Learning English with CBC
Listening Lessons for Intermediate Students
Based on CBC Manitoba Radio Broadcasts
October 15, 2010

Lesson 59: Self Study Edition

Level: CLB 6 and up

Topic: Where Are the Voters?

Language Skills and Functions:
Listening – listening to a short interview for main ideas, details and inference
Speaking – asking questions; expressing ideas and opinions
Reading – reading a text for the main ideas; scanning a website for information
Writing – writing instructions

Language Competencies: Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Listening and Speaking Strategies, Socio-cultural/sociolinguistic Competence

Language Tasks:
Answer questions about the importance and process of voting in different countries

Listen for details, main ideas and inference in a radio interview with Kyle Geske about his website *winnipegelection.ca*

Scan a website to find specific election information

Write instructions on how to find information on the website *winnipegelection.ca* using time markers

Ask for information about voting and elections

Read a text on the Democracy Project

Express ideas and opinions using brainstorming techniques on ways to increase voter turnout

Essential Skills: Reading text, thinking skills, oral communication, writing; problem solving

Appendices: Transcript of the podcast
Answers to Worksheets

Manitoba Memo

With municipal elections on the horizon in Manitoba, the main question is not only who will win, but how many of us will actually vote? Turnout in local elections tends to be even lower than provincial or federal elections. In 2006, only thirty-nine percent of Winnipeg residents voted to select a mayor, council members and school board trustees. Even though it is not that long ago that major battles were fought to win the right to vote, fewer and fewer people are voting in developed countries around the world.

In other parts of the world, the right to vote does not exist, or if it does, it's not an easy process. We can easily understand the reasons for low voter turnout in fledgling democracies. Line-ups can be very long, polling stations can be disorganized and voters may even be threatened with violence.

It is more difficult to understand the reasons why voter turnout is declining in Canada. Here, voting is a relatively simple, safe task. Polling stations stay open long hours. They are conveniently located, well-staffed and well organized. Line-ups are rare. If you can't vote on election day, there are numerous advance polls. The main challenge voters face is becoming informed about the candidates and their positions on the issues. While the internet is making that task easier, becoming an informed voter does take some time and effort.

So why is that fewer and fewer Manitobans and Canadians are voting? There are many hypotheses, including:

- We're too busy working and raising our families;
- We don't think our vote will make a difference or bring about change;
- We think we can make more of a difference by working with a non-profit organization than by becoming involved in politics;
- We don't understand the issues;
- We think that all political parties and candidates are basically the same.

Are these reasons not to vote valid? Or are they simply excuses? What happens to democracy if voter turnout continues to decline? Or if some demographic groups aren't fully participating in making the decisions about which candidates and political parties we elect to run our governments? These aren't only questions for scholars and journalists. They are questions we all need to think about.

Background

1. Think about and the following questions

- Have you ever voted in an election?
- Did you vote in your country? What kind of election was it? Was it a local, regional or national election? Have you voted in Canada? In what election(s)?
- How easy/difficult was it for you vote in your country? Why was it easy/difficult?
- How did the experience of voting in your country compare to voting in Canada?
- Do you think people in established democracies like Canada take the right to vote for granted? Is that a problem? If so, why? If not, why not?

2. Vocabulary definitions

Here are some words you need to know to understand the CBC interview.

a democracy	A system of government where citizens vote to elect people to represent them.
voter turnout	The percentage of eligible voters who actually come out and vote in an election.
a trend	When things develop or change over time. For example, one recent development or trend is for candidates to use Facebook and Twitter to communicate with voters.
local elections	Elections at the local or municipal level for reeves, mayors, councillors and school trustees.
a candidate	Someone who competes for a position in an election.
an initiative	Something a person starts, like a project or plan.
user-friendly	Something that is easy for everyone to use. You don't need to be an expert or experienced to use it.
a council ward	A ward is a geographical area in a city. Councillors run for office to represent people who live in a ward, or specific area of a city.
a school trustee	A trustee is a person who is elected to represent the interests of voters on the local school board.
Facebook and Twitter	Popular social media websites that are used to connect and communicate with others via the internet.
You Tube	You Tube is a video sharing website on which users can upload and share videos.

a polling station	The place where a person goes to cast their ballot and vote in an election.
apathy	When people are not interested in something, they are often described as being apathetic. For example: Voter apathy or lack of interest in politics may be one reason for low voter turnout rates.
Google	Google is a way to search the internet to find information. You type the word or subject you are interested in into Google and it finds all the websites with information on your topic.
top hits	Google's top hits are the most popular websites on a specific topic.

3. Predict what the podcast is about

In this story, Marilyn Mackie interviews a Red River College instructor who has co-founded a website called *winnipegelection.ca*. Can you predict what kind of information people might find on this website? Here are a few examples:

I think people might find ...information on the candidates.
The website might have...information on how and where to vote.
Perhaps the website has...different people's opinions on the election.
*Maybe the website has...*a map of the different wards in Winnipeg.
I don't know what I would find on that website.
I don't have a clue what kind of information would be on that website.

4. Expand your vocabulary with phrasal verbs

The story you are about to hear contains several phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs have two parts, a verb and a particle. Two-part verbs are very common, especially in spoken English. They are a lot like idioms and they can be very confusing to English language learners. This is because it is often difficult to guess the meaning of phrasal verbs even if you know the meaning of both of the parts. In most situations, you need context to help you guess or infer the meaning of the phrasal verb. The information below reviews the structure of phrasal verbs and provides examples of how they are used.

phrasal verb = simple verb + particle

Examples of particles: in, on, off, up, out, up, over, under, down, after

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
look + after	to take care of	Jose can't come with us tonight. She has to *look after* her younger sister.
look + over	to check something, to look at it closely	Maria carefully *looked over* the bill. She checked to make sure the waiter had not charged her too much.
look + out	to be careful: to be aware of something that's about to happen	The mother warned her children to look out for the car backing up in the parking lot. She wanted to be sure they watched carefully and did not walk behind it.

Note: For some phrasal verbs, the particle must directly follow the main verb. They cannot be separated. But other phrasal verbs can be separated. For example, you could say: When the bill came, Maria *looked* it (the bill) *over*. In this case, the pronoun "it" separates the two parts of the phrasal verb.

Unfortunately, there are no hard and fast rules about which phrasal verbs can be separated and which cannot. Like idioms, phrasal verbs are something we learn through practice.

5. Use the context clue to find the correct phrasal verb

Now it's your turn! The CBC interview you are about to listen to has several phrasal verbs. Read the following summary of the story. Can you use the context clues provided and fill in the blanks with the correct phrasal verb from the box below? The first one is completed for you as an example.

1. Two teachers from Red River College have <u>set up</u> (started; established) an election website.

2. In the last election, the teachers had difficulty finding information about the candidates running in their area of the city on the internet. So this election, they decided to create a website and_____ (display; show) information about the all of the candidates.

3. The teachers hope their website will provide information to voters and this will _____ (cause; lead to) better voter turnout.

4. If you go to Google and _____ (key in) *Winnipeg election,* you will find the website on the internet.

5. When you _____ (view; observe) the main page of the website, you will see a map.

6. If you _____ (select; choose) a ward on the city map on the website, you will find information about the candidates running for election in that ward.

7. Be sure to _____ (take a look at) this website so you can be an informed voter!

click on	**check out**	**put up**	**look at**	**set up**
	type in	**result in**		

6. Get ready to listen

In this podcast, you will hear three speakers. They are:

Marcy Markusa – host
Marilyn Mackie – interviewer
Kyle Geske – website co-founder

Play the podcast for the first time.

7. Listen for main ideas, detail and inference

Sometimes when we listen, we are listening for important details that help us to understand a situation. Sometimes we are listening for the main ideas or for inference. When you listen to the interview this time, listen for main ideas, details and inference. Read the questions and decide whether the statement is true or false. If the statement is false, can you re-write it to make it true? The first one is completed for you as an example.

	Sentence	T / F
1	Voter turnout is not a problem in Canada. *Rewritten sentence: Voter turnout is a problem in Canada.*	F
2	The decline is significant across all demographic groups.	
3	Turnout in local elections is higher than provincial elections.	
4	The main purpose of the website is to provide information about the candidates who are running for office in Winnipeg.	
5	People who are somewhat familiar with the internet may find the website challenging to navigate.	
6	The best way to find information about your area on the website is to click on your ward on the map, or to select your ward from a list.	
7	Only candidates with a good chance of winning are included on the website.	
8	Kyle Geske believes voters will be more likely to cast a ballot if they know something about the candidates in their area.	
9	The website creators are confident their website will result in higher voter turnout.	

Bonus question: What do you think of this project? Do you think the website will have the impact the teachers are hoping it will have? Why or why not?

8. Pronunciation: When "to" becomes "ta"

When you listened to the interview, did you notice instances where Kyle reduced the word "to" to "ta"? Sometimes he links it with another word. Here are a couple of examples from the transcript.

Written English	Spoken English	Line
Just to provide information	Justa provide information	15
Just to put that information up	Justa put that information up	20

There are other times in the audio where the word "to" is pronounced as "ta" but it is not linked to another word. Use the transcript and listen to the audio again. Can you hear the differences in the pronunciation of the word "to"?

After you listen

a) Review your pre-listening predictions

Were you able to correctly predict the kind of information found on the website?

b) Find information on the winnipegelection.ca website

More and more people look for information they need on the internet. Whether you need to find information for school, for work or for your family, the internet is often the easiest place to start your search. Can you find the information you are looking for on a website? See if you can you find the answers to the following questions on *winnipegelection.ca.* by following the steps on this worksheet.

1. Type **Winnipeg election** into Google or whatever search engine you are using. Click on the website *winnipegelection.ca.*

2. Look at the website Home Page. How many days are left until the election takes place?

   Your answer: _____

3. Open up the Calendar Page. Click on month. Scan the calendar. What was the date of the CBC Manitoba/ Winnipeg Free Press debate?

   Your answer: _____

4. Return to the website Home Page. Click on Mayoral Candidates. How many candidates are running for Mayor of Winnipeg?

   Your answer: _____

5. Now you are going to help your friend Ilona. She wants to know who is running for city council in her Ward. She lives at 440 Dominion Street.

   - Click on *More election information?* on the website Home Page.

   - Click on *Find Your Ward.*

   - Click on *the city of Winnipeg's address look-up tool.*

   - Type in Ilona's address. (Abbreviations you need to know: Street is St, Number is Num).

   - Click on search.

6. What is the name of the Council Ward Ilona lives in?

   Your answer: _____

7. Return to the website Home Page. Click on Ilona's Ward on the map. Can you tell Ilona how many people are running for council in her ward?

   Your answer: _____

c) Write instructions using time markers

Now that you have used the *winnipegelection.ca* website to find information, can you write instructions in your own words to help another student use the website? Your friend Carlos wants to know how to find his Ward on the website and how to find out who is running for council in his Ward. Carlos' address is 1455 Henderson Highway (hwy). Can you write instructions for Carlos similar to those you used to find this information for Ilona?

Using the following time markers will to help you write your instructions and make the process Carlos needs to follow very clear. The first instruction is completed for you as an example:

<div align="center">

Last   Next*   First   After that*   Then*   Second

</div>

1. **First,** type Winnipeg election into Google and click on the website *winnipegelection.ca*.

2. _____, _____

3. _____, _____

4. _____, _____

5. _____, _____

6. _____, _____

Practice saying your instructions out loud. Do they work? Try following your own instructions to find the information Carlos needs.

* You will sometimes see this symbol, called an *asterisk*, in a document. It functions like a footnote. It draws your attention to certain words or information because the author wants to tell you something more about them. In this case, *next, after that* and *then* are followed by an * (asterisk) to let you know that these three time markers can be used interchangeably. In other words, you can use them for numbers 3, 4 or 5 on your instruction list.

d) Ask questions to find out information on elections and voting

Voters, especially first-time voters, often have many questions about the voting process. Can you ask the questions you might need to find out this kind of information? Practice asking the following questions out loud. You can make notes or write the question first if that helps you. The first one is completed for you as an example.

Questions

1. You want to know the date of the election.

   What is the date of the election?

2. You want to know who is eligible to vote in the election.

   _____

3. You want to know how to get your name on the voters list.

   _____

4. You want to know where you go to vote on election day.

   _____

5. You want to know what identification you need to take with you to the polling station.

   _____

6. You want to know if the polling station is wheelchair accessible.

   _____

7. You want to know where you can find out information about the candidates running in your area.

   _____

e) *Read the following article from the Winnipeg Free Press*

There is a lot of interest in the subject of voter turnout. Read the following article. What do you think of the Democracy Project the newspaper is undertaking? Is it a good idea or a bad idea? Why?

Giving democracy a helping hand[1]

Free Press launches project to get more voters out to 2011 election

By: Margo Goodhand, Winnipeg Free Press   Posted: 2/10/2010 1:00 AM

We're kicking off a year-long project today with one simple objective. We want more Manitobans to vote in the Oct. 4, 2011 provincial election.

It's a simple goal but not a simple task. Voter turnout is declining across the developed world.

In 2008 for the first time in Canadian history, the federal electoral turnout dropped below 60 per cent.

And here in Manitoba -- where our women were the first in Canada to win the right to vote 94 years ago -- we now have one of the lowest voter turnouts of the nation.

Why? We're going to find out. And we hope to make it change. We call it the Democracy Project.

Over the next 12 months, we will examine issues and ideologies beyond the politicians and their campaigns. We want to know what you care about and how to make your ballot count.

We hope to talk to many of you over the next year -- from our youngest citizens, who are voting in increasingly smaller numbers than their parents and grandparents; to our newest citizens, who often feel disengaged from the process in their adopted homeland; to our aboriginal community, of which so many are both young and disengaged.

You can follow the Democracy Project in the paper and online. Or join in on the year-long dialogue on Facebook.

Manitoba women fought hard for women's suffrage at the turn of the 20th century. Today, thousands of us don't even bother to cast a ballot. We hope to remind ourselves why that fundamental right was so important then, and now.

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[1] http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/giving-democracy-a-helping-hand-104199839.html

f) Brainstorm ideas on the issue of voter turnout

You have read the Winnipeg Free Press article about the Democracy Project. Clearly, the decline in voter turnout is a big problem. How can it be solved? The Free Press is looking for ideas.

One way to problem solve is to brainstorm possible ideas and solutions. Brainstorming is a way to quickly discuss and list ideas. Brainstorming is often used by employers as a creative way to solve a problem in the workplace.

There are four main principles to keep in mind when you are brainstorming:

1. Participants accept and do not judge each other's ideas (all ideas are considered equal);
2. Lots of different ideas are offered;
3. Creative thinking (often called thinking outside-the-box) is encouraged;
4. Ideas may be combined to form new ideas.

Brainstorming is usually done in a group. But you can brainstorm ideas and solutions on your own or ask a friend to do this activity with you. How many ideas can you think of?

1. What kinds of things do you think might encourage newcomers and other low turnout groups to become interested in the next provincial election and come out to vote?

✓ _____

✓ _____

✓ _____

✓ _____

✓ _____

✓ _____

✓ _____

✓ _____

✓ _____

Want to know more…

The link to the Kyle Geske's website is:

http://winnipegelection.ca/

For a list of about 200 phrasal verbs, go to:

http://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/phrasal-verbs-list.htm

For information about voter eligibility and other Winnipeg election information, go to:

http://www.winnipeg.ca/clerks/docs/elections/2010election/voter/eligibility.htm

For information on elections in other municipalities in Manitoba, go to:

http://web5.gov.mb.ca/mfas/mfas_elections.aspx

For information on school board elections, go to:

http://www.mbschoolboards.ca/

CBC Manitoba has information on the Winnipeg elections on its website:

http://www.cbc.ca/manitoba/features/manitobavotes2010/

Information on municipal races outside Winnipeg will be in the local newspapers.

CBC does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of external websites

Speaker	Podcast	Line
Marcy	Hi I'm Marcy Markusa and you're listening to Learning English with CBC. Well there is a lot of talk in democratic societies about voter turnout. The Canadian trend is that some demographic groups, including youth, newcomers, women and First Nations people, are less likely to vote. But no-one knows exactly why. Turnout in local elections, like the one we are having this fall in Winnipeg, tends to be the lowest of all. Two Red River College instructors are making it easier for Winnipeg residents to become informed about local candidates with a new website. Radio noon host Marilyn Mackie interviewed Kyle Geske, one of the teachers behind this initiative, to find out more.	1 5 10
Marilyn	I went and looked at your website so tell me why did you set up an election website?	
Kyle	We set up one justa, justa provide information. We *ah* we were sorta concerned about the voter turnout last time around, as you said, it was *ah*, I think, somewhere around 39 percent and *um* in our minds, like we tend to go to the internet for information and last time around we couldn't find *ah* all that much information about the election or the candidates *ah* so we decided justa put that information up ourselves.	15 20
Marilyn	Okay, so tell me how it's set up. It's fairly *ah* user-friendly?	
Kyle	It's fairly user-friendly, you come into to the site and you can pick your council ward via a map or just by name and *ah* when you click on a particular ward whether it's a *ah* council ward or a school trustee ward it brings up a list of all the candidates in that ward, it also shows images *ah* if the candidate has sent us in their photos, they're available, and it links to candidate websites, their email addresses, their Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, and even if they have videos up on.	25 30

Marilyn	Kyle, do you think having a website like this will result in better voter turnout, any idea?
Kyle	I would really like to think that if we see an increase in voter turnout that *ah* we had something to do with that. It's gonna be very hard to tell if we did but *ah* when I speak to people one of the things they tell me about *ah* perhaps why they don't vote is because of a lack of information. They feel uncomfortable getting to the polling station and, you know, do they just vote for someone whose signs they've seen the most? How do they inform themselves about the different candidates? So they were, well I've had a lot of people tell me that their sort of voter apathy is tied directly to not knowing enough about the candidates.
Marilyn	Okay, so what is the website? Let's get it out there so people can go check it out.
Kyle	The website is *winnipegelection.ca*. And *ah* if you go into Google and you just type in Winnipeg election you should find us as one of the top hits.

35

40

45

Answers to Worksheets

Phrasal Verbs
1. set up
2. put up
3. result in
4. type in
5. look at
6. click on
7. check out

Listening for Main Ideas, Details and Inference

(Rewritten sentences may vary)

	Sentence	T / F
1	Voter turnout is not a problem in Canada. *Voter turnout is a problem in Canada.*	F
2	The decline is significant across all demographic groups. *The decline is more significant in some demographic groups.*	F
3	Turnout in local elections is higher than provincial elections. *Turnout in local elections is lower than provincial elections.*	F
4	The main purpose of the website is to provide information about the candidates who are running for office in Winnipeg.	T
5	People who are somewhat familiar with the internet may find the website challenging to navigate. *People who are somewhat familiar with the internet will find the website easy to navigate.*	F
6	The best way to find information about your area on the website is to click on your ward on the map, or to select your ward from a list.	T
7	Only candidates with a good chance of winning are included on the website. *All candidates running in the election are included on the website.*	F
8	Kyle Geske believes voters will be more likely to cast a ballot if they know something about the candidates in their area.	T
9	The website creators are confident their website will result in higher voter turnout. *The website creators are hopeful their website will result in higher voter turnout.*	F

Find Information on the Website

2. answers will vary
3. October 14
4. four
6. Daniel McIntyre
7. five

Carlos lives in North Kildonan Ward. There are three candidates for council in his ward.

Asking Questions

(answers will vary)

1. What is the date of the election?

2. Who is eligible to vote in the election?

3. How do I get my name on the voters list?

4. Where do I go to vote on election day?

5. What identification do I need to take with me to the polling station?

6. Is the polling station wheelchair accessible?

7. Where can I find out information about the candidates running in my area?