

Lesson

1

Overview of CAEL Test Format and Part 1: Speaking

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the class, students will be able to:

- Describe the overall format and scoring of CAEL;
- Describe in detail the format and scoring of Part 1; and
- Identify specific features that contribute to a high-scoring response.

TIME: 2 hours

| TOPIC | SUGGESTED TIME |
|--|----------------|
| 1. Overview of CAEL Test Format | 15 minutes |
| 2. Scoring | 5 minutes |
| 3. Speaking Checklist | 15 minutes |
| 4. Part 1: Independent Speaking, Types A and B | 20 minutes |
| 5. Part 1: Speaking on a Visual | 15 minutes |
| 6. Sample Responses | 20 minutes |
| 7. Additional Practice | 20 minutes |
| 8. Vocabulary Journal | 10 minutes |
| 9. Transcription (Optional) | N/A |
| 10. Homework | 30 minutes |

Before Class:

- Prepare classroom resources for the projector.
- Print sufficient copies of the Speaking Checklist.
- If using the paper option, print sufficient copies of the Speaking prompts.
- Note that the audio for this lesson is accessible at: www.cael.ca/cael-ce-prep/audio-files.

1. Overview of CAEL Test Format (15 minutes)

Introduce CAEL as the Canadian Academic English Language Test. Project **Resource 1A**. Explain that it is a computer-delivered test containing five parts, with integration between skills in some of these parts. In Part 2, there is a Speaking task based on a Reading passage, and in Part 3, there is a Speaking task based on a lecture. Parts 4 and 5 are completely integrated, in that each part contains multiple skills that build off each other and are based on the same academic topic.

Explain that these academic topics can come from two broad fields of Arts and Science. Write these terms on the board:

Arts

Science

Ask Ss to help brainstorm topics for each category, and write these on the board. See **Resource 1B** for some ideas, and project for class after you have finished brainstorming.

Emphasize that the topics you have discussed will not necessarily be reflected in the test: they are simply meant to show the range of possibilities.

Explain that CAEL reflects a wide range of academic topics in order to resemble a first-year student's experience, where they may study in a number of different disciplines. Having a variety of topics also increases the fairness of the test. The inclusion of multiple topics means that there is a lower chance of any test takers having an advantage or disadvantage with any one topic.

Project **Resource 1A** again. Tell Ss that you will focus more on Part 1 later this class, but you will cover it briefly now as well. For Part 1, explain:

- This is the shortest part of CAEL, and it is comprised of 3 Speaking tasks.
- First Speaking task requires you to answer a question for a professor, based on some general aspect of academic studies or university life.
- Second task is similar in content to the first, but this task is also slightly longer.
- Third Speaking task requires you to discuss the features of a chart or diagram.

Move on to Part 2. Explain that this part includes:

- A Short Reading passage, likely about some general aspect of university life, and several questions
- A Long Reading passage about an academic topic, and some questions
- A Speaking prompt based on the information in the Long Reading

Move on to Part 3. For this part, explain:

- Format is similar to that of Part 2, except test takers will answer questions about Listening passages, not passages of text. This part includes:
 - A Short Listening passage, likely about some general aspect of university life, and several questions
 - A Long Listening passage about an academic topic, and some questions
 - A Speaking prompt based on the information in the Long Listening

Move on to Part 4. This part includes:

- A Long Reading passage with questions
- A Long Listening passage with questions

- **On the same topic** as the Long Reading in this part
- A Long Writing in response to a question about this academic topic
 - Response should include information from both the Long Reading and the Long Listening in this part.

Move on to Part 5. For this part, explain:

- Format is similar to that of Part 4, except the Writing portion will be shorter.
- Long Reading, Long Listening, and Short Writing will all be focused on the same academic topic.
 - Topic in Part 5 will be **different** from that used in Part 4.

Explain that CAEL may also include unscored items, used for research and development purposes. These can be found anywhere within the test and will have the same format as the scored items. You will not be able to tell scored items from unscored items, so apply your best effort to the entire test.

2. Scoring (5 minutes)

Project **Resource 1 C**. Explain that test takers will receive individual scores for the Speaking, Reading, Listening, and Writing components, as well as an overall score.

- CAEL scores are reported on a scale from 10 to 90.
- Overall score is calculated as an average that gives equal weight to each of the four component scores.
- Score requirements vary among institutions.

3. Speaking Checklist (15 minutes)

- Distribute the Speaking checklist (**Resource 1 D**), and project on board as well.
- Explain that checklist will help Ss remember the key requirements for their Speaking responses. Except for the content near the bottom of the list, these points can apply to any of the Speaking tasks.
- Ss will be using this list in the next few activities to provide general feedback about each other's work.
- Review each point on list and clarify if any are unclear to Ss.
- Point out that Ss can also use checklist outside of class, to evaluate their own responses. Encourage them to do so by recording their responses, playing them back, and filling out the checklist. What points did they perform well? What points could they improve on?
 - Explain that there is a "Yes/Sometimes/No" column for each point that Ss can fill out as it pertains to the response they are reviewing. There are multiple "Yes/Sometimes/No" columns on the checklist so that it can be used multiple times.

In connection with this, explain that each Speaking task in CAEL contains a Preparation Time, in which you can plan your response, and a Speaking Time, in which you record your response.

- Test takers will be provided with notepaper during the test.

- Emphasize that brainstorming some notes during your Preparation Time for each task is a good way to strengthen the structure and content of your response.
- If you've got a tentative idea beforehand of what you will say, your response is more likely to have good organization and is less likely to contain long pauses, interjections, or shifts in rhythm and pace.
- It can also be useful to note down words and phrases that will help you develop your response, since minds can sometimes go blank when test takers are recording a response.

4. Part 1: Independent Speaking, Types A and B (20 minutes)

Explain that you will now be discussing both Independent Speaking, Type A and Independent Speaking, Type B because the content required for these tasks is quite similar.

Project **Resource 1E**. Review Independent Speaking, Type A once again.

- Task requires you to answer a question for a professor, based on some general aspect of academic studies or university life.
- Question might surround such topics as life on campus, your educational history, or other situations common to academic study.
- Project **Resource 1F**. Note that, as stated in the instructions for Types A and B, test takers will be evaluated on the content of their response and the accuracy of their language.
- Be sure to support your response with lots of details and good examples.
- Shortest of the three tasks in Part 1.
 - Preparation Time: 30 seconds
 - Speaking Time: 60 seconds

Project **Resource 1G**. Review Independent Speaking, Type B once again.

- Task requires you to answer a question for a professor, based on some general aspect of academic studies or university life.
- Question might surround such topics as life on campus, your educational history, or other situations common to academic study.
- Be sure to support your response with lots of details and good examples.
- Preparation Time: 60 seconds
- Speaking Time: 90 seconds

Practice

Inform Ss that they will now have a chance to practice Type A and Type B. It can be beneficial to practice these Speaking tasks using computers with headsets because this best simulates the test day experience. If this is not possible, a paper-based alternative that does not require the use of computers has been provided.

Some suggestions:

Computer Option

- Have Ss access www.cael.ca/cael-ce-sample-test/.
- Start the test and navigate to the first instructions screen (**Part 1: Independent Speaking, Type A – Instructions**).
 - Once all Ss are here, tell them to click **Next**.
 - Timer for Speaking task will start; have all Ss complete task simultaneously, speaking into their headset. (They will not be recorded, but this is good practice for test day itself.) Do likewise for Type B.
 - Briefly discuss Ss' experience and answer questions.
- Now arrange Ss in pairs or sets of three (grouped around one computer?).
 - Have Ss take turns practicing these questions once again, using the prompts onscreen.
 - While one S speaks, the other(s) should fill out the Speaking Checklist.
 - After each S finishes a task, their partner(s) should provide feedback using the checklist.
 - Each S in the set should have an opportunity to respond to the Type A question before they move to the Type B question.
 - The instructor should monitor Ss' Speaking tasks and provide feedback to the class about areas of weakness.
 - Debrief as a class. What did Ss find were their biggest strengths? Biggest weaknesses? What was the most challenging aspect? What was the easiest? You may wish to brainstorm on the board.

Note: Once the timer reaches '0' on a response, it will auto-progress to the next screen. To return to this part, the user can select the appropriate screen from the **Navigation** menu at the top. Note that the **Navigation** menu will NOT appear on the official test.

Paper Option

- Arrange Ss into pairs or sets of three.
- Distribute copies of Speaking prompts (**Resources 1E** and **1G**).
- Make sure that each set of Ss has some sort of timer. Explain that they will take turns speaking for both tasks. Meanwhile, partners will fill in the Speaking Checklist (**Resource 1D**).
- After each S finishes a task, their partner(s) should provide feedback using the checklist.
- Each S in the set should have an opportunity to respond to the Type A question before they move to the Type B question.
- The instructor should monitor Ss' Speaking tasks and provide feedback to the class about areas of weakness.
- Debrief as a class. What did Ss find were their biggest strengths? Biggest weaknesses? What was the most challenging aspect? What was the easiest? You may wish to brainstorm on the board.

Note: Encourage Ss to record themselves with their phone or another recording device. Playing back their responses later may help them recognize their strengths and weaknesses for each task. Remind them that they may also access the CAEL Sample Test at home (www.cael.ca/cael-ce-sample-test/), if they wish to repeat these tasks.

5. Part 1: Speaking on a Visual (15 minutes)

Explain that you will now be discussing Speaking on a Visual.

Project **Resource 1H**. Review Speaking on a Visual once again.

- Task requires you to discuss the features of a chart or diagram.
- Amongst its many possible topics, this task may present information in such fields as economics, tourism, or ecology. The graphic itself could be a line or bar graph, or another type of statistical representation.
- Project **Resource 1F** once more. Note that, according to the instructions screen for this task, test takers will be rated on the content of their response, the accuracy of their language, and their ability to reference details in the image.
- Try to not just describe what you see, but also draw some conclusions about the data. Do you see any trends in the graphic? What might this information suggest?
- Longest of the three Speaking tasks in Part 1
 - Preparation Time: 1 minute
 - Speaking Time: 2 minutes
- Remind Ss that the Preparation Time is especially important in Speaking on a Visual, since they will have to speak for 2 minutes this time. They should try to make at least a few notes, brainstorming the content and structure of their response. They can also note down useful words and phrases to use in their response.

Practice

Explain to Ss that they will now have a chance to practice this task via the CAEL Sample Test. Use the same steps as detailed in Topic 4.

6. Sample Responses (20 minutes)

- Explain that Ss will now listen to some sample responses for the Speaking prompts they just practiced with.
- Arrange Ss into small groups, then play **Response 1 – Independent Speaking, Type A**.
 - After it is finished, debrief and explain that this response is from a test taker who received an overall **band 90** in Speaking.

- Ensure that each group has sufficient blank Speaking Checklists, and replay response. This time, have groups fill in the checklist as they listen.
- Debrief, and ask Ss what specific strengths and weaknesses they noticed in the response.
 - Instructor may use the points on the following page to guide discussion.
- Play **Response 1 – Independent Speaking, Type B** and **Response 1 – Speaking on a Visual**, once again having groups assess them with the checklist.
- Time allowing, repeat procedure with **Response 2 (band 80)**. Alternatively, Ss could be assigned to listen to these responses for homework, with a brief discussion at the beginning of next class.

Note: If Ss need a refresher of the Speaking prompts for these responses, this activity may be completed while Ss are reading the Speaking prompt with the CAEL Sample Test onscreen.

| Response 1 – Independent Speaking, Type A (overall Speaking component: band 90) | |
|---|---|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good range of higher-level vocabulary • Logical flow of ideas • Solid reasons and details • Speaker talks for full time, with no real pauses • Speaker uses numerous examples from own experience to support her points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker talks so quickly that it may be difficult for some listeners to understand |
| Response 1 – Independent Speaking, Type B (overall Speaking component: band 90) | |
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good use of transitions • Extensive range of vocabulary • Plenty of examples and details • Speaker talks for full time, with no real pauses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker talks so quickly that it may be difficult for some listeners to understand |
| Response 1 – Speaking on a Visual (overall Speaking component: band 90) | |
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good use of academic vocabulary to describe the trends • Speaker uses variety of points of data to draw logical conclusions • Speaker talks for full time, with no real pauses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could explain the units and numbers of the graph more thoroughly (give numerical examples) • Some language is a bit informal (“not super significant”) • Speaker goes on a tangent about why travellers may want to come to Canada (30 seconds) • Speaker talks so quickly that it may be difficult for some listeners to understand |

| Response 2 – Independent Speaking, Type A (overall Speaking component: band 80) | |
|---|--|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of specific detail about what speaker wants to study and why Good range of higher-level vocabulary Logical organization to ideas in response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaker is sometimes repetitive, perhaps to fill up time (multiple variations of “that is my goal and that is basically what I want to study at university”) Speaker didn’t really answer why she wanted to study speech sciences |
| Response 2 – Independent Speaking, Type B (overall Speaking component: band 80) | |
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good range of higher-level vocabulary Variety of advanced sentence structures Speaker explains her argument well, giving good supporting reasons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaker spends a long time (almost 30 seconds) explaining the premise of her response before outlining the strengths of high school in Singapore Some language is a bit informal (“way, way, way more challenging”) |
| Response 2 – Speaking on a Visual (overall Speaking component: band 80) | |
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently uses specific numbers to describe aspects of the graph Speaker gives good overall description of the graph and its trends | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaker makes a few language errors (“mode of transportations”; “arrive at Canada”; “high peaks or high lows”) Speaker repeats some phrases numerous times (“mode of transportation”) Speaker neglected to really draw conclusions about trends in graph |

7. Additional Practice (20 minutes)

The Speaking practice thus far has focused on content from the CAEL Sample Test. Now, Ss will get a chance to practice all three tasks in Part 1 with new content via in-class handouts. Distribute **Resource 11** for this extra practice, using the same practice methodology as explained in the paper option of Topic 4.

8. Vocabulary Journal (10 minutes)

- Project and distribute copies of **Resource 1K**.
- Explain that Ss can use this blank Vocabulary Journal to keep track of any new words they come across, whether in their studies or in everyday life.
- For each new word, there is space for the Ss to write down the definition, a sentence using the word, and any synonyms and antonyms they can think of. Note that it is helpful to include the part of speech in the definition.
- Tell Ss that this Vocabulary Journal will be most helpful if they continually add to it (e.g., if they try to fill in 10 new words a week).
- Reviewing these new words can be helpful in many ways. Not only can it help Ss demonstrate the range of their vocabulary in the Writing and Speaking parts of CAEL—it may also help Ss recognize terms in the Listening and Reading parts.
- Ask Ss if they came across any new words in class today, which they could write in the journal.

- Instructor may wish to brainstorm and write example on board.

If time, an example from the Long Reading passage in Part 4 of the sample test could be added to the journal: “nomadic.”

- **Definition:** nomadic, adjective: Having no permanent home
- **Example sentence:** Historically, instead of farming crops, nomadic peoples often led herds of livestock from region to region.
- **Synonyms:** wandering, migratory
- **Antonym:** stationary, settled

Note: In subsequent classes, instructor may print as many copies of this resource as needed.

9. Transcription (Optional)

Time allowing, explain to Ss that it can be useful to record their responses and then write them out. This way, they might become aware of problems in their oral communication that may not be obvious to them merely by listening.

- Distribute **Resource 1J**. Instruct Ss to record themselves speaking for each task.
 - If computers and headsets are available, Ss can record themselves using Audacity or another free online voice recorder. They can then play back the recording and type out the transcript.
 - If computers are not available, Ss may use their phones (preferably with a headset) to record their responses and write out their transcripts in longhand. Provide lined paper if needed.
 - If neither computers nor phones can be used, Ss could write out what they would say (instead of speaking it); however, this option would be a much less effective way of detecting errors related to speaking.
- Given the time constraints of this lesson, you may wish to limit this activity to recording responses to the first task only, and ask Ss to only write out the first 10 sentences of this response.
- In addition to the Speaking Checklist to assess their response, tell Ss to watch out for these common sources of mistakes in speaking: linking words and phrases, verb tense, usage of articles and plurals, countable and uncountable nouns, and subject-verb agreement.

Possible topics for discussion, in groups or as class:

- Which errors have you noticed yourself making?
- Which errors do you think are the most difficult to avoid?

10. Homework (30 minutes)

- I. If there was not enough time in class to finish analyzing the sample responses, Ss may complete this for homework. Have them listen to the second set of responses (**Response 2**) and assess them using the Speaking Checklist. Ss may access these audio files at: www.cael.ca/cael-ce-prep/audio-files.
 - Debrief next class.
- II. Encourage Ss to transcribe their responses for **Resource 1J**, if they have not done so in class. They may also do the same for **Resource 1I**.
 - If this activity was not covered in class, instructor may wish to simply distribute **Resource 1J** as additional content for Ss to practice at home.
- III. Encourage Ss to practice speaking for Part 1 at home. They can either access the CAEL Sample Test (www.cael.ca/cael-ce-sample-test/), or use any of the additional practice questions you may have done as a class. Remind them they can record their responses and play them back, using the Speaking Checklist to help identify areas where they may need to improve.