Measuring the impact of a 10-Week English language course:

An evaluation of a pilot project in Dashwood, Ontario

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Contents

Introduction

Over the winter of 2025, the Huron County Local Immigration Partnership worked alongside Set7 Skills and Technology, North Perth & Region to lead a pilot project offering weekly English language classes to adults in the hamlet of Dashwood, Ontario.

The project enabled more than 20 newcomers to Canada, who were on temporary work permits, to improve their English language skills over a 10-week period. The English language classes were funded thanks to support from the Huron County Economic Development Board and the Municipality of South Huron.

This report provides an evaluation of those classes and highlights their impact. This program served newcomers to Canada, most of whom were working in manual labour roles in agricultural operations and spoke Tagalog or Spanish at home. A total of 22 individuals completed the 10-week pilot program, offered at two different levels: introductory and intermediate workplace English.

Results from pre and post class surveys revealed impact. While participants entered with varying levels of comfort using English, their motivation to improve remained consistently high throughout the training. Encouragingly, four core language skills showed improvement, with the greatest gains in listening and reading. Progress was also seen in real-world workplace interactions, especially in team meetings, delivering updates, and resolving conflicts. Additionally, the participants reported feeling anxious more frequently before the training and had more neutral feelings following the 10-week course.

Notably, older participants made stronger gains in listening and writing, and Spanish speakers reported greater improvements in several workplace scenarios. While some learners moved from comfort to a more neutral stance in workplace communication, the continued high motivation among those who completed the course reflects a meaningful step toward greater language confidence and engagement.

Ultimately, the pilot project can be viewed as a success, as the classes were continued after the pilot ended, thanks to funding from Hayters Farm, and the Sunset Foundation, with support from the Municipality of South Huron.

Background

Rural and small communities across Canada are looking towards immigration to maintain economic and social vitality. Newcomers to Canada who settle in rural and small communities can contribute to the economy by establishing new businesses, taking over existing ones, and filling critical workforce gaps. Newcomers also contribute by joining community organizations, organizing social events, and sharing their cultural traditions with one another and the broader community. As Caldwell et al (2017) write, small communities that support immigration attraction and retention are building "a viable economic, social, and cultural fabric for their communities" (p.4). When considering immigrant attraction and retention, it's key to look at existing data to determine approaches for assistance.

In Ontario's Huron County, an area comprising many small and rural communities, the number of newcomers to Canada who arrive annually is increasingly dominated by newcomers with temporary work permits. According to Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (2025) data, of the 1,880 newcomers who arrived in Huron County in 2023 and 2024, 68 per cent were on temporary work permits – either through the Temporary Foreign Work Program or the International Mobility Program (see TABLE 1). Among those 1,290 temporary workers, 1,105 (86 per cent) worked in positions categorized into three National Occupation Classification codes: supervisors and technical occupations in natural resources, agriculture and related production; workers in natural resources, agriculture and related production; and harvesting, landscaping and natural resources labourers.

Number of new migrants in Huron County by permit type - 2023 & 2024
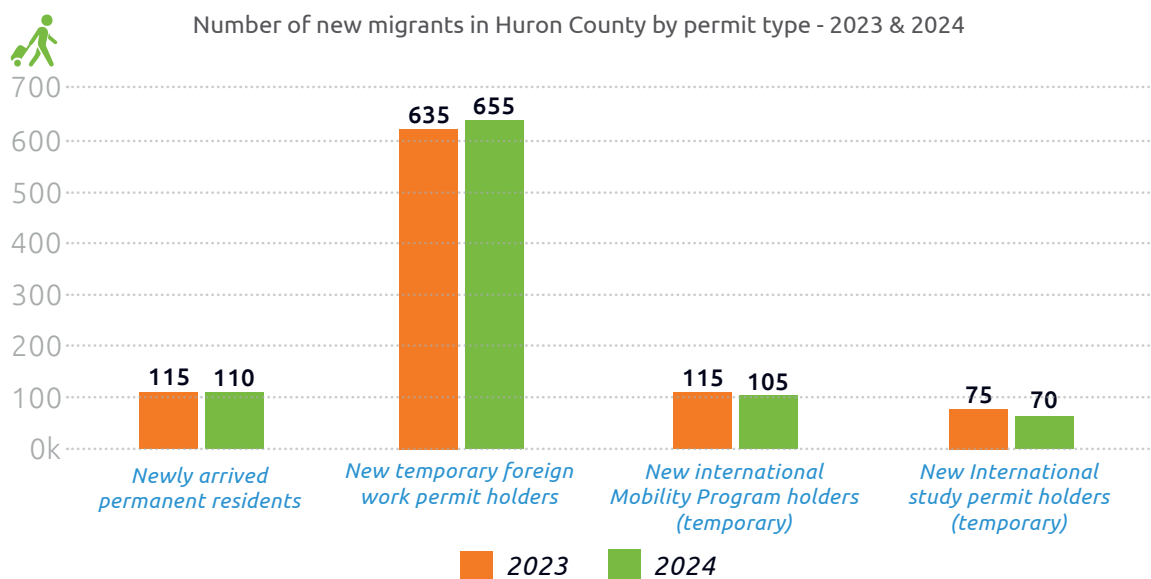
(Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada, 2025a; Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada, 2025b)

As agriculture is Huron County's leading economic industry, the alignment with the number of temporary workers employed in that sector is not surprising. As Hennebry (2021) outlines, many Canadian small and medium-scale farmers have hired migrant workers to fill critical employment shortages, meet market demands and remain competitive. People who work as temporary internation workers in agri-food roles in Huron County may have seasonal jobs or year-round employment, depending on what their permit allows. For those who have been employed in year-round employment for three years or more, they may meet the length of time criteria to apply for permanent residency in Canada.

As such, in an area that sees a significant number of temporary international workers, it's prudent to look towards this group as future residents in immigrant attraction and retention strategies. According to Nakache and Dixon-Perera (2015), tens of thousands of temporary workers have been able to transition to become permanent residents in Canada. The Government of Canada has recognized that experienced international workers in the agri-food industry who work in non-seasonal jobs are eligible to apply for permanent residency through various immigration pathways.

Among the criteria to apply for permanent residency, temporary international workers must prove competencies in an official language. For people from non-English or French speaking countries, applications for permanent residency must be accompanied with reading, writing, listening and speaking test results, proving a level of proficient communication skills (Nakache & Dixon-Perera, 2015). Offering English language classes has been identified as a best practice in welcoming and supporting temporary migrant workers, enabling newcomers to gain a greater understanding of their new environment and providing individuals with a greater sense of autonomy (Cajax & Cohen, 2019; Mullings et al., 2021). Knowledge of an official language also improves long-term settlement and integration outcomes. Research from Statistics Canada (Xu & Hou, 2023) documents that newcomers who learn English or French and reach proficiency levels similar to native speakers see dramatically increased earning potential in comparison to those who do not learn or have limited national language speaking abilities.

Despite the benefits, in Ontario, many temporary international workers are unable to access these classes. Federal and provincial government funding models that support English as a Second Language (ESL) classes limit funding to permanent residents, Canadian citizens, and only some temporary work permits. Many temporary work permit holders, including many working in agri-food sector, have been excluded through those funding models. As such, a fee-for-service ESL model, or volunteer-led ESL classes, have been sought to mitigate the challenge.

In Perth County, Set7 Skills and Technology North Perth & Region has worked with employers and municipalities to deliver an ESL program to temporary workers in Listowel and Minto. Set7 created a curriculum to help people learn English at a beginner and intermediary level, with a focus on strengthening workplace English through reading, writing, listening and speaking. The organization has a proven history in offering ESL classes over a 10-weeks, helping learners build skills each week. The organization provides ESL classes on a fee-for-service model. Recognizing the need for ESL classes that did not limit eligibility based on migration permit, the Huron County Immigration Partnership worked with Set7 to pilot a project to deliver ESL classes in Dashwood, Ontario, a hamlet in southern Huron County where several large agri-food businesses employ international temporary talent.

The Immigration Partnership approached the Huron County Economic Development Board for funding to pilot a 10-week session of the ESL classes in the winter of 2025. The request to deliver the pilot ESL program also came with a commitment to evaluate the project's impact with an external researcher. In October 2024, the Economic Development Board approved the program. In addition, the Municipality of South Huron contributed in-kind support, offering the Dashwood Community Centre as a venue for the ESL classes to take place at no cost over the winter of 2025.

Advertising the ESL pilot project took place in late fall of 2024 and early winter of 2025, with posters distributed to area employers, a press release being published in local media, social media content being created and shared, and partner organizations being notified to encourage referrals. Set7 began delivering the two levels of ESL classes in late January 2025, with classes running every Saturday until April 2025.

Irene Fu, a researcher with expertise in survey-based evaluation methods, was engaged to design the survey instrument, process and analyze the collected data, and provide evidence-based recommendations.

Methodology

This report is based on a quantitative survey conducted before and after a structured English training program.

The study focused on farm workers in rural southwestern Ontario, with 36 participants initially enrolled and 22 completing the program, resulting in a 61% retention rate. Considering Canada's foreign worker population of approximately 672,100, a sample size of 26 would be required to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. Therefore, the final sample size of 22 is slightly below the ideal threshold but still offers valuable insights into this population.

Two-wave data were collected, one before and one after the training. Each survey included demographic questions and 18 self-assessment items covering English proficiency, workplace communication, and motivation to learn. Most items employed a 5-point-Likert scale, with response options ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), Very Difficult (1) to Very Easy (5), or Not at All Motivated (1) to Extremely Motivated (5), depending on the question type.

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 30.0. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) summarized the data key trends, while paired samples t-tests assessed statistically significant changes over time. Linear regression also explored how demographics and motivation related to improvement. This statistical approach offered a well-rounded view of the training program's overall impact, while also highlighting differences across participant groups.

Note: Statistical terms (e.g., n, M, SD, ANOVA) in the report are consistent with those introduced earlier and defined in the glossary.

Findings

## Part One: Demographic Characters of Survey Participants

1 Age   "What is your age?"

The findings are most representative of participants aged 25 to 44. Both the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups each accounted for 41.7% (n = 15), making up 83.4% of valid responses. A smaller number were under 25 (n = 5, 13.9%) or over 45 (n = 1, 2.8%).

Age Distribution of Respondents

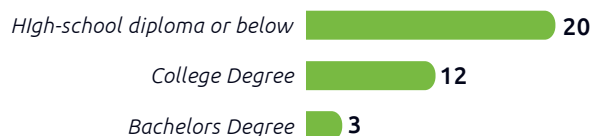| Age group	Number of Respondents
18 - 24	5
25 - 34	15
35 - 44	15
45 - 54	1
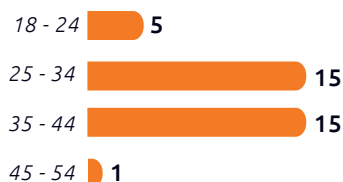
Age group ; **Number of Respondents**

2 Education   "What is the highest level of education you have completed?"

Most participants reported having lower to mid-level educational backgrounds. The majority (57.1%, n = 20) had a high school diploma or less, followed by 34.3% (n = 12) with a college degree, and 8.6% (n = 3) with a bachelor's degree.

Highest Level of Education Completed

Education Level	Number of Respondents
HIgh-school diploma or below	20
College Degree	12
Bachelors Degree	3

*Education Level ;* **Number of Respondents**

3 Time in Canada   "How long have you been in Canada?"

Most respondents were relatively new to Canada. The majority (63.9%, n = 23) had been in the country for 1-2 years, followed by 19.4% (n = 7) for less than one year. A smaller portion (16.7%, n = 6) had lived in Canada for more than two years.

Length of Time Respondents Have Been in Canada

Time in Canada	Percentage of Respondents
1 year	19.4%
1 - 2 years	63.9%
2 + years	16.7%
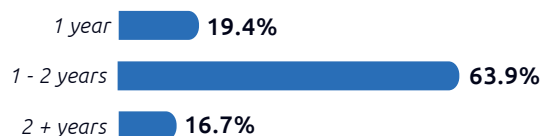
Time in Canada ; **Percentage of Respondents**

Findings

**Part One:** Demographic Characters of Survey Participants

4 Job Title

"What is the current position you hold?"

Among 35 respondents, farm worker (including meat cutter) was the most common job title (54.3%, n = 19), followed by production operator (42.9%, n = 15). One respondent identified as a truck driver (2.8%, n = 1).

Current Job Positions Among Respondents

| Job Position	Number of Respondents
Production Operator	15
Meat Cutter	19
Farm Worker	19
Truck Driver	1
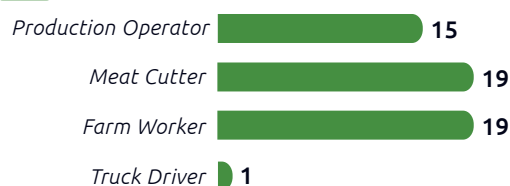
Job Position ; **Number of Respondents**

5 Home Language

"What language you speak most often at home?"

Half of the respondents reported speaking Tagalog (50%, n = 18), and 44.4% (n = 16) spoke Spanish. One participant reported speaking Ukrainian, and another indicated a different language (each 2.8%).

Most Common Home Languages Among Residents

Languages	Number of Respondents
Tagalog	18
Spanish	16
Ukranian	1
Other	1
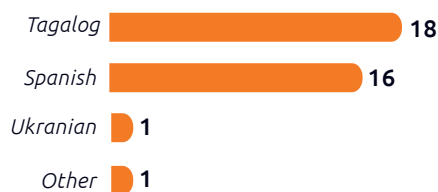
Languages ; **Number of Respondents**

*Note: n refers to the number of respondents.*

Findings

Part Two: English Proficiency before English Training Program

1 Confidence in Using English (Q1)

Most participants selected "Neutral" (n = 15) when asked about anxiety speaking English, suggesting uncertainty or mixed feelings. Some disagreed (n = 6) or strongly disagreed (n = 8), while fewer agreed (n = 3) or strongly agreed (n = 3). The average score was 2.63, leaning slightly toward "Neutral".

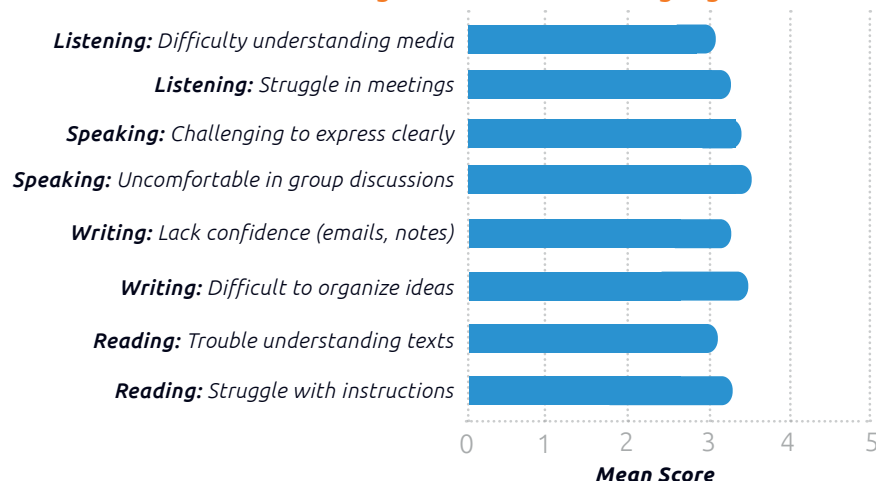**Frequency of Responses: Anxiety or Fear When Speaking English**

Response	Frequency
Strongly Disagree	8
Disagree	6
Nuetral	15
Agree	3
Strongly Agree	3
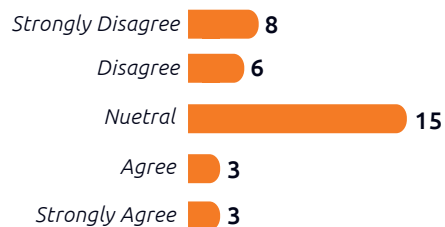
Frequency ; **Number of Respondents**

No significant relationships were found between English Confidence and Education or Job Position. Given the demographic similarity of the group, further statistical comparisons (e.g., ANOVA) were not pursued.

2 Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Reading Skills (Q2-Q9)

The chart below presents self-reported difficulty levels across language tasks prior to taking the training. Ratings range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) with higher scores indicating greater difficulty or discomfort in using English in each context.

Confidence in English Skills Across Language Tasks

Task	Mean Score
Listening: Difficulty understanding media	~3.1
Listening: Struggle in meetings	~3.3
Speaking: Challenging to express clearly	~3.4
Speaking: Uncomfortable in group discussions	~3.5
Writing: Lack confidence (emails, notes)	~3.3
Writing: Difficult to organize ideas	~3.5
Reading: Trouble understanding texts	~3.1
Reading: Struggle with instructions	~3.3

Mean Score

Findings

Part Two: English Proficiency before English Training Program

Speaking: Among all language tasks, the highest challenge was speaking in group discussions (M = 3.50, SD = 1.02), followed by expressing ideas clearly (M = 3.46, SD = 1.15). This highlighted a broader challenge with oral communication, especially at work. "M" is a symbol for the mean or average. "SD" refers to standard deviation, a common descriptive statistic that shows how spread-out respondents' scores are from the average. Please refer to the glossary for detailed explanations.

Writing: Participants reported difficulty organizing and presenting ideas effectively (M = 3.35, SD = 1.15) and writing messages or emails (M = 3.24, SD = 1.17). These scores indicate a moderate level of discomfort with written communication in both workplace and everyday contexts.

Listening: Participants found English discussions in meetings (M = 3.25, SD = 1.03) more challenging than understanding media such as TV shows or news (M = 3.11, SD = 1.01).

Reading: Reading was reported as the least challenging language skill overall. However, comprehending detailed instruction or technical texts (M = 3.24, SD = 1.05) and reading materials like manuals (M = 3.03, SD = 0.90) still posed challenges.

Overall, prior to the training, participants identified speaking and writing were the most challenging skills, especially in group contexts and written organization. Listening posed moderate difficulty, especially in following discussions in workplace meetings. Reading is comparatively less difficult than listening; however, some participants still struggled with technical texts, where additional support could be beneficial.

Findings

Part Two: English Proficiency before English Training Program

3 Self-rated Workplace Communication Skills (Q10)

The average self-rating for the statement, "I feel uncomfortable presenting ideas or initiating conversations, like small talk, with my coworkers or clients," was 3.15 (SD = .90), suggesting slight discomfort in initiating workplace communication. While 29.4% of participants felt confident, 70.6% reported discomfort or uncertainty.

Frequency of Responses: Uncomfortable Presenting or Small Talk at Work
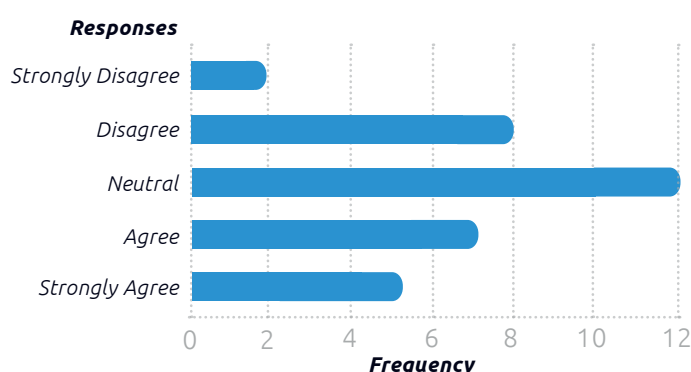
The following bar chart compares how participants feel about speaking English in daily life versus in the workplace. While many reported feeling neutral in both contexts, slightly more participants expressed anxiety when using English in everyday situations. However, discomfort was more commonly reported in the workplace, particularly when presenting ideas or initiating small talk, indicating that professional interactions may feel more challenging.

Notably, fewer participants strongly disagreed with workplace discomfort compared to daily English use, suggesting that professional situations might feel more intimidating, even for those generally comfortable with the language. These findings highlight how context can really shape our confidence in communication.

**Comparison of Communication Discomfort Across Two Contexts**
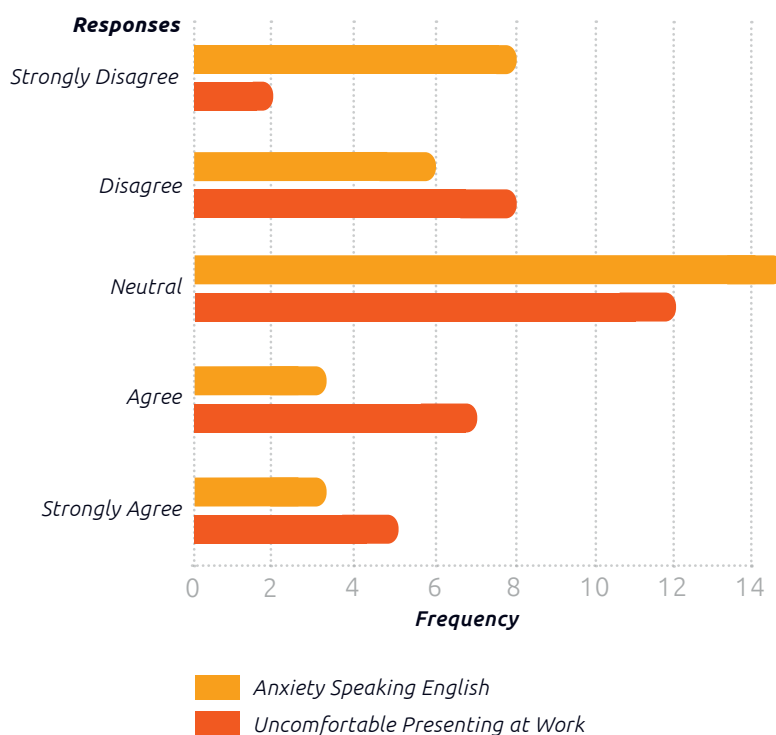
■ *Anxiety Speaking English*
■ *Uncomfortable Presenting at Work*

11

Findings

4 Workplace Interaction Scenarios (Q11-Q18)

This chart presents participants' average self-reported English proficiency across various workplace interaction scenarios prior to the training. Ratings range from 1 (Very Difficult) to 5 (Very Easy), with higher scores indicating greater ease and confidence in using English in each context.

Self-Rated English Communication Skills by Scenario

Mean Rating (1 = Very Difficult, 5 =Very Easy)
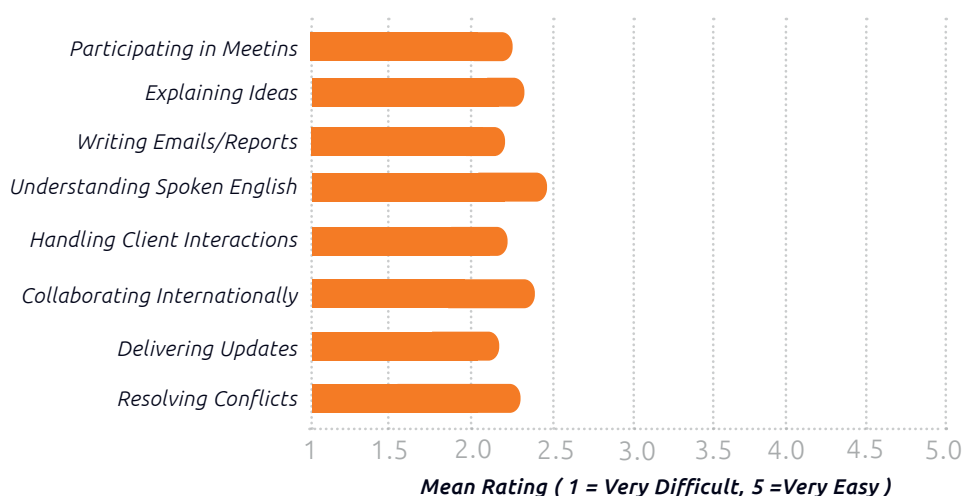
All mean scores fell below 2.5, indicating moderate difficulty across scenarios. The most challenging were delivering updates (M = 2.21, SD = 0.98), participating in team meetings (M = 2.27, SD = 0.80), and resolving conflicts (M = 2.27, SD = 0.98). Understanding spoken English (M = 2.44, SD = 0.93) was rated least difficult, but still moderately challenging.

5 Individual Motivation for English Training Program

Motivation for English Training Participants were highly motivated (M = 1.78, SD = 0.85), with most participants actively seeking opportunities to enhance their language abilities. About 89% were very or extremely motivated, with only one participant reporting limited time or focus to improve.

Motivation to Improve English Skills (Reordered)

Frequency
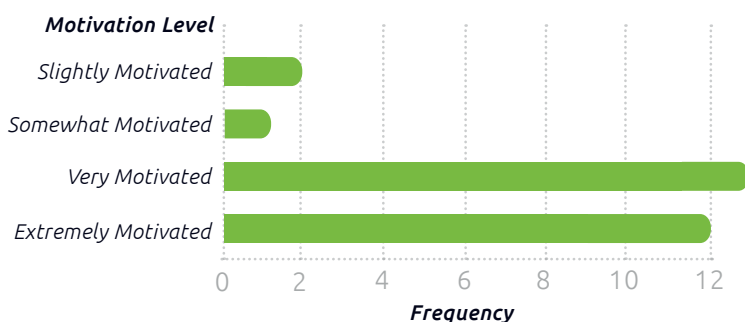
A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference in mean motivation across age groups ($F(3, 26)$ = 3.03, p = .05) and home-language groups ($F(3, 26)$ = 3.49, p = .03). Post-hoc tests showed that 35-44-year-olds reported the highest motivation, whereas those under 24 years old reported the lowest. Additionally, Tagalog speakers entered the program with significantly higher motivation than Spanish speakers.

Findings

Part Three: Before and After the English Training Program

1 Demographic Comparison: Pre- and Post-Training

The demographic profile of participants shifted between the start and end of the English training program, as only 22 of the original 36 participants completed the full course. The following section compares key characteristics—such as gender, age, education, time in Canada, job position, and home language—before and after the program to highlight these changes.

Gender
All program completers were male, except for one female participant who completed the full 10-session course.

Age
Participants aged 25–54 were most likely to complete the program. Participants under 24 dropped significantly from 15 to 3, while those aged 25–54 saw a slight decline from 20 to 18. The number of participants over 55 remained steady at one.

Education
High school or below remained the dominant educational level among completers. After the program, high school graduates decreased from 20 to 13, college degree holders from 12 to 5, and those with a bachelor's from 3 to 2.

Time in Canada
Those in Canada longer were more likely to complete the training. Participants in Canada for less than a year dropped from 7 to 3, and those in the 1–2 year range declined from 23 to 11. Meanwhile, those with over two years in Canada rose slightly from 6 to 7.

Job Title
Farm workers were more likely to complete the program than production operators and those in other job positions. The number of farm workers, including meat cutters, declined slightly from 19 to 15, while production operators dropped more sharply from 15 to 7. The sole truck driver did not complete the program.

Home Language
Both Tagalog and Spanish speakers remained equally engaged. Spanish and Tagalog speakers each declined from 16 and 18 to 11, maintaining balanced representation among completers. The sole Ukrainian speaker did not continue, suggesting the program remained accessible and relevant to both major language groups.
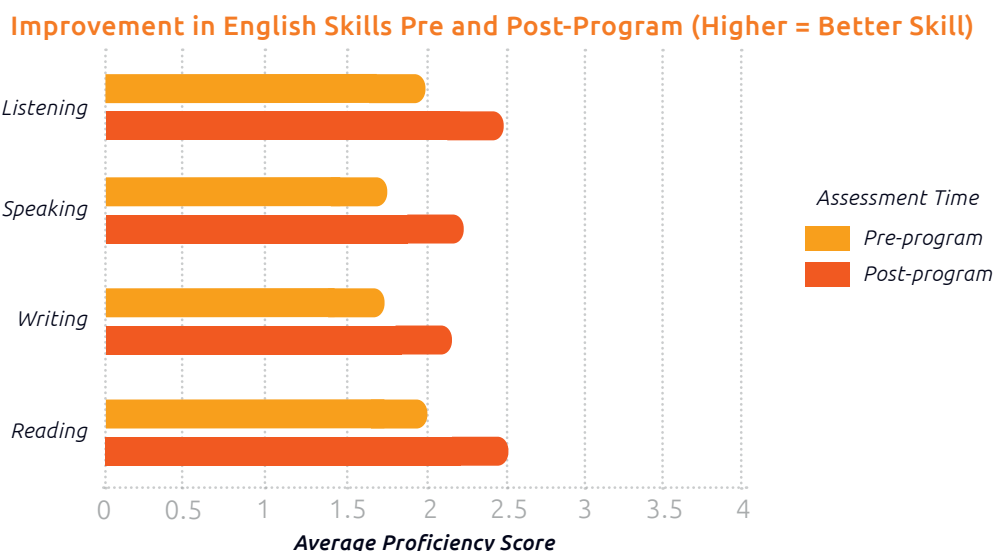
Findings

2 Comparison of Confidence in Using English: Pre- and Post-Training

While average confidence declined slightly (from M = 3.15 to M = 3.00), this change was not statistically significant. Notably, anxiety decreased (from 38% to 13%), while "Neutral" responses increased (from 29% to 59%), suggesting a shift from anxiety to neutrality. This shift indicates that although participants did not necessarily feel more confident, fewer reported feeling anxious. Instead, they may have adopted a more neutral stance toward their English use.

Linear regression is a method used to explore how one factor (like confidence) is related to others, such as speaking ability, workplace communication, and motivation. In this analysis, B indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between variables, while the p-value (probability value) shows whether the relationship is statistically significant. The smaller the p-value, the less likely it is that the result occurred by chance. Results showed that higher confidence was linked to greater speaking ability (B = .58, $p < .05$), stronger communication skills at work (B = .51, $p < .05$), and higher self-motivation (B = .46, $p < .05$).

3 Comparison of Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Reading: Pre- and Post-Training

To make the results easier to interpret, scores for Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Reading Skills were reverse-coded, meaning the scale was flipped so that higher numbers always indicate better skills. The comparison results showed that all four skill areas improved after the program, with the largest gains in Listening and Reading.


Improvement in English Skills Pre and Post-Program (Higher = Better Skill)

Average Proficiency Score

Findings

Part Three: Before and After the English Training Program

A more detailed breakdown of the eight survey items offers a clearer view: the greatest progress observed are "following English discussions in meetings" (Listening) and "understanding technical instructions in English" (Reading). Speaking-related improvements were more modest but still present.

Detailed English Skill Improvements by Item (Higher=Better Skill)
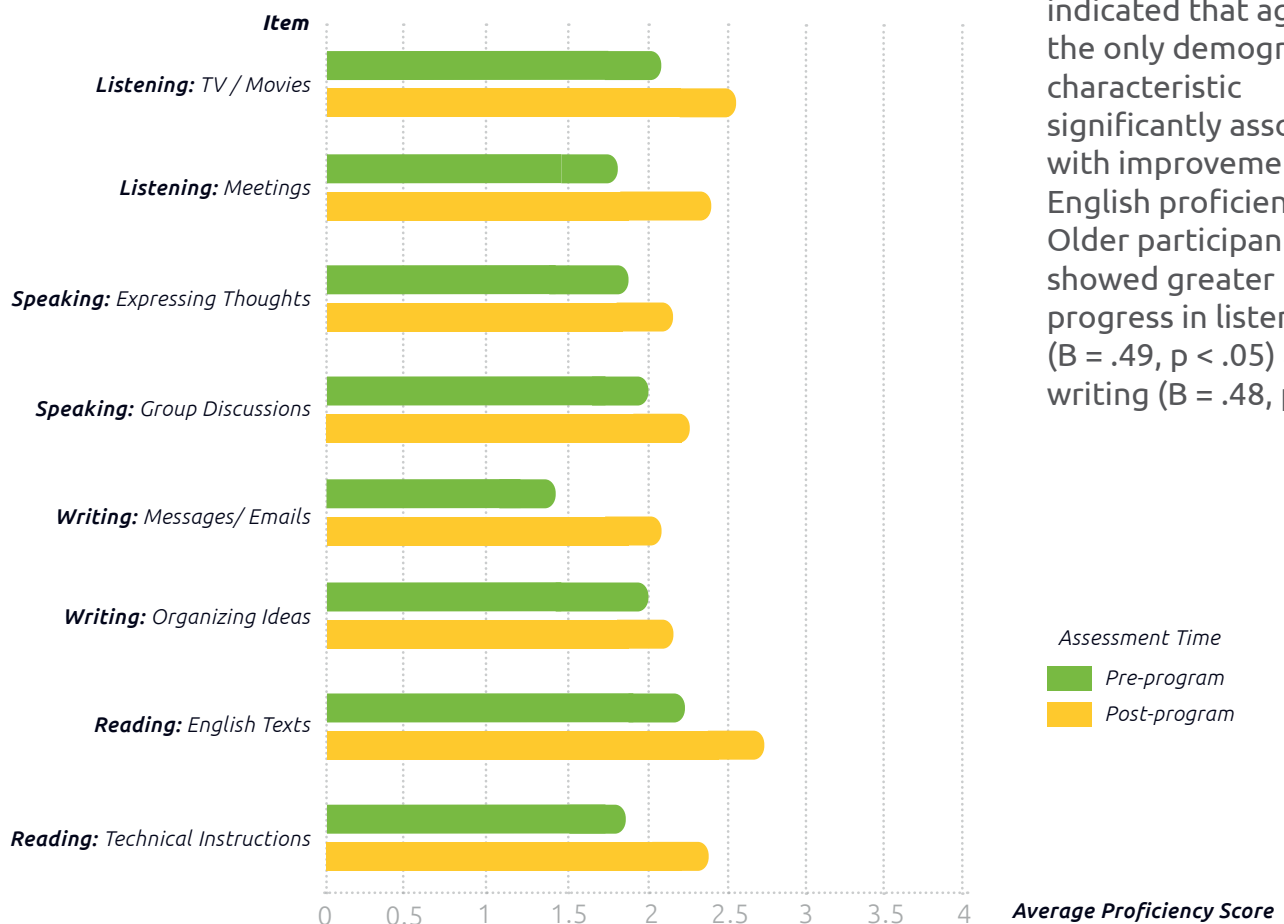
Regression analysis indicated that age was the only demographic characteristic significantly associated with improvement in English proficiency. Older participants showed greater progress in listening (B = .49, p < .05) and writing (B = .48, p < .05).

Assessment Time
- Pre-program
- Post-program

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4 Comparison of Self-Rated Communication Skills: Pre- and Post-Training

A paired samples t-test, which compares the same group's scores before and after an intervention to see if there was a meaningful change, revealed no statistically significant difference in workplace communication between the beginning (M = 3.15, SD = 1.13) and the end of the program (M = 3.00, SD = 0.93). However, there was a notable shift in the distribution of responses: comfort decreased by 8%, uncertainty increased by 10%, and 27.2% of participants still reported feeling uncomfortable. This suggests a shift toward a more neutral stance. Although overall self-assessed ease did not improve significantly, some participants may have moved from feeling confident to taking a more cautious or neutral view of their workplace communication skills.

Findings

Part Three: Before and After the English Training Program

5 Workplace Interaction Scenarios: Pre- and Post-Training Comparison

Workplace Interaction Scenarios scores were reverse coded for clarity. Participants' self-assessed proficiency improved across all eight workplace communication scenarios. The strongest gains occurred in delivering updates and explaining ideas, followed by team meetings and resolving conflicts. These reflect enhanced verbal and collaborative communication.

Improvement in Workplace Communication Scenarios (Higher=Better Skill)

Scenario

Scenario 1: *Team Meetings*

Scenario 2: *Explaining Ideas*

Scenario 3: *Writing Emails/Docs*

Scenario 4: *Understanding Spoken English*

Scenario 5: *Customer/Client Interactions*

Scenario 6: *Collaborating Internationally*

Scenario 7: *Delivering Updates*

Scenario 7: *Resolving Conflicts*

Assessment Time
- Pre-program
- Post-program

Average Proficiency Score

Specifically, the most notable gains were seen in Scenario 7 (Delivering information or updates in English) and Scenario 2 (Explaining your ideas or suggestions to coworkers or supervisors in English), both of which require active verbal communication. Significant progress was also evident in collaborative and interpersonal contexts, such as Scenario 1 (Participating in team meetings) and Scenario 8 (Resolving conflicts or addressing misunderstandings in English). These results suggest that, following the program, participants felt more capable in applying English effectively in real-world workplace interactions.

Home language significantly influenced workplace interactions. Compared to their Tagalog-speaking counterparts, Spanish speakers showed greater improvement in four areas: participating in team meetings, understanding conversations and presentations, handling interactions with coworkers, and delivering information or updates.

Findings

Part Three: Before and After the English Training Program

6 Motivation to Improve English Skills: Pre- and Post-Training Comparison

Motivation remained high, though the distribution of responses shifted. Before training, 88.8% felt extremely (40.7%) or very motivated (48.1%). After training, extreme motivation rose to 63.2%, while "very motivated" dropped to 26.3%. A shift is noticeable from moderate to stronger motivation only among engaged participants, with fewer reporting low motivation or uncertainty - indicating deeper post-training engagement.

Participant Motivation to Improve English: Pre vs Post Program
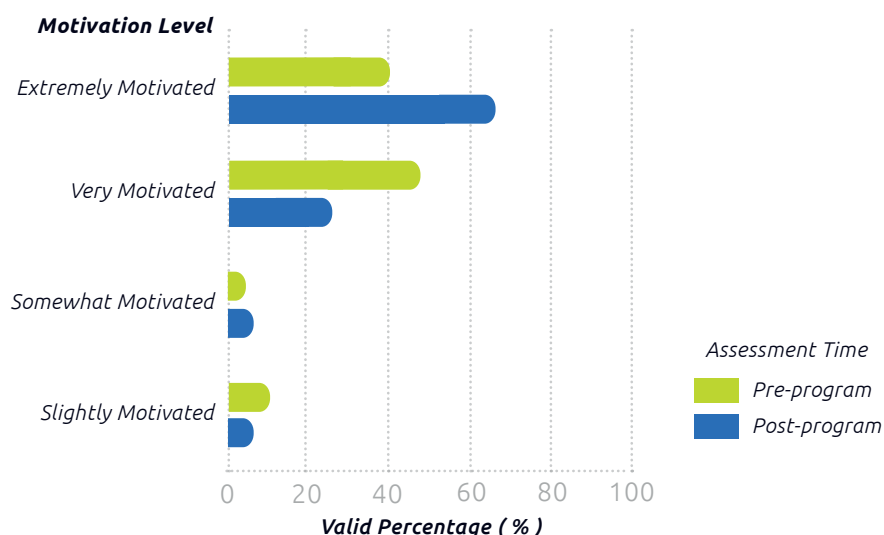
Although fewer people responded after the program (19 compared to 27), the overall trend shows stronger commitment. After the training, fewer completers said they felt only somewhat or slightly motivated, and no one reported feeling unmotivated at either time. This suggests that those who finished the program were more engaged, possibly due to positive experiences or the benefits they saw from the training.

Findings

Part Four: Summary of Findings

This program served newcomers to Canada, most of whom were working in manual labour roles and spoke Tagalog or Spanish at home. While participants entered with varying levels of comfort using English, their motivation to improve remained consistently high throughout the training.

Encouragingly, all four core language skills showed improvement, with the greatest gains in listening and reading. Progress was also seen in real-world workplace interactions, especially in team meetings, delivering updates, and resolving conflicts. Although overall confidence did not increase significantly, reduced anxiety and more neutral self-assessments suggest participants felt less discomfort over time.

Notably, older participants made stronger gains in listening and writing, and Spanish speakers reported greater improvements in several workplace scenarios. While some learners moved from comfort to a more neutral stance in workplace communication, the continued high motivation among those who completed the course reflects a meaningful step toward greater language confidence and engagement.

Recommendations for Program Development

The purpose of this research aimed to examine the effects of an English language training program for foreign workers by comparing their experiences before and after the course. The results from this assessment imply that the intervention had promising impacts on participants' language and workplace communication, particularly for those who completed full training. Although some challenges remain, including retaining participants and nurturing long-term self-belief, findings exposed practical strategies to enhance future programs. The recommendations below are in place to ensure that language instruction is responsive, valuable, and accessible for newcomer workers and provides real advantages for employers and the community at large.

1 The Importance of Speaking and Writing in Training Design

Findings:
Participants had the most trouble with their oral language when participating in group discussions and when trying to express their thoughts clearly. Writing skills, specifically organizing thoughts in long emails and writing nicer notes was a struggle as well.

Recommendation:
More time can be spent on speaking opportunities and discretely structured writing tasks in class in future programming. Peer role-plays, group storytelling and email modules are some such techniques which can improve fluency as well as confidence. This could also help bridge the gap between the classroom and the workplace, supporting skill transfer by including workplace-related language (e.g., safety instructions and shift updates).

2 Leverage Workplace Scenarios to Enhance Real World Application

Findings:
The largest before to after change was reported for updating colleagues, participating in meetings and for handling conflicts – which are directly corresponding to everyday workplace interactions.

Recommendation:
Practices of authentic workplace simulation should be integrated into the content of training, as they could serve to connect language learning and actual job requirements. For additional application value, the program should consider opportunities for industry expert or employer participation in the development or adaptation of training material. When appropriate, bringing in employers or supervisors to conduct guest workshops or just share experiences is also effective. Their perspectives could inform to what extent scenarios should capture genuine communication problems that occur in fields like agriculture and meat working.

3 Overcome Lingering Communication Anxiety by Developing Confidence Gradually

Findings:
Although anxiety about using English decreased after the training, the majority of participants did not move into active confidence, but rather to a neutral or uncertain position. About 27% were still experiencing discomfort in their communication at work. This suggests that learners may have reached a deeper awareness of their language limitations, a natural stage in the learning process where confidence may temporarily dip even as skills improve.

Recommendation:
Future programming should recognize that a decline in perceived confidence is not necessarily a setback, but often a sign of growing self-awareness. As learners become more aware of what they don't know, they may temporarily feel unsure, even though their skills are improving. To assist students in negotiating this phase, provide them with confidence-building activities, such as guided self-reflection, non-evaluative spoken practice and one-to-one mentoring. Structured after-class social activities, such as "language buddies" or casual conversation groups, may also help take the pressure off while strengthening their daily language use in low-stakes environments.

Crucially, training should frame this stage as a normal part of language development and actively normalize temporary dips in confidence. The key is to establish safe environments for practice, which is essential to helping foreign workers gradually build comfort and competence in using English, both in the workplace and beyond.

4 Capitalize on High Motivation of Older and Tagalog Speakers

Findings:
Rationale to enhance English was constantly high, and a grade of extreme motivation increased after training. Age and home language were also both significant for progress, the older and Tagalog-speaking participants being the most motivated.

Recommendation:
English trainers use personal goal-setting tools and individual learning plans to help motivate newcomer workers in learning English. Culturally relevant and communication compatible activities may increase engagement and should be tailored to cultural context or preferred communication style. And for younger and Spanish-speaking workers, consider developing basic, bilingual guides on workplace conversations or side-by-side vocabulary lists in English and Spanish as related to the job. These tools may offer comfortable and convenient ways for learners to maintain practice, outside the classroom, and on the journey to autonomy.

5 Increase Retention Through the Use of Flexible and Available Program Models

Findings:
Retention in the program was 61%; drop-off was significantly greater among participants less than 25 years and who were more recent to Canada. Only one female participant completed the program.

Recommendation:
Retention can be increased only if the program structure is more flexible. Options might include shorter modular sessions. Childcare, transportation, and milestone-based incentives might lower the barriers for younger and female workers. It is important to work creatively with community partners such as Huron County to determine logistical solutions.

6 Broaden Monitoring and Aftercare Systems

Findings:
There were short-term outcomes and immediate changes were identified, including listening, reading, and scenario-based communication. However, long-term impact remains unknown.

Recommendation:
Implement longitudinal follow-up of those being trained and track skill retention and workplace outcomes over time. These evaluations can also offer valuable insights into program sustainability and return on investment for funders such as IRCC. Regular follow-up time points such as at 3 and 6 months post-program and feedback from employers can guide for improvement and provide evidence of impact to stakeholders.

Conclusion

This program reached a vulnerable population, newcomer workers in rural areas, with significant language and social integration needs.

Despite external demands and a lack of resources, many felt motivated and made significant strides, particularly in workplace communication. As a result, other municipal partners, community organizations and local employers can play a role in ensuring that language training keeps opening doors to inclusion, safety and opportunities for Canada's essential workers.

This pilot program successfully engaged a vulnerable and often underserved population: newcomer workers in rural communities who face significant linguistic and social integration barriers. Despite systemic constraints - such as limited access to publicly funded ESL programming - participants demonstrated strong motivation and made measurable progress, particularly in workplace communication.

These outcomes underscore the importance of flexible, inclusive in-person language training that responds to the realities of temporary foreign workers. As the number of newcomers on temporary work permits continues to rise in rural areas like Huron County, programs like this serve not only as educational interventions, but also as strategic tools for immigrant retention and long-term community development. Continued support from partners will be essential in ensuring that language training remains a pathway to inclusion, safety, and opportunity for Canada's essential workforce.

Appendix A:
Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

n	The number of respondents included in the survey.
Mean (M)	Arithmetic average of a group of scores.
Standard Deviation	Approximately the average amount that scores in a distribution vary from the mean. A higher SD indicates
p-value (p)	A statistical value that helps determine if the result is likely due to chance. A result is typically considered significant if p < .05.
ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)	A statistical test used to compare the means of three or more groups to determine if there are meaningful differences.
Paired Samples t-test	A statistical method used to compare the same group's responses before and after an intervention.
Linear Regression	A method to understand the relationship between one outcome (e.g., language improvement) and one or more influencing factors (e.g., age, motivation).
Likert Scale	A common survey scale that allows participants to express how much they agree or disagree with a statement, typically on a 1 to 5 scale.
Reverse Coding	A technique in survey design, involving flipping the scale so that higher numbers consistently reflect stronger skills or more positive responses.

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