

## **College English Preparation Online (CEPO) : en ligne pour une meilleure compréhension de l'anglais chez les allophones**

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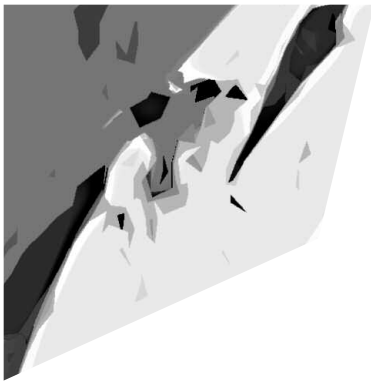
### **Overview of the site**

CEPO is an online supplement to the Preparation for College English course developed by members of The Learning Centre at Vanier College and the CCDMD. Its main objective is to develop college students' English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through academic online activities in order to bring them to the entry level English proficiency required for college studies. It consists of 5 units, each of which focuses on a different text and literary technique. Exercises based on the ministry's four competencies are incorporated into each unit to help students in the way they express themselves regarding English literature and to help them to read and analyze a short story.

### **Target audience and « raison d'être »**

CEPO is aimed at the students of the Preparation for College English course. There are approximately five Preparation for College English course sections offered every year.

Students who are placed in the Preparation for College English course are usually second or third language students who come from francophone high schools, adult education centres or have recently immigrated to Canada. The students are usually in their late teens and/or adults coming back to school to pursue a new profession. Given that the non-Anglophone Vanier student population represents 60% of the overall student body, the targeted group makes up a significant proportion of the English language college population.



Students' learning suffers because they have difficulty communicating not only with their teacher, but also with their peers. In addition, these students are not able to fulfill the requirements for the Preparation for College English courses.

Moreover, one shortcoming of the classroom is that the teacher spends more time on reading and writing than on listening and speaking. This occurs because so much of the students' studies require reading and writing; therefore, speaking and listening activities are put aside. Students feel frustrated that they are not able to communicate as fluently and accurately as they should.

The Learning Centre, in conjunction with CCDMD and the Vanier English department felt that one way to solve these problems was to provide these students with educational materials to practice correctly pronouncing and understanding literary techniques and devices, which would make them feel more comfortable using academic words regularly. This would also facilitate them in expressing their ideas to their teacher, peers and as well in oral presentations. The educational materials would, in turn, enhance the students' communication skills in the classroom. Once the students complete their studies and apply for jobs, advanced listening, speaking, reading and writing skills will help ease them into the workplace.

While the website is primarily aimed at the above-mentioned students, the choice to make it freely available online makes it accessible to all students who may be experiencing difficulty with college-level English, and/or who need to become better acquainted with English literary techniques. Although much of the material focuses on literary analysis, the project was designed to address weak areas in English language reading comprehension and analysis, and as such can be transposed into other course contexts, such as ESL courses in the French system.

### **Educational methods and activities**

The main objective of the educational project is strengthening English language skills through the introduction of topics and themes pertaining to English literature. As such, each unit includes activities that incorporate all four skills directly related to literature (for example, activities revolving around techniques and devices, transitional words and relevant vocabulary). The activities included develop these skills by reinforcing what they have learned in the English literature classroom, and allowing students to put what they have learned into practice. The activities focus on comprehension, reading for main ideas, critical thinking, etc. of a specific short story. In other words, the primary goal is to instruct students how to effectively analyze a piece of literature. This is done through activities that are designed to teach students how to analyze a body of work by getting students to analyse the nuances of individual components like vocabulary and literary techniques for deeper meaning.

## **Description of the project**

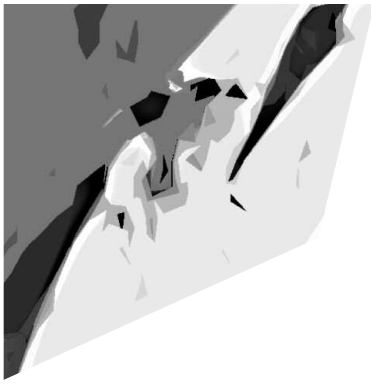
### **LEARNING CONTENT:**

- The learning content of the material is course-content-related, focusing on in-context communication.
- A typical unit begins with a short story. Using an audio function, the student first listens to the short story, and then read it on his/her own.
- Definitions, phonetic spelling and pronunciation are given for newly introduced and challenging vocabulary.
- Multiple choice, true/false and matching questions follow to test comprehension of the main ideas.
- The next section of the unit introduces a literary technique (such as « character »), and offer activities to help the student understand the specific technique.
- The activities throughout the unit, as well as the units themselves, are graduated to increase knowledge and promote self-esteem and motivation.
- Each unit ends with activities that review the main ideas raised in the unit and takes approximately an hour to an hour and a half for the student to complete.
- The website is designed to allow students to receive immediate feedback on their answers to the questions found in the different units. Errors are quickly identified, and corrected.
- Students are able to evaluate their own progress by saving their work and accessing the statistics.

### **INNOVATIVE LEARNING:**

After thorough research, it was apparent that educational materials such as the ones included in this site are greatly lacking and that the Preparation for College English course was taught without the incorporation of IT materials. The project was designed because the developers felt that it was crucial to introduce new ways to perfect this course as it is offered to students whose grasp of English is weak. This course is therefore in place to offer these students a solid foundation on which they will pursue their CEGEP and subsequent studies. In addition to serving as a means of increasing student participation, this online project also increases accessibility to course materials. Students are be able to log on to the website from home and, indeed, virtually any location where there is access to the Internet.

To introduce key literary concepts, the teacher could use the online activities, which offer more practice to the students and reinforce learning. The educational materials can be effectively integrated into a classroom situation as an essential component of the course. IT materials allow teachers the freedom to divert from traditional teaching methods that are not always successful.



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Furthermore, students come with an existing knowledge of the technology, which facilitates the process, and are keen to use innovative learning tools which incorporate variety into students' workload and therefore help maintain interest.

#### **OVERALL BENEFITS:**

The overall benefit the site offers is that it enhances the interaction of students with course materials, which, in turn, improves students' achievement. The project accommodates a great variety of learning styles, as well as incorporating different types of media, such as visual and auditory elements. Students can work at their own pace, which encourages students to be independent learners. Moreover, this project specifically targets typical ESL difficulties, such as trouble with reading comprehension, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

#### **Integration into the teaching process**

Teachers can incorporate the materials into his/her curriculum as a lab component. Another option for the teacher is to use the project as remedial work for weaker students or enrichment for advanced students. The teacher can also simply assign it as homework to all students. Students could access the materials in a lab component of the course. The students could alternate between a lab and a classroom setting and access the website at any time and from anywhere.

In class, use of the site has been successful and students have stated that the site helped them not only with their reading and analytical comprehension, but with the targeted ESL areas like pronunciation and vocabulary expansion. They appreciated being able to use the site independently, in conjunction with their course, to further their learning and understanding of the course related content. The site was launched publically in the winter 2009 session and is freely accessible to all, teachers and students alike.

Visit the site to find out more: <http://www.ccdmd.qc.ca/en/cepo/>