

MacMillan Teacher Training Day, 20 June 2015 held at Haus der Wirtschaft in Stuttgart

Workshop A

"I know I can't speak English - but I don't have a choice"

The first of the two workshops held by MacMillan/Hueber dealt with people who found themselves having to suddenly use the English language in a work-related context.

Ed Pegg, lecturer of this workshop, encouraged his audience to participate in the personal linguistic development of one of his language students:

Christelle, a French business lady, had to quickly function on international level due to a change in her profession. She started with a low level of English and limited vocabulary at A1+ standard. However, due to her occupational experience she had a lot of business related vocabulary at hand.

Ed asked the participants to predict potential problems that could arise for learners in similar situations; considering and discussing language skills learners would need.

What could language instructors do to teach essential business skills alongside vocabulary and basic grammatical structures?

Ed praised schemata as a solution for handling most of learners' difficulties.

He believes in making the *language material* as difficult as possible but to keep the *language task* as simple as possible. This way, students can experiment and experiment with new vocabulary. Even low level learners should be able to deal with the complexity of the language while focusing on their most challenging tasks: performance at work.

Workshop B

"Developing language and business skills"

The second workshop on this Saturday morning looked at management scenarios under aspects of developing the learners' knowledge of English at B1+ level. The idea was to set a challenge and think about improving business dealings.

Ed Pegg focused on the importance of raising cultural awareness of the speakers' own cultural background. Only if they are aware of how their utterances may be understood by others they then are in a position to be able to communicate their ideas more accurately.

The work situation evolves around how people behave and communicate with each other. Therefore, the emphasis at this level of teaching needs to highlight linguistic as well as cultural, pragmatic and business skills.

Language students should be made aware of how they are using their own language in regard to gathering information, responding, confirming (ie positive comments) and asserting their own positions.

The learners' work-experience is needed to set up realistic business scenarios in which creation of solidarity can be practised.

Linguistic mirroring, for example, which is subconsciously used to convey trust, may have an impact on any negotiations. If practised and used conscientiously it may put the speaker at an advantage.

Non minimal response tokens ('exactly') are very powerful in making statements or the responses more effective. This, too, can be practised in setting up language scenarios.

Ellipsis as a linguistic means may lower the distance between two people, eg. in e-mails or notifications.

Direct language is often chosen to clarify linguistic problems for the student.

In general, if one were to analyse a discussion the more precise the vocabulary, the more formal the situation.

A conversational scenario is mostly built up on presenting “face”. A positive atmosphere is created by paying compliments. A rather negative atmosphere may arise by minimizing oneself.

With these observations in mind, Ed advised teachers to prompt their students to discuss why they choose certain structures of utterance, e.g. assertive statements/questions. Language tasks at this level should include question asking, as they are the underlying reason for certain behavioural patterns.

To sum it up: Speakers need to be able to identify and be aware of the usage of language in order to be most effective in business situations.

Two highly informative workshops that gave a lot of advice and enabled teachers to share their teaching experience on a great scale.