

**‘Understanding English however it is spoken’ – summary of Ian Badger’s talk at Poland IATEFL. Wroclaw,
8th September, 2012**

Today’s learners of English have to understand speakers from all over the world, many of whom do not speak with the pronunciation, grammar and clarity which have traditionally been taught in schools and colleges. A single focus on listening to native-speaker actors and broadcasters does not necessarily help our learners when they need to do business with Indian colleagues, to understand a London taxi driver, or to strike up a conversation with a fellow student from China. In this talk Ian refers to his extensive experience of working with global businesses for whom clear and comprehensible communication between colleagues, partners, customers and suppliers is key. He makes specific reference to his work to improve communications between personnel working in Poland, Finland, Germany, France and India and presents some examples of the materials which he has developed to help such international teams work together more effectively. As trainers we need to help our learners to become more sensitive to a range of different ways of speaking English – to help them to understand English however it is spoken.

Ian has over twenty years’ experience of making authentic video and audio recordings for use in the classroom and for self-study. Such materials motivate learners to improve their English skills; they provide fascinating listening and related speaking practice, a focus on key target vocabulary, grammar in real contexts, cultural reference and, particularly in the case of workplace recordings, fresh information about a company and its people. Ian’s background in making authentic recordings in his everyday training was the catalyst for writing *Collins English for Life: Listening* and the ELTons 2012 award-shortlisted title *Collins English for Business: Listening*. The particularly innovative feature of these books is that all material is unscripted and therefore presents a genuine listening challenge. Ian discusses ways in which trainers can work with the materials, including use of the exercises, the glossary of language powered by the Collins Cobuild corpus and use of the transcripts.

In a recent review of the Collins Listening books and CDs in the EL Gazette, Wayne Trotman commented that the material was ‘an exact representation of what is said, without the usual sanitised corrections and adaptation and therefore the learner is presented with a much clearer idea of the nuances of real speech’. In his talk, Ian refers to some possible surprises for teachers and learners in terms of language which is actually

used by speakers of English in natural contexts, compared with language traditionally taught in conventional course books and included in some 'scripted' listening materials.

Ian has also worked with native speaker managers in the UK who understand that they, too, need to improve the clarity of the language they use in order to make their non-native speaker counterparts understand them better. This experience clearly illustrates that improving communication is a two-way process. So finally, Ian shares his thoughts on how all speakers (native and non-native) should make efforts to make themselves clearer and more intelligible to their international counterparts.

Ian refers to the following sources in his talk:

Badger, I English for Business 'Listening' Collins ELT 2011 + App for I Pad 2012

Badger, I English for Life 'Listening' Collins ELT 2012

Badger, I and P. Menzies 'English for Business Life', Heinle Cengage/National Geographic Learning 2007

Badger, I 'Everyday Business English', Pearson 2003

Dignen, B and I McMaster 'Communicating internationally in English' (pp31-42) York Associates/Business Spotlight 2011

Sweeney, S. 'Authentic materials' in Business Issues, 2/2006

Walker, R. 'Teaching the pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca', OUP 2010

Wilson, JJ. How to teach listening, Pearson 2008

www.collinselt.com/businesslistening

- Further recordings of 'Business Listening' speakers

<http://accent.gmu.edu>

– People from around the world recording the same paragraph in English

<http://sounds.bl.uk/Accents-and-dialects> – Examples of regional UK accents and dialects

<http://www.languagebyvideo.com>

- Video examples of English accents around the world