

## Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research

**Let's Make a Deal: Surviving the Car Buying Language Experience!**

authored by: Karen Johnson, CALPER

**The Learners:** Advanced English as a second language learners who come to the United States often find themselves in locations where there is limited access to mass transportation. In such cases, they are put in a situation in which they must purchase a car, often with limited funds and specific transportation needs. They may not have purchased a car before, nor less navigated this experience in a second language and unfamiliar culture.

**Project Description:** This project is designed to prepare advanced English language learners with the necessary language skills to research, locate, and negotiate through the process of purchasing a new or used car. Since purchasing a car involves knowing everything from technical information about car specifications and financing to negotiating a reasonable business deal, this project creates opportunities for learners to develop advanced proficiency in the following skill areas:

- learning relevant vocabulary, technical terms, and related laws
- active listening skills
- researching skills
- negotiation skills
- oral presentation skills

**Project Outline:****Part One: Needs Assessment**

Learners begin the project by completing a needs assessment report. This helps them determine what sort of car is right for them.

*Sample Language Related Activities:*

Learners learn “car lingo” by creating a semantic map and providing definitions and explanations for their classmates.

**Part Three: Negotiating**

Learners prepare for negotiating with a car salesperson by listing the topics they expect to discuss and the price they are willing to pay.

*Sample Language Related Activities:*

Learners practice active listening and intonation patterns in questions to hone their negotiating skills. They also analyze a negotiation dialogue for idiomatic expressions, car related terminology, and linguistic reductions.

**Part Two: Research**

Learners conduct extensive research before their car buying experience. They review everything from pertinent technical terms to “lemon laws”.

*Sample Language Related Activities:*

Learners research a range of internet resources and interpret both classified advertisements and the “fine print” in car dealership advertisement to find out relevant information about buying a car.

**Part Four: Giving an Oral Presentation**

Learners prepare a 20 minute presentation that highlights all aspects of their car purchasing experience. The presentation is evaluated by the instructor and fellow classmates.

*Sample Language Related Activities:*

Learners develop effective oral presentation skills.

## Part One: Needs Assessment

Learners begin the project by completing a needs assessment report. The report walks learners through the process of considering why they need a car, what it will be used for, and the size, type, make/model they prefer. In addition, they are asked to consider budget constraints, their time frame for purchasing the car, and the location of sellers.

**Sample Needs Assessment**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Needs Criteria Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

Review of Personal Requirements:

<u>Requirement</u>	<u>Selection</u>	<u>Justification</u>
Size		
Type		
Make/model		
Budget		
Time Frame		
Location		

### Sample Language Related Activities:

**Car Lingo:** In teams, learners research the following car-related technical terms and then create a semantic map. Each team is responsible for discussing the meaning of each term and its relationship to the other terms in their semantic map. Teams then compare their definitions/explanations with other teams. Instructors should provide resources, such as car manuals and other car-related materials.

V-8, V-6	keyless entry	financing	2-liter, 4-cylinder
compact	coupes	full-size	APR financing
breaks	warranties	anti-lock	sport utility
on-star	extended warranties	2-door, 4-door, 5-door	mini-van
mid-size sedan	title & tags	subcompact	air conditioning
side impact airbags	anti-theft	disc-breaks	sports car
luxury sedan	power accessories	dealer invoice/MSRP	torque
cash back	incentives and rebates	lemon laws	horse power

**Web Resources:** Individually or as a class, have learners explore these websites. Ask them to report on information they found to be most helpful.

How to budget for and select the right used car - <http://www.goodasnew.com/>

Edmunds: Tips & Advice - <http://www.edmunds.com/advice/buying/articles/78388/article.html>

A Car Buying Survival Guide - <http://www.voiceofwomen.com/articles/carbuyart.html>

**Community Resources:** Contact a local car dealership and ask if a sales person might be willing to give a presentation to your class about how to buy a new or used car.

## Part Two: Research

Learners will need to conduct a good deal of research in preparation for their car buying experience. They should be encouraged to consider information sources in print as well as those located on the Internet. Throughout the research process, they should collect and record information that is organized around their needs assessment report. As they create this report, they should include a list of the most helpful information sources they found, any and all pertinent vocabulary, phrases or directions, three locations for purchasing a car, and a summary of important information related to shopping for cars in general.

### **Sample Research Report**

<u>Name:</u>	<u>General Information</u>
	Warranties
	Insurance
<u>Helpful Information Sources:</u>	Title & Tags
	Lemon Laws
	Financing
<u>List of Vocabulary, Phrases, and Directions:</u>	Inspecting Car Details
	Test Driving
<u>Locations for Purchasing a Car:</u>	
1.	
2.	
3.	

### **Sample Language Related Activities:**

**Researching The Internet:** There are many Internet resources for car buyers. Below is a list of sites where learners can find information about buy a new or used car. Assign pairs of learners to visit one of the websites listed below and answer the following questions. Once complete, each pair should report their findings to the class.

What is the main purpose of the website?

What information on the website did you find to be most helpful?

Provide one example of information and/or resources you can find at this website.

Provide tips for how to best use this website when preparing to buy a new or used car.

<http://wsf.carfax.com> — Carfax – Getting a Vehicle History Report

<http://www.kbb.com> — Kelly Blue Book: The Trusted Resource

<http://www.edmunds.com> — Edmunds: Where Smart Car Buyers Start

<http://autos.yahoo.com> — Yahoo Autos

<http://www.carbuyingtips.com/used.htm> — Car Buying Tips

<http://www.capitaloneautofinance.com> — Capital One Auto Financing

<http://carprice.com/negot> — Car Negotiation

## Part Two: Research

### Sample Language Related Activities:

**Understanding Classified Ads:** Read and interpret the following classified advertisements:

CHRYSLER TOWN & COUNTRY '98 LXI, 35K, very good condition, tape, \$10,600.

MITSUBISHI ECLIPSE GS '99, 5 spd manual, 53K, power sunroof, mirrors, & dr locks, cruise, leather seats, rear spoiler, am.fm.tape.cd palyer, aluminum wheels.

FORD 150 '94, extended cab w/western snow plow. Exc shape, 94K ps/pb, Air.

TOYOTA 4 RUNNER '95, V6, SR5, auto, 97K, all power options, CD, insp.till 0704, asking \$7,500 neg.

DOGDE INTREPID '98, red 50K auto a/c power windows/locks cruise cd, leather, ABS 2 new tires & battery exc. Cond \$9000.

JEEP CHEROKEE '95, 6 cyl high output, 146k, needs exhaust manifold. \$1500.

FORD F150 Supercab '99, 4X4 XLT Off Rd 46K v8 5.4L auto a/c ABS tilt crusie power toneay cover bed liner towing package mint cond. \$18,900 neg.

**Reading the fine print:** Read and interpret the following "fine print" from 1) a Leasing Agreement, 2) a Navigation System, and 3) a Limited Warranty.

1) \* Available only to qualifies customers by MB Credit at participating dealers through December 1, 2003. Advertised lease rate based on MSRP of \$32,620 less a suggested dealer contribution resulting in a total gross capitalized cost of \$31,857.51. Dealer contribution may vary and could affect your actual lease rate. Included destination charge and optional automatic transmission, Sunroof package and CD changer. Excludes title, taxes, fees, insurance, dealer prep and additional options. Total monthly payments equal \$14,625. Cash due at signing includes \$2,350 capitalized cost reduction, \$795.00 acquisition fee (\$1,000 if registered in NY) and first month's lease payment availability and may have to be ordered. See participating dealer for details.

2) \*MSRP including delivery, processing and handling fee. Excludes taxes, title, license and optional equipment. Actual dealer price may vary. See your local Lexus dealer for more details. The Lexus DVD Navigation System is designed to assist in locating an address or point of interest. Discrepancies may be encountered between the system and your actual location. Changes in street name, road closures, traffic flow or other road system changes may affect the accuracy of the mapping software. Rely upon your common sense to decide whether or not to follow a specified route. Detailed coverage not available in every city. Optional periodic geographic updates available at an additional cost. See your Navigation System Owner's Manual and your Lexus dealer for further details. Lexus reminds you to wear seatbelts, secure children in the rear seat, obey all traffic laws and drive responsibly.

3) \*This warranty runs three months from date vehicle was sold or 3,000 additional miles, whatever comes first. A \$0 deductible applied. Warranty runs 8 years from date vehicle was new or 80,000 miles on odometer. A deductible applied. Availability may vary by dealer. You must call for prior authorization to receive these benefits.

## Part Three: Negotiating

To enable learners to prepare for negotiating with a car sales person or owner of the car they wish to purchase, they should begin by listing the topics they expect to discuss and determine a position that they expect to take. In addition, they need to anticipate questions that the car seller might ask. Learners then prepare for the negotiation by compiling a list of the most frequently used phrases that will be involved. Preliminary interviews can be conducted by phone. Follow-up interviews should be conducted in person.

<b>Sample Negotiation Worksheet</b>		
Name:		
<u>Topic Area</u>	<u>My Game Plan</u>	<u>Seller's position</u>
Price		
Options		
Warranty		
Possible questions:		
Frequently used phrases:		

### Sample Language Related Activities:

**Intonation Patterns in Questions:** Stress gives English its rhythm, while intonation provides its melody. Intonation is the rising and falling of your voice when you are speaking. English speakers generally use one of two basic intonation patterns when asking questions, depending on the type of question. Raising intonation is usually used at the end of yes-no questions. This means that the pitch is raised on the last syllable or word that is stressed in the sentence. This high pitch, then, is maintained to the end of the question. Falling intonation is used for information questions, such as who, what, what kind, which, when, why, and how. This means that the pitch rises on the last stressed syllable in the sentence, and then falls on the rest of the unstressed syllables or words. Read the following questions, and mark the stress and intonation. Do the same for questions you expect to ask in your negotiation.

What's the asking price?

What's the mileage?

Has it ever been in an accident?

What's the warranty?

Has it been inspected?

Does it have air conditioning?

What year is it?

How many miles does it have on it?

Does it have antilock or disc breaks?

What kind of condition is it in?

**Phrases and Expressions for Active Listening:** Below are some useful phrases and expressions that may help learners become active listeners. Ask learners to consider how they might incorporate such phrases in their negotiations.

#### **Asking for Clarification**

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not sure what you mean."

"Sorry, but I don't understand."

"Could you explain what you mean by ...?"

#### **Clarifying or Restating**

"I mean ..."

"In other words..."

"The point I'm trying to make it..."

"What I'm trying to say is..."

#### **Paraphrasing**

"What she means is ..."

"I believe his point it ..."

"I think she feels ... Isn't that right?"

#### **Checking for Understanding**

"Do you see what I mean?"

"Is that clear?"

So, you think that...?"

## Part Three: Negotiating

### Sample Language Related Activities:

**Negotiating with A Car Salesperson:** Listen to this conversation between a used car salesman and a young woman:

Salesman: How ya doin' today? Can I help you with something?  
Woman: Yes, I'm looking for a small car...something economical....not too expensive.  
Salesman: Well... le'me show you what we have... that Honda over there is small... it's in mint condition.  
Woman: How much is it?  
Salesman: Only \$8,500, and it has air conditioning and new tires. It's only three years old.  
Woman: Is it an automatic?  
Salesman: No, it's a standard, but it's very economical. 28 highway, 25 city. At that price it'll be snapped up. In fact, I had a gentleman in here yesterday, wanting to buy it for his daughter, she's probably about your age. You a student?  
Woman: Yes, I'm a senior. It's a bit more than I can afford, in fact, it would probably wipe me out.  
Salesman: Well, we have financing available, I might be able to get you pretty low monthly payments. How much are ya thinking of puttin down?  
Woman: Bottom line? About \$5,000.  
Salesman: Well, you want a reliable car, don't ya? Something that'll get you through the winter and Hondas are excellent in the snow. It has new tires.  
Woman: Well, let me look around some more. What else do you have?  
Salesman: At that price, not much... well I could sell you something at that price but I can't guarantee it'll get ya through the winter. The servicing is minimal on these and they are excellent in snow. Have you ever driven one? Shall we take a test drive?  
Woman: Well, I don't think I can afford it.  
Salesman: Well, I might be able to work something up, if this is the car you want?  
Woman: What sorta ballpark are we talk'in about?  
Salesman: Well, let's test it out first. Shall we?

Discuss the meanings and uses of the following:

Idiomatic Expressions:

mint condition  
snapped up  
wipe me out  
putting down  
bottom line  
work something up  
ballpark

Car Related Terms:

economical  
automatic  
standard  
financing  
monthly payments  
servicing  
test drive

Reductions:

How ya doin'?  
le'me  
are'ya  
get'ya  
outa  
sorta  
talk'in

Answer the following questions:

- 1) What does the woman want? What language does she use that tells you this?
- 2) What does the salesperson want? What language does he use that tells you this?
- 3) How might the woman have responded to the salesperson in order to get what she wants?

## Part Four: Giving an Oral Presentation

Finally, learners prepare a 20 minute presentation that highlights all aspects of their car purchasing experience. If at all possible, they should be encouraged to use multimedia presentation software to create their presentations. In their presentations they should include the following six sections:

1. Brief review or highlights of the needs assessment report
2. Brief review or highlights of the research reports
3. A description of what happened during their preliminary interview
4. A description of what happened during the negotiation
5. The results of this negotiation (How did you do? Did you feel you made a reasonable business deal?)
6. An evaluation of their ability to manage the activities involved in this project (What tasks gave you the most challenge? In what area were the terms or phrases the most difficult to gain an understanding? How might you prepare yourself better next time? When did you feel most confident?)

### Sample Language Related Activities:

**Giving Effective Presentations:** Learners should consider the following evaluation rubric when preparing and delivering their presentations. The instructor and classmates can use this rubric to evaluate the presentations.

#### Sample Presentation Evaluation Form

Speaker:

Delivery

- Maintained eye contact with listeners in all parts of the room
- Spoke loudly and clearly
- Spoke in a natural, conversational manner
- Used effective posture, movement, and gestures
- Used notes effectively (if applicable)

Communicative Ability

- Pronunciation was clear
- Spoke fluently, without too much hesitation or repetition
- Grammar and vocabulary choices were reasonably accurate

Content

- Met time limit
- Developed topic with sufficient reasons, examples, and detail
- Chose a topic that was appropriate for the audience
- Organization
- Effective introduction
- Logical development of ideas
- Clear transitions
- Effective conclusion

Additional Comments:

## What is Project Work?

“Project Work” is a systematic instructional method based on the principles of project-based learning. “Project Work” offers a constructivist perspective on language learning, creating opportunities for students to actively participate in their own learning and become more self-directed learners of other languages while creating a product that is both realistic and meaningful.

### Where do Projects come from?

Ideas for projects can emanate from a number of different sources.

- Course curriculum
- Students/teachers raised topics
- Special events

### Realistic and Meaningful Products of Project Work

- Oral presentations
- Portfolios
- Poster sessions
- Reports
- Interviews

### Project Work Essential Features

- Students engage in substantial inquiry over an extended period of time.
- Teachers provide guidance and direction to students.
- Students become more self-directed and autonomous learners who monitor, analyze and evaluate their own learning.
- Students work collaboratively with others using their language in an integrated rather than isolated way.
- Content, process, and product are essential features of project work.

---

# CALPER

Center for Advanced Language Proficiency  
Education and Research

#### Contact Information:

James P. Lantolf and Karen E. Johnson, Co-directors  
Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research (CALPER)  
The Pennsylvania State University  
5 Sparks Building  
University Park, PA 16802-5203  
Phone: (814) 863-1212 - Fax: (814) 865-1316  
E-Mail: [calper@psu.edu](mailto:calper@psu.edu)

**For more information visit our website at:  
[calper.la.psu.edu/probl.php](http://calper.la.psu.edu/probl.php)**

This project was developed and prepared for publication with funding from the U.S. Department of Education (CFDA 84.229, P229A020010-03). However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and one should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.