


<b>Teaching Business English</b>			<b>Economics</b>  <b>Keywords:</b> teaching business English, business communication and business lessons.
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<b>Abstract</b>			
<p>Business English is a part of English for specific purposes and can be considered a specialism within English language learning and teaching. Many non-native English speakers study the subject with the goal of doing business with English-speaking countries, or with companies located outside the English-speaking world but which nonetheless use English as a shared language or lingua franca. Much of the English communication that takes place within business circles all over the world occurs between non-native speakers. In cases such as these, the object of the exercise is efficient and effective communication. The strict rules of grammar are in such cases sometimes ignored, when, for example, a stressed negotiator's only goal is to reach an agreement as quickly as possible. (See linguist Braj Kachru's theory of the "expanding circle".) Business English means different things to different people. For some, it focuses on vocabulary and topics used in the worlds of business, trade, finance, and international relations. For others it refers to the communication skills used in the workplace, and focuses on the language and skills needed for typical business communication such as presentations, negotiations, meetings, small talk, socializing, correspondence, report writing, and a systematic approach. In both of these cases it can be taught to native speakers of English, for example, high school students preparing to enter the job market. Business English is a variant of international English. One can study it at a college or university. Institutes around the world have courses or modules in BE available, which can lead to a degree in the subject.</p>			

## Introduction

Many of our *Business English* students never explicitly requested to be taught *Business English*. Yet, we can still list which of our students we consider to have been *Business English* students! We've surmised that the only real distinction of teaching Business English is in the choice of themes used to deliver different target language. For Business English students we tend to choose themes that have a corporate feel. Put another way, the same target language tackled with any ESL student (based on their goals and needs) can be tackled with a Business English student. It's only that the thematic focus of the lessons should be typical business scenarios such as writing an email, successful negotiation or customer service (or industry-specific scenarios based on the student's profession).

While preparing our own Business English lesson plans we consulted with a number of content creators, teacher trainers and private teachers to gather ideas. Most of our colleagues agreed that although a background in business is helpful it is not required to teach Business English. Our own professional backgrounds include dozen years working in Finance and Management Consulting and Teaching English for Specific Purposes, but we rarely draw upon any deep technical vocabulary while teaching. Most of the terminology we use could be gained

from the business section of a newspaper or the a magazine such as *the Economist*. So what *do* you need to teach business English:<sup>20</sup>

**1. A professional appearance and teaching style:** executives will expect the same level of professionalism that they encounter everyday at work to be carried over into their lessons. This is especially true if you are going into workplaces to run workshops. Even small things such as a groomed appearance, ironed shirt and an organized environment (whether online or in-person) are important.

**2. Experience teaching adults:** teaching ESL to adults requires a different approach than teaching ESL to young learners. Try to gain some experience with adults (even by volunteering or teaching for an online ESL marketplace/platform) before tutoring a professional.

**3. An understanding of basic business terminology:** you'll need to understand both basic business terminology and industry-specific terminology (specific to the industry your student belongs to) before tutoring a professional. This should not be an overly onerous task. My own Business English lesson plans should be a good start to anyone who needs to make sure they have their bases covered.

**4. Professional looking and engaging lesson content:** most professionals are used to a PPT presentation style and you should aim to replicate this format with your own lesson content. Target language should be delivered with lots of image-heavy slides with a clean and professional look. Here are some slides from the first lesson in my Business English lesson plans as an example for anyone thinking of creating their own lesson content:

## 1. Teaching Business English

Many teachers of English as a foreign language feel intimidated by the prospect of teaching business English. This often stems from the perception that teaching business English is the same thing as teaching business studies. In fact, it's more about helping learners develop their English skills for use in a business context. Here are five tips to get your business English teaching off to a good start:<sup>21</sup>

### 1. Find out what students really want to achieve

You'll be teaching busy adults who are used to working towards objectives. You should therefore discuss with them at the beginning of the course what they would realistically like to achieve. This usually means breaking things down into skills: telephoning more effectively, writing more coherent emails, chairing meetings, etc. Teachers should help set these objectives by analysing the needs of the learners early on. This 'needs analysis' can then be shared with the

<sup>20</sup> Bondi, Diaz (7 October 2015). "*TEFL – Teaching English Abroad*". Maximonivel. Retrieved 8 February 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Roberts, Clair. "*Teaching English as a Foreign Language*". The TEFL Academy. Retrieved 13 June 2016

learners and referred to as a way of keeping them engaged and motivated throughout the course. Bear in mind though that people's jobs develop and change, so you may need to agree on new objectives further down the line.

## **2. Get a clear idea about the contexts in which learners use English**

A very important part of the needs analysis process should be a discussion about the context in which the course participants need to perform: Why are they learning English? Who do they communicate with in their work and under what conditions? Someone who is learning English just to brush up fluency skills will have different needs and expectations to someone who is learning English to supervise a team working in another country. We should also remember that business is conducted on a global level and there is a strong possibility that your students will be communicating with other non-native speakers. It's a good idea to research cross-cultural communication and find out how people from different backgrounds do business. You can find lots of resources on the internet relating to cross-cultural communication and there are many books on the subject.

## **3. Be businesslike but keep energy levels high**

To make the right impression, it's important to teach in a business-like way. This affects what you say, and how you behave, but also what you wear. If you're going to work in-company, then punctuality, professionalism and competence are crucial. Furthermore, business English learners, like all learners, need motivating. A group of managers who have just come back from a long business trip will need their trainer to keep their energy levels high, and as with all classes, there needs to be a certain degree of entertainment. Student talking time (STT) is likely to be much higher in a business English classroom, so ensure there are plenty of opportunities for collaborative task work and speaking practice. Where possible, leave reading and writing for self-study or homework.

## **4. Choose your materials wisely**

As in the general English classroom, learners will expect you to bring materials to class. There are lots of books and online resources available, but it's important to choose materials that create 'authentic' situations in the classroom. Probably the most important resource is the learners themselves. They can provide you with real materials from their working lives - the things they need to read and understand, or perhaps even create and present. These could be leaflets, emails, PowerPoint presentations or reports. Learners will probably expect you to take some of these resources and create your own worksheets from them. This shouldn't be a harrowing experience though! Don't forget: concentrate on goals and needs.<sup>22</sup> Find out why these resources are important and what your learners want to take away from the lesson. Then come to an agreement with them about how to meet these needs.

<sup>22</sup> Bondi, Diaz (7 October 2015). *"TEFL – Teaching English Abroad"*. Maximonivel. Retrieved 8 February 2017.

## 5. Be flexible and try to anticipate problems

Business people can have high expectations. They might ask for classes before they start work, during lunchtime or at the end of the working day. This means trainers can end up working long days – perhaps starting the first class at 7.30 in the morning and finishing the last lesson in the evening. In addition, learners may cancel at the last minute because of unforeseen problems: perhaps an important call has come in, or their train is delayed. Although this can be frustrating, business English teachers and trainers need to accept that, for learners in the workplace, work is clearly their priority. To reduce the stress, it can be a good idea to negotiate a cancellation policy with the company in advance – ask them to make sure they inform you 24 or 48 hours in advance, for example. A further issue may be the numbers of people attending class. It's not unusual to prepare for a group of six to eight people and have only one person show up. Try and create activities that will work on a one-to-one basis.

Business English teaching can be very interesting and rewarding. Although teaching in-company employees requires a variety of skills and techniques, it mostly boils down to good preparation and a professional approach.<sup>23</sup>

### 1.1. Europe

Major European cities have established language schools on-site or operated as agencies sending teachers to various locations. September is the peak recruiting month, and many annual contracts last from October until June. Employers prefer graduates with experience in teaching Business English or in teaching young learners.

Instructors from the United Kingdom and Ireland, countries within the European Union, do not need any visas to work within the EU, which reduces demand for non-EU teachers. Immigration laws require that non-EU job applicants submit documents from their home countries in person after the European employer files an officially documented job offer. If the worker has traveled to Europe to find the job, this means they must return home and wait for some time. Following the process correctly does not guarantee getting a visa. Many private-sector employers do not subsidise them at all, because they are able to hire the staff easily from the EU countries.<sup>24</sup>

International schools hire some experienced and well-qualified non-EU teachers. Education ministries, i.e. those of France and Spain, offer opportunities for assistant language instructors in public schools.

<sup>23</sup> Bolos, Nicole (November 2012). "Successful Strategies For Teaching Reading to 5. Middle Grades English Language Learners: Teachers Can Employ a Variety of Classroom-Tested Strategies To Teach Reading To English Language Learners". Middle School Journal. **44** (2): 14–20. *JSTOR 4176311*

<sup>24</sup> Paul Z. Jambor *"Protectionist Measures in Postsecondary Ontario (Canada) TESL"*, U.S. Department of Education: Educational Resources Information Center, 2012.

Part-time employment is usually allowed under an education visa, but this visa also requires proper attendance at an accredited EU college or university, institute, or another educational program. Other teachers work illegally under tourist visas, since the "don't ask, don't tell" method is the only viable solution to avoiding impossible bureaucracy and eventual job rejection.

Despite claims from websites that sell courses, state schools often do not accept brief TEFL courses as a substitute for a university degree in English education.<sup>[14]</sup> In Spain it is impossible to get a job with a state school unless you go through the process of getting your foreign teaching degree accepted in Spain and then pass the civil service examination ("oposiciones").

Demand for TEFL tends to be stronger in countries which joined the European Union recently. They also tend to have lower costs of living. Non-EU teachers usually find legal work there with less difficulty. The Balkan former Yugoslav countries have seen recent growth in TEFL—private schools have recruited Anglophone teachers there for several years.<sup>25</sup>

Very few foreign instructors work in Scandinavia, where stricter immigration laws and a policy of relying on bilingual local teachers apply.

## 1.2. Japan

In Japan, the JET Programme employs assistant language teachers and teaching assistants to work in Japanese high schools and elementary schools. Other teachers work in eikaiwa (private language schools), universities, and as Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs) in government and boards of education. The largest of these chains are Aeon and ECC. The sector is not well regulated. Nova, one of the largest chains with over 900 branches, collapsed in October 2007, leaving thousands of foreign teachers without income or, for some, a place to live. Agencies are increasingly used to send English speakers into kindergartens, primary schools, and private companies whose employees need to improve their Business English. Agencies, known in Japan as *haken*, or dispatch companies, have recently been competing among themselves to get contracts from various<sup>26</sup>

Boards of Education for Elementary, Junior and Senior High Schools, and wages have decreased steadily. JALT (the Japan Association for Language Teaching) is the largest NPO (not-

<sup>25</sup> Bolos, Nicole (November 2012). "Successful Strategies For Teaching Reading to 5. Middle Grades English Language Learners: Teachers Can Employ a Variety of Classroom-Tested Strategies To Teach Reading To English Language Learners". *Middle School Journal*. **44** (2): 14–20. *JSTOR* 4176311

<sup>26</sup> Tievert, Jessica. "Evaluation of Structured English Immersion and Bilingual Education on Reading Skills of Limited English Proficient Students in California and Texas". *Applied Research Project*. Texas State University. 2007. Retrieved on 2008-07-04.

for-profit organization) for language teachers (mainly native English speakers), with nearly 3,000 members.<sup>[28]</sup>

### 1.3. Americas

There has been significant growth in TEFL within the wealthier non-Anglophone countries of North, Central, and South America as well as the Caribbean. In particular, many teachers work in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. Chile has even made it a national goal to become a bilingual nation within the coming years. As proof of its commitment to this goal the Chilean Ministry of Education sponsors English Opens Doors, a program that recruits English speakers to work in Chilean Public High Schools

### 1.4. Taiwan

In Taiwan, most teachers work in cram schools, known locally as bushibans or buxibans. Some are part of chains, like Hess and Kojen. Others operate independently. Such schools pay around US\$2,000 per month.<sup>27</sup> End-of-contract bonuses equivalent to an extra month's pay are not mandated by law as in South Korea, and are uncommon in Taiwan. Also, under current law it is illegal for foreigners to teach English in pre-schools or kindergartens, though it is almost always overlooked by both the schools and the government, thereby making the practice common and accepted. To teach English and live in Taiwan, you must be a holder of an Alien Resident Card (ARC), which is supplied to passport holders of native English speaking countries by hiring schools. ARC candidates must hold a bachelor's degree from a university.

In recent years Taiwan has increased its needs for TEFL and Certified Teachers in public schools. Qualifications and salaries for public school positions are based on certifications and experience. Also, benefits and salaries are more extensive than cram schools.

**2. Why Learn English? (Teaching Business English),** English is the International Common Tongue

English was originally the language of England, but through the historical efforts of the British Empire it has become the primary or secondary language of many former British colonies such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and India. Currently, English is the primary language of not only countries actively touched by British imperialism, but also many business and cultural spheres dominated by those countries. It is the language of Hollywood and the language of international banking and business. As such, it is a useful and even necessary language to know.

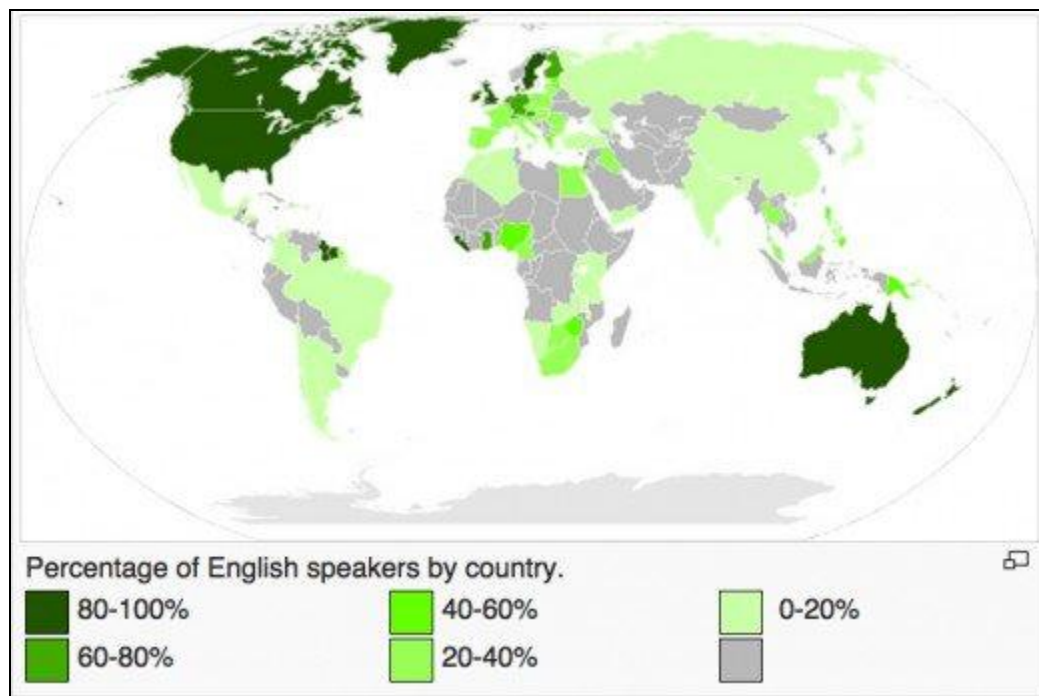
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<sup>27</sup> Brandt, C. (2006). Success on your certificate course in English language teaching: A guide to becoming a teacher in ELT/TESOL. London: Sage. ISBN 1-4129-2059-0, ISBN

There are several factors that make the English language essential to communication in our current time. First of all, it is the most common foreign language. This means that two people who come from different countries (for example, a Mexican and a Swede) usually use English as a common language to communicate<sup>28</sup>.

That's why everyone needs to learn the language in order to get in touch on an international level. Speaking it will help you communicate with people from countries all over the world, not just English-speaking ones.

Picture 1.



Source:[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_English-speaking\\_population](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_English-speaking_population)

Teaching Business English is also essential to the field of education. In many countries, children are taught and encouraged to learn English as a second language. Even in countries where it is not an official language, such as the Netherlands or Sweden, we will find many syllabi in science and engineering are written in English. Because it is the dominant language in the sciences, most of the research and studies you find in any given scientific field will be written in it

<sup>28</sup> Tievert, Jessica. "Evaluation of Structured English Immersion and Bilingual Education on Reading Skills of Limited English Proficient Students in California and Texas". Applied Research Project. Texas State University. 2007. Retrieved on 2008-07-04.

as well.<sup>29</sup> At the university level, students in many countries study almost all their subjects in English teaching business in order to make the material more accessible to international students.

**Table.1. List of Countries by English Speaking Population)**

<b>List of Countries by English Speaking Population</b>		
<b>Country</b>	<b>% English Speakers</b>	<b>Total English Speakers</b>
United States	94.2	298,444,149
India	10.35	125,226,449
Pakistan	49	92,316,049
Nigeria	53	82,941,000
United Kingdom	97.74	63,962,000
Philippines	56.63	57,292,884
Germany	64	51,584,000
Bangladesh	18	29,398,158
Canada	85.63	28,360,240
Egypt	35	28,101,325
France	39	25,500,000
Italy	34	20,300,000
Ghana	66.67	18,000,000
Australia	97.03	17,357,833
Thailand	27.16	17,121,187
South Africa	31	16,424,417

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_English-speaking\\_population](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_English-speaking_population)

English has developed to become the universal language for business around the world. English unites people and companies from different backgrounds, countries and languages and allows them to communicate in a clear and effective way. That's why Business English is so important to study if you want to work in this sector. Having a good grasp of English that you can apply to business will be an attractive asset to employers.

If you want to live and work abroad in the future, in an English speaking country such as the UK or the USA, you'll need to be able to understand English business terms. Especially if you're looking to find work in your chosen field.

<sup>29</sup> Roberts, Clair. "Teaching English as a Foreign Language". The TEFL Academy. Retrieved 13 June 2016.



## Conclusion

Students from across the globe are taking Business English lessons and the reasons are obvious. In today's globalized world, English is the language of choice when it comes to conducting business. Moreover, those who speak English, and speak it well, often have a competitive advantage over their business rivals. And those who seek better job opportunities also turn to Business English courses to increase their chances of success in today's tough job market. These Business English students are very different from other ESL learners. You'll find they are highly motivated and will embrace the activities you set forth with great enthusiasm, as long as these activities are targeted to help them meet their communication goals.

Although many people think that it is very difficult and confusing, English is actually the easiest language of the world to learn because there are so many resources available. As soon as you decide you want to learn, there are thousands of resources on the Internet and in bookstores. I'm not just talking about lessons and grammar books. You can supplement traditional learning materials with children's TV shows and books. I suggest watching as much TV as you can, in English with English subtitles, and you will pick up conversational English in no time.

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