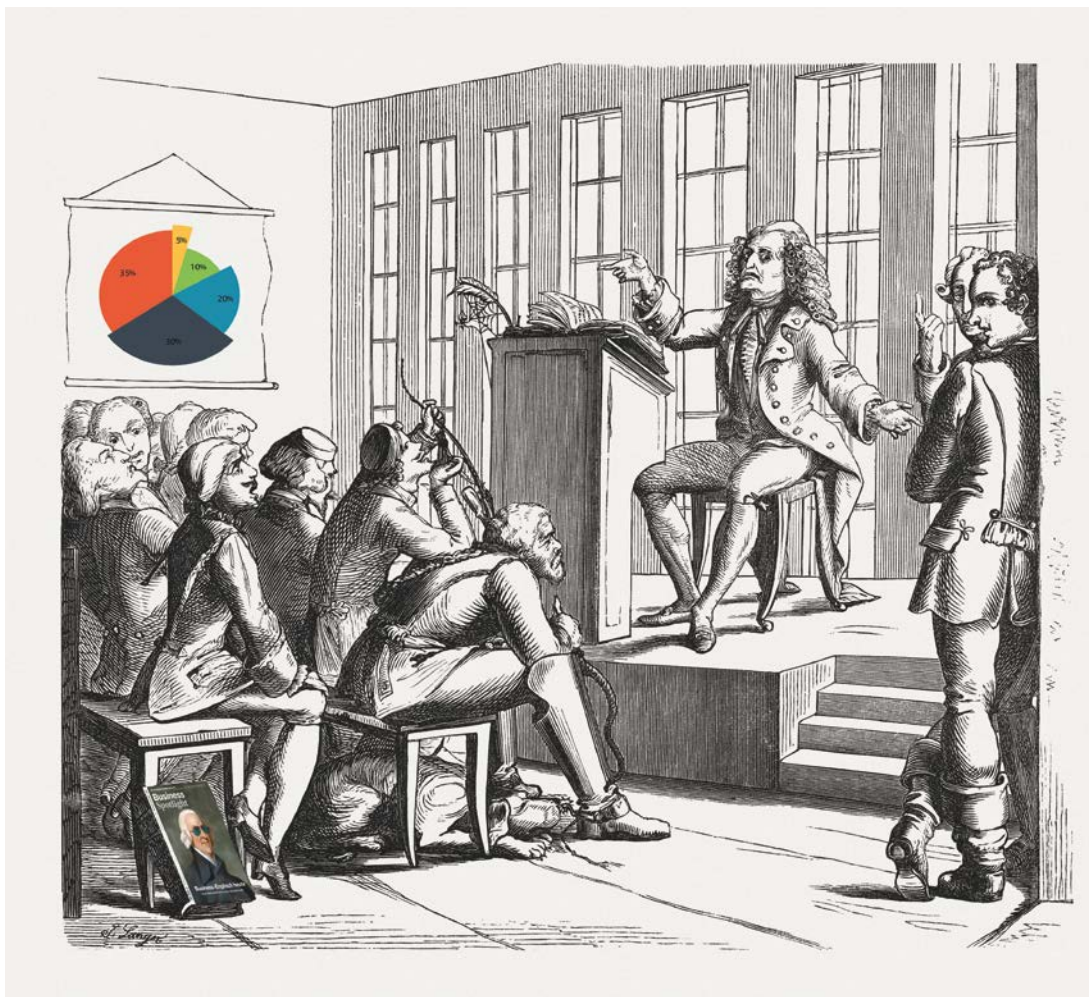


CHANGING TIMES

Wie hat sich das Business-Englisch im Laufe der Jahre für Lernende und Lehrende verändert? Was ist guter Business-Englisch-Unterricht? Über diese und andere Fragen sprach IAN MCMASTER mit Evan Frendo, einem Experten auf diesem Gebiet.

MEDIUM



Know your
audience
and adapt
your style

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hat have been the biggest changes you have observed over your career among users of business English?

When I started in business English in the early 1990s, most of my students were managers and people in senior positions. They were the ones who needed English in order to speak to customers, work with partners and so on. Now, English is used by many more people in companies. It has become common to see people working in interna-

tional teams, often virtually, with English as the lingua franca. Many internal meetings are held in English, even in German companies. The result is that, for many people, a typical day is full of switches from German to English and back to German, depending on what is happening and who is in the room or on the telephone. This sort of business English was not as common when I started. But it is not only that people are using English in different situations and in different ways, but also a question of how people think about English. There is greater recognition of the fact that business English is not “native speaker” English, but rather the English that people need to do their jobs effectively. This means that, in many companies, the focus has changed to a more international type of English rather than the traditional British or American English, and there is an increased focus on intercultural communication and soft skills. For example, in some companies where I work, the focus is on understanding “Chinese English”, because this is the type of English the employees will meet when they speak with their clients and business partners. Experienced business people understand that it is no good having perfect “native-speaker” English if you cannot communicate with your clients.

And what have been the biggest changes you have observed for teachers and trainers?

I think the biggest change I have noticed is that there are more teachers and trainers on the market, and therefore there is more competition. Surprisingly, Germany is a country that does not demand high standards from the people who teach business English, and almost anyone can do it. There are no minimum entry qualifications. This means that many trainers are not properly trained to do what they are doing, but have simply done a short introductory course on how to be a teacher and then relied on the fact that, as native speakers, their command of the language will get them through. Most trainers working in companies in Germany would not be qualified to teach in schools or universities, for example. In many business English situations, this is adequate, and there are many examples of satisfied customers using trainers like this. But in other cases, such trainers are not good enough. Unfortunately, clients remain unaware that they are being hoodwinked. This has led to another change: some companies have learned from experience and now demand better-trained trainers. And more and more trainers are now doing certificates in business English training.



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He has written numerous in-house courses for multinational companies, and authored or co-authored many business English textbooks, including *Business Partner* (Pearson), *English for Accounting* (Cornelsen), *English for the Oil Industry* (Pearson) and *Working in Asia* (Cornelsen).

His methodology books are used in teacher-training courses worldwide, and include *How to Teach Business English* (Pearson), *New Ways in Teaching Business English* (TESOL, co-edited with Clarice S. C. Chan) and *How to Write Corporate Training Materials* (ELT Teacher 2 Writer).

Evan has a diploma in teaching business English from London Guildhall University, and a master's degree in teaching English for Specific Purposes from Aston University. www.e4b.de

accounting [ə'kauntɪŋ]

• Buchhaltung

corporate ['kɔ:pəreɪt]

• Firmen-

degree [di'ɡri:]

• (Universitäts-)Abschluss

engineer [ˌendʒɪ'nɪə]

• Ingenieur(in)

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

[ˌɪŋɡlɪʃ fə spə'sɪfɪk 'pɜ:pəsɪz]

• Englisch als Fachsprache

in-house [ɪn 'haʊs]

• firmenintern

textbook ['tekstbʊk]

• Lehrbuch

“There is greater recognition that business English is not ‘native-speaker’ English”

command [kə'mɑ:nd]

• Beherrschung

competition

[ˌkɒmpə'tɪʃən]

• Wettbewerb

entry qualification

['entri kwɒlɪfɪ,keɪʃən]

• Einstiegsqualifikation

get sb. through

[ˌget 'θru:]

• hier: jmdn. agieren lassen

hoodwink sb.

['hʊdwɪŋk]

• jmdn. täuschen, hinter Licht führen

no good: be -

[ˌnəʊ 'ɡʊd]

• nutzlos sein

senior ['si:nɪə]

• leitend

soft skills

['sɒft skɪlz]

• Sozialkompetenz

benchmark sth.

[ˈbentʃmɑ:k]
 • etw. vergleichen

chat to sb.

[ˈtʃæt tu]
 • mit jmdm. plaudern

commonplace

[ˈkɒmənpleɪs]
 • alltäglich

degree

[diˈɡri:]
 • (Universitäts-)Abschluss

evaluate sth.

[iˈvæljuert]
 • etw. bewerten

expertise

[ˌekspɜːˈtɪz]
 • Sachkompetenz

impact

[ˈɪmpækt]
 • Effekt, Auswirkung(en)

in the long run

[ɪn ðə ˈlɒŋ rʌn]
 • langfristig

negotiation

[niˌɡəʊʃiˈeɪʃən]
 • Verhandlung

package

[ˈpækɪdʒ]
 • Paket

pass sth. on

[ˌpɑːs ˈɒn]
 • etw. weitergeben

remote communication

[riˌməʊt kəˌmjuːnɪˈkeɪʃən]
 • Fern-, Telekommunikation

solely

[ˈsəʊli]
 • ausschließlich

stakeholder

[ˈsteɪkˌhəʊldə]
 • Interessengruppe, Beteiligte(r)

tailor-make sth.

[ˈteɪlə ˈmerk]
 • etw. individuell gestalten

take sth. into account

[ˌteɪk ɪntu əˈkaʊnt]
 • etw. berücksichtigen

What type of business English training do people at work really need?

The answer always depends on the specific context. In some situations, a general business English approach will be enough, with the trainer and the learners adapting published materials as necessary to suit their own needs. This type of approach is very common in language schools, for example. Within companies, however, the approach can be very different, with the trainers and learners spending significant time analysing needs, understanding where the priorities are and then tailor-making the training accordingly. This sometimes means collaborating with a range of stakeholders to understand what the company’s perspective is, as well as observing language in use — meetings, presentations, negotiations, discussions and so on — to find out where the real communication problems lie. An important factor here may be business knowledge and content, not just the language, and trainers will often work closely with a client to understand this perspective. Such a collaborative approach requires special skills; so trainers who do this sort of work tend to be well qualified and experienced. Sometimes, they are employees of the company, and sometimes they are hired for specific projects. The key is that they have time to get to know the company and to know what English their employees need in order to do their jobs effectively.

Many companies don’t know how to provide effective business English training for their employees. What advice do you have for them?

Organizing effective training requires expertise, so the best advice is to speak to the experts. The problem here is that, if the company goes to the nearest training provider, they will often buy what the language school wants to sell. There are ways to get around this problem. One is to benchmark what is on offer — the company can easily compare different training providers and get an idea of what is on the market. Another is to hire someone to do the task, such as an independent consultant who can advise them on how to choose a training provider. Both these methods take additional time and therefore create additional costs, but the savings in the long run will be significant.

There are also some very simple checks the company can make. First, they can ask if the training provider offers a standard package, or if they are prepared to spend some time getting to know the company and its needs. This will be more expensive, but should provide better-quality training. Second, they should insist on qualified trainers — someone who has a university degree in language teaching (not a

degree in history or politics), as well as some knowledge of the business world. A four-week certificate in language teaching is really not enough. Third, they should ask questions about how the training impact on the company will be evaluated. If the training provider cannot answer this question, they shouldn’t be in the business of teaching business English.

Finally, companies looking for training providers should remember that the cost of the training provider is only a small part of the total cost of training. For example, the opportunity costs tend to be much more significant, and need to be taken into account.

How is technology changing the way that people use English for work purposes?

Recently, I was in Xi’an, China, doing some work for a client, and I had to take a taxi. The taxi driver didn’t speak any English, and my Chinese is very poor. But I had a card with my hotel address on it, so I wasn’t worried. But this time, the driver chatted to me the whole of the 40-minute trip using an app on his smartphone. The app allowed us to communicate.

“The biggest impact of technology is that fewer people will need to learn a language”

We talked about my job, his family, Xi’an and many other things.

Such apps are becoming commonplace in the workplace. I often see people using them during meetings, for example. But simultaneous translation apps are only one example of new technology. Everyone knows how easy it is to translate an email or other

written document. The quality is now very good and getting better all the time. And some industries are working hard to eliminate the need for human communication at all in certain areas — computers simply communicate with other computers to pass on information. Contact between people is still important, but things are changing. The days of relying solely on intuition and personal relationships are disappearing fast. And, of course, there is a lot more remote communication, using technology that simply did not exist a few years ago. I think the biggest impact of technology, however, is that fewer people



Devices are now normal in teaching

access sth. [ˈæksɛs]
 ► auf etw. zugreifen

beneficial
 [ˌbenɪˈfɪʃəl]
 ► vorteilhaft

commute to work
 [kəˌmju:t tə ˈwɜ:k]
 ► Fahrt zur Arbeit

component
 [kəmˈpəʊnənt]
 ► hier: (Lern-)Modul

detriment to the ~ of sb./sth. [ˈdetrɪmənt]
 ► zum Nachteil von jmdm./etw.

device [diˈvaɪs]
 ► Gerät

face sb. [feɪs]
 ► jmdn. konfrontieren

feed back into sth.
 [ˌfi:d bæk ˈɪntu]
 ► hier: sich in etw. widerspiegeln

industry [ˈɪndəstri]
 ► hier: Branche

profound [prəˈfaʊnd]
 ► tiefgreifend

publisher [ˈpʌblɪʃə]
 ► Verlag; Verleger(in)

research [riˈsɜ:tʃ]
 ► Forschung

resources [riˈzɔ:sɪz]
 ► (Hilfs-)Mittel

return on investment
 [riˌtɜ:n ɒn ɪnˈvestmənt]
 ► Rentabilität

revise sth. [riˈvaɪz] UK
 ► etw. (nochmals) durchgehen

target sth. [ˈtɑ:ɡɪt]
 ► auf etw. abzielen

textbook [ˈtekstbʊk]
 ► Lehrbuch

undergo sth.
 [ˌʌndəˈɡəʊ]
 ► etw. durchlaufen

will need to learn a language. Of course, it will always be **beneficial** to learn foreign languages, but when we measure how long language training takes, compared to the potential advantages, many of us will decide that the method I used with my taxi driver will be enough. It's all about **return on investment**.

And how is technology changing the way that people learn and teach business English?

Firstly, the software we use nowadays to analyse language use allows us to understand much better the language that we need to focus on. For example, we now have access to large collections of language data and can compare the mistakes that native speakers of German make in English with those made by speakers of other languages, and create language-learning activities that are aimed precisely at German speakers of English. This means that a whole range of learning **resources**, from **textbooks** to dictionaries to magazines, are able to **target** real needs much more effectively than in the past. Secondly, the technology available in the classroom and for self-study allows a lot of new things to be done. It is now normal for teachers and learners to use their own **devices** in class to make recordings, to **access** resources such as dictionaries and videos, to practise vocabulary and so on. Most coursebooks now include online activities and exercises. Language-learning apps are everywhere and are offering new language-learning opportunities. It is relatively easy to spend ten minutes every day **revising** key vocabulary on an app on the daily **commute to work**, for example. But perhaps more importantly, these apps are allowing the experts to collect vast amounts of data about how people learn languages. This is already **feeding back into** our understanding of how people

learn languages. Such **research** will have a **profound** influence on how professional trainers do things.

What do you see as being the biggest challenges facing publishers of business English materials?

I see two big challenges. The first is copyright. It is so easy to copy materials that, as soon as a new book is published, it can be found somewhere free to download on the internet. As someone who has written several books, I have plenty of personal experience of this and I have learned that it is not easy to earn money as a writer working for publishers. The second challenge is that learners and teachers expect materials to be of high quality and to offer much more than in the past — such as online **components**. This means that high-quality products are very expensive to produce. Look at the global coursebooks currently on the market; most are second or third editions — that is, recycled and updated. Very few are new, and even fewer are innovative or take the latest research into account.

Looking ahead to the next five years, what are the biggest changes that you expect the business English industry to undergo?

Different parts of the industry will go in different ways. The big language schools will get bigger and bigger, and dominate the market even more, to the **detriment** of small schools and individual trainers working as freelancers. This trend is already taking place, as many of Germany's largest multinational companies are seeking to increase the quality of their training providers, and at the same time, bring down the costs. Universities, colleges and schools will do a much better job of preparing people for the workplace, and less training will be necessary in the

computational linguistics

[kɒmpjuˌteɪʃənəl
 lɪŋˈɡwɪstɪks]
 • Computerlinguistik

cutting edge: be at the ~ of sth.

[ˌkʌtɪŋ ˈedʒ]
 • eine Vorreiterrolle bei etw. einnehmen

emphasis [ˈemfəʊsɪs]

• Schwerpunkt, Akzent

invaluable

[ɪnˈvæljuəbəl]
 • äußerst wertvoll

keep up to date

[kiːp ˌʌp tə ˈdeɪt]
 • sich auf dem Laufenden halten

natural language processing

[ˌnætʃrəl ˈlæŋɡwɪdʒ
 ˌprəʊsesɪŋ]
 • natürliche Sprachverarbeitung

one size does not fit all

[wʌn ˌsaɪz dɔz nɒt fɪt
 ˈɔ:l] *ifm.*
 • hier: es gibt keine Einheitslösung

professional

[prəˈfʃəʊnəl]
 • hier: qualifizierte Lehrkraft

research sth. [riˈsɜ:tʃ]

• etw. erforschen

take sth. [teɪk]

• hier: etw. erfordern

teacher association

[ˈti:tʃər əˌsəʊsiˌeɪʃən]
 • Lehrerverband

unique [juˈni:k]

• einzigartig

workplace itself. Already, many school leavers have certificates in business English, something that was quite rare just a few years ago. Technology will continue to change the way we think about communication and, as I said, fewer people will need to spend time learning a foreign language. The way we relate to devices will change as we learn how to use them better. And those people who do invest in learning a language will demand much more emphasis on soft skills and intercultural skills, rather than a more traditional focus on grammar and vocabulary.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of starting a career as a business English trainer?

First, be prepared to learn from your clients and from experienced trainers. They often know much more about business communication than you do, particularly at the beginning of your career. Second, be prepared to spend time analysing your clients' needs. Each client is unique and requires a tailor-made approach. One size does not fit all. Third, do more than an introductory course in teaching — if you want to be a professional, you need to spend real time and effort learning the skills and techniques you require, and you need to keep up to date. Your clients deserve no less. Joining teacher associations, attending conferences and simply networking with others in the profession will all be invaluable. And finally, be aware that technology is really influencing this profession. If you are interested in how language works, have a look at natural language processing and computational linguistics. These fields are at the cutting edge of what we do, and there are innumerable opportunities at the moment.

And finally, what advice would you give to someone who needs to use English at work but whose employer doesn't provide the training?

Many people have researched how best to learn a language and the results are really not that surprising. First, we know that almost anyone can learn a language — all it takes is a lot of time and motivation. There are plenty of self-study materials, plenty of opportunities to listen to and practise English, and plenty of places to go for advice. Second, we know that it is possible to learn without a teacher; a teacher is useful, but not essential. Spend some time analysing what you need to do in English at work, and focus on those areas. Find someone in the company who already uses English for work, and ask for their advice, or just watch what they do and how they do it. Perhaps find a partner who is willing to share the learning experience. Learning alone is not easy and it is not quick, but it can be done.

“Spend some time analysing what you need to do in English at work and focus on those areas”



IATEFL BESIG is the Business English Special Interest Group of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL). With more than 400 members from all over the world, IATEFL BESIG is one of the largest professional bodies representing the interests and serving the needs of the international

business English teaching community.

Now in its 32nd year, IATEFL BESIG's annual conference attracts a wide range of delegates — including teachers, trainers, language school owners, university lecturers, publishers and researchers — and gives them the opportunity to network and keep up to date with current trends, innovations and issues in business English.

The 2019 IATEFL BESIG conference will take place in Berlin from 11 to 13 October. *Business Spotlight* editor-in-chief Ian McMaster will be giving a joint plenary talk with Ian Badger (see pp. 18–19) on Sunday, 13 October. <https://besig.iatefl.org>

annual [ˈænjuəl]

• jährlich

association

[əˌsəʊsiˈeɪʃən]
 • Verband

editor-in-chief

[ˌeditər ɪn ˈtʃi:f]
 • Chefredakteur(in)

issue [ˈɪʃu:]

• Frage, Thema

lecturer [ˈlektʃərə]

• Dozent(in)

plenary talk: give a ~

[ˈpli:nəri ˌtɔ:k]
 • einen Plenarvortrag halten

professional body

[prəˌfeʃənəl ˈbɒdi]
 • Berufsverband

researcher [riˈsɜ:tʃə]

• Forscher(in)