

## Business English: Make it Easy, Make it Different

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### Abstract

**Presentation Abstract:** Have you ever dealt with a student who feels insecure when speaking English in a business setting? Do you know what happens when his mind goes black as the English words disappear from his memory during an international phone call? Making himself understood takes precedence over getting the grammar perfectly correct. Too often, business English is taught like grammar, the more complicated and the more words in the vocabulary, the better it is. Let's find ways to make it easy making it different.

**Presentation Summary/Outline:** English is not the most widely-spoken language in the world if we count native speakers; it's the second after Chinese. But if we were to add on second-language speakers, then English becomes number one. So we should keep in mind that speakers of English as a second language outnumber native speakers by over three to one. Taking this into account, the student should communicate in an English that can be understood both by Mr Smith and Mr Yamamoto. The main body of the presentation will deal with networking and socialising, telephoning, negotiations, presentations, and reading business texts. In each part we will deal with the specific aspects and certain hot tips, activities and skill to reinforce its learning. They don't need idiomatic and slang expressions to impress their international business partners - quite the reverse, in fact. We, as teachers, should find the way to avoid our students worrying about their accent. It may be noticeable, that's fine as long as it does not interfere with understanding, it is part of their charm and cultural background. The choice of the areas covered by this presentation is based on long experience of working with international communication skills courses. The areas are the basic business communication skills we all need, the skills we also use in our business dealings in our first language. If they work in an international organisation, they need to write emails in English and make phone calls. They meet and negotiate with people, they make short presentations of themselves, their organisations and their products or services. It is simply a question of successfully transferring their business competence in their mother tongue to English (although this is easier said than done). On the other hand, the language used in memos and letters should always be simple and direct. The key to good writing is to use as few words as possible to make meaning immediately clear to the reader. The best communications, those easily understood, are short, to the point and use familiar words: anyone going to a dictionary to write a letter runs into trouble by using unfamiliar words and getting the construction wrong, very likely, the person at the other end has to go to a dictionary to read the letter. It's always best to use simple English with familiar words. We should conclude that we all make mistakes, they matter but not as much as we tend to think. Mistakes can be corrected and misunderstandings can be overcome. Anything that improves communication can make life easier and business better.