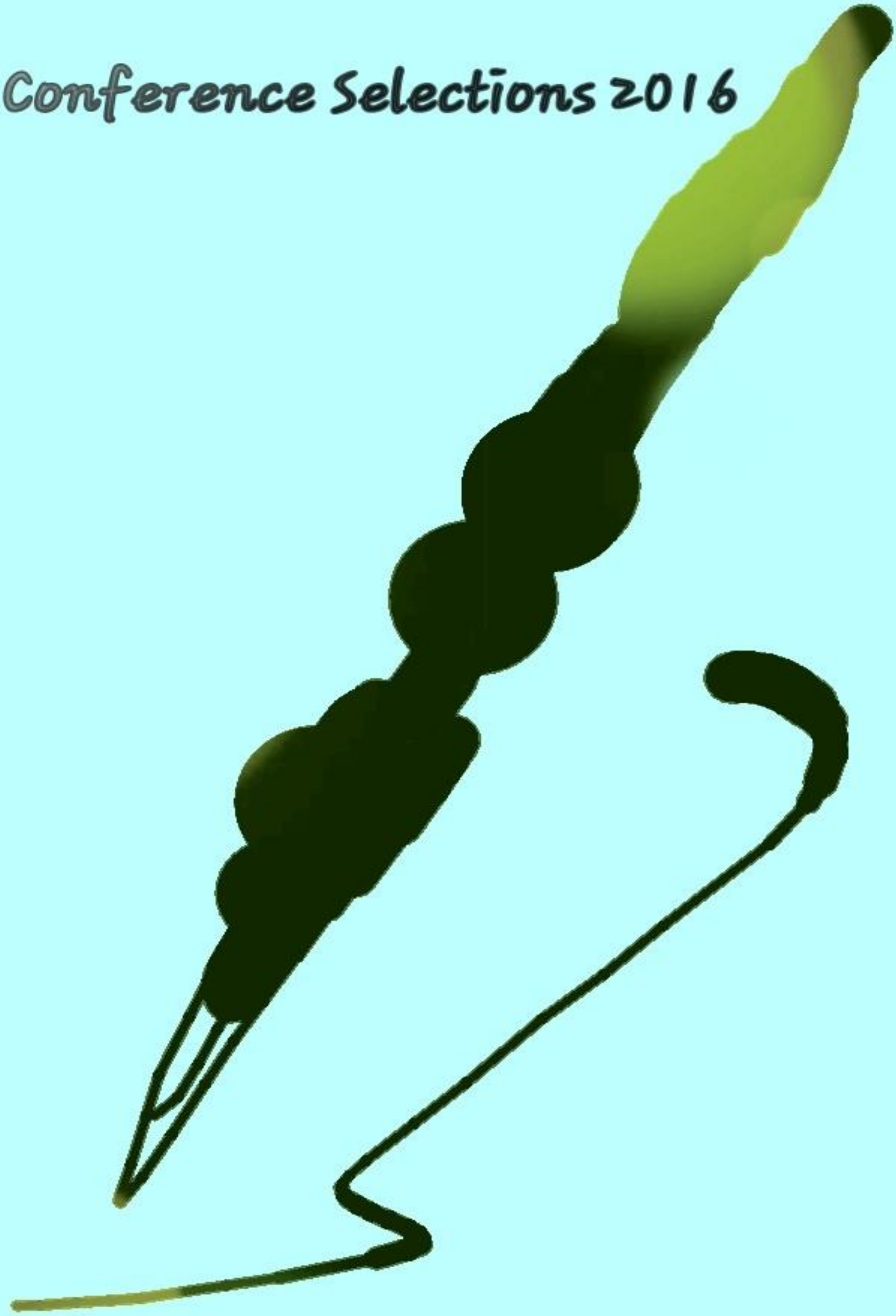
Munich Conference Selections 2016



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Edited by the IATEFL BESIG Editorial Team

Roy Bicknell
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Chapter one: From the Editor-in-chief

1.1 Weaving the fabric of Business English – *Roy Bicknell*

Editor-in-chief IATEFL BESIG Editorial Team, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

We are delighted to present for all our readers *Munich Conference Selections* or *Munich CS*, which is the fifth edition in our ongoing digital series. As readers you now have the opportunity to explore areas or approaches that you may not have previously considered or may now want to investigate further. We can see *Munich CS* as a 'report from the field' which informs us how fellow professionals view our practice, thereby enabling us to readjust our perspective on Business English or reassess didactical principles we've been adopting in the classroom and elsewhere.

The warp and the woof

Business English is so wide-ranging these days that we could say that the use of English as a lingua franca in teaching business communication not only reflects how multi-faceted and globalised the business world is, but also that this very diversity does not allow for a single common denominator which defines all that our practice entails. What we teach and what our students learn are part of a fabric that grows and reveals as it unfolds; and this new annual conference selection holds within its pages new strands or threads to be woven into the fabric of Business English. The summaries in Munich CS are like the warp on a loom. They form the underlying structure through which we navigate the woof, weaving in and out to complete a new fabric: our reading, which is informed by new insights or connections in how we see our practice. In that sense, reading this new edition is a highly individual experience as we pick up threads to identify patterns or make unforeseen connections; yet however personal and seemingly random our choice, we are collectively creating new fabric which we bring back to the classroom and other areas of our practice.

Some weaves

As suggested, any reading we do is necessarily idiosyncratic by nature, but there are weaves that might be worth exploring as readers. Here are some of them. The in-conversation piece with our plenary speaker, Robert Gibson, is a good example in that it reflects different threads in his talk on megatrends in the business world and the future of Business English in our increasingly digitised and mediatised world. He talks of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) informing our global culture and the changing perception of intercultural communication in that respect. A companion to this can be found in Rudi Camerer and Judith Mader who critique current perceptions of intercultural communication through their investigation of how culture-specific language is transferred to other languages. A less expansive but no less interesting and informative perspective on intercultural communication is provided by Marina Wikman with her report on student research, which included visits to asylum-seeker centres in Finland. The dividing line between business and intercultural communication is not a strict one. What to think for example of Olena Korol writing on active listening and how this benefits both learner and teacher? Her mantra of listen with the heart, listen with the ears, listen with the eyes is very much one with current intercultural approaches.

Another weave is suggested by the summaries that focus on different aspects of improvement or development and which in part address the relation of teacher and students to the workplace. We have an interesting review by Suzanne Vetter-M'Caw of a project linking progress in English proficiency to bonus schemes. Even though the client saw the project as a one-off, it is a refreshingly different take on motivating workplace students. Almost at the other end of this particular thread, we have Oksana Hera discuss locally inspired activities to engage her students. One striking example is Everyday Jam, which has students explore how the way they commute impacts their workday experience – a fun and innovative take on the pulling-down-the-classroom-walls theme.

Just as there is no strict dividing line between business and intercultural communication, the same could be said of ESP: although the focus is more specific, many of the didactical concerns discussed in ESP are shared by their Business English counterparts. Rachel Appleby points out in her summary the need for a different approach to teaching one-to one: in her view, teachers need to be selective in their methodology but also have the language ‘lift’ off the page to add extra dynamics. Suggestions like the latter show that ESP is much more than a nuts-and-bolts approach to ELT. John Allison is on similar terrain but his review is much broader. He discusses six principles that need to be considered in teaching ESP. There were a couple of eye-openers, such as the importance of listening and avoiding the use of document-heavy material.

Last weave

Last but not the least, there was a significant thread provided by MaWSIG, the special interest group on writing materials, who had their own session strand during the Munich event. Tania Pattison reviews the pre-conference seminar in which ELT authors such as Rachael Roberts and Karen Richardson demonstrated how to write excellent ELT materials. This introduction to materials writing was continued during the conference proper by ELT authors such as John Hughes, who interestingly focused on writing teachers’ notes, a much less explored domain of professional writing. His advice to not repeat an activity rubric but show how an activity could be managed in the classroom is simple but relevant to any novice writer of ELT materials. Jeremy Day presented in his summary the dilemmas of writing materials for legal and marketing English. What to think, for example, of legalese versus plain English? Jeremy Day would choose the latter, but also acknowledges that lawyers may need to flip styles, so it’s less straightforward than we think at first glance.

The above are just some weaves or threads that readers might want to explore. *Munich CS* has much for you to discover and hopefully enlighten you. So, start browsing and weaving. It has been a pleasure compiling and editing this edition. I would like to take this opportunity to thank fellow BET member Lynn Nikkanen for putting in her time and effort over the past months so that we have this new edition as we intended it to be: an engaging and informative read.

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Chapter two: The plenary

2.1 Into the next generation workplace: In conversation with Robert Gibson – *Robert Gibson, Roy Bicknell*

Robert Gibson, Business Spotlight
Roy Bicknell, Editor-in-chief IATEFL BESIG Editorial Team

Introduction
The first decades of this millennium have transformed the workplace. It's a very different working environment from the one we knew in the 1990s. What does this mean for all of us – teachers and students – who work in this multi-faceted and multi-cultural business world? It was therefore more than appropriate to have Robert Gibson as our plenary speaker, sponsored by *Business Spotlight* magazine. Robert Gibson is an acknowledged expert on intercultural communication. Currently, he leads an international team of experts at Siemens AG and is also adjunct professor at the University of Bologna Business School. Robert's brief was to explore with the Munich audience the next generation workplace and what this implies for our practice.

Robert divided his talk into three parts: the megatrends that are shaping the workplace; how that affects customers, content and delivery in teaching Business English and intercultural communication; and a final part in which some of the implications for Business English are briefly discussed. Robert identifies three megatrends that are transforming the workplace: demographic change; globalisation; and digitalisation. The latter would be a key theme in his talk but Robert wanted first to emphasise the radical difference of our new workplace by introducing the formula VUCA: volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity. VUCA is a military term which was originally used to describe the post-Cold War world but more recently used by Deloitte to define our rapidly evolving business climate. Robert used the VUCA formula to frame the first part of his talk and to explain how the megatrends create challenges for the next generation workplace. His anecdotes and jokes about his newly acquired German citizenship and the use of the quiet room at Siemens were not only entertaining but served to underline one of his themes: our professional world is not only changing rapidly; we also have to be flexible and our immediate response needs to be fit-for-purpose.

His new workplace and the requirement that he works 20% of the week from home are examples of the changes Robert's professional environment has undergone, and it's one that the Munich audience and its students would recognise too. I for one found it interesting that he broadened this view to consider the wider implications. One example was the demographic change, with the greying of the Western workforce and the emerging of new ones in the developing countries. Teaching will need to address these changes, just as the business world needs to meet the challenge of recruiting the workforce of the future. Robert stressed the importance of unconscious bias and how this is affecting our view of recruitment. This will need to change and he gave examples of how to redress the balance. His argument, which follows from this, is that intercultural awareness is key to an understanding of these issues.

The final part of his talk focussed on digitalisation and on how this also affects our teaching practice. A clear example of this is the Duolingo app, which is used by millions globally. Services like these are eroding our customer base at the lower levels in second language acquisition, while there is a growing demand for high-end language services with function-specific programmes which integrate soft and intercultural skills. In short, the middle ground in our market seems to be disappearing.

There was much more in Robert Gibson's plenary that was similarly thought-provoking. Later, I had the opportunity to talk with him about some of the issues that he had raised.

In conversation with Robert Gibson

Q: You mentioned in your talk that some companies had separated intercultural communication and language acquisition in their programmes but then reintegrated them in recent years. The implication is that this was in direct response to the changes and megatrends that are affecting the workplace. Could you elaborate on this?

Robert: It actually has more to do with the development of the language and intercultural training and the demands of clients for a more holistic approach. The boundaries between different types of training are not as sharp as they once were. The categories which might interest us as professionals in the field are not of much interest to our customers; they are looking for solutions to problems. This does not mean that all trainers should offer all services. There is an overlap between language and intercultural training but intercultural competence goes beyond communication skills. My clients want to know how to communicate but also how to understand other things like how customers tick in India or what quality means in China.

Q: You also discussed the three-factor model (individual-culture-context), which would be relevant to any business environment. Why is this important?

Robert: For too long interculturalists have focussed on national cultural differences without fully taking into account all the other types of culture that can be important (like regional, professional, gender, age) and the importance of individual personality and the context in which you are working. Only by understanding the interplay between all of these factors can you hope to understand what is going on in any particular situation. In critical cases you will need to analyse the different stakeholders involved, taking into consideration the three factors to decide what the best strategy is.

Q: You referred to unconscious bias and its importance as a factor. An underlying theme was the need to embrace difference in the recruitment of the future workforce. Many companies are working on changing hearts and minds in this respect but there is resistance, also among educators. Could you tell us more about how you see the role of intercultural training in this? Would Business English, for example, require a radical rethink of its practice?

Robert: Obviously, no one likes to be told that they are biased towards a particular group, but the fact is that we all have biases of one type or another. On the individual level the point is to become aware of your personal biases; on an organisational level it is a question of putting procedures in place to mitigate the effects of bias (e.g. accepting job applications without photos). For me, unconscious bias training includes doing what good intercultural trainers have always done, which is increasing awareness of stereotypes. Business English trainers need to reflect on their biases when developing materials and interacting with students with different cultural backgrounds.

Q: One of the signs of our digitalised world is how it is also affecting the workplace and how it is organised, for example working from home. In your view a new workplace also requires a different mindset. I was thinking of the recent change in legislation which allows French workers the right to be disconnected. How do you see this?

Robert: I'm not sure whether we need legislation to do this but we have to accept, on the one hand, that for an increasingly large number of people the old distinctions between work and leisure no longer exist. On the other hand, we need to protect people's private sphere. I wouldn't classify posting an article on LinkedIn as work and may do it at home in the evening, but it may well have a payoff for my work. It is more important for employers and employees to appreciate how important it is for people to have a break from digital interactions.

Q: Recent years have seen a shift towards more online teaching. I was thinking in particular of the rise of smart schools, with little or no F2F teaching. Many educators believe that F2F teaching is still a core element in student learning. How do you see this, also in connection with intercultural training, which often requires an understanding of complex and sensitive contexts?

Robert: We need to be clear about which media are useful for which purpose. I like the analogy of getting medical treatment. For simple ailments it may be OK to go to the chemist, for some illnesses you will need to see a GP, but in some cases you will need to visit a specialist at the hospital. Websites can provide useful information about different cultures, videos can also address our emotions, but if you need help with leading an intercultural team in a complex business environment, you may need the help of an expert consultant.

Q: Towards the end of your talk you referred to a flipped version of VUCA. That would then be: velocity, unorthodoxy, collaboration, awesomeness. The latter of the four seems tongue-in-cheek but you may have been thinking of the new generation mindset too. Could you tell us more about how you see the flipped VUCA?

Robert: This came from the German futurist Gerd Leonhard. I just think that the VUCA world will require us to act in new ways and see that educators need to respond to the challenge of helping people to develop new skills.

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Chapter three: The Munich reviews

3.1 Munich Impressions – *Oksana Hera*

Freelance Business English Trainer, Lviv, Ukraine

The 29th IATEFL BESIG Conference in Munich was a major event in the world of Business English communication training. It celebrated the 30th anniversary of BESIG and the cooperation with IATEFL MaWSIG undoubtedly gave the event a competitive edge.

The conference location and the level of organisation exceeded expectations. The professional layout of the conference programme deserves a separate appraisal: a centre-spread overview of the sessions was a clear demonstration that every single detail had been thoroughly thought out for the convenience of the participants.

Even though it was not my first BESIG conference, it was a very special one: I had the enormous privilege of being one of the first-time presenters and taking part in a simulcast.

The event began with a series of pre-conference seminars that aptly reflected the current state of affairs in the industry and provided an opportunity to reflect on what lay ahead.

Mike Hogan, the moderator of *The future of business English training*, invited the speakers to share their views regarding in-company training, the skills trainers will need in the near future, what kind of English should be taught, and how to select and adapt materials that meet learners' needs. After James Schofield, Cornelia Kreis-Meyer, Chia Suan Chong, and Valentina Dodge had delivered their talks, all of the delegates had the opportunity to work in smaller groups, discuss the questions raised by the speakers, considering their local teaching context, and give feedback to the speakers, which added to a lively exchange of thoughts and ideas.

The MaWSIG pre-conference seminar *How to write excellent materials* was a highly practical session, where the leading experts demonstrated a whole range of material-writing skills that every teacher should feel confident about. Sue Kay presented practical samples of writing multiple-choice activities, Karen Richardson shared her experience of writing worksheets, Jeremy Day talked about creating digital materials, Rachael Roberts involved the delegates in analysing how to write quality writing materials, while Evan Frendo provided the fundamentals of practical design regarding corporate training materials.

The interactive Saturday plenary by Robert Gibson covered a myriad of topical questions for every ELT practitioner. Having extensive experience of teaching and training both English and intercultural communication in a variety of educational and business settings, in his cheerful manner Robert focused on globalisation and digitalisation as the megatrends that cannot be underestimated when approaching the context of learners' needs for the workplace and beyond. At the very start of the talk, he introduced the idea of VUCA, claiming that volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity are key characteristics of the modern world that have to be accounted for when building a functional training model both for individual learners and corporate teams. Throughout his presentation, Robert stressed the interrelation between language and intercultural training, which have to go hand in hand with the dynamic changes we are facing today. One of the key highlights for me as a participant was the simple piece of advice to flip VUCA to velocity, unorthodox, collaboration and awesomeness, highlighting the importance of helping ourselves and our learners to stay open-minded and receptive.

The main part of the conference programme unfolded at such a pace that it was difficult to choose which of the sessions to join. Presenters shared their extensive first-hand experience of teaching English and communication skills to learners from all walks of life.

Kirsten Waechter invited participants to her workshop to show that teaching finance in accounting classes can be enjoyable for everyone involved. She proved how easy it was to tailor activities using SmartArt, TED Talks, and by exploiting her beloved topic of football.

In her highly informative talk, Sylvie Donna touched on the topic of students' identity when they speak English and how this identity change can heavily influence the efficiency and success of the communicator in the business world. James Chamberlain encouraged the attendees to reflect on how we as trainers have to take into account not only the classroom environment but also the values and principles of our customers that inevitably affect the business relationship in the long run.

Evan Frendo's talk highlighted some of the key findings in the area of Business English as a lingua franca. It was informative and inspiring for practitioners to see which way to go to help learners master the skills and language they really need.

The last day of the conference was packed with another set of high-quality talks. Mercedes Viola reflected on the changes we are experiencing in life and business, and the respective role of English in this paradigm. Her futuristic view of the topic combined well with a series of practical collaborative activities offered to participants. Emphasising the nature of any project as a human interaction exercise, Bob Dignen shared practical solutions for leading international projects and the areas communication trainers have to upskill to provide adequate assistance to customers in this field. This linked smoothly to the presentation by Helen Strong where she presented a matrix for developing the skills learners need to perform in the international business arena.

To sum up, Munich was a remarkable event that provided a platform for a fruitful exchange of ideas, best practices, and cutting-edge technology solutions for language and communication skills trainers. The tenor of this wide discussion was the quest for optimal and comprehensive solutions to aid our learners in reaching their most ambitious goals. And it was a great privilege to attend the event and be a part of this professional community.

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3.2 Munich online – *Elena Matveeva*

Director of studies, Yaroslavl, Russian Federation

I attended my first BESIG conference in Bonn in 2014. It was an unforgettable experience as I not only had the chance to give a talk to the international audience, but also met wonderful BESIG teachers face-to-face, and felt the spirit of creativity and warmth that they embodied. I will always be grateful to the BESIG team for their support and encouragement. As it wasn't possible for me to attend the conference in person in Munich in 2016, but my desire to once again experience the special atmosphere of a BESIG conference was great, I followed the event online.

International communication

In her talk about international communication, Chia Suan Chong shared some secrets on how to help learners communicate internationally. In our globalized world, such skills are vitally important. When doing business, professionals face numerous challenges connected with cultural differences. Businesspeople have certain expectations that they tend to apply to new business situations, which might not necessarily work as expected. As Chia pointed out, "We are under the illusion that people think like us and when they don't, it comes as a shock to us". In this interactive workshop, the presenter communicated with the audience, giving them time to think about the questions she asked before adding her own ideas. It was interesting to note that the answers given by the audience in Munich were more or less homogeneous, while the answers suggested by the online audience were very diverse. This proves the idea that cultural differences matter, and the way in which people from various cultures think might cause misunderstandings. Chia presented case studies which clearly showed the problem of miscommunication in the international environment. The audience became absorbed in trying to guess why things had gone wrong and how the situation could have been avoided. The idea that was promoted in the workshop is that when doing business internationally, people need to be attentive listeners, learn empathy, get to know the foreign culture in question, and try to avoid making assumptions based on what is acceptable in their own culture.

Low-level business English learners

The topic of Mike Hogan's talk was vital for me personally, as the majority of Business English learners in Russia are at a low level. This always poses a challenge, which Mike addressed in his talk by sharing a 10-

step path to follow that will lead to success in this situation. He started by defining what success represents for low-level Business English learners, with the main factors in this context undoubtedly being confidence-building, fast progress, and becoming functional quickly. Business people who need English at work have to acquire knowledge that they can apply right away.

To this end, confidence-building is key. Even at the early stages, it is possible to show learners that they are progressing by pointing out loan words and cognates, and generally finding similarities between English and their mother tongue. However contradictory the second idea might sound, it makes perfect sense. Learners need to progress fast enough to become functional, but slow enough not to feel stressed and intimidated. Mike suggested incorporating regular checkpoints into lessons, and paying attention to what the learners can apply in their particular work context Practising the language should be outcome-driven, as the teacher's task is to equip learners with the necessary vocabulary and skills that can be applied in real-life situations.

Mike pointed out that it is appropriate to look at cultural issues and differences early on in a course because in the globalized world learners will have to apply this kind of knowledge right away. The material used in classes should be engaging and motivating. Media-rich content, infographics, and blended learning were suggested as good ways of achieving this. Autonomous learning was another point that Mike brought up, as acquiring knowledge outside the classroom, and grasping every opportunity to learn shouldn't be underestimated. When teaching grammar, Mike suggested using an experiential approach whereby learners experiment first to see how things work, and then to analyse and draw conclusions. Nothing can be achieved without practice. Learners should be given every opportunity to speak in class and to practise what they have learned, as these are the surest routes to building confidence and achieving success. Personalized content is always more engaging and motivating.

To conclude, Mike reminded all of those in attendance that the main idea is to keep climbing and to never stop improving, as only then will success ensue. This talk was one of my favourites as it was fast-paced, very useful and full of practical ideas. The presenter captured the audience's attention from start to finish.

Business model teacher

Another amazing talk I was lucky to listen to was that by Justine Arena, who was giving recommendations on applying a business approach to freelance teaching. The presentation started in an unusual way by inviting the audience to meditate and then asking if they felt different afterwards. Meditation transforms thinking in positive ways, according to Justine. After the relaxing beginning, the first question was asked: What business skills can we bring to our teaching? Among the ideas offered by the audience were better networking skills, time management, and having more time to socialize in the environment of our potential clients. What I personally found useful in this workshop is the idea that we need to reflect on our practices in order to realize where and how we can develop. Justine invited the audience to reflect on the following questions:

1) Who are you? (think about your traits, tastes and abilities)
2) What do you know? (describe your education, training, expertise and experience)
3) Who do you know? (focus on your social and professional networks)
4) In which direction do you want to go? (this is a very important question to ask as sometimes we tend to go on autopilot)
5) What is your trademark? For Justine, her trademark was being a connector, and judging by the answers given by the audience, I noticed that many teachers (including myself) consider themselves to be motivators.

It is always beneficial to plan ahead where possible, but fast-paced, contemporary business life seldom allows time for that. In this connection, Justine mentioned effectuation as an organic way of doing business. The idea is to start and then to learn in the process as you go along, even though this can be quite challenging.

While the first part of the talk was rather general, the second part focused more on the questions that freelance teachers have to ask themselves. Reflection is important for teachers because when we become more aware of the situation, we become more confident, we know where we are and then we know where we are going. Justine shared several interesting case studies, business strategies and real-life examples which emphasized the points she made. Even though the workshop was meant for freelancers (as stated in the title) I found it applicable to any teacher. The five questions that Justine posed form a practical framework for reflection and can be useful in teacher training sessions.

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Chapter four: MaWSIG

4.1 The MaWSIG PCS: How to write excellent materials – *Tania Pattison*

Deputy Publications Coordinator, IATEFL MaWSIG

In this pre-conference seminar, experienced ELT authors demonstrated a range of material writing skills based on books on writing ELT materials published by English Teacher2Writer.

Rachael Roberts admitted that writing activities are not always seen as the 'sexiest' part of a lesson, but she pointed out that if we don't work on writing skills in class, we are failing to help our students with an absolutely key skill. Students won't learn to write just by writing. As teachers, and as materials writers, we need to break down the skill into subskills, such as structuring a paragraph, or using appropriate vocabulary or register, and carefully scaffold the activities to help them develop those skills. In her session, she demonstrated activities from her book *How to Write Writing Activities*, which focused on each of these subskills and demonstrated practical ways to develop them.

Jeremy Day argued that nowadays all ELT materials need to work on a digital platform as well as in print. When writing materials, your rubrics must be crystal clear (because there might be no teacher to explain them) and your answer keys must be tight (so a computer can check them). You should avoid turning every exercise into a test: remember that your main role is to teach. You also need to think about user experience (UX): creating materials that are a pleasure to use. For example, clicking and dragging on a touchscreen are more satisfying than typing. Get learners interacting with your content as much as possible, not just reading or watching it. And remember that everything needs to fit on a smartphone screen, so avoid exercises where learners drag and scroll at the same time. Finally, remember to stay focused on the content itself: excellent digital materials still need to be excellent materials.

Karen Richardson pointed out that these days worksheets are no longer the 'poor country cousins' of coursebooks; they are holding their own in the classroom – whether they are publisher-commissioned or a teacher's own work. As worksheets are often stand-alone materials, their tasks need instructions that are clear and concise. In this short workshop Karen looked at real examples of confusing rubrics and talked about how we could tweak, change, reorder or rewrite these so that worksheets are user-friendly for both students and teacher.

Sue Kay's talk focused on multiple-choice activities. As Sue said, a couple of years ago, she wouldn't have thought there would be that much to say about multiple-choice activities, but that was before she had to write one. Sue learned the hard way, by trial and error – especially error – that there's plenty you can get wrong with multiple-choice items. In this session, she presented practical tips for getting them right, based on useful step-by-step instructions and advice in *How to Write Reading and Listening Activities* by Caroline Krantz, and *How to Write Exam Preparation Materials* by Roy Norris.

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4.2 Writing Business English teacher resources – *John Hughes*

ELT author and teacher trainer, UK.

When talking about Business English materials, we typically think of classroom materials for students. But a large proportion of materials writing is often aimed at teachers in the form of answer keys, extra activities, printable/downloadable activities, and articles for teacher journals such as the BESIG newsletter. In my session at BESIG Munich I focused on tips and ideas for writing the kind of notes you might find in a teacher's book.

What follows are some key points and examples that I covered in the session.

Provide more rather than less

Whilst no one wants a set of teacher's notes that are too wordy, teachers – as a general rule – won't complain if the notes contain more ideas than they need. They will, however, complain if the teacher's notes don't include enough support. So when writing teacher's notes, it's worth assuming you are writing for a teacher with little experience. That way, your notes will be useful for a newly qualified teacher as well as more experienced teachers, who will automatically ignore what they don't need and jump to the part of the notes that are relevant to them.

Referencing and headings for navigating the material

Here's something else that sounds obvious but is important to remember: any page numbers and exercise numbers in the classroom material also need to appear in the teacher's notes. Detailed and clear cross-referencing is crucial. If the classroom materials have any headings and subheadings, the teacher's notes should include these. Furthermore, adding extra subheadings in bold, such as ***Audio script***, ***Answer key*** or ***Extension activity***, will help a teacher quickly find the section they need.

The tone and style of the writing

Views vary on how the teacher's notes should talk to the reader. Is your writing style going to be chatty, informal and friendly? Or do you want it to be direct and to the point? In my experience, newer teachers tend to appreciate a style of writing which feels like the author is leading them gently into the lesson, whereas more experienced teachers prefer a direct approach. Ideally, I'd suggest trying to strike a balance. For example, here is an extract from a set of teacher's notes explaining how to start the lesson using a unit called 'Energy' from a coursebook. The first exercise asks students to look at a picture and discuss two questions. Notice how the writer switches between an indirect style at the beginning (using modal verbs), to a more direct instructional style (using sequence words and imperatives).

> Write the title of the unit, 'Energy', on the board. You could put students in pairs and give them two minutes to brainstorm different types of energy, solar, oil, etc. Write their ideas on the board and help with any pronunciation problems. Next, ask students to turn to the picture on page 20 and look at the image of smoke rising from factories. Discuss the two questions about the picture as a class. If you have a large class, you could ask students to discuss the questions in small groups and then summarise their answers to the rest of the class afterwards. Allow about five minutes for this part of the lesson.

Don't repeat what's in the classroom materials

In general, avoid repeating what's on the page of the classroom material. So, when referring to an exercise in the classroom material, don't repeat the exercise rubric, but perhaps suggest different ways of managing the activity. For example, perhaps students could do the exercise in pairs, perhaps the teacher could set a time limit, or maybe students could just complete the exercise orally rather than writing the answers.

The what, the who, the how and the why

To sum up, teacher's notes need to set out what kind of lesson the material is for, who it's aimed at (the type of student), and how you can use it. Finally, you might want to include something in your notes on why the material takes a certain approach. In other words, it can be helpful for some teachers to provide the reason for doing something. The example below is from some teacher's notes that accompanied a questionnaire activity, designed for use on the first day of the course. The writer explains the reasons for doing it in the first part of the instructions.

> As it's the first day of your course, this questionnaire is designed to help students get to know each other and to build a sense of community in the class. Students need to realise that everyone has their own reasons for learning English and that they should support each other. Make a copy of the questionnaire for each student. Put the students in pairs; they take turns to interview each other and write down their partner's answers.

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4.3 How to write like a lawyer or a marketer – *Jeremy Day*

Author, Day ELT Ltd

My background in legal English and marketing English

In 2003, after years of creating courses for my own learners, I wrote my first course for a global audience, *English for Marketing Professionals* (International House). My second global course, *Advanced Legal English* (British Council, 2005), followed a few years later. Both projects involved months of exhausting work – I remember my colleagues scoffing at me for working so hard, night after night, for so little money. But they led directly to my breakthroughs in publishing, first as a Teacher's Book writer for *International Legal English* (Cambridge, 2006), then as Series Editor for the *Cambridge English for …* series (2008–2011). This experience taught me an important lesson: as writers, we certainly need lucky breaks, but we can increase our chances of getting lucky by sheer hard work.

Dilemmas in legal and marketing English

Anyone who teaches – or creates materials for – legal English immediately becomes aware of a dilemma. On the one hand, lawyers expect to learn how to sound impressive to clients and write impenetrable texts in Legalese – the form of English that only lawyers understand. But what they actually need (at least according to their bosses and their clients) is to communicate in professional but clear client-friendly language – in other words, in Plain English. So should we teach them what they want or what they need? Well, probably a bit of both, including the crucial skill of flipping from one style to the other.

There's a similar dilemma in marketing English. We tend to think of marketing English in terms of copywriting – slogans, marketing communications, blogs, web copy, and so on. But in fact, marketers around the world typically outsource those jobs to native English speakers. What most non-native marketers really need English for is much more mundane: marketing plans, reports, emails, and so forth. So again, should we teach them the fun stuff or the useful stuff? And again the answer is: a bit of both.

Language analysis

Both my early courses were built around case studies: model dialogues and texts, followed by analysis and practice, leading to role-plays and situational writing. To create the case studies, I needed to identify rules and patterns from authentic texts. For example, I found that lawyers tend to write highly depersonalised texts: instead of writing, '*It's really important that you comply with these rules*', a lawyer might write '*Compliance with these procedures is of the utmost importance*'. Notice how the human subject and powerful verb (*… you comply …*) are replaced with an abstract subject and an almost meaningless verb (*Compliance … is …*). Other tricks that lawyers use to depersonalise their writing include non-finite verb forms (e.g. *Having examined your notes, …*), dummy subjects (e.g. *It is necessary … / There are several …*) and, of course, the passive voice.

Marketing copy, in contrast, typically reverses those processes, maximizing the use of human subjects and powerful verbs to create snappy sentences. But we can go beyond this process of personalisation, to what we might call hyper-personalisation. This involves playing with personal pronouns, so that it's not *we-the-company* selling something to *you-the-customer*. Instead, the customer is included as part of 'we'. So rather than saying, '*We can help you by solving your problem*', we might say, '*We all face the same challenges – let's work together to solve them.*'

Writing as part of a linear or non-linear process

At a deeper level, it's vital to understand the writers' underlying motivations and the hidden processes behind the texts. For example, writing a contract is a non-linear process: lawyers start with simple phrases (i.e. the main ideas) and gradually build up, step-by-step, to create their monstrous page-length sentences. To find the main ideas in an impenetrable contract, a good place to start is the commas. Look for pairs of enclosing commas, like the ones around this chunk, which signal that the information inside them is extra, probably added by the lawyer as an afterthought to the main idea. And look for list commas (e.g. a, b, c and d), which allow the lawyer to string lots of extra ideas after the main idea. Once you understand the process, the text itself becomes far more transparent.

Similarly, in marketing English, every fragment of copy on a website is carefully designed to lead the reader along the path towards becoming a paying customer. A blog post, for example, is basically a tool for attracting the reader in the first place (e.g. because it was carefully written to include some common search terms), and then funnelling the reader into the next stage on the path, ultimately leading to them opening their wallets. You can only analyse the text if you first understand its position on the path.

Of course, I've barely scratched the surface here in terms of language analysis – there's a wealth of amazing things to discover once you start exploring legal or marketing English more deeply. And even then, English-teacher analysis can only get you so far. For published ESP courses, the content must be written and checked by experienced experts in the relevant fields. But whether you're writing for your own learners or for a global market, understanding hidden patterns and processes like this can be incredibly useful and rewarding.

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Chapter five: Inside the classroom, outside the classroom

5.1 Six things you'd (maybe) forgotten you knew about teaching ESP – *John Allison*

Teacher, teacher trainer, author, France

The history of Business English teaching has seen a gradual movement from general to specific. In my first job teaching English for professional needs we had a single course that was considered to fit everybody's needs. In the early 1980s, the advent of the personal computer and software like Clozemaster and Choicemaster meant teachers could start adapting materials to specific needs. Nowadays, a demanding business environment forces us to offer a wide range of ESP courses; in my school we offer English for every profession from Accountants to Zookeepers (animal handlers in research laboratories, to be more precise).

In the old days, the sales team used to try to sell General English the first year, Business English the second year and ESP after that. Nowadays smaller budgets, shorter courses and clearer objectives require an integrated approach right from the start; professional buyers want to make sure their staff not only develop a full range of communication skills, but are also at ease with the terminology in their specialist field.

To start sharing the questions Ed Pegg, Jeremy Townend and I had been debating before writing *In Company 3.0's* five new ESP modules, attendees were invited to share their thoughts on their own teaching styles by considering six possible positions and their advantages and disadvantages. There was a general consensus that if making one's own materials is often desirable, using an ESP course book, when available, is usually a more realistic and efficient approach. It was pointed out that getting students to describe their job is useful but not enough on its own as ESP students need appropriate functions and skills, not just vocabulary; role playing typical scenarios was generally held to be very useful, but also involves extra work for the teacher if these activities are to be properly scaffolded.

The first of the six easily forgotten things about ESP concerns vocabulary. Attendees looked at a typical Logistics text about barcodes and agreed that although such texts contain obviously useful vocabulary, they are not actually very helpful if they only tell students what they already know. In-service learners already have a *passive* knowledge of much of the special lexis in their field; they don't need or want to be 'taught' that vocabulary, but they do need help in making it part of their active vocabulary. A key role of ESP materials is therefore to provide meaningful practice to help transfer specialized lexis to students' *active* vocabulary; we looked at samples from the new series to see how the materials try to integrate the practice of key vocabulary while building communicative skills.

We moved on to think about speaking and in particular the fact that talking *about* the job is not the same as talking *on* the job: ESP students are also BE students; they still need to work on communication skills, not just specific vocabulary. Once again, sample activities demonstrated how skills like telephoning, conducting meetings, presentations and negotiations can be integrated into an ESP course.

Point three was jargon; attendees considered what should be included in an ESP course. It was suggested that specific sectors and organizations have their own 'hyper-ESP' jargon that we need to cater for; this can be done by providing activities such as spidergrams, mind maps or extra spaces for students to include their own jargon.

The fourth principle to remember was the importance of listening skills, and the risk that tailor-made materials can become very document-heavy; listening activities based around authentic documents provide a convenient solution. Another useful component of any ESP course is anecdotes related on video by professionals in the particular sector.

Attendees were next asked to consider the questions of course length and pedagogical approach. There was general agreement that ESP courses tend to be short, between 20 and 30 hours, learners are pragmatic, and so a deductive, task-based or test-teach-test format often works best.

Finally, we considered the fact that within a particular sector, for example Finance or Supply Chain, different jobs present different needs and levels, and so ESP materials need to allow for this. Areas of finance like Forecasting and Budgeting are important for students working in Corporate Finance, whereas Mergers and Acquisitions and Compliance are a priority for those in Investment. Similarly, Procurement and Distribution strategies will resonate much more with students working in Supply Chain Management than with those in Logistics, who are more concerned with topics such as Scheduling delivery and Tracking shipments. Students in management functions like Supply Chain will also tend to have a higher B1/B2 level than those in more operational jobs in Logistics, who are likely to be at B1 or even A2.

In conclusion, attendees received a copy of either the Sales or the Supply Chain Module and were invited to evaluate how the six forgettable but key principles summarized below have been implemented in these components:

1. vocabulary is 'known', but needs activating
2. talking *about* vs talking *on* the job; ESP learners need a full range of communication skills
3. allow for 'hyper-ESP' jargon
4. listening is a high priority
5. short, deductive, task-based/test-teach-test format
6. needs and levels vary within sectors

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5.2 Balancing ESP concerns with one-to-one methodology – *Rachel Appleby*

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Many teachers have serious concerns about teaching English for Specific Purposes, and one-to-one ESP in particular. In my experience, this sort of teaching, albeit challenging at times, can be extremely rewarding: it is exciting and energizing, and often results in the teacher gaining new knowledge as well.

In this session, the emphasis was placed on ways of drawing on subject matter that teachers are not necessarily experts in, but may be able to relate to and use to good effect. A case-study approach was adopted, aimed at allaying fears and illustrating points of entry for managing a range of topics, levels, and student types.

This talk differed from two other ESP talks I attended at the BESIG conference, yet I felt all three complemented each other. While Ben Butler's focused on practical tips for helping the teacher 'at sea' in an ESP world, John Allison's reminded teachers of the skills they already have, and how these can be put to effective use.

Introduction to the session

The initial bridge analogy served to remind teachers that one-to-one teaching is two-way, with the student learning language for applying relevant vocabulary and knowledge, while the teacher simultaneously learns about the student's area of work, leading towards more focused and pertinent support.

The session opened by looking at some of the concerns teachers and students have, such as a teacher being uncertain about how to broach the student's specialist area of work, and the embarrassment a low-level student feels when struggling to communicate. The underlying issues imply the need to focus on the student's needs and motivation, and the teacher's credibility. Drawing on real examples, I demonstrated how to address these issues, leading to an increase in both teacher and student confidence.

Three case studies

Case 1 – Oil industry

While it is important to do some topic research prior to a course, this may not always be relevant: in one case, a high-level student kept a very tightly-closed door on staff personnel and work issues, making it a challenge to clarify needs. It was finally agreed to work on 'Chairing a meeting'. With a skills focus, any topic can be appropriate, and hence agreeing on a neutral topic, or one related to current affairs or the student's own interests, is perfectly acceptable. Adapting functions-based materials from Business English course books is also useful. While it can take longer to gain respect from a student who, additionally, does not appreciate the value of a teacher's expertise *per se,* and is reluctant to speak openly about industry-related topics, once common territory has been established, it is easier to define course input and plan ahead. In this scenario, both teacher and student needed to gain confidence, and to clarify and agree on goals together to determine suitable input.

Case 2 – Investment banking

At all levels, it is important to revisit the needs analysis regularly, and focus on both short- and long-term goals. This was especially relevant with a pre-intermediate investment banker who was familiar with the relevant vocabulary, but had little grammar to support it, and virtually no access to small talk. He lacked confidence, and felt awkward and de-motivated. In this case, finding the contexts in which the student needed to use English, the typical 'communicative events', was an important start. For his context, language for requesting and providing information and data, and working with a range of opportunities using different genres and media, provided invaluable practice: setting up a meeting by phone, following up on emails, running the meeting in person, and dealing with follow-up documentation. Obviously, in such a situation, the teacher will gain information about the client's area of expertise; this, in turn, can be used to provide more relevant support, increasing student motivation and interest.

Case 3 – Insurance

The third case involved an HR student with a good passive knowledge of formal topic vocabulary, but who struggled to express herself orally. In such a context, the teacher may be able to draw on their own experiences: in this case, the theft of a briefcase. Discussing this immediately revealed the student's difficulties in converting formal written insurance language into everyday spoken English. The classroom focus dealt with work on paraphrasing, synonyms and in-/formal language to translate the language and issues raised on a claim form (e.g. "If loss occasioned by Burglary and/or Housebreaking, state how entry to premises was obtained") into accessible oral English. Much of this was achieved in a game-like way using Post-its to match up, recycling activities, and so on. In addition to language improvement, the student's confidence increased considerably. Moreover, being able to relate directly to her line of work paved the way for other in-roads in later course input.

Conclusion: ESP concerns and one-to-one methodology

Overall, it is important to relate closely to the student's area of work, and to pinpoint the most salient situations they find themselves in. However, if this approach is denied, then investigation into the kinds of communication used by the student is key, leading to a focus on functional language / skills, and working within other topic areas, allowing the teacher to use his or her own teaching expertise to provide appropriate input and practice.

Furthermore, the same 'rules' of good teaching apply: in my experience, one-to-one teaching requires a variety of short, relevant and focused activity types, and language needs to be 'lifted' off the page to add extra dynamics and practice opportunities. Working in this way in a safe environment on language specific to student needs is crucial before real-life work use.

These are just a few of the colours in the one-to-one teacher's paint box, but they are crucial for engendering confidence in ESP students.

Response and feedback

Overall, I felt the audience appreciated this case-study approach. Participants were engaged, and contributed positively with their own ideas and experience.

As the number of one-to-one ESP students seems to be increasing, it would be advisable to remind ourselves of the methodological skills we have at our disposal, and how to use those to good effect in this very exciting area of teaching.

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5.3 Adapting training to the demands of the next generation workplace

- Kate Baade and Lynn Brincks
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What, if anything, do we need to do to adapt our training to the demands of the next generation workplace?

This was the main question we considered in this workshop. We did not set out to answer questions, however. Rather, our goal was to provide the participants with food for thought and to give them a starting tool to begin to address the approach they want to take in their own training environment. One really important step in this approach is to develop a very clear idea of what is happening in the wider world of Training and L&D. You may be familiar with some of the names and trends out there, but how deep is your understanding? And what steps are you actually taking in terms of adapting the training you are delivering?

Training a mix of generations

We started off with a short quiz on generations in the workplace to make sure we all knew what we were talking about. There are a lot of names used to describe the newer generations, but we agreed on these: The Silents (1925–1945), Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Gen Xers (1965–1976), Gen Yers (1977–1994), Gen Zers (1994–today).

In true EFL style, we then gave the participants a list of characteristics and asked them to complete the title with one of the generations. We stressed that these are generalizations and that there will always be exceptions. Some of these exceptions will invariably be culturally based.

We then discussed the challenges of having four (or perhaps even five) generations in the same training room. We asked participants to think about how they can cater to everyone's needs and whether they should even try. We then considered the obstacles in the way, including the following:

- Resistance from the participants regarding the traditional role of a trainer
- Problems with the speed of the training
- Intolerance from older participants regarding the amount of technology in the training room
- Frustration from younger participants when technology isn't present or is only used sparingly

- Your own feelings of insufficiency regarding utilizing all of the possible technology options available (and perhaps expected) today
- A disconnect between the value of traditional, accepted learning which is “right or wrong” and experimental, “learn as you go” methods
- Participants who feel unable to meet the demands being made of them linguistically, but also technologically
- Differences in opinions about the value of pure language versus language plus soft skills training sessions
- Differing opinions about the role of the training room (i.e. a place to receive information or a place to practice what has been introduced in another way)

Training Generation Y: connecting management research with training
This was the theory part. We asked the participants to look at a series of slides, which are based on a Ken Blanchard Companies study by Lily Guthrie:

How do Gen Yers view authority?

How do Gen Yers view technology?

How do Gen Yers view relationships?

How do Gen Yers view careers?

How do Gen Yers view management?

We gave them two minutes to look at each slide and then work with their neighbours to answer the question: What is the implication for training?

Following on from these discussions, we asked the participants to come up with some concrete advice for training Gen Yers. Here are some of the ideas mentioned:

- Allow students to provide feedback during the training session
- Let students lead the class
- Stand back and facilitate
- The need for speed: react quickly
- Create content that is 100% relevant
- Always have a plan B, a plan C, and maybe even a plan D
- Create, maintain and use mobile learning platforms
- Exploit social media in training
- Deliver concise training – break it down into bite-sized chunks

The mini-audit: identifying and assessing where you are with training trends for the future
We then moved on to explore what L&D managers will expect from us in the future. The way we’re training now may work well for the moment, but will it continue to work well if we don’t move with the generation shift and the latest training trends?

We closed the session by giving the participants a simple mini-audit tool to assess where they are now in terms of facing new training trends, where they want to be, and what steps they need to take to get there. By keeping abreast of what is going on in L&D and the training industry as a whole, we can stay ahead of the game and show the flexibility and adaptability that they are seeking.

	Where you are now	**Where you want to be**	**What steps you need to take now**

70-20-10			
Mobile learning			
Blended learning			
Learning journeys			
Global reach			
Social learning			

We didn't expect the participants to be 100% familiar with all of these terms. These were all items that we had heard L&D managers mention in the past few months – and realizing that we'd need to do some work now and in the future, we designed this very simple tool. Looking at the list, it's clear that we need to actively learn about and integrate at least some of what our customers are looking for. Not only is it positive if we can sound knowledgeable about what is happening in our industry, but we learn and develop by adapting and implementing new strategies and approaches. The choice is individual, however, and we had some discussion about how much one would want to invest in adapting to these changes. It seems that many people are uncertain about the terms presented in the audit and would like clear definitions. This was exactly the challenge we wanted to highlight with the presentation.

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5.4 The imagined classroom – *Roy Bicknell*

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Today's workplace is in some respects a radically different one. An even greater flexibility of response and alertness are required than professionals would have experienced in the 1990s, and we have to prepare our students to meet the challenges the new workplace throws up. This entails a shift in learning needs which I think could best be addressed through the lens of an imagined classroom.

I proposed to the audience that we do this from a dual perspective, one in which we use the idea of affordance to explore different approaches in learning the productive skills of speaking and writing, and the other in which we reimagine classroom activities that address issues which hinge on key elements of group dynamics, namely lesson planning and feedback.

First, I introduced the concept of affordance which was popularised by Leo van Lier and later by educators such as Scott Thornbury. Basically, as van Lier sees it, affordance is about the multitude of factors that influence the learning environment and accordingly impact the learners themselves. Their own abilities and motivation are also indicative of the 'learning fit'. Van Lier suggested that the affordances will also depend on how learners interact during learning. After demonstrating a simple example of affordance, I asked the audience to discuss and reflect on the concept, and the implications using an affordance-based approach would have for student learning and the design of classroom activities.

Affordance in circles

To explore further how affordance in learning can be created, I revisited a key activity that I had created for my students a few years ago. This activity has a strong visual element. Small groups are given a set of concentric circles which I often draw *live* in class. The audience in Munich was small enough to re-enact this. As I would do with my own students, I had audience members gather around a table while I drew the circles on a flipchart sheet. The students are only given a few minutes to prioritise, using the different circles as they place key terms on a pre-set topic. After some initial hesitation, audience members started placing terms relating to the chosen topic (classroom learning) and the concept underlying the concentric activities was then clearer to them.

I then discussed how the activity was further developed: the students are divided into sub-groups to form their own concentric circles, after which they are brought together again to debate what they have prioritised. The key purpose of this activity is to stimulate collaboration and it is in itself a demonstration of what affordance in learning entails. One of the key points that came up in the ensuing discussion was how easily this kind of activity draws students into collaborative learning. Another point that emerged was the potential this activity has for making students more aware of group dynamics, as well as providing teachers with an opportunity to observe students working at peer level on their learning. It also became clear how this could be extended to integrate speaking and writing skills development in a single activity.

Flexible lesson plans

The thread here was the need for more flexibility in lesson planning. In this I share Jack C. Richards' view that the lesson plan is not a rigid structure, but is more of a roadmap and resource that can be 'consulted' but also deviated from as the lesson unfolds. To make the audience more aware of this I adopted a two-step approach. First I had them discuss some standard parameters that often surface when considering lesson plans. Key ones are the type of instruction and the 'fit-for-purposeness' of the classroom activity as such. But I asked them to also consider other parameters such as the pacing of the activity and making transitions as these in my view often drop below the teacher's radar. Once we had done this, I set them a pressure-cooker task in which they had to build on this. This was done quickly by setting up a new classroom activity using new parameters.

I demonstrated the new parameters using a digital spinning wheel. Its playfulness had a dual purpose: to loosen their preconception of what lesson planning is about and to force them to step out and consider possibilities they might not think of otherwise. The ensuing discussion was lively and fruitful, and some audience members were surprised at the speed at which new and meaningful activities could be generated in this way.

Into the feedback

Feedback is such a key feature of group dynamics but at times I've felt that its potential has been underestimated. It is too often seen as an *effect* of teacher-student interaction and not enough as an actual driver for collaborative learning. With this in mind, I discussed with the audience three types of feedback: immediate, delayed and post-activity. The key idea here was to discuss how these types of feedback are integral to student development in second language acquisition. How we give but also handle feedback helps shape and support student learning. Some found this different, more driver-oriented approach to classroom feedback an eye-opener.

To build on this new perspective, I then introduced an activity called Show of Boards. Mini-whiteboards are distributed among the students to trigger written responses which punctuate group discussion of a pre-set topic. The visualisation of the group conversation through another medium allows for a levelling of the difference in ability which we often see in group interaction. It also encouraged peer feedback. The multi-medial approach is yet another example of how affordance can be created or stimulated in a learning activity.

There was much more that we discussed in the intimate setting we had managed to create with the Munich audience. One thing was clear at the end: when we reimagine the classroom, there are many perspectives that can be adopted, but using group dynamics as a lens certainly provides a fruitful and productive starting point.

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5.5 What *else* can Business English trainers do to support their clients?

– Ute Franzen-Waschke
Business English & Culture, Holle, Germany

Introduction and background of my talk

In 2003 I founded my own company: Business English & Culture. The focus has since then been on supporting people in improving their language and communication skills in English. Over the years the requirements in the corporate classroom have changed and this change encouraged me to aim at a degree in Coaching. In 2012 I attended a course in London and did my postgraduate certificate in Personal and Business Coaching with the University of Chester. The interrelation between language and communication skills training and coaching, however, was so intriguing that I decided to take it further and I enrolled at the University of Chester to earn my MA in Coaching and International Business Communication. My first talk at the BESIG conference in Munich – I have been a regular delegate since 2003 – was about the findings of my small-scale research study and its implications for the Business English classroom.

I started my talk with how past contributions from BESIG presenters have influenced my path, along with some observations and a timeline, namely that:

- in 2003 all of my courses were standard language training courses,
- in 2005 I began to roll out corporate and more job-specific programmes, and
- in 2011 a trend started to emerge; coaching elements were more in demand in the language classroom, which was an indicator for me that English as a language would become more of a tool than something that would have to be *taught*.

One-to-one clients in particular were looking for coaching and wanted to practice their English language skills and fluency at the same time. I was prepared and qualified to do the latter, but for coaching I felt I needed a specialized degree because coaching is very different from training. And that's how my journey began.

Research findings and implications for the Business English classroom

When doing research for my MA, 75% of my informants said that 'establishing good relationships' would be beneficial for communication and collaboration behaviour in multi-cultural teams. This is a typical topic for the Business English classroom, and so I asked my audience to discuss in small groups what their favourite activities were, if they wanted to practice 'Establishing Relationships' in the Business English classroom. Favourite activities that emerged from the groups were: 'Three Truths and One Lie'; 'Company Tours and Presentations', and 'Picture Share Activity'.

Other typical activities centred around topics such as: socializing, networking, small talk, and so forth, and I showed a traditional 'Find someone who...?' activity. However, if my language learners were invited to a team-coaching session and were asked to work on 'Establishing Relationships' in such a setting, different vocabulary would be required. To illustrate the difference, I handed out a coaching intervention called 'Ask 5 people' that I had modified for the language learning classroom. A description of this activity and another activity that I shared with my audience during the talk as well as a PDF of my slides can be found on my website**.**

Audience discussion and most important take-away from my talk
My audience was rather small and this allowed an active and intimate exchange. One participant said that she could not envision using the 'Ask 5 people' activity with her students, pointing out that they would not feel comfortable answering such questions at all. I was really grateful to her for making this comment, as she had hit the nail right on the head: these questions can go deep, and some students may indeed feel uncomfortable. I personally have not yet had adverse reactions from my students. However, if I could sense any discomfort among my students, I would try to make them feel more at ease by pointing out that in the language classroom we can be 'creative', and hence they would not necessarily have to be truthful about everything they said to each other. I would also try to put them at ease by reminding them that this activity is about 'vocabulary building' and not 'personal disclosure'.

There was mutual understanding of what using a modified coaching intervention in the language learning classroom meant for the role of the Business English trainer, namely that we must be entirely clear about and aware of the space we are creating for our students in our role. It is a space where our students can learn new words and phrases, and practice their language skills and fluency. As a coach, the mission would be very different. Reflection at a deeper level is part of the coachee's personal growth and development journey, and for this to happen, a safe environment needs to be created and both parties must be totally aware of the journey they are about to embark on. The exchange with the audience was so invaluable and hence the core message naturally emerged, and led, without further ado from my side, to the conclusion that this is exactly where Business English trainers and coaches need to be able to draw the line and be aware of the role they were hired for.

When we are hired as Business English trainers, we should deliver the best product that Business English trainers can deliver: language and communication skills, vocabulary, grammar and maybe intercultural communication skills as well. We can use adapted coaching interventions in the Business English classroom if they serve the purpose of vocabulary building, grammar consolidation and fluency, for example.

When, however, we want to be hired as Coaches, we should first of all and most importantly be qualified as such. From the contracting point of view, it must be crystal clear for companies, for students and clients, as well as for us, in which capacity we will be working for and with them – as a Trainer or as a Coach.

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5.6 TechSpeak: Building needs-based skills for IT engineers – *Dolon Gupta*

ELT practitioner, India

I work for an organization that operates out of more than fifty countries and employs people from over one hundred. The question that often looms is, "How do they communicate?" In order to avoid a Tower of Babel situation, English has been chosen as the lingua franca of the organization.

There are native speakers, second language speakers as well as foreign language speakers. The variety of language requirements that exists is enormous but the focus of the workshop was on a single element that is common across organizations: business requirements and the need to align a language course to business outcomes.
No company engages in any training unless there is a business requirement for it. Moreover, there is a need to assess whether the expected business outcomes have been met by the end of the course. Hence, the course designer plays a critical role whereby material has to be curated or created so that the course complies with the expected business outcomes.

Despite the large number and variety of learning resources that exist, it is extremely rare to be able to put together a tailor-made course that fits the requirements exactly. Given the variety of needs that exist within a single organization, a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work either. Specific needs have to be met with customized courses that address those needs.

An extremely comprehensive CEFR scale has made it possible to map language abilities using a common set of parameters. This scale would not carry much weight in business, however, since terms like A1, B2 or C1 mean very little to an organization.

Business needs are expressed differently: preparing PowerPoint slides, delivering a presentation, and presenting at status meetings are terms that would be familiar in an organizational context.
The following is a four-step way to approach any training requirement so that the language course can be clearly aligned to business expectations.

1. Compile a list of business outcomes or tasks that the language course is expected to target.

2. Map the business outcomes onto a list of Can Do statements for language (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing – either all four, or selected skills).

3. Build an assessment that will relate to and validate the selected Can Do Statements.

4. Build a course or a series of modules that flow into the final assessment.

The focus of the workshop was on Step 2 above, and a case study was used to gain a hands-on feeling.
The case study:

> *XYZ, an IT multinational headquartered in India is growing its business in China. It acquires a Chinese IT major to gain access to the distribution network in China. 10,000 employees of Chinese origin move into the organization. Very few of them are fluent in English. There is also a general feeling of apprehension amongst the new employees because most of them are being expected to work in a language that they don't understand well.*
> *Regular emails, phone calls and meetings become an area of concern. They need to be up-skilled as soon as possible.*

A short mock exercise ensued where participants asked questions to dig deeper and identify specific business tasks that participants would be expected to learn to do by the end of the course. These included incisive questions regarding the learners, their habits, mode of delivery, budget, measurement parameters and more. These were all extremely pertinent questions that spanned all four steps rather than just Step 2. Considering the richness of the questions, it would have been wonderful to follow up each with detailed discussions had time allowed. Quite a few of these questions became one-on-one discussion points with some of the participants when the session was over.

The purpose of the mock exercise had been to identify the business task or rather capabilities that the learner would be expected to acquire, and this was duly accomplished. The participants were then expected to map Can Do Statements onto these capabilities.

A sample set of "Business capabilities" was kept at hand, in the interest of time (Column 1 of the screenshot below). This was further drilled down to "Business language capabilities" (Column 2 of the screenshot below). This column served as the bridge between "Business capability" and "Can Do Statement". A list of 40 Can Do Statements was provided altogether.

FILE TOOLS VIEW Can Do Statements_business_participants.docx [Read-Only] - Word

Can Do Statements

#	Business capability	Business language capability	Can Do Statement
1	Can make minimal small talk		
2	*Can listen in at a meeting*	*Can understand most points of a brief business meeting (face to face or over calls/VCon). Understands familiar facts of a conversation if spoken slowly.*	*4,5*
3	Can present at status meetings/calls		
4	Can write simple mails, MOMs or status reports		
5	Can participate in internal meetings, present a report or a ppt and also engage in Q & A based on the document.		

1. Can use basic sentence patterns and communicate with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae about themselves and other people, what they do, places, possessions etc.
2. Can produce brief everyday expressions in order to satisfy simple needs of a concrete type; personal details, daily routines, wants and needs, requests for information.
3. Can use the most frequently occurring connectors to link simple sentences in order to tell a story or describe something as a simple list of points.
4. Can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure etc., including short narratives.
5. Can generally understand clear, standard speech on familiar matters directed at him/her, provided he/she can ask for repetition or reformulation from time to time.
6. Can understand the main points of radio news bulletins and simpler recorded material about familiar subjects delivered relatively slowly and clearly.
7. Can identify the main point of TV news items reporting events, accidents etc. where the visual supports the commentary.
8. Can construct phrases on familiar topics with sufficient ease to handle short exchanges, despite very noticeable hesitation and false starts.
9. Can get simple information about travel, use public transport: buses, trains, and taxis, ask for and give directions, and buy tickets.
10. Has sufficient vocabulary to conduct routine, everyday transactions involving familiar situations and topics.
11. Can understand short, simple texts on familiar matters of a concrete type which consist of high frequency or job-related language.
12. Can understand regulations, for example safety, when expressed in simple language.

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Participants worked in groups for 10 minutes to identify Can Do Statements that would align with specific rows in the "Business Capability" column. Ten minutes was too short to comprehensively complete the worksheet, but it gave everyone enough time to understand the purpose of the exercise.

Answer for the sample sheet.

FILE TOOLS VIEW Can Do Statements_business.docx [Read-Only] - Word

Can Do Statements

#	Business capability	Business language capability	Can Do Statement
1	Can make minimal small talk	Can engage in rapport building and minimal small talk with customer or counterpart	31
2	Can listen in at a meeting	Can understand most points of a brief business meeting (face to face or over calls/VCon). Understands familiar facts of a conversation if spoken slowly.	4,5,
3	Can present at status meetings/calls	Can contribute to a meeting in a minimal way on known topics of discussions, like status update meetings where one has had the opportunity to prepare	8, 22, 23, 38,
4	Can write simple mails, MOMs or status reports	Can write short mails or reports on a known topic	11, 13, 14, 15, 18,24, 29,
5	Can participate in internal meetings, present a report or a ppt and also engage in Q & A based on the document.	Can participate in internal meetings, present a report or a ppt and also engage in Q & A based on the document. Would not be able to continue if discussions were too in-depth or detailed	19, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39

1. Can use basic sentence patterns and communicate with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae about themselves and other people, what they do, places, possessions etc.
2. Can produce brief everyday expressions in order to satisfy simple needs of a concrete type; personal details, daily routines, wants and needs, requests for information.
3. Can use the most frequently occurring connectors to link simple sentences in order to tell a story or describe something as a simple list of points.
4. Can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure etc., including short narratives.
5. Can generally understand clear, standard speech on familiar matters directed at him/her, provided he/she can ask for repetition or reformulation from time to time.
6. Can understand the main points of radio news bulletins and simpler recorded material about familiar subjects delivered relatively slowly and clearly.
7. Can identify the main point of TV news items reporting events, accidents etc. where the visual supports the commentary.

PAGE 1 OF 3

During the debriefing session, the need to link Can Do Statements to business tasks, and consequently business outcomes, was discussed. While as language trainers we need to understand language teaching terms and expressions, as Business English trainers, we also need to understand business terminology. A course needs to be conceived from a business perspective rather than an academic one.

Further interest was expressed in how the organization I work for handled the scale and implementation of language training, as well as questions regarding calculating ROI and the measurement of business outcomes. All in all, it was an enjoyable and engaging session for presenter and participants alike.

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5.7 Teaching English for a more fulfilling career – *Oksana Hera*

Freelance Business English trainer, Lviv, Ukraine

Being a first-time presenter at the BESIG Annual Conference and having my talk simulcast was both a huge honour and a responsibility. To tune into a collaborative and relaxed atmosphere, we started by sharing anecdotes about travelling to Munich, which were later used for one of the activities presented.

Teaching English to IT professionals, I often tackle various issues that are not directly related to the knowledge of language. Even though learners mostly claim they need to improve their speaking or listening skills, it is only in the course of training that they start to realise what other factors contribute to their success as an effective communicator in a foreign language. Stemming from this, I aimed to highlight the approaches and activities that help me make my learners feel more fulfilled in their workplace.

Needs analysis

The importance of this stage cannot be underestimated. When meeting with the learner for the first time, we do a standard placement test to gauge their passive knowledge and have a short conversation, which allows me to get a general idea about what the person can produce actively. However, this is but a first step, after which we have to find out the real reasons for our classes and the aims we need to set. From my previous experience, this may be difficult to achieve, as priorities change and learners' workloads and the types of tasks they are given are beyond their control.

The technique we use is called 'unwind the ball of yarn', where every class is yet another thread we pull to define our goals for the following classes. Mostly I apply this to one-to-one classes; hence, we can plan our studies in blocks of 4 or 5 lessons. This allows us to maintain the structure and stay flexible, reacting to unexpected circumstances.

Learners' challenges

The data I receive highlights the key problematic areas. Communicating in English, learners experience anxiety about not understanding their interlocutors, struggle to speak confidently under pressure and email effectively, and lack cultural awareness. Consequently, when designing materials and planning lessons, I have to ensure that every activity meets their immediate needs and has some added value, which is not necessarily visible to them right from the start. For all of the activities presented, the added value was the use of a topic suitable for small talk.

Let them hear

To present this activity, I played the recording of my colleague sharing her ideas about career switching in her city. Then I explained the rationale behind the speaking, vocabulary and listening parts of this task, for which I used the self-made recordings of my colleagues, for whom English is a foreign language. Using the recordings of learners talking about the topics related to a specific industry or area they live in provides my learners with a realistic role model of a speaker and boosts their confidence when communicating in real-world situations. In addition to this, learners practise understanding various accents, which is essential for communicative success.

Smart ping pong

This is an email-writing activity involving the exchange of a chain of messages, using small hand-held devices, and focusing on the recipient, not just on replying to particular information. In setting the task, you can use any general topic – such as what might surprise a foreigner in your city – and let your learners' imagination run wild, providing you with some material to give feedback on. As a result, after analysing these messages with the learners, we usually find that they rarely think about the readers of their emails, not to mention how clear their message is, which leaves a lot of room for improvement.

Everyday jam

This was the point at which I referred to the activity where we shared our experiences of travelling to Munich. This allowed me to introduce an exercise whereby, through a series of questions, we try to decide whether there is any connection between the mode of transport used to get to work, one's typical everyday behaviour, and one's workplace performance. Analysing the way people travel by bus in my city, learners tend to agree that very often we either practise teamwork skills or get off the bus feeling so stressed that we transfer this into our working context, which may negatively influence the level of trust and cooperation within the team.

The pyramid

Based on an interview dry-run, I demonstrated how I help my learners prepare for various interviews by understanding which aspects to focus on. Through an analysis of CEFR descriptors with the learner, we aim at raising their awareness of what they should do. We then draw a pyramid or a triangle and fill in the blocks with what we consider essential: these could be either linguistic elements, phrasal verbs or idioms, or pragmatic elements, including the appropriate use of intonation patterns and body language. Applying our 'pyramid' to the actual speaking activity shows that learners get a road map to reach their goal. Making a video recording of the learner speaking, together with a follow-up analysis, gives them invaluable insights into the process.

Outcome

During the brief question and answer session, the participants were interested to know whether the learners appreciated the activities tailored for them and expressed the idea that the use of locally specific topics was a good approach in making the training more relevant to their needs. These comments left me feeling inspired and I do hope that everyone who joined us in person and online picked up some practical takeaways for their classroom.

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5.8 Money and other matters that matter – *Patrick Mustu*

Freelance Business English author and trainer, Germany

"I've been offered 15 euros an hour at a language school. Is this reasonable?"

"Is it legal for a freelance teacher to be tied to one school and not be able to take on work elsewhere?"

"Part of the TEFL problem in Germany is schools taking any Tom, Dick or Harry on without any experience at all, thus degrading the good work being done by so-called TEFL professionals."

The above quotes from online forums reflect teachers' concerns outside the classroom. It goes without saying that teachers have ideals, love teaching, and want to help others communicate. They also have to deal with the environment around them – the market they operate in, the conditions they are confronted with, and the nitty-gritty they need to know. We worry and learn a lot about teaching methodology, materials development, blended learning, intercultural and other skills. Yet when you meet and talk to your peers, you very quickly realize that working conditions are a hot topic, too.

Germany is one of the largest ELT markets in Europe and attracts many teachers from around the world. It hosts major international chains, as well as numerous small and medium-sized schools. Since the vast majority of jobs are for freelancers, most people teach for several schools. These schools advertise a wide range of quality features, such as special teaching methods, dedicated course and quality management systems – all very confusing, and hard to verify. Access to teaching, on the other hand, is pretty straightforward. In most cases, being a native speaker will do. A teaching certificate, such as a CELTA or CertTESOL, is not as important as in other countries. The requirements most often mentioned are that you should be a native speaker, have a university degree, a teaching qualification and experience in teaching and in business. In reality, most schools are lax about this.

More than 60% of teachers work part-time, which in turn means they do not depend on it. They are often prepared to work for money you can barely live on. The freelance status involves substantial expenses for health and pension insurance, on top of business expenses and unpaid leave when sick or on holiday. It is very difficult to generate the number of hours you need to live a comfortable life when you depend entirely on schools. Thus, after gaining some experience and paying their dues, many try to get their own clients and/or create USPs, such as offering specific skills, ESP or intercultural training.

The awful truth

German ELTAs have conducted pay surveys in the past, but failed to get valid results. You cannot rely on 30 or 40 respondents and claim empirical validity. There are, however, reliable surveys on pay rates for freelance teachers in tertiary education, including language teachers, by the German government and the German teachers' union, with respondent figures between 500 and 1,700. These indicate an average rate for language teachers of €15.50 and €16.84 respectively (per 45 minutes as this is the standard teaching unit in Germany). The minimum wage for employed teachers, on the other hand, is €19.72. It is a bit tricky to translate this into an appropriate figure for freelancers as you have to take many aspects into account, such as shared social security contributions, paid holiday and sick leave. You will easily arrive at a figure of around €30, but you should bear in mind that a minimum wage refers to the bottom end, namely rookies with few or no qualifications and little experience.

Hands off my clients!

The contracts that language schools present to their teachers are usually not overly complex, but often include a non-solicitation clause. Such a clause is designed to prevent the teacher from 'stealing' the school's clients. A four-digit penalty is often attached. Many of the wordings used render these clauses unenforceable, either because they are not limited in scope, area and time, or because they ban the teacher from working for other schools without providing compensation. Moreover, the penalty is often unreasonable because it does not honour the value of the assignment. Penalty clauses are there to scare rather than enforce. A late cancellation clause, on the other hand, is common and makes sense. It makes sure you get paid when a class is cancelled less than 24 or 48 hours before it is supposed to take place. Illegal practices some language schools apply include:

- defining a post-contract period of more than two years during which you may not work for the school's clients;
- telling the teacher that he may not work for other schools, without providing compensation;
- excluding the right to quit prematurely, or notice periods for doing so that exceed one month;
- expecting you to arrange for another teacher to cover for you during sickness;
- comprehensive instructions on how to do your job;
- excessive penalties.

Being a freelancer means being independent. You can lose your job quickly, but you can also leave quickly. You do not have to observe unreasonable instructions and restrictions – and you do not have to provide a specific result, just your service.

A professional dilemma

When it comes to taxation, there is the obvious and the less obvious. You can obviously deduct any expenses related to your work, such as books, photocopies and travel. Many more items come with special requirements and restrictions, such as a home office, gifts and entertainment. Because of the intimidating technical language surrounding tax and other red-tape issues, many people hire professional accountants. Theoretically, all of them are qualified, but many are not familiar with special regulations for freelance teachers. Thus, caution should be exercised when choosing one.

At the end of the day

The German ELT market is big, both in size and in marketing. Teaching languages is rather poorly paid and leaves little room for bargaining. Networking is important to learn about the nitty-gritty and the good, the bad and the ugly.

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5.9 Empowering students to become better writers of English – *Bobbi Reimann*

Lecturer at the Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt, Eichstaett, Germany

Instructors of advanced English often find that while students believe they have a solid command of the English language, this is not always the case. In fact, as I pointed out during my talk, even advanced students lack the basic rules of written English, which may ultimately harm them in their future careers. Part of the reason why students are unable to accurately gauge their writing abilities is tied to the CEFR and its universal descriptors. While the CEFR provides a good starting point for assessment, it doesn't necessarily provide the best feedback since the descriptors are too general to clearly indicate which particular sub-skills students have mastered. This, however, is something that the Global Scale of English (GSE), developed by Pearson and tied to their *MyEnglishLab: Writing 4*, does address, duly helping students evaluate their own writing abilities more effectively, and thereby empowering them to become better writers of English.

My talk centred specifically on advanced writing classes at the Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt and how I incorporate *MyEnglishLab: Writing 4* into my teaching. This platform has proved to be a time-saving tool that's easy to use, and since it's tied into the GSE, it also makes it easier to assess students' writing sub-skills. To show how easy the platform is to use, I gave participants a tour of the *MyEnglishLab: Writing 4* dashboard and how to navigate it. I then provided concrete samples of my students' written work to show how I use the platform in my teaching. This was followed up by a brief discussion of the advantages of the GSE and why my students and I like using the platform.

The sample texts I presented were sourced from my everyday teaching practice; the exact cataloguing, however, was expressly done in preparation for this talk. In order to clearly assess my students' writing needs, I spent two semesters closely analysing their writing. I catalogued the number and types of mistakes students made (e.g. structure, format, determiners, tense/aspect, punctuation) in my advanced writing courses. The courses I analysed comprised two state exam preparation courses, designed specifically for students studying to become English teachers in Bavaria (Germany) and aimed at the C2 level as required by the Bavarian Ministry of Education: one C1- to C2-level writing course, in which a wide variety of text types is taught and attempted; and one B2+- to C1-level writing course, which focuses specifically on essay and summary writing. Surprisingly, what I felt were some of the students' biggest weaknesses – general structure (introduction with thesis statement, body, and conclusion), verb phrases, and negation, for instance – proved to be less problematic than other areas. Of the 53 texts I analysed, I found a total of 1,364 mistakes, over half of which (731) stemmed from the following areas: punctuation (29%), vocabulary (26%), determiners (16%), expression (11%), cohesion/coherence (9%), and other grammar points (8%). This assessment, although time-consuming, helped me provide my students with concrete feedback and tailored exercises on the *MyEnglishLab: Writing 4* platform to correct their mistakes, and it was these findings that we focused on in my talk when we looked at the sample texts.

Using the samples, I showed participants how to assign students individual tasks on the platform. For instance, if a student writes a poor business letter, I assign them exercises about how to write and structure the same; if a student has problems with punctuation specifically related to relative clauses, I assign them exercises on "Adjective Clauses". In this way, I'm better able to devote classroom time to solving problems multiple students have, relegating individual problems to homework. Not only does this save time for meaningful input and exercises, but it also helps my weaker students save face by not drawing attention to the basic mistakes they still make, an aspect highlighted repeatedly in their feedback. In addition, since most grammar exercises on the platform are automatically corrected, there is no additional time burden, and the navigation dashboard gives instructors quick feedback about which exercises have been completed by whom and how well they have done on the assigned exercises. If I see that different students have completed the same exercise at different points in the semester and the majority have had problems, I can re-introduce the topic at a point in the semester when it's meaningful for most students. This differentiation is the key to incorporating *MyEnglishLab: Writing 4* into my teaching: It makes additional practice for students relevant when they need it, and it doesn't take too much time to help students solve their individual problems.

The final minutes of my talk were spent highlighting the advantages of the platform and the GSE. Based on the analysis I conducted, it is apparent that even advanced students aren't at the level they should be. Yet the CEFR, with its broad descriptors, doesn't help students understand where their strengths and weaknesses really lie. The GSE, however, which has a fine-tuned scale from 10 to 90 (on a scale where B2+ is 67–75, C1 is 76–84, and C2 is 85–90), makes it easier for students to see where they stand. Statements like "Can write an effective and informative summary" (GSE level 67), "Can express themselves fluently in writing, adapting the level of formality to the context" (GSE level 77), and "Can use linguistically complex vocabulary and structures to enhance the impact in academic reports and essays" (GSE level 82) are far more valuable to students than the sweeping statements provided by the CEFR. Since the GSE is directly linked to *MyEnglishLab: Writing 4*, students and instructors can quickly see where students stand on writing sub-skills. By allowing for more learner autonomy and differentiation, I have been able to help my students become better writers of English. Although they still make mistakes, they can now more precisely gauge what needs working on and fix it autonomously, which will ultimately enhance their writing skills.

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5.10 Linking English progress to the company bonus scheme – *Suzanne Vetter-M'Caw*

Freelance, for telc gGmbH, Frankfurt, Germany

The objective of this workshop was to share data from a case study in which the presenter was involved and to encourage other trainers to try out something similar. The data illustrates that language training in a company can be of great benefit when the trainer works closely together with the personnel department, and that the company management may even be willing to try out new training models.

Introducing the case study company

Biogrund GmbH is a small, dynamic, young company located near Frankfurt am Main in Germany. The company develops and produces tailor-made film coating products for tablets and so on that are used in the pharmaceutical and nutritional industries. Apart from dealing with international customers and suppliers, there is also a subsidiary in America. The company offered employees English lessons but up until 2013 attendance was poor as lessons took place on a Friday afternoon when everyone else went home to start their weekend!

Language training is given priority

When the American subsidiary became reality, Biogrund decided to prioritise English and encourage staff to attend lessons during working time. Three groups catering for different English levels and for specific departments were set up on Monday morning. To ensure that staff were not away from their desks for too long, 60-minute lessons were scheduled. Most companies expect staff to go to language training outside working hours, so this was real commitment on the part of the company.

Annual staff review

During the annual staff review in November, Biogrund employees are given individual objectives to fulfil that have a direct influence on the bonus that is paid out. In November 2013, management discussed the level of English needed for their job with the participants of the English courses. In collaboration with the English trainer, the current English levels of the respective employees were defined using the CEFR and the target of reaching the next level was written into the bonus agreement. Employees needed to prove they had achieved the target by passing a Business English Language Test at the set level. The certificate would be from the internationally recognised exam provider telc language tests.

Analysis

After the project was completed, the nine participants were given a questionnaire with 15 questions, which they were asked to fill in anonymously. The results were then collected and analysed and it was these results that were presented and discussed in the workshop.

Realistic targets

A 60-minute lesson once a week does not give participants much input. Sales staff were often on business trips and, together with holiday, illness, and customer visits, it was often only possible to attend an average of two or three classes a month. Additionally, moving from, for example, a B2 level to a C1 level within a short year is a very challenging target. After six months, the management and the English trainer agreed that the time period should be extended by one year so that the exam date would be in autumn 2015. Everyone was happy with this decision and in the survey a clear majority of participants said that linking their English progress to their bonus payment did not cause additional stress.

Motivation

The English course participants were willing to invest time in studying English and supported each other in preparing for the exam. They were motivated to achieve the target level, not just extrinsically because this had been agreed with the company, but also intrinsically. Participants wanted to prove to themselves that they had improved their language skills and had something in black and white to show for their efforts. There was, however, one employee who noticeably attended class very irregularly, hardly did any homework and was not well prepared for the exam – probably because he felt his English was good enough to do the job and was therefore not willing to invest time and effort in this project. When the exam results arrived, it was not surprising that this one candidate was the only one who did not reach the target level.

The positive acceptance of the project can be seen in the results for the following three questions. Was this a good idea for your personal development? (Figure 1). Do you support the company's target of improving employees' English in this way (Figure 2). Would you say this project was successful? (Figure 3). The answer in all cases was a clear yes.

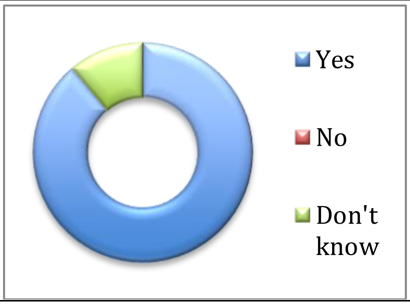

Figure 1

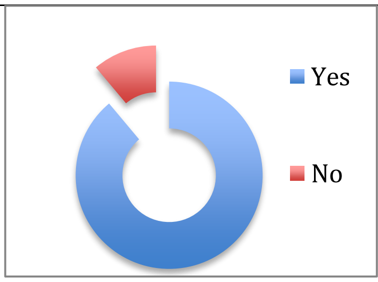

Figure 2

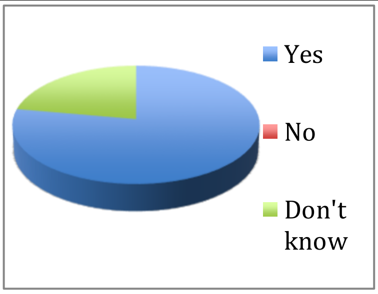

Figure 3

Afterwards

Although staff clearly supported the project, when asked if English progress and bonus payments should be linked again, the answer was clearly negative. Employees confirmed that it had been a good experience, but since they had now reached the required level, the company could also link the bonus to class attendance or other factors in future. Ideally, passing a higher-level language exam should be rewarded by an extra payment on top of the usual bonus.

Conclusion

Workshop participants discussed the problem that in-company courses often suffer from poor attendance when participants have too much work to do. A company must clearly show that learning English is a priority and practically encourage employees to reach their language targets – allowing staff to attend lessons during working hours, or linking English progress to the bonus payments are just two possibilities. It's up to us as trainers to come up with further innovative ideas.

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5.11 Finance can be fun – *Kirsten Waechter*

Freelance Business English and Communication Skills trainer, Bochum, Germany

In this workshop, we worked on how we can design more attractive exercises and tasks for a topic that is often seen as dry and boring: finance.

To start with, we discussed why finance is seen as such a boring topic: participants pointed out that people are obliged to do tasks that require a high level of concentration, diligence and an eye for detail, namely tasks that often involve routine jobs like completing spreadsheets. However, it is all about people, and such people (accountants or management students) might not be boring at all and may listen to Nirvana, be ardent football supporters and movie-goers, or fashion lovers in their private lives, which is why we as teachers need to find materials that are more inspiring and motivate our learners to improve their skills in financial English. We then set out to explore some of these issues.

The first item was pop music, and it seems that every participant had a favourite song about finance, ranging from ABBA and 10cc to Depeche Mode and the Beatles. However, as many participants taught financial English as part of university programmes and were looking for a more attractive way to make the subject appeal to their younger learners, we had to think about songs from the more recent history of pop music such as Eminem or Kings of Leon. Ideas included asking students to explore them for idioms and key vocabulary, and doing mini-presentations on them.

As teaching financial English involves a broad range of specialist vocabulary, we then worked on how to design more attractive vocabulary exercises using tools such as word clouds, SmartArt (in MS Word and PowerPoint) and crosswords. I demonstrated how easy it is to create SmartArt designs for word fields, word families and word partners that help learners categorise language in a visual manner, and how to create flow charts of accounting principles, for example. The impact of key words can best be demonstrated with word clouds, for which good free online resources are available, while crosswords can be created – again using easy-to-use online tools – to recycle vocabulary. Participants found the live demonstrations useful as many were unfamiliar with such tools.

The second half of the workshop focused on the usability of realia such as real-life case studies, newspaper articles, videos and movies. The key questions when selecting these are, of course: Is it relevant? And for what purpose can I use it?

First, we took a look at football – a topic that many of our learners relate to. Where football clubs are public companies (e.g. Manchester United), documents are available on the web such as their financial statements, which can be used for teaching assets and liabilities, for instance. In addition, every year Deloitte publishes its Money Football League, which compares the financial performance of Europe's top football clubs and provides material for presenting forecasts and performance to the management board, and so on.

Another useful resource includes financial scandals and reports, especially where companies and businesses are involved, which can capture our students' interest. Cases in point are the corporate tax payments (or non-payments) of US companies in Europe. Here, it was argued that articles the teacher wants to use in the classroom may have to be rewritten and scanned for words and phrases that students need to learn. Where teachers do not have time to do this, they can refer to two other resources, YouTube and TED. We looked at a couple of case studies from both.

YouTube provides an interesting selection of movie clips and (funny) teaching videos, even on topics such as internal auditing, which are great for playing 'Buzzword Bingo', for example. As videos are often provided with transcripts, teachers can reduce their own workload significantly (although one needs to check for accuracy as the transcript is generated automatically). Using a clip and script excerpt from the movie *Margin Call* about the financial crisis in 2008, the participants discussed possible uses of the excerpt, including sentence starters and linking words, giving instructions, saying numbers, learning idioms, and the use of tenses and conditionals, in addition to the financial jargon it contained. It was great to see intense group discussion and each of the six workshop groups coming up with a different idea.

Lastly, we had a look at the TED talk *The future of money* by Neha Narula, director of the Digital Currency Initiative at the MIT Media Lab, which was interesting for another reason: how teachers can improve their own knowledge of finance issues (money, currency and banking in this context). TED provides complete and immaculate transcripts, which teachers can use to check words and learn about issues while preparing their lessons. Classroom ideas put forward during the workshop included how to fix the value of something (i.e. how a currency functions) and what kind of payment will be used in the future (e.g. whether the use of cash would be phased out). Participants made some lively contributions and – as I gathered from follow-up emails – some started to use examples of the materials straight after the conference, making it a valuable session that paid dividends!

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5.12 Teaching English over the telephone – *Sherri Williams*

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In our technology-driven age, what is the place of teaching Business English over the telephone without the use of video? While it might be tempting to spice up our courses with lots of flashy apps and the latest tech trends, this can also be a distraction.

The strength of the telephone as a stand-alone tool for language learning is in its isolation of the spoken element. By stripping away the crutch of visual cues, we force participants to focus on the spoken content, leading to highly effective training in the right situations. In effect, this creates a training environment that may be even more challenging than many of the tasks the participant will need to perform in English in their work, such as discussions during face-to-face meetings or social interactions at a conference dinner, where visual cues are present. With the proper amount of encouragement and motivation from the trainer, continued success during the telephone sessions can also lead to a much greater level of confidence and ease in speaking.

When is telephone training appropriate?

It is important to consider the participant's language level when training over the telephone. It can often be too intense and challenging for beginners, who need more visual input and structure, and it is difficult to teach foundational grammar explicitly without the use of timelines and drawings. In my experience, I have found that telephone training is best suited to intermediate and advanced English learners (B1 and up) who want to focus on improving their speaking and listening skills.

The participants' goals are also crucial to the success of the training. Telephone training works well for tasks that can be trained with voice-only input, such as giving presentations, preparing for meetings, discussing issues, or making small talk. While it is possible to work on reading and writing over the phone by using an accompanying online document-sharing platform during the calls, the medium lends itself much more naturally to activities that focus on listening and speaking.

Trainers who teach over the phone must be prepared to multi-task, as you need to simultaneously listen, engage the participant in conversation, and take relevant feedback notes. Yet the advantage of not having to worry about making eye contact on video means you can devote more attention to listening and typing. You also need the same skills that are necessary for any successful one-to-one session: grading your language, active listening, keeping the conversation going, and customizing the course content to the participant's individual needs according to his/her industry, position and goals.

How are the sessions structured?

A telephone training session is structured in a similar way to an in-person one-to-one session. It is natural to start with a bit of small talk, which is good practice for my German participants, since phone conversations are typically much more to-the-point in Germany than in English-speaking countries. Any homework that was given during the last session is reviewed, then the main content of the session is discussed.

During the call, the trainer takes detailed notes on new vocabulary, pronunciation errors, and a list of mistakes along with the corrected version. This feedback is sent to the participant by email shortly after the end of the call and becomes a valuable record of the session content, which can be incorporated into future sessions for review or progress evaluation. Although feedback can also be given during in-person sessions, it is not often possible to include the same level of detail that can be included in telephone training feedback simply because it is awkward to have a conversation with someone who is constantly writing down or typing up everything you say. Without the visual distractions, a skilled telephone trainer can take extensive notes without sacrificing the flow of conversation.

Which materials work best?

I find the most effective materials are discussion topics centered around the participant's own work – introducing their work background, detailing their job responsibilities, explaining processes, or discussing problems. With the use of an online document sharing platform, participants' presentations can also be trained very effectively.

When participants don't have their own content to use or want to focus on discussing non-work-related topics, I often use TED talks as material for the sessions. I ask the participant to browse www.ted.com, choose a video they are interested in, email me the link, and we both watch it separately before the call. If a very busy participant does not have time to do any preparation at all before the next session, we can watch a short 10- to 15-minute TED talk during the beginning of the call, with our phones on mute. During the call, we discuss why the participant chose that talk, their opinion of the topic or speaker, and the meaning and usage of any new vocabulary. The video input suits the medium well, and very naturally leads to discussion and vocabulary-based language work.

Because of the lack of body language and eye contact, it can be tempting to use visual materials as something to focus on, however this can undermine the benefit of telephone training. Coursebooks in particular don't work well over the phone. They are awkward to use when you can't see what area of the page the participant is looking at, and not enough of the content is centered around speaking skills. Framework-style worksheets in which the participant supplies most of the content can work better if a more concrete structure is needed for the session.

Grammar is another tricky area to handle. If the participant has a grammar issue that needs clarification or an obvious repeated mistake, I send grammar worksheets for optional homework, but I don't usually teach grammar explicitly during the calls. I find that one of the great advantages of telephone training is that the participants learn grammar implicitly when the trainer reformulates/recasts what they have said with corrected grammar. For example, the participant says, "I have been to the cinema last week." The trainer replies, "You went to the cinema last week? So did I." Because of the vast amount of speaking and listening time during these calls, the participant gets much greater exposure to correct grammar than they otherwise would in a group course. Of course, the same is true for an in-person one-to-one session, but I believe the lack of visual content over the phone magnifies this effect because the participant has to concentrate harder to understand, and is therefore paying more attention to the trainer's model of correct grammar.

What are the benefits for the trainer?

Of course, one of the key benefits of telephone training for the trainer is flexibility. As a freelancer, I spent many unpaid travel hours a day crisscrossing Berlin going from company to company to try to fill my schedule with sufficient course hours. But now I supplement my in-company courses with telephone training that I can do from home. This helps to fill in gaps in my schedule, and lets me be flexible so I can book occasional workshops or intensive courses as well.

In addition, training over the phone has improved my soft skills, making me more effective in my in-person courses as well. The participants in one of my company courses were surprised when at the end of their in-class presentation I handed them a full page of feedback notes I had written spontaneously during their presentation while maintaining eye contact and asking questions. All that multi-tasking over the phone had made it a much easier task. I have also become better at keeping a conversation going by asking follow-up questions, a skill that I have found very useful in networking and social situations. And perhaps most beneficial to me personally is that I have had the opportunity to have long, in-depth conversations with a variety of professionals in all kinds of industries.

It has been fascinating to learn about jobs and issues I previously knew little about directly from experts working in these fields. And best of all, I have achieved one of my primary goals in moving to Germany – to learn about German culture first-hand from the people who live here, and share my unique view of the world with them in turn. Telephone training, without the distraction of technological bells and whistles, facilitates intense, direct and meaningful person-to-person communication, which is the heart of language training.

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Chapter six: Culture and communication

6.1 How can we make Blended Learning work even better? – *Kate Baade and Nathan Wale*

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Blended Learning (BL) is a term that has been around for a long time. The problem is that everyone, trainers, client decision-makers, and students alike, seem to have a different understanding of what it really means. In this workshop we set out to look at what blended learning really is (and what it isn't) and how you can add to what you are already doing by simplifying the planning process. Knowing that the audience would be mixed in terms of their experience with blended learning, we did not want to give in-depth descriptions of the theory. Instead we set out to work with a tool or two that the audience could use to help them plan their next blended learning course to make their BL programs even better. And perhaps most importantly, how to get the blend right for their students. Here are some of the questions we looked at.

Why is Blended Learning hot?

To warm us up, we asked why BL is hot (even though it's been around for so long). Some of the answers were that it engages younger audiences, it minimizes expensive face-to-face time, it suits different learning types, it's adjustable to budgets, and it offers flexibility.

What is/isn't Blended Learning?

There were different ideas on what constitutes blended learning. Basically, blended learning is not new. It's essentially what we did at school, with a few additions, and made to sound a little sexier. If you have any mixture of training modalities, for example face-to-face training and self-study, then you've got a blend. The question is really not whether you blend, but how you get the right blend for your students and their training needs.

Why use BL?

We looked at some of the advantages. These included clients wanting less travel time, young people expecting more engagement with different media, and how flexible and adaptable it is. It also increases variety and relevance, extends the learning journey and the classroom, gives students more of a feeling of ownership, and offers an opportunity to experiment with and use new media.

It's a proven fact that there is the least retention from training which involves sitting and listening. We showed a graph from the National Training Laboratory (World Bank) which summarizes the point well and shows us the need to blend our training approaches.

What modalities can we use?

With the aim of reminding the audience about how many tools they have at their fingertips, we elicited a list of modalities people can use, some of which are:

video, interactive quizzes, face-to-face training, coursework, virtual classrooms, video- and podcasts, projects, on-the-job learning, coaching, apps, websites, discussion forums

The main point here was that as soon as you start using more than one of these, you are in fact using a blended learning solution.

How do you decide which modality to use when?

After being faced with this question in practice so many times, we started using the CART model to help us make decisions on blending. The chart below shows what CART stands for and a few example questions to consider in each category. You can no doubt think of more to fit your training situation.

Content	What is your aim? What do you want students to be able to do? What tasks are involved?
Audience	Who is your audience? What can they do well? How independent are they? Will they be able to do the tasks without me?
Resources	How much time / money do we have? How much material do I need to develop? Is it feasible? What access do I have to client-based resources with potential for exploitation in training? How can we ensure students are completing self-learning activities?
Technology	Does everyone have access to e.g. the internet / a computer / a mobile phone? How familiar are my audience with technology? What will I need to do to make a technology-heavy modality work well with this group of students?

We closed the workshop by asking the participants to plan a blended learning journey for their participants using this tool to help them map out a learning journey.

Modality	**Before**	**During**	**After**

We took a typical Business English topic as an example and then asked the groups to decide on the best way of blending this topic in practice for a specific teaching situation. Each group presented back why they chose to use each modality at a certain point along the learning journey. It was good to see the differences, and it was great to see the amount of discussion that came up in the group work. In some cases, it really wasn't so easy to decide what to do at what stage in a way that would make sense for particular participants. The outcome: it was easy enough to decide that a blended solution is a must, but how you do it is a matter of opinion. And that's just fine – you know your students, so you're the one who knows best how to design their blended learning journey. Personalization and tailoring are key to the success of the program.

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6.2 Cultural concepts and language: progressing from EFL to ELF?

– Rudi Camerer, Judith Mader

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Language and culture

There is a close connection between culture and language, something that is true even if English is used as a lingua franca (ELF). Three examples of intercultural encounters were presented in the workshop to show how culture-specific language use is transferred to other languages.

Critical intercultural encounters

One example concerned the 1992 riots in South-Central Los Angeles, the worst ethnic conflict in US history, in which mostly Afro-American residents and Korean shop-owners clashed. The riots led to 55 deaths, 2,500 injuries, hundreds of shops looted and blocks of streets burned down. Some of the underlying reasons for the extraordinary degree of aggression displayed during the riots were studied by Benjamin Bayley several years later. Analysis of recordings by CCTV cameras of encounters between immigrant Korean shop-owners and African-American customers revealed divergent communicative patterns. Members of each group felt as if the other had behaved in insultingly inappropriate ways (Bailey 2000). All involved were using English in a US context, but nonetheless the conflicting expectations on both sides of the communication divide had severe consequences.

Another example involved an incident between family members, where a Puerto Rican daughter living in the US offended her visiting father by thanking him for looking after his grandson (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). In many cultures, it is inappropriate to thank family members at all, while in some cultures, thanks are not expressed verbally. Both conventions, if used in other cultural contexts, can lead to misunderstandings and possible breakdowns in communication.

The third example was the failed BMW-Rover merger, which involved enormous sums of money for both companies. Examples taken from an internal document entitled “The differences were greater than we had expected” indicate that the ways in which managers from both companies communicated using English led to serious difficulties in the management process, which were shown in comments like “Interpreting what they [the British] mean is a special difficulty” and “I often find that the Germans speak English very well ... but have more difficulty in understanding the language”. These difficulties in communication led to the failure not only of the merger, but also of what is perhaps the most valuable commodity in business – trust.

English as a lingua franca

Current research in ELF involves publications from all parts of the world, international conferences dedicated to the topic, and ELF corpora in Asian, European and academic contexts. Those responsible for language training in business and other contexts, as well as for recruiting, are often unaware of this and do not realize that proficiency in English is not merely a matter of mastery of linguistic forms and discourse features as used in Anglo-American contexts, but also entails the ability to communicate effectively in international teams and intercultural contexts.

Language and intercultural competence

It is the approaches to language learning which need to be considered in terms of their usefulness in a global context where English is used and, equally, approaches to training in intercultural competence need to be reassessed for their usefulness (Camerer and Mader, 2012). Training in intercultural competence has so far largely been based on concepts of self-awareness and personality, using the many cultural frameworks and dimensions developed in the latter part of the last century. These need to be re-assessed in light of more recent criticisms, as well as more recent approaches to intercultural communication, and by taking account of culture-based language functions (e.g. criticising, complaining) and communication strategies (e.g. enthusiasm, directness).

Two activities were used during the workshop to demonstrate two culture-based language functions and communication strategies (self-disclosure and face-saving). Participants were asked to think about what information they would give and / or inquire about in a first encounter, and to compare their views with others. An example of business communication was used to demonstrate the importance of face-saving strategies. This was a request for payment, considered highly effective by Chinese managers, but generally felt by Western businesspeople to be too effusive and wordy. Both the activities (concerning small talk and written communication in intercultural contexts) can be used in language and intercultural communication courses.

Conclusion

As language is an integral part of communication, and as this communication is increasingly intercultural, both areas – language training and intercultural training – must combine their approaches. Intercultural communicative competence involves not only awareness of cultural differences and features of personality (openness to and tolerance of difference) but also communicative skills in intercultural encounters. These are increasingly taking place in English, whether native speakers are involved or not.

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6.3 Anxiety, reputation and opportunities in Business English speaking skills for next generation workplaces – *Elizabeth Chute*

ELT practitioner, Italy

Meeting new needs for next generation workplaces

In my experience, *speaking* is the most sought-after skill, but also the most feared and under-delivered. And it is a claim backed up with feedback from students and teachers alike. We all bring anxieties, expectations and unfulfilled needs into the speaking class, but few, it seems, have noticed how much this really matters.

To this end, I adopt a new approach to fluency in English. I channel energy, curiosity, and marketing skills into empowering students and teachers with communication tools for better outcomes. What distinguishes this from other approaches is the way in which mindfulness and well-being are blended with the language of purpose and connection.

How it all began

My journey to the 29th IATEFL BESIG Conference as a first-time speaker started in 2014. With my ELT and marketer hat on, I entered and reached the finals of the 2015 British Council ELTons for *New Talent in Writing* (sponsored by Macmillan Education) for a new teachers' handbook called *20 Stimulating Lesson Plans for Conversation.* As a result, fuelled by this unexpected and welcomed interest, I joined IATEFL and MaWSIG to further develop my skills in this area. Soon after, I received a call for speakers for Munich 2016. I duly applied and the next thing I knew I had been selected.

On the day

So onto Anxiety, Reputation and Opportunities, what it was all about, and how it all went.
Mine was an interactive 30-minute session articulated in **four** parts, with the following aims:

- To invite reflection on the **context** and speed of change and the benefits of embracing wider communication strategies to meet known 'unmet' needs.
- To reveal underlying classroom **anxiety** and introduce relaxing and energizing activities to ease pain points.
- To illustrate the value of **reputation** building and personal branding for teachers and students in the classroom.
- To harness **opportunities** through strategies and tactics, such as Communication PEARLS (Partnership, Empathy, Acknowledgement/Apology, Respect, Legitimization, Support), flexing communication styles, stories, and intercultural sensitivity – to build fluency in clarity, confidence and connection for more effective mutually-beneficial outcomes.

This was an occasion for attendees to reflect and roll up their sleeves to take part in some memorable interactive activities. Highlights included: three activities (As Easy as ABC, Christmas is Coming, and an Elevator Pitch interspersed with confidence-building Power Postures), a storytelling formula, a plan for a 90-minute lesson, intercultural communication insights and tools, and other practical ways to teach the language of empathy and stimulate meaningful conversation exchange and positive outcomes for students.

All in all, I aimed to share effective communication strategies for Business English students when interacting in global business and social situations, as well as inspire attendees with exercises and approaches that are equally relevant for their own self-development to become even better listeners and communicators.

Feedback

First of all, I would like to thank everyone that came to listen for their enthusiasm and willingness to take part in the activities. Hearing positive feedback on the day, expressed with comments such as '*insightful', 'lively*',' *inspirational*' and '*energizing*' was so valuable, and greatly appreciated. Moreover, for those who were excited about using some of the ideas with their students, keep in touch. I look forward to learning from your experiences, and hearing about your ideas to further develop this approach. With apologies again for being glued to my notes, mine has undoubtedly been a move out of my own comfort zone to embrace a challenge as an opportunity. Although this, my first foray into speaking at an EFL event, has been a learning curve, particularly bearing in mind the high calibre and expertise of the IATEFL BESIG and MaWSIG speakers, I wholeheartedly recommend others to take the steps to do the same.

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6.4 Seek first to understand, then to be understood – *Olena Korol*

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The purpose of the Munich workshop was to demonstrate how active listening training can enhance not only the process of teaching in-service students to avoid misunderstandings in contexts with cultural diversities, but also lead to better communication among teachers in their workplace. In other words, I involved the participants in self-awareness hands-on activities, so that they could explore their own listening habits/skills and find out to what extent they are aware of their students' attitudes to communication in general and to active listening in particular. In the workshop I shared my experience in designing and delivering a Master's degree Intercultural Communication course and in overcoming some cultural incidents. My premise was Ralph Nichol's (1961) maxim: 'The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them'.

Listen with the heart

I started the workshop by introducing myself in a sort of dynamic 'elevator pitch' to let the participants know the focus of my professional interest, namely fostering autonomous learning among BE students. Afterwards, the participants were asked in pairs to reflect on their listening attention skills and to analyze their listening performance by answering the following questions:

- Were you spacing out (was your mind wandering off into another galaxy)?
- Did you pretend to listen ('yeah', 'uh-huh', 'cool')?
- Were you listening selectively (what was your focus on: voice, appearance, mistakes, manners, etc.)?
- Were you listening only to the words, not to the body language?
- Was your listening self-centered (you were making judgements in the back of your mind)?

This reflection helped us to move on to a discussion of different types of listeners, which we usually encounter in class as well as in the workplace. The participants commented on the appropriateness of the following matching self-awareness activity in their teaching contexts, which was a springboard for the above-mentioned discussion.

Task: *Match each 'Self-talk' of listener with the Type of listener and evaluate yourself as a listener during the presenter's introduction.*

	Type of listener		'Self-talk' of listener
1	Non-listener	A	*'I hear and I understand and I focus on the content and your feelings'*
2	Evaluative listener	B	*'I hear the words but I don't hear the feelings'*
3	Marginal listener	C	*'I am thinking about what I want to say next'*
4	Active listener	D	*'I get the gist but I am more interested in what I want to say'*

According to the participants, this activity helps build awareness of factors that affect listening ability. We then focused on such factors as clear and concise speaking, and evaluated my 'elevator pitch' by using the 'PRESS' technique. We agreed that, on the one hand, a thoroughly prepared, well-structured and well thought-out message, which is clear not only to the speaker, but also to the target listener leads to an active listener's response. On the other hand, the engaged listeners are expected to treat the speakers as *special*, by listening to them as Covey (2004) points out 'with your eyes and with your heart'. The participants agreed that formal listening training has been underestimated in universities, which may be a reason for poor communication even among teaching colleagues. I had a good "STAR story" to suggest as evidence, based on my experience. Thus, the next listening activity helped us to gain deeper insights into possible reasons for misunderstanding.

Listen with the ears

The "BINGO" listening activity was aimed at:

a) encouraging participants to compare differences between 'attentive' and 'active listening', and to discuss their pros and cons
b) identifying more reasons for misunderstanding among course designers, working as a team
c) encouraging participants to learn more about behavioral habits of colleagues
d) encouraging participants to share misunderstandings occurring in their workplaces

I read 'My STAR story', which is full of emotion and different examples of behaviors, to put the participants in the framework of the course design team project. Before the reading, the participants chose those words they expected to hear from a set of words given on a slide, and wrote them in their charts. While listening, they crossed out the words they heard. The first to complete the chart got a box of chocolates as a prize. Afterwards, the participants shared their experiences of avoiding and handling misunderstandings in their contexts. They unanimously agreed with Julian Treasure (TED talk), who points out that 'Listening is the most important skill we can have and is one of the most difficult to master'.

Listen with the eyes

The final activity was aimed at raising teachers' awareness of the necessity to train observation skills to better understand an interlocutor. It was based on a party game where a pair of scissors was passed around a circle of players. The participants had to pass the scissors from one to the next saying, 'I received the scissors crossed/uncrossed and I passed them on crossed/uncrossed'. The aim was for participants to learn the 'rule' about when the scissors were crossed or uncrossed and then to act correctly. Most people assumed that it was the position of the scissors which determined whether crossed or uncrossed was the correct response. In fact, it was whether the person who was passing the scissors on was sitting with their legs crossed or uncrossed.

Conclusion

Not all of the activities mentioned may be applicable to every situation, of course. Each participant will have to adapt them to their own particular needs. The most important thing, however, may not be what happens when a specific activity is used, but rather simply what happens when people become aware of the problem of listening and of how improved active listening skills make the learning and working atmosphere more efficient and enjoyable.

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6.5 The Global Virtual Teams project: Preparing students for teamwork across cultures, time and space – *Rachel Lindner*

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A Global Virtual Team (GVT) is a group of culturally, geographically, temporally, and functionally dispersed individuals who are brought together to work on a project, often using English as their lingua franca. GVTs seldom meet face-to-face, relying instead on online and mobile communication tools and video conferencing to collaborate. With the increasing speed and reliability of online and mobile connections and ease of access to cheap communication tools, international business is keen to tap into the cost and time-saving potential of GVTs. However, research into GVTs, such as that by Furst et al. (2004) into their life-cycle (see Figure 1), emphasises how the complexity of communicating across cultures, time and space poses immense challenges to effective teamwork.

Phases	Face-to-face team formation behaviour	GVT formation behaviour
Forming	• Getting to know each other • Building initial trust • Clarifying goals and expectations	• Fewer opportunities for off-task, interpersonal trust-building • Trust relies on prior positive experience of working in GVTs and/or of the anticipated work culture of other team members • Gaps in information about team members may lead to stereotyping
Storming	• Similarities and differences revealed • Identification of responsibilities and roles – conflicts may arise	• Reliance on less rich communication channels may worsen conflict • Lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities; reliance on (an) emerging or assigned team leader(s)
Norming	• Team members identify ways of	• Difficulty in developing norms for communication

	collaborating ○ Bonds are strengthened	modes, speed and frequency ○ Frustration with different communication styles
Performing	○ Work towards project goals ○ Mutual support	○ Vulnerability to pressures from local (competing) assignments ○ Frustrations over free-riding or non-commitment ○ Discontinuation of communication in some cases
Adjourning	○ Project conclusion ○ Feedback ○ Team disbands with some sense of loss	○ Project conclusion ○ Feedback ○ Team disbands with some sense of relief

Figure 1: Stages of virtual project team development adapted from Furst et al. (2004)

A rationale for GVT training in business schools

In order to meet these challenges, multiliteracies are required of team members, including the linguistic, intercultural and media competencies necessary for building trustful relationships, for maintaining team processes, sharing knowledge and solving problems, often under considerable pressure. However, team members may neither possess nor be able to draw on all skills simultaneously, which is where business communication training comes in. As a university teacher of Business English, my principal concern is how to help business students develop these skills *before* they enter the workplace. This was the reason why I set up the Global Virtual Teams Project.

Blended learning course design

The GVTs Project combines insights from business studies of GVTs with research into online intercultural exchange in foreign language education to provide students of business with an insider experience of managing GVT communication issues. The project is embedded in a blended learning course. Classroom sessions at participating institutions are partly dedicated to theoretical input, project guidance and ongoing reflection on the learning experience. They are also used for working on professional writing skills for team reports, academic writing skills for a post-project reflective paper, as well as video conference training for professional and academic contexts.

For the project, students from participating universities are organised into GVTs that are diverse not only in terms of national and institutional culture, but also in terms of gender and to some extent language proficiency, academic maturity, age difference and work experience. Over a period of eight weeks, each team negotiates, researches and presents a project in which they compare a product, service, business procedure or managerial innovation across at least two different cultures. The project phases are illustrated in Figure 2.

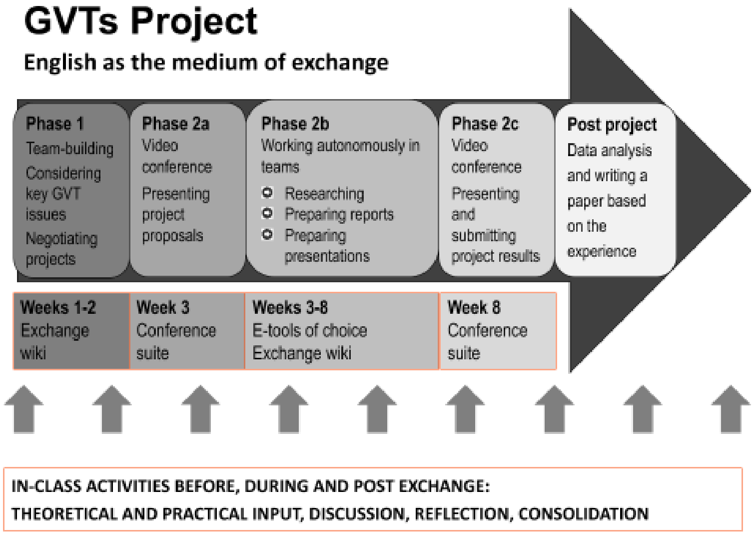

Figure 2: Project phases

Phase 1 takes place over two weeks on an online platform that serves as the plenary space for the project. We use a Wikispaces wiki for this purpose. Each team has its own wiki page for making initial contact and considering aspects of GVT collaboration, guided by teacher-moderated discussion prompts. Besides its organizational and team-building functions, the visibility of phase 1 enables teachers to check that teams are up and running. By the end of phase 1, teams move into their chosen communication channels, where they prepare for the first video conference.

Phase 2 takes place in weeks 3–8. It starts and concludes with plenary video conferences in which students formally present project proposals (week 3) and project results (week 8). Between conferences, teams work on their projects. Although clear scaffolding is provided, students not only have to negotiate their research topic, but also team organisation. The more 'successful' teams deal with the 'forming', 'storming' and 'norming' aspects of teamwork (see Figure 1) in phase 1 or early in phase 2 and can consequently dedicate most of the phase 2 timeframe to 'performing'. Other teams never really 'form'; instead they 'storm' parallel to 'performing', making teamwork frustrating and project results unsatisfactory for the students involved. Negative project experiences of this kind can be turned into positive learning outcomes when students understand what went wrong and learn from it. Reflective practice is therefore a key pedagogical component both during the project and after it in phase 3.

Phase 3 starts after the second video conference and involves 'adjourning' the project – namely debriefing, evaluation and reflection. Throughout the project, students keep a log of all team dialogue and any critical incidents that occur. After project completion, they analyse this data as the basis for a reflective paper in which they compare the project experience with the business literature on GVTs, focusing on those aspects that seem particularly relevant to them, and making business recommendations for best practice in GVTs based on their experience.

Practicalities

There is a strong rationale for experiential learning scenarios that give students a taste of real communication challenges in the workplace. However, online projects of this kind involve considerable dedication and sometimes equally considerable frustration on the part of instructors and students alike. The first step in running a successful project is to find suitable partner institutions. For this purpose teachers can use their personal networks, Erasmus partners or dedicated platforms, such as http://uni-collaboration.eu/, which also provide advice and project examples. For a potentially more harmonious project, teachers may look for partner cohorts that are similar to their own.

However, too much smoothing away at the edges may detract from the experience of managing diversity and learning opportunities may be lost. In the same way, teachers must consider what aspects of the course design need to be prescriptive enough for the exchange to work (e.g. team constellations, objectives, project products and deadlines) and how much can be experiential (e.g. choosing team roles and communication channels, and when and how to interact), the balance of which will impact the overall learning outcomes. Finally, although it is pleasing when teams work well together and produce excellent results, it is essential to create a learning climate that allows for things to go wrong. Time must be dedicated to discussion and reflection so that students can analyse and, where possible, overcome communication problems. In this way they will be able to learn from experience and be better prepared for the workplace.

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6.6 Natives and non-natives: where are we? – *Ian McMaster*

Editor-in-chief, Business Spotlight, Germany

In recent years, there has been heated discussion on numerous aspects of the native/non-native debate. The aim of this session was to provide a platform to discuss these issues, to separate out aspects that often get mixed up and to separate facts from opinions. To start the session, participants were asked to answer the following questions *alone*.

1. What percentage of English spoken in the world is spoken by non-native speakers of English?

   40 80 ?

2. Do you consider yourself to be a native speaker?

   Y N ?

3. Are native speakers of English better international communicators than non-native speakers of English?

   Y N ?

4. Are non-native speakers of English better international communicators than native speakers of English?

   Y N ?

5. Do non-native speakers of English find other non-native speakers easier to understand than native speakers?

   Y N ?

6. Is a native-speaker model of English a good model for learners?

   Y N ?

7. Should learners have more exposure to non-native speakers of English in learning materials?

   Y N ?

8. Is it legitimate for learners to want to speak like native speakers of English?

   Y N ?

9. Are native speakers of English better teachers than non-native speakers?

   Y N ?

10. Are non-native speakers of English better teachers than native speakers?

    Y N ?

11. Should language schools be allowed to advertise teaching posts for native-speaker English teachers only?

    Y N ?

12. Should learners be able to ask to be taught by a native-speaker English teacher?

    Y N ?

One advantage of working alone is that it avoids the danger of ‘group think’ and allows each person to think about their own opinion before talking to a partner. Maybe we should do this more often in our teaching.

After participants had answered these questions – but before discussing their answers – they were asked to answer an additional question on whether the concepts ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ make any sense. A lively discussion followed on all these issues, with a range of different views. Below are some key points from the discussion.

- Some people answered that the concepts of native speaker and non-native speaker make no sense. Yet they had still answered ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to questions comparing the groups. This is illogical: if you think the categories make no sense, then it also makes no sense to compare them.
- A separate issue is whether the terms ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ are discriminatory. Some people felt they are and I would agree. Do we need alternative terms? Maybe not. Why not just say ‘learners/users’ or ‘teachers/trainers’, without making any distinction?
- Most people answered ‘80 per cent’ for question 1. Yet there is absolutely no evidence for this figure. So why does this myth persist? The truth is that nobody knows how much English is spoken by whom worldwide.
- Most people fell into the trap in question 2 of assuming that it related to English. Yet English wasn’t in this question, unlike the other questions. To illustrate the point, I noted that I am, in traditional terms, a non-native speaker…of German, Spanish, etc. This highlights the absurdity of assuming superior communication skills for one group: I am not necessarily a better or worse communicator in German as a non-native speaker than I am in English as a native speaker.
- A related point is that it is nonsensical to make sweeping generalisations such as “native speakers are the worst communicators in international business” because this ignores the individual person, the context, and so on. Such blanket generalisations are exactly the sort of thing we have been trying to get away from in other aspects of language and intercultural training. So why do we re-introduce them now in relation to native and non-native speakers? One answer, of course, is to focus legitimate attention on the need for native speakers to improve their communication skills for international business. But do we need to exaggerate our arguments or do we then lose credibility? Not everyone agreed with my provocative comment that we wouldn’t generalize about ‘tall’ and ‘short’ speakers of English, so why generalize about native and non-native speakers?
- Another paradox relates to materials. It is often argued that native speakers are always hard to understand but that non-native speakers have no trouble understanding each other. If this is true (which I don’t believe), then why do the same people who believe this argue for more listening materials to understand non-native speakers? If native speakers are the problem, then materials should be aimed at understanding them, surely. The reality, of course, is that learners/users of English have problems understanding both groups (assuming these groups can be clearly identified) and materials are needed for understanding a wide range of speakers from different countries, with different accents and so forth.
- As far as teaching goes, most people felt that both native and non-native teachers have advantages. (Again, should we really be arguing that one group is better than the other or even allowing these groups to be compared?) But some participants argued that schools had to employ native speakers because the market demanded it. Another topic of heated debate.

The discussion could have continued for much longer and many issues remained unresolved, with sharp differences of opinion, indicating that the workshop provided plenty of food for thought on these complicated topics.

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6.7 Teaching in the virtual classroom – *Darina Phelan*

Marcus Evans Linguarama, Germany

Introduction

The session aimed to share the results of my ongoing action research project to establish criteria and approaches for observing online teaching (one's own and that of other teachers within an organisation). After a brief introduction and exchange of experiences in the area of online (virtual) teaching, I gave some background to my teaching context (corporate business language training online to learners in open groups and individual lessons). I explained how this teaching activity prompted me to think more deeply about how and whether the criteria for evaluating teaching online were different from generally established observation criteria for face-to-face lessons. Drawing on the participants' opinions, my own experience and feedback received from my colleagues, the following proposed key criteria and questions relating to online observations were outlined and examples of each given.

Strategic planning

Online lessons don't generally afford the flexibility that face-to-face lessons do; the in-flight adaptation common in face-to-face teaching is not as feasible online. Therefore, questions surrounding strategic planning become key to teaching evaluation. How well has the teacher prepared; what contingency planning has been done, and how successful is it? Are different modes of delivery used (online, in-space, emailed in advance, on the spot, etc.) as appropriate? Is input and feedback carefully structured; are clear routines established/evident? What decisions have been made about feedback (how and when)? Does the planning take into account the medium or does the medium lead the lesson aims?

Materials and resources

How well have the materials been developed/adapted for online use? How do they affect the lesson flow (selection/design, staging of activities/task, exploitation, follow-up activities); is there resource variety/ richness and how appropriate is the materials selection and use for the lesson aims and the medium?; has the teacher considered the effect of the medium on lesson pacing/timing? How is this built into the materials design and handling?

Materials and the learner

How well is the learner used as a resource? Are learner-centred approaches evident (e.g. screen/desktop sharing, working directly on learner's documents, email, slides)? How are materials adapted to increase student participation and make up for more directed teacher talk in-session?

'Mastery' of tools/tech

This includes effective/ appropriate use of technology. How well does the teacher use and employ the tools available (flexibility, multi-tasking ability, etc.)? Does the teacher take the learner's ability to manipulate tools/tech into account when planning and delivering the lesson? Can the teacher deal with tech problems/glitches effectively and confidently?

Online presence

Within the limits of what is visible on-screen (i.e. head and shoulders), how effectively does the teacher establish their online presence? Is facial expression used effectively? How effectively is the voice used (speed of speech, expression, clarity)? Has the background and lighting been checked (as well as equipment: sound/webcam etc.)?

Environment management

This term represents the presenter's take on what is traditionally referred to as classroom management in the face-to-face context. How does the teacher manage the learner experience online? Is there frequent checking and clarifying (operational checks as well as checking instructions/concepts)? Have instructions been graded/staged clearly (e.g. for lower-level learners)? Are visuals used for clarity (and how effectively/appropriately)? How are tasks set up and interactions managed, given the constraints of the online application being used? How evenly does the teacher involve learners in a group?

Implications/opportunities for online observation practices
Finally, I outlined the steps I planned to take in my organisation to incorporate these findings into my own and others' observations and training practice:

a) revising/updating in-house observation procedures, formats and documentation to include the above criteria;

b) including key criteria in the evaluation of one's own and others' online teaching;

c) widening the focus of teacher training to include support for the full range of key criteria areas (i.e. not just teaching how to use online tools/features, but also looking at awareness-raising of the other areas involved in successful online teaching).

Conclusion
Effective online lessons resemble face-to-face teaching in many ways. However, standard practices, when viewed through the prism of the online teaching situation, change shape in some crucial ways. These differences must form the basis of establishing criteria for observing and evaluating online lessons, both our own and those of others, alongside the established criteria applied to face-to-face teaching. An examination of our practice in the four areas outlined (strategic planning, materials design including the learner as 'material', mastery of tools, and environment management) can help us to improve as teachers and observers of teaching and make the demands of the online teaching situation more transparent for our peers and fellow teachers.

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6.8 Encountering Otherness – *Marina Wikman*
ELT professional, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

Introduction
2015 was an unprecedented year in terms of the extremely high number of asylum seekers arriving in Europe. Being far up north, Finland received over 30,000 asylum seekers, a small number in comparison to many other countries, but a very high number indeed compared to the average number of asylum seekers entering Finland annually (a little over 3,000).

Due to the fact that Finland is not used to receiving such an influx, the reactions in the country were quite strong, and varied from extremely positive to extremely negative. The media covered the topic almost on a daily basis, shaping public opinion towards doubt and even fear.

As a teacher, one's basic duty is to help students learn, but also to encourage them to be curious about contemporary society, as well as support them in forming their own opinions about issues around them. For that reason, studying asylum seekers' cultural adaptation was chosen as a topic for the course module Managing Intercultural Relations.

Module on Intercultural Awareness
Managing Intercultural Relations is an obligatory part of studies in the International Business programme at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences. As part of the course, the students always carry out some research on an agreed topic to learn to apply theory to practice.

The course contents cover topics such as communication across cultures, culture shock, as well as familiarization with cultural theories. In this version of the course, there was also class discussion about the asylum-seeker situation in general.

To be able to carry out interviews, the students created general questions with which they would be able to learn about similarities and differences between their own cultures and the asylum seekers' cultures, gain information about possible culture shock, and also link the interview to a theory. In small groups, they subsequently prepared some further questions to diversify each group's approach, and to give them a chance to talk about anything of interest that to came mind.

As this was quite a critical and sensitive issue, the university needed to approve the visits, and naturally the centres as well as the asylum seekers were asked if they were willing to take part and answer questions. The response was very positive, with asylum seekers and centres both welcoming the visits.

There were over 90 students in the group, coming not only from Finland, but also from various Asian and Central European countries. They were divided into two, and we visited two different centres. In both groups there were several multinational subgroups, so the interviews were carried out in small groups, with four or five students and approximately the same number of asylum seekers. This made it easier to conduct the interviews and helped each party to talk more openly. The interviewees came from many countries but the largest groups were from Iraq, Syria and Somalia.

Results of the Asylum-Seeker Project

As a part of the project, the students wrote a report in which they described the visit and the talks, and applied them to the course contents. Two seminars were also conducted with the aim of reflecting on the project. An important scholarly achievement was that second-hand information should not be taken for granted, but that they should always study the facts and the reality of the situation for themselves. The academic requirements of the module were clearly fulfilled, but the results also showed a lot of extracurricular learning.

In class, it is sometimes difficult to make the students understand what is actually meant by all the theory and generalization in the field of culture. During the project, the students brought up the fact that they now understand that there really are cultural differences, and that others actually do not see them as they see themselves. They also saw that customs and habits are different, that one's own culture is not at the centre, and that there are different ways of doing things. In the end, however, people care about the same things, and family, for example, is important to everyone, irrespective of nationality.

The students realised that they had been stereotyping people, and that there was a need to get to know people and situations on their own merits before judging and forming any opinions. One essential outcome was also that they accepted that change starts with them, not with others. Some of the students had harboured some doubts about the visits, but the vast majority stated afterwards that the asylum seekers they had met had been very friendly and engaging, and they were pleased that the project had given them the opportunity to learn that.

As not all of the interviewees spoke English very well, those asylum seekers who spoke English acted as interpreters and helped others in the group. This led to an important secondary result, emphasising the need to learn languages and have good communication skills in a language other than one's own.

Conclusion

First-hand experience generates a better learning curve, and results in learning beyond the curriculum, which is always the aim in teaching. Hands-on learning generally produces better results, and in this case hopefully more tolerance and understanding towards others. In this asylum-seeker project, it seems that the aims were duly met, encapsulated perhaps by one of the comments in the reports: 'We learnt more than a lot'.

Epilogue

What happened after the project officially ended was that some of the contacts that had been established continued to develop, with the result that some students have been going to the centres to teach Finnish sports, and speak Finnish with asylum seekers, among other things. The centres have also asked for information about opportunities to study in Finland, either on full degree courses or individual course modules. To this end, some of the asylum seekers have started to study at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences or similar educational institutions across Finland.

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ELT acronym buster

ALM	Audio-lingual Method
ALTE	Association of Language Testers in Europe
BC	British Council
BE	Business English
BEC	Business English Certificate(s) (UCLES)
BELF	Business English as a Lingua Franca
BET	BESIG Editorial Team
BL	Blended Learning
BULATS	Business Language Testing Services
CALL	Computer-Assisted Language Learning
CBI	Content-based Instruction
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CELTA	Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
Cert IBET	Certificate in International Business English Training
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CMS	Course Management System
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American English
CofP	Community of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CT	Critical Thinking
DELTA	Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults
DOS	Director of Studies
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EIL	English as an International Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ELL(s)	English Language Learner(s)
ELTA	English Language Teaching Association
EMI	English-Medium Instruction
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes
EPP	English for Professional Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
F2F	Face-to-face
GMAT®	Graduate Management Admission Test
GVT	Global Virtual Team
HE	Higher Education
IATEFL	International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
IATET	International Association of Technical English Trainers
ICFE	International Certificate in Financial English
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IE	International English
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ILEC	International Legal English Certificate
INSET	In-Service (Education and) Training
IWB	Interactive Whiteboard
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
L1	First language, native language
L2	Second language, target language

LCCI	London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LMS	Learning Management System
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
MOODLE	Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment
NLP	Neuro-linguistic Programming
NS	Native speaker
NNS	Non-native speaker
PARSNIP	politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms, pork
PLN	Personal Learning Network
PPP	Present, Practise, Produce
PSA	Present Situation Analysis
QR Code	Quick Response Code
SCL	Student-centered Learning
SDL	Self-directed Learning
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TBL	Task-based Learning
telc	The European Language Certificates
TELL	Technology Enhanced Language Learning
TENOR	Teaching English for No Obvious Reason
TOEFL®	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOEIC®	Test of English for International Communication
TOLES	Test of Legal English Skills
TP	Teaching Practice
TPR	Total Physical Response
TTT	Test, Teach, Test; Teacher Talking Time
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
USP	Unique Selling Proposition/Point
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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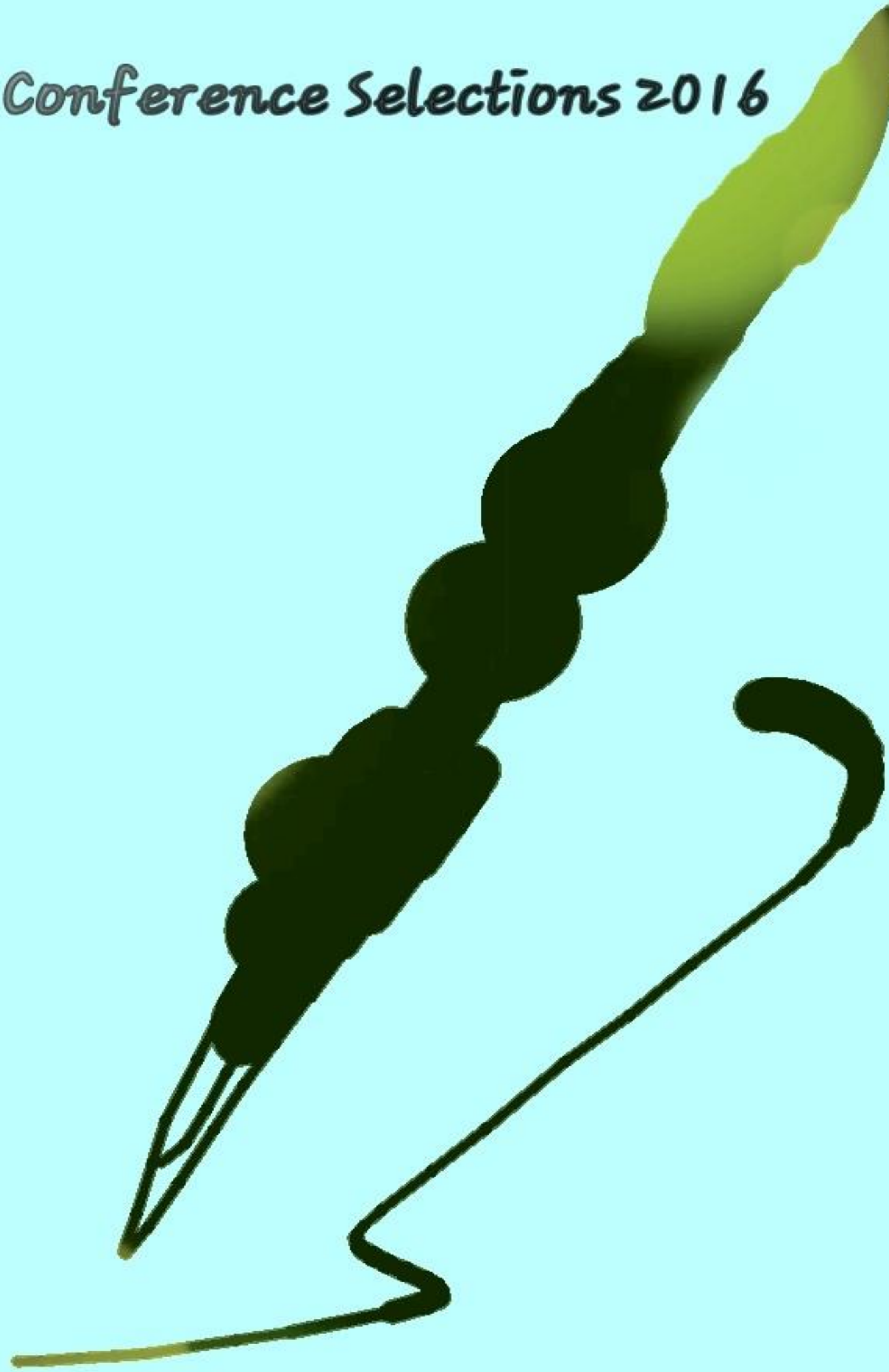
Munich Conference Selections 2016



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