Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses

Test Impact and Washback

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What is CELBAN?

Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses (CELBAN)

- an occupation-specific English language assessment tool used to assess the threshold English language proficiency of internationally-educated (IE) nurses seeking entry into nursing employment in Canada.
Why was CELBAN developed?

Internationally-educated (IE) nurses require proof of language proficiency when obtaining licensure to practice in Canada.

Traditionally the English proficiency tests used have been: TOEFL/TSE, TOEIC, IELTS, MELAB and other similar tests.
Why was CELBAN developed?

English proficiency tests often used are inadequate because...

• not based on a Target Language Use (TLU) analysis of the workplace (nursing) (content and context does not represent the nursing workplace);

• not validated with the target population (IE nurses);

• test-takers do not receive feedback on strengths and weaknesses in the productive skills (speaking & writing).
Why was CELBAN developed?

Some IE nurses who can pass these academic language tests, cannot function in the workplace – and others who take these language tests and fail, may have the potential to function successfully on the job.

There was an need identified by key stakeholders for a more appropriate language proficiency assessment tool for nursing.
How was CELBAN developed?

In 2002, the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) facilitated the development of an occupation-specific English language assessment tool for nurses, CELBAN.

CELBAN was seen as a model for other professions and occupations.

Funding for CELBAN was provided by:

- **Provincial Governments:**
  Alberta – British Columbia – Manitoba – Ontario

- **Federal Government:**
  Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Why nursing?

- Canada is experiencing an increasing shortage of nurses.
- IE nurses could help ease the shortage.
- Nursing stakeholders expressed enthusiastic support for such a project.
CELBAN is a project of the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB)
Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)
Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) Descriptors:

- **The CLB** is a set of national standards for English as an additional Language.

- They describe what a person can do in English in the 4 skill areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing using real life tasks.
What is a “Benchmark”?

A benchmark (CLB) is a description of the English language abilities one should demonstrate at one of the 12 levels.

• **Range:** CLB Level 1 (describes a literate student with no English) to CLB Level 12 (describes a graduate student in university program or a highly-proficient practicing professional)

• **Four skills:** Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing.

• **Performance and Situational Conditions:** Social Interaction, Information, Instruction, Suasion, Business/Service Texts
CLB Sample Descriptors

**Speaking**

**CLB 5:**
- can participate with some effort in routine social conversation
- grammar and pronunciation errors are frequent and may sometimes impede communication

**CLB 8:**
- can communicate effectively in most daily social and familiar work situations
- grammar and pronunciation errors rarely impede communication
CELBAN - developed by researchers at Red River College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Prior to Phase II, the development of CELBAN:

• Feasibility study

• Phase I – An Analysis of the language demands of Nursing across Canada – a TLU Analysis (using the CLB).
Based on analysis of the data gathered in Phase I, the English language demands of the nursing profession were determined to be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>CLB Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>7</td>
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</table>
Data obtained in Phase I, the TLU analysis of the nursing profession was used in the development of CELBAN.
Observations of Nurses (Chart 1)

Individuals with whom Nurses Interact

- Clients: 56%
- Professional: 34%
- Family: 10%
Observations of Nurses (Chart 2)
Language Tasks
Content of all CELBAN tasks:

- is based on data collected in Phase I, the TLU analysis of the nursing profession.
- was created with input from nursing consultants and experts to ensure authenticity.
Speaking Assessment

The speaking assessment consists of:

• an oral interview
• two role plays involving two assessors (with one candidate).

• Scores are assigned as CLB Levels.
• Clear criteria for evaluation are used.
• Feedback on strengths and weaknesses is provided on candidate’s report.
The listening assessment is composed of:

- **video scenarios** - various settings including hospital, home, clinic, and medical office.
- **audio scenarios** - phone calls and one shift-to-shift report.

Scenarios – variety of interactions, i.e., between nurses and patients, family members and other professionals.

Question format - standard multiple choice questions (MCQs); some in chart format.

Note: Listening, Writing & Reading tests are administered as a group.
Reading Assessment

• Reading assessment includes two sections:
  - Skimming and Scanning
  - Reading Comprehension

• Text - formats such as charts, patient notes, manuals, and information texts related to health issues.

• Question format - short answer (word or phrase), multiple choice, and cloze (fill-in-the-blank) format.
Writing Assessment

• Writing assessment includes two sections:
  ➢ i) Form-filling
  ➢ ii) Report Writing

• Scores are assigned as CLB Levels.

• Clear criteria for evaluation

• Feedback on strengths and weaknesses is provided.
Facts about CELBAN

• Nursing licensing bodies across Canada have accepted CELBAN as an option for demonstrating English language proficiency.

• A national administrative centre (CELAS Centre) has been set up at Red River College to provide centralized national administration of CELBAN.

• As of September 2009, official CELBAN Administration Sites have been set up in five of the ten provinces and two territories.
The Development of CELBAN

Rigorous, comprehensive, and collaborative:

- **Stage One:** Planning
- **Stage Two:** Developing test specifications and first draft of tool (speaking, listening, reading and writing)
- **Stage Three:** Piloting of draft versions
- **Stage Four:** Statistical analysis and revisions
- **Stage Five:** Completion of final version of test materials (including guidebooks for administrators & invigilators, and speaking assessors)
- **Stage Six:** Implementation of CELBAN (Version One)
CELBAN Products and Services

• **CELBAN website:** [www.CELBAN.org](http://www.CELBAN.org) (2003)
• **CELBAN Readiness Self-Assessment (CRSA)** (2004)
  - on-line: via website
  - off-line: a) for candidates  b) for institutions
• **Official CELBAN** (Versions Two and Three) (2005)
• **Institutional CELBAN** (Versions One and Two) (2007)
Institutional CELBAN

- Institutional CELBAN - developed for educational institutions which provide nursing language bridging programs to internationally-educated nurses.

- Institutional CELBAN (modeled after the official CELBAN), with same content/context and language components; but there are a few differences:
  - Purpose
  - Length
  - Administration/training
  - Quality control
## Institutional CELBAN vs. Official CELBAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Institutional CELBAN</th>
<th>Official CELBAN</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Content and Context</strong></td>
<td>Based on Phase I, the analysis of the language demands of nursing</td>
<td>Based on Phase I, the analysis of the language demands of nursing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **2. Language Components** | • Listening, Writing, Reading (Group)  
• Speaking (Individual Assessment) | • Listening, Writing, Reading (Group)  
• Speaking (Individual Assessment) |
| **3. Purpose**          | • Entry or exit into nursing language bridging programs  
• Diagnostic purpose | • Means of demonstrating English language proficiency as one requirement for gaining licensure to enter nursing profession in Canada |
### Institutional CELBAN vs. Official CELBAN

#### 4. Length

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<tr>
<td>4. Length</td>
<td>• L/W/R: 2 hours (+ scoring)</td>
<td>• L/W/R: 3 hours (+ scoring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Speaking: 20-25 minutes (+scoring)</td>
<td>• Speaking: 30-35 minutes (+scoring)</td>
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#### 5. Administration and scoring and training

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<tr>
<td>5. Administration and scoring</td>
<td>• Training is not required <strong>but is recommended</strong> and available from CELAS Centre staff if requested</td>
<td>• Training and Certification by CELAS Centre staff (CELBAN Trainers) is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and training</td>
<td>• Administration, scoring and reporting is done on-site by institution</td>
<td>• Invigilators and Speaking assessors must be approved and trained by CELBAN trainers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• All components of test materials are couriered to CELAS for scoring and reporting</td>
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### 6. Quality Control

<table>
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</table>
|                | • Letter of Agreement signed by purchasing Institution commits users of the tool to follow appropriate test protocols for secure materials storage, administration, usage, scoring, etc. | • Formal Licensing agreements are made between official CELBAN site and the CELAS Centre  
• CELAS Centre protocols must be followed to ensure standardized administration of CELBAN occurs and security is maintained.  
• Any breaches in procedure or security are immediately reported by CELBAN sites to CELAS.  
• Speaking assessment tapes are periodically reviewed by CELAS staff to maintain quality control. |
Institutional CELBAN

- available for purchase by educational institutions since October, 2007

- has training option available for teams at purchasing institutions

- used in nursing language bridging programs in many institutions
Test Impact and Washback
Test Impact and Washback

Since the implementation of CELBAN, the impact and washback from this unique occupation-specific English language assessment tool has been experienced by a variety of stakeholders* in many different contexts.

* Stakeholders include test-takers, educators, researchers, test developers, employers, policy analysts, regulators, etc.
Test Impact and Washback

1. Test Impact - how stakeholders are impacted by a test over time, positively or negatively.

Impact refers to the wider influence of tests on:

a) educational systems (e.g., test results used to made decisions about curriculum planning, funding allocation, admission, etc.)

b) society (e.g., immigration policy, licensing for professionals, etc.)

Language testing has consequences beyond the immediate teaching/learning context.
Test Impact and Washback

Use of test scores can impact significantly on career and life changes for individual test-takers. (Social consequences of testing = “consequential validity”)

Widespread acceptance of a test often impacts
- publishers
- institutions

(Impact can be positive or negative.)

Note: A baseline study is often conducted to describe an educational context before the introduction of an innovation intended to cause change.
Test Impact and Washback

2. **Washback** is limited to influences on teaching and learning (including curriculum materials).

**Washback** can be positive or negative.
Test Impact and Washback

• **Positive washback** occurs when the implementation of a test results in
  – enhanced *curriculum*
  – improved communicative language *teaching*
  – better communicative language *learning*

(and ultimately better employees, once learners leave the educational environment to enter the workforce)
Test Impact and Washback

• **Negative washback** occurs when the implementation of a test
  – becomes the entire focus of a program (i.e. ‘teaching to the test’)
  – results in de-contextualized linguistic forms and not authentic language being taught
  – results in a mismatch between what is taught and tested, and what is needed thereafter.
Test Impact and Washback

**Test Impact** related to **CELBAN**

- **CELBAN aligned** - with other English language proficiency tests
- **CELBAN scrutinized** - in standard-setting exercises by educators and regulators
- **CELBAN explored** - for adaptation for use by other health professions - for administration in other countries

No formal impact study has yet been undertaken since CELBAN is still in its infancy (less than 5 years since implementation).
Test Impact and Washback

Washback related to CELBAN

Positive Washback

• **Institutional CELBAN** - **instructor is informed about gaps** to fill throughout program from specific diagnostic feedback obtained

• Program planners can **determine appropriate entrance CLB levels** for nursing language bridging programs
Test Impact and Washback

Negative Washback

• “CELBAN Prep” courses and programs are being developed and delivered in various locations;
  – many have not had outcomes and curriculum reviewed by CELBAN developers or other qualified stakeholders;
  - IENs may be paying for courses and participating in tasks which have no clear correlation to tasks and demands of CELBAN, and/or of the nursing profession
  - Opportunists may be financially benefitting from IENs paying for ‘prep’ materials with the false believe that the materials are valid and beneficial.

• Some candidates who take official CELBAN may be inadequately prepared and may not successfully complete official CELBAN.
Test Impact and Washback

Examples of positive washback from teams using the Institutional CELBAN in educational programs:

Examples:

• helps program planners to set standards for entrance to programs
• provides instructors with means for conducting interim assessment within programs
• provides instructors with diagnostic data in speaking/writing which was consolidated and used to design gap filling tasks to enhance curriculum
• increases instructor confidence:
  – in accuracy and reliability of results (answer keys are provided, exemplars are provided for scoring writing, and two assessors are recommended for the speaking component)
  – in developing new teacher-generated tasks
Test Impact and Washback

More examples of positive washback…

- **Feedback to candidates** on strengths and weaknesses in speaking and writing extremely useful in preparation for clinical practice
- **Identification of individual strengths and weaknesses** provides information for **instructors** designing individualized learning plans for a variety of learning groups
- **New courses have been developed by instructors**, e.g. Enhanced listening for Health Care; Enhanced Speaking for Health Care; **on-line in-house practice site on Moodle for students to practice tasks related to CELBAN**
Goal is to make the impact and washback from CELBAN as positive as possible… all stakeholders will benefit.
References


Hawkey, Roger. Consultant in language testing to University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations. *A Study of the Impacts of IELTS, especially on candidates and teachers*. ESOL.org


Publications Available

- **Phase I**: Analyzing the English Language Demands of the Nursing Profession Across Canada (2002)


- **Phase III**: The Implementation of CELBAN (2003)


Reports are available from the Centre from Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB); see website: www.celban.org (Note: click Resources; then History, Background and Research)
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