

Business English in the Context of the Algerian University: Methods and Techniques

اللغة الإنجليزية للأعمال في سياق الجامعة الجزائرية: المناهج والتقنيات

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Received 07/02/2024

Accepted: 02/03/2024

Abstract

Teaching Business English in the Algerian context is a complex task due to the fact that the learners are non-native speakers of English and the teachers themselves are not specialized in the domain of economy. For that, the teachers have to be more professional to choose the most effective methods and techniques for ensuring a successful teaching process. Also, they need to be eclectic in using the appropriate materials according to the age and the level of the students in the business classroom. Hence, this article highlights the problematic of which effective teaching method that the instructors can adopt for teaching business English to the university students. It aims at guiding the teachers to train competent future businessman/woman that can adapt to the international market.

Keywords: business English, businessman, English, teaching methods

ملخص:

يعد تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأعمال في السياق الجزائري مهمة معقدة لأن المتعلمين ليسوا متحدثين أصليين للغة الإنجليزية إضافة إلى أن الأساتذة ليسوا مختصين في مجال الاقتصاد. لهذا يجب أن يكون المعلمون محترفين في اختيار المناهج والتقنيات الفعالة لضمان منهجية التدريس الناجحة. كما يجب أيضا أن يتقنوا اختيار أدوات التدريس المناسبة لعمر و مستوى الطلاب في صف الأعمال. وعليه، يسلط هذا المقال الضوء على إشكالية المنهج الفعال الذي يتبناه الأساتذة لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأعمال للطلبة الجامعيين. كما يهدف المقال إلى توجيه الأساتذة إلى كيفية تكوين رجل وسيدة أعمال أكفاء و الذين بإمكانهما التكيف مع السوق العالمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية للأعمال ، رجل أعمال ، الإنجليزية، مناهج التدريس

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1.Introduction:

Over decades, scholars have developed various teaching methods for teaching English. Each new method was either revolutionary or complementary to the previous one. However, their main objective has been always to insure a successful teaching context to EFL learners. Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audiolingual Method, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and others are the main known and effective methods for languages instruction. These techniques and approaches are not limited for teaching general English but also for specialized courses, as the field of economy and business that this article deals with.

Teaching business English for the Algerian students at the university must be under study because the domain of economy, as well as the English language can be considered as the backbone of any country's means of flourishing in the world. The concept of "business English" has not only linguistic and professional dimensions but it is also related to the social, and political status of each country. In other words, the mentality of the British businessman, for example, is not the same as that of the American one where the way of dealing with employees in their companies differs. Here, the students have to be aware of these differences in addition to vocabulary acquisition.

To achieve the previous goals, teachers have to select the appropriate methods in order to develop the learners' communicative capacities in any business context. In the light of this, the present paper raises the following problematic: what are the effective methods for teaching business English to non-native learners?

The sub-questions below are developed:

1. What are the English teaching methods?
2. What is business English?
3. What materials can support the business classroom?

Therefore, we hypothesize that the communicative approach (learner-centered) can be more effective with the mixture of the other methods when necessary.

To answer the above sub-questions, the following hypotheses are suggested:

1. Historically, various English teaching methods have been developed .
2. Business English has a closer relationship with the English linguistic and social contexts.
3. The materials for teaching business English have to cope with technology development.

Hence, this article's objective is to decide the effective method, techniques, and materials for teaching business English. In addition, it aims at making the university students aware about the importance of the English module at the economy department. To answer the research questions and to achieve its goals, the main English teaching methods are explained.

In addition, business English is highlighted and defined where the main techniques of teaching it are studied deeply with examples. At the end of the article, the chosen method that can be more appropriate for the business classroom will be decided.

2. English Teaching Methods: Overview

Linguists have developed and revised multiple teaching methods and approaches to create a successful learning environment for students and teachers. This article provides a description of some well-known methods.

One of these methods is Grammar Translation, which originated from German scholarship and gained popularity in the United States. It is based on several key principles. Firstly, the aim of studying a foreign language is to acquire the ability to read its literature and gain intellectual development from the mental discipline that comes with learning a foreign language. Grammar Translation focuses on analyzing the grammar rules of a language in great detail. This knowledge is then applied to the translation of sentences and texts between the target language and the native language. This method primarily emphasizes the memorization of rules and facts to comprehend and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the foreign language. Therefore, Grammar Translation is an approach to language learning that places significance on detailed grammar analysis and the translation of texts¹.

Stern (1983) argues that in second language acquisition, the first language serves as the reference point². The emphasis is primarily on reading and writing skills, with less attention given to speaking and listening. Accuracy is highly prioritized, as students are expected to achieve meticulous standards in translation. Additionally, vocabulary selection is solely based on the reading materials, and words are taught through bilingual word lists, dictionary study, and memorization.

The Direct Method originated in France and Germany during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It gained recognition in the United States through the work of Sauveur and Maximilian Berlitz. The proponents of this method believe that a language can be taught effectively without translation or the use of the native language. Instead, learning is facilitated through demonstration and active engagement in the classroom, rather than relying on analytical approaches focused on explaining grammatical rules³.

The method covers the following principles: (1) Immersion in the target language: all instructions in the classroom are given exclusively in the target language. This allows students to develop their thinking and communication skills in the target language. (2) Progressive language learning: in the initial phase, students focus on learning vocabulary and phrases. However, as they progress, grammar, reading, and writing skills are introduced. (3) Gradual development of communicative skills: communicative skills are taught gradually through question and answer exchanges. This approach encourages students to actively participate in conversations. (4) Emphasis on speaking and listening: speaking and listening skills are given special attention, with a strong emphasis on correct pronunciation. This helps students develop clear and accurate spoken language in different contexts⁴.

The Audiolingual Method emerged in response to the necessity for acquiring proficient speaking and listening skills in a foreign language during and after World War II. This approach was discussed in various books during the 1960s. The fundamental principles of the method were formulated by Moulton between 1961 and 1963. It is heavily influenced by behaviorism, emphasizing repetition and habit formation. The learning process primarily focuses on listening and speaking, rather than writing and reading. Dialogues and exercises serve as the main instructional techniques. The use of the native language is discouraged in the classroom within this method⁵.

The principles of the Audiolingual Method can be summarized as follows: (a) Listening and oral production first: teachers must emphasize the development of listening and speaking skills before introducing writing and reading. (b) Avoidance of mistakes: instructors have to carefully prevent and correct mistakes during the learning process. (c) Target language instruction: teachers present instructions and exercises in the target language to immerse students in the language. (d) Teacher-centric approach: linguists highlight the central role of the teacher in facilitating the teaching and learning process. (e) Importance of dialogue: instructors use dialogues, repetition, and imitation to teach vocabulary and sentence structures, with an emphasis on interaction between students and teachers. Focus on correct pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation⁶.

On the other hand, the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was a response to the Audiolingual Method. CLT is based on the cognitive approach, where the learner takes a central role in the classroom. Key figures in CLT include linguists Widdowson, Candlin, Christopher Brumfit, and Keith Johnson.

CLT enables learners to acquire language skills in various contexts. It emphasizes the importance of language functions, particularly communication. According to scholars, the main goal of language learning is to develop effective communication skills⁷. Overall, CLT focuses on meaningful communication rather than imitation and places the learner at the center of the learning process.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach focuses on the development of students' communication skills, active participation in the learning process, and equal emphasis on listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The main characteristics of CLT can be summarized as follows:

- Authentic use of the target language in social contexts.
- Encouragement for learners to express their ideas.
- Communication as the central objective.
- Acceptance of errors as part of the students' learning process.
- Prioritization of fluency over accuracy.
- The teacher's role in creating diverse communication situations⁸.

In other words, CLT involves using the target language authentically, giving students opportunities to express themselves, focusing on effective communication, embracing errors as part of learning, prioritizing fluency, and the teacher's role in creating various communication scenarios.

In a CLT classroom, educators prioritize using real-life materials and their role is to facilitate and mentor students in group communication. They also provide assessment and feedback through assignments to support students' learning progress⁹.

In the next section, the important teaching method that can be more appropriate for specialized courses, business English will be highlighted.

3. Teaching Business English: Methods, Techniques, and Materials

Business English is a critical component of the needs analysis field, requiring a specific, detailed, and well-researched approach to syllabus design, course design, and materials selection. It is predominantly used in international trade by individuals whose primary language of communication is English. The importance of Business English is growing as companies increasingly require their employees to be proficient in multiple languages¹⁰.

When teaching Business English, educators may encounter various challenges, which can be summarized as follows: selecting relevant specialized vocabulary, enhancing communication skills within a business context, catering to the specific needs of non-native students studying economics and business, structuring the course effectively, and employing appropriate teaching methods and techniques¹¹. In summary, the teaching of Business English involves addressing these challenges and ensuring that students develop the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their future careers as successful business professionals.

The main goal of the Business English course is to equip learners with the necessary skills to communicate effectively in a professional setting. This includes written communication, verbal interactions, and various other business contexts. In a Business English classroom, topics covered may include business reading, writing letters and resumes, learning business phrases and sales terms, understanding advertising, and marketing concepts. Therefore, the teacher's role is to utilize different teaching techniques and methods to effectively teach Business English¹².

Among the techniques of teaching Business English, the teacher can follow these tips suggested by O'keeffe (2020):

- Focus on high-frequency vocabulary for the workplace: prioritizing the acquisition of job-related vocabulary is crucial during business English classes. This enables students to effectively express themselves in a clear and concise manner. To achieve this objective, it is important to teach commonly used words and phrases that are applicable to everyday work scenarios. There are three recommended approaches for achieving this goal. Firstly, utilizing lexical sets comprised of words associated with specific topics or situations (such as days, months, numbers, verbs describing work

routines, and past tense verbs). Secondly, introducing common collocations that involve verb-noun combinations (for instance, "manage a team," "have meetings," "place an order," "solve a problem," etc.). Lastly, focusing on functional language and fixed phrases, including greetings ("How are you?" "Nice to meet you.") and offers ("How can I help you?" "Would you like...?"). By employing these strategies, students will develop a robust foundation of vocabulary necessary for effective workplace communication.

- Guide learners to vocabulary learning: one effective strategy for teaching vocabulary to students is to present the vocabulary items in realistic contexts, such as phone calls, to-do lists, short emails, and text messages. This approach fosters better understanding and retention compared to simply memorizing a long list of words. To enhance recall, students can be encouraged to make simple decisions related to new words. For instance, they can be tasked with matching words and pictures, or identifying common verb and noun collocations within a short text. Examples of such collocations could include "manage a team," "call customers," and "write emails." The teacher can further support vocabulary learning by prompting students to complete sentences using the target words. Additionally, students can be encouraged to create their own sentences incorporating these new words. Personalizing vocabulary in this way helps to make it more memorable and relevant to the students' own experiences. To reinforce vocabulary learning, a variety of vocabulary games can be utilized as revision exercises, warm-up activities, or as a way to conclude lessons. These games offer a fun and engaging way for students to practice and review their vocabulary knowledge. In conclusion, by providing vocabulary instruction in realistic contexts, engaging students in decision-making activities, encouraging personalization, and incorporating vocabulary games, educators can greatly enhance students' vocabulary learning experience.
- Enhance student opportunities for verbal communication: students must cultivate their ability to speak effectively for professional purposes. The classroom serves as a secure and low-pressure setting where they can improve their fluency and build confidence. Within this space, instructors can employ audio and video scripts containing brief dialogues or excerpts from longer scripts. By having students engage in paired or group activities, such as reading the dialogues aloud, teachers can provide valuable feedback to the entire class, focusing on stress and rhythm when addressing any challenging words or phrases.
- Assisting students with speaking tasks: utilize dialogue models from the course book or those created by the teacher. Encourage students to create their own dialogues by modifying certain elements (e.g., names, dates, prices, quantities). Divide the dialogues so that half are prepared, allowing students to write the other half. Have students practice their dialogues using the provided script. Challenge students to memorize their dialogues and perform them without the script. Conclude by having students engage in paired or group discussions to practice and perform the dialogues.

- Enhancing practical work Skills for students: students are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their learning when the class materials are applicable to their daily lives. Therefore, it is crucial for them to develop essential job-related skills, such as effective telephone communication, socialization, and delivering presentations. Additionally, honing their writing abilities is also significant. This encompasses composing both formal and informal text messages, completing simple forms, drafting less formal emails to colleagues (e.g., work updates), and crafting more formal emails to customers (e.g., responding to inquiries).
- At the conclusion of the session, the teacher may prompt students to assess their own abilities with the statement "I am able to make a basic phone order." This serves as a reminder of the lesson's objectives while also encouraging students and teachers to contemplate their individual growth. Additionally, it is crucial for the grammar curriculum to address the practical needs of the learners, such as describing their company, giving instructions, and discussing arrangements.
- In order to help students improve their speaking and writing skills, it is important for teachers to introduce them to useful phrases and functional language. These phrases, such as "Nice to meet you" and "See you later," can be used to greet visitors and are beneficial for daily communication. To make sure that students remember these expressions and can use them in real-life situations, it is recommended that they memorize the phrases and practice using them outside of the classroom.
- Role-plays are an effective way to practice both job skills and functional language. The teacher can allocate sufficient time for students to prepare and write down what they want to say. To increase the challenge and create a sense of authenticity, the instructor can have students engage in phone conversations where they are back-to-back or call each other from separate rooms using their mobile phones.
- Presentation tips for introducing yourself and your company: When it comes to giving presentations, it is helpful for students to have some time to prepare and practice. Here are a few strategies that can be used: (1) time to prepare the teacher can allocate a specific amount of time for students to gather information about themselves and their company. This allows them to organize their thoughts and create a structured presentation. (2) Practice with colleagues: students can pair up with a classmate and use their mobile phones to record each other's presentations. This provides an opportunity for constructive feedback, as they can review the videos later and identify areas for improvement. (3) Rehearse at home: as a homework assignment, students can rehearse their presentations and film themselves at home. This allows them to practice multiple times and gain confidence in their delivery. (4) showcase the final video: in the next session, students can showcase their final video presentations. This provides an opportunity for them to share their progress, and receive feedback from peers¹³.

According to Talbot (2009), it is crucial to prioritize the enhancement of learners' writing skills. Talbot emphasizes that learners must acknowledge writing as an essential skill for personal growth and professional success. They should seize every opportunity to refine and advance their writing abilities throughout their careers. Talbot suggests that English business writing, in its diverse formats, serves as the primary avenue for promoting their products and services in the market.¹⁴.

In his book, Bennie (2009) provides a comprehensive explanation of various business scenarios in which businessmen can communicate either orally or in writing. For instance, when making a request, Bennie suggests the importance of gradually building up to it by first giving the background and reasons behind the request. This approach helps to prepare the audience and encourages them to think more favorably about the request. Conversely, if the request is made first and the reasons are provided later, the audience may unconsciously or consciously reject the request before understanding the context¹⁵.

Through the techniques explained earlier, one can deduce that teaching business English is a difficult process that needs skillful teachers who are competent in choosing the appropriate materials and decide their course objectives carefully. Therefore, in all these techniques, we can find part of each method mentioned in the second section of this article. In other words, for, learning vocabulary, the learners can listen/read and repeat the new terms. So, the principles of the Audiolingual Method can be followed. In addition, they can translate the new business concepts through the dictionary translation where the Grammar Translation Method can be used.

More importantly, CLT main principles can be very effective in the case where the students communicate business vocabulary via the models of dialogues for real contexts (functional language). They can work and discuss them in groups as well. Concerning the teaching materials, in addition to the blackboard and the textbook, the teacher, as mentioned earlier, can support his/her classroom by technology means as the computer, the data show, videos, television, and radio. Hence, the audiovisual aids are useful for helping the learners to memorize, imitate, and communicate the specialized vocabulary.

Thus, teaching business English can be more effective via depending on CLT method and the learner centered approach as first to be supported by the other methods because business contexts are based on communication, negotiation and interaction. That is to say, the teacher's principle role is to encourage the learners to be self-confident and competent in speaking accurately and fluently.

4. Conclusion

To effectively teach business English, the teachers have to be familiar with the economy and business field. Also, they need to have enough background about all the English teaching methods which are useful for both general English classroom and the specialized one.

Business English instruction needs also skillful teachers who can cope with technology development in order to support their classes with novel materials. The Algerian students at the economy faculty have to be aware that the module of English is not additional but it is necessary for helping them to get information about the international market.

English is widely acknowledged as the most globally widespread language, thereby establishing its supremacy in the realm of business. Even if learners possess a solid foundation in English, acquiring proficiency in business English will afford them the opportunity to display a broader range of professional vocabulary, leading to huge prospects in their professional journey. The study of business English enables students to cultivate language proficiency that proves invaluable in office settings and other business contexts. By comprehending the interpersonal skills required in the workplace, they can develop the self-assurance necessary to foster strong connections with their coworkers and customers.

Margins

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