



ARE THE NATIVES STILL THE PROBLEM?

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Trending news

- BBC article - Native speakers are the world's worst communicators (31.10.16)
- BBC article - UK and German interpretation of 'No' (30.10.16)

To cover

- Background – working with ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ users of English
- But what is a ‘native’ speaker and are ‘native’ speakers good models for clear international communication?
- A common objective for ‘the natives’ and the ‘non-natives’ – clear communication
- Business communication training: some needs and materials?
- Some conclusions and recommendations



Background

Background: working with 'native' and 'non-native' users of English – 3 BMES ongoing training scenarios

1. IT managers in the UK (predominantly British)
2. Customer service/supply specialists in Germany (British, American, German, Russian, Finnish, Turkish, French)
3. Paper machine shift supervisors in Finland (Finnish)





But what is a native speaker?

L..., a supply specialist

- ❑ I have been working as a supply specialist at for almost six months now. I am in charge of the deep sea container exports from xxxxxxx in Scotland, xxxxxxx Mill in Finland, and sometimes perform back up for other mills located in Germany.
- ❑ I was born in Russia, but have moved to United States when I was 11 years old. I have been living now in Germany for almost two years and speak three languages: English, Russian, and German.

Radek Sikorski, a politician

- born in Bydgoszcz, Poland
- travelled to the UK in 1981 to study English.
- granted political asylum in 1982
- Studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford University
- Sunday Telegraph Warsaw correspondent 1990-1991
- Minister of Foreign Affairs, Poland, 2007-2014
- [A recent interview post-Brexit](#)



Are 'native' speakers clear models for
international communication?



Seen and heard over the last couple of weeks

- Hi Ian the doubles is organised by you and you're partner to be played whenever suitable for you.
- Sorry I should of text you instead
- You need to send there details
- Please text 30003 to donate three pound
- Thousands of pounds have been set aside to be paid to you and I

Heard on 'Match of the day'

- ❑ He struck it lovely
- ❑ He's sat in the stand
- ❑ It ain't happening
- ❑ When I come in this morning
- ❑ Roverem
- ❑ They need more from im.

Using advanced vocabulary can be dangerous!



“A lot of the information goes amiss.”

“The project went totally awry!”

“We decided to forego the treatment”





A common objective for ‘the natives’ and the
‘non-natives’ – clear communication

A Londoner



“I find it embarrassing going to Zurich when I don't speak a word of German (I did French and Spanish at school), so basics like hello, thank you, where is the train station? etc. are beyond me.

We Brits are very poor in speaking other languages, and showing that you are making an effort to learn and embrace a language can only be a good thing”.



A German speaker

- I am a Supply Specialist, responsible the different projects like FCI (Future Customer Interface) and in holiday times I help my colleagues also in the daily business, then for the markets: Spain and Portugal. So I have daily contact with a lot of people from different countries, who are not native English speakers.
- I communicate with my colleagues via e-mail and telephone, so I need to use a plain and understandable English.



Business communication training: some needs and materials

What they said

- I am used to do it
- I'm stuck on the M25 doing no miles an hour
- I book the tickets
- The single biggest retailer in the world is based out of a Podunk town.
- I explain structure of the building and then I take them down to canteen.

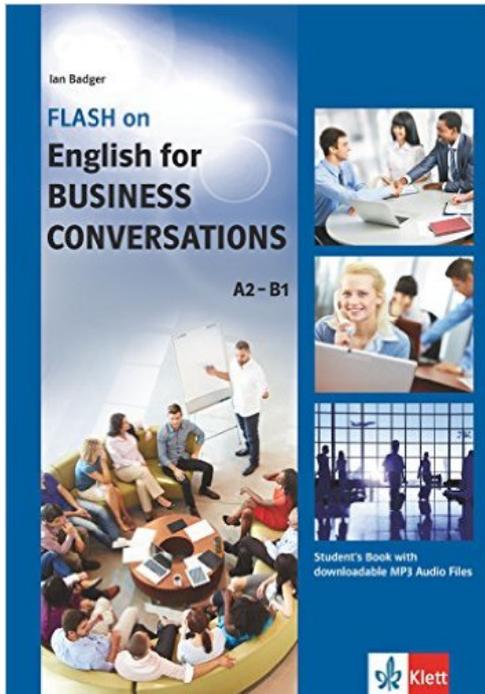
Who said it

- A famous French manager of a Premier League English football team
- A British sales manager
- A Finnish administrator
- An American senior sales manager
- A Polish facilities manager

NS and NNS: common or separate needs?

- ❑ Develop skills and strategies to understand English however it is spoken
- ❑ Develop the skills to modify language in order to get the message across
- ❑ Develop vocabulary and grammar
- ❑ Develop cultural awareness as it applies to everyday business communication – emails, conference calls, face-to-face meetings, small talk etc
- ❑ Develop skills to decipher what is meant (listening and reading skills)
- ❑ Eliminate punctuation errors and spelling mistakes from emails and chat.

Core materials for learners of English



Ability to introduce yourself and your job responsibilities

Ability to make and receive phone calls

Ability to message and email

Ability to make and change arrangements

Ability to set up and take part in meetings – on-line and face-to-face

Ability to give a short presentation

Ability to socialise, to talk about family, friends, home town etc.

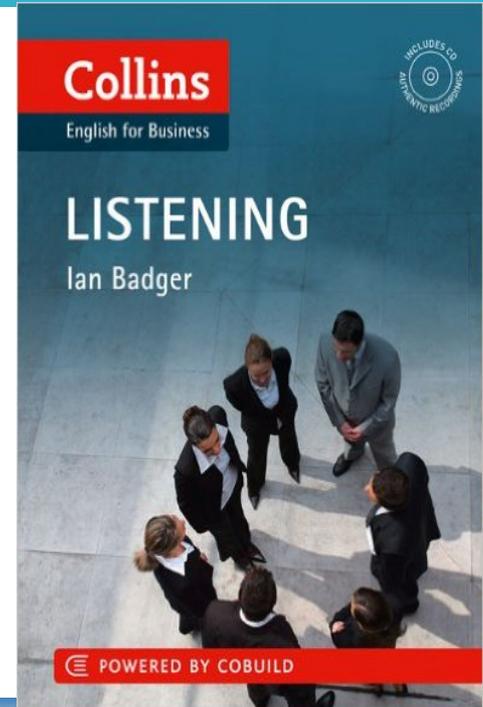
Ability to use English when travelling

Materials for all

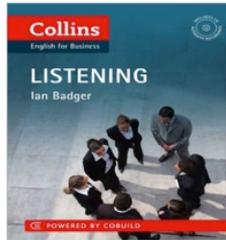
Office etiquette



Email etiquette



Owen – comparing business culture in Ireland and Germany



- Track 18, Collins English for Business Listening, 2012

Conclusions

- Unclear communicators, poor listeners and those with limited cultural awareness are 'the problem' in international business communication, whether or not they are 'native' or 'non-native' speakers
- Native speakers have the advantage of not having to learn English as an additional language but the disadvantage of not having to learn English as an additional language
- It's not a question of who is a native speaker and who isn't. It's a matter of who can communicate most effectively and, in my experience that will often, but not definitely not always, be the 'non-native' speaker.

References

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- ❑ www.bbc.com/capital/story/20161028-native-english-speakers-are-the-worlds-worst-communicators?ocid=ww.social.link.email
- ❑ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-37799805>