Vitalizing Classroom Activities for Teaching Business English

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Abstract

Teachers of Business English are more often than not anticipated to develop customized materials for their EFL/ESL learners coming of age and more eager to be partaking than ever in the new normal and this everchanging proactive learning environment. At times, Business English teachers can well serve to draw learners to certain jargon and business-related vocabulary, offer helpful practices, or provide impetus for engagement in the classroom. A profusion of Business English teachers today endeavor to initiate creative activities that aim to increase learner interaction and interest. This can be an extremely challenging task for new or inexperienced teachers of Business English. This paper is written to provide a framework to help Business English teachers develop bespoke lessons or tasks by making use of accessible published materials, innovative input from EFL/ESL learners in the classroom, and other hands-on classroom-based activities. It is suggested that by adopting this framework, based on the author's stance and experience, Business English teaching becomes dynamic, creative, and purposeful aligned with the underlying principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which designates that language teaching is ultimately oriented to satisfy learners' needs.

Keywords: Business English; ESL/EFL Teachers; Materials Development; Classroom Activities

Introduction

Business English courses normally gear towards the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), considering learners' needs for English skills development in the context of business and entrepreneurship (Sobkowiak, 2008). The aim of any Business English subject is primarily to enable its learners to successfully communicate with others in a business setting or

context, be it in business correspondence, different kinds of meetings that exist, or other means of communication. Even though there would be conventional textbooks designed specifically for Business English learners at present, some texts are under copyright and may not fully fit the purposes of learning in various EFL/ESL contexts. Thus, a framework for materials development for Business English teaching has to be developed first. This discussion of where to find suitable materials prioritize. Business English teachers are therefore urged to adapt texts, find material in the public domain or legitimate online open access, or they could seek permission from copyright holders. In case of corporate teaching, Business English trainers may also be given permission to use authentic materials for their training courses. The function of Business English teachers and the materials that they use used in teaching deserve attention as well.

Initiating warm-up or lead-in tasks

In fact, warm-up or lead-in tasks for teaching Business English can be a remarkable approach to introducing a subject and sparkling learners' interest in it. Different types of tasks can be used, including selecting or coming up with a definition for a term, eliciting learners' ideas or opinions, matching meanings to words. General discussion of the topic or using guided questions to increase learners' participation and interest would surely boost learners' engagement.

Preparing the learners

Currently, there is a demand for Business English as many learners are becoming aware of what they want to use English for in the future. In today's economy, not only do learners need to acquire four English skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but they also need to be able to communicate with others effectively in the workplace so that they would be considered competent personnel among other colleagues. Thus, it is important that Business English teachers prepare learners promptly before they enter the real world of employment. Accordingly, business English courses are to be set up to give interested students an opportunity to better alter to the demands of the market.

As the aim is to incorporate learners while enabling them to fulfil multiple tasks, several techniques are to be considered, such as understanding collocations, joining half sentences together, using multiple options to create meanings, brainstorming with others in the group, finding words in a text or anticipating what learners might read or encounter next. Commonly and recently used includes a gapped text to complete using word partnerships and a Venn diagram to

highlight resemblances and differences between two comparative factors. For example, business and language could be used (See Figure 1). Language and business are often compared with each other and are believed to share many similar elements. ESL/EFL learners in a class can be asked to work together in a group to complete a Venn diagram, which is defined as a mathematical plan encompassing overlapping circles which display how subjects relate to each other. Utilizing this type of diagram, ESL/EFL learners can attempt to find and list out elements of language and of business which they feel belong solely to one of these areas and write down the areas where they actually overlap in the central area. Then, they can share their ideas with one another and afterwards create one Venn diagram as a class together.

Figure 1: The Venn diagram for prompting Business English learners

How to make use of input material

It is actually quite obvious to most Business English teachers that expecting learners to begin enthusiastically reading a business–oriented text may be rather difficult and impractical and perhaps would not be the most effective way to make use of input material. Connecting this stage to former steps would create a flow and gives structure to a lesson. For instance, after having made some guesses, learners can watch a video or read a text to see whether their ideas were parallel. What is more motivating is to use cooperative reading, in which several groups of assigned learners, so called, masters are allocated a text and work together to answer questions about it. This could be an interesting alternative to having learners read on their own. After that the students are put into new groups with one 'master' or the one who has been assigned to take care of the certain text in each group. The masters report on what they have read to the others who make a note of and/or reflect on what they have skimmed or possibly the teacher can ask questions to each student who has not read the text. The masters are expected to convey the

information they have had to their peers in the group and the other masters pay attention to make certain that the answers are accurate. Other strategies to utilize input material may include putting sentences into categories or matching sentences or statements to parts of a selected text. In addition, linking a text to other related current affairs of interest also helps strategize Business English teachers in terms of schema building.

How to activate the material

Reading and understanding an article or text does not necessarily mean that Business English learners can use its vocabulary or grammar correctly, which is why activation plays a principal role here. Crossword puzzles, word grids, dialog presentations, simulations, and recently more increasing employed gamification are some of the useful ways to activate the material. Kapp (2012) pointed out that gamification was not just the use of game elements to enliven learning, but the notion of boosting learner engagement, developing interactive learning milieus, and promoting EFL or ESL learning autonomy. In fact, gamification has become popular in supporting EFL in recent years (Zhang & Hasim, 2023). The pros of gamification encompasses honing learners' English language skills, eagerly shaping student learning attitudes, and clearly supporting a learning environment to be interactive and reciprocal. By initiating the material promptly, this also gives the Business English teacher the opportunity to observe what learners have acquired so far and determine which components may need to be included again. This way, the teachers can further explain, elaborate and even exemplify what may have been unclear to the learners. At the same time, Business English teachers can reflect on their teaching practices to see what would work best for learners. In accordance with Brookfield (2004), teachers who have been aware of reflective behaviors know the effects the teachers have on students. Thus, they are alarmed to power relations in their classrooms and to their potential for abuse.

Questioning and learners presenting outcomes

Even though this kind of exercise may not be essential in every situation after gamification, dialog presentations, simulations or other small presentations, it is considered an important step of the Business English lesson. Learners are encouraged to present their leaning results verbally, or in the form of a poster. In addition, they can write minutes if they organized a meeting or pitching. Alternatively, they can be asked to give feedback on presentations, or simply report on how the activity proceeded and whether the objectives were achieved. The salient benefit of doing this is

that Business English learners would have the chance to deliver presentations. Presentations, representing activities normally examined as a way by which learning could emerge, are in fact very common in tertiary learning around the world. With reference to Tsang, (2020), it has been found that skills in presentations are remarkably helpful for employability and professional life such as in interviews, product pitching, and communication with customers and coworkers in the work settings. Having realized the move, schools and universities worldwide indeed acknowledge the need for equipping learners with strong and tactical communication skills (Mercer–Mapstone and Matthews, 2017). To reiterate, presentations form an important part of many EFL learners' enriching academic journey in university and are inherently relevant to prospective future careers (Elliott and Higgins, 2005).

Follow-up activities

Follow-up activities can take place outside of the classroom. This is actually the great opportunity for learners to make use of online Internet sources or for them to use authentic materials from companies they know or work for in case of doing internships. By doing this, it helps keep the material fresh and always updated and shows them how the material can be applied to real life scenarios. For Business English learners, having been able to see how the material they learn can be truly useful for their job is of great significance. This suggests that the materials adapted or adopted and the activities accompanied in the classroom should be various and appealing to enhance the learners' motivation in learning English. Lightbown and Spada (2006) indicate that variation in activities, assignments and EFL learning materials are able to boost learners' motivation to a greater extent.

According to Oguz & Bahar (2008), authentic materials appear to be more interesting than textbooks or course books, which are deliberately designed for ESL/EFL learners. Authentic materials support the actual language use by native speakers of the language in an actual context, making it natural and more genuine. It is reported that authentic materials are more pleasurable for learners, increasing their motivation as they are also introduced to the target language culture as well. The learners also hold that they actually learn the language, which is precisely the language they wish to know in order to network and connect with others within the actual world (Oguz & Bahar, 2008).

For Business English learners, authentic materials are thus found to be crucial especially when referring to business case studies and models. Much literature even points out that learning

is best when it includes real challenges and active reasoning and functional practice (Ray, 2018). The use of a case study in Business English thus comes with high recommendation because it is a conventional teaching method that supports student–centered underpinning and engagement in overcoming obstacles that emerge in real business settings. In addition, apart from the author's own advocate and for practice of using case studies in Business English instruction as well as other more specific English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, it has been found that case studies in fact make learning content or subject matter simpler to comprehend and the class more pleasurable for learners especially at tertiary level (Yadav et al., 2010).

In summation, Table 1 highlights the proposed classroom activities as a framework for teaching Business English and their objectives as follows:

Table 1: Optimizing Business English Activities

Nature of activities	Objectives
1. Initiating warm–ups	Introducing a subject and boosting learners' interest, participation and engagement
2. Preparing the learners	Prompting learners for the world of employment, meeting the demands of the market
3. Making use of input material	Creating a flow and giving structure to a lesson, building collaboration with other learners, making linkages to other affairs
4. Activating the material	Initiating the material through a variety of activities and observing learners to determine which components need reinforcement
5. Questioning and learners presenting outcomes	Probing learners and having them present learning outcomes in creative ways
6. Doing follow–ups	Ensuring learners use what has been learned in practice via online sources and authentic materials to boost learners' motivation

Conclusion

The Business English activities framework proposed in this paper provides an applicable yet pliable structure to work when teaching Business English. Initially, a number of ideas for practicing and activating knowledge can be generated by Business English teachers in the classroom with specifically designed lessons or tasks using available teaching materials along with inventive input from learners, making it a collaborative effort for all involved. Authentic materials, however, are advocated for Business English teaching and learning because of numerous benefits:

naturalness, genuineness and a learning catalyst. Moreover, class activities, which play an important role as well, have to be diverse, engaging and modernized for Business English learners. Gamification, presentations, simulations, and case studies are some of the most recommended activities as they, according to much literature, help increase a level of engagement in classrooms, boost motivation and aid in cognitive improvement for young learners. To make Business English teaching efficient, it is obvious that it requires a well-designed program and pedagogy. Business English learners have to be prepared in the most effective way for the content and tasks challenging and supportive for successful learning. It also calls for Business English teachers to exert their efforts to provide for what is most appropriate and useful for learners.

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