture obstacle. Sometimes you don't know what's your co-worker's thinking, so I don't know how to do, when the problem happen, yeah.



# NNSs' Perceptions of Problems

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## ■ Pronunciation

The most difficult part for me was to overcome the language barrier, and even now I have certain difficulties because most of people they don't understand me. They don't understand my strong accent and, you know, you can see that those impression on their faces and like it makes you uncomfortable and instead of trying to continue conversation you just confused.



# Workplace Study

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- Human Resources personnel- interview
- ESL/Culture Instructor - interview
- NNS employees - interviews
- NS employees - questionnaires and listening experiments
- Observations of both NS & NNS training



# On Hiring Foreign Professionals

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It's very difficult to hire people with the skills we're looking for. There's a high demand for engineering and technical skills, and a dwindling, limited pool of Canadians with those skills. There are lots of foreign-trained professionals with technical skills. We need to tap into this pool.



# Why do NNS Professionals Need Help on the Job?

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- First was in the area of verbal communication. I had feedback from Canadian employees having trouble understanding immigrant employees.
- As for the written side, it was pretty obvious from the first report.



# Meeting the Challenges

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- Technical writing classes at a local college



# Meeting the Challenges

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- It's not about mechanics – it's about integrating the cultural with speaking and writing. I realized there is no way to separate culture from communication.



# Preparation

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- Job shadowing



# Three Courses

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- Taught Friday afternoons on employees' own time - 3 hours x 12 weeks

1. clear speech

2. conversational management

3. autonomous language learning

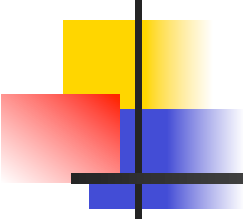


# An EWP Course for NSs

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## Course for Managers

- interpreting résumés
- dealing with cross-cultural conflict
  - gender
  - sexual harassment
  - washroom issues (e.g., spitting)
- promoting leadership in the company



# How Were the Courses Received?

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HR is happy with the outcomes and plans to continue to offer the courses as they hire new personnel. People who were on the verge of losing their jobs are now viewed as making valuable contributions to the company.



# NNSs

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- 9 respondents - Columbia, China, Philippines, India, Venezuela
- 6 males, 3 females
- Mean age = 43 (range = 37-55)
- Mean LOR = 5y (range = 1y 8m - 14y)
- 8 had studied English in own country
- 6 studied English in Canada



# NNSs

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Was general ESL (LINC or beyond) prior to starting to work in Canada helpful?

- A little bit helpful - program has a different aim. My aim is to look for a job, to be familiar with the Canadian working place. Aim at X College is to upgrade.
- At the beginning it was helpful, but at the end it was more difficult. We studied Shakespeare in the last two courses and it was not helpful.



# NNSs

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Was the EWP course helpful?

Oh, yeah, a lot - I was introduced to the Canadian workplace culture.

Yeah, sure, it helped but it was too short. The culture aspect was the most helpful.

Ah, yes, definitely ... I think this course could help me in the future.

The focus on speaking and communication was most helpful.



# NS Employee Reactions

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	Question	Yes	No	N/A
1.	More effort with ESL than NS?	22	1	1
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				



# NSs on Their ESL Colleagues

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Yes. Both harder to understand AND harder to be understood. The analogies that I tend to use are not easily translated. The time delay required for them to translate what I say, think in their native language, then translate to English and share it is painful for a person with little patience to spare. Humour is completely lost a lot of the time.



# NS Employee Reactions

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	Question	Yes	No	N/A
1.	More effort with ESL than NS?	22	1	1
2.	Difficulty comm. with NNS?	22	2	
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				



# NSs on Their NNS Colleagues

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- Yes, sometimes their accent is too dominant. I seriously can't understand them sometimes. Sometimes I feel they don't have a strong enough vocabulary, which results in their explanations of things to be somewhat unclear.



# NS Employee Reactions

	Question	Yes	No	N/A
1.	More effort with ESL than NS?	22	1	1
2.	Difficulty comm. with NNS?	22	2	
3.	NNSs have problems comm.?	24		
4.				
5.				
6.				



# NSs on ESL Colleagues

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Yes, takes much longer to explain. You have to have patience and speak very slowly and patience to listen as well. Words chosen must be proper English, not slang. Some pronunciation is difficult to understand.

Yes – hard to understand what they are saying and hard to use vocabulary that they will understand. Frustrating to adapt to language level.

Yes, longer time, rework, mistakes, wasted budgets, poor quality products, hurt feelings and broken relationships especially as deadlines approach (or pass).



# NS Employee Reactions

	Question	Yes	No	N/A
1.	More effort with ESL than NS?	22	1	1
2.	Difficulty comm. with NNS?	22	2	
3.	NNSs have problems comm.?	24		
4.	Socialize within L1 groups?	23	1	
5.				
6.				



# NS Employee Reactions

	Question	Yes	No	N/A
1.	More effort with ESL than NS?	22	1	1
2.	Difficulty comm. with NNS?	22	2	
3.	NNSs have problems comm.?	24		
4.	Socialize within L1 groups?	23	1	
5.	Coworkers initiate w. same L1?	19	4	1
6.				



# NS Employee Reactions

	Question	Yes	No	N/A
1.	More effort with ESL than NS?	22	1	1
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3.	NNSs have problems comm.?	24		
4.	Socialize within L1 groups?	23	1	
5.	Coworkers initiate w. same L1?	19	4	1
6.	NS reluctant to talk with NNS?	16	3	5



# NSs on Their Colleagues

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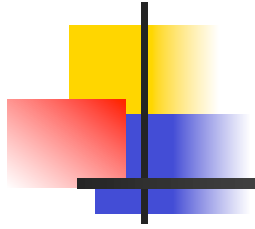
- I find that language barriers hinder fluent conversation and effective communication. Sometimes this makes me less inclined to have social conversation because I find it frustrating.



# Conclusions

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- HR, Managers & NNSs see value in EWP courses
- NSs still frustrated with NNS co-workers' communication skills
- Can't do everything in a short course on Friday afternoons



# Recommendations

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- LINC/ESL programs
- LINC funders
- EWP programs
- Teacher trainers
- Researchers

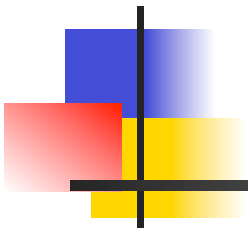


# Willingness to Communicate

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The more I try, the easier it is. Wish others would see that too. People just need more patience, and ESL need to interact more and not hide with their own so much.

Thank you!



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