

Conference Abstract

Presenter: *Jonathan Floss, M.S TESOL*
Institution: *EFL Fellow Program (sponsored by the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. State Department)/Urals State Technical University*
Title: *Culturally Relevant, Real and Reflective Management English*
Format: *Talk (30-45 minutes) [Please notify me of how much time I will be given!]*
Equipment Needed: *Overhead Projector and Screen*

Presentation Abstract: Managers must be able both to understand the business implications of the target country's culture and to explain their own country's culture. In the real world their ability to speak English as a foreign language is assessed in terms of how they use what they know and how they interpret what they perceive cross-culturally; what they merely know matters mainly in the isolated realm of exams and tests. In order to develop this ability, Business English teachers should incorporate the following criteria into designing curricula, syllabi, lessons and materials: relevance, realness, reflectiveness.

Relevance implies current business issues, trends and themes which are pertinent to the goals and outcomes of the course and which have practical value or applicability. Realness refers to materials which are actual and authentic rather than fictitious. Reflectiveness means that the teacher and students use the materials in a manner involving careful consideration. In essence, managers need to work with Real-materials which are Relevant to their goals and on which they must Reflect. This helps to maximize the students/managers' time in the English as a foreign language classroom and to prepare them for interviews –both language-wise and mentality-wise. The presenter intends to explain the cross-cultural and course design principles which underlie the Management English materials he creates and/or uses. These often focus on relevant business-oriented articles from real English language periodicals/Web sites which serve to provoke critical cross-cultural reflection.

Cross-culturally, English-speaking countries tend to have a more low-context, explicit manner of discourse. Americans in particular prefer to attack complex issues sequentially –the one thing at a time approach- by separating them into sub-issues and settling them one at a time in a linear manner. The use of frameworks in the Business

English classroom can help students restructure their thoughts so that they conform to the expectations of the other culture. The focus in this talk will be on developing answers that conform to the expectations of native English-speakers as the presenter is an American and can best offer advice from that perspective. However, the Business English teacher must adjust his/her use of this advice according to the tendencies of the culture in which the managers will use English.

Some of the principles of effective course design that should be kept in mind when developing materials for Management English classes are knowledge building (do the materials, tasks, activities promote deep, personally meaningful rather than surface processing of information?), authenticity (is the teacher providing realistic cases, problems, issues, incidents to which students can apply concepts, principles, theories?), articulation (is the teacher offering abundant opportunities for students to express their knowledge or understanding by explaining concepts, summarizing, retelling, discussing reactions, analyzing problems, offering solutions, presenting projects, describing strategies, etc.), scaffolding (are frameworks of instructional support –tools or techniques- which help students move from their current level of knowledge and skills to the next level of learning being provided systematically?), and critical thinking (are activities that promote higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, predicting, hypothesizing and justifying as well as problem solving and decision-making being emphasized?).

Scaffolding tools will be emphasized in this talk. For example, to encourage the development of linear and interconnected answers to questions on the problems of customer service, the teacher could present the following framework as a scaffold upon which to build: competence (did the employees possess the required skill and knowledge?), courtesy (were the employees friendly, respectful, and considerate?), credibility (were the employees trustworthy?), reliability (did the employees perform the service consistently and accurately?), responsiveness (did the employees respond quickly to customers' requests and problems?), and communication (did the employees make an effort to understand the customer and communicate clearly?). Even the answer to the simple question "What do you do as a manager?" can be enhanced by using a framework of ten managerial functions as the exemplification base. This sort of scaffolding aims to

help them avoid giving a textbook definition of customer service/management/etc. without qualifying their answer with personal examples. It also aids more fluent students in answering the question being asked without rambling on and on.

Scaffolding tools which guide the development of multi-level reflective questions for current business case studies (e.g. electronic monitoring of employees) will also be considered. This is critical in preparing the managers to discuss managerial issues which are topical in the Western business world and explain cross-cultural similarities or differences from the Russian perspective.