



A pragmatic approach to teaching English for the workplace

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Delivery of training

Face-to-face and on-line

Regular training

Intensive/one-off training

Self study (solitary/supported)

Work-focused groups (irrespective of level)

Level-based groups (irrespective of jobs done)

A pragmatic approach?!

Teresa May calls for a “practical and pragmatic approach” to Brexit.

Dominic Raab calls for a “principled and pragmatic Brexit.”

“The business world of the 1990s is a world where results and a return on investment are expected.

As with all company training, language training should be cost-effective: a company should be able to see results in terms of its employees' improved performance at work.

..... language training should be very much a part of business”

Badger, 1994

Communication priorities in the 2018 workplace



1. Need to develop understanding and tolerance of 'non-standard' forms of English
2. Need to speak and write clearly so that others understand
3. Need to develop the required language/vocabulary to do a specific job
4. Need to develop greater cultural awareness

And some 'non-priorities'

1. Delivering training that the learner **wants** above what the sponsoring organisation **needs**
2. Over-focus on, for example, UK/UK or US/US business transactions
3. Work on irrelevant case studies and exercises
4. Over-attention to production of 'correct' forms of language

Communication needs in a global supply chain

Production Planning

Logistics

Inventory management

Customer service

- Training requirements in their own words

“My main task is to support our RCP user, which are located in Germany, France, Great Britain and Finland.

On the other hand I am in a daily contact with our IT teams in India, which supports me if I face errors or problems in our SAP solution. I am also working together with IT teams from India and Finland when we are developing new IT solutions for our business.”

German SAP Key user

“My main work language is English. 90% of my communication is via mail because the cases from end-user are reported by mail.

I hear of lot of English from different people from different parts of the world and from my Scottish colleagues (this man is the hardest to understand 😊 😊).”

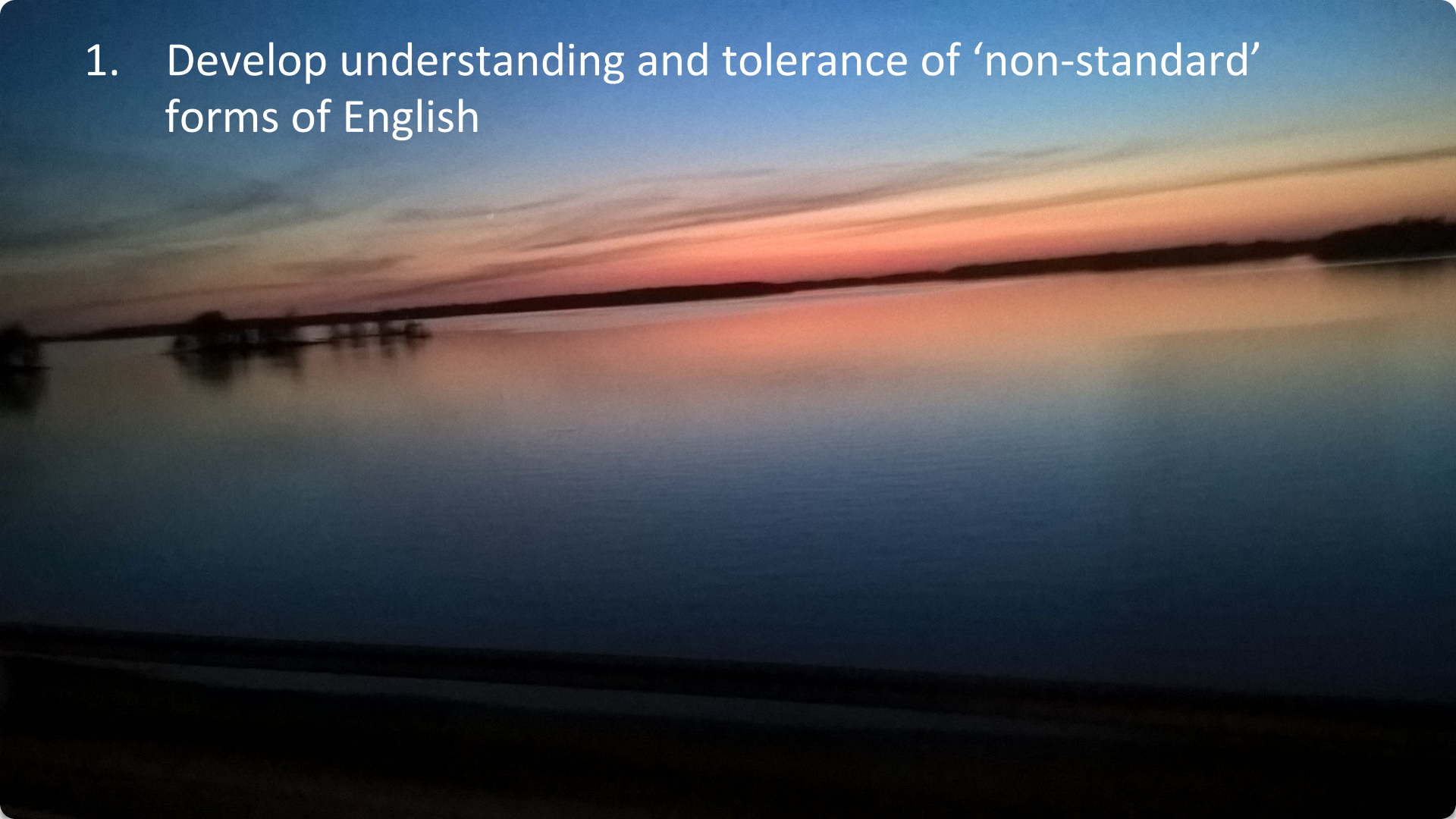
German Customer Service specialist

“I mainly handle claims of Austrian customers but also support colleagues in the smaller sales offices in the same duties.

The most internal correspondence is in English, customers are German speaking”.

Finnish Customer Service specialist working in Austria

1. Develop understanding and tolerance of 'non-standard' forms of English



I've bought a phone here a couple of months ago.
= I bought a phone here a couple of months ago.

Basically, you have issue with your screen.
= Basically, you have an issue with your screen.

You can come and collect here.
= You can come and collect it here.

Did you like to go ahead?
= Would you like to go ahead?

Spot the 'non-native' speaker!

What they say

Who says it?

She's playing unbelievable



Serena Williams (mother and tennis player)

I didn't play on grass since one year.



Rafael Nadal (Majorcan tennis player)

Hi Ian the doubles is organised by you and you're partner to be played whenever suitable for you.



My club tennis coach

When I come in this morning



Paul Merson (football commentator)

Please text 30003 to donate three pound



Narrator for a UK charity appeal on TV

'Native-speaker' grammar confusion: 'a' or 'b'?

a) There is four of them in circulation (£5 notes with Harry Kane on them)

b) There are four of them in circulation

a) There were fewer people at the concert than expected.

b) There were less people at the conference than expected.

a) They sent it to you and I

b) They sent it to you and me

a) I recommend that he leave immediately

b) I recommend that he leaves immediately



Helping learners to develop skills and strategies
to understand English however it is spoken and
written.

Working with audio recordings



(from Badger 2011/2012)

Working with learners own texts (1)

Hi [Germany Customer Service]

I have not received any instruction on how to handle the damage containers. we have waste so long in waiting without any progress. The damage containers will be charged for demurrage fees because if we have no acceptance on the fees ,the container can not be returned to port. As day goes by, the fees will beyond the damage fee itself.

I send this email today just for reminding you two to this situation.

Again, I'd like to hear from you: keeping waiting? Or accept the fees firstly then you negotiation with [XXX] later.

Thks [Chinese sales]

Working with learners own texts (2)

From: Chinese agent

Hi, All

Couple days went away, but we had no any progress yet.

Fortunately, there is no demurrage fees till now, only the damage fees need to pay. It is about CNY4,600.

Shall we accept this amount to avoid more fees occurrence?

From: French customer service

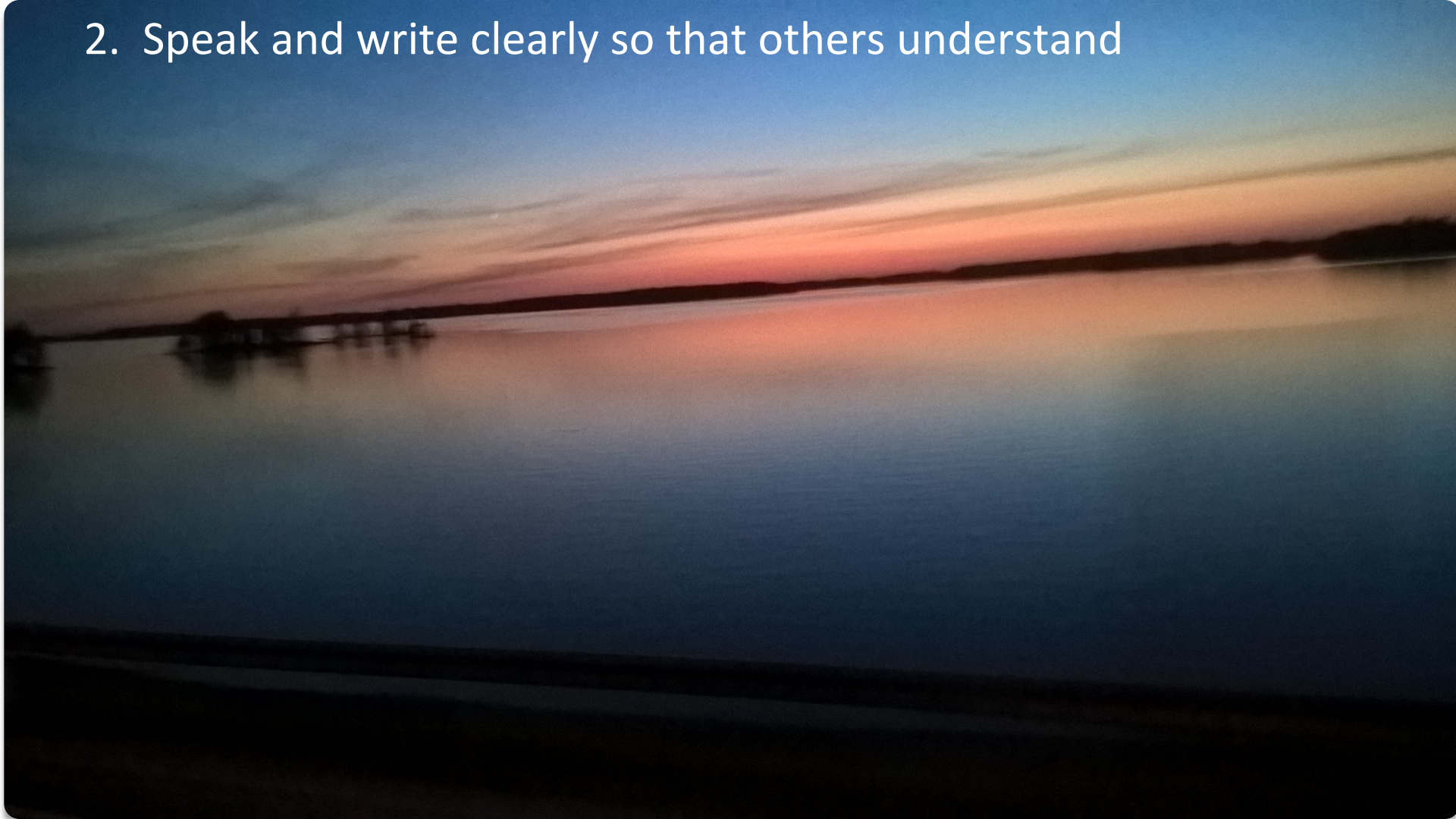
Hi,

I've ask again [XXX] to help here for clarification of that issue. Hope they will reply fast to this to get this solved.

“Despite working with my team everyday, the training made me aware of language which I was using which others did not understand”

Feedback from a British team leader working in Germany

2. Speak and write clearly so that others understand



Issues of..

- Speed
- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Pronunciation
- Making assumptions

Complexity of grammar: Phrasal verbs (Phrase or verbs!)

to get across	= to explain
to get at	= to reach
to get back	= to have something returned
to get by	= to manage; to survive
to get off early	= to leave work early
to get on with	= to make progress with
to get over	= to recover

Making assumptions – good and bad practice

Good practice:

“They regard him as a misogynist – someone who has a bad attitude to women”
(BBC reporter making reference to protesters at an anti-Trump rally)

Bad practice:

“She was speaking with an RP accent”
(Me during a conference presentation)

Audience member after the talk: Sorry Ian, but what is ‘RP’?

First, read the two versions of the short conversations. Then cover up the idiomatic version and read the simpler version again. Can you remember how to say the same things idiomatically??

Rubric for exercise from 'Skill Up' in Business Spotlight, August 2018

First, read the two versions of the short conversations. Then cover up the idiomatic version and read the simpler version again. Can you remember how to say the same things idiomatically??

First, the idiomatic way

Customer service agent (CSA):

Good morning, Pease Ltd, Tom speaking. How can I help you?

Caller: At long last! I've been hanging around and twiddling my thumbs all day waiting for your delivery. I had to take a day off work and this is costing me an arm and a leg! You're about as much use as a chocolate teapot!

Now, more simply

CSA: Good morning, Pease Ltd, Tom speaking, How can I help you?

Caller: Finally! I've been wasting time with nothing to do all day waiting for your delivery. I had to take a day off work and this is costing me a lot of money! You're completely useless!

Seamus's rules

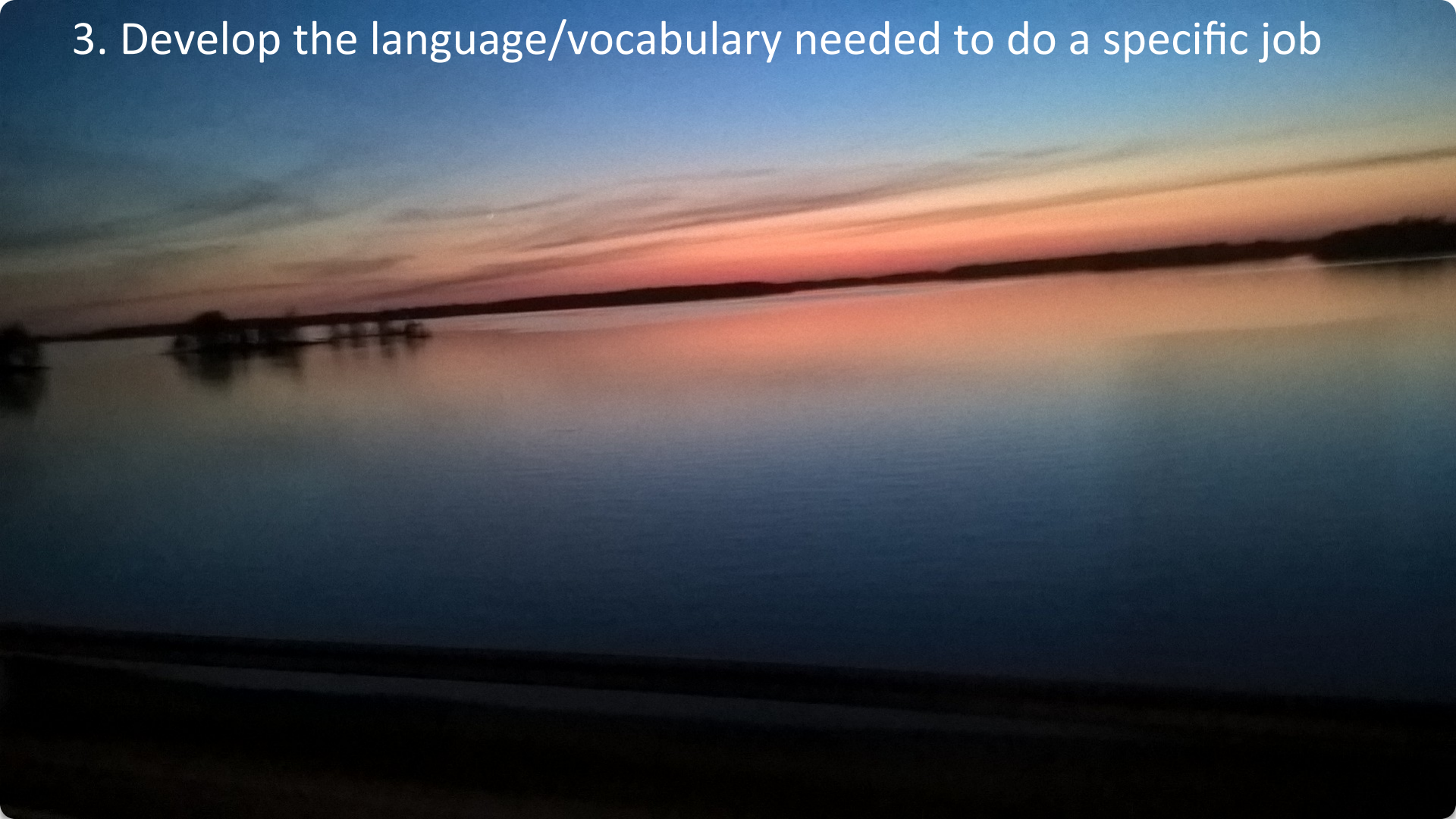


We should simplify and modify our English when appropriate

We should use 'incorrect' English when appropriate

We should slow down

3. Develop the language/vocabulary needed to do a specific job



On-the-job learning



If possible, get out and about with your learners – walk/drive round the port, check out some apartment refurbishments with your real estate people, explore the warehouse, tour the factory, run through IT systems, analyse email threads.

Logistics vocabulary

dredged – dredger

demurrage

impounded cargo

dunnage

stevedoring

a bonded warehouse

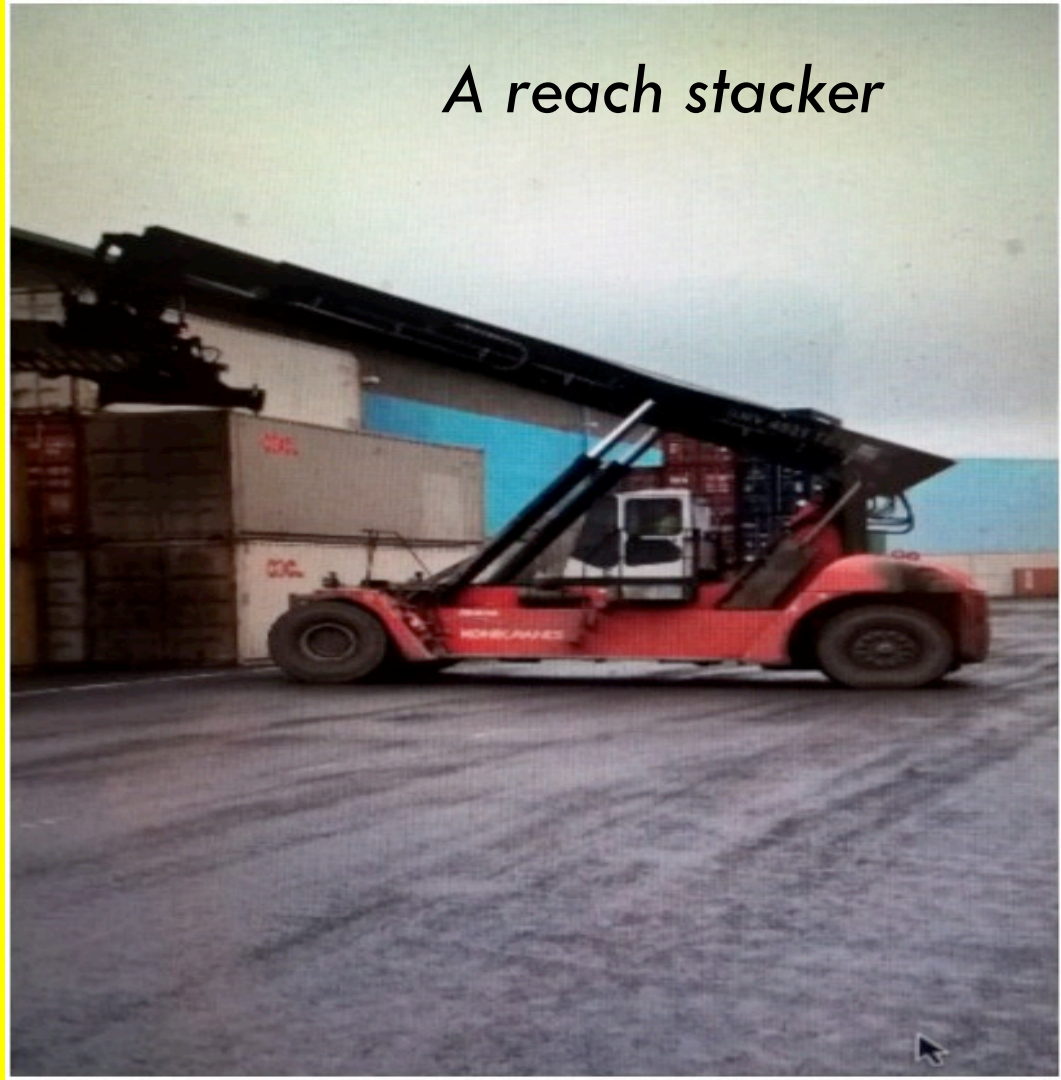
bespoke services

a designated area

shunting

diverted traffic

A reach stacker



4. Develop greater cultural awareness



Cultural Issues that hinder my learners' communication

1. Over/under-familiarity
2. Attitudes to punctuality and lateness
3. Attitudes to multi-tasking (eg others perceived as not concentrating on the matter at hand)
4. Focus on the business to the exclusion of interest in the person/country/culture
5. Attitudes to leadership and management
6. Attitudes to planning and getting things started

“If we wait for the moment when everything, absolutely everything, is ready, we shall never begin.” - Ivan Turgenev

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Developing cultural awareness using video and audio recordings

Extract from BMES video contents:

- 11:00 Finnish and German similarities
- 14:25 Understanding different nationalities
- 16:00 Production in China
- 16:55 Negotiating across cultures
- 17:50 Small talk
- 18:30 Accommodating discussions with people with different native languages
- 20:20 Advice to people coming to work in Germany

Video menu (speakers)

French 19.40 Learn German

Scottish 00.00 HR

Finnish 7.20 RCP collection

Finnish 00.00 Emails

Russian 13.10 Teams

Building cultural awareness – using audio



Irish/German business practices



China - negotiations



Spanish greetings

From Badger, 2011

Using authentic texts: issue of over-familiarity



Good morning Erja,

Mrs. Gruber from [XXX GmbH= the customer] asked for crosschecking the volumes in GERMAN to Mrs. Drechster.

The answer from Matti is in ENGLISH – is this agreed with the customer? If not it's absolutely unacceptable and further “Hello”.....

Please instruct your team members accordingly.

Some conclusions



A learner's 'pragmatic' view

‘It is not necessary to write or speak perfect English - the most important thing is to communicate in a way that the other part is able to understand what you mean’.

A German customer service specialist

Being pragmatic =



Accepting/understanding the communication which takes place in international workplaces and helping to improve it

Not imposing “ELT” rules and norms which may be alien to learners’ communication needs and their experience of doing business in English

And finally...

“Amazon wants to speak your dialect”

Amazon has applied for a patent for technology to detect the origins of two people in a phone call and adjust their speech so that each hears the other in his or her own accent.

According to Amazon’s filing, which was spotted by Patent Yogi, a research firm, it would make communication between people from different regions and countries easier. “In many cases, even when individuals speak the same language, they may have difficulty understanding one another,” it explains.

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References/Further reading

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