

CURRENT TRENDS IN MODERN TEACHING OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

Jasmina Komilova,
Aziza Ikromova,
Gulchehra Nurullayeva,
Zilola Inagamova

University of Science and Technologies,
senior lecturer of linguistics and languages

Abstract: *Current Trends in Modern Teaching of Business English* It is a well-known fact that English has become the lingua franca of the business world. Nowadays when national frontiers are open and do not present a threat for those, wanting to cross them with their entrepreneurial activities, English teaching is facing a challenge of being able to provide knowledge for this specific sphere. Gaining language skills in the special area of Business English is vitally important for future managers, entrepreneurs and anyone who is about to enter the world of business. The paper explains the differences between General and Business English. It focuses on communication as a key aspect of today's teaching Business English as well as cultural awareness. It also discusses the role of Business English teachers and the materials used in teaching.

Keywords: Business English, communication, Business English teacher, authentic context.

Annotatsiya: Hozirgi zamon biznes ingliz tilini o'qitishdagi zamonaviy tendensiyalar. Ma'lumki, ingliz tili biznes dunyosining lingua franca (umumiy til) sifatida tan olingan. Bugungi kunda milliy chegaralar ochilib, tadbirkorlik faoliyatini olib borishni istaganlar uchun to'siq bo'lmay qolganda, ingliz tilini o'qitish o'ziga xos soha uchun bilim taqdim etish vazifasiga duch kelmoqda. Biznes ingliz tili sohasida til ko'nikmalarini egallash kelajakdagi menejerlar, tadbirkorlar va biznes dunyosiga kirishni rejalashtirayotgan har bir kishi uchun juda muhimdir. Ushbu maqola umumiy ingliz tili va biznes ingliz tili o'rtasidagi farqlarni tushuntiradi. Shuningdek, bugungi kunda biznes ingliz tilini o'qitishda asosiy omil sifatida muloqot va madaniy xabardorlikka e'tibor qaratadi. Maqolada biznes ingliz tili o'qituvchilarining roli va o'qitishda foydalaniladigan materiallar muhokama qilinadi.

Аннотация: Современные тенденции в обучении деловому английскому языку. Известно, что английский язык стал ленива-франка в мире бизнеса. Сегодня, когда национальные границы открыты и не представляют препятствий для тех, кто хочет вести предпринимательскую деятельность, обучение английскому языку сталкивается с задачей предоставления знаний для этой специфической сферы. Овладение языковыми навыками в области делового английского жизненно важно для будущих менеджеров, предпринимателей и всех, кто собирается войти в мир бизнеса. В статье объясняются различия между общим и деловым английским языком. Основное внимание уделяется коммуникации как ключевому аспекту современного обучения деловому

английскому, а также культурной осведомленности. Также обсуждаются роль преподавателей делового английского и материалы, используемые в процессе обучения.

I. INTRODUCTION

English has become the language of the business world. That is a well-known fact. It is thus natural that there has been a growing demand for Business English teaching. The term Business English is used either for English taught to different business professionals or job experienced learners or students who are in schools preparing for business career or reexperienced learners. This paper is interested in teaching Business English to groups of learners in schools - people who are still preparing to enter the professional field of business. However, many of the principles concerning the focus on communication and intercultural communication apply to all groups of Business English learners. As business people use a specific language to get their ideas across, they need some business communication skills. Thus, teaching Business English nowadays is especially about teaching communication in the authentic business context because learners want to be able to communicate in a way which would be appreciated and recognized by their counterparts. It is more than just teaching English, cultural awareness is of growing importance. Because of very specific goals and needs, it is necessary that the instructor is interested in business topics, although he is not expected to be an expert and he needs to carefully select materials and activities.

Authenticity is a highly important issue especially with low-experienced learners.

1. The difference between Business and General English

Business English belongs under the more general English for Specific Purposes (ESP)¹. It has special and unique characteristics which were stated as a general principle of ESP by Tom Hutchinson and Allah Waters as: "Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need" ²(Hutchinson, Waters 8). In other words, it is an approach to learning a language, based on the need of the learner, on his apparent reasons for learning. It should also be pointed out that Business English is not so easily defined because unlike other varieties of ESP, it is often a mix of specific and general content³. There are many situations where the distinction between General and Business English is not so clear.

Also, having certain knowledge of General

English is a prerequisite to start learning Business English. This does not mean that one needs to be fluent in English to start studying Business English. There are Business English course books which are designed for different levels of knowledge of English. However, the lower the level of knowledge of the language, the more likely

¹ Dudley-Evans, T. va St. John, M. J. (1998). "Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach"

² Hutchinson, T. va Waters, A. (1987). "English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-Centred Approach" – ESP

³ Ellis, Johnson 3

it is that the distinction between General and Business English becomes less clear. In General English one learns the basics, the mechanics of grammar, composition and vocabulary. In Business English you build upon what you learned in General English, you focus on business situations which require clarity and logic, presentation styles that are dominant in business communication. One of the most important aspects of the difference between General English and Business English is content. In General English the main focus and topics discussed will concern family, friends and situations that a person generally encounters in his life. In Business English classes the topics will concern the environment of the office, the life within a company and the skills taught and practiced will be such which the learner generally needs in his/her job or will most probably need in his/her future career. The context for listening and reading exercises in Business English is different from General English. Also, lexis in grammar will use vocabulary and situations from the business context. Business English is also sometimes called English for Business Purposes. It can be further divided according to who the learners are into English for General Business Purposes which is taught to reexperienced learners and English for Specific Business Purposes which is aimed at job-experienced learners. English for General Business Purposes teaches a broad range of English through business settings. English for Specific Business Purposes courses are often taught in one-on-one setting, even though, not exclusively, and they are carefully tailored to very specific needs of the learner often teaching one or two language skills⁴. Mark Ellis and Christine Johnson called the unique characteristics of Business English more specifically as sense of purpose, social aspects and clear communication. the context of business meetings, telephone calls and discussions, a sense of purpose is regarded as the most important characteristic of exchanges. The successful use of language is considered in terms of a successful outcome of the business event. Thus, it is understandable that those who use Business English need to speak the language to achieve more in their jobs. As there is great competition in business, between companies as well as Research Article Volume 11 Issue No.06 IJESC, June 2021 within companies, it follows that performance objectives take priority over educational objectives or language learning for its own sake. Much of language will be transactional, which means getting what you want and persuading others to agree with your choice of the course of action⁵. The social aspects characteristic of Business English takes into consideration the fact that for business people there is a need to contact others whom they do not know or know very little. Meetings are often short and there is a need for internationally accepted way of doing things, so that people of different mother tongues and cultures can feel comfortable with each other quickly. Thus social contacts are often highly ritualized and language is used in the context of a routine pattern of exchanges. The style and content of social interactions is typified, marked by the desire for building a good mutual relationship but still avoiding being too familiar⁶. There is a need for clear communication because

⁴ Dudley-Evans, St John 56

⁵ Ellis, Johnson 7

⁶ Ellis, Johnson 8

information needs to be communicated with a minimum risk of misunderstanding. Often it is necessary to be brief, for example when using the telephone. In order to be short and save time certain terms came to be which refer to specific concepts people in business are familiar with. Thus, in Business English being clear and concise often go hand-in hand⁷. From the characteristics provided above it is becoming clear that communication is a key aspect and Business English can be seen as English for communication in a specific context.

2. The focus on effective communication

There is a demand for business English which appears to be growing because learners are becoming clearer about what they want to use English for. In today's global economy, learners want not only the skills to read, write, listen to and speak English fluently, they also want to be able to communicate in a way which will be recognized and appreciated by their counterparts internationally. That is the consequence of the Communication Age we live in. Lull et al. (1) claim that the term Communication Age does not only refer to transmissions of digitized bytes from one person to another, but it also refers to communication processes among real people. According to Codrescu, the ultimate key to successful business is communication (221). Generally, communication can be defined as sending and receiving verbal and non-verbal messages. It is effective when the message is understood and stimulates the expected action. The essence of communication is sharing – providing data, information and insight in an exchange that benefits both you and people with whom you are communicating⁸. Effective communication in business context means strengthening business relationships between the company and all its stakeholders. That is why accuracy and proper vocabulary usage in English are so important. The primary objective of learning a language is acquiring specific expressions and phrases. In Business English that means learning business-related vocabulary and content which enable students to communicate effectively in relevant business situations⁹. This requires that vocabulary is chosen from authentic materials according to their usefulness. Further, it is vitally important that a classroom environment is created, in which real communication can take place and be practiced. Learners will feel confident and relaxed if the trainer or teacher meets characteristics outlined below. Interaction will also be encouraged by not overcorrecting, by asking too many questions and allowing time to answer the questions. The question stands out, which communicative events are of most interest and should be addressed in teaching Business English today. Dudley-Evans and St John list the following based on previously conducted research and published materials: telephoning, socializing, making presentations, taking part in meetings, negotiating, corresponding and reporting. The authors themselves claims

⁷ Ellis, Johnson 9

⁸ BOVÉE, Courtland V. va THILL, John V. (2008). Business Communication Today.

⁹ Weber ova 5-6

that 'socializing'¹⁰ probably is a misleading term¹¹. Socializing should be replaced by talking to clients, visitors, colleagues and foreign managers as Donna lists it (15).

2.1. Communicative Language teaching (CLT)

As stated in the previous paragraph's communication is a key issue in learning and teaching Business English. That is why the communicative approach should be taken when teaching English for business purposes. It is an approach which stresses task-based language teaching, project work and cooperative learning. CeCe-Murcia et al. list the following features and manifestations of CLT (8): - the goal of language teaching is the ability to communicate semantic notions and social functions are as important as linguistic structures - in case that content is focused on Business English or if it is academic it becomes a simultaneous concern group and pair work is common, be it a role play, dramatization or other activities to facilitate language use in different social contexts materials and activities often consist of authentic tasks and projects using materials not primarily constructed for pedagogical use - the teacher's role is especially to facilitate communication the teacher needs to be able to use the target language fluently and appropriately. The core principles of CLT include developing the students' confidence, fluency, autonomy in language, making language practice interesting and social; and teaching language skills, content and forms that are useful, relevant and meaningful. Teaching Business English at university or college level calls for adopting Content-Based Instruction, in which content is the driving force of the classroom activities. The chosen topics provide a framework around which language skills, vocabulary and grammar can be developed in parallel. For example students at the Faculty of Management in Bratislava, Slovakia study the following topics in English classes in their first year of studies: numbers in managerial work, fundamental principles of management, company structure, personnel management, stress management, management styles, cultural aspects of managerial work, business trips abroad, sectors of economy, international trade, banking, negotiating, corporate finance, accounting, stock exchange markets, insurance, types of businesses, setting up a business. The English course thus consists of a sequence of modules spread over the academic year covering topics studied in classes other than English. This provides a good opportunity to practice language and vocabulary which students have encountered or will encounter during their university studies. The course reflects the needs of students in their current situation. Tasks are a component of lessons which are used to reflect real-world uses of language and create interaction.

2.2. Intercultural communication

Language and communication cannot exist apart from culture. Culture is complex and has different aspects: national, organizational, professional, personal. It is something that cannot be spotted easily but it is rather what lies underneath. In Business

¹⁰ Dudley-Evans, T. va St. John, M. J. (1998). Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach.

¹¹ Dudley Evans, St John 63-64

context the need to communicate with others from different cultural backgrounds makes intercultural IJESC, June communication highly important. Such intercultural competence consists of three dimensions: intercultural awareness (cognitive dimension), intercultural sensitivity (affective dimension) and intercultural adroitness (behavioral dimension)¹². A key element for the learners of Business English is that they need to be aware of appropriate language as well as behavior for cultures and situations in which they will function¹³. These may include matters as purpose of meetings, use of negotiation tactics, information structuring and use of politeness strategies in written as well as oral communication. Moreover, not only verbal but also body language differs in cultures. For example, silence as a negotiation technique might be unnatural for Europeans but very natural for Asian cultures (Dudley-Evans, St John 69). Culture needs to be taken into account in teaching Business English especially because of the role of English as an international language in business. This does not only mean learning about the culture of native English speakers. The term 'International English' has even been used by some¹⁴ referring to English which is used for communication among non-native speakers. Since we live in such global world where many people interact with others from different cultures, we need to be aware of and sensitive to cultural differences.

3. Teacher as the facilitator of the learning process

According to Hutchinson and Waters the role of the Business English teacher is different from the role of General English teachers in the fact that it will often involve needs analysis, syllabus design, materials writing and adaptation and evaluation. It is also true that the majority of Business English teachers have not been trained for this specific role, that is why they do need to find their way in this new environment they have generally been ill-prepared for¹⁵. They often find themselves using texts whose content is not very familiar to them, so it may well be that they will feel inadequate, lacking the ability to cope. However, as Ellis and Johnson state, teaching Business English can also be an attractive field to pursue for teachers. There are several reasons for this: first learners of Business English are often highly motivated, disciplined, intelligent and dynamic. Secondly, it is more than just teaching a language because there are highly specific goals and objectives. Thirdly, there is a combination of professional as well as general language skills, which are taught in the context of a varied and fascinating subject matter (Ellis, Johnson 26). The question needs to be asked, what kind of knowledge is required for a teacher of Business English? Of course, it is an advantage if the teacher knows the specialist subject but it is not a condition sine qua non. Generally, a Business English teacher should not be intimidated by the subject as often is the case according to Hutchinson and Waters¹⁶ but rather they need to take a positive attitude towards the specialist content of the texts used for teaching.

¹² Barkov 47

¹³ Ellis, Johnson 35

¹⁴ Dudley-Evans, St John 54

¹⁵ Hutchinson, Waters 157-160

¹⁶ Hutchinson, Waters 163

A knowledge of the basic principles in the area of the subject is necessary, so the teacher 'should not become a teacher of the subject matter, but rather an interested student of the subject matter'¹⁷. It is the learner who has the specific content knowledge. There is a danger that a teacher working with reexperienced learners will feel a necessity to teach the subject, especially in cases when the learners are not yet so familiar with the specialized content, have not had a real-life experience with it. However, that is not the role of the teacher. The Business English teacher is not supposed to be an expert in any particular business area but in language education. Their specific task is to find the needs of the learners and prepare them for successful communication with their partners in business and also in academic environment for being able to study from specialized textbooks of the subject, or following lectures where the specialized subject vocabulary is used. An important issue for a Business English teacher is a balance of personal skills. Ellis and Johnson name the following¹⁸ an outgoing personality, sensitive to the needs of the learner - being a good negotiator, a skill most needed especially with job-experienced learners - being curious and interested in all aspects of business. A teacher of Business English needs to be clear about what the job involves. Their confidence is built up gradually but only on condition of being aware of their duties and the fact that the professional development is a continual process which needs a lot of commitment and time.

4. Materials for teaching and learning Business English

When considering teaching Business English, a key issue is identifying the current language level of the learner and selecting materials and tasks that are appropriate in level, as well as in content. Nowadays there is a wide selection of published materials to be used for Business English classes. It is easier for a teacher to choose from these, as they make all the decisions in terms of syllabus, content and methodology for them. The problem is that publishers try to reach a wider market. For that reason, it may pose a problem to try to address a specific need of a learner or a group of learners. For such needs additional materials are necessary which a teacher must choose from available published materials or other sources and tailor them to the needs of the group of learners. Generally, there are three types of Business English materials for teaching and learning: framework materials, authentic materials and tailor-made materials. Framework materials allow learners to produce content and context directly applicable to them. They are diagrammatic representations used to generate language. These kinds of supplementary materials are very suitable especially for visual learners. The use of the term authentic materials has been discussed and some oppose that it is not accurate, that there is no intrinsic merit in a so-called authentic text. The text is only authentic in the sense that it is a message from a writer to an assumed reader, who is expected to have certain knowledge and bring it to the text. Thus, it has a value only in the context for which it was originally written¹⁹. The authors assert that there is no such thing as

¹⁷ Hutchinson, Waters 163

¹⁸ Ellis, Johnson 27

¹⁹ Hutchinson, Waters 159

an authentic text; texts need to be seen from the point of view of being able to contribute to the learning process. However, most authors use the term authentic materials referring to anything that an English native speaker would read, listen to or use. Authentic materials are texts, videos, audio programs, films or broadcasts which were primarily not designed for use in teaching English as a foreign language. They can still be used and be of great benefit for learners. It is though a challenge for a teacher to choose authentic material which will be suitable for the goal of the class, which will provide a 'real' experience with the environment native speakers encounter. Also, it takes a certain level of creativity, experience and knowledge to exploit such materials to benefit the students. The third type of materials, the tailor-made materials, refers to such materials which have been produced by a teacher to address specific needs of students. Teaching Business English is about teaching communication in the authentic business context. Creating authentic context is especially a challenge in a class IJESC, June with pre-experienced learners, i.e., those who are still students in universities and colleges or commerce schools. Because pre-experienced learners do not usually have the possibility to practice and learn English in the real-life situations in business context, a good approach is to employ methods and strategies to help create the authentic business context in the classroom. We believe that can be achieved by a suitable combination of the used materials. Nowadays when information technology has such an impact on us and Internet has become a vital part of our lives it is natural to use the Internet to enrich lessons. The Internet can especially be used to provide learners with authentic and up-to-date materials. Often course books contain information about companies and their activities which were up-to-date in the time when the book was published but now, some years later, this information is not so accurate any more. We can thus, for example, use the Internet to update such information. Also, it can be used for homework assignments, when students have much information available to choose from and can relate to something that is of interest to them. For example, when learning about organizational structures of companies and various job titles, students can look up the structures of companies they are interested in, bring them into the class and then they can be used for pair work to practice the vocabulary related to the topic.

II. CONCLUSION

Currently there is a high demand for Business English classes. The reason lies in today's demand for knowledge of English because it has become the international language of business. Learners have a clearer idea of what they need the language for. This paper attempts to generally look at issues surrounding teaching Business English today especially to reexperienced learners. The difference in English for general Purposes and English for Business Purposes is especially in the content. Effective communication is an essential part of teaching Business English and in today's global world we need to approach it with an awareness of cultural differences more than ever before. These aspects of Business English place a requirement on a teacher of Business English. Even though one does not need to be an expert in the field of business to teach

Business English, it is necessary that the teacher is interested in the subject and understands the basics. It is even more of a challenge for a teacher of reexperienced learners who possess knowledge of the subject mostly from textbooks and not so much from real life situations. That is why authenticity has an important role in such classes. Materials are an important tool of creating the authentic context. This does not mean that only authentic materials should be used, even though they play an important role. The Internet is a good tool which can be used nowadays to bring authentic and up-to-date materials into teaching.

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