

advancing learning outcomes programme



**Preparing University Learners for Real Workplace English**

Evan Frendo

responsibility education

1

**English for general academic purposes**

- Study skills (e.g. note taking, critical thinking)
- Attending lectures
- Writing assignments
- Seminar discussions



2

**Discipline specific**



**English for Civil Engineering** – project proposals, safety protocols, blueprints



**English for Law** – legal argumentation, case briefs, contracts



**English for Medical Purposes** – clinical terminology, research articles, ethics

3

**What about after university?**



**A typical day?**

- Formal meeting with clients
- Online team meeting
- Small talk at the water cooler with other team leaders
- Project update (onsite)
- Emails, chat messages, Trello etc

4

**Business English**



“Language used to *do* business and the language used to *talk about* business”

Nelson, M. (2000). A corpus-based study of the lexis of business English and business English teaching materials [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. University of Manchester.

5

**Chemical Engineering**



**Purpose:** Learning, demonstrating understanding, assessment  
**Audience:** Lecturers, tutors, examiners, peers  
**Focus:** Theory, explanation, correctness, academic language



**Purpose:** Safety, efficiency, production, collaboration, decision-making  
**Audience:** Operators, managers, technicians, clients, regulators, multidisciplinary teams  
**Focus:** Clarity, action, risk, outcomes, practicality

6

Two questions

1. How do people really speak English in the world of work?
2. What can we do to help prepare our learners for it?



7

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8

Software development team meeting

Where? Southern Germany  
 Who? Software developers  
 What? Project update from an Indian developer who has flown in from Bangalore. He grew up speaking English.  
 All the Germans speak good English (C1-C2).



9

Software development team meeting

Too fast.  
 Too technical.



10

Planning a business trip

<p>Hi Lin</p> <p>Just to let you know the visa came through today – all successful – see you in Wuhan ☺</p> <p>Bernd</p>	<p>Good news</p> <p>I have booked my train tickets back and forth. I will meet you Wuhan G Train Station. I will arrive the station at 20:00 around earlier than you. You will arrive Wuhan Station at 20:40 around.</p>
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11

Meetings – examples of “non-standard” English

- I used the *before* reference
- I ask for a quick glance for this paragraph
- Ok I note it. We will think later on.
- Any idea where is?
- Can I get back to you later? I need more thoughts for that.
- I would like listen comments from experts here.

None of these prevent communication!

12

## English as a business lingua franca (BELF)

Investigates use of English in international business contexts



13

## Getting the job done

“BELF is perceived as an enabling resource to get the work done. Since it is highly context-bound and situation-specific, it is a moving target defying detailed linguistic description.” (p. 129)



Kankaanranta, A., Louhiala-Salminen, L. & Karhunen, P. (2015). English in multinational companies: implications for teaching “English” at an international business school. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 4(1), 125–148.

14

## English as a business lingua franca

“conformity with standard English is seen as a fairly irrelevant concept”

“I don’t actually care whether something is correct or incorrect. As long as the meaning is not distorted” (p. 418)

Ehrenreich, S. (2010). English as a business lingua franca in a German multinational corporation: Meeting the challenge. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(4), 408–431.

15

## English as a corporate language



Kankaanranta, A., Karhunen, P., & Louhiala-Salminen, L. (2018). “English as corporate language” in the multilingual reality of multinational companies. *Multilingua: Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, 37(4), 331–351.

16

## English as a business lingua franca (BELF)

- Communication strategies used to “get the job done”
- Accommodation – simplifying / adapting speech patterns
  - Translanguaging / multilingualism
  - Non-verbal communication
  - Negotiation of meaning / co-construction of meaning
  - Pragmatic strategies e.g. repetition, clarification, redundancy, confirmation
  - Intercultural - politeness / appropriateness, rapport building

17

## Communities of practice

“Learning ... seems to happen most effectively in business “communities of practice” rather than in traditional English training”

Ehrenreich, S. (2010). English as a lingua franca in a German multinational corporation: meeting the challenge. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(4), 408–443.

“I illustrated how heavily their learning was sourced from their own experience of using English at work, rather than from a systematic study of English.”

Takino, M. (2019). Becoming BELF users: the learning process of business users of English and its conceptualization. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 8(2), 235–267.



18

**Communities of practice**

“Hamad, who worked in process engineering, attributed his strengths in English to his time in the reservoir field in the United States and Norway, where he learned to communicate in what he called “the company way.” (pp. 503-504)



Hodges, A., & Seawright, L. (2023). Transnational technical communication: English as a business lingua franca in engineering workplaces. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, 86(4), 498–513.

19

19

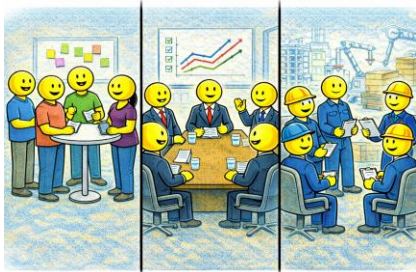
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20

**1 Understand the context**



- Speak to stakeholders, expert insiders
- Read the research
- Observe and analyse workplace interactions
- Communication strategies

21

**Meeting skills - Elements**

**An online MEETING**

● A Look at the photos. What problems do people sometimes have in this type of meeting?

● B (1) Listen to the conversation. What problem does one person have?

**LISTENING FOR THE MAIN IDEA**  
When you listen for the main idea, don't focus on details. Instead, pay attention to the main topic that people are talking about.

● C (1) Listen to the conversation again. Choose the main idea of each part of the conversation.

Part 1:	Part 2:	Part 3:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a using the technology</li> <li>b meeting the team</li> <li>c talking about sales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d problems in the company</li> <li>e the market in Mexico</li> <li>f planning for next year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>g an event at the end of the year</li> <li>h the next meeting</li> <li>i the market in the US</li> </ul>

● D How often do you have video calls? Do you usually have video calls with groups or with one other person? What do you usually talk about?

**LOST FOR WORDS?**  
signals (it's a list of things to discuss at a meeting)  
focus (it's the person you should pay attention to one thing you meet with the second off

Elements Level 1 p. 109

22

**2 Focus on intercultural communication skills**

The way we do things around here



23

**Build awareness - Elements**

**Coding isn't a Necessary Leadership Skill - But Digital Literacy Is**

By Stephen Williams  
of MIT Sloan School of Management

The good news is that most leaders don't need to learn to code. Instead, they need to learn how to work with people who code. This means knowing a digital collaborator and knowing how to work with that collaborator.

**Understand different working styles**  
Because different people have different working styles, it's important to understand those styles. For example, some people like to work in a team, while others prefer to work alone. Some people like to work in a structured way, while others prefer to work in a more flexible way. Understanding these differences can help you work more effectively with your team.

**Learn concepts rather than skills**  
While you don't need to learn to code, you do need to learn the concepts behind coding. This means understanding the logic and structure of code, as well as the different ways that code can be used. Learning these concepts will help you work more effectively with your team.

**LOL approach**  
LOL stands for Listen, Observe, and Learn. It's a simple but powerful approach to learning from others. Listen to what they have to say, observe their actions, and learn from their experiences.

**digital literacy (DL)**  
digital literacy (DL) is the ability to use digital technology in general, and digital literacy (DL) is the ability to use digital technology in general, and digital literacy (DL) is the ability to use digital technology in general.

**frustrate (fr)**  
frustrate (fr) is to make someone feel stressed or annoyed. It's a common problem when people work in different ways or want different things.

learning how to work with developers.  
**Understand different working styles**  
Tension often arises when non-technical teams want to plan every feature, which frustrates technical teams, who want to

Elements Level 1 p. 86

24

**Critical incidents**

You are attending a team meeting with colleagues from different countries. The meeting is being chaired by the team leader who you have just met for the first time. Everything is in English, but you can see that some people seem to be struggling.



What do you do?

Explaining, dealing with vague information, problem solving, persuading / arguing a point of view, intercultural perspectives

25

**3 Task-based language teaching**

Needs analysis – identify tasks



Task

Language feedback



Repeat task

No prediction of specific language outcomes

26

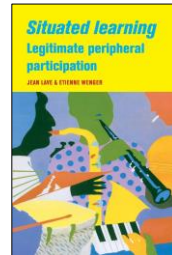
**Storytelling**

Prepare three short stories / anecdotes you can use in social situations in China (e.g. dinner with Chinese colleagues and Party dignitaries). The stories should ideally be humorous (nobody likes a boring story) but also help build your credibility as a trustworthy business partner.



27

**4 Teach learning skills**



“Learning is a process of participation in communities of practice”

- Conversations
- Observation
- Storytelling
- Shared problem-solving

Internships, workplace shadowing, mentoring, real-world tasks

28

**Corporate perspective on learning**

**Learning in the flow of work**

“The idea is to provide useful and relevant learning experiences that help employees build skills without disrupting employees’ existing workflows.”



<https://www.instride.com/insights/learning-in-the-flow-of-work/>

29

**Learning in the flow of work - AI**



“My Bulgarian partners use AI so they don’t have to learn English”

“My company asks us to check everything though the AI assistant before we send it out”

“My AI language tutor is great. I hardly need a teacher anymore”

30

Learning skills - Elements

**Make Learning a Part of Your Daily Routine**

**Lifelong Learning**

**LEARNER'S VOICE**

Elements Level 1 pp 100-101

31

Two questions

- How do people really speak English in the world of work?
  - “Doing” business, not talking about it
  - English as a business lingua franca – not “English”
  - Context-specific, intercultural, messy, hybrid, emergent, non-standard, multilingual
  - Getting the job done - communication strategies
  - Communities of practice
- What can we do to help prepare our learners for it?
  - Understand the context
  - Develop communication strategies / intercultural communication skills
  - Task-based language teaching – focus on outcomes
  - Teach learning skills (e.g. LIFOW, CoP)

32

advancing learning academics programs

**GLOBAL TEACHERS' FESTIVAL 2026**  
31st - 20th February

Preparing University Learners for Real Workplace English

Evan Frendo

resonance education

33