



The Business English Teacher has looked at the challenging contrasts and reassuring similarities between business English and general English teaching. It is now the moment to put the strategies to the test. We think two points are worth making here:

- Confidence is all. In each of our three chapters, we begin by answering a series of ‘frequently asked questions’ that we hope will allay some of your apprehensions.
- Customisation is everything. Following the principle ‘learner needs’ – and also due to the contingencies of limited space! – the examples we propose throughout Part B are exactly that: examples. When preparing a questionnaire, a text, a roleplay or a card-sorting activity, you might like to take advantage of the examples we propose, but we are sure you will also want to formulate your own.

Business from the beginning

You need to have an overview of your objectives and obligations – before you can know what your individual lesson aims are going to be and can set about applying them. From the beginning, analyse your learners’ needs, teach learner skills, maintain motivation and progress by adapting your lessons, reviewing and recycling the content – and finally finish off with a demonstration of what has been successfully achieved and what can still be done.

The language of business

Although, as a teacher of business English, you are not necessarily an expert in business – nor do you have to be – you are an expert in English. This means you don’t tell business people how to do their jobs; rather, you let them tell you. What you provide is the language to enable them to use their business skills and expertise successfully – *the language of business*.

The business of language

While you will be providing your learners with the business language needed for their specific jobs, there will be times when you feel they need more. Competent users of English must function in a variety of situations and they may need to work specifically on language skills and language systems. Using authentic materials and teaching strategies like those suggested here, this is where you are definitely the expert – *the business of language*.

1 Business from the beginning

Learner needs
Learner autonomy
Learner dictionaries
Learner progress
Learner success

2 The language of business

Telephoning
Emails
Presentations
Meetings and discussions
Negotiating
Socialising

3 The business of language

Frameworks
Authentic/work materials
Vocabulary
Phonology
Grammar

Watching the web

Principle Learners need guidance on how they can use the internet to help them learn English. Although this is a familiar resource, available for most people, provide initial classroom support – because the sheer amount of information can make it a daunting task to begin.

Prepare

Before the lesson, spend time on the internet looking at sites for learning English. For the lesson, you will need a computer with internet access for each individual or pair.

Proceed

- Elicit websites the learners already know which are specifically for people learning English.
 - Have they tried any?
 - What did they think of them?
- Set a time limit – perhaps 30 minutes – to find and try out some good websites for learning English. The learners should be prepared to report back to the group on their favourites. If they use a search engine and type in 'learning English', they ought to find plenty.
- After the time limit, get them to share their experiences and recommendations.

Alternative If you don't have access to computers with internet, make a list of your 'top five' internet sites for learning English. Give out the list and assign each learner a site to investigate. They should report back in the next lesson. This could be in the form of a short presentation or written summary/report, depending on *your* objectives and *their* needs.

One-to-one Look through the internet together, to demonstrate how easy it is to find good websites, then set the task of looking at the internet sites as a homework assignment and reporting back during next lesson.

Personal plans If the learners would find it useful to use the internet to learn English and if they want to experiment on their own at home, get them to write it down on their 'personal action plan'. Record this in your own file so that you remember to ask them in the near future if they tried it out and how it went.

Yesterday's news

Principle Learners need strategies for improving their listening skills, and a natural way of doing this is by watching the news. Give them a 'framework' to focus on and facilitate comprehension – their background knowledge of topical news items should give them support in understanding.

Prepare

Record three to five minutes of the news in English the day before the lesson. The headlines or a short bulletin before a main programme work well. Watch it yourself and write down the main events that are discussed.

Proceed

- Tell the learners that they are going to watch yesterday's news in English.
- Put them into small groups and ask them to think of five events that they expect to be discussed in the news. They should base this on what they have seen or read in the news in their own language.
- Elicit ideas and write up the contributions.
- Tell them that when they watch the news, they only have to listen for the items you have listed.
- Play the recording and elicit which of the items on the board were discussed.

Follow-up Get the learners to ask each other questions about the news events – their opinion about a specific politician, etc.

Podcasts If you do not have facilities to play a video or DVD, use a news podcast from the internet.

Personal plans If the learners want to practise listening on their own at home, get them to write this down on their 'personal action plan'. Record it also in your own file so that you remember to ask them in the near future – Did they try it out? How did it go?

Explain that they can take two minutes to think about what events they expect to see and then check if they are correct. If they have already read or watched the news in their own language, they should already be familiar with the content and therefore should not feel overwhelmed by new vocabulary or the speed of the presenters' delivery.

That's too late!

Principle Learners need to maintain a good relationship with their negotiating partner, but still get what they want. Emphasise and practise diplomatic language for the bargaining phase of a negotiation.

Prepare

Make a copy of the dialogue and of the cards opposite for every two learners, and make another copy of the dialogue for each learner. Also, think of a situation relevant to your learners. See the suggestions in *Focus on phrases* (page 78).

Proceed

- Tell the learners they are going to read a conversation which takes place at a negotiation between a customer and a supplier discussing a new order. Elicit things that might be talked about (price, quantity, delivery dates).
- Give out the dialogue and ask the learners to read it to see if their predictions were correct.
- Ask them if they notice any impolite language. Put them into pairs to underline phrases in the dialogue which they think could be more diplomatic.
- Now give out the cards and get the pairs to match the undiplomatic examples from the dialogue with a better version. Monitor to check they are matching correctly.
- Once the cards are matched, elicit a few examples of how to make language diplomatic – ‘softeners’, indirect questions, etc.
- Dictate some undiplomatic phrases:
 - *I don't agree.*
 - *That's not helpful.*
 - *That's not possible.*
- With their partner, the learners check the phrases then make them more diplomatic.
- Explain the negotiation situation or give it to them on a card. In pairs, they write a short dialogue using diplomatic language for this situation. Set a time limit of up to ten minutes, then get the pairs to read out their dialogues or to exchange with another pair and read theirs.

Alternative Write your own dialogue, based on a situation closer to one your learners might find themselves in.

Follow-up Record the learners doing the negotiation, to analyse how good their intonation is. A wider intonation range helps make language more polite.

Higher levels Get the learners to roleplay a situation rather than write a dialogue. Give them a few minutes to prepare.

One-to-one You take the role of a very aggressive negotiating partner – the learner has to stay diplomatic at all costs!

Negotiating dialogue

A: Hello, Mr Brown. I'm sorry I'm late, I got stuck in traffic. I hope you still have time to see me.
 B: I have another meeting to go to after this. We'll still have to finish at 11:00.
 A: That should be OK. Did you get the chance to read the brochures I sent you?
 B: Yes, but they weren't very helpful. You'll have to explain the procedure to me.
 A: No problem.
 B: It says here that we can only order in quantities of 1,000. We don't need that many. We only want 700.
 A: That might be possible but it would affect the price.
 B: No. We can't pay more.
 A: Then you could order 1,000 and keep the rest in stock.
 B: No. Our warehouse isn't big enough.
 A: How about if we sent them in two deliveries.
 B: That sounds better. When can you make the first delivery?
 A: In four weeks.
 B: That's too late. I need them in three weeks.
 A: I'll have to check the factory schedule and get back to you.

Negotiating cards

We'll still have to finish at 11.00.	Would it be OK if we still finished at 11.00?
They weren't very helpful.	They didn't answer all my questions.
You'll have to explain the procedure to me.	I think you'll have to explain the procedure to me.
We don't need that many.	We don't really need that many.
We only want 700.	We were thinking of 700.
No. We can't pay more.	I'm afraid we can't pay more.
No. Our warehouse isn't big enough.	Unfortunately, our warehouse isn't big enough.
When can you make the first delivery?	Do you know when you can make the first delivery?
That's too late.	That would be too late.
I need them in three weeks.	I hoped to have them in three weeks.

The covering letter

Principle Learners need to be able to use present perfect and past simple correctly so that it is clear whether they are talking about something which is finished or still continuing – a difficult area for many due to first language interference. Demonstrate in the business context of a letter from someone applying for a job.

Prepare

This activity will take some time to create but it is worth it, especially if you have several classes at the same company. Write a covering letter for a job at the company (see below for an example to adapt – an application to a German chemical company). Make copies for every learner.

Proceed

- Elicit what the duties of an International Marketing Manager could be – What experience and qualifications should such a person have at the learners' company?
- Say that you have a covering letter from an applicant who applied for the job at their company. You may need to pre-teach vocabulary from the letter.
- Hand out the letter and tell the learners to read it and decide if the person would be suitable for their company.
- In small groups, they discuss the advantages and the disadvantages of the candidate:
 - The applicant is working for a competitor.
 - He will have to move a large family overseas.
 - He doesn't speak any German.
- After the discussion, explain that they are going to focus on some of the grammar in the text.
- Write the following years on the board:
1999 2001 2004 2006
- Get the learners to re-read the text and find out what the candidate did in each of the years.
- Write the answers on the board to create a timeline:
 - 1999 – Finished PhD, started working for Competitor 2
 - 2001 – Got married
 - 2004 – Stopped working for Competitor 2, moved to NY, started MBA program
 - 2006 – Ended MBA program, started to work for Competitor 1
- Elicit the tense used. The learners read the text again to check if the candidate always uses the past simple when talking about his career history, or if he also uses other tenses. If necessary, draw their attention to the sentence *I have worked for Competitor 1 since 2006*.
 - What tense is it? (present perfect)
 - Why? (The applicant still works for Competitor 1.)
- Get them to form other sentences in the present perfect, using the dates on the timeline:
 - He has been married since 2001.*
 - He has had an MBA since 2006.*
- Give the learners a few minutes to think about their own career histories and write down important dates on a piece of paper. In pairs, they tell each other what the dates mean, using both the past simple and present perfect. Monitor, and check they are using the tenses correctly.

Lower levels In the final practice stage, the learners write whole sentences including the dates *before* telling each other.

Higher levels The learners write their own covering letter to a company similar to the one they work in now in a country of their choice. They could do this for homework.

Pre-experience learners The learners write a version of the letter based on a famous company they all know.

Review In the next lesson, the learners exchange and read each other's letters, checking the tenses.

Name of the company

Address of the company

Dear Sirs:

I am writing in response to your advertisement for an International Marketing Manager in last week's *Sunday Times*. I am 38 years old and from Argentina. I finished a PhD in Chemistry in 1999 and an MBA from New York University in 2006. I speak fluent English and Spanish, and I have a good knowledge of Portuguese.

I have worked for [Competitor 1] in Argentina since 2006, where I am in charge

of marketing decorative paints in South America. I have played a key role in helping the company increase its turnover in a very competitive sector. Before I started my two-year MBA program (2004–2006), I worked for [Competitor 2] in Brazil, developing paint for the automobile industry.

Since the start of my career, I have enjoyed working in the chemical industry and especially enjoy the paints sector. I am keen to find a position which combines my experience of marketing and chemistry, and I would particularly

like to work with an international company. I got married in 2001 and we now have four children, but we would be happy to live in Germany. My wife is a physiotherapist so she can move easily. We are excited about learning German and living in a new country.

I am hard-working, independent and enjoy a challenge. I can provide full references if necessary. Please find enclosed my resumé.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours truly,