

Canadian Workplace Vocabulary for a Diverse Workforce

There are many workplace vocabulary words and phrases that are commonplace in most Canadian work environments, which tend to be more egalitarian than other cultures. In other words, the concept of **hierarchy** tends to be more flattened in Canada, and there are more instances of bottom-up, **grassroots** suggestions to improve productivity and/or morale. In addition, typical HR materials are written in a formal style, assuming a shared Canadian cultural perspective. On-boarding policies may be based on a Canadian understanding of the roles of the participants in the workplace.

Native speakers of Canadian English often assume a level of mutual understanding with speakers of English as a Second Language. However, **feedback** and **tip** tend to map onto different types of interaction. **Feedback** can come from a supervisor, co-worker or workshop participant, and can be formal or informal, written or verbal. A **tip**, however, is always verbal and most often comes from a co-worker.

In order to move away from a dictionary-based understanding to a more Canadian workplace culture usage, it might be useful for co-workers to imagine that the new employee as a cousin, niece or nephew from their own family's heritage country. How would you, as a co-worker, explain **performance review**, **new hire**, **comfort zone** or **procedures** to a new employee from:

- the Ukraine,
- Sri Lanka,
- South Africa or
- Guatemala?

Cultural Competence Vocabulary:

Identity	Critical Incident	Self-Awareness
Culture	Boundaries	Background Knowledge (C1/C2)
Task	Eye Contact	Conscious vs. Unconscious
Relationship	Direct or Indirect	Assumptions
Time	Stereotypes	Norms
Perception	Rude	Unpack

References:

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Welcoming Communities Workshop Agenda, November 1-2, 2013

Communication Tools for Working Around Language Barriers, Tacey Ruffner, Kamloops Immigrant Services