

**LET'S TALK
BASIS FOR BUSINESS:
BUILDING SPEAKING AND
BUSINESS SKILLS
AT B2 AND C1**

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IATEFL BESIG 13 NOV 2014**

WHAT DO YOUR LEARNERS NEED TO DO IN CLASS IN ORDER TO IMPROVE?



USING ENGLISH AT WORK



USING ENGLISH IN CLASS

WHAT METHODS?

DOGMAS & HERESIES

develop business skills

build repertoire of own scenarios

Study conversations as cases

1 They're here to learn English, not to develop their life skills	a Get them to attempt a task first to elicit a need for the target forms	2 Maximise L2 exposure by using only English in class
b Code-switch in class to build bridges between L1 and L2	3 Give them tasks you know they <i>can</i> do, never ones you know they <i>can't</i>	c Mobile devices will fundamentally change the way we learn
4 If you want to be easily understood, speak like a native speaker	d Keep your own accent, but be prepared to understand many others	5 Practise English in imagined everyday functional encounters
e Let the lesson emerge naturally from the interaction of all participants	6 Present learners with graded, target-form-rich samples	f Our educational aims should go beyond the narrowly linguistic
7 The best lessons come from careful planning and well-chosen materials	g Present only authentic, corpus-attested samples	8 Present new language carefully and then give them opportunities to practice
h Practise English through using it to learn other educational content	9 Technology is useful but not essential - it is only a tool	i Tasks should push them to the limits of their abilities

CEFR LEVELS, PLUS



A1/A2 Basic

- Can understand expressions related to, and speak about, areas of immediate relevance, e.g. personal information.

B1 Independent

- Can deal with most situations where the language is spoken.
- Can understand connected text on familiar topics.

B2 Independent

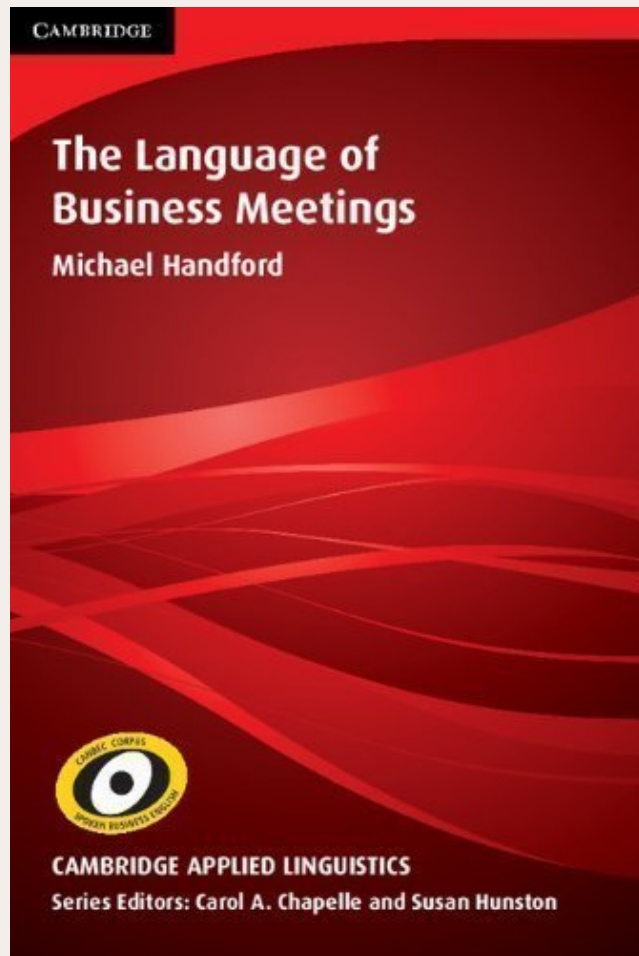
- Can interact spontaneously without strain for self or listener.
- Can understand, in detail, detailed text on many subjects and explain a viewpoint.

C1 Proficient

- Can understand demanding texts and recognize implicit meaning.
- Can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes.

Communication skills to match the language level

WHAT LANGUAGE?



Limitations:

- 90% of speakers from UK
- 76% men
- middle & senior management

LEAN LANGUAGE



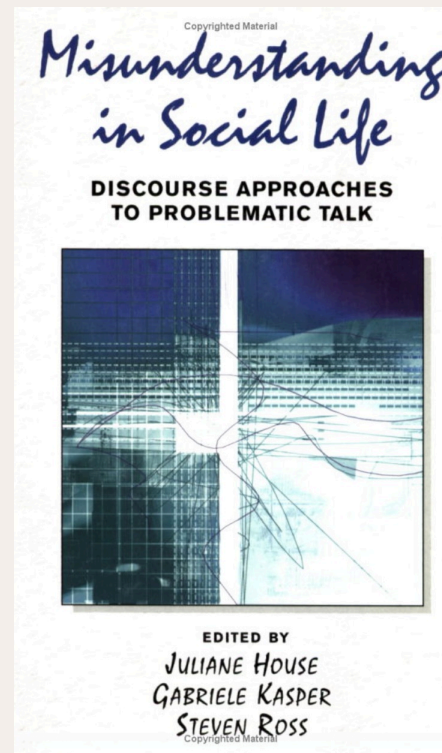
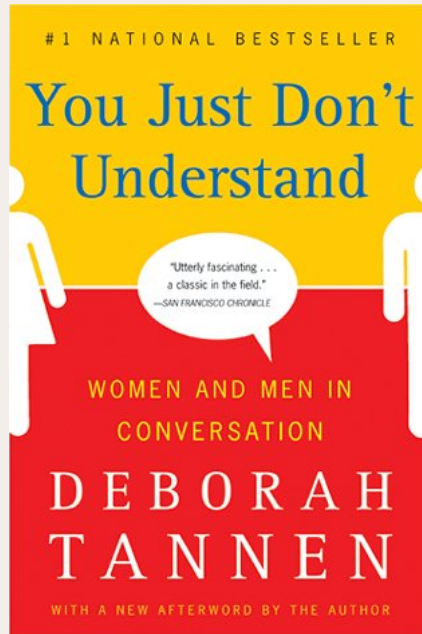
ELF research: NNS

- ignore/ repair errors
 - Innovate language that works
- e.g. Germans use noun-phrases:
- Our idea is...
 - My suggestion is...

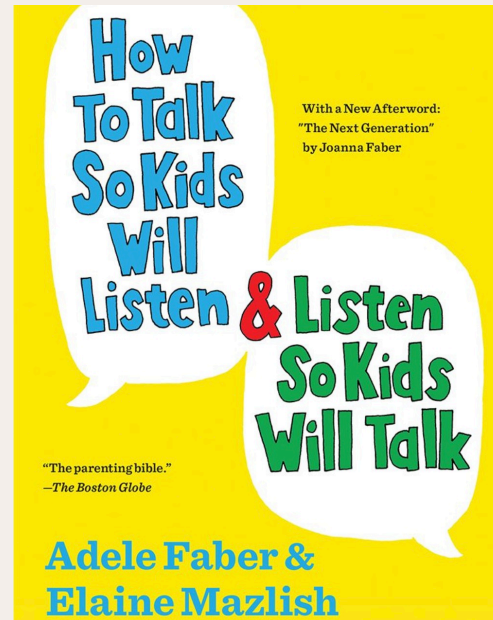
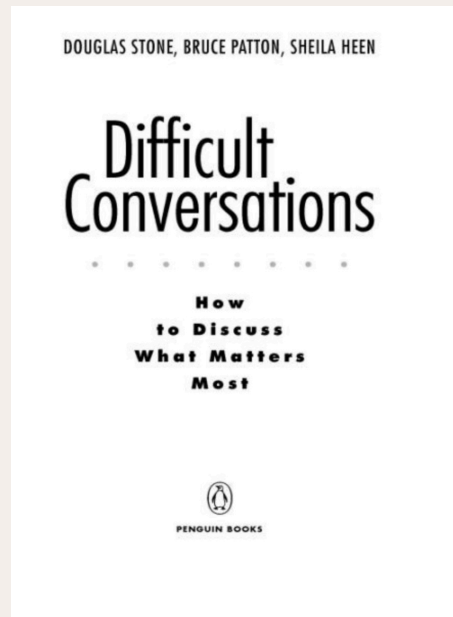
Mark Powell “Lean language”
“Streamlining Business English”
(BESIG 2010 Plenary)

- > Encourage the learner
- > Give the learner reality checks

HOW CONVERSATIONS WORK



HOW TO IMPROVE CONVERSATIONS



CONVERSATION FRAMEWORKS

Relationships can be

internal <-> external
peer <-> hierarchical
new <-> longstanding
still in negotiation <-> contractually bound
similar <-> different cultures, genders, ages

Different kinds of meeting

informal <-> formal
one to one <-> multiple participants
floor: one at a time <-> all together now
decision makers present <-> absent
sales <-> planning/ strategy
stage of project or negotiation

... add your criteria

THE BASIS FOR BUSINESS AGENDA

**WORKPLACE SCENARIOS TO
PERSONALIZE AND PRACTICE**

COMMUNICATIVE, TASK-BASED LEARNING

**PROGRESSION AT C1:
FROM EVERYDAY NEEDS TO SPECIAL
CHALLENGES**

**CHALLENGES AT C1:
EXTENDED LISTENING TO NNS
INTERCULTURAL REFLECTIONS**



INTERCULTURAL REFLECTIONS: POLITE REQUESTS



Asking others to change their behaviour

I noticed that you didn't copy me into your email.

~~NOT: You're always forgetting to copy me into emails!~~

Next time, could you send me the update a few days earlier?

Can you (try and) ... ?

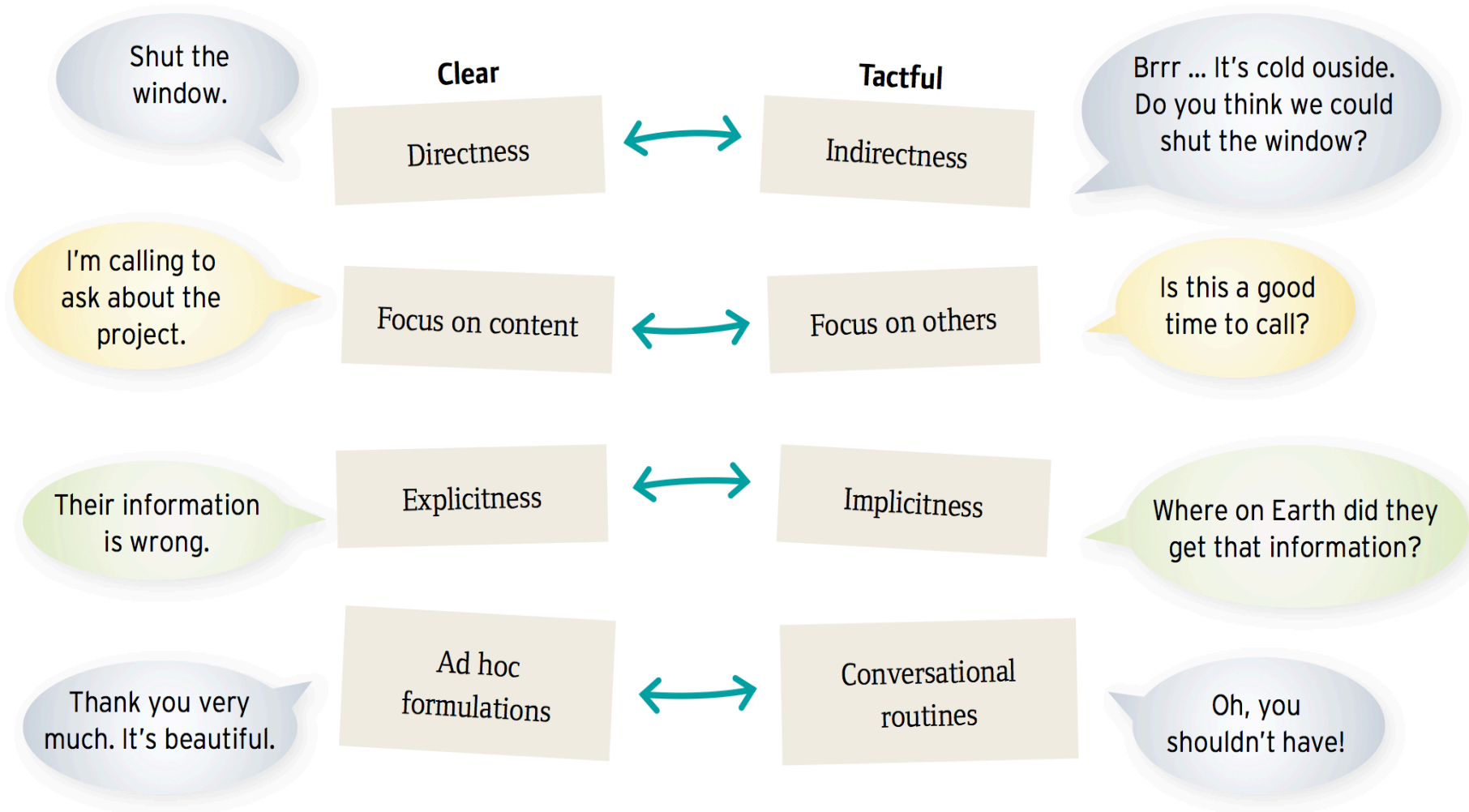
It would help if you sent ...

I'd appreciate it if you would ...

It would be (really) great if we could ...

Note how 'please' is not used in the requests above.

INTERCULTURAL REFLECTIONS



EXTRA PRACTICE

6 Rearrange the following sentences to make more tactful versions of the thoughts below.

You never understand me!

1 be misunderstanding / we might / I suppose / one another / just

2 in the future / if we could / more often / I'd appreciate it / communicate

You are always avoiding me and deliberately not answering my phone calls.

Give me more time to prepare!

3 had / it would help / more time to prepare / if I / next time

4 got off / we might have / it seems / on the wrong foot

Last time we met it was a disaster.

I need it today!

5 try and / at the latest / can you / by the end of the day / send it to me ?

BASIS FOR BUSINESS QUIZ

1. How many units, parts and business files does Basis for Business C1 have, from *Welcome* unit to the end?
2. Each double-spread is designed to take 90 minutes. How many hours of teaching would that provide? Do you see the content providing more?
3. What file format is the audio in? Where are the transcripts?
4. Flip through the individual units and study the boxes in the outside margins: What colour are the *Grammar boxes*? How do they present grammar points?
5. Find the blue-green *Phrase boxes*, also in the outside margin. What types of activities do they accompany?
6. How do the *Food for thought* and the *Did you know* boxes differ?
7. Where are the *Outside View* essays? What are they about?
8. Which of the *Skills files* can be used to prepare a sales talk?
9. Where are activities to elicit learner business experience normally located?



ANSWERS

1. 1 Welcome, 8 units x 3 , 4 business files = 29
2. The basis design is 29 double spreads x 90 minutes, but but every unit can be extended ad lib through activities of personalized practice.
3. The audio format is mp3. Transcripts in back.
4. The *Grammar boxes* are green, grammar is presented functionally, often contrasting two forms.
5. The *Phrase boxes* accompany productive tasks and fluency activities
6. *Food for thought* is normally a quote. Conversation starters.
7. *Outside View* is in *Extra practice*, and covers cultural skills.
8. Self-introductions, Short talks, Elevator pitch, Framing a proposal, perhaps Effective emails to prepare the meeting
9. Start (warmer), middle (reflection), end (real task), business files.

Being less direct

We **were just wondering** if we could ...

I **was thinking** ... Why don't we ...?

I **was hoping** to find out more.



Talking about training and career development

I trained as a

I completed my studies in ...

I am currently enrolled in a course on

I was sent on secondment (BE) to Italy. [sɪ'kɒndmənt]

I went on temporary assignment (AE) to our plant in Texas.

PERSONALIZING



Topical:

Own experience & preference, update on subject
Book: Warmers and discussions, business cases



Linguistic:

Meaningful, productive tasks and feedback, explorative tasks
Book: Tasks with phrase and grammar boxes



Communication skills:

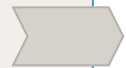
Communication gap, simulations
Book: Partner files, Business files



Business skills:

reflect on own skills, share; conduct class projects and meetings
Book: apply suggested business methods to own situation

ACTIVITIES



Topical:
Freewriting reviews



Linguistic:
Dictogloss



Communication skills:
Information gap or Triangulation / Listening trios



Business skills:
Frameworks: roleplaying conversations

TOPICAL PERSONALIZATION FREEWRTING REVIEWS



Aims: Assess interest, share experience, create agenda.

Activity: Individual, pair, share
First note down 3 headings:
1. Business topic
2. Scenario at work
3. Language point
Then browse book for 2 minutes.
Finally write non-stop under these headings for 10 minutes.

With students: Present to partner
Mingle to find someone with similar points
Collaborate to lead session on a selected topic.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

LISTENING TRIOS



Aims:

Workout in all skills, especially listening.

Activity:

Form 3 groups.

Each group reads a different text connected to one issue. It can also be a simulation that requires each group to develop a certain perspective

Form trios with one person from each group.

1. Summarize your text orally to a partner.
2. Summarize what your partner tells you in writing.
3. Discuss and triangulate the issue. Create a new text together.

Follow-up:

Compare the summaries of each trio for form, and collaborative texts for meaning.

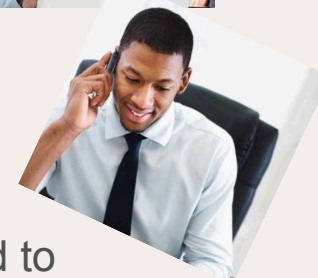
Our example:

Ivo, Doug and Bob

Relate the dilemma as if you were Ivo, Doug or Bob.

Summarize each position individually.

Then discuss and collaborate on a summary.



TRIOS: WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

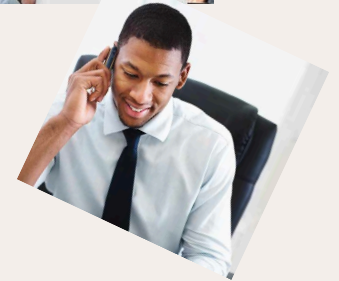


Ivo and his assistant Rose (Germany) have repeatedly helped Doug (US subsidiary) place orders in Germany. This time there is confusion, because when Rose calls the supplier, it turns out that Doug has taken care of things himself.

Ivo complains to Doug for causing them unnecessary work.

Angry emails ensue.

Ivo approaches Bob, a close colleague in Germany, for advice.



Doug's reaction to Ivo's complaint:

It seems we have had several instances now where poor communication or confusion has caused some trouble for us with you. In the future it will be helpful if you can please call me directly to discuss these issues before drawing conclusions without fully understanding the situation.

Ivo's reply to Doug:

In the future I will not accept these kinds of emails from your side blaming Rose and me for not fully understanding your poor communication.

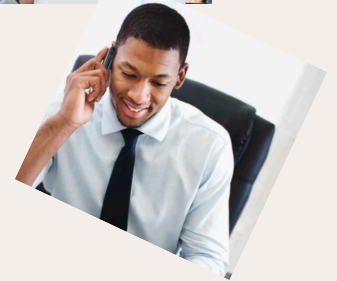
TRIOS: WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Form 3 groups.

Discuss the scenario from the point of view of your character.

Meet up in trios and discuss situation.

Get in character and roleplay any necessary dialogues.




LINGUISTIC PERSONALIZATION

DICTOGLOSS

Aims:	Assess learner language, analyse new input
Activity:	Groups of 4 Text: 250 words in 12 sentences challenging level, new input Read at natural speed. Groups produce a grammatically correct version of the text.
Follow-up:	Compare versions. Focus on form.
Examples:	a. Outside View b. Doug's telephone apology from C1/ 4B c. Dialogue Work-life-balance Sue/Dirk from B1/5B ->

DICTOGLOSS



- 5  17 Ivo finds a message from Doug in his voicemail. Does Doug admit to making any mistakes? If you were Ivo, what would you think of the message?

What exactly did Doug say? Use words from the box to rephrase the sentences below, then listen again to check.

I guess · I suppose · kind of · may
have · probably · sort of

- 1 I misinterpreted the situation.
- 2 We got off on the wrong foot.
- 3 I was surprised, after that last email.



Part B Work-life balance



▶ How do you try to maintain a good work-life balance?

1  1.38 Listen to two colleagues talking during a coffee break. How important do they think a healthy work-life balance is?



Basis
for
Business
B1

Dirk: Hey Sue, what can I get you?
Sue: Oh, I'll have a coffee, please, Dirk. White, no sugar.
Dirk: OK, this one is for you.
Sue: Thanks.
Dirk: So how's it going?



Sue: Ah, pretty good, thanks. I just got back from visiting the Dublin subsidiary.
Dirk: Ah. How'd that go?
Sue: Yeah, good. Everything went fine. You know, they've got the highest workload of all of our European offices these days, but they still have the best results. They get everything done.
Dirk: That's great.
Sue: They're really into this whole work-life balance thing in Ireland at the moment.
Dirk: (groans)
Sue: I think it's a good idea. I think it's becoming more and more important.
Dirk: You can't be serious. Some people are just lazier than others and look for reasons to work less.
Sue: Maybe. But not the Dublin group. Look at their performance. It's about being responsible for having a life outside of work. People who only work all the time, like some people I won't mention, will burn out eventually. That's just counterproductive. You need to balance your work with something like sport or something to help you switch off.
Dirk: Switch off?
Sue: Yeah, you know, relax, take your mind off work, think of other things. There are things in life other than work, you know. You'll get more satisfaction from work, and also have better results, with a healthy work-life balance. I really think you should...

APPLYING CONVERSATION FRAMEWORKS

Aims:	Recognize frameworks
Activity:	Listen to a conversation Analyse the relationship and setting Frame the moves in a flowchart Add phrases to the flowchart
Follow-up:	Roleplay the conversation using the framework. Exchange feedback. Switch roles and replay. Immediate and delayed reflections
Examples:	C1/3A: Check project status (internal, hierarchical) C1/3B: Request a proposal (external, initial contact) C1/6B: Give employee feedback (internal, hierarchical)

EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK



Appraising employees

- 1) Focus on their behaviour, not their attitude.
- 2) Build trust, then cut straight to unresolved issues.
- 3) Be direct and concise. Make sure they understand.
- 4) Elicit their response and listen closely.
- 5) Let them propose a solution.

BUSINESS SKILLS

REFRAME DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Aims: Improve practice by reframing a remembered conversation. (M. Powell)

Activity: Relate and act out the conversation.
Learner briefs teacher on counterpart.
Teacher plays the counterpart.

Discuss to understand.
Share advice, introduce literature.
Produce a new framework, language

Follow-up: Apply framework and repeat role play with switched roles. Feedback.
Repeat with original roles.

ROLE PLAY AND SIMULATION

Identify

- What's the scenario
- Who am I?
- What do I want?
- How will I get it?

Practice

- Language
- Rephrase

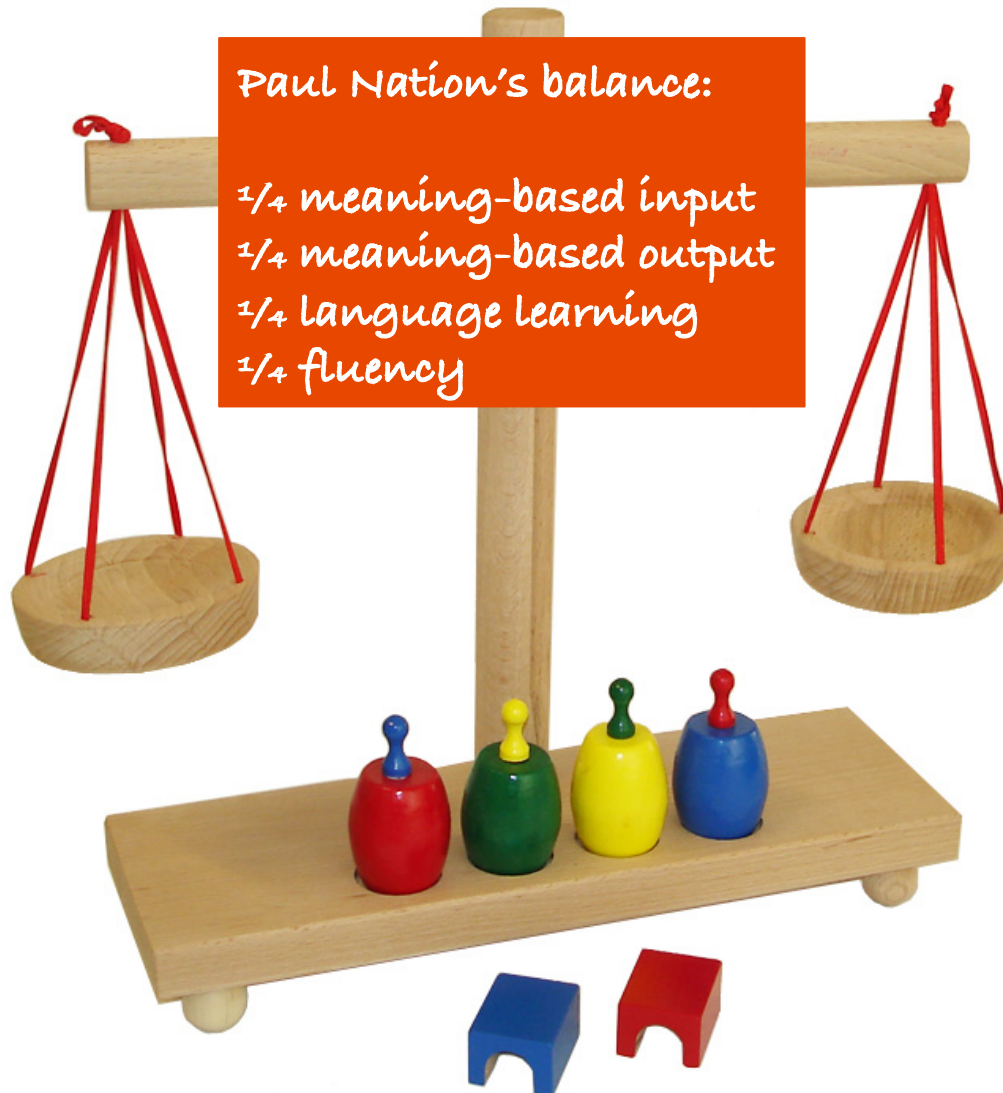
Perform

- No corrections
- Change partners
- Change roles
- Use constraints
- Use a monitor
- Record

Debrief

- Hot reflections:
- What worked?
 - What went wrong, why?
 - What would I do differently?
- Cold reflections:
- thinking back in writing (C. Chan)

BALANCE



FLUENCY ACTIVITIES

Criteria:

1. Is it meaning-focused?
2. Is it easy and familiar?
3. Is there pressure to go faster?
4. Is there quantity of practice?



Paul Nation's 4–3–2 activity

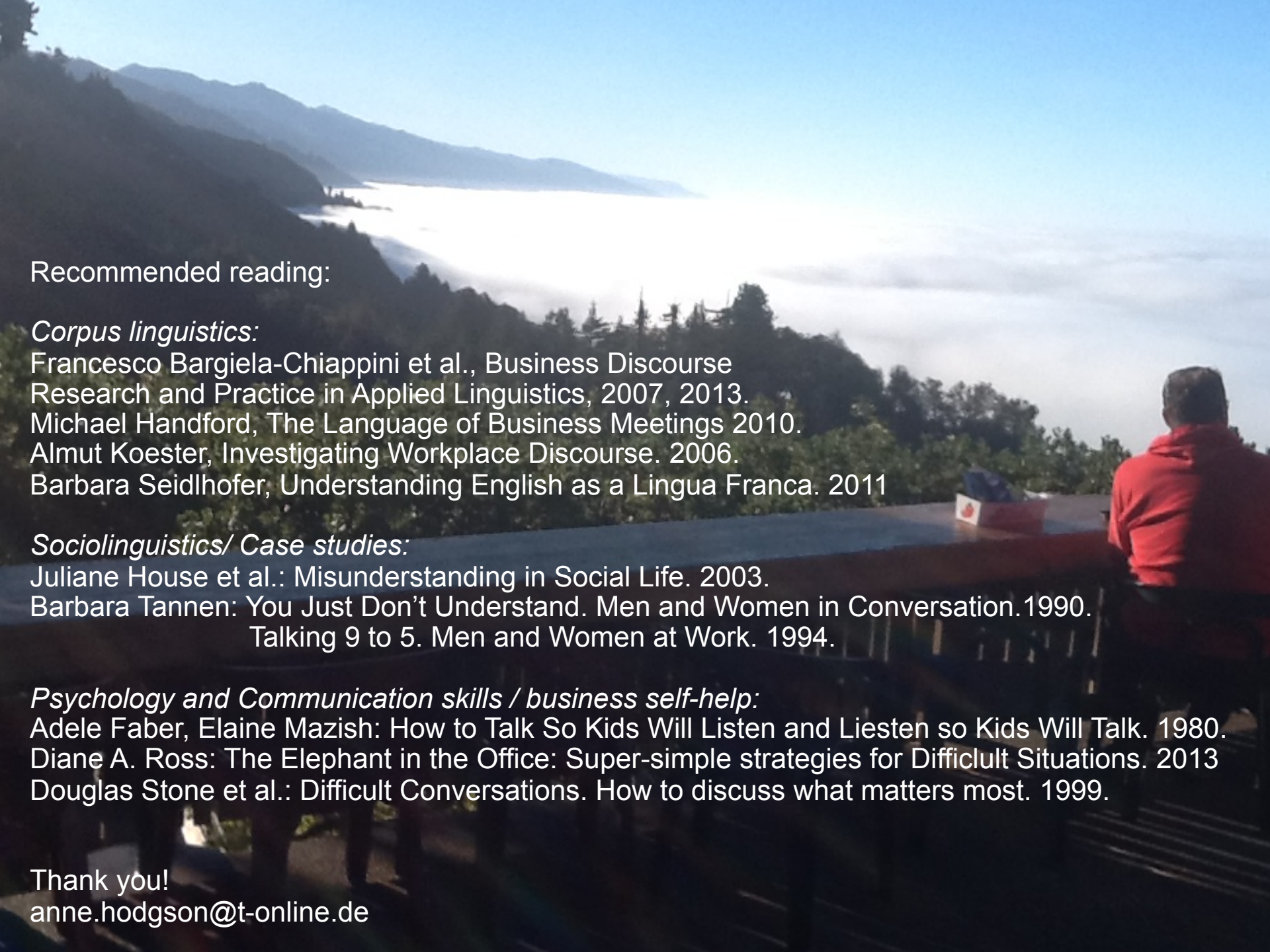
1. Speak for 4 minutes on a subject.
2. Change partners and repeat what you said, taking 3 minutes.
3. Change partners again and repeat, taking 2 minutes.

ROLEPLAYS



SOUND OFF



A scenic view of a lake and mountains under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a person wearing a red hoodie is seen from behind, looking out over the landscape. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Recommended reading:

Corpus linguistics:

Francesco Bargiela-Chiappini et al., Business Discourse Research and Practice in Applied Linguistics, 2007, 2013.

Michael Handford, The Language of Business Meetings 2010.

Almut Koester, Investigating Workplace Discourse. 2006.

Barbara Seidlhofer, Understanding English as a Lingua Franca. 2011

Sociolinguistics/ Case studies:

Juliane House et al.: Misunderstanding in Social Life. 2003.

Barbara Tannen: You Just Don't Understand. Men and Women in Conversation. 1990.

Talking 9 to 5. Men and Women at Work. 1994.

Psychology and Communication skills / business self-help:

Adele Faber, Elaine Mazish: How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk. 1980.

Diane A. Ross: The Elephant in the Office: Super-simple strategies for Difficult Situations. 2013

Douglas Stone et al.: Difficult Conversations. How to discuss what matters most. 1999.

Thank you!

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