



Exploring Effective Teaching Strategies for Business English Beginners

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Abstract. The use of English teaching strategies has been one of the heated topics in the past years. With the rapid development of the economy and the internationalization of urban development, more and more white-collar workers, especially business people, need to use English in the workplace. However, a large proportion of them who do not have good English skills or have never even studied English, are forced by the demands of their work to acquire certain English skills. It is crucial to explore suitable teaching strategies for business people. In addressing the needs of the rising number of business people learning English in today's society, this paper aims to seek specific teaching strategies by analyzing the characteristics of business people, including clear motivation, limited time, poor memory, high learning efficiency, and psychological characteristics. In this paper, a series of pedagogical approaches are reviewed: setting up business English courses, scenario-specific oral instruction, small-class teaching, mobile device teaching, and the Affective-promotion teaching method. It is found that the English pedagogy sought in this paper is fundamentally different from that of other populations, which is an effective method for business English beginners. The contributions of this paper include finding a specific population that has not received much scholarly attention and analyzing the pedagogy needed for this group.

Keywords: Business people · Teaching strategies · English beginners · English learning · Work

1 Introduction

English is a global language that its speakers are spread all over the world. In most cases, communication and cooperation between countries rely on English communication. In today's increasingly globalized world, exchanges between countries are increasing and the frequency of English use is growing dramatically. To narrow down the scope, there is a shortage of English speakers in various industries and fields, while business people, as ambassadors of cross-border trade, need to master English skills. Inevitably, it is necessary to find effective strategies for teaching them well. There are many previous studies that examine methods of teaching English to different populations, but very few of them are their studies that target adult beginners in English and even less on business English beginners, which is a research gap. This paper begins by reviewing the characteristics of business people. It will then review and analyze specific teaching strategies.

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Z. Zhan et al. (Eds.): SEAA 2022, ASSEHR 675, pp. 635–642, 2023.

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-05-3_78

2 Learning Characteristics of Business English Beginners

2.1 Clear Learning Motivation and Goal

Individuals regularly have clear motivations and goals to learn something to accomplish self-development and progress. Maslow divided human needs into five basic types in the order from lower to higher: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization needs [1]. The need for self-actualization alludes to realizing one's ideals and ambitions to the potential of oneself. Zeng reckons that self-actualization is the highest level of need based on the previous four needs. From the perspective of humanistic psychology, people learn to pursue self-actualization. In other words, they are doing this to make their values, and develop their potentials and personalities fully through learning. The low-level needs of adult learners have largely been met [2]. Thus, people intend to learn something, because they have a clear purpose to improve themselves in a certain aspect. Adults have a desire to learn because they want to improve themselves. They are there to learn, and they want to be challenged.

However, the business world is full of challenges. With expanding globalization, trade between domestic and foreign countries has increased. In any case, not knowing English, numerous business people have little or no knowledge of English, and in order to have better personal advancement and workplace prospects, they have a clear goal to learn English to gain a positive impression in the workplace. On the one hand, being competitive in a company and learning an extra language skill can make their abilities more outstanding and impress their colleagues while gaining self-satisfaction. On the other hand, learning English can enable them to be valued by their leaders, who would regard them have outstanding abilities, and workers will be assigned more customer resources so that they can explore more customers and develop a bigger market. Furthermore, businessmen need to be able to communicate effectively with other people in the workplace for the purpose of success. This means that they must learn English well enough to get their point across. If they do not speak English, they will not be able to work in larger markets, which means they will not earn more money and the company will not get more revenue, which is a big blow as a business person.

2.2 Limited Time

Business people have little time to study due to work and family. Ren mentions that in addition to studying, adults have jobs and families to take care of, so they can spend far less energy on their studies than young students [3]. For teenagers, they spend most of their day in school, and their main task is to learn. In contrast, for adults, especially for business people, their main task is to work and provide for their families, while their time is very limited.

Generally, business people are hectic with business, and business trips are a regular occurrence. They often need to travel to various regions, attend different meetings, or talk business with clients. Compared to white-collar workers who work from 9am to 5pm, business people may not have a fixed commute time, which means that they do not have much free time. They may be talking with clients when others are off work, and they may be on their way to flying to different places to prepare for new cooperative

negotiations when others have not yet started working. Ultimately, business people are adults, and most of them they have families. Apart from work, their focus will be on their families, because family members need company. For example, children need to be tutored on their homework, and then the family needs to have family activities in their free time to strengthen family relationships. Faced with heavy workloads and family needs, business people have little time to spend on English learning. Therefore, time is the largest limitation for them.

2.3 Poor Memory

Lenneberg believes that language acquisition is influenced by the mechanism of language acquisition in the brain. During the period from 2 years old to adolescence (i.e., 10–12 years old), both hemispheres of the brain are involved in language learning and language acquisition is easy and natural [4]. However, after adolescence, the lateralization of the brain occurs, language learning gradually shifts to the left side of the brain and language learning becomes gradually difficult [4]. Due to the age factor, adults have poorer mechanical memory, which declines with age, while comprehension memory is stronger [3].

Vocabulary is the cornerstone of learning English. The most important part of learning English is memorizing words. And remembering words is a relatively mechanical task. For teenagers, remembering words requires less frequent memorization, while adults need more energy and time to memorize. Furthermore, for adults who have not studied English or who have been away from school for a long time, memorization requires more effort and is more difficult to remember. Accordingly, adult English beginners have been away from learning for a long time in their daily lives, and since learning is something that requires a lot of concentration, it is difficult to get them to focus on memorizing language knowledge, and too much inattention can indirectly affect their mechanical memory.

2.4 High Learning Efficiency

Business people have high learning efficiency with heavy workload, as they need to deal with a lot of things, which demands that they have higher efficiency to complete their work matters. This is because their job load is high and they need to deal with many things, which requires them to have higher efficiency to finish their work matters, and as mentioned above, they have limited time, which also needs them to have higher efficiency. Additionally, in English learning, apart from word memorization, some knowledge of grammar and other such knowledge that needs to be understood is also a necessity. In terms of comprehension, adults are better than teenagers because business people tend to have rich social experiences and social activities that lead to their understanding, analytical skills, and maturity of thinking.

2.5 Psychological Characteristics

Business people have a certain positive impression on society. They are not the general class of workers, but rather, they create more opportunities for cooperation and wealth

through their abilities. They usually perceive themselves as creating a lot of value for society, which also contributes to their good social self-perception, and others tend to have a favorable opinion of them. Since they have struggled for many years in the industry to get to where they are today, they have a lot of positive comments, affirmations, and appreciation from people around them, which makes them often surrounded by this sense of honor. Yet, for the English learning aspect, they are beginners in English and know and master little English, which leads to a sense of shame they may have in their learning.

3 Strategies to Improve Teaching Effectiveness

3.1 Set Up Business English Courses

The crucial motivation for business people to learn English is to work. Different from ordinary English learners, business people have to gain not only basic English knowledge but also business knowledge in its English version. Wozniak mentions that the teaching of business English needs to involve both business and English, and the fundamental purpose of teaching business English is to meet the requirements of students [5]. While the content of business knowledge is diverse and complex, in Wang's survey, "international business etiquette", "import and export English correspondence" and "marketing" are the top three important business skills, especially "international business etiquette" is most important [6]. Using English, business people mostly communicate with foreign partners, and English-speaking countries and Westerners pay much attention to etiquette, so it is necessary to include international etiquette courses in the English curriculum for business people. Both students and employers consider "business English conversation and presentation" to be important, and employers consider this skill to be the most essential job skill [6]. Knowing how to express yourself correctly and accurately to others requires thought and practice. However, the course "business English conversation and presentation" is designed to effectively help business people improve their communication skills to achieve higher-value collaboration. As a result, business English courses are set up to give business people a valuable opportunity to better adapt to the needs of the market.

3.2 Scenario-Specific Oral Instruction

Oral English instruction is becoming more popular as a component of language instruction. In any language, spoken language must be accompanied by specifics in life, and scenarios and spoken language reinforce each other [7]. Given that the specific scenario for business people in the workplace, the content of the spoken language is directed at a business negotiation. Due to examination-based education, the teaching of speaking is not as important as the teaching of grammar, reading, and writing.

However, the main reason business people learn English is to communicate. Spoken English carries the burden of communication and is an important skill that is indispensable for language learners [8]. The instruction of Spoken English expects students to understand the relevance of what they see and the language so as to reinforce this relevance by imitating the actual use of scenarios. The scenario creates the best memory

stimulus for the language, which is essential for achieving the final result of speaking out loud. In short, learning and training to speak English are about creating a language-related context, and this context must be related to the student's interests and their lives and thoughts [7]. Oppenheim mentioned that fluency in non-native speakers can be defined by the choice of speech and expression. This means that short, periodic repetitions of speech sequences can be effective in demonstrating fluency [9]. Because the target people are English beginners, the scenarios range from the simplest greeting scenarios to role plays where students can play the roles of customers and businessmen among themselves, and the same scenario needs to be repeated several times. After improving fluency and proficiency in speaking specific scenarios, higher-level scenarios such as business negotiations can be taught.

3.3 Small-Class Teaching

First of all, "Small class size" is often expressed in Western research as "Class size reduction, which generally refers to a reduction in class size and student-teacher ratio" [10]. Obviously, smaller classes mean fewer students, and teachers are more likely to be able to take care of more students. Because it is more arduous for learners to conceal and get left behind in a smaller class, each one can receive the attention they require from their teacher. They are also urged to participate in conversations and compelled to express themselves. Due to the limited time of business people, this requires the teaching mode to be characterized by high efficiency. Small class sizes allow teachers to take care of more students and to identify and solve their problems in a timely manner. Therefore, small-class teachers should use effective teaching strategies in order to individualize teaching and learning so as to highlight the value of "personalized learning" in small-class teaching. Sui points out that hierarchical teaching strategies, "scaffolding" teaching strategies, and "portfolio assessment" teaching strategies are effective in small classes [11]. In hierarchical teaching, teachers in small classrooms are likely to teach in layers or small groups, offering assignments ranging from easy to tough, depending on the students' English proficiency.

In addition, most beginners in English for business people learn English by enrolling in classes at institutions. Small classes are definitely more costly than large classes, and business people can afford to pay for small classes. For beginners, there are a bunch of difficulties in learning English, and small classes give them a commendable opportunity to solve problems and improve their learning efficiency.

3.4 Mobile Device Teaching

Business people are busy and have limited time. Commuting and traveling take up a large portion of their time, and they do not have much time to spend on classes or other ways to get an English education. For this reason, the emergence of mobile devices has opened up the possibility for these people to learn English. In particular, vocabulary is an integral part of learning for English learners, especially for beginners, as highlighted in the characteristics above. With the development of APP functions and network technology, more and more teaching applications, such as word recitation applications, accompanied by powerful application functions, have become imperative

learning tools in the process of English learning for contemporary people. Recognizing the shortcomings of the traditional root word teaching process, English word applications have developed hundreds of systematic and well-organized word lexicons, and users of such applications can more efficaciously improve the quality of their own target word memorization [12]. As such, it indicates that apps boost the effectiveness of English learners' word memorization and increase the number of words they can memorize, which will greatly elevate the level of word mastery.

Further, the Flipped Classroom (FCL) is a new teaching model that originated in a mountain school in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, the United States [13]. In this teaching mode, students can watch classroom videos and do practice online at any time on their own mobile devices. The flipped classroom frees up class time and uses it for other instructional activities [14]. Hence, business people have the access to learn English efficiently in limited fragments of time outside the traditional classroom through the above teaching method.

3.5 Affective-Promotion Teaching

Business people typically have a high social position, striving to make a nice and favorable impression on others. As they have the corresponding social status, they are often afraid to speak up and behave in a reserved manner. They are scared of being laughed at by others and are embarrassed to participate in language activities [3]. Meanwhile, Brown argues that adults, due to their age, have more shame than children when it comes to language learning. Finding a teaching strategy that allows them to be unaffected by these psychological factors is therefore crucial [15]. Lobo suggests that Colombian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers apply Socio-Affective Language Learning Strategies (SLLS) because they can both contribute to strengthening the interaction of EFL learners and help learners avoid negative situations such as nervousness, a fear of public speaking, and anxiety [16]. This approach is also applicable to business English beginners.

Affective pedagogy, according to some scholars, is a strategy in which teachers blend human emotions with other teaching strategies to encourage the efficient use of emotions in the teaching process. Parra makes a clear strategy: Intrinsic motivation to know and intrinsic motivation towards accomplishment [17]. Thus, the teacher provides easy, within-competence learning assignments to students using the affective approach to eliminate shame and anxiety and allow them to learn in a relaxed and confident environment. For this strategy, as Iwaki explains, when students believe in their own capability to learn languages and feel comfortable while doing class activities, they approach EFL learning with a greater measure of self-assurance and tend to be more open to allowing the new language experience to penetrate their heads and hearts [18].

4 Conclusion

The main goal of the current study was to determine the analysis of teaching strategies according to the characteristics of business people. The study contributes to our understanding of effective teaching methods for business English beginners. This study

has found that generally all characteristics are similar to adult English beginners. The second major finding is that teaching strategies towards business people are diversified. In offline classes, multiple modes of teaching are available, which can work on students' business expertise, speaking skills, and boost their self-confidence in learning English, respectively. In the distance and online classes, further or more detailed teaching can be done through mobile devices such as cell phones, tablets, and laptops. The study should be repeated in the (Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages) TESOL area to get more concentration on business English beginners. Yet there are still a lot of aspects of this group that need to be discovered and studied.

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