

Course
ENG-4113-3
English to Inform

English Language Arts



Introduction

In order to fully participate in today's world, we need to know how to sift through, discuss, explain, use, synthesize and summarize the plethora of information we receive from a diversity of sources. Most importantly, we need to be able to evaluate how much of this information is based on fact since even texts that are primarily factual may at times contain digressions or indications of their authors' personal bias. To varying degrees, these texts may shift back and forth from one text genre to another. When we notice such shifts, we are able to assess the type and quality of information before us, i.e. we are able to determine its reliability and level of objectivity.

In this 75-hour course, the third of three courses in Secondary IV (for which adult learners earn credits in language of instruction), adult learners participate in a variety of learning situations and activities to develop their ability to discuss and analyze news reports, feature stories and documentaries. Although these texts belong primarily to the Informative genre, whose social function is to provide a reliable and neutral account of events, situations or natural/social/cultural phenomena, they may contain persuasive, narrative, explanatory and argumentative elements as well. (See the explanation on social functions and their corresponding genres in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.)

The course helps adult learners broaden their knowledge of the communication conventions used in informative texts. By the end of the course, adult learners will be able to apply this knowledge when they present oral news reports and write reports and feature stories.

Subject-Specific Competencies

Competencies are developed and demonstrated through the mobilization and effective use of various resources. Among these resources are language processes, strategies and textual and linguistic knowledge. The subject-specific competencies targeted in the course *English to Inform* are shaded in the table below.

Competencies	Key Features		
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)	Develops resources for communicating orally and for learning	Interacts with others in different contexts	Interprets how speakers shape an oral message to create a relationship with the audience
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)	Develops resources to make sense of various written, spoken and media texts	Extends understanding of various written, spoken and media texts	Interprets his/her relationship to the text and the context
Produces texts for personal and social purposes (C3)	Develops resources to produce written and media texts	Follows a process to produce written and media texts	Creates a relationship with his/her audience suitable to the text and context

For more information on the subject-specific competencies, refer to the following sections:

- *Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.2
- *Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.3
- *Produces texts for personal and social purposes (C3)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.4

Processes and Strategies

Language processes are series of actions or operations that support competency development. In other words, they are important resources that adult learners may use to become more effective speakers, listeners, readers, viewers, writers or producers of texts. In all, there are four language processes (Research, Reading, Writing and Production); the processes suggested for this course are illustrated in the table below.

Processes	Phases
Research	Planning task at hand Mobilizing resources Reflecting on the resources employed to achieve the task
Reading	
Writing	
Production	

Communication and learning strategies are actions, behaviours, steps and techniques that enable adult learners to overcome obstacles, attain goals and achieve success. They are additional 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 and nonverbal Rhetorical Organizational Writing Multimedia/production
Learning	Cognitive	Activating prior knowledge Listening Reading/viewing Information-gathering Interpretation Note-taking
	Socioaffective	Feedback Collaborative
	Metacognitive	Procedural Feedback Self-evaluation

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

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

Cross-Curricular Competencies

The cross-curricular competencies are generic skills that can be developed and applied outside the school setting. They are developed in tandem with subject-specific competencies. Given the nature of the course *English to Inform*, 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 decide to develop cross-curricular competencies other than those shaded in the table below.

Cross-Curricular 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
↓ Subject-Specific Competencies									
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn	■				■	■			■
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts	■				■	■			
Produces texts for personal and social purposes	■				■	■			■

For more information on the key features and manifestations of the cross-curricular competencies, refer to the Diversified Basic Education Program.

Subject-Specific Content

The subject-specific content includes knowledge and cultural references.

Knowledge

The prescribed textual and linguistic elements, necessary for the development of the competencies targeted in this course, are listed below in alphabetical order.

<p>Textual Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ audience and communication context ✓ coherence and cohesion ✓ consistency or logical presentation of ideas ✓ emotional/aesthetic/intellectual appeal of text ✓ main and supporting ideas ✓ methods of organization (e.g. cause/effect, chronological order, comparison/contrast, example, explanation, listing of ideas) ✓ layout of feature stories/written reports (title at top, author’s name at top or bottom of text, text presented in columns under headings/subheadings) ✓ objectivity and bias ✓ paragraphing (features of introductory, body and concluding paragraphs) ✓ relevant vs. irrelevant details ✓ social function(s) of text ✓ sufficient vs. insufficient development of ideas ✓ textual features of reports and feature stories: titles, headings/subheadings, images, pictures and captions, coloured lettering, etc.
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Linguistic Elements

- ✓ agreement (of person, subject and verb, verb tenses, pronoun and antecedent)
- ✓ body language (gestures/movements/facial expressions/eye contact)
- ✓ capitalization and punctuation (commas, quotation marks, end punctuation)
- ✓ common sentence errors (e.g. fragments, run-on sentences, misplaced modifiers)
- ✓ commonly misspelled or confused words
- ✓ language (neutral, connotative)
- ✓ language devices (e.g. hyperbole, irony, innuendo)
- ✓ language functions (contextualizing, summarizing, paraphrasing, rephrasing)
- ✓ language tone and register (style/level of language suitable to the context)
- ✓ oral communication features (voice tone, speed, volume, emphasis, enunciation, pronunciation)
- ✓ parallel structure
- ✓ simple, compound and complex sentences (coordinators, subordinators)
- ✓ synonyms and antonyms
- ✓ syntax
- ✓ transition expressions including time and sequence markers

Cultural References

In this course, teachers may decide to have adult learners explore the sociolinguistic aspect of culture by focusing on the differences in the language and information contained in news reports, documentaries and feature stories. By examining live and written news reports on the same event, for instance, adult learners discover that live news reports tend to be more informal in tone and skimpier in factual content than written news reports. Society expects live news reports to be sound bites, a shorthand version of the main news events. In contrast, society expects written news reports to cover main and minor news events of the day and to include more factual information on these events, in language that is for the most part both formal and neutral.

When adult learners examine documentaries, they discover that the social conventions governing these texts are changing. In the past, documentary texts were also expected to use formal, neutral language and to “stick to the facts,” whereas today it is increasingly acceptable for documentary texts to use informal and connotative language and to transparently promote specific social values. Similarly, when adult learners examine feature stories, they discover that it is customary for news feature stories to deliver the facts in a more neutral, straightforward, pared-down fashion than popular magazine feature stories, which may include street jargon, humour, sexual innuendoes, shocking images and colourful and descriptive language.

By considering these different types of informative texts, adult learners become aware that the differences in language style and content are connected to the roles these texts play in our society. Alternatively, teachers may decide to focus on the aesthetic or the sociological aspect of culture. (See Chapter 4 for additional information on the three cultural aspects.)

Families of Learning Situations

The term “families of learning situations” refers to groupings of learning situations that vary in style and complexity but share some common characteristics. The families of learning situations targeted in this course are shaded in the table below.

Families of Learning Situations	
Exploring and creating literary diversity	
▶	Seeking and imparting information
▶	Developing and supporting a stance

Seeking is associated with the communication purposes of gathering, sorting and extracting information from different types of informative texts such as live/radio/TV/print news reports, documentaries and feature stories. **Imparting** is associated with the communication purposes of relaying, explaining and summarizing this information to others.

Developing is associated with the communication purposes of formulating ideas/opinions about the objectivity of the content presented in news reports, documentaries and feature stories. **Supporting** is associated with the communication purposes of providing evidence for one’s opinion that a selected text does or does not contain bias or strong elements of persuasion. It is also associated with providing evidence for the position adopted in one’s own reports and feature stories.

Broad Areas of Learning

The table below illustrates the broad areas of learning. These five areas are selected on the basis of their importance to society. Each comprises an educational aim and focuses of development that help teachers delineate the knowledge that can be explored in specific learning situations.

Broad Areas of Learning →	Health and Well-Being	Career Planning and Entrepreneurship	Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities	Media Literacy	Citizenship and Community Life
Subject-Specific Competencies ↓					
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn			■		
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts			■		
Produces texts for personal and social purposes			■		

As demonstrated in the previous chart and the example of a learning situation below, Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities is a broad area of learning well suited to this course.

When adult learners focus on Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, they may develop:

- an awareness of the interdependence between the environment and human activity (e.g. the impact of lifestyle choices on global warming, pollution, sustainable energy, clean water supplies)

Other broad areas of learning could also be selected to create different learning situations.

For more information on the broad areas of learning, their educational aim and focuses of development, refer to the Diversified Basic Education Program.

Example of a Learning Situation

Possible Connection Between Brain Tumours and Farming Practices

In this learning situation, adult learners are presented with the following scenario:

You have just heard that an unusually high incidence of brain cancer has been reported in a nearby rural area, including in young adults. Alarmed by these cases, you go online to find out the causes and average incidence of brain tumours. Since you have heard somewhere that brain tumours may be connected to environmental pollution, you also read a recent report on common pesticides used by Québec farmers.

You then gather some additional information on the pesticides used by the farmers in the area where the cases of brain tumours have appeared. Later, you share your research information with some friends, and they convince you to make it public by writing and submitting a feature story to a weekly newspaper that serves the community in question.

End-of-Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, adult learners will be able to:

Discuss and analyze

- **news reports** (e.g. print, TV, radio, streaming, podcast news reports)
- **feature stories** (e.g. assorted newspaper and magazine feature stories)
- **objective and persuasive documentaries**

When adult learners discuss and analyze different types of news reports, they focus on the texts' social function(s), target audience(s) and communication conventions. They identify textual features characteristic of print news stories such as the use of columns, pictures, captions and underlined headings. They discuss the standard use of neutral language in a news report and the reason for its use. They understand that TV news reports, for example, are often more informal than print news reports and also more persuasive because TV reporters use body language, voice tone and word emphasis to draw the audience's attention to certain information. Adult learners summarize the factual content in each report and analyze the way it is organized or presented. They identify the methods of organization used, for example, cause/effect, chronological order, comparison/contrast, example and listing of ideas. They identify the report's narrative, explanatory or persuasive elements. (Ideally, they examine two or more types of reports on the same news item. This helps them to better understand the special communication features of each.)

When adult learners discuss and analyze assorted written feature stories, they focus on the texts' social function(s), target audience(s) and communication conventions and adopt a suitable reading stance. They compare the language formality and neutrality in a newspaper and magazine feature story. They understand that, in general, a newspaper feature story tends to be more pared down than a magazine feature story and also more neutral and formal in tone. They summarize the main topic and main ideas presented in each selected text and evaluate the quality of evidence provided. They compare the content, layout and organization of the two types of feature stories and discuss how a magazine feature story, due to its greater length, tends to contain more descriptive details and also more explanations of the facts than the average newspaper feature story. They identify some of the methods of organization used in both texts. (See examples above.) They also analyze the impact of the title, headings and subheadings, as well as any pictures/graphics/colours the story contains. They appraise the story's overall intellectual, emotional or aesthetic appeal.

When adult learners discuss and analyze objective and persuasive documentaries, they focus on the social function(s), target audience(s) and communication conventions of each selected text. They evaluate the text's language in terms of neutrality and identify and analyze the impact of any connotative language and emotionally charged images the text contains. In other words, they examine the text for signs of personal bias and assess the text's overall objectivity.

Adult learners discuss and summarize the main ideas presented and discuss the credibility of the sources or experts cited. They also evaluate the quantity of factual information provided. They appraise the text's intellectual, emotional or aesthetic appeal. They provide concrete evidence for their conclusions or opinions. In the case of a persuasive documentary, they identify the author's/director's point of view on the topic as well as their own.

Present orally

- **a report**

When adult learners present their oral report, they first introduce their topic (for example, an event/accident or project) and establish a clear context by providing necessary background

information such as the time and location of the event/accident/project. They then elaborate on their topic by providing a number of facts and other types of research information such as expert opinions, observations or eyewitness accounts. They paraphrase this information or identify and directly quote their source. They present this information in a logical fashion, using a method of organization such as cause/effect, chronological order, example or explanation. They end their report with concluding remarks that summarize their findings or the final outcome of the event/accident/project on which they are reporting. They use neutral language overall and a variety of oral communication devices such as varied voice tone, speed, volume, expression and emphasis to generate interest. They respond to questions from the audience and rephrase when clarification is necessary.

Text length: 2-3 minutes

Communication context: familiar or unfamiliar audience; fairly formal tone and register suitable to the text type and target audience

Produce

- **a written report (print or electronic)**

When adult learners write a report, they use concise, neutral language and a layout style characteristic of this text type. They may choose to write a report detailing a factual event or the facts surrounding a new phenomenon, product or technological gadget, for example. Alternatively, they may write a report summarizing the information on a person/event/situation presented in a documentary text. They begin by stating the topic of their report and contextualize the topic by providing any necessary time/date references. They then elaborate on this topic by providing relevant facts and details. They present their information in a logical fashion, using suitable methods of organization such as cause/effect, chronological order or explanation. They show audience awareness by filling in any possible information gaps. They paraphrase their information overall, and if they include direct quotes, they clearly identify the speaker and enclose the speaker's exact words inside quotation marks.

Text length: 300-350 words, excluding prepositions and articles

Communication context: unfamiliar audience; formal tone and register suitable to the text type and target audience

Produce

- **a feature story**

When adult learners write a feature story on an accident/event or a project/personality, they select a target audience and use a layout style characteristic of this text type. For example, they provide a suitable title for their story and place the author's name under the title or at the end of the text. They include headings that may have coloured or distinctive lettering, and pictures/images with captions identifying the people or objects illustrated.

Adult learners begin their story with an introduction that establishes a context and provides time/date references. They flesh out the story by providing relevant information and background details. They present this information in a logical fashion, using suitable methods of organization such as chronological order, cause/effect, example and explanation. Although their story may be informative overall, it may also contain brief descriptions of the main characters and aesthetic and connotative language where suitable. Adult learners may provide direct quotations from the people mentioned in the story or paraphrase remarks. In their concluding section, they summarize the point of the story or its final outcome.

Text length: 500-600 words, including quotations

Communication context: familiar or unfamiliar audience; informal or formal tone and register suitable to the text type and target audience

Teachers need to ensure that adult learners use planning tools such as brainstorming, lists, outlines, storyboards and discussions as they begin creating their oral/written/media texts. Teachers also need to ensure that adult learners actively reflect on how well they communicated their intended message in the texts they created. For example, adult learners may use self-evaluation checklists or participate in feedback discussions to appraise how clearly they explained and supported their ideas in their oral and written reports and feature stories, and how effectively they used various learning and communication strategies. Learners may use the same type of evaluation tools to reflect on what they learned as a result of discussing and creating these texts.

Evaluation Criteria for the Competencies Targeted by the Course

Competencies	Evaluation Criteria
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication of ideas • Effective communication for learning • Appropriate use of language conventions
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherent construction of meaning from texts • Demonstration of understanding contextual connections • Thorough comprehension of structures and features of texts • Critical interpretation of texts
Produces texts for personal and social purposes (C3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective organization of texts to communicate • Appropriate adaptation of language for audience and purpose • Appropriate use of structures, features, codes and conventions of texts • Correct application of language conventions (usage and mechanics)