IATEFL BESIG Conference Collection 2012-2017

Edited by the IATEFL BESIG Editorial Team

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Chapter One: From the Editor-in-chief

Six years of BESIG Conference Selections – *Roy Bicknell*
Editor-in-chief, IATEFL BESIG Editorial Team

Six years
It all started on a balmy late summer night in Frankfurt in 2012. Subsequent editors of *IATEFL BESIG Conference Selections* came together to discuss setting up this ambitious series, which has published a digital edition of each Annual BESIG Conference since 2012. With the release in spring 2018 of our sixth edition, *Malta Conference Selections 2017*, fellow editor Lynn Nikkanen and I thought that this was the right moment to present to the BESIG community an overview of what has been achieved by the IATEFL BESIG Editorial Team (BET) in the past six years.

The six publications in the *Conference Selections* (CS) series to date include 9 plenaries, 200 summaries, and multiple reviews of presentations – a vast treasure trove for readers of all things related to the world of business English. Our basic idea for this edition was to put together a compilation that would showcase the CS series, based on a selection from each annual edition. A selection committee was set up for this purpose – Markus Dietz, Maha Hassan and Olena Korol – who are based in Lausanne, Cairo and Kyiv, respectively. The committee has an international flavour, which reflects the geographical spread of the BESIG community. We decided to select 30 of the summaries from the existing CS series, with BET and the selection committee reviewing each article for this new compilation. Our criteria for selection were simple: the selected articles should be practical, offer new perspectives on our teaching practice, and have a certain longevity. All 30 reviews of the selection have been grouped in the second chapter of this special edition and have been hyperlinked for easy and immediate access to the articles proper.

Business English is a metaphor
Putting together this compilation provided me with an opportunity to have another look at the different CS editions. There is a seemingly endless variation of themes on display, which is why during different CS introductions I used metaphors and analogies, such as the warp and the woof (Munich 2016), in an attempt to express the different strands that readers can discover in browsing the digital editions. On reflection, using metaphors points to the very nature of business English. We could say that business English itself has a metaphorical dimension: it constantly changes shape and shifts focus as it evolves, as educators and learners map the ever-changing business world they perform in. Just listing some of the themes from this compilation indicates how multi-faceted our practice is: impression management, virtual classrooms, applied improvisation, relationship-building, intercultural communication, learning styles, and action research. It's an impressive array of practices and concepts that curious readers will find stimulating and informative.

We wish you much enjoyment in browsing these pages. They showcase what is in store for you when you continue to explore and read the six CS editions which are also available on the BESIG website. Lynn and I would like to take the opportunity to thank Markus, Maha and Olena for the great teamwork on this compilation and we also wish to thank former BET editors, Kristen Acquaviva, Claire Hart and Vicky Loras, for all their hard work in building the *Conference Selections* series.

We hope you enjoy looking back at *IATEFL BESIG Conference Collection 2012-2017*, and we also look forward to inviting you to future editions of this ongoing series.

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Chapter Two: The Reviews

Stuttgart revisited – ***Lynn Nikkanen***
English language consultation, Helsinki, Finland

Stuttgart 2012 was an outstanding year for the IATEFL BESIG Annual Conference, not only because it marked the year when the *Conference Selections* series was launched, but also because over fifty high-quality presentation summaries were accepted for inclusion in the publication. This made whittling that number down to a mere handful for this special edition all the harder, but I eventually homed in on four summaries based on their originality, utility, and longevity. Each one is just as relevant for business English teaching practice today as it was when it was written.

Kicking off this personal selection, as well as this entire collection, is Kristen Acquaviva's article on measuring progress with advanced learners. Kristen begins by providing her definition of this category of learner and goes on to list some of the reasons that they might have for continuing to study even after achieving a high level of proficiency. Tweaking tasks and devising different ways to measure progress are just two of the approaches that Kristen describes to help maintain motivation in advanced learners, and to convince them that they are indeed enhancing their skills. She rounds off her discussion with an imaginative yet practical way to simultaneously heighten attentiveness during lessons and awareness of progress.

NLP expert Patricia de Griese takes an important yet often neglected topic as the context for her summary on improving communication skills – talking to difficult students. Acknowledging at the outset that the epithet 'difficult student' means different things to different teachers, Patricia emphasizes that we need to intensify our own receptiveness and responsiveness in class. While we shouldn't allow ourselves to make snap judgments about a person based on preconceived ideas, what we should do is pay attention to certain personality traits and behaviours and turn them to our advantage during lessons. By illustrating how 'difficult' can be reinterpreted as 'different', Patricia provides sharp insights into how teachers can learn to recognize students' individual preferences and communication styles and, in so doing, capitalize on their different learning styles.

In her article on dealing with sporadic attendance in the in-company training context, Claire Hart tackles another obstructive elephant in the business English classroom. As Claire points out, in addition to thwarting well-designed course and lesson plans, irregular attendance can have a demotivating effect on the teacher as well as those who are able to participate on a regular basis. Far from simply resigning ourselves to the inevitability of this occupational hazard, Claire sheds light on the factors that can contribute to it, and offers some solutions for mitigating the damage and making the most of those occasions when attendance dips. She also comes up with an intriguing acronym – QTIP – which encapsulates the first and foremost rule for teachers who find their lessons derailed by no-shows.

Having made the transition from business English trainer to intercultural trainer himself, few are better qualified than Adrian Pilbeam when it comes to providing guidance on this professional role change. After referencing quintessential interculturalist L. Robert Kohls in order to define intercultural training, Adrian illustrates three types of learning that are integral to these types of training courses: cognitive, affective and behavioural. Tapping into his multicultural audience's knowledge and experiences, Adrian goes on to outline the skills and qualities that characterize an effective intercultural trainer. As evidenced by his audience's contributions in Stuttgart, although the new role calls for recalibrating one's teaching tools, content and approach, the business English trainer is well placed and well equipped to try on the intercultural trainer's mantle for size.

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Takeaways from Prague 2013 – *Olena Korol*

ESP teacher, KNEU, Kyiv, Ukraine

I really enjoyed participating in the selection and compilation of this special CS edition and working with a wonderful team of committed professionals. Rereading the 46 articles in the Prague 2013 edition gave me the opportunity to list some must-do activities to try out in my own classroom. I have made a selection from the many interesting summaries in the Prague CS edition. I hope you will enjoy your read, gain some new teaching perspectives, and enrich your teaching repertoire.

Rita Baker in the summary of her pre-conference event in Prague looks at some of the successful practices we already include in our repertoire. Rita explores how and why they work by drawing on her book *Brain Power*. A key focus in her workshop was presenting a structural overview of the brain and how different kinds of memory work.

An interesting point in her summary was her discussion of how learning gets hard-wired: 'feel good' hormones help promote learning whereas stress hormones reduce the potential for learning. This could be a good reminder for us that activities need to be challenging enough to stimulate interest, without causing negative stress. Rita concludes that a simple understanding of basic neurology can have an empowering effect on the way we plan and deliver our training, and should perhaps be given greater weight in professional development.

Why did I find Barry Tomalin's summary of his Prague workshop on negotiating so relevant to what we do? First of all, he provides a clear interpretation of the five steps in any negotiation, as suggested by Gavin Kennedy. I find this particularly helpful for non-native speakers. A second reason is that concrete language phrases are given to build awareness of negotiating signals at each step. Also key for me is the fact that Barry gives invaluable advice on how to deal with different types of negotiators by using the acronym PERSUADE.

Evan Frendo in his summary examines what we mean by impression management (IM) and highlights its importance as a business skill in building trust, establishing credibility and creating rapport. It was the focus on cultural issues that drew me to this summary since misunderstandings in relationships caused by lack of intercultural competence is widespread today. Evan points out that some common tactics, such as self-promotion, exemplification, and compliments in different cultures (national, corporate, professional) may have different effects, depending on the context in which they are used. What makes this summary a 'must-read' is the wide range of ideas it presents and the exploration of how IM can be incorporated into business English activities.

Hanadi Mirza's summary concerns the part played by Arabic and French interference when students in Lebanon are learning English. Hanadi explores problems that students face when writing emails in English, and shares her experience of using students' background knowledge of Arabic and French to improve their business English emails in terms of clarity and conciseness. She argues that encouraging students to translate from French rather than from Arabic when writing English sentences is more appropriate when it comes to email writing. Of particular interest is her analysis of how a student's learning background can be used to raise awareness of tense usage in English.

The intriguing title of Vilhelm Lindholm's summary – Feel free to fail … fantastically! – immediately caught my attention. Vilhelm shares his experience of using weekly journal entries on self-reflection, and peer reviews as assessment tools through using Google Drive in business negotiation classes. He argues that the combination of reflection through an interactive course journal, recorded negotiations and peer reviews allows students to become better self-reflectors and collaborators.

Roy Bicknell in his summary proposes that readers should take another look at how we define what is functional in business English, and that we should broaden the parameters for our classroom practice by exploring techniques from the field of Applied Improvisation. What makes this summary particularly valuable is how Roy describes improvisational techniques which stimulate group interaction and fluency and help reduce student anxiety about making mistakes. These techniques will definitely enrich traditional communication models of learning; the new ideas on training flexibility are, in my view, essential when learning business English.

I found Marjorie Rosenberg's summary of her Prague workshop on learning styles extremely well written and insightful. It is of particular relevance to those of us who are dipping our toes into business English training and want to find out more about fostering learner autonomy. Marjorie outlines three research-based models of different learner-type behaviour and demonstrates how to use them in the classroom by offering a range of activities that encourage learners to develop their own strategies and enable them to derive as much as they can from a learning experience. Read the summary and find out more about the Power Planners, the Expert Investigators, the Radical Reformers and Flexible Friends, all of whom can be found in your classroom.

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A diverse practice – ***Roy Bicknell***

Interlingua, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Readers browsing the different editions of *Conference Selections* series will discover how diverse 21st-century practice in the field of business English is. There is neither a uniform nor a dominant approach in current ELT, and the summaries I have chosen from the Prague and Bonn editions for this new collection reflect this. Read on to see how the selected authors seek meaning while exploring different strands in our teaching practice.

Tihana Romanić's summary of her workshop in Prague is in several respects intriguing. In seeking to achieve a more profound understanding of core business skills, Tihana has focussed on a key aspect of business communication, namely building relationships in the workplace. The importance of relationship-building is easily acknowledged, but an interesting twist is added in that Tihana has decided to investigate a very specific feature of our interpersonal communication – paying compliments. She builds a convincing case for highlighting this and, what's more, readers are asked to reflect on whether we should not take another unbiased look at paying compliments, given the negative connotation that is often associated with it. Her advocacy of a three-step model (be observant – be relevant – be specific) and her observations on the importance of recognising cultural difference as a factor in relationship-building are illuminating and thought-provoking.

Ania Kolbuszewska in the summary of her Bonn pre-conference seminar presents a fascinating overview of how adaptive learning systems have developed, especially regarding the use of big data and emergence of data mining as an analytical tool in language learning. As Ania explores the influence of recent technological developments on language teaching, it becomes clear that her stance is a critical one in that she also expresses some reservations about using adaptive learning systems. While acknowledging that big data and adaptive learning systems are here to stay, Ania also challenges us as professional readers to reflect on the implications of that for our teaching practice.

I attended the workshop that Elena Matveeva gave in Bonn and was duly impressed. Her summary is a good reflection of what she presented on teaching presentation skills in our digital age. Her explicit brief was to show how internet tools can help support teachers to create an outstanding presentation. She delivered the goods by reviewing a wide range of digital resources that could add value to what we present, and her comments on the different uses were insightful. What made her summary even more interesting was the historical perspective she provided while referencing influential authors from the field such as Garr Reynolds and Mark Powell. And Elena's judicious comments on using multimedia serve as a reminder that in the end it's the storytelling that matters.

The title of Mandy Welfare's Bonn summary – The Inbetweeners – will intrigue most readers. It certainly caught my attention. This is about German students in vocational training who in a sense fall between the cracks; as Mandy points out, there is little research and limited resources for this specific teaching environment. She has even coined a term for them: 'experience-acquiring learners'. What makes this summary interesting is how Mandy discusses her approach towards teaching apprentices in what are generally perceived to be problem classes. Her approach is to adopt techniques which address behavioural issues or when a class doesn't go according to plan. What Mandy says here about establishing rapport or peer correction is insightful and could be applied in other teaching environments.

Jennie Wright's summary of her Bonn workshop on HOT listening tasks was stimulating in different respects. So, the reader might ask, what is HOT? The acronym stands for high-order thinking as opposed to LOT or low-order thinking; high-order thinking focuses on cognitive skills such as analysis and evaluation. Jennie presents a convincing case for having these sub-skills addressed more in listening tasks; her call for giving more attention to verbs which belong in the HOT category seems relevant. This may seem abstract, but Jennie proposes HOT listening tasks which bridge theory and classroom practice. Listening tasks like 'First Impressions' and 'Anecdote that!' should persuade readers to adopt the HOT approach or to rethink their teaching of listening as a skill.

The tongue-in-cheek title of Ian Badger's workshop summary – 'It's a pony, Ian': Understanding 'non-businessy' language in a business world – will also intrigue readers. The summary addresses an important aspect for his learners who work in multinational teams. His students often have a high level of English and are more focused on what Ian calls the social side of business, or the non-businessy language they encounter in their international working environment. Ian identifies a need in his learners for authentic or non-scripted listening materials, so that they develop a better awareness and understanding while building relationships. A case in point is Ian's authentic recording containing the 'It's a pony, Ian' phrase, which illustrates how grammar and vocabulary are used in a real-world context.

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Perspectives on Sitges 2015 – ***Markus Dietz***
English language trainer, Lausanne, Switzerland

I didn't have the opportunity to attend the 2015 IATEFL BESIG Conference in Sitges. Therefore, reading the summaries of what must have been an exciting event was particularly inspiring. The variety of perspectives the presenters took on BELT, the diversity of practical problems that were tackled, and the wealth of ideas I encountered in the *Conference Selections* were impressive. My choice here is driven by the wish to give readers an impression of the valuable support these workshops may offer business English teachers in a highly diverse, rapidly changing and increasingly competitive professional environment.

In his summary on the value of extended speaking, Paul Dummett deals with a topic that remains highly relevant in many business English classrooms: giving a presentation. He explains why he thinks that the students' learning of a language benefits from introducing extended speaking in the classroom and how he helps his students develop good presentation skills. There are several aspects in Paul's very readable summary that I find particularly remarkable. To mention only one, three factors are crucial in his experience when choosing the content of a talk, namely being informed, passionate and authentic. What's interesting here is that, conversely, this also means that if a speaker lacks one of the three it will harm the quality of the talk. In a way, this reconciles more traditional approaches to presentations that emphasise the importance of knowledge with more modern views that tend to celebrate passion and authenticity: in order to deliver a good talk, the speaker needs to relate to its content through all three channels.

Ian McMaster in the captivating summary of his workshop in Sitges questions the widely popular view that BE teachers should teach authentic English and not scripted language from textbooks. Personally, I've always been a big fan of using authentic materials in the classroom and that hasn't changed. But I must admit that Ian points to a problem here that I hadn't considered before. This gave me food for thought and finally allowed me to gain a different, broader perspective on the issue: communication in the real world is often clumsy or impolite, it lacks goal orientation, or simply fails. The language used in meetings is pertinent, but the problem occurs elsewhere too. Ian argues that where authentic communication is poor, teachers shouldn't duplicate it in the classroom but provide their students with better, more effective models of communication, with the aim of helping them become better language users in the real world.

The elevator pitch is a phenomenon that has always fascinated me because it is a wonderful example of a communication strategy that has a clear and simple goal, meets the challenges that occur in a specific situation, and takes account of the person it is directed towards. I was very interested when I saw that Jasmina Sazdovska had explored the topic from a teacher's point of view in her workshop in Sitges. From her engaging summary, readers learn what an elevator pitch is, where it got its name, as well as some of the typical mistakes often made when pitching. In addition, readers are given a basic structure that can be applied to elevator pitches and a list of seven steps that should be taken when preparing one. Regardless of whether you're interested in elevator pitches as such, are teaching them because they're part of your course syllabus, or just want to check out something you have heard of but don't know much about, you will certainly enjoy the read.

I'm not familiar with Andrzej Stesik's workshops thus far. His stimulating and insightful summary of the one he delivered in Sitges on one-to-one language training and coaching tells me that I may have missed out on something here. Andrzej rightly asserts that the one-to-one classroom setting is very common in BE teaching. His summary revolves around two aspects that are even more prevalent in this situation than in the classic group setting: (1) the focus is on the learner and (2) the teaching/learning process is conversation-driven. Andrzej explains very clearly what each aspect means for teaching, and what the teacher can do to adapt to this challenging situation and turn it to the advantage of the student. En passant, the reader learns what a process syllabus is and what it looks like in Andrzej's own classes.

I have attended several of Kirsten Waechter's workshops at different professional development events. Hence, I could tell just from reading the summary of the one she held in Sitges on speaking activities for low-level students that it was another excellent example of her guidance and ideas in action. She presents two warm-up and two speaking activities that are so practicable that readers can easily use them the next time they enter the classroom. The idea here is to help learners overcome their difficulties with, and change their attitude towards, a language skill the acquisition of which they often see as a major obstacle, or even a threat. Kirsten always includes a short debriefing at the end of each activity that helps workshop participants (and summary readers) to reflect on the effect that the activity has on learners.

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Good reads from Munich and Malta – ***Maha Hassan***

Founder & CEO, Teaching ESL Hub, Cairo, Egypt

Reading Munich 2016 and Malta 2017 provides fascinating glimpses into recent developments in the practice of business English training. Both of these recent CS editions are in all respects a good read; I have selected summaries from them which, in my view, reflect different and illuminating aspects of our teaching practice.

As Rudi Camerer and Judith Mader point out in their summary on cultural concepts and language, '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 words reflect the importance of including a discussion on cultural concepts in our language teaching classes. It broadens students' understanding and awareness of other cultures while contributing to their language learning, which they develop through the wider exposure to different language structures and vocabulary. Another key point is that considering the difference in cultures and showing respect and tolerance to differences 'entail [the student's] ability to communicate effectively in international teams and intercultural contexts'. The examples of intercultural encounters that Rudi and Judith provide in their article are a real eye-opener when it comes to the way in which culture-specific language use is transferred to other languages.

The summary by Darina Phelan will immediately engage readers in its discussion of establishing criteria and approaches for observing online teaching. It is interesting in that little research seems to have been done on virtual classroom teaching. A number of important questions are raised on four areas of practice: strategic planning, materials design including the learner as 'material', mastery of tools, and environment management. The online setting is compared to face-to-face teaching, with Darina concluding that research into this area 'can help us improve as teachers and observers of teaching and make the demands of the online teaching situation more transparent for our peers and fellow teachers'.

I was inspired by the new and unorthodox perspective adopted by Sherri Williams on using the telephone as a teaching tool. Sherri begins by dealing with the appropriacy of telephone training as a whole, before going on to suggest how sessions could be structured and how this would help the teacher to assess the learner and track their development. Another important question is: Which materials work best? Sherri discusses a number of options, one of which is using Ted Talks, and how she was also able to tackle grammar problems or weaknesses. From the training perspective, a further key question is: What are the benefits for the trainer? Sherri explains how the approach benefited her financially, had an impact on her soft skills, and allowed her to learn about German culture first-hand.

In another interesting summary from Munich 2016, Suzanne Vetter-M'Caw discusses a case study in which progress in language development was linked to the company bonus scheme. The case study illustrates the way in which Suzanne collaborated with the personnel department on a target-oriented approach to sustaining employees' involvement in a language training programme. This included the introduction of a survey for participants at the end of the programme, which asked them to reflect on the process and practice as a whole. Suzanne discusses the survey results in her summary, and considers the pros and cons of this highly pragmatic effort to incentivize in-company learners and maintain their motivation at the same time.

John Hughes summarises what must have been an engaging presentation on materials writing and, more specifically, on writing business English teacher resources. He provides a fresh perspective on writing teacher's notes with the novice business English instructor in mind, pointing out that it is better to provide more information or ideas in your notes rather than less, as the reader may be a teacher who has relatively little experience. I found his guidance on striking a balance between style and tone when writing teacher's notes particularly relevant and practical.

What interested me as a reader in the Malta 2017 summary by Dana Poklepovic on developing soft skills was how it discussed body language and expressing emotions. Her view is that we should focus more on the communicative nature of soft skills and integrate them into business English discourse. As Dana puts it, 'Soft skills occur in communication: in and beyond words'. Her emphasis on the importance of teaching these skills to students to help them express themselves and develop their language learning is insightful. I particularly appreciated how Dana walks the reader through a research project on teaching soft skills and the experience of teaching business learners with different language levels. A key finding that emerged from the discussion on this project was that students identified their beliefs, assumptions and emotions as critical areas of attention in building confidence and developing their language skills.

Before the Malta conference, Mike Hogan conducted a survey to find out how teachers address certain topics in business English training and if, and how, they use infographics or animated videos in their courses. In his summary, Mike discusses the importance of using both infographics and videos in developing discussions in class. For example, he explains how infographics are a versatile resource that can easily be adapted for classroom discussion purposes, and which are suitable for all learners regardless of their language level. Besides presenting new perspectives on using these resources, Mike also gives readers a brief overview of 10 tools for creating infographics and 10 tools for creating explainer videos. This will certainly help both novice and more experienced teachers who wish to use these resources in their classroom.

My final selection from Malta 2017 is the summary by Sarah Mercer and Daniel Xerri. This comprehensive overview on carrying out research provides readers with numerous insights into this particular area of ELT, and why it matters. The presenters' step-by-step exploration of the topic will help readers see research as something that can benefit teachers and students alike, how it can be pursued, and for what reasons. In Sarah and Daniel's view, teachers may believe that research is too complex and academic or that it has little relevance for their work. They seek to dispel this misconception by discussing the question 'What is research?' in detail. They also try to demonstrate the basic idea behind research and refer to its importance in teaching, especially if teachers share the results with their colleagues. In short, a wealth of useful information is provided in this extended summary, and readers are bound to be reinvigorated by the meaningful ways in which it can support their teaching practice.

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Chapter Three: The Selection

1 Getting even better: measuring progress with advanced learners – *Kristen Acquaviva*

Freelance, Berlin, Germany

Advanced learners: striving for perfection and enjoying the journey there

Truly advanced learners may only make up a minority of Business English learners but they pose an interesting challenge to trainers. While there are various formal classifications for advanced learners, my designation refers to those who can successfully navigate a myriad of complex speech events in English.

The question that then follows is: why do individuals who can handle sophisticated tasks in English with relative aplomb continue learning the language for professional purposes? As revealed through collaboration with the audience, some reasons are: they need more business-specific vocabulary, they have to handle challenging or delicate tasks in English, they want to maintain their current level of English, they want to advance their career, they want to be perfect, and they have to use English in formal or public situations. Yet, the overwhelming response from the audience was that advanced learners, above all, want to continue learning English because they like it, and have been successful at learning and using it.

Regular informal assessment: the key to keeping advanced learners motivated

Regardless of intrinsic motivation, it is common for advanced learners to feel as if they are plateauing, as their issues with English are often small, intricate, and unrelated. Furthermore, the vocabulary required for reading academic or technical material can still feel daunting. As plateauing can lead to demotivation or resigning themselves to their current level, leading to infrequent course attendance or withdrawal from the course altogether, it is especially important to show them that they are, in fact, making regular progress.

Cumulative tests are an effective means of showing progress, but are infrequent and often linked to how much the learners review outside of class, which is often not guaranteed in corporate classes. Fortunately, learners can leave nearly every lesson with a sense of achievement and satisfaction, as well as understand their progress within a larger context, if informal quantitative and qualitative means of measuring progress are a regular part of a course.

Receptive skills

Even though advanced learners can likely handle most kinds of spoken and written discourse, it is still important to have an overarching curriculum structure, particularly in terms of topics. Ideally, such topics would come from their own resources, but what is more essential is that they are relevant to the learners so they feel that their knowledge is expanding and skills are deepening in that field.

Giving learners access to live and unscripted listening practice can be a fun challenge for them, particularly as any speaking task can be used as a listening task. Certain learners could, for instance, be responsible for taking notes, in which case the difficulty of the listening task can always be increased.

It should also be noted that the difficulty of a text can sometimes be measured. You can use a site like www.textalyser.net to determine the lexical density of a piece, meaning the ratio of content words to function words. Text analysis tools like this also measure how many unique words are in a passage in addition to assessing its complexity. This is especially useful for determining material to include and planning how to increase its difficulty over the course.

Vocabulary
While advanced learners should be keeping their own word lists, a master list of words from each class can be used for regular review and quizzes, as well as to provide evidence of progress. A trick to further encourage the repetition and retention of new words is the 'banishing' of familiar words, which promotes the use of synonyms or alternate expressions. Learners should also be encouraged to focus on word groups, antonyms, affixes, and common collocations while learning new vocabulary, in order to put even more words at their disposal and broaden their language awareness.

In addition, sites like Textalyser and Wordle can also compile lists of the most relevant and frequently used words in a text, which can help ensure targeted vocabulary is useful and relevant to a course.

Speaking skills
Measuring speaking progress can be difficult, as there are so many components involved in communicating successfully in a foreign language. Advanced learners can, however, become aware of the variety of speaking skills they are mastering through consistent task modifications. For example, a task can be altered by changing the register, the technical or cultural background of the participants, or by introducing a new complication. If these sorts of modifications happen on a regular basis, learners will realize they are getting progressively better at handling a range of speaking scenarios. However, as with receptive skills, the task should be within a relevant context and connected to the greater scheme of the course to demonstrate a broadening of knowledge in a subject area and give learners a sense of focus.

Such speaking tasks can be rated in a more quantitative fashion through the use of quantitative rubrics measuring factors such as appropriateness of language and register, use of vocabulary, or any other aspect of speaking that the teacher wishes to focus on. In addition, the learners can often rate each other qualitatively and prepare comments for each other.

As with all levels, learners should, if possible, be encouraged to record themselves on a regular basis to give them empirical evidence that they have gradually improved.

Enabling advanced learners to focus on progress
Finally, advanced learners can often take on the role of the teacher in terms of summarizing a previous lesson, giving feedback, and providing a wrap-up at the end of a session. The latter is especially useful as it makes them aware of what they have accomplished. This further contributes to making them aware of how good they are and how much better they are becoming.

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2 'It's a pony, Ian': Understanding 'non-businessy' language in a business world – *Ian Badger*

Partner, BMES, Bristol, UK

My day job is helping multinational teams to work more effectively using English, so I began this talk by summarizing my work, which mainly involves running short intensive courses for employees of leading industrial companies in various locations in Europe.

My ‘students’ typically have an advanced level of English and in recent years have come from Germany, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Turkey, Denmark, Hungary, Russia, Ukraine, the UK and the USA. They need to develop their communication skills working in, for example:

• paper company supply chain centres in Germany, Finland and Sweden

• payroll teams based in Finland

• IT applications support in Poland and Finland

• UK-based ‘global-facing’ functions in the insurance industry

So why am I so interested in the ‘social’ side of business, the understanding and use of ‘non-businessy’ language? I asked some employees of a major insurance company to summarise their main challenges in working in English internationally. These are some of their replies (in their own words).

“The hardest thing to get in another language is jokes or sarcasm, so be careful about using it. Even though you think you speak English there are many different accents and some of them are hard to understand for a non-native speaker, e.g. Irish, Scots, Indians, …” (Swiss)

“Personally for me, it was not easy working with Brits initially. Language is the main barrier, although we speak the common English language, the British accent was very difficult for me to understand, and I think vice versa. Brits find it really hard understanding Malaysian English as well.” (Malaysian)

“Communication: indirect messages do not have a literal meaning as in my home country. We say things explicitly and in a direct manner to achieve the same goal. Humour style: you need to be prepared for ironic messages all around.” (Argentinian, working in a UK office)

These comments tie in with my business learners’ generally-held view that they need to understand the people they are working with, wherever they are from; and this involves, amongst other things, understanding a range of accents and being culturally aware. We need to spend time working on the ‘social’ side of business because, to quote Bicknell (2014), Business English is ‘fuzzy…, open-ended, loose-ended’. My learners are like Bicknell’s students – they are very often advanced and can handle the everyday exchanges with clear native and non-native speakers, but they ‘need to improve communication skills with difficult speakers … – working with high-level, non-scripted materials helps them to do this, motivates, and gives confidence to handle the unexpected’.

Bicknell mentions the importance of using ‘non-scripted’ materials to motivate and to help give learners confidence. I stress the importance of using such ‘authentic’ listening materials, as opposed to ‘scripted’ listening materials. My experience suggests that in order to engage and motivate our learners fully, our materials should reflect genuine working/living environments. Study time is often short for business learners and they need to put what they learn in the classroom and in self-study to immediate use.

Whether the authentic listening text is business-orientated or not, if carefully chosen as relevant to learners’ interests and needs, the trainer can, for example, decide to focus on: the topic of a recording, specific accents, cultural aspects, functional language, grammar used in real contexts and the active listening techniques used by the speakers.

In order to demonstrate how we can work on more general listening materials to help our business learners with key communication skills, I played some authentic recordings from

Badger 2014 and Badger 2012. An example of how a 'general' authentic listening text can be used as a springboard for a wide range of language work is provided by the recording which was the title of my talk: 'It's a pony, Ian', a phrase used by Fiona, the owner of the pony. This recording, which features in Badger 2014, contains use of humour, banter and irony as well as a wide and natural use of non-prescriptive grammar and rich vocabulary in everyday social interaction. From a short section of the recording I identified the following uses of tenses by Fiona. The grammar context may be general/social, but the language is wholly transferable to a work context.

Simple past *I went to America for a month* *I left him for over four weeks and when I got back…*	**Present perfect** *I've had him for twelve years* *The longest I've been away is two weeks*
'Would' for habitual past *He wouldn't look at me*	**Past continuous** *The vet reckons he was pining for me*
	Past perfect *He had lost two stone in weight* *We had built up that kind of relationship*

Business people need to build relationships with their contacts around the world, to talk about everyday matters, to improve everyday cultural and linguistic awareness. For this reason, we should not neglect what, at first sight, may appear to be 'non-businessy' language and materials in our Business English training.

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3 Brain power – *Rita Baker*

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For quite a few years now, language training has been influenced by insights gained from concepts such as NLP, Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences model, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the Silent Way derived from Caleb Gattegno's work, or Georgi Lozanov's Suggestopedia. Many educators believe that language training should include a balance of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic input and practice.

At the beginning of 2013 I decided to produce a tips booklet entitled 'Twelve Things Every Teacher Should Know', based on my own experience of over 40 years. However, as I began to research into what evidence existed to support my findings, I found myself becoming more and more interested in neurological research. Consequently, I ended up writing a book, called Brain Power (2014). This is what I drew on for this pre-conference workshop. Instead of looking at the findings of neurological research to see how we should teach, I decided to look at some of the successful practices we already include in our repertoire, with a view to discovering how and why they work.

First I presented a structural overview of the brain, highlighting the interdependence of the various parts and the fact that it is 'democratically' rather than 'hierarchically' organised. We then looked at the differentiation of the cerebral cortex (outer section of the brain) into lobes, noting that a proportionately larger part of it is given over to visual rather than auditory reception and processing. However, the brain is essentially plastic, not only in its ability to change and develop in response to learning experiences, but also in the sense that learning in one modality (e.g. physical spatial awareness) can be transferred to another. For example, a learner who cannot distinguish between musical notes can be helped to see the distinction by learning to perceive distances between objects.

The organisation of the brain into left and right hemispheres, connected by the corpus callosum, is also significant. Storytelling and metaphors are powerful learning tools because they combine the linearity and sequencing largely associated with the left side, and the creativity and imagination attributed to the right side.

A key point of the workshop was to identify which part of the brain is the most important for establishing memory. It happens to be the emotional centre, as participants demonstrated by recalling their earliest childhood memories, nearly all of which derived from emotional and sensory experience. Key structures, including the thalamus and amygdala, play an essential role in the filtering of incoming data. The emotional brain is the gateway to the higher thinking areas, which is why a frightening or stressful experience can cause the 'higher' part of the brain to shut down. However, unexpected, amusing or novel events help to focus attention. This data is filtered into the hippocampus, which has only a limited holding capacity, so it has to be passed on to areas in the cortex for long-term storage. This requires 'downtime', in the form of sleep or rest. Without this, any further incoming data 'spills over' and is lost. This is why short, regularly repeated periods of study punctuated by breaks are more effective than intensive last-minute swotting up.

We looked at the four different kinds of memory – semantic (new vocabulary), procedural (kinaesthetic), episodic (contextual) and reflexive (e.g. sensory) – the kinds of activities associated with them, and how we might link them up to create more accelerated and effective learning. We also looked at the importance of state, which is connected with the frequency of brainwaves, and how this might be used, as for example it is used in Suggestopedia. The state of consciousness known as 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008), the optimum condition for learning, is brought about by an equal balance of positive stress and relaxation. Activities need to provide enough challenge to be stimulating, without causing negative stress.

From there we moved on to how learning gets 'hardwired'; namely how new neural connections are formed and fixed, and the essential role that review and repetition plays in this. Certain activities and conditions increase the production of endorphins. These are 'feel good' hormones that help to promote learning, whereas the production of stress hormones, such as cortisol, reduces the potential for learning.

A little knowledge about the different kinds of brain cells is helpful to teachers and trainers. The motor neurons include 'mirror' neurons. When we visualise an action, motor neurons can produce the same effect in our brains as if we have actually carried it out. This has great implications for role-plays and simulations in creating a sense of reality and experience. The vast majority of brain cells, however, are interneurons, whose primary function is to detect pattern and create meaning. Again, this is important to bear in mind when planning activities.

The workshop ended with an examination of the key stages of learning, which are not to be confused with the stages of cognitive development. At the most basic stage, knowledge is seen as absolute: information is absorbed and remembered as objectively either right or wrong, and there is little room for ambiguity or uncertainty. Language learners can get stuck on 'rules'. With experience, understanding becomes more and more relative until at an advanced stage they start to construct their own understanding through analysis, synthesis and evaluation, while remaining open to different possibilities and conclusions. By this stage learners are able to open up to new ways of seeing things, without feeling threatened or insecure.

The conclusion of this workshop was that a simple understanding of basic neurology can have an empowering effect on the way we plan and deliver our training, and should perhaps be given greater weight in professional development.

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4 Thinking on our feet: improvisational techniques for the classroom – ***Roy Bicknell***
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Our business students are increasingly required to be flexible in their response as professionals. They are in all respects public performers, which is why we need to have another look at how we define what is functional in Business English. Are the parameters for classroom practice too narrow and do they need broadening? This Prague workshop explored techniques from the field of Applied Improvisation and had a strong interactive component. The two-part core of the workshop required audience performance in improvisational activities which I had introduced in the classroom, and in activities I had adapted from Applied Improvisation.

Before we performed the improvisations, I first told the audience a personal anecdote about a sales manager who is often asked to extemporise by handling any questions that corporate clients fire at him, usually without his having prior knowledge of the client's current portfolio. This extreme example of business improvisation prepared the ground for discussing factors which, in my view, stretch our idea of what students require for the workplace. One such factor is that learner proficiency levels are rising fast, but at the same time learners may feel that they are underperforming at critical moments. This is partly due to the more challenging virtual and global business world many students now perform in. It requires a flexibility of response, which is not addressed in traditional communication models of learning. The premise here is that working on improvisational skills addresses this need for flexibility, and I put it to the audience that communication is largely improvisational in nature. Indeed, we 'make up' most of what we communicate, so why not teach this to our business students?

Improvisation sequence one

And now to the improvisations. I had the audience stand up to perform them, and explained – much to the amusement of participants – that they now needed to 'think on their feet'. We started with a word association game, In a Word. The idea is to form small groups and circulate words by association on an agreed subject. At any time, a group member can intervene and say 'Develop!' and the last speaker develops on the last spoken word. The word game caused a flurry of group activity in the audience, and with its emphasis on spontaneity is similar to activities that are used in applied improvisation. One point raised in the post-activity discussion was that this improvisation would stimulate group interaction and fluency; another was that this would be one way of handling that student bugbear, the fear of making mistakes.

The second improvisation in this sequence is called Tiny Stories. The basic idea is, in groups of two or three, to make up tiny stories using three images which I provide to the students. They are given only a few minutes to create their tiny story, and this highlights its improvisational nature. The images could be used in random order to create the story. It was immediately clear to the audience that students would need analysis and synthesis as skills in their storytelling. Before having the improvisation performed, I showed the audience how this could be modelled for students. I had created my own tiny story using three images: a young woman with a microphone, a megaphone and three smartphones on a bed of autumn leaves. I walked up and down the room aisle while playing dreamlike music from a smartphone, as I told my tiny story: 'Once upon a time there was a girl who loved her microphone. She loved it so much...' The audience could view the images on the slideshow while I 'walked and talked'. I was in a sense showing the audience the power of image and text and in so doing was also proposing their relevance in this kind of learning activity. The whole workshop had a strong visual element which underpinned its improvisational theme.

Improvisation sequence two

The second sequence introduced activities which Kat Koppett collated from the field of Applied Improvisation for her book, Training to Imagine (2013). One improvisation is called Conversation Weave and is perhaps the most challenging for students¬ – as it also proved to be for the audience. The basic idea is that group members form a circle and tell each other story chunks (a sentence or perhaps two). After the first story round, participants start to weave in words from the other stories that are being shared. This is clearly more complex than the improvisations from the first sequence. I have only used this with students when they have become familiar with the improvisational approach. The post-activity discussion raised considerations such as the need for student observers and its possible use for business simulations.

Perhaps the most enjoyable and engaging improvisation for the audience was Ask Silly Questions. I showed them a slide with silly questions such as 'When does language get creamy?' and 'How do you drink a room?'. I elicited and got the silliest responses from the amused audience. But is there a didactical point? I agree with Kat Koppett that 'doing silly' takes us out of the status quo, and is an awareness-raiser. This is similar to a strand of thinking among educators that goes back to the early writings of John Dewey (1997) on the importance of curiosity in learning. I extended the idea for the classroom by adding a variation, Ask Silly Professional Questions. How would a lawyer, for example, respond to this question: 'Can you guarantee that we'll win if we follow your advice?'. I then explored with the audience the way this improvisation could be applied and the didactical considerations that arise from this.

In the classroom, the most effective application of Ask Silly Professional Questions has proved to be a two-group format in which each group prepares silly questions related to their professional field, after which they form a semi-circle and perform a showdown, each group firing questions at the opposite group. Interactive fun is guaranteed, and much food for thought too. The reflective nature of the improvisation is enhanced when we have observer groups, who then give feedback to the performers but also take their turn to perform in the next round. In this way, the whole class has the opportunity to engage in performance and observation.

Final considerations
The brief was to show how students can use improvisation and thereby find ways of responding to the unexpected. There are more didactical points that can be considered when adopting improvisational techniques, but I proposed that activities which challenge students in their handling of the unscripted better prepare them for the workplace. This in turn affects our idea of what is functional in Business English. The audience response suggests that some participants are already rethinking the parameters of their classroom work. If this workshop has added a new perspective on how we approach our learners, then the audience not only had some fun but also had something to reflect on as we go forward in our fast-changing teacher practice.

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5 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 Improve your communication skills: how to talk to difficult students – *Patricia de Griese*

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My talk in Stuttgart started with a short brainstorming session to find out what we understood by 'difficult'. We quickly realized this kind of student comes in different shapes and sizes, and we have all met them: the socializer, the know-it-all, the loner, the sceptic, the dominant speaker, the one who doesn't participate...

And we have occasionally allowed some of them to get on our nerves, disrupt the flow of our carefully planned class, or even seriously ruin our day. So, what could we do to involve everyone, teach a successful class and remain calm and composed in the process?

We concluded that, for starters and to everyone's great relief, only 1% of the general population exhibits psychopathic traits. This means that everyone we meet is most likely a normal person going about their day being themselves. They probably didn't wake up intent on raining on our parade. Unfortunately, that is not how we generally assess the situation.

We may not know that we go through life filtering, deleting, and generalizing information, as well as distorting this information to fill the gaps that our deletions caused. This interpretation is what we call reality and is the basis of how we choose to react, of what we choose to say and how. This is also where the trouble starts...

These filters, which are always on, are the result of our experience, upbringing, preferences, and thoughts – in short, our biography. And since no two biographies are the same, it is a miracle when communication actually works.

In order to minimize the chances of misunderstanding, we need to increase our attention to incoming information. That is, we should learn to turn off that voice inside our heads that is constantly interpreting and judging our environment. We do this unconsciously. Since our brains are designed to keep us safe, we look to clues and patterns for threats.

What if we switched off that judging voice and remembered that behind everything people do or say there is probably a positive intention and a need that wants to be fulfilled? What are the needs of someone who interrupts a lot? Is it the need to be heard or the need for attention? What if we gave them that? Could appointing that person to be the speaker of their group be a way to satisfy the need and get them on our side? What could be the needs behind passive, withdrawn behavior? The need to listen, observe and process information internally? What happens when we interrupt that need and 'force' them to talk? Probably more of the same withdrawn behavior...

There are certain clues and patterns we can observe to get an accurate picture of our students' individual preferences. Remember that we all strive to feel 'understood'. If you detect those patterns, you will be able to address your students matching their preferred learning style and they will feel 'understood'.

According to Carl Jung, we all perceive the world and make judgments about it in different and recognizable ways. We have inherited and developed dominant traits and we also have underdeveloped traits and blind spots in our perceptions and interactions with others. Conflict usually arises when we communicate with someone who has a different style than we do and we feel our needs are not being met.

Jung notes that we differ in how we:

- Find our emotional energy (Introversion vs. Extraversion)
- Make decisions (Thinking vs. Feeling)
- Process information (Sensing vs. Intuiting)
- Orient ourselves to the world (Judging vs. Perceiving)

Introverts need to go 'inside' to think and process information before they share their thoughts and ideas with others. They would rather stand back until they find meaning. If they are interrupted by someone preferring to think out loud, a common reaction is withdrawing from the conversation. The 'noise' outside does not let them think clearly. Interpreting this 'pause to think' as 'withdrawn behavior' can only complicate matters. Let us simply understand and honor this need and assign a few minutes for individual work before we ask students to do group work or discuss something in plenary. The latter will please Extraverts, who must interact with the world to find answers.

Thinkers use rational thought and objective facts to make decisions and reach conclusions. They prefer rules and procedures. They lack interest in compromising and might not notice other people's feelings. Feelers are more understanding of others' needs and values. They are usually good at persuading. They may be impatient with analytical types. Notice how your students react when you give them instructions for an activity. Do they jump in and get started, or do they ask for more data? What is your instruction-giving style?

The Sensing types like sensory information and pay attention to details. They are careful and systematic in their approach to activities and can be impatient with theorizing and slow in completing tasks. The Intuitive type sees possibilities and likes working with new ideas, imagining and brainstorming. They may be inattentive to details and forget practical considerations. Think about the type of activities you prefer; could you be addressing mainly one of these types?

There are two quite different approaches to life. Judgers prefer to get things done. They need to keep things moving so new data may be ignored. Perceivers usually miss deadlines because they prefer open-ended situations; new data make them rethink a decision, they believe the journey is more interesting than the destination. Judgers call themselves firm and decisive. Perceivers may view them as stubborn and inflexible. Perceivers call themselves open, compromising and tolerant; Judgers may view them as unreliable, weak and indecisive. What are the words you use to describe yourself and others?

In short, we need to stop labeling people as 'difficult', for example. It is important to remember that the more we know about ourselves and our preferences, the better prepared we are to recognize and meet our students' needs. This can easily be done by increasing our awareness of learning styles and balancing the activities we use in class.

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7 Finding your voice: The value of extended speaking – *Paul Dummett*
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This talk had two aims. The first was to investigate the extent to which good presentation skills, as modelled by TED Talk speakers and other effective public speakers, could be transferable to students' classroom performance, and from there to other areas of their lives. The second was to examine how practical it is for busy managers to learn and implement the type of techniques used in such talks in their own business presentations.

So, what are extended speaking turns in a class teaching setting? They consist of individual students giving structured or semi-structured talks of 3-5 minutes and perhaps, in time, fuller presentations of 15-20 minutes. For several reasons, this seems like a good idea. The student has time to think about what they are going to say and how they are going to say it, making it more likely that they will express themselves as they would actually like to, rather than as they might happen to when asked to speak spontaneously. It also has the advantage of placing a premium on their intelligibility: good pronunciation and clear delivery are key – much more than they are in group work or pair work where it is possible to ask for repetition or clarification. When giving an individual talk, the learner's language skills are fully exposed, giving the teacher the opportunity to identify those things which are really holding them back, whether that's ingrained errors from first language interference, poor pronunciation or a lack of appropriate vocabulary. It should be noted that important factors in determining how someone is listened to include not only the ideas expressed and the body language of the speaker, but also the quality of their voice (pace, tone, volume, etc) and the words they choose to explain those ideas.

So, what will students talk about during these extended speaking turns, and how can we make their task seem less threatening? (However confident an individual language learner may appear to be, we must not forget how vulnerable their situation is). What I have taken from watching many TED Talks is that there are three basic rules of thumb for the content of a good talk: be informed, be passionate, be authentic. In other words, speak about something you know about, that you care about and also something that reflects your own true feelings and experience. There are various questions we teachers can ask to help find out where and when our students feel most engaged and what subjects they feel comfortable with: for example, 'What did you want to be when you grew up?' 'What change would you most like to see in the world?' 'If you didn't have to work again, what would you do with your life?' Stimulating subject matter may just as easily be found in the ideas, words or work of others (not all of us have an inner passion bursting to get out). You can just as easily ask students to give a short talk on an article they have read, a place they have visited, an event they have attended, a film they have seen or a piece of graffiti they have seen and photographed.

As to making tasks non-threatening, the key is to break them down into manageable chunks. For example, asking students to collaborate in pairs to write the opening part of a talk or its concluding words; to design one presentation slide and think about how they would include it in a talk; or to think about how they would illustrate a particular point with a concrete example during a talk. In addition, give them simple presentation skills tasks, like establishing their credibility at the start of a talk (opening words about themselves) or asking them to think about how they would pace a short text you have provided them with if they were presenting it. Little by little, through digestible chunks such as these, students can build a full repertoire of good presentation skills and habits that will help them, not only when giving a formal presentation, but in any area of life – a job interview, an exam, a work meeting – where they have to present an idea or argument.

Much of the above can also apply to helping business people give more effective presentations. Another important part of the TED formula is particularly relevant here and that is the idea of structuring a talk in a way that takes the listener on a journey. In some cases, the journey could be a personal narrative; in others, it could be a journey from a problem that needs to be solved to a neat solution. This approach assumes two things, namely that a) you should write the talk yourself and b) that you should hone, edit and rehearse it carefully before you give it. However, in my experience of teaching business people, managers often don't have the time for this kind of preparation. They ask an assistant to put together some slides for them on, say, a departmental re-organisation and then they spend an hour looking at the slides before they deliver their presentation. This is a fact of busy working life and not behaviour we can hope to change overnight. Yet, through the use of good models and short speaking exercises, such as the ones I have outlined above, we can begin to sensitize managers to the effectiveness of taking their audience on a 'journey' in their presentations and get them to incorporate some small elements to make them easier to relate to as speakers.

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8 Impression management – *Evan Frendo*

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Impression management (IM) is about how we seek to convey the best impression possible when we interact with other people. It is important to look good and sound good. This is clearly an important business skill, particularly in the early stages of a relationship. Typically, we do this by 'embellishing' our role or contribution, by explaining how we cleverly did something which saved the day, by showing how 'stupid' other people are, by praising and complimenting whenever possible, and so on. If we assume that such tactics or techniques are useful for our Business English learners, then we might want to practise the relevant language in the classroom. This talk on IM was divided into two parts. We first examined what we mean by IM, looking at some examples of common tactics and language along the way. In the second part we considered possible classroom activities.

IM has a long history, with Aristotle being one of the earliest to demonstrate how language can be used to control what other people think of us. Shakespeare's 'All the world's a stage …' speech famously compared people to actors playing roles in life. This dramaturgical metaphor was later extended in Erving Goffman's much cited The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Goffman, 1959), which laid the foundations for much of how we see IM today. Goffman saw interlocutors as 'actors' taking on different roles and different identities in order to influence and even control how others see them; social interaction is a performance in which actors and audience collaborate to effectively shape reality. Much of his work focussed on business contexts, where IM is typically used to build trust, establish credibility and create rapport.

We then looked at common tactics used in IM, including self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation and supplication (Jones & Pittman, 1982), emphasising that different cultures (national, corporate, professional) may use these tactics in different ways. What may count as likeable self-promotion in one context may come across as sycophantic behaviour in another. Likewise, complimenting and flattery might be seen as a useful way of making an interlocutor feel good in one context, but might have quite a different effect in another.

The aim of the second part of the talk was to demonstrate different types of classroom activities. Activity 1 focussed on using authentic texts to analyse spoken language. First we looked at a transcript of a conversation between two business people who were meeting for the first time, and analysed it in terms of self-promotion language. In the second text we looked at the language used by a project manager during the opening of a meeting with a new team. This time the focus was on looking at how the discourse was structured to leave a favourable impression and demonstrate leadership competence. Our checklist for this included: (a) showing that you know what is happening; (b) explaining your vision; (c) giving guidance and directions; and (d) remembering the names of people.

In the second activity we looked at IM lexis, specifically ingratiation language in emails. Using the Enron email corpus as a source (Styler, 2011), we looked at examples of written language, focussing on lexical items like 'great job', 'well done', and 'way to go', following up with possible activities for practising the use of this language with learners (gap-fills, matching exercises, functional analysis).

Finally we looked at incorporating an IM perspective into common Business English classroom activities such as role-plays. Looking at typical contexts such as job interviews, small talk, starting a presentation, opening a meeting and giving feedback, we considered techniques like discussion and observation which can be used to build awareness of the language of IM within the classroom.

The workshop provoked some stimulating discussion. Among the points raised were: (a) the many possible ways of analysing and interpreting spoken interaction; (b) the limitations of using transcripts to represent spoken interaction; (c) the potential difficulty of teaching IM tactics in a specific cultural context; and (d) the limited availability of authentic data for business English trainers to exploit.

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9 Dealing with sporadic attendance in Business English courses – ***Claire Hart***

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The focus of this workshop was on sporadic attendance within Business English courses in an in-company training context. Sporadic attendance was defined here as a situation where participants' attendance is either inconsistent, infrequent or both. If sporadic attendance occurs, you're likely to have a situation where in a group of six, for example, two participants attend one week and another two attend the next week and then the following week only one shows up. In an in-company context, where participation in Business English courses is often voluntary and participants often have to interrupt their working day to attend or have to attend at the end of their workday when they are tired, sporadic attendance is a common phenomenon, as the participants in this workshop attested.

The elephant in the room

This session provided a space for us teachers to admit that we have encountered this issue in our teaching practice and to feel reassured that this situation is not a reflection of our inadequacies or failings as teachers. We agreed that we can use the metaphor of the elephant in the room for the issue of sporadic attendance in the sense that we all know that it exists and that it is problematic, but we usually choose to ignore it rather than confront it.

I shared with the participants some comments that I'd heard other teachers make about their experiences of sporadic attendance. We explored the way in which sporadic attendance can cause us to question our abilities as teachers and think that it is happening because we are doing something wrong or not doing something that we should be doing. There is also the fact that we can spend a long time preparing for courses by carrying out a needs analysis, designing the course, selecting materials and putting them all together, only to find that we are practically unable to deliver the training course as we had planned due to sporadic attendance and this can, of course, lead to frustration and demotivation on our part. Another issue that arose from looking at these comments was the fact that the sporadic attendance of some participants can have a negative impact on the motivation levels of the participants who are able to attend regularly and may actually result in them attending less frequently themselves.

QTIP

Clearly, however, the blame for the occurrence of sporadic attendance should not be laid solely at the door of Business English teachers themselves as, in fact, a range of diverse factors are exerting their influence in the in-company context. One message that I wanted to pass on to the workshop participants was, therefore, QTIP, which is short for: 'Quit Taking It Personally'. We then moved on to look at why sporadic attendance occurs and I had divided these factors into four groups, each of which I asked a section of the participants to discuss. These four groups were: factors influenced by the participant, factors influenced by the company, factors influenced by the teacher and factors beyond everyone's control.

Determining factors

Some of the results of these discussions were, firstly, that the participants' attitude towards English training and the amount of value they place on learning English and professional development in general was an important factor, as was the participants' workload. You may find that the heavier the participants' workload, the less frequently they are likely to attend, but effective time management skills can balance this out. Moving on to factors influenced by the company, this would prove to be the most numerous group and, as a result, we came to the conclusion that we often underestimate the extent to which the company itself, which is paying for the training and should, therefore, have an interest in having as many participants as possible in training as frequently as possible, may be inadvertently contributing to sporadic attendance.

We identified the attitudes of the boss, colleagues, the HR department and the corporate culture in general with regard to English training as having a significant impact. Factors such as the participants' workload, the size of the group, frequency of business trips and the facilities made available for the courses are also usually determined by the company. Teachers play a role here too though, and it was mentioned that the attendance of some teachers at their courses can be sporadic too. More generally, we discussed how the teacher's ability to set clear learning goals, make links between lessons, boost motivation levels and establish rapport with their learners can influence the participants' attendance. Finally, the factors out of everyone's control which we discussed included health and personal issues, weather, bank holidays and staff meetings or events that learners cannot avoid attending.

Mitigation strategies
In the final stage of the workshop, we looked at a number of strategies that teachers can use in order to mitigate some of the negative effects that sporadic attendance can have on the coherence of the course and the progress participants make. These included: making the most of lessons where only a small number of participants attend to focus on or reassess their specific needs. This could include visiting their workplace and asking them to give you a tour of it in English (assuming that this is possible). These workplace visits can provide excellent opportunities for 'vocabulary harvesting' and help you build on the learners' strengths and weaknesses when it comes to work-related vocabulary and functional language. Another strategy that we looked at was being prepared to deviate from your course plan if only one or two participants can come and using some framework activities with them to recycle or review language or generate new work-related language.

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10 Using infographics and animated videos in business English teaching – *Mike Hogan*
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Current reality
Prior to the conference I ran a brief online survey aimed at finding out how teachers address certain topics in business English training and if, and how, they use infographics or animated videos in their training. The survey found that teachers find it most relevant to focus on their learners' immediate needs, build their confidence and develop their fluency in work-relevant contexts. Three-quarters of the twenty-five respondents used infographics in their training, yet only 30% created them themselves and none of the respondents created their own animated infographics.

Discussions support fluency: Infographics can help
It was agreed that learners can develop both their fluency and their confidence through relevant and guided discussions. Often, discussion input in coursebooks comes in the form of articles, which may be either too short or inaccessible at lower levels, and which run the risk of being lengthy and not engaging enough to hold learners' attention at higher levels. The same can be said of video input such as interviews of dramatic scenes in business contexts. Infographics can be a solution to all of these challenges.

The input in infographics is usually pictorial, light and not too complex. If framed and presented accordingly, the ensuing discussions from a single infographic can be tailored to be appropriate for all learners regardless of language level. This also means that they can be a versatile resource for teachers and trainers.

I presented an example from my latest coursebook *Business English for Beginners A1/A2*, which had won the 2017 David Riley Award for Innovation in Business English and ESP the previous evening. This example looked at workplace trends and how organisations are re-designing their office spaces to encourage more spontaneous meetings and creativity. Many of the audience members were able to relate to the topic, both from their own experience and when considering that of their learners. A lively discussion followed during which the audience not only agreed with but also demonstrated the points made above about engagement and accessibility.

Source: *Business English for Beginners A1 / A2*

Animated infographics and mobile learning

From static pictorial infographics, we moved on to moving images. It is well-known that there is more demand for video content in learning these days, and the prevalence of mobile devices means that this also supports autonomous learning and engagement. Building on this idea, we looked at animated infographics (also often known as explainer videos), again taking an example from the aforementioned coursebook. This comprised a short two-minute animated video of an infographic on service design, which the audience had seen in image format first. Using recognition software within a free app which accompanies the book, I demonstrated how the camera on the phone can recognise the images and play an associated video; in this case, an animated version of the image.

The service design animated infographic looked at service design and delivery from an internal point of view and suggested that everyone who does something for their colleagues is essentially providing them with an internal service, be it compiling a report, processing some information, or something else. The narrator explained this further and asked the viewers to reflect on the level and quality of internal service they provide. The aim was to not only provide learners with an engaging discussion topic, but also to encourage reflection on their workplace practices, and how they might improve them and the quality of the relationships they have at work. I went on to ask the audience members to reflect on our role as Business English teachers to not only teach Business English, but also to support our learners' workplace development and performance.

Create your own

Having discussed the pedagogical benefits of both infographics and animated videos with the audience, I ended my talk by showing some examples I had created myself, without the support of a publisher, to demonstrate how easy it is. I then gave a brief overview of 10 tools for creating infographics and 10 tools for creating explainer videos.

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11 Writing Business English teacher resources – *John Hughes*

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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 for 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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12 Adaptive learning and language teaching: a love-hate relationship – *Ania Kolbuszewska*

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Big data
Big data is a relatively new concept. But data as such has always been there: our names, addresses, educational history, history of illnesses, phone numbers, employment history are

all kinds of data, which has been collected and analysed – some for a surprisingly long time. Then there is data relating to geography, physics, astronomy, the weather, and so on. However, it is only with advances in technology that the amount of data produced has literally exploded: so much so that we create the vast majority of currently existing data in the two-year period preceding any present moment. This is even reflected in language change: we no longer talk about analysing data but about data mining and data miners.

It is predicted that by the year 2018 the number of people working specifically on big data will exceed a quarter of a million. Why are more and more people working on big data? Because it is only the analysis of such enormous amounts of data that allows us to see patterns which are otherwise impossible to detect. These patterns, in turn, are used to predict what may happen in the future in an increasingly wide range of human activity. Predictive policing allows for a reduction in the crime rate by using data to predict where crime is most likely to happen and to prevent it more effectively. Predictive marketing is described as 'the next big thing' in the world of advertising: predicting customer behaviour and beaming just-in-time marketing of a particular product or service to customers' mobile device is already happening. The world of finance uses data to find patterns in seemingly unpredictable market trends.

Big data in education

Big data has also entered education and is the basis for a new generation of online systems called adaptive learning systems. These are systems which, by analysing huge amounts of data, create individual learning paths for each particular user. Early adaptive learning systems
were only able to show what the learner was getting wrong; current adaptive learning systems endeavour to do much more. They don't only show what the learner gets wrong, but, by analysing the reasons for the mistake, they're able to construct a learning path which will teach the learner to avoid making the same mistake in the future.

Adaptive learning systems have received a mixed reception in the world of education. They are rapidly gaining in popularity in some parts of the world, especially in tertiary education, which has become a battleground for students/customers in recent years. The battle lines seem to be drawn between traditional, college-based tertiary education, for which AL systems may be an attractive, cost-cutting alternative, and free, massive open online courses. On the other hand, the fact that AL may facilitate cost-cutting measures has sparked strong and well-articulated protests among parents and educators.

It is in the world of language teaching that adaptive learning systems have become the subject of one of the hottest public debates in recent years. As in other areas of education, one of the major concerns is the issue of data collection, or rather, of data protection. The other concern touches the even more basic issue of whether adaptive learning systems are suitable for language learning and teaching at all.

From a purely business point of view, AL systems are very attractive for publishers: they allow them to use a subscription model for their materials on a much wider scale. This model is more profitable than selling printed materials (e.g. individual coursebooks); at the same time, the amount of investment needed for modifying content is significantly lower than in the case of printed materials. It is, therefore, not surprising that AL systems are very actively promoted as a solution to almost everything that ails education these days.

How adaptive learning systems work

In order to arrive at the 'why' of making a mistake, an adaptive learning system needs to work on a set of prerequisites with regard to the subject matter that is being taught. This set of prerequisites, a so-called knowledge graph, shows what learners need to know in order to correctly perform a task at a given level. In terms of language teaching and learning, this means that the knowledge graph will show what learners need to know, for example, in order to produce a correct sentence such as 'I haven't been here for 10 years'. By defining the knowledge needed, the knowledge graph will contribute to determining why learners make a mistake if they say for example, 'I wasn't here since 10 years' and whether this is a problem with the present perfect tense, or a problem with the auxiliary verb, or perhaps a problem with the use of 'since' vs. 'for'.

Adaptive learning systems – controversies

To construct a knowledge graph, language would need to be broken down into minute elements, and a way of putting these elements back together in a certain order would need to be defined. This can be done if language is viewed as a wall constructed of individual bricks which are put together layer after layer. This seems to be a very simplistic view of language as a sum total of a finite number of quantifiable elements (bricks), with little or no regard for the human, unpredictable factor of language use, or the social, cultural, symbolic or creative dimensions of using language for communication.

There have been attempts at categorising what language is acquired and in what order, such as the CEFR or Pearson's Global Scale of English. Although they're very useful for assessing the level a learner has achieved in a given language, their value as knowledge graphs is not clear: the categorisation of certain language as belonging to a given level is debatable. There are linguists who claim that deciding what level a certain piece of language belongs to is extremely difficult, if not impossible.

The 'brick-to-wall' approach to language is also worrying on another level. As language teachers we know that of all the features successful language learners have (fluency, accuracy, creativity and confidence), the last to be developed is accuracy. Grammar and vocabulary are the language systems which are most easily broken down into minute units, and so most readily usable in adaptive learning. However, if grammar and vocabulary are going to become too much of a pivotal point of adaptive language learning, with the resulting strong focus on accuracy, learners will either not develop, or will lose confidence, creativity and fluency. They will thus become unsuccessful language learners and this in itself defeats the purpose of language teaching in the first place.

Another important controversy is that surrounding data collection, or rather data protection. Adaptive learning systems need big data in order to be reliable. The leaders in the adaptive leaning systems market claim that they will be collecting data from hundreds of millions of learners. If this is the case, sufficient safeguards need to be in place to ensure that the data collected is appropriately protected and that individuals retain a degree of control over their personal data.

Education is becoming increasingly data-driven in an attempt to make it more quantifiable, in line with a market-driven demand for measurable returns for the money invested in education. On a practical level this may mean that education could be reduced to a money-making machine which does not have sufficient regard for its key human players: teachers and learners. This could also mean that teachers would seem easily replaceable to those decisionmakers who believe in education as a mechanical, additive experience rather than as a human, transformational experience. Such a belief is likely to bring about a decidedly negative response to AL systems from teachers who might see these as a threat to their jobs.

There is a whole host of other practical issues which arise in the wake of adaptive learning systems entering education. These are connected with teacher training (who will pay for training teachers in using AL systems effectively?), potential widening of the ability gap in classrooms where AL systems are used as supporting systems, or dealing with the aftermath of the novelty effect wearing off once AL systems are more widely used.

Conclusion

Whether we like it or not, big data is here to stay – and so are adaptive learning systems. However, because AL systems seem to have rather serious limitations it is our role as educators to make sure that we can maximise the potential of such systems for our students and for ourselves, while avoiding, or at least minimising, the dangers they may bring.

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13 Feel free to fail … fantastically! – *Vilhelm Lindholm*

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Feel free to fail was a presentation on an assessment method I use to grade students in a business negotiation class. In my presentation, I introduced how the course is structured, how the students are assessed, and finally, which technological applications I use to facilitate this method.

I teach in a Finnish university, so the majority of my students are Finnish. In general, Finnish university students have above average English language skills, but are less proficient at collaboration. However, the negotiation class is truly international as there are about 30-50% non-Finnish students in the form of exchange students and international degree students on the course, depending on the year. The language skills of these students vary greatly.

This heterogeneous mix of students actually adds a layer of realism to the course. Negotiating with someone who has much weaker or stronger language skills requires you to practise checking and reaffirming, skills which are vital in negotiation. However, with so many variables affecting performance in team assignments, how do you go about assessing students? I find that measuring whether the negotiation was successful or not, or whether a student used the 'proper' language does not actually focus attention on the learning process. In addition, I have found that when students feel like they have to succeed in the task to get a good grade, they tend to use risk-avoiding strategies in collaborative tasks to the detriment of the negotiation exercise. This behaviour often eliminates those 'great mistakes' that can lead to the most valuable learning experiences.

My solution is to use a course journal, self-reflection and peer reviews as assessment tools. This stresses the notion that all students make mistakes on their journey towards understanding negotiations, and it invites them to reflect on these mistakes and how they can be rectified. As students strive to improve their performance during the course, the journal becomes a testament of their learning. The following is an authentic extract from a student journal:

"I felt that I was not sincere, since there was no 'some problems'. There was a huge problem and it was right there! I explained this to the teacher who told us that many Finns feel this way. Being not direct is not the same thing as being not sincere.

This really opened my eyes and got me thinking about my way of communication. What do I earn for being direct and straightforward if my conversation/negotiating partner ends up feeling hurt?"

The students also write peer reviews. However, these do not affect the grade of the reviewed student at all. Instead, the reviewer's grade is affected. This discourages students from writing superficial and neutral reviews, and rewards those who do their best to pinpoint what went well and what could be improved. The result is a win-win situation. Students get better reviews from their peers, while improving their ability to critically observe others.

After the presentation, I was asked how one goes about assessing the subjective reflections of students. The exact question was: 'What makes a 'good' reflection?' In a field so dominated by points and criteria, it is understandable that my approach may seem dangerously vague. However, the process has been quite simple in my experience so far. As teachers, we can easily identify real reflection, as opposed to superficial reporting. As there are no 'right answers' in the course, good reflections indicate a desire to improve through inspection of the self and others. Students who highlight examples of their own actions, and try to interpret them, or ask questions about them are good self-reflectors. Similarly, a good review is one that signals the writer was observing closely.

In short, active students on the course tend to be or become good self-reflectors. Those whose activity veers off course get feedback from the teacher in the form of comments and questions, which refocuses their attention. Due to this, it is only those who choose not to interact who remain poor self-reflectors.

Still, solid self-reflection does require a good command of English. For this reason, language skill plays a part in the assessment, as those with more rudimentary skills have trouble expressing themselves. Form and style, however, are not explicit grounds for assessment.

Finally, technology has stepped in to make the tried and tested course journal a truly interactive teaching tool. The students use Google Drive to write their weekly journal entries, and I invite them to ask questions or make comments in their journals. I then respond to these entries, asking questions as well as answering them, and requesting more detail when needed, and so on.

On rare occasions, when I am reading the journal at the same time as a student is logged in, spontaneous chat sessions occur. These allow students to discuss challenging concepts in real time. I also use Adobe Connect, an application usually used for conference calls, in order to record and comment on the comprehensive negotiation tasks we do in the second half of the course. It has the crucial feature of recording the notes you write down, in sync with the webcam feed, in real time. This way, I can be more effective by writing feedback commentary for the task while the negotiation is still taking place.

This combination of reflection through an interactive course journal, recorded negotiations and peer reviews allows students to develop their negotiation skills in a supportive way. Being 'free to fail' encourages them to derive maximum value from their own mistakes, and the mistakes of others.

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14 Teaching presentation skills in a digital age – *Elena Matveeva*

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The art of public speaking has existed for a long time and has always been one of the most important things to master. Before the introduction of computers and the internet, the focus in public speaking was mainly on the speaker. The charisma, the power of persuasion, the ability to get the message across and to produce an impression that lasts were some of the important characteristics of a good speaker. We would argue that nowadays not much of this has changed, contrary to the belief of some ardent technophiles who consider a powerful slideshow to be all that is needed.

Nevertheless, it can't be denied that the digital world has had its influence on the process of giving talks. 'If there is one skill, above others, that will help you stand out in the world of international business, it is the skill of presenting. And the further you progress in your career, the more likely it is that you will be called upon to present. In the age of technology and social networking it's easy to lose sight of this. In professional life, competent presentations are expected. But great presentations are rare and always remembered' (Powell, 2010). In this article we will explore how internet tools can be a help instead of a hindrance for teachers and those trying to create an outstanding presentation. Reynolds (2012) gives an interesting analogy, comparing a presentation to a Japanese packed lunch called 'bento': 'like a Japanese bento, great slide presentations contain appropriate content arranged in the most efficient, graceful manner without superfluous decoration. The presentation of the content is simple, balanced and beautiful'. Eating such a bento is a real pleasure and Reynolds (2012) notices that in our world it is very rare to experience the same enjoyment when listening to some presentations.

Reynolds (2012) successfully explores how to avoid 'death by PowerPoint' and what should be done in order to impress the audience and to have them enjoy their time when listening to the speaker. According to him, 'live talks should have more in common with the art of a documentary than the reading of a paper document,' an idea that many of today's presenters seem to overlook. Presentations are not only about using multimedia wisely, but mostly about telling a story which is appropriately supported by imagery.

According to Powell (2010), attention should be paid to the structure of the talk, to the opening and closing, to the visuals, and to vocal power, building rapport and storytelling. These are just a few points discussed in detail in his book. During my own presentation in Bonn, I went on to describe a number of internet resources that can also be helpful in preparing an effective presentation.

There is no doubt that YouTube has an impressive repertoire of materials. For a teacher who is willing to explain to students what it takes to be a good presenter, there are countless video clips showing what to do and what to avoid doing (for example, 'Death by PowerPoint' by Don MacMillan, 'Present like Steve Jobs' and others). Here are just some of the ideas from what can be viewed there and elsewhere on the internet: use only one idea per slide, use minimal text, avoid using bullet-points, focus on telling a great story that will get the audience hooked, and use props to support the story. How to achieve all of this if not by careful preparation?

The beginning of the process is brainstorming and organizing ideas. Even though pen and paper are still considered to be the best tools in this respect (e.g. writing an idea on a Post-it note works brilliantly), there are some internet tools which can be used to make the process more stimulating. Wordle can be used to give some food for thought to students and make them reflect, while resources such as bubbl.us, Mindmeister and Spiderscribe can turn the process of brainstorming into a dynamic action, involving and engaging students.

Storytelling arguably plays a central role in an outstanding presentation, and Ted Talks offer a wide variety of examples where storytelling features can be noticed and ideas picked up.

Nowadays it is almost impossible to imagine a presentation without slides. There are numerous resources such as Prezi, Emaze, Slidebean, and Slides which can compete in efficiency with the well-known PowerPoint. It is not possible to choose a universal tool, which is why the choice should be made according to the aims of the presentation, the audience and the availability of resources. Nowadays it is quite easy to learn how to use any new tool because there are numerous tutorials on the internet to help us. Russell Stannard creates simple, clear and understandable explanations on the use of different online resources on his website Teacher Training Videos, including some of those mentioned above.

Working on pronunciation and intonation in the process of preparing a presentation is quite often overlooked but it is an issue of great importance. In our global world there might be people of different nationalities in the audience, which is why it is vital to sound clear and understandable. BESIG colleague Jennie Wright has suggested downloadable software called Speech Analyzer, which visualizes intonation and vocal power when speech is recorded, raising awareness of how to speak in order to be understood.

Finally, when the presentation is ready, it is time to practise it. Useful tools exist which allow one to record oneself as well as upload slides. They can be helpful for a teacher who is monitoring the process of preparation, but who does not have enough classroom time to check how it is going. These tools can be used to upload the slides, record the audio, and even create a video of the person presenting. MyBrainShark and Present.Me are the ones highly recommended for this purpose by Russell Stannard.

Another helpful Internet tool that can be used when there is limited classroom time is Padlet, which is useful for collecting feedback on presentations which were delivered in class, thus saving time.

In conclusion, the main principles to keep in mind when preparing a presentation are, according to Reynolds (2012), restraint in preparation, simplicity in design, and naturalness in delivery. All of these ultimately lead to greater clarity for us and our audience and will result in a brilliant and memorable presentation.

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15 Should we teach 'real' language? – *Ian McMaster*

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In this session, we discussed the extent to which Business English trainers should be teaching the 'real' language of the business world. That might seem like a no-brainer. Surely, we should be teaching authentic English and not some artificial textbook variety that has been made up using the intuition of Business English authors. I'm not so sure about this, however, and one of the aims of the session was to explain why.

Criticisms of textbooks

First, we looked at the main criticisms of typical textbook phrases — for example, for situations such as telephoning, meetings, negotiating or socializing. On the one hand, these phrases have been criticized for being artificial because corpus research shows that native speakers don't necessarily use them. At the same time, the phrases have been criticized for being too native-speaker oriented, and therefore at odds with the concept of ELF. We also discussed some of the advantages of corpus research. For example, it shows us vocabulary use and collocations that we hadn't thought of; it shows us language forms we weren't aware of; it shows us strategies that people use (for example, politeness); and it shows us the tasks people actually do at work.

Problems with the real world

Some problems of corpus research and real meetings were also discussed. Often in the literature, it is assumed that the language captured in real meetings is communicatively effective. The words 'authentic' and 'real' are, consciously or sub-consciously, used to mean 'effective', 'good' or 'better'. Yet, we cannot assume that people are either doing or saying the right things in naturally occurring communication. Indeed, the opposite is often the case.

Taking business meetings as an example, we referred back to the seminal paper on the topic by Marion Williams in 1988: 'Language Taught for Meetings and Language Used in Meetings: Is there Anything in Common?' This paper described the meetings that were analyzed like this:

'On reading the transcripts, the real meetings were almost unintelligible. The language contained a number of false starts, overlapping utterance and fillers, such as um, er and you know. A large proportion of the language contained comments, jokes, quips, repetitions and asides. Some of the sentences were not grammatically correct' (Williams, 1988: 49).

In summary, as most of us have experienced, real business meetings are often a communicative disaster. It is certainly important for learners to develop listening skills and communication strategies to survive in such meetings, for example through authentic listening exercises. But surely we wouldn't want to encourage our learners to speak in such ways: unintelligible and communicatively inefficient (and probably ineffective, too).

We can do better than this

As York Associates director and Business Spotlight author Bob Dignen has said, 'If authentic [communication] is mostly poor communication, part of the mission is to reform it and not to replicate it'. Our job as Business English trainers is to provide learners with a better model of communication than the ones they see and hear each day in the real world.

If this means creating our own 'artificial' model of communication — with phrases that are not typically found in the real world — so be it. To take one example, how often do studies of real world meetings find people saying simple things such as 'I trust you to do this job well?' Not as often as they should, I would argue.

We also discussed in the session another common criticism of textbook phrases: that they are 'overly polite' or 'overly explicit'. But what does this really mean? If it means 'overly' compared to transcripts of real meetings — which it usually seems to — that doesn't necessarily mean 'overly' compared to the communicative needs of the contexts in which learners find themselves.

On the contrary, I would argue that many real meetings are actually 'underly' polite and 'underly' explicit (in terms of both content and motive) for the context, causing both offence and confusion. A bad model doesn't become a good model just because it is real. To take one example, the 'artificial' textbook phrase, 'Excuse me for interrupting' will often be more polite and communicatively superior to the typical real world phrase, 'Yes, but…'.

The case for intelligent artificiality

The key point, discussed at the end of the session, is that we should learn from authentic materials and situations, but we shouldn't copy them if they do not meet the communicative criteria that we would like to set. And as long as our 'artificial' communication model is selected intelligently, we'll be helping our learners to become better communicators than they would by aping the real world.

In other words, what we need in our Business English teaching is not artificial intelligence but what I call 'intelligent artificiality' in our choice of language. And through our intelligent choices, we'll be helping to create the basis of an international English which is more communicatively effective than that used to date.

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16 Doing research to find answers to your questions – *Sarah Mercer, Daniel Xerri*

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Introduction

Research has the potential to be an important source of professional development for teachers (Atay, 2008). It enables them to link theory and practice, and to practise theory while theorising practice. It provides teachers with the means to engage in informed pedagogy and it makes better teaching possible (BERA-RSA, 2014). However, due to certain deep-seated beliefs about the nature of research and about who is entitled to conduct it, classroom practitioners sometimes shy away from engaging in this activity (Borg, 2009). Certain inhibitive beliefs lead some teachers to conceive of research as something that has to include statistics and complex kinds of analysis, or has to involve proving a hypothesis. They may see research as something far-removed from their practice and daily concerns or, in the worst case, as having no relevance for them and their work. They may come to associate research exclusively with academia and refuse to consider the possibility that it could ever form part of their professional identity and practices. Narrow conceptions of research make certain teachers feel alienated from this activity and discourage them from seeing it as something that can lead to professional growth. In this summary, we argue that research is much more varied than some might believe. Rather than being something inaccessible to teachers, it is actually one of the best ways for classroom practitioners to find answers to questions about their practice.

What is research?

Questions are the primary driver for most research. In fact, empirical research is described as the systematic approach to finding answers to one's questions (Hatch & Farhady, 1982, p. 1). It involves asking appropriate questions, understanding and employing systematic approaches, and generating possible answers. According to Hurston (1996), "Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose" (p. 143). That sense of purpose is what makes Punch (2006) describe research as "organised common sense" (p. 7).

As a form of "disciplined inquiry" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 15), research involves a process typically comprising the following stages: identifying a research area, designing a research study, conducting research, analysing research results, and publishing research. These stages can be further subdivided into other stages. Appendix 1 consists of a number of questions that are meant to help you reflect on the different stages of the research process. Even though you might expect research to be a highly organised and neat process, in reality it is much messier and the different stages do not necessarily follow one another in a linear manner. Despite all these stages, it is important to keep in mind that research "simply means trying to find answers to questions, an activity every one of us does all the time to learn more about the world around us" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 15). This democratic notion should help to dispel the mystique that surrounds research for some teachers. It is something everyone does to differing degrees in their everyday lives.

Research is not only an activity that all teachers can do, but it is also something that can be done in lots of different ways. Even though it can involve statistics and vast numbers, it does not have to do so. There are many equally valid and rewarding alternative approaches. In fact, there is great value in tapping practitioners' own knowledge and experiences with respect to a specific context in order to generate answers to the questions they may have. In teacher-driven research, the impetus is most often provided by practice rather than theory. It includes asking questions about teachers' practices, their students, context and professional identity; generating data in a way suitable to answering these questions; analysing and reflecting on the generated data; and sharing these findings with others in some public way, not necessarily in the form of a written publication or formalised presentation.

Different approaches to research require different understandings of what constitutes good research. The latter is not only defined in terms of validity, reliability and replicability. While these principles are helpful for those conducting quantitative research, as a teacher-researcher or for those doing qualitative research, it is better to adopt the principles of thoroughness, transparency, honesty, reflexivity, openness to alternative interpretations, and trustworthiness.

Asking questions

A good research question is the foundation when doing a study. According to O'Leary (2004), a research question serves to define an investigation, set the boundaries of the study and provide direction. It means knowing what you want to find out and being clear what your focus is. However, good research questions take time to formulate well and doing so is not a straightforward journey.

To construct a research question, you typically start by defining a topic, which involves using your creativity and curiosity as well as bearing in mind any practicalities (O'Leary, 2004, p. 33). You then move on to generating questions in order to find an angle on the topic you wish to investigate (O'Leary, 2004, p. 33). The questions enable you to identify a perspective as you begin to narrow down the scope of your study. These are some ideas of how to generate questions:

1. Consider your personal experiences or observations – What puzzles you?
2. Try turning a familiar idea on its head, looking at it from different angles and a fresh perspective.
3. Think about a theory you are aware of, but which doesn't appear to match your reality.

4. Think about a gap in the existing literature.
5. Try to think creatively about your topic – use metaphor, images, song, etc.
6. Create a mind-map to look for connections between related areas.
7. Think of any cases of uniqueness/exceptions.
8. Think of what you do not know.

In the process of generating questions, it is better to have lots of diffuse questions before you start looking for connections and honing your focus. Ultimately, the aim is to arrive at researchable questions, which can be answered through the research process. Moreover, one of the defining characteristics of good research questions is whether they are doable in practical terms given a lack of time, funding, ethical clearance and expertise (O'Leary, 2004, pp. 39–40). Can you collect data that will be able to answer your question(s)?

O'Leary (2004) makes a number of recommendations on how to verify the soundness of a research question. One of the most important considerations is that good research questions are interesting and worth investigating. They should be interconnected meaningfully with each other and their wording must be unambiguous. Care needs to be taken not to use loaded terms, to avoid making assumptions, and to set appropriate boundaries and focus. It is well worth keeping in mind that questions to which the answer is 'yes/no' are limiting. However, you must also remember that 'Why?' questions cannot be answered objectively. First, ask 'What?' and 'How?', and then 'Why?'

The formulation of a research question is an iterative process (O'Leary, 2004). Research questions are not static and may develop over time through reading, conversations, pilot studies, and the acquisition of new information at every stage. Data analysis may also lead to new research questions. In fact, you may well end up with two sets of questions: one to begin with that guides the study, and one emerging from analysis. The important thing to remember is to set out collecting data with a clear question in mind so you do not collect useless, diffuse and irrelevant data.

Finding answers

Once you have constructed your research questions, it is important to consider how you are going to go about answering them. This involves creating your study's methodological design. There are numerous possible ways to answer your research questions but you must choose the one that is most likely to help you answer your specific research questions and which works well for you as a teacher-researcher – epistemologically and practically in your specific setting (O'Leary, 2004). The decisions you take with respect to your methodological design are highly significant and will have an impact on the kind of data you collect and on how well it answers your questions.

Empirical research is about generating data that is used to answer questions, and to test or develop ideas. The two kinds of data that you can choose to collect are quantitative or qualitative. Simplistically speaking, the former consists of data primarily in the form of numbers, while the latter is data made up of texts and visuals. This is a very basic and highly simplified overview of quantitative and qualitative methods:

Quantitative

- Collects data that is analysed in numerical or statistical terms
- Useful for describing trends and relationships between variables
- Often narrow, highly focused questions
- Often large scale and survey methods
- Intended to be objective and with a lack of bias
- Issue of generalizability

Qualitative

- Collects textual or visual data
- Useful for understanding and exploring phenomena
- Often broad, general issues
- Often small scale
- Often interested in participants' perspectives
- Often analysed for themes or description – concerned with meaning, not quantity
- Acknowledges subjectivity and may be interpretative
- Issue of uniqueness

The dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative often reflects different ways of thinking and different ways of conceptualising the issue being investigated. It can also reflect different ways of working with data. The two approaches reflect various understandings of the nature and status of knowledge. Quantitative is more typical of positivism and empiricism, whereas qualitative is more typical of subjectivism and constructivism. However, there are similarities between the two and hybrid forms exist. Moreover, it is also good to remember that in reality the dichotomy is more of a continuum given that a study is likely to mix both types of data by using a mixed methods approach. Using such an approach would entail thinking about the sequence of methods you intend to use and their role in your study. Essentially, when teachers choose an approach to researching their classroom lives, they are likely to make pragmatic decisions and choose the approach most likely to answer their questions in a way that is accessible to them and of interest.

The decision about which tool to use to collect data will often reflect this preference for more quantitative or qualitative types of data. While not meant to be exhaustive, below is a list of some of the methods that you could consider employing in order to answer your research questions:

- Questionnaires
- Interviews/focus groups
- Observation/field notes
- Think-aloud/verbal protocols
- Journals/diaries/blogs
- Narratives/life histories (oral or written)
- Documents/tests/audio-visual
- Role plays/simulations
- Pictures/images/photographs

Some methods can be used in combination with others to ensure you get a balanced, rich picture of the issue being investigated. Methodological triangulation helps to make a study more robust given that different methods complement each other, make up for each other's disadvantages, and enrich the collected data. Whichever methods you opt for, you need to keep in mind the kind of research questions you want to address, and to make the best choice for you and your study. There is no one best way to conduct research and you have to find the way that works for you.

Conclusion

As shown by the various publications produced by the IATEFL Research SIG (ReSIG) over the past few years, there are a host of benefits for teachers doing research in their own contexts. Teacher research is not only a means by which a teacher can grow professionally, but is also a significant means of enhancing language learning and teaching. Above all, we find it fun and fascinating to do.

If language teachers wish to research their contexts, it would be important for them to be provided with the necessary support to develop their research literacy (Xerri, 2017, 2018). This involves having the knowledge and skills to write effective and researchable research questions, being able to select an appropriate way of answering these questions, designing research instruments, and collecting and analysing the data generated by these tools. However, we feel that first and foremost it involves equipping teachers with the attitudes and beliefs required for them to conceive of themselves as research-engaged professionals, that is individuals who are willing to find answers to their questions by doing research.

As we explained at the outset, there may first be a need to challenge preconceived notions of what research is so that teachers can relate to and identify with research as something they can and perhaps want to do. The pre-conference seminar we led at the 2017 BESIG Annual Conference in Malta was a modest attempt to fulfil that purpose. As outgoing Joint ReSIG Coordinators, it served to confirm our conviction that teacher associations can play a crucial role in developing the research literacy of their members and encouraging teachers to see research as an exciting, interesting and manageable way of enriching their professional practice.

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Appendix 1

These questions are meant to help you reflect on the different stages of the research process.

Stage 1

- What topic are you working on/would like to work on?
- Why is this topic interesting in your opinion?
- How will researching it be useful for your practice?

Stage 2

- What is/are your research question(s)?
- Is/are the question(s) well-formulated and researchable in practical terms?
- Why does/do this/these specific question(s) need asking?

Stage 3

- Operationalising your research questions. To make your research questions researchable, you have to define exactly what you mean by the terms you use.
- Take at least one term and explain exactly what you understand by it and how you would recognise it in your data.

Stage 4

Methodological design:

- What tool(s) would you use to generate data? Why? Why not a specific other tool?
- What are the shortcomings of your tool?
- What sort of data would it generate?
- How does/do the tool(s) relate to your research questions?

Stage 5

- Who are your participants?
- Why this group and not another?
- What ethical concerns do you need to accommodate?
- What contextual parameters and particularities of these participants need to be considered?
- What is your relationship to the context? Do you have subjectivities to manage?

Stage 6

- How would you analyse your data?
- What kinds of insights would it give you?
- What would it not tell you?
- What would you do with your results?

Stage 7

- What needs to be done next?
- What time plan do you have for doing this?
- What would you still need help with?

17 Arabic and French interference in learning Business English – *Hanadi Mirza*

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Many students living in Lebanon acquire Arabic as a mother tongue, French as a second language and English as a foreign language. Some reach university with poor English in general and insufficient Business English in particular. Based on my personal experience, Arabic and French can interfere positively in learning Business English.

This workshop is based on Ausubel's psychology of meaningful learning (Ausubel, 1963), in that the new information in Business English is related to students' background knowledge in Arabic and French. The session offered practical approaches on how teachers can help their students use their Arabic and French to improve: pronunciation; usage of prepositions; usage of tenses; and email writing in Business English.

Pronunciation

Drilling the pronunciation of various English words at university is time-consuming. Simplifying phonetics using Arabic/French letters is beneficial for students to learn the proper pronunciation of various English sounds. For example, French letters and symbols can be used to transcribe the words hotel, dollars, work, and brochure respectively as [hotelle; dàlrz; weurk; broshour]. Arabic letters can also be used to address students' pronunciation of the following words: although [olذ ó], these [ذ يز], and thank [ثank]. Students need to learn that there is no (ج/j) sound but rather [dj] as in 'change' and 'job'. Students can also make use of the audio features on their mobile phones and other devices, in order to listen to the proper pronunciation of English words.

Prepositions

University students already know and use prepositions of place when communicating in Arabic and French. Learning the meaning in Arabic and French of prepositions such as *on, above, near,* and *under* can help students use them appropriately in English. Students can remember to use 'turn left' and the office is 'on the right' because they use the Arabic translation of these expressions, instead of the French expression 'turn to left'.

Tenses

Students' grammatical knowledge of Arabic and French doesn't help them differentiate between the usages of the simple past and present perfect tenses. In Arabic, for instance, there are basically three tenses: past, present, and imperative. In Business English classes, students can start with the appropriate exercises or tasks since they already know some

English. Task-based-learning (TBL) is effective in teaching grammar at university. To promote the appropriate usage of the simple past and present perfect tenses, tables can be used to chart the event/action which happened in the past regarding: verb, time of action (specific (S) / non-specific (N)), and complete action (x) or continuous to present (…). Students use the noticing strategy to deduce the usage of the simple past expressing a past action (S/x), while the present perfect simple and continuous tenses express (N/…) actions.

Email-writing

Some problems Arab learners face when writing English emails include (a) idea organization, (b) process writing, (c) translations from L1/L2, and (d) sentence-writing.

(a) A major problem is the word redundancy Arab students are encouraged to use in their Arabic writing. 'The weather is nice and beautiful and wonderful and warm today' is a well-developed idea in Arabic. Consequently, students have some difficulties in being concise and in getting straight to the point when writing English emails.

(b) Many university students regard focusing on process writing (using effective composing processes such as planning, drafting and revising) as time-consuming. The main reason for their poor writing is that they often write their draft as a final product without gathering ideas before writing and without proofreading their emails. Even after practising writing while using the process writing approach in class, most students are obsessed with time during exams and end up submitting their draft as a final product with the same ideas being repeated and numerous spelling and grammatical mistakes.

(c) Another major problem for Arab learners is that they write in English the same way they speak in Arabic. This is mainly due to the negative Arabic transfer that results from translating directly while writing in English (Hussein & Mohammad, 2010). Most Arab students are not able to think in English; therefore, they tend to translate not only from their L1 (Arabic) but also from the L2 (French). It is highly effective when teachers are able to show students that translating from Arabic and French is not appropriate when expressing their ideas in English. For example, students translate from French and say 'What age are you?' instead of 'How old are you?'. They also say 'I have 20 years old' (French/Arabic translation) instead of 'I am 20 years old'. Similarly, they are likely to translate from Arabic and say 'He shouts on me' instead of 'He shouts at me'.

(d) Encouraging students to translate from French rather than from Arabic when writing English sentences is more appropriate when it comes to email-writing. Students need to be aware that both French and English are SVO languages. It is structurally more correct for novice students to translate from French into English, rather than from Arabic into English, because Arabic is a VSO language. Moreover, writing sentences and questions correctly is a crucial task when writing business emails. Being aware of the writing structure of the English sentence (SV(O)) and the question ((Wh-)+Auxiliary+Subject+verb+….?) helps students write/edit their emails. After practising writing sentences and questions, students can analyse the format of a model email before writing an email themselves, using process writing.

Discussion

Throughout the workshop, participants were particularly interested in the comparative approach I used to explain the different mistakes native Arabic students make when learning Business English. As English teachers of adult Arab learners themselves, they raised several relevant points. For example, participants found it beneficial to use Arabic/French letters in teaching English pronunciation to Arab learners, and it was clear from the discussion that using Arabic to learn the proper use of prepositions was also of interest to them. There was also general agreement that their Arab learners suffer from similar writing problems, namely word redundancy, product as opposed to process writing, poor sentence construction, and over-translation from Arabic. A final point was that the participants expressed their interest in using their own students' L1 and other languages when teaching. The main purpose of this would be to improve their learners' English pronunciation and business email-writing.

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18 Teaching in the virtual classroom – *Darina Phelan*

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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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19 Making the transition from Business English trainer to intercultural trainer – *Adrian Pilbeam*

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In recent years, intercultural training has been one of the 'hot' topics at IATEFL BESIG conferences. I have given a number of short workshops at past conferences on activities to use for intercultural training, especially as a part of Business English training. But in this presentation, I decided it would be useful to look at what is entailed if a Business English trainer wants to make the transition and become an intercultural trainer.

I am speaking from experience because I made the very same transition more than fifteen years ago. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that I am still making the transition because, as in all professions, there is always something new to learn. Otherwise there would not be so many delegates at IATEFL BESIG conferences!

I structured my presentation around three main questions:

- What is intercultural training?
- What skills and qualities does an intercultural trainer need?
- What does a Business English trainer bring to the intercultural trainer role?

I then rounded off with some suggestions on how Business English trainers can develop their skills for intercultural training.

What is intercultural training?

As to the first question above, the most concise answer I know is one I heard many years ago at a presentation in the United States by Robert Kohls, a leading intercultural trainer and teacher trainer, now sadly deceased:

Intercultural training is training that helps people acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills to communicate and function effectively with cultures other than their own.

Kohls' definition covers three types of learning: cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitudes and awareness) and behavioural (skills). All three should ideally be present in intercultural courses.

Knowledge can include facts and figures about a culture, what behaviour will be well or badly viewed, the classic lists of cultural do's and don'ts, and finally knowing something about key cultural issues (time, hierarchy, task/relationship etc.) that have been much written about by theorists such as Edward Hall, Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars.

Trying to change participants' attitudes and awareness should really be the central part of any intercultural course so that they can change the way they think about and view the world. This includes raising awareness about their own culture – behaviour, norms, attitudes, values – as well as awareness of other cultures' norms, values, and so on. It means realizing that what is normal in our culture may not be perceived as normal to other cultures.

This can be at the simple level of how people greet each other or what time they have their meals, as well as at the more complex level of how decisions are made or the role of a leader or manager. An important point here is for learners to become familiar with the DIE model, (Describe / Interpret / Evaluate) so that they do not judge too quickly when they encounter 'different' behaviour.

A more difficult area to deal with in intercultural training is helping people develop new skills to become more effective. This is partly because intercultural courses are usually quite short (only one or two days), especially compared with Business English courses. Skills which learners need to acquire include:

- Being able to stand back and describe what is happening before interpreting or evaluating
- Being able to adjust their behaviour
- Modifying their communication style – direct or indirect, formal or informal etc.
- Modifying their use of English, where appropriate. This is especially the case for native English speakers, who should be sensitive to the effort their foreign colleagues need to make when using English as a foreign language
- Mirroring their counterparts' style, a technique central to neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)
- Showing patience, tact and resilience

What skills and qualities does an intercultural trainer need?
This question resulted in a lot of responses and some of the key ideas are listed below:

- Experience with other cultures, often gained by living and working in other countries; we would not have credibility with our participants without this knowledge about other cultures – norms, values, and so on – and of the work of key cross-cultural theorists
- Being open to new experiences and being ready to learn from our participants, who bring so much experience of their own to the course
- Self-awareness – realizing that we do not have all the answers, which differs from the role of the Business English trainer, who is more of an 'expert', especially if they are a native English speaker
- High emotional intelligence (EQ), because when getting participants involved in simulations and other experiential activities, a lot of feelings can come out which need to be processed with sensitivity

What does a Business English trainer bring to the intercultural trainer role?
Business English trainers have the potential to make excellent intercultural trainers. They usually have extensive experience with other cultures and often quite a lot of knowledge gained from experience. They also possess good training skills and they are often skilled at handling group dynamics.

However, there are some key differences, mainly because, as mentioned above, the Business English trainer is often considered an 'expert'. This means learners expect to be told when they are 'right' or 'wrong'. In addition, in language teaching, new skills can often be tested and checked.

By contrast, the intercultural trainer is more of a facilitator than a trainer, helping the participants acquire knowledge, awareness and skills by getting them to reflect on their experiences and to set goals for future behaviour. But it is very difficult to test whether they have acquired new skills, certainly within the time frame of the course itself.

How can you develop your skills for intercultural training?
I finished the session with some pointers for a useful follow-up. These included suggested reading to get an overview of the intercultural field, as well as some short and longer courses that trainers can attend, including two 5-day courses run by myself and a colleague at LTS in Bath.

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20 Developing soft skills with a coaching approach – *Dana Poklepovic*

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Introduction

Soft skills are the abilities and traits of behaviour and personality that enable us to interact positively and work effectively with people. While technical knowledge is important, soft skills have become essential to succeed in the contemporary workplace. Business people are expected to collaborate, think critically and empathise, among other abilities, with co-workers and external agents both in their native language and in English.

The first part of the workshop focused on the communicative nature of soft skills and the need to integrate these abilities in business English discourse.

The communicative nature of soft skills

Soft skills occur in communication: in and beyond words. When business people interact, their message is decoded in all its aspects: verbal, nonverbal and emotional. It is not only the language they use, but how they express it with their bodies, gestures and tone of voice, and the mood with which they convey the message. For example, when supervisors give feedback it is important that they match non-verbal signals with the content of the message and that they are able to manage their emotions.

Business English trainers need to raise learners' awareness of these domains when interacting in English. This can be achieved by working with activities that integrate the three aspects of communication and make learners reflect on their performance. When a soft skill is used in a balanced way, the communication goal is attained more effectively and the speaker's professional identity is clearly established.

To put this aspect of soft skills into practice, attendees performed an activity called 'Conflict management'. The goal of this activity is to avoid conflict or to manage existing conflicts by using the appropriate tone of voice – responsible for conveying the speaker's emotion – and matching the verbal and body language.

Teaching soft skills with an experiential approach: the research

The second part of the workshop focused on the methodology to teach soft skills in business English classes. Specifically, it was based on research conducted with 90 business learners of different language levels (See Table below).

Level	No. of learners
A2	32
B1	20
B2	18
C1	20

The research goal was to determine whether the experiential training and coaching approaches were effective in developing soft skills in business English learners. To make the session interactive and truly experiential, participants performed a team-building activity called 'Survival'. This communication and decision-making activity requires the team to build consensus or at least partial agreement and teaches that give-and-take is often required in group collaboration. After the activity, participants shared their experience in a de-briefing session. After this, we analyzed the stages of the experiential learning process:

1. **Performance:** Learning is achieved by engaging in the actual experience.
2. **Reflection:** Participants reflect on their performance and share their experience.
3. **Connection:** Participants identify in what other situations they can use the same skills.
4. **Application**: The use of the soft skill in real life.

Developing a soft skill is a transformation process that begins during the reflection stage. The trainer acts as a facilitator. Their most important role is to help the group learn from and through the activity and this is done through thought-provoking questions. The facilitator helps learners review the process and lets them discover by themselves what they have learnt. It is the de-briefing that makes the game meaningful as it empowers the group to use their talents.

During the research, the facilitators gathered data about learners' performance. In some cases, they observed that learners had emotional or behavioural barriers that prevented them from developing the skills. These learners were offered coaching sessions to gain insight into their barriers and develop strategies to overcome them. The major challenging areas reported by the learners were:

1. **Beliefs**: learners hold opinions about themselves or others that are built on their interpretations of reality. *"I can't use body language"*, "*I feel confident if I'm sitting*", "*I can't speak better than my boss*".
2. **Assumptions**: Thoughts that cause them to predict an outcome. "*When I entered the room they were talking about me. I was frozen and couldn't participate*".
3. **Emotions**: Exposure triggers emotional reactions. For example, fear of being criticized, of making mistakes.

The process was guided by the following questions aimed at shifting the learners' perceptions.

- What if you could use your body language?
- What is a mistake for you? What does it mean for you to be criticized?
- What do you fear? What's at risk?
- If you absolutely knew that this was not true, what would you do differently?
- How is this assumption serving you?
- How would you feel if you could ...?
- What do you need (to be) to achieve that?

Learners' progress was regularly assessed with qualitative assessments such as recorded observations, action planning and goal setting.

General findings

The findings revealed that learners from all levels started to use soft skills in class and in real business life. Over 80% of A2 and B1 learners said that they were more self-confident speakers and were able to respond to unexpected situations without fear. Over 70% of B2 and C1 learners reported that they are now aware of how to control their emotions when they have difficult conversations.

Conclusions

The research concluded that experiential learning activities supported by coaching sessions are effective in helping business learners develop soft skills.

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21 Building relationships: paying compliments in the workplace – *Tihana Romanić*

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Background

I have become increasingly concerned not just with teaching phrases, but going deeper into understanding core business skills and what makes one good at each specific skill. Most recently my attention has turned to building relationships in the workplace, and in particular to what I have come to believe is an important part of it – paying compliments. In order to provide language trainers with some ideas on how to effectively teach this skill, I started by looking at some cultural aspects, as well as the generally negative connotation which is often associated with complimenting. My concern was not simply teaching the phrases, but first and foremost overcoming negative attitudes. It is also with this in mind that I designed a three-step model which could be used by trainers. In my talk, besides sharing personal observations and those existing in the field, I also offered some practical classroom ideas to be used as stand-alone material or to complement existing ones.

Observations

Whereas it has become common knowledge that there are certain cultural differences, such as attitudes to time for example, less is spoken about different attitudes to paying or receiving compliments. It may not be necessary to know all the cultural differences, but being aware that they exist and enquiring about them before teaching the skills of giving praise or compliments in English is relevant. That said, there seems to be a tendency among business people, which transcends any one culture, to come up with various ways of saying 'thank you' instead of actually complimenting. This is the first hurdle to be overcome when teaching the skill of paying compliments, as complimenting is often experienced as manipulation. In this respect, lack of a language skill is not the primary reason here, and it would then be appropriate to examine the specific culture.

German culture, for example, puts a high value on authenticity and truthfulness. Therefore, if paying compliments is seen as an act of untruthfulness, which is being deployed to gain some unfair advantage, it is directly opposed to this core cultural value, and hence constitutes a much bigger 'offence' in German culture than it might in other cultures. Furthermore, in a culture that places emphasis on being efficient and engaged in one's work, people may see paying compliments as redundant – such as a lady thanking her coach driver at the end of her journey for getting passengers safely and smoothly to their final destination.

However, I strongly believe that it is important to disabuse people of this habit of taking things for granted, especially when we enter the business arena, where we actively participate in building, and need to build, strong relationships. This notion is supported by research in the cross-cultural field, which suggests that paying compliments is a universal tool for building better relationships.

Complimenting in practice

As I proposed above, in order to win the case for complimenting one may start by tackling the notion of manipulation. The key, in my opinion, is to make people feel comfortable with our compliments and not to make them feel as if we are trying to take advantage of them. This means making them see our compliment as praise and not flattery. Essentially, compliments in the workplace are praise when they specifically refer to: the work people do, namely their past/present actions or past/present achievements; the commitment to being appreciative of the help received; and a desire to build and maintain good working relationships as well as the willingness to reciprocate.

The three-step model: Be observant – Be relevant – Be specific

What I mean by being observant is thinking about what the culture I am communicating with is like, and specifically what its core values are. Let us take Germany as an example again. The emphasis is placed on being efficient and improving performance, which entails that correcting comes before praising. In such a situation, one may choose to be simple and to the point, without overusing intensifiers, and directly praising people's efficiency: you are so helpful/efficient/swift. Yet, when I say being observant, I am not only thinking about what the culture is like, but what this person is like – do they pay compliments to me and other colleagues and do they seem comfortable with this behaviour? Consequently, this may affect the choice of delivery – in an email, or face to face, in front of other people or in private.

Once the step of being observant has been completed and the aspect of being relevant has been considered by asking the question 'Is the situation work-related?', we can proceed to the third step, being specific. This is a skill that can be practiced in a classroom activity with a task-based approach. First, a situation is described and learners identify the complimentary or 'complimentable' part in it, then choose an adequate adjective and apply it to the simple pre-taught linguistic structure: You are so + adjective; You are such a + adjective person/colleague/manager; That's so + adjective + of you; That's a + adjective job/document/gesture. Next is to add a 'tail' or tag to the simple structure to make the compliment specific. Finally, we come to production in a chosen method of delivery.

Final thoughts

What I wanted trainers to think about is that, when teaching compliments, it is important to teach not just how in terms of the phrases to be used, but to emphasize the need for doing it in the first place, and to provide a model for effectively going about it. In essence, the context and the culture within that particular context, or when cultures intersect, should be observed each and every time, and should not be generalized. When it comes to timing, it seems best to pay a compliment sooner rather than later, although this may not always be the case: there are situations from the more distant past which you can refer to and compliment on, and which can be used as a conversation starter. Finally, there needs to be a balance in how often we pay compliments, and most agree that to promote trust and remove doubt we need to pay genuine compliments on a regular basis while balancing this with constructive criticism.

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22 Spotlight on learning styles – *Marjorie Rosenberg*

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Are you sometimes surprised by the way your students react to activities in class, or when reading homework they have handed in? Do you have some tried and tested lessons that just don't seem to work with a particular group of students? If you have had any of these experiences, the answer could lie in the learning styles of your students.

Although few of us use the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to teaching, we generally do not have the time to first test our students and then create activities in order to appeal to each of them individually. In fact, it does not mean that they actually learn any better just because an activity appeals to them. However, as we teach individuals and not just material, our learners usually benefit from a mix of methods. In addition, providing them with a range of strategies they can choose from themselves may encourage them to start taking more responsibility for their own learning.

Background information on styles

These were some of the issues addressed in the workshop given at the IATEFL BESIG Conference in Prague. We started off with a definition of style, which included aspects such as perceptual filters, learning strategies, processing and organisation of information, and patterns of behaviour. The discussion then moved on to several misconceptions about style, namely that it is used to pigeon-hole learners, is judgmental and limiting, or an indication of competence. Reasons for being aware of style in the classroom were presented as well. For example, accepting differences in learners can make classes run more smoothly. In addition, many of us teach in the way that we learn, so using a variety of methods can help learners to stretch out of their comfort zones. As Tessa Woodward mentions, we first start by harmonising with our learners (matching their styles) and then challenging them (helping them to become more comfortable with new methods and strategies). In this way, we enable them to get as much as they can from a learning experience.

The models

The workshop concentrated on three models. The first, sensory-based perception, was researched in the late 1970s by Walter Barbe and Raymond Swassing. It covers the visual, auditory, kinaesthetic motoric and kinaesthetic emotional learners and affects how we take in, store and retrieve information. The second model, based on research by Herman Witkin spanning the period from the 1940s to the 1970s is called cognitive processing. This looks at whether learners tend to be more global and affected by their surroundings (field-dependent) or analytical and more able to concentrate on the task at hand (field independent). The third model, called Mind Organisation and based on research done by April Bowie in the 1990s, looks at the type of behaviour demonstrated by learners and deals with concrete or abstract perception, which is then organised systematically or non-systematically. These four elements are combined in different ways, resulting in four distinct styles: the Power Planner who likes to organise, the Expert Investigator who questions information, the Radical Reformer who likes to be unique and the Flexible Friend who is very comfortable around other people.

Activities for visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners

In order to show how to use this information in the classroom, activities which appeal to different learner types were demonstrated. The first one was a 'picture search' for visual learners, in which they looked for differences between two drawings of an office. The next activity involved groups building a machine which the group had decided would be useful. The team members then acted out the parts of the machine, and another group had to guess what the machine did. This activity helps kinaesthetic motoric learners combine vocabulary (in this case processes carried out by a machine) with movement. We then looked at an activity designed for all the sensory-based learner types. Here learners sat back-to-back while one person described a drawing projected onto a slide to the partner, who had to draw it. This combined all the sensory channels as it involved producing a drawing, describing and answering questions.

Activities for global and analytical learners

Moving on to the global-analytical activities, we began with a simple global one which gave participants the chance to use their imagination. Two people were sent out of the room and then the rest of the group was presented with a dilemma such as, 'What would you do if it rained ice cream in the office?'. When the two learners returned, they had to ask the others what they would do if the dilemma in question happened to them and then guess what it was, giving the global learners the chance to be creative and have fun. We then went on to a more analytical activity, in which one learner thought of some daily task and the others asked questions about it to guess what it was. The person being questioned, however, was not allowed to answer merely 'Yes' or 'No', a mental activity very appealing to analytical learners.

Activities for the Mind Organisation learner types

We discussed the idea of buying and selling everyday objects in the classroom to encourage the Radical Reformers to use their imagination and their persuasive capabilities. We finished off with an activity for the Flexible Friends in the form of a personal mind map. This consisted of the name of the teacher in the centre with dates, places, and so on connected to it. The group then asked questions to find out what was meant by the particular information. This can be done in pairs with the learners drawing their own mind maps and then interviewing each other, something that helps this learner type to connect vocabulary to a particular person.

A final word

At the end of the session, it was stressed that learning styles are a way to raise awareness, for both learners and teachers. As learners begin to take an active part in developing strategies they are comfortable with, motivation can increase. This is a learner-centred approach that can also help learners to become more autonomous. It was stressed at the end of the session that this short introduction was just the start and that participants could adapt, use and develop the ideas to suit their learners and teaching situations.

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23 The elevator pitch: a two-minute business presentation – *Jasmina Sazdovska*

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The workshop aimed to provide participants with the skills to teach students how to prepare for and perform elevator pitches with a combination of online and coursebook materials. An additional goal was to give freelance teachers and trainers guidance on how to perfect their own elevator pitches when approaching possible clients. The workshop followed the usual three-stage teaching process of presentation, practice and performance.

Presentation

The first part of the workshop aimed to define the genre of elevator pitches, to provide participants with both positive and negative examples of these presentations and to outline their basic structure. Elevator pitches are extremely short business presentations, often lasting only half a minute, which are given to prospective clients in order to pitch an idea, obtain an investment or arouse interest in future cooperation. The name comes from the fact that it is often difficult to get an appointment with potential clients or investors so people frequently resort to pitching their ideas to them in an elevator. It is very easy to find examples of elevator pitches on the internet. Participants in the workshop were asked to watch one such internet clip and comment on three failed pitches and one successful presentation. All four presenters in the video are students attempting to get a job as a business college ambassador with the college president, who they meet in a lift. The video clip is called *The Elevator Speech* and is available on YouTube.

Participants in the workshop found the first speaker to be too distracted. He was talking on the phone, did not introduce himself properly, failed to emphasise his qualities and seemed overly confident. In the next scene there are two students in the lift with the president. Both of them are attempting to get the job. The participants commented that these two speakers seemed to suffer from the opposite problem compared to the first speaker. They were too shy in approaching the president and tried to speak at the same time. Comments on the third speaker focused on the fact that he was too informal, casual and intimate with the president. The speaker talked about irrelevant issues such as his mother and the president's shoes. The last presenter was seen as the most successful. Participants noted that she clearly introduced herself, emphasised her positive qualities and how she could contribute to the college. She managed to get a lunch appointment with the president to discuss her ideas. Getting the listener interested in the pitch and taking the process to the next stage is vital for a successful elevator pitch, which was clearly evident in the last scene.

The next workshop activity revealed the basic structure of a typical elevator pitch and was based on Unit 11, New Business, from *Market Leader Advanced* (Dubicka and O'Keeffe, 2011, p. 105). Participants were asked to identify the Five Ps of an elevator pitch, which include:

- **Pain**: the problem you can solve
- **Premise**: your solution
- **People**: a credible team
- **Proof**: happy customers, data, market research
- **Purpose**: social benefits, financial rewards

Recognising this basic structure of a pitch helps speakers quickly and easily achieve their goal. It makes the preparation process more straightforward, allowing speakers to focus on the most relevant information since it is highly important in a very brief pitch to focus only on the essentials. Following the 5 Ps structure can be seen as the most important aspect of a successful elevator pitch.

Practice
The practice section of the workshop had a single activity where participants were asked to identify and put in order the 5 Ps from three different elevator pitches on karate schools available from The Black Belt Corner website.

Each of the three complete elevator pitches were cut up into 5 parts, each part dealing with one of the 5 Ps. The 15 parts of all three pitches were then mixed up. Participants seemed to enjoy guessing which P the sections referred to and putting the pieces in order to form the three complete talks.

Performance
In the final part of the workshop, participants received tips on how to prepare for performing elevator pitches. There were two activities. First, members were asked to list the 7 steps of preparing for an elevator pitch while watching a video clip entitled *How to perfect the elevator pitch*, available on YouTube. The seven steps include:

1. Make a list of adjectives to describe yourself
2. Make a list of your qualifications
3. Practise your talk with a friend or a mirror
4. Take the needs of the listener into account
5. Remember to emphasise your value to the listener
6. Engage your audience
7. Ask for contact details or an appointment

By following these 7 preparation steps, speakers can ensure not only that they cover all the necessary information, but that they leave a lasting impression on their listener(s), which can take them to the next stage.

The final activity of the workshop was based on a handout which allowed participants to follow the 7 steps from the previous activity and design their own elevator pitch for their language school or training course. The handout had a separate section for each of the 5 Ps, helping speakers to stick to the main information and providing the basic structure. This activity served the dual purpose of demonstrating how to help students prepare and practise elevator pitches, while at the same time providing participants with an opportunity to develop their own elevator pitches which they can use when approaching prospective clients.

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24 One-to-one language training and coaching – ***Andrzej Stesik***
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Introduction

In my presentation, I focused on one-to-one Business English training. Although in the literature it is a rather neglected area (only three books on this topic have been published; see References), it constitutes a large proportion of all Business English training. In Poland over the last 5 to 10 years, one-to-one courses have gained popularity. Suffice it to say that at the time of the conference I had only one in-company group course – all my other courses were one-to-one. When I asked the audience about whether this trend was present in their different teaching contexts, they replied positively.

Aims of Session

The aims of my session were as follows: to share my experience of one-to-one training; to present an approach which, in my experience, is effective; and to give some practical tips

Focus on one learner: implications

The one-to-one training situation is special since there is only one learner. Therefore, what we can do here which we cannot do in a group is go at the learner's own pace, adjust to the learner's preferred learning style, react to any sudden or unexpected changes in the learner's needs, as well as constantly communicate on issues relevant to the learner.

However, there is one more important implication here. When we begin a one-to-one course, where do we start? We can start with a coursebook, and a lot of us do exactly that. Is this the best starting point, though? I believe there is a better one. We can take advantage of the fact that there is only one learner and make their English, their so-called interlanguage, the starting point. We do not need an external syllabus with pre-selected discrete items of vocabulary, grammar and functions. We do not need a syllabus that a coursebook imposes on us – instead, the syllabus emerges as we go along.

One-to-one training: conversation-driven

When I asked the audience about which aspect, in their experience, learners want to improve first and foremost, everybody agreed it is speaking. Learners usually feel they need to focus primarily on developing their spoken communication skills. It seems that the best way to learn how to communicate is by communicating, so conversation should become the vehicle of the learning process.

As the conversation develops, the natural contexts of it will dictate the grammar and vocabulary to be used, namely the need to use particular grammar structures and vocabulary will appear naturally. For example, when one describes their job, phrases like 'I report to …', 'I'm responsible for –ing …', or 'I'm in charge of …' will occur automatically. In addition, during conversation, the learner can only use the English they have learned; any gaps in it will be obvious. This means that all sorts of mistakes will be made, and any gaps in grammar and vocabulary will cause the learner to pause or hesitate. These will all be signals to the trainer about what it is that the learner needs to improve and develop. The role of the trainer here is to develop the learner's English by giving feedback on mistakes, through correction, explanation, as well as by supplying the missing grammar and vocabulary.

In the literature, this kind of approach to language training is referred to as the process approach, which is based on the process syllabus. Meddings and Thornbury define this syllabus in the following way: 'A process syllabus is a syllabus that grows organically out of the needs and interests of the learners: there are no pre-selected goals or specifications of content. It is also a *negotiated* syllabus. That is, the content of the syllabus, and even the methodology itself, is subject to a continual process of negotiation and evaluation by learners and teacher' (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). The syllabus emerges naturally through conversation, and is dictated by the needs of the learner as they reveal themselves along the way as well as by the learner's interlanguage and its limitations.

One-to-one training done in this way is very demanding on the trainer, since they will need to react to the unpredictable needs of the learner, to supply new language and to present / explain language points that have cropped up during the conversation. In short, the trainer will need to improvise on the spot as and when necessary. This training combines language teaching and language coaching, where the trainer follows the learner and helps them identify and then satisfy their learning needs.

The second part of my presentation focused on practical aspects of my one-to-one training. I discussed possible topics of conversation: in general, these should be relevant to the learner and their situation and interests. I also talked about how to maintain a conversation with the learner: mainly by asking open-ended questions, which generate more elaborate answers than closed questions.

Finally, I presented ways in which I use the Internet in my training, and showed the audience which websites I find useful: the Google search engine, the DuckDuckGo search engine, monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, a dictionary of collocations, the TED website, as well as Stanford University's eCorner website.

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25 What international negotiators need to know – *Barry Tomalin*

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'Let us never fear to negotiate but let us never negotiate out of fear.' That was US President John F Kennedy in his presidential inaugural speech in 1961, speaking in somewhat different circumstances to English for business environments.

Nevertheless, the fear is there for international negotiators who have to take part in negotiations with native English speakers or with highly proficient users. This presentation dealt with several techniques teachers can use to help increase understanding and improve language flexibility.

I use these techniques with Business English groups at B2 and C1 levels and the attraction for them is learning business communication skills and building the language around them, rather than learning pure Business English.

Technique 1: The five steps of a negotiation

Gavin Kennedy (2003) of the University of Glasgow identified five steps in any negotiation:

1. Prepare (state your position)

2. Debate (discuss your position with your opposite number)
3. Propose (make a proposal)
4. Bargain (negotiate the proposal)
5. Agree (come to an agreement)

This looks like a linear process, but as Gavin Kennedy pointed out, that is not what happens in real life. Negotiators frequently go from Prepare to Propose and then back to Debate. Even in the process of Bargaining, they may go back to Debate.

For native speakers this is relatively easily recognizable, but for non-native speakers it can be very difficult to detect what stage the negotiator is at simply from the language used. What they need is knowledge and experience.

How to build awareness of negotiating signals
To achieve this, the technique I suggest to students is this: in meetings, prepare a sheet of paper in your notebook with five columns; as you attend meetings, write down in each column phrases which seem to suggest a change of approach between the five stages: and bring your list to class and check with the teacher. If you do this regularly, you will quickly get a sense of which language signals which stage of the negotiation.

Here are some examples:

Prepare	Our situation is... The key issue in our market is... What we want to achieve is...
Debate	Tell me what you think/feel about... On the one hand... On the other hand...
Propose	I propose/suggest... What would happen if we did this? Suppose we did this, what would happen?
Bargain	If we do that, will you do this? If you can't agree, we'll... This is a deal-breaker for us. I'm not happy with that.
Agree	I'm comfortable with that. I can live with that. I think we can proceed along these lines.

It is interesting to see how the phrases are used. In some cases the same phrase may be used to signal different stages. However, if students can collect their own list of phrases and assign them to each stage, checking with you, the teacher, as they do so, they can quickly build up confidence in spotting where 'the other side' is in a negotiation.

Technique 2: Dealing with different types of negotiators
Apart from the language used, students have to deal with different personalities. Research identifies four types and also suggests ways to deal with them.

Negotiating type	How to deal with them
A Practical/realistic	Adopt an objective approach, deal with 'how' and 'what' questions. Emphasise real short-term benefits and be prepared for critical questions. Above all, no bluffing.
B Humane/intimate	Use a warm, friendly, encouraging tone. Emphasise harmony and agreement and cite successes elsewhere. Above all, talk about building a lasting relationship.
C Objective/cool	Focus on the big picture and explore various options for achieving it. Stress long-term benefits and remain detached and objective. Don't put pressure on the other person to conclude the deal, but be prepared to be examined on details.
D Speculative/creative	Show sincerity and warmth and build empathy by matching posture and tone. Listen to their vision and play it back to them. Focus on people possibilities and opportunities and tailor details to what they need.

In class I go through the following steps:

- Go through the table with the group. Make sure everyone understands it.
- Choose a negotiation topic and model a particular type of negotiator. Don't tell the student. He or she has to guess and adapt accordingly.
- Don't do it for too long (five to ten minutes is ample). The aim is to recognize the style and adapt your language accordingly.
- Divide the group into small groups of three. Two are negotiators and one is an observer. They choose a topic and begin negotiating. The 'buyer' adopts a style and the 'seller' adapts to suit the style.

- Walk around and listen and observe.
- At the end, the observers report back on the 'buyer's' style and how successfully the seller adapted. At the end, correct any major errors and teach any key phrases that will help users adapt their style successfully.

Technique 3: PERSUADE

One final 'people' technique is the acronym PERSUADE. PERSUADE describes different negotiating personalities and how to deal with each one, as shown below:

Negotiating personality	**How to deal with it**
Procrastinator	They need proof, facts and information, and patience.
Explosive	They need you to keep absolutely calm, and not to respond in kind. Maintain strong eye contact, acknowledge good points and, if necessary, offer to come back later (when they have calmed down.)
Rigid	Forget the charm. Focus on facts, figures and statistics. Analyse everything.
Self-important	Make them feel important. Ask about their work and praise their achievements to get them on your side.
Untrustworthy	Don't attack. Avoid putting them on the defensive. Check the accuracy of everything that is said.
Aggressive	Keep calm, ask open questions 'Tell me what you think about…' and propose realistic solutions.
Depressive	Listen, don't be discouraged and employ anything useful.
Extrovert	They want adulation and praise. Listen and enjoy the ride.

Once again, explain the grid and make sure everyone understands it. Elicit or teach phrases that assist in dealing with each personality, and perhaps model one or two personality types. The group has to identify the personality type from your style and language. Be careful about doing small group or pair role-play with this grid as many business students can be ill at ease displaying these characteristics. Instead, ask the group if they have experiences of dealing with the different personalities. Get them to tell you what happened.

Technique 4: Principled Negotiation
The most important negotiation practice in the world was developed for political crisis negotiations by Professor Roger Fisher, a professor of Law at Harvard University. It was called the Harvard Negotiation Project and was turned into a successful negotiation handbook with William Ury, called *Getting to Yes* (2011). The five key principles of principled negotiation are:

1. Interests: Try to explore the positions adopted by negotiators to discover the real interests behind them.

2. People: Separate the people from the problem. As Ury and Fisher advise, 'Be soft on the people but hard on the problem'.

3. Options: Establish a range of options and look for mutual gain.

4. Criteria: Insist on objective criteria.

5. BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement): an escape route or 'Plan B'.

The best way to teach Principled Negotiation is probably not through a 'buyer' and 'seller' one-on-one negotiation, but through a classroom project involving two or more negotiating teams. This might take half a day or be run over several sessions. In this project, you can teach the five principles, choose a negotiation topic with the group, and then divide the group into two to four negotiation teams, depending on class size.

Then, take them through the agenda below stage by stage:

Stage 1: Canter round the course. Agree terms of reference, explore what issues need to be addressed, explain any procedures and describe what a positive agreement might look like. The convenor does this to ensure that everyone is on the same page, and to provide an objective framework for the negotiation.

Stage 2: Emphasise positive achievements. This is most important as it establishes a positive atmosphere.

Stage 3: Agree at each stage what you have agreed and then shortlist remaining issues. Once again, you are always accentuating the positive, while not ignoring the 'difficult' points.

Stage 4: Where there are difficult negotiation points, try and broaden the options. Ury calls it 'redefining the arithmetic'. Propose 'approaching things from a different angle'. If things are really difficult, change the process, step back, or take a break, for example.

Stage 5: The JU-JITSU tactic. One of the most successful negotiating tactics. Ask, 'What can I say to get a solution?' or 'What would you need to agree to this proposal?'

At the end of each stage of the negotiation or each session, debrief and review and take the opportunity to reinforce the five principles. Point out where opportunities have been taken and overlooked, and suggest appropriate language that could be used.

Conclusion
Business English students find these four techniques very useful and satisfying. Even if they know some of them, they usually haven't had much experience of using them in English and they feel they are dealing with real issues that they can apply directly to their international business life. They feel more confident in dealing with proficient English users and they become more successful international negotiators. As they do so, they realize the value of the teaching approach.

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

English Communication Skills, 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 a 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 a 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.

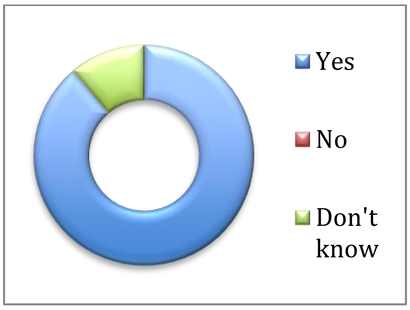

Figure 1

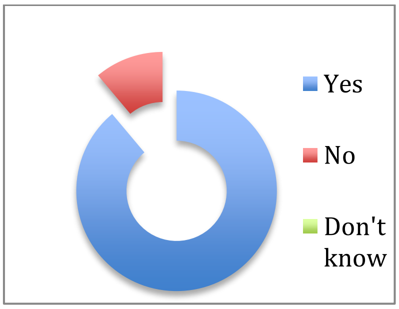

Figure 2

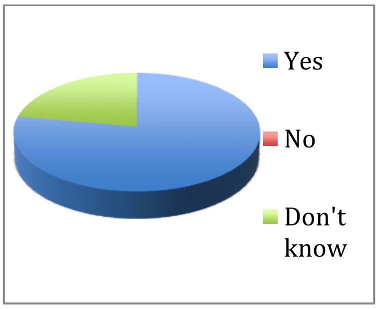

Figure 3

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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27 No teacher, much talk: Designing speaking activities for low-level students – ***Kirsten Waechter***

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Background

This workshop looked into an issue that many of us face when we teach students at a low level of English, A1 and A2 in particular, but even B1 if they feel that their speaking skills are less than adequate. I sometimes feel like the 'teacher monster' who does something evil: I ask a question. It took me a while to understand how difficult this situation was for them: they feel like they are at school again (not the best experience for many of them), they are afraid of making mistakes, have difficulty stringing a sentence together, and lose their self-confidence in the process. Instead of throwing the ball back to me, they start building a wall to hide behind. So speaking is a challenge, and how can we as teachers help them?

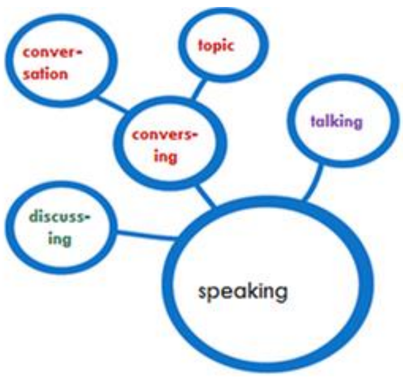
If you facilitate this kind of workshop with other teachers and trainers, the most fun can be derived from putting them in the students' position. Especially when you have the post-lunch slot where people need an energy-booster to wake them up again after all the wonderful tapas we were served in Sitges.

About twenty people were more than happy to take this opportunity to work together and try out some methods and ideas themselves and to discuss how to implement them. First, we looked at what we can do to tear down that wall: students at A1-B1 levels need more recycling and input to tune their brains to English: visualisation tools and game-like activities that include small speaking parts are great here. Then we quickly moved on to trying out some tools.

Warm-up activities

Two groups played **hot seat** on the topic of speaking and discussing. My variant includes having learners take turns describing words that they are given on cards to the rest of their group, who have to guess them. They line up and move quickly to the end of the line after they have explained their word to keep the energy level high (normally I use groups of four or five; here, we had two groups of ten which increased the liveliness). After the round, we reflected on what this game could be used for. For example, it helps in recycling words that will be needed for a speaking activity planned for a later point in the lesson (e.g. a business meeting or hotel booking); and it helps students to talk around words they don't know in order to avoid communication breakdowns.

The diagram below shows another activity, **mind-mapping**. In the workshop, we did this as a large group activity, but I usually design flip charts that the students can fill in. As with hot seat, the flip charts provide very good visual support for later activities and allow you to refer to students' words and ideas – something which boosts their self-confidence.



Speaking activities in action
After the warm-up, we managed to practise some more activities, including my favourite, the *consultants' circles*. I learned this activity from Barry Tomalin and have used it in different contexts, from team-building to problem-solving, and although I often use it at higher levels, it is also possible to use it at A1-B1 level. Here, you need to be very clear about the instructions. The participants were divided into two groups. One half received cards with some topics (e.g. a highlight of their weekend, a problem at work, their best holiday), whereas the other group were given cards with response strategies (e.g. active listening, echoing, asking follow-up questions, paraphrasing, asking for clarification, and so on: these cards also include examples of what to say).

The workshop participants then formed two circles. Those in the inner circle talked about their topic. People on the outside responded. The talkers were asked to move clockwise so that they would experience another response strategy. After the exercise, we debriefed on suitable follow-up activities: the teacher could refer back to the stories – what did people in the outer circle remember or like? People on the inside could tell which response strategy worked best for them. As people are moving and changing partners, the level of fear and nervousness drops significantly. The talkers can repeat their story and thus become more confident. We also brainstormed some related activities (such as speed-dating or ping-pong).

Story-telling continued
If I give my students the task of telling a story, they usually script it completely, losing all the spontaneity that a real-world speaking situation requires. So in the last part of our workshop, my fellow teachers and I looked at some tools and worked with an activity called *fire starter*. Here, I started a sentence and then handed the speaking turn over to one of the participants who a) had to complete the sentence and b) add some more information as another half-sentence in order to pass it on to a third person. To help A1 students, you could use a set of phrase dominos where they have to find the sentence halves that belong together, but after that first round they will be able to play this at a slightly more challenging level. The teacher should provide a topic to give them some food for thought. The debriefing revealed that students really need to listen for this task (many of them only concentrate of what they want to say and how to say it) and thus real interaction can take place, which generates a lot of laughter (at least it did in our seminar room; I apologise if the laughter was too loud).

The feedback from my participants was great. First of all, they all felt very energised and bubbly, and second, they really enjoyed putting themselves in their students' shoes and being reminded in very practical terms of what it feels like to be a learner again, and to reflect on what we can do in the classroom to help our students practise their speaking skills without fear. As the teacher stands on the side-lines, they can much better observe and give praise and practical tips later on. Talking to peers instead of merely answering the teacher's questions also means that low-level students will be much less afraid of speaking.

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28 The Inbetweeners – *Mandy Welfare*

Business English trainer and multicultural communications trainer, Berlin, Germany

In 2014 I took on a problem class. Three problem classes in fact. Each class had gone through five teachers in the last year and as Director of Studies, I had the pleasure of teaching those classes that nobody else wants! The outcomes of teaching these three classes were, however, totally unexpected. I'd stumbled upon an area of ELT which has little research and few materials, but which is becoming an ever-expanding feature in a Business English context: teaching apprentices.

The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research states that 'around 60 per cent of young people in Germany take part in the dual system of vocational training', an opportunity open to EU and non-EU citizens. The German government has implemented nationally standardized regulations for vocational education and training to deal with the ever-growing number of companies that operate on an international level. They have also commissioned some extensive research, which will be presented in 2020 and which will prioritize the information infrastructure, the promotion of young scientists and the promotion of international exchanges.

The question of whether an apprentice-specific type of language even exists within our language is a recurring topic. Many issues exist when designing a course for apprentices: devising a curriculum, the distinction between formal and informal language, encouraging intercultural sensitivity, small talk and the reliability of course books to name but a few. Technical language can also often be quite dull and dry, and finding the balance between the serious topics being covered and making the lessons fun can be quite challenging. Furthermore, attempting to recreate real-life business situations, such as negotiations, which the students had previously only observed their bosses doing, is extremely challenging.

My classes

When one thinks of apprentices, many images spring to mind: hard-working and underpaid, curious and intelligent, awkward and self-conscious. My apprentices were working in various departments in one of Germany's biggest pharmaceutical companies. Each group was made up of a mixture of young professionals aged 17–24 with various backgrounds: some had come directly from secondary education, others had already spent some time in the world of work. One thing they all had in common was that they had passed the rigorous interview and gained a very prestigious apprenticeship in an international company. According to the Vocational Training in Germany webpages, 'Applicants must submit the application themselves, just as if they were applying for a normal job'.

Alongside the extremes of temperament, various hormonal fluctuations and unconcealed struggles to adapt to adult working life, these students had very specific needs, making them fall into a category which lies in between the acknowledged terms 'pre-experienced' and 'general business-experienced' learners. I've coined the term 'experience-acquiring learners': learners who are steadily acquiring business knowledge and have an immediate urge to draw on it. The syllabus consisted of all the standard Business English components: from meetings to emailing, all of which had to be taught in the context of their company. Each week they learned a new set of skills that they developed in a controlled manner in their working environment, and wanted to emulate and manipulate in English in our classroom context. As their teacher, it was my task to keep on top of whatever skills they were learning and to adapt them to a classroom setting so as to allow them to simulate the same skills in English.

During my talk in Bonn, four case studies were discussed. These comprised four students or situations that I had experienced throughout the course, ranging from behavioural issues to activities not going the way I had anticipated. After a thorough discussion, we established some key tricks that are essential when teaching apprentices:

Rapport

In order to ease them away from their stressful jobs, we always started with a 15-minute informal chat where the only rule was that it had to be in English. They could talk about whatever they wanted and I circulated, helping with vocabulary, asking questions and telling them about my weekend. They loved it! It gave them time to eat their breakfast, catch up on the gossip and even talk about the homework. It also allowed me time to prepare the classroom, allow for latecomers and establish rapport.

Group work

A major skill that is learnt during their time as an apprentice is teamwork, a skill so badly needed in the world of business. For grammar, we simulated meetings: each group had a group-appointed chair and a minute-taker. Once they had discussed the grammatical rules, they had to decide how they would present them to the group. They came up with inventive examples and mini-presentations. I circulated to check understanding and give praise and feedback.

Correction

Self-correction in a group of young adults by highlighting individual mistakes is a recipe for embarrassment! I used stop and start correction. During tasks, I would listen out for mistakes, divide them up into grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, and email them to the students for review. The following class would start with an activity such as 7th Heaven: 7 sentences on the board, 1 is correct and the rest are wrong, and the students correct the incorrect ones.

Movement

Technical English and business skills are often dealt with while students are sitting down, but how much time do you actually spend talking while sitting down at a desk? Students mimicked the stand-up meeting by brainstorming in a circle. We practised small talk by sitting at opposite ends of the table and practically shouting across, demonstrating that we don't always speak English to people who are sitting right next to us. Back-to-back negotiating made them see how important facial expressions are. Movement in the classroom keeps the brain stimulated and the blood flowing.

To conclude, here are three teacher requirements based on my experience for anyone thinking of teaching apprentices. I feel teachers should:

1. have already taught young learners and Business English.
2. be prepared to be a teacher/friend/counsellor.
3. have lots of energy, patience and personality.

Marianna Fotaki, professor of business ethics at Warwick Business School, stated that one should 'be authentic and try to listen and identify what you could uniquely offer' when networking. This is sound advice when teaching apprentices. Channelling their energy and passions is the key to successful learning; and what better way than keeping it real!

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29 Teaching English over the telephone – *Sherri Williams*

Chair ELTABB (English Language Teachers' Association Berlin-Brandenburg), Germany

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 TED Talks, 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 centred 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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30 HOT listening tasks for Business English learners – *Jennie Wright*

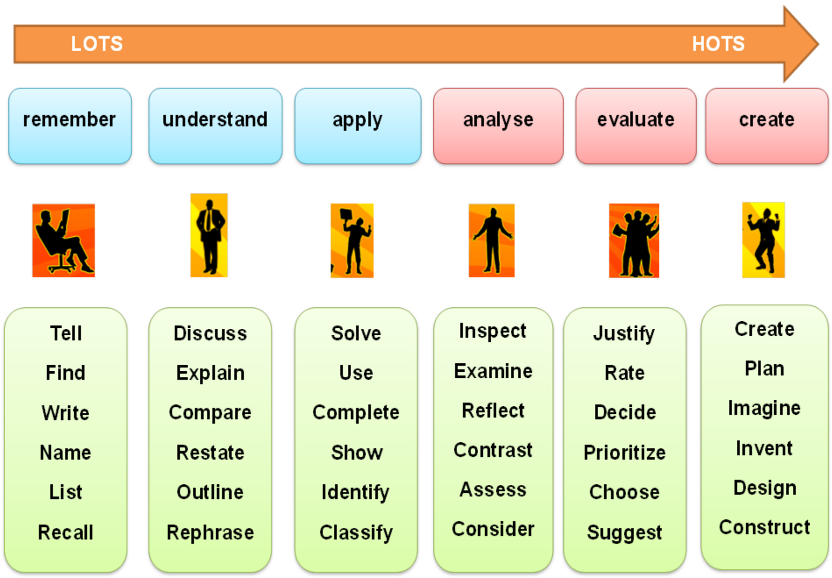
Teacher and author, Karlsruhe, Germany

High-order thinking and Bloom's Taxonomy are buzz terms in ELT at the moment, but what do they mean for Business English learners and teachers? The simple answer is that we can use these ideas to design and direct our listening activities, going beyond traditional comprehension tasks to prepare our learners for the reality of doing business in English. My workshop attempted to do just this, getting the audience to act as students working through a selection of HOT activities.

What is high-order thinking?

I started by talking about Bloom's Taxonomy, which is a simple system for distinguishing learning objectives. The taxonomy is split into three domains: the cognitive (thinking), the affective (emotional) and the psychomotor (physical). As teachers, I pointed out that we're naturally most interested in the cognitive domain.

I then moved on to look just at the cognitive domain and the top section of my visual aid (see below). There is a continuum which runs from low-order (LOT) to high-order thinking (HOT) skills. As you move up the continuum, the cognitive skills become more complicated and sophisticated (hence 'high-order' skills).



We then moved to the next part of the visual aid. Under the LOT/HOT continuum there are six sub-skills: remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create. Often these are seen as skills or learning/educational objectives to be achieved by learners one by one. There is a set of action verbs for each sub-skill (sometimes called power verbs, thinking verbs or learning objective verbs) and these can be used to describe learning aims or design instructions for tasks, such as listen to the CEO and *discuss* his problem with a partner.

To summarise, I noted that the verbs closer to the LOT end of the continuum are similar to the verbs you often see in the instructions for traditional listening comprehension tasks. Unfortunately, I don't know many Business English learners who go to meetings then simply remember or relay what was said. So, if we only do LOT listening tasks, we may not be preparing our learners to use English at work effectively. Based on this, I suggested that using the verbs on the HOT end of the scale makes tasks more stimulating and engaging and better reflects what our learners really do at work. Here it was great to see the audience nodding in agreement with me and I was eager to get to the tasks to see how HOT I could get them thinking.

HOT tasks
The tasks below have been designed to be used with any listening text of your choice and should be used with learners from B1 upwards.

Task One: First impressions

Objective: To develop the skill of evaluating people whilst interacting
Language focus: Personality adjectives
Instructions: Circle the adjectives that best describe the person speaking. Compare your evaluation with a partner and justify your choices with clear examples and analysis.

capable, industrious, dynamic, productive, self-assured, unrealistic, egotistical, agreeable, knowledgeable, fake, hesitant, trustworthy

Task Two: Anecdote that!

Objective: To invent an experience based on contextual evidence
Language focus: Narrating stories/experiences
Instructions: Listen to the person speaking and identify their basic beliefs about life and business. With a partner, imagine the experience that led to these beliefs and write the story of that experience. When you have finished, tell your story to the rest of your group.
Example: One day she was talking in a meeting when her boss shouted at her about a missed deadline. After this meeting, she decided to talk to her boss about his behaviour and went to his office. When she got to his office door…

Task Three: Paint me a picture

Objective: To develop the skill of justifying personal choices
Language focus: Expressing reasoning and interpretation
Instructions: Listen to the person speaking. As the person speaks, draw him/her as you imagine him/ her. Compare your drawing with a partner and explain your picture with clear examples and reasoning.

Task Four: Read between the lines

Objective: To develop the skill of scrutinizing underlying attitudes and beliefs
Language focus: Comparing and contrasting information

Instructions: Listen to the person speaking. Note down what you think he/she is thinking but ***not*** saying. Imagine the words, phrases and opinions she/he is thinking but has chosen ***not*** to say.

Discuss your conclusions with your partner, comparing what was said and unsaid.
Create two belief sentences for the person: one with their explicit spoken belief and one with their implicit unspoken belief.

Throughout the workshop, it was hard to get the audience to stop responding to the tasks. All the groups came up with a different and unique rationale for their responses and I was happy to see everyone getting engrossed in the tasks themselves, rather than just focusing on the language.

Make your tasks HOTTER
To finish the session, I went through some top tips and resources with my audience, which they can use to make their tasks hotter.

- Move slowly up the continuum so you don't shock your learners – it's difficult, demanding, and some learners are not natural HOT thinkers.
- Don't think about making *listening comprehension* tasks. Think more in terms of *listen and investigate* / *listen and create*, and so on.
- Push them to go beyond the text, read between the lines, guess, imagine, and so forth.
- Most of my HOT tasks are paperless, simple and focused. Use the verbs from the HOT end of the scale to design tasks, such as listen to the meeting and *create* an action plan.
- Find out which HOTS your learners need: Do they have to design, interpret or create?

At the end of the session I finished with this one simple message: So, what are you waiting for? Make your listening activities HOTTER!

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HOT resources

John Hughes:

http://elteachertrainer.com/
http://www.elionline.com/eng/teachers-area/critical-thinking

Macmillan Life Skills Day (recordings & slides):

http://www.macmillanenglish.com/events/life-skills-day/

CLIL resources:

http://the-round.com/resource/experimental-practice-in-elt/
http://www.onestopenglish.com/clil/

Bloom's Taxonomy:

http://ilearntechnology.com

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