

Making safety training clear and usable for a multilingual mining team



A scenario-based learning resource to support trainers and assessors

Focus

Training when English is not the first language: Inclusive strategies for culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

Scenario

Paul is a safety trainer working with a crew of operators at a mining site. Several workers are highly capable on the job, but English is not their first language. While the operators could generally follow routine instructions in the field, they find longer explanations, fast-paced discussions and written training materials more difficult to understand.

Paul noticed a pattern across previous training sessions. Some workers nodded along during training but were less confident when asked to explain a process in their own words. A few avoided answering questions in front of the group, or said "yes, boss" when asked if everything was understood. Others copied notes from the screen without clearly understanding the material. This was a concern because the training covered high-risk topics.

The challenge

The training relied too heavily on spoken English, long explanations and text-heavy materials, not a lack of ability or willingness to learn.

If Paul continued to deliver training in the same way, some learners would appear compliant but would lack the depth of content understanding.

In a mining environment, that creates a direct safety risk. The training needed to be clearer, more inclusive and easier to apply on site.

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Solutions

Paul changed both his delivery and his materials. He simplified the language in each session, removing unnecessary jargon, shortening his explanations, and using consistent terms for key processes. When technical terms were needed, he explained them clearly and used them consistently.

He slowed the pace of delivery and broke the session into shorter sections, checking understanding before moving on. Rather than asking, "Does everyone understand?" he asked learners to show, explain or point to the next step in a process. This gave him a more accurate picture of what had been understood.

Paul also used more visual support. He brought in photos of the plant, isolation points, tags, permits, and work areas from the site, and replaced text-heavy slides with diagrams, short process maps, and simple checklists. This helped learners connect the training to the equipment and tasks they dealt with every day.

Importantly, he demonstrated key steps physically. For example, when covering isolation, he showed the sequence, clearly named each step, and then had learners repeat the process in pairs. This reduced the language load and gave learners a chance to learn by seeing and doing.

He also changed how he managed questions. Rather than always asking for answers in front of the whole group, he first used pair share discussions. This gave learners time to process the question, test their understanding with a peer and build confidence before contributing to the wider group.

Paul regularly checked comprehension through practical responses, asking learners to identify the correct tag, locate the hazard in a site photo, or explain the next action in a short scenario. This was more effective than relying solely on written answers.

He also ensured the learning environment remained respectful. He did not rush learners, finish their sentences or treat language differences as a weakness. The focus was on clarity, repetition and practical understanding. Learner participation improved, and workers asked more questions, provided more accurate responses during comprehension checks, and showed better recall of safety steps in the field.

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Next steps

Other trainers can apply this learning by:

- using plain English and reducing unnecessary jargon in training sessions
- explaining technical terms clearly and using them consistently
- breaking content into short sections and checking understanding before moving on
- using photos, diagrams, process maps and real workplace examples to support meaning
- demonstrating tasks physically so learners can see and do, not just listen
- using pair discussion before whole-group questions to build learner confidence
- checking understanding through action, explanation and demonstration rather than relying only on written responses
- slowing the pace of delivery when the content is safety-critical
- creating a respectful environment where learners have time to process and respond.

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