

# Designing a Bespoke English Course for Professionals

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The following anonymised notes document the process of designing a tailored English course for a company's staff. These notes were taken during meetings and conversations with the company owner and prospective learners, and have been refined for clarity.

## INITIAL MEETING

On 1 November 2023, I met with the owner of a company who wished to arrange private English coaching sessions for their staff. During this meeting, I made the following observations:

- Staff need to feel more comfortable speaking English
- Roles include office-based, technical, and sales positions
- Staff work remotely from different locations
- They are required to:
  - Make phone calls in English
  - Place orders in English
  - Discuss software and applications in English
- Common needs include:
  - General vocabulary development
  - Technical and logistics-specific vocabulary
  - Vocabulary for phone calls

## LEARNER INTERVIEWS

During the week beginning 20 November 2023, I conducted individual sessions with prospective learners. For each person, I recorded their name, role, email address, and estimated English level based on their responses to the *First Session Questions*. Below are summarised notes for two of the learners.

### STUDENT 1

- Learnt English at school (secondary)
- Doesn't speak too much English at work
- Hasn't been to any English-speaking countries
- Writes a lot of emails in English
- Uncomfortable when speaking English, stressed, and nervous
- Avoids phone calls and presentations in English
- More comfortable reading and writing

- Does financial, administrative, and technical support
- Four years in company
- Favourite parts are talking to people
- Talks with customers and suppliers
- Most difficult thing is to talk to suppliers in English

## **STUDENT 2**

- Learnt English at school
- Watches TV without subtitles
- Listens to music
- Been to London (last year)
- Lives in the middle of nowhere
- Sometimes speaks with partners in English
- English part of everyday life
- Reads in English
- Feels overwhelmed when speaking, also feels embarrassed
- Problems with big numbers in English
- Phone calls in English are okay, needs practice
- Emails are okay (reading and writing)
- Needs opportunity to talk more
- Makes first contact with clients
- Makes appointments and meetings
- Two and a half years with company
- Likes administrative tasks, making appointments
- Most difficult thing is to make the follow-up contact calls

## **GROUP OBSERVATIONS**

From the initial sessions, I made the following general notes:

- All learners have good pronunciation, with minor prepositional errors
- Group estimated to be around CEFR level B1-B2 (level 5–6)
- Positive group dynamic and willingness to learn
- Areas for focus:
  - Increasing confidence in spoken English
  - Expanding vocabulary (especially technical/business)
  - Improving comfort with numbers and years
  - Practical, work-relevant language practice

## **FEEDBACK TO THE COMPANY OWNER**

Based on the group sessions, I shared the following feedback document with the company owner:

### **Problem Statement**

I made the following observations based on my meeting with [the prospective students]:

- Learners' comprehension was strong; they understood most questions with ease
- Spoken English was generally good, though occasionally limited by vocabulary and prepositional errors
- Pronunciation was clear and often impressive as they enunciated difficult words with ease
- Learners expressed a lack of confidence and opportunities to speak English
- The group showed excellent teamwork and engagement throughout — there was a great atmosphere during the session

## Proposed Solution

I recommended a 10-week English coaching course focused on increasing confidence and improving vocabulary in relevant contexts.

## Key Topics

The course will be designed around the following themes:

- Making and receiving phone calls
- Ordering and liaising with suppliers
- Understanding and using large numbers and dates
- Talking about software, systems, and technical processes
- Supporting clients with technical issues
- Discussing logistics and transportation
- Talking about manufacturing and machinery
- Writing emails clearly and professionally
- Conducting sales and follow-up calls

The tenth session would be used to review and consolidate learning. Progress would be assessed at the end of the course, with the option to continue if further development was needed.

## SAMPLE LESSON FEEDBACK: MAKING PHONE CALLS

After delivering the session on phone calls, I provided the following feedback to the learners:

### Phone Call Vocabulary

Here is a selection of key vocabulary, with associated prepositions and usage notes:

to be cut off (adjective) To interrupt somebody who is speaking on the telephone by breaking the connection: We were **cut off** in the middle of our conversation.

to pick up the receiver (noun) To lift the part of the phone you hold to your ear and mouth (the receiver): She **picked up the receiver** and dialled his number.

to be off the hook (adjective) If you leave or take the telephone off the hook, you take the receiver off the place where it usually rests, so nobody can call you: Because the phone **was off the hook**, I didn't receive any calls this morning.

to be out of order (adjective) If a phone is out of order, it does not work because it is broken: All phones in the building are currently **out of order**.

to have the wrong number (phrase) Usually said when you receive a call from someone you do not know because they dialled the wrong number or used an incorrect series of digits: I'm sorry, but you **have the wrong number**.

to leave a message (noun) To give a short piece of information to a person when you cannot speak to them directly: Dave didn't answer his phone, so I **left him a message**.

## Modal Verbs for Phone Calls

These modal verbs are essential for polite and professional phone communication:

### Would

Used for polite offers or requests:

- **Would** you mind spelling that for me? (request)
- **Would** you like to leave a message? (offer)
- **Would** you mind calling back in an hour? (request)

### Can

Used for offers or requests:

- **Can** you call again? I think we have a bad connection. (request)
- **Can** I be of any help? (offer)
- **Can** I leave a message? (request)

### Could

A more polite form of 'can':

- **Could** I speak to Mr Davis, please?
- **Could** you repeat that, please?
- **Could** you email that to me later?

### May

A formal way to ask or give permission:

- **May** I speak with Helen?
- How **may** I help you?

## Common Mistakes

Incorrect: "It's more easier for me". Correct: "It's easier for me" or "It's much easier for me".

Explanation: "easier" is already the comparative form of "easy", so adding "more" before it is unnecessary.

## **REFLECTIONS ON APPROACH**

In the past, I would have included longer vocabulary lists. However, I've found that providing shorter, focused lists helps learners retain and apply new language more effectively.

Because this was the first session, I also limited the number of grammar corrections. I aimed to support learner confidence while addressing the most important issues.