



Canadian Language Benchmarks and Essential Skills Comparative Framework:

Writing Validation

Copyright 2006 : Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks

Executive Summary

In 2002, a project was initiated to investigate the relationship between the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and the Essential Skills (ES). Out of this investigation, the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB), in consultation with the BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council (SkillPlan), produced a Comparative Framework (CF) that represented the first draft attempt to align the skills and competencies reflected in these two national standards. This report describes a small study that was conducted to investigate the validity of the CF Writing alignment table. This work follows earlier research that focused on the utility and accuracy of the CF Reading alignment table.

The methodology used for this validation was to draft 25 samples of various complexity levels and workplace situations, which were evaluated by 2 experts in Essential Skills. After some minor revisions (e.g. clarity), 23 samples were selected for the pilot. Tasks and a rating sheet were sent out to 15 CLB experts (participants), with additional instructions to benchmark some example tasks to make sure the participants were clear on the process of review and rating that was to be followed. Tasks were then rated independently and remotely by the participants, who mailed back their forms to the researchers.

All benchmark ratings were assigned and delivered by the 15 CLB experts on the 23 writing tasks. In summary, ratings tend to be closer to expectations at both ends of the difficulty continuum, where judgments might be expected to be easier. In the middle ranges, rating accuracy is not very good. Raters tend to disagree by assigning ratings higher rather than lower than expected, with one exception, as noted, Item K. Assuming that a CLB-ES alignment is acceptable if 80% of raters can agree within the one-benchmark margin, we can then identify the tasks where this is not the case. The standard of agreement is not met in tasks V, F, S, C, E, L, and W. In these cases, between 25% and 100% of judges were outside this range of tolerance. Most of these tasks are at ES levels 3 and 4. Overall, at ES level 3, more than 25% of ratings are too high by more than one benchmark, and at ES level 4, this figure is almost 50%.

The tendency for raters to perceive tasks as more difficult than target may be due to the fact that the CLB, unlike the ES, is designed to take into account the second-language and second-culture interpretation of a task. While the rating system for ES is quite straight-forward, focusing only on the complexity of the task itself, the rating system for the CLB requires a careful consideration of all variables that might impact a second-language learner who attempts to perform the task in a cultural setting that is less than familiar. Although the assignment instructions advised CLB experts to assume that the writer performing the task would be sufficiently familiar with the occupational and situational requirements of the target workplace, in reality it might have been quite difficult for these ESL professionals to screen out the cultural and contextual features of the task. As part of the discussion, two possible models are proposed for the Writing alignment table.

Results of this small study seem to indicate the need for a reconsideration of the concordance presented in the Comparative Framework Writing alignment table. It appears that a greater degree of accuracy could be achieved in the task alignments if the existing Writing table were to be replaced with a somewhat looser model, one that acknowledges the degree of error associated with rating workplace tasks on the Canadian Language Benchmarks, one that also better reflects the fluidity and imprecision of the relationship between the two underlying scales.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Methodology.....	2
Analysis.....	4
Discussion	8
Conclusion.....	15
Appendix A.....	16
Appendix B.....	25
Appendix C.....	26
Appendix D.....	28
Appendix E.....	29
Appendix F.....	34
Appendix G.....	35

CLB-ES Comparative Framework

Writing Validation Study

**Gail Stewart
Philip Nagy**

January 19, 2006

Introduction

In 2002, a project was initiated to investigate the relationship between the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and the Essential Skills (ES). Out of this investigation, the BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council (SkillPlan), in consultation with the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB), produced a Comparative Framework (CF) that represented the first draft attempt to align the skills and competencies reflected in these two national standards. The intended purpose of the framework was to support the work of English as a Second Language (ESL) practitioners by assisting them in selecting suitable workplace content for use in CLB-based language classrooms and training programs.

This report describes a small study that was conducted to investigate the validity of the CF Writing alignment table. This work follows earlier research that focused on the utility and accuracy of the CF Reading alignment table. In the Reading study, practitioners were asked to use the Reading table for its intended purpose and to report on their experiences. They were also asked to provide feedback on the comprehensiveness, clarity, and accuracy of an introduction that had been written to go along with the framework. In addition, the Reading study respondents were assembled into panels to undertake a task alignment activity and to offer commentary on the inherent value of the CF concept.

Results of the Reading study revealed a positive response to the existence of a concrete tool that would assist ESL practitioners in understanding the complex relationship between the

CLB and the ES. Participants in the study offered a great deal of support for the CF and also provided much anecdotal feedback to suggest ways in which the framework might be clarified, fleshed out, and improved.

The Reading study resulted in such a rich qualitative response that we did not see the necessity to inquire again as to the overall value and utility of the Comparative Framework. Because there is already sufficient evidence to indicate that the field supports the existence of the CF and endorses its conceptual underpinning, we chose in this study to focus solely on the issue of accuracy.

Methodology

The study was designed as follows.

1. Twenty-five workplace-oriented Writing tasks were drafted to represent a range of complexities and a variety of occupational situations.
2. The draft tasks were examined and evaluated by two expert raters who have extensive background and experience in developing ES profiles. Complexity ratings were assigned independently by these experts, who then conferred to reach consensus. Where any ambiguity existed, the raters suggested modifications that would make the tasks more easily ratable. The perspective taken in this report is that the ES ratings assigned by the two experts are accurate.
3. The Writing tasks were further refined for consistency and clarity, and twenty-three of them were selected (see Appendix A) to represent a range of ES complexities (see Appendix B).

4. The tasks and instructions for rating (see Appendix C) were sent out to a CLB respondent group comprising experts with a strong working knowledge and understanding of the Canadian Language Benchmarks.

5. Before carrying out their rating assignment, the CLB expert group engaged in a benchmarking session. The session was conducted by teleconference using tasks that had not been assigned any previous ES or CLB ratings (see Appendix D). The purpose of this benchmarking session was to ensure that all of the CLB experts would consistently follow the instructions for their task rating assignment. Following the teleconference, all of the experts received a summary of the group’s benchmark ratings, along with a rationale for each decision (see Appendix E).

6. Each CLB expert then undertook the assignment of determining an independent benchmark rating for each of the twenty-three Writing tasks. As stipulated in the assignment instructions, these ratings were to reflect the lowest CLB Writing level necessary to fulfil the requirements of each task in a workplace setting. Ratings were recorded on response sheets (see Appendix F), which were collected for analysis.

7. The independent ratings were analyzed with reference to Table 1, the concordance set out in the Comparative Framework Writing table.

Table 1: Target Matches Based on the ES-CLB Comparative Framework

CLB	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
				ES 1								
						ES 2						
								ES 3				
									ES 4			
										ES 5		

Based on this concordance, the expected CLB ratings for the tasks in the study are summarized in Appendix G.

Analysis

All benchmark ratings were assigned and delivered by the 15 CLB experts on the 23 writing tasks. In three cases, a rater gave a pair of ratings (e.g., 6/7). In each case, the lower rating was chosen for analysis, in accordance with the rating instructions, which asked participants to name the lowest benchmark level at which an individual might expect to be successful at the task.

Two of the 15 respondents were unable to attend the training teleconference and went ahead with their rating assignments before reading the feedback summary. In order to investigate whether they might have misunderstood the assignment, an analysis was undertaken to determine whether or not their ratings were comparable to those of other respondents. The average ratings fell into three clusters: there were two averages at 7.0, ten between 7.5 and 8.2, and three between 8.6 and 8.8 (all figures rounded). The two average ratings of 7.0 were produced by the two respondents unable to attend the training. This might suggest that these two ratings be excluded, but they were no more below the central tendency than were the cluster of three high averages above this central tendency. Therefore, their ratings have been included, but flagged with superscripts, a '1' indicating that the cell includes one of their ratings, and '2' that it includes both of their ratings. Perusal of the data shows that, while these two raters were almost always at the low end of the range for that task, in all but a couple of cases, they were not alone.

The main analysis was a comparison for consistency across the 15 raters and for congruence with the assigned ratings based on the Comparative Framework. Results appear in Table 2. Bolded entries fall within the expected benchmark range based on the Comparative Framework Writing table, which was shown as Table 1.

Table 2: Benchmark Ratings as Assigned

Task	Benchmark										
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A						1	5²	7	2		
B		2 ¹	7	5¹			1				
C								4²	5	6	
D						3 ¹	6¹	4	2		
E								0		3	12 ²
F					1	2 ¹	6¹	2	4		
G		1 ¹	2	4	5 ¹	2	1				
H				2 ¹	7¹	2	3	1			
J									1	10¹	4¹
K			3 ¹	3	3¹	6					
L								1	4 ²	7	3
M				1 ¹	2	5¹	6	1			
N			2	11²	1	1					
P	1 ¹	2 ¹	10	1	1						
R		3 ²	8	3	1						
S							3 ¹	4	5 ¹	2	1
T							1 ¹	9¹	4	1	
U									4¹	6	5¹
V					2 ¹	2	5 ¹	5	1		
W								2¹	9 ¹	2	2
X					1 ¹			2	3¹	7	2
Y		1 ¹		3 ¹	4	4	2	1			
Z			3¹	3	6 ¹		2	1			

Table 2 is difficult to use. In order to highlight patterns in these results, Table 3 presents a reordering of the data by task difficulty and a grouping of responses into categories. Since, on most low-stakes CLB placement assessments, an error of one benchmark in either direction is not uncommon and is considered within the bounds of achievable accuracy on the CLB scale, we have created Table 3 to illustrate the proportion of ratings at target, missing the target by only one benchmark, and missing the target by two or more benchmarks.

Table 3: More Detailed Examination of Ratings

Accuracy/ Benchmark	Below target by 2 or more	Below target by 1	At Target	Above target by 1	Above target by 2 or more
ES1/BM 4-5					
B	0	2	12	0	1
G	0	1	6	5	3
N	0	0	13	1	1
P	1	2	11	1	0
R	0	3	11	1	0
Z	0	0	6	6	3
Benchmark %	1.1%	8.9%	65.6%	15.6%	8.9%
ES2/BM 6-7					
H	0	2	9	3	1
K	3	3	9	0	0
M	0	1	7	6	1
V*	0	0	4	5	6
Y	1	3	8	2	1
Benchmark %	5.3%	12.0%	49.3%	21.3%	12.0%
ES3/BM 8					
A	0	1	5	7	2
D	0	3	6	4	2
F*	1	2	6	2	4
S*	0	0	3	4	8
Benchmark %	1.7%	10.0%	33.3%	28.3%	26.7%
ES4/BM 9					
C*	0	0	4	5	6
E*	0	0	0	0	15
L*	0	0	1	4	10
T	0	1	9	4	1
W*	0	0	2	9	4
Benchmark %	0.0%	1.3%	21.3%	29.3%	48.0%
ES5/BM 10-12					
J	0	0	15	N/A	N/A
U	0	0	15	N/A	N/A
X	1	2	12	N/A	N/A
Benchmark %	2.2%	4.4%	93.3%	N/A	N/A
Overall %	2.0%	7.5%	50.4%	20.0%	20.0%

The asterisks * in Table 3 indicate instances where fewer than 80% of judgements are within one benchmark of the acceptable range. The bottom row summarizes the levels of agreement for all 23 tasks. Overall, 22% of ratings are off in either direction by two or more benchmarks. There is considerable asymmetry, with many more ratings above than below target.

Further insight can be gained by examining the tasks by benchmark level, as illustrated in the rows of Table 3 labeled “Benchmark %.” Disagreement is considerably worse in the middle of the difficulty range, at Benchmarks 8 and 9, than at the extremes. The pattern of asymmetry persists throughout, with more high ratings than low, with one notable exception, Item K, that has many more low ratings than ratings on target.

In summary, ratings tend to be closer to expectations at both ends of the difficulty continuum, where judgments might be expected to be easier. In the middle ranges, rating accuracy is not very good. Raters tend to disagree by assigning ratings higher rather than lower than expected, with one exception, as noted, Item K. Assuming that a CLB-ES alignment is acceptable if 80% of raters can agree within the one-benchmark margin, we can then identify the tasks where this is not the case. The standard of agreement is not met in tasks V, F, S, C, E, L, and W. In these cases, between 25% and 100% of judges were outside this range of tolerance. Most of these tasks are at ES levels 3 and 4. Overall, at ES level 3, more than 25% of ratings are too high by more than one benchmark, and at ES level 4, this figure is almost 50%.

Discussion

The tendency for raters to perceive tasks as more difficult than target may be due to the fact that the CLB, unlike the ES, is designed to take into account the second-language and second-culture interpretation of a task. While the rating system for ES is quite straight-forward, focusing only on the complexity of the task itself, the rating system for the CLB requires a careful consideration of all variables that might impact a second-language learner who attempts to perform the task in a cultural setting that is less than familiar. Although the assignment instructions advised CLB experts to assume that the writer performing the task would be sufficiently familiar with the occupational and situational requirements of the target

workplace, in reality it might have been quite difficult for these ESL professionals to screen out the cultural and contextual features of the task.

In the ES level 2 range (benchmarks 6-7), there is only one task that elicits a high degree of disagreement (Task K, the only task where ratings were lower than target), and perhaps this is not of great concern, as there may have been a specific feature of that particular task which caused our expert raters to perceive it as easier than target. However, at ES level 3 (benchmark 8) and ES level 4 (benchmark 9), the levels of disagreement warrant further examination.

The main feature that stands out for ES levels 3 and 4 is the fact that only one benchmark is associated with each of these problematic ranges. In the draft Comparative Framework, ES level 3 is associated only with benchmark 8, and ES level 4 is associated only with benchmark 9. This is perhaps too fine a distinction to suggest in a concordance that is intended to capture what is in fact an imperfect and very complex relationship between two very different scales. We note also that the CLB is a 12-point scale, which leaves a much greater margin for error than does the 5-point ES scale.

The existing draft CF Writing table implies precise distinctions between contiguous levels, while our study seems to show that these distinctions are perhaps not as clear as one might like to believe. For this reason, we have investigated the accuracy of two potential replacement tables that could depict the reality of a more fluid and flexible relationship between the two standards. The possible models are presented below.

The first model represents an attempt to capture as fully as possible the broad range of response indicated by our CLB expert ratings. The advantage of this table is the fact that it clearly illustrates the complexity and imprecision of the CLB-ES relationship. The disadvantage is that there is a great degree of overlap, which might be confusing to potential users.

Table 4: ES/CLB Writing Matches, First Replacement Version

CLB	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
			ES level 1									
				ES level 2								
						ES level 3						
								ES level 4				
									ES level 5			

If the above concordance is substituted for the existing Writing alignment table, then the results of our CLB rating assignment change considerably. Tables 5 and 6 show the dramatic improvement in the number of ratings on target when Table 4 is substituted for Table 1.

Table 5: Alignments if First Replacement Framework (Table 4) is used

Task	Benchmark											
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
A						1	5²	7	2			
B		2¹	7	5¹			1					
C								4²	5	6		
D						3¹	6¹	4	2			
E										3	12²	
F					1	2¹	6¹	2	4			
G		1¹	2	4	5¹	2	1					
H				2¹	7¹	2	3	1				
J									1	10¹	4¹	
K			3¹	3	3¹	6						
L								1	4²	7	3	
M				1¹	2	5¹	6	1				
N			2	11²	1	1						
P	1¹	2¹	10	1	1							
R		3²	8	3	1							
S							3¹	4	5¹	2	1	
T							1¹	9¹	4	1		
U									4¹	6	5¹	
V					2¹	2	5¹	5	1			
W								2¹	9¹	2	2	
X					1¹			2	3¹	7	2	
Y		1¹		3¹	4	4	2	1				
Z			3¹	3	6¹		2	1				

Table 6: More Detailed Examination of Ratings Using First Replacement ES/CLB Match

Accuracy/ Benchmark	Below target by 2 or more	Below target by 1	At Target	Above target by 1	Above target by 2 or more
ES1/BM 3-6					
B	0	0	14	0	1
G	0	0	12	2	1
N	0	0	14	1	0
P	0	1	14	0	0
R	0	0	15	0	0
Z	0	0	12	0	3
Benchmark %	0%	1.1%	91.2%	3.3%	4.4%
ES2/BM 5-8					
H	0	0	14	1	0
K	0	3	12	0	0
M	0	0	14	1	0
V	0	0	9	5	1
Y	1	0	13	1	0
Benchmark %	1.3%	4.0%	82.7%	10.7%	1.3%
ES3/BM 7-10					
A	0	0	15	0	0
D	0	0	15	0	0
F	0	1	14	0	0
S	0	0	12	2	1
Benchmark %	0.0%	1.6%	93.3%	3.3%	1.6%
ES4/BM 9-12					
C	0	0	15	0	0
E	0	0	15	0	0
L	0	0	15	0	0
T	0	1	14	0	0
W	0	0	15	0	0
Benchmark %	0.0%	1.3%	98.7%	0.0%	0.0%
ES5/BM 10-12					
J	0	0	15	N/A	N/A
U	0	0	15	N/A	N/A
X	1	2	12	N/A	N/A
Benchmark %	0.0%	4.4%	93.3%	N/A	N/A
Overall %	0.6%	2.3%	91.3%	3.8%	2.0%

Examination of Table 6 shows that replacement of the existing CF Writing table by Replacement Table 4 produces a very high level of ratings on target. Overall, only 8.7% of ratings miss the target at all, and only 2.6% miss by more than one benchmark. Only Task Z has more than one rating that misses the target by 2 or more benchmarks.

The disadvantage of using Table 4 is the fact that, as noted, this concordance implies a great deal of overlap between the levels in the two underlying standards. This feature of Table 4 could lead users of the Comparative Framework to feel confused when trying to select tasks and materials for teaching and training purposes. Ultimately, a table that reflects too loose a relationship between the two scales is likely to be of little practical use.

The second model for a potential replacement table (Table 7) is an attempt to create a compromise between the overly tight concordance in Table 1 and the overly loose alignment shown in Table 4. Table 7 presents a more uniform alignment of ranges on the two scales, with exactly three CLB benchmarks appearing at each ES level and an overlap of one benchmark between each range. The overlap is deliberate and is intended to reflect the one-benchmark allowable margin of error and also to acknowledge the imprecision of the relationship between the two underlying scales. Note that the degree of overlap in Replacement Table 7 is minimal compared to Replacement Table 4

Table 7: ES/CLB Writing Matches, Second Replacement Version

CLB	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
			ES level 1									
					ES level 2							
							ES level 3					
									ES level 4			
										ES level 5		

If this second realignment (Table 7) is used, then Tables 8 and 9 ensue. Table 8 presents the same data as in Tables 2 and 5 but with more entries bolded than in Table 2 and fewer than in Table 5. This reflects the fact that Table 7 is a compromise between the very strict and precise Table 1 and the much looser Table 4.

Table 8: Alignments if Second Replacement Framework (Table 6) is used

Task	Benchmark										
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A						1	5²	7	2		
B		2¹	7	5¹			1				
C								4²	5	6	
D						3¹	6¹	4	2		
E										3	12 ²
F					1	2¹	6¹	2	4		
G		1¹	2	4	5 ¹	2	1				
H				2¹	7¹	2	3	1			
J									1	10¹	4¹
K			3 ¹	3	3¹	6					
L								1	4²	7	3
M				1¹	2	5¹	6	1			
N			2	11²	1	1					
P	1 ¹	2¹	10	1	1						
R		3²	8	3	1						
S							3¹	4	5 ¹	2	1
T							1 ¹	9¹	4	1	
U									4¹	6	5¹
V					2¹	2	5¹	5	1		
W								2¹	9¹	2	2
X					1 ¹			2	3¹	7	2
Y		1 ¹		3¹	4	4	2	1			
Z			3¹	3	6 ¹		2	1			

Table 9: More Detailed Examination of Ratings Using Second Replacement ES/CLB Match

Accuracy/ Benchmark	Below target by 2 or more	Below target by 1	At Target	Above target by 1	Above target by 2 or more
ES1/BM 3-5					
B	0	0	14	0	1
G	0	0	7	5	3
N	0	0	13	1	1
P	0	1	13	1	0
R	0	0	14	1	0
Z	0	0	6	6	3
Benchmark %	0%	1.1%	74.4%	15.6%	8.9%
ES2/BM 5-7					
H	0	0	11	3	1
K	0	3	6	6	0
M	0	0	8	6	1
V	0	0	9	5	1
Y	1	0	10	2	1
Benchmark %	1.3%	4.0%	58.7%	29.3%	5.3%
ES3/BM 7-9					
A	0	0	13	2	0
D	0	0	13	2	0
F	0	1	10	4	0
S	0	0	7	5	3
Benchmark %	0.0%	1.6%	71.2%	21.7%	5.0%
ES4/BM 9-11					
C	0	0	15	0	0
E	0	0	3	12	0
L	0	0	12	3	0
T	0	1	14	0	0
W	0	0	13	2	0
Benchmark %	0.0%	1.3%	76.0%	22.7%	0.0%
ES5/BM 10-12					
J	0	0	15	N/A	N/A
U	0	0	15	N/A	N/A
X	1	2	12	N/A	N/A
Benchmark %	0.0%	4.4%	93.3%	N/A	N/A
Overall %	0.6%	2.3%	73.9%	19.1%	4.1%

In Table 9, only 4.7% of ratings are beyond a tolerance of one benchmark from the compromise matches as shown in Table 6. Of the 95% within a one benchmark tolerance, substantial asymmetry is shown, with 19.1% of ratings one benchmark above target, and only 2.3% one benchmark below target. The disproportionate number of higher ratings is

probably due to CLB raters' attention to variables beyond linguistic ability that influence performance on authentic workplace tasks.

Conclusion

Results of this small study seem to indicate the need for a reconsideration of the concordance presented in the Comparative Framework Writing alignment table. It appears that a greater degree of accuracy could be achieved in the task alignments if the existing Writing table were to be replaced with a somewhat looser model, one that acknowledges the degree of error associated with rating workplace tasks on the Canadian Language Benchmarks, one that also better reflects the fluidity and imprecision of the relationship between the two underlying scales.

Appendix A

Task A

You are the senior manager in a company that manufactures windows. Last week, your department shipped out thirty-five windows (product # 34709). Some of the customers who received the windows have called to inform you that there is a defect in the seal. Write a one-page letter to all of the customers who received the defective windows. Keeping in mind that customers are usually upset by defects and delays, explain the nature of the defect, apologize for the problem, and offer a suitable solution.

Task B

You are a kitchen worker in a small restaurant. Every morning, you follow a set routine to get the kitchen set up and ready for the day. Tomorrow, a co-worker will be filling in for you. Write a “to do” list with ten items to indicate the routine that the co-worker should follow in setting up for the day.

To Do
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Task C

You are the department manager at a large food processing company. You have done some research and have concluded that your department could be run more efficiently. Write a detailed report to the company president outlining your proposed changes. Include your research results, recommendations, the reasons why your ideas will work, and the benefits to the company.

Task D

You are a customer service agent for a small airline. Recently, a customer arrived at the boarding gate in a desperate hurry and tried to get on a flight without a boarding pass. You followed procedure while trying to be polite yet firm, indicating that you could not allow anyone to board the plane without a valid pass. Now, the customer has registered a complaint about your attitude. In a letter to the company president, the customer has stated that you were rude and uncooperative. Write a letter to the president defending your behaviour. Describe the incident and explain your side of the story.

Task E

As a senior HR manager at a telecommunications company, you have been asked to draft a company policy manual. This manual should include policies to deal with employee rights and responsibilities, health and safety, working conditions, and employee conduct.

Task F

You are an administrator at a medical clinic, and you have just managed to convince the management that you need a full-time assistant. Write a job description for this new position.

Task G

You are an elementary school teacher assistant working with a grade three class. One of the students is showing problems in her behaviour. Write a short note to the parents of this student requesting a meeting to talk about the situation.

Task H

You are a team leader in the shipping department of a large factory. Yesterday, a member of your team tried to get a box from a high shelf and fell off a ladder. As a result, she has a broken wrist and a bruised hip. Fill out the following report with details about the incident.

Accidental Injury Report			
Business unit:	Department:	Name of reporting team leader:	
Date of accident:	Time of accident:	Location of accident:	
Name of injured employee:	Employee occupation:	Employee number:	Employee start date:
How did the accident occur? (Please explain fully)			
What is the nature of the injury? (Please explain fully)			
Was the injury due to negligence? (Please explain fully)			

Task J

You are a researcher who has recently completed a one-year environmental impact study of proposed development in a township currently zoned for agricultural use. Prepare a detailed report to be presented to town council members. Your report should include several sections, including research methodology, data analysis and interpretation, assessment of the impact of the proposed development, and final recommendations.

Task K

You are a security guard working in a large office tower. Each year, you get two weeks off. One week is supposed to be taken between January and June, and the other week is supposed to be taken between July and December. Next month, you plan to take a trip with your family, and you would like to use your entire vacation at that time. Write a short memo to your supervisor outlining your request.

Memo	
To:	
From:	
Re:	

Task L

You are the manager of a daycare centre. Write a proposal to the government requesting funding for a special project. Your proposal should be 8 to 10 pages in length.

Task M

You are a travel counselor who has just booked a trip for an important client. The client will be visiting five cities on her trip and staying in some of the finest hotels. Write a letter to the client detailing the arrangements you have confirmed for the trip.

Task N

You work as a sales representative in a shoe store. A customer has just tried on a pair of shoes and would like to come back and purchase them tomorrow at a specific time. You will not be at work tomorrow. The other sales representative, Andy, will be working tomorrow. Write a short note to Andy. Include the customer's name, describe the situation, indicate when the customer will be returning, and explain what Andy needs to do.

Task P

You are a gas station attendant, and you have suddenly become ill during your shift. It is now 3:00 pm, and you have called a replacement who promises to be on duty by 3:30 pm. Your medical condition is serious enough that you feel you have to leave immediately. You intend to lock the door to your booth and leave a note to inform customers of the situation. Write the note that you would stick on the door of your booth.

Task R

You are an executive assistant sharing a large office space with three others. The shared printer has broken down. You have called the repair service to come this afternoon, and you are now leaving for lunch. Write a note to place on the machine explaining the situation to your co-workers.

Task S

You are the manager of a business unit in a large industrial company. One of your job responsibilities is to complete appraisals of employees in your unit. Complete the following performance appraisal.

Employee Performance Appraisal	
Employee name: _____ Employee number: _____	
Department: _____ Job title: _____	
Date of appraisal: _____ Appraisal period: _____	
Performance Expectations: Please provide a summary of employee expectations for the appraisal period.	
Employee Accountabilities: Please provide a summary of employee accountabilities as outlined in the job profile.	

Performance against Expectations:

Please provide a summary of employee performance with regard to stated expectations.

Performance against Accountabilities:

Please provide a summary of employee performance with regard to stated accountabilities.

Additional comments and observations:

Authorized Signature: _____ **Date:**

Task T

You are the supervisor of an assembly team at a large automobile manufacturing plant. Last week, your manager was unable to attend an important seminar on safety practices in the workplace. You attended the seminar in his place and took notes on the important points that were made. Now, you need to prepare a summary for your manager. Write up a report with the important points that were made in the seminar and their impact on your work. Your report should be about 5 pages long.

Task U

You are a technical writer for a home electronics manufacturer. Write a users' manual for a new line of stereo equipment. The manual should include assembly and installation instructions, user instructions, troubleshooting techniques, and warranty information

Task V

You manage the toy department at a large store. The store is having a midnight madness sale on December 15, and some of your employees have been complaining and claiming that they should not be required to work such late hours. Prepare a memo to these employees emphasizing the importance of the sale, reminding them that this event only occurs once a year, and explaining why they are all required to work that evening. Your memo should be 2 paragraphs in length

Task W

You are a software developer who has just completed writing a software program that will be used by an entire company. The software is to be installed and implemented right away. Write detailed instructions to be distributed with the software for employees who do not have an understanding of how the software works. Include an introduction, explanation of the application, and detailed instructions for use. The document should be 8 pages in length.

Task X

You are an advertising copywriter. Write the script for a 30-second radio advertisement for an insurance company.

Task Y

You work in the stock room of a large hardware outlet. Over the past month, the number of accidents occurring in the stock room has increased by 15%. Write a suggestion to the company describing three ways you think the accident rate in the stock room could be reduced.

Employee Suggestion Form
Name: _____ Department: _____ Position: _____
Your suggestion:

Task Z

You are the tennis instructor at a large fitness club. Recently, you offered some pointers to a member of the club, and these tips really improved the person's game. As a thank-you, he sent you two passes to a movie. You have to return the tickets because the fitness club policy states that employees are not allowed to accept any gifts from members. Write a brief note to the member thanking him for the tickets and explaining why they have to be returned.

Appendix B

ES Complexity Ratings assigned by inQuire

Writing Task Identifier	ES Complexity Level
A	3
B	1
C	4
D	3
E	4
F	3
G	1
H	2
J	5
K	2
L	4
M	2
N	1
P	1
R	1
S	3
T	4
U	5
V	2
W	4
X	5
Y	2
Z	1

Appendix C

Dear CLB Expert:

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this CCLB study on the validity of the CLB-ES Comparative Framework. The purpose of this stage of our research is to examine expert opinion on the placement of Essential Skills tasks in reference to the communicative competencies described in the Canadian Language Benchmarks for Writing.

In order to ensure the consistency of our results, it is very important that all CLB expert respondents approach the study in the same way. We therefore require that you follow these instructions for each task in your package.

- 1) Read the task.
- 2) Imagine that the task is to be performed by a worker whose first language is not English. The worker is employed in the described context and is required to perform the task as part of her or his job.
- 3) Assume that the worker is competent in the job and understands the requirements of the task.
- 4) Assume that the worker has all of the information required to complete the task. For example, if the task requires an evaluation of a person or a description of an incident, imagine that the worker has easy access to this information.
- 5) Assume that the worker is able to comprehend the prompt or instructions for the task. In other words, do not consider the reading complexity of the prompt but only the difficulty of the writing that is required of the worker.
- 6) Look at the task, and ask yourself the following question:

What is the lowest CLB writing benchmark at which a worker could successfully carry out this writing task?
- 7) Record the CLB writing benchmark on the CLB Respondent Rating Sheet.

When you have assigned a CLB benchmark for each of the tasks in your package, sign and date your rating sheet. Please return your Respondent Rating Sheet to Philip Nagy in the addressed envelope provided before December 20, 2005.

Again, many thanks for your assistance with this research. Without the benefit of your expertise, we could not complete this validation.

Appendix D

Sample Tasks for Discussion and Benchmark Calibration

Task 1

You are the senior manager in a food processing company. Recently, your company placed a recall on a particular canned soup because of concerns that the product might have been contaminated. Your research department has since run tests on this product and has assured you that these concerns were unfounded. Despite this finding, there is reluctance on the part of one of your largest retail distributors to continue carrying your products. **Write a letter** to the executive director of this large retail chain apologizing for the problem, reassuring her that your products are safe, and requesting her continued confidence in your company.

Task 2

You are an executive in a large advertising firm. Next week, you will be making a trip to another country to pitch a new ad campaign. Before you leave, you need to be sure that your assistant assembles all of the necessary materials and equipment for you to successfully run your presentation. **Prepare a list** for your executive assistant detailing all of the materials and equipment you will require for the trip.

Task 3

You are a writer in the marketing department of a large financial institution. **Write a persuasive marketing package** to introduce five new products to your existing customer base. For each product or service, include a one-page summary **along with an appealing customer brochure** promoting each product or service.

Task 4

You are the front desk agent in a large hotel. Your colleague has listed the items that are currently in your lost-and-found bin. **Complete the remainder of the chart** with information about the items.

Item	Detailed Description	Date found	Where found
Umbrella	blue and white stripes with dark wooden handle	July 20, 2005	Hotel lobby
Sweater			
Golf club			
Wrist watch			
Wallet			
Duffel bag			
Key ring			
Eye glasses			
Scarf			

Appendix E

Comparative Framework Validation Study

Group Calibration Session Notes

December 15, 2005

The group calibration session began with panel introductions and an overview of the Comparative Framework and the purpose of this study. The following main points were made in the description and overview:

- The Comparative Framework aligns two scales – Essential Skills (ES) and Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB). It has been designed so that ESL teachers can select workplace content for use in CLB-based classrooms and training programs.
- The purpose of this study is to validate the concordance of levels across the two scales. If you are interested in looking at the research that underpins the development of the framework or at the framework itself, this information can be found on the Essential Skills website. You are not required to look at this framework, and the framework should definitely not be used as the basis for the work that you do in this study. You are being asked, as a CLB expert, to use your background and your CLB document for the task placement exercise.
- One of the difficulties in validating the framework is the fact that the CLB and ES scales differ in two main ways. The ES has 5 levels, and its main purpose is to place tasks. The CLB has 12 levels, and its main purpose is to place learners. Although the CLB has not been designed specifically for task placement, CLB

experts tend to have a pretty good sense when looking at a task as to the sort of learner who would be able to cope successfully with the complexity of the task demands.

- The prompts for the study have been designed so that they can be rated by both ES and CLB experts. This is why the prompts tell us the job title and the context for the task, but they do not provide any of the information that would be required in the writing. It is understood that the person in the given situation would have the information needed to compete the task.

We then went on to discuss how we would define task success or the ability to cope. In other words, how would we decide on the benchmark of a person would be able to do the task successfully?

- The most important thing to keep in mind is that we are concentrating on the ability to complete the task only, not on the ability required to do the job. For example, the prompt might indicate that the task is performed by a senior manager, and the task itself might be to write a list. In this case, we do not ask ourselves what benchmark is required to be a senior manager, but rather how much ability is required to cope with the task of writing this simple list.
- The ability to cope will be defined in terms of 75% success on the task. In other words, when we ask ourselves what benchmark would be required to succeed at the task, we are going to think of success in terms of a 75% completion. This is in keeping with the degree of success that defines ability in the CLB.

The group discussed some of the features of a prompt that could distract or derail us from assigning the appropriate benchmark.

- Notice that each task in the calibration materials includes a phrase that has been bolded in red font. This is to help call attention to the core of the task instruction. So, while the prompt might be directed at an executive who is preparing a presentation and has to understand the context of a complex situation and deal with the challenges of a demanding workplace, the task might simply be to write a note. The focus of our benchmarking is the ability to write the note at a 75% completion.
- We are focusing on the linguistic demands of each writing task.

The group went on to discuss the calibration tasks that they had received. The four tasks had not been benchmarked prior to the discussion. Before beginning the benchmarking, we discussed the following.

- The core instruction in each of the calibration tasks is distinguished by red font. This is to help us to stay on track. When you approach the actual task rating, it might be helpful if you begin by looking for this core. Try to identify the phrase that gives you the essence of what the person is required to do.

Task 1 Benchmark 9

Notice that the person is a senior manager. This is one of the points that could derail an accurate CLB placement if it is given too much focus. Although the context for the task describes a senior manager who is required to understand the concepts of product contamination and recall, we do not build this background and knowledge into the task

difficulty. In the workplace, the person would understand all of the ins and outs of the situation and would be qualified to deal with a situation such as a recall. This knowledge would be separate from the linguistic ability required to write the letter. We have to stick to the requirements of the letter. It is a formal business letter, somewhat routine perhaps, including the functions of apologizing, reassuring, and requesting. The person would be required to synthesize information in order to compose a letter at a suitable level of complexity. A routine letter appears at benchmark 8, but the group felt that the almost persuasive nature of this particular letter would place it at a benchmark 9.

Task 2 Benchmark 6

Because the task requires the writer to compile a list, we began by looking in the benchmark 5 range. We then looked at the 4 and the 6, but we settled on the 6 because of the specialized vocabulary required to write the list.

Task 3 Benchmark 11

This task requires that the writer produce a large quantity of writing for an unfamiliar audience. The writing has to be creative and varied. Furthermore, it is highly persuasive in nature. These were the key criteria that caused the group to settle on a benchmark 11 rather than a 10.

Task 4 Benchmark 4

This was fairly straight-forward. The group noted immediately that the essence of the task was to complete a simple form - thus benchmark 4.

Appendix F

CLB Respondent Rating Sheet

This chart is to be completed and returned to Philip Nagy by December 31, 2005.

Writing Task Identifier	CLB Writing Benchmark
A	
B	
C	
D	
E	
F	
G	
H	
J	
K	
L	
M	
N	
P	
R	
S	
T	
U	
V	
W	
X	
Y	
Z	

Name of CLB Expert: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix G

Concordance for Comparative Framework Writing Validation

Task Identifier	ES Complexity Level	CLB Benchmark that should be assigned if the Comparative Framework is accurate
A	3	8
B	1	4 or 5
C	4	9
D	3	8
E	4	9
F	3	8
G	1	4 or 5
H	2	6 or 7
J	5	10 or 11 or 12
K	2	6 or 7
L	4	9
M	2	6 or 7
N	1	4 or 5
P	1	4 or 5
R	1	4 or 5
S	3	8
T	4	9
U	5	10 or 11 or 12
V	2	6 or 7
W	4	9
X	5	10 or 11 or 12
Y	2	6 or 7
Z	1	4 or 5

