

Part I: Understanding Stakeholders



Needs analysis is an important feature of curriculum development in business English, and the literature abounds with accounts of approaches and recommendations in this area (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Flowerdew, 2013; Friedenberg, Kennedy, Lomperis, Martin, & Westerfield, 2003; Huhta, Vogt, Johnson, Tulkki, & Hall, 2013; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Reeves & Wright, 1996). In the three teaching and learning contexts that we have identified—tertiary education, adult education, and corporate training—there are different stakeholders, who provide unique perspectives that can inform or determine the course content. In some teaching contexts, business English teachers play an important part in determining the syllabus; in others, teachers have to follow a predetermined syllabus and may not see needs analysis as relevant to them. In fact, although the influence of business English teachers on the syllabus can vary, their course implementation can always benefit from a better understanding of the stakeholders in their teaching context. What these teachers need is an eclectic approach which brings in a range of perspectives and ways of gathering information about learners' needs.

The types of needs and stakeholder perspectives of relevance in different teaching and learning contexts can be quite different. In a tertiary education context, stakeholders may include education ministries as well as local faculty. Learners will be entering different professions and different discourse communities, which can make target needs very difficult to ascertain. In adult education, a single class is likely to consist of learners working in different companies and fields, and the learners themselves may have different needs and wants. In such cases the main problem may be not only the identification of target needs, but the search for the compromise which suits everybody in the course. In corporate training, key stakeholders may include department heads, business partners, and clients; understanding the company and its business is thus an important part of the process. Yet despite this complexity, it is important to remember that needs analysis is generally recognized as an ongoing process of information gathering and analysis, not something which happens only before the course begins. Much can be learned and analyzed after the course has begun, either from the learners themselves or from other stakeholders mentioned above.

This section provides some activities and ideas that business English teachers can use in their teaching to gain a better understanding of stakeholders in different contexts. The stakeholders whose perspectives are addressed in this section include future employers of pre-experience learners, the employers and clients

of in-work learners, and the learners themselves. The needs covered include not only target needs and professional communication needs, but also the subjective needs of the learners.

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Helping Pre-experience Learners Understand Workplace English Needs

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Levels	<i>High-intermediate +</i>
Context	<i>Pre-experience</i>
Aims	<i>Build awareness of English needs in the workplace</i>
Class Time	<i>Variable</i>
Preparation Time	<i>Variable</i>
Resources	<i>An online forum platform (optional)</i>



As the introduction to this volume states, in the field of business English three different teaching contexts can be identified: tertiary education, adult education, and corporate training. Whereas in-work learners in adult education or corporate training may be well aware of their workplace English needs, pre-experience learners in a tertiary education context may not have a clear idea which field they will enter after graduation and what they will need to use English for in the workplace. Yet this uncertainty does not mean that there is little these learners can discover about their future needs. This activity provides several ideas for projects in which teachers can encourage learners to identify their own needs. Through these projects, learners can gain a better understanding of the workplace and identify the skills that they need to work on.

PROCEDURE

1. Find out from the class how many learners have a target field that they would like to enter after graduation. This may be a specific profession, a particular industry, or even a perceived future role or function.
2. Group the learners according to their target fields. Those who do not have a target field in mind can be grouped together to form a general group.
3. Ask the groups to make a list of what they might need to use English for in their target fields (e.g., writing product descriptions, writing reports, negotiating with suppliers, giving sales presentations, emailing clients, handling

complaints). The general group can make a list of the English skills that are commonly needed in the workplace.

4. Tell the learners that they are going to work on a group project to find out more about the likely language and communication skills to be of use in their future career and then share their findings with the rest of the class in an online discussion forum (see the alternatives in the Caveats and Options section). The projects could involve one or more of the following:
 - a. Reading newspaper and journal articles to find out about employers' perceptions of employees' English skills (e.g., their strengths and weaknesses)
 - b. Learning about real-life business communication through interviewing or job-shadowing someone from a company in their field of interest
 - c. Sharing experiences they have gained from any part-time jobs, summer jobs, or internships (e.g., the tasks they performed in English, the difficulties they encountered, how they overcame the difficulties)
 - d. Interviewing some alumni of the institution about their experiences in using English in the workplace
 - e. Analyzing job ads from companies in their field of interest to identify workplace English needs
 - f. Going to recruitment talks offered by a few companies to gather information about their requirements as regards English skills and how candidates are assessed on these skills
5. Ask the groups to post their findings on the online forum, attaching relevant documents (e.g., newspaper articles, job ads). In addition, they should respond to other groups' postings. You may want to join in the discussion by posting comments, suggestions, and questions.
6. Select several interesting findings, responses, and questions for an in-class feedback session during which you can advise the learners about ways to engage in continuous learning so as to prepare themselves better for their future workplace needs.
7. To wrap up, ask the learners to reflect on the findings from the projects and/or develop a plan for self-learning.



CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. If an online forum platform is not available, the sharing can take the form of in-class group discussions or oral presentations.
2. Depending on the teaching context, you may want to limit learners' choices of project or add more choices to those suggested in Step 4.
3. In some contexts it may be appropriate to adjust the syllabus according to learners' findings. However, in contexts where this is not possible, you should make the purpose of the project clear and ensure that learners have no false expectations.

My English

Chia Suan Chong

Levels	Intermediate +
Context	Pre-experience and in-work
Aims	Build awareness of English competence in an international context Understand personal attitudes to language learning
Class Time	60–90 minutes
Preparation Time	5 minutes
Resources	Questionnaire (see Appendix)



As English cements its role as the global lingua franca of business and trade, it has now become important for many learners to hone their ability to communicate internationally and to prioritize intelligibility in the discourse community they operate in, rather than focusing on trying to emulate British/U.S. speakers of English and trying to understand their culture and discourse styles.

This shift consequently leads us to revised notions as to what constitutes accuracy, fluency, and communicative competence in the world of international communication. Yet most learners still base the success of their language learning on the idealized native-speaker model and continue to feel disillusioned about their inability to seem British or American in their use of the language. Their lack of confidence often stems from distorted views of their own English that they hold up against British or U.S. role models for comparison.

In order to encourage reflection and to raise awareness of these issues, the questionnaire in this activity, used alongside a needs analysis at the beginning of the course, could encourage debate and discussion regarding how learners feel about their own English and how they would like to see it develop.

PROCEDURE

Before Class

1. Read through the questionnaire (see Appendix). Adapt it as necessary to suit your class/teaching context. For example, if you are working in-company, make reference to the channels of communication and genres that your client deals with.



In Class

2. Explain to the class that you would like to explore what is meant by the term *my English*. This will enable you to understand the needs of the class better, but it will also enable learners to reflect on their own needs.
3. Hand out the questionnaire in the Appendix. Allow enough time for learners to complete it. If necessary, circulate and assist.
4. Carry out a class discussion, ensuring that each answer is thoroughly explained, elaborated upon, and challenged, if appropriate. In some contexts it may be advisable to look at the answers beforehand, and to do this discussion in a subsequent class.

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. Depending on the teaching context, the questionnaire can also be presented as homework or answered in plenary. The discussion can also be done in pairs or small groups before involving the whole class.
2. In some classes and teaching contexts, learners may insist that that they need to learn one variety of English. In such cases it is worth reminding learners that the object of the exercise is to explore how English is used in the world—there are no right or wrong answers. Every class is different and will make up its own mind about the type of English they want to learn.

APPENDIX: Questionnaire

1. How do you feel about your English? Why? _____

2. Do you feel more confident speaking, writing, listening, or reading? Why? _____

3. When do you normally use English? Give examples. _____

4. Do you watch any films, read any websites, or listen to any music in English?
How do you feel when you do these things? Why? _____

5. Do you have any friends or colleagues that you speak or write to in English? Give
examples. _____

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6. Do you use English for your social media interactions? _____

7. How do you feel when speaking and writing in English? Why? _____

8. Do you hate making mistakes? _____

9. What do you consider a mistake in your English? How do you know you have made a mistake in English? _____
10. If you could wake up in the morning and speak English differently, what kind of English would you speak? Why? _____

11. Who would you want to speak English like? Who are your role models? _____

12. Would you consider having role models who are not British/American? Why might this be helpful? _____
13. On a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*), how much do you agree with the following statements? :
- a. It is more important to be communicatively successful than to be grammatically accurate.
 - b. If I want to be a successful English user, I must learn to speak like a British or American person.
 - c. I think my own accent is part of who I am, and I wouldn't want to lose it completely when speaking English.
 - d. People who need English for business should speak it perfectly, otherwise they look unprofessional.