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Developing Business ESP Courses

■ **In today's current climate of international business expansion, traditional language institutes frequently have the opportunity to serve a growing language-learner population: nonnative English speakers working in local international companies. In this paper, we examine a university-based English language program's experience in providing business English courses for one company, from initially assessing its need for English language training to evaluating the courses after completion. The courses were a success overall, meeting the primary expressed needs of a group of the company's English language learners. However, designing the courses also presented a series of challenges. Through the process, we achieved success in teaching and also learned a great deal about providing workplace English language training, including working within the parameters of individual corporate situations and designing courses for specific business English needs.**

During recent years, major international investment and business development have steadily increased in the US. Our English language program (ELP) was formed, in part, to meet the English language training needs of these businesses, which often transplant hundreds of international employees to the US. In this case study, we examine how

English language courses were established and implemented at one such company and analyze the successes and challenges we experienced as a part of the process. Because of the increasing internationalization of business activities globally, we hope that our experiences will aid both traditional programs that are considering expanding their services into their local business community and nontraditional language programs seeking to enter this market.

Our ELP is a university-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program housed in the School of Education, set up specifically to serve English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) needs in the thriving academic and research venues of the university as well as in the international community at large. We are in an English as a Second Language setting. The program is nontraditional in format; although it offers intensive training to specific groups, it is not a traditional intensive English program with multiple levels. Also, our program is less than 5 years old. As a result, we have a great deal of flexibility in offering ESP services, and building a client base is of great importance to our long-term viability. Thus, client satisfaction is a key concern at all times.

We began working to secure the business of a large manufacturing company that was new to the area and which was known to have nonnative English-speaking employees. We assumed that the company would be interested in providing English language courses, so we tried to find out whether or not it had contacted anyone else to provide English language training, and we also attempted to identify an appropriate contact person in the company with whom we could propose a training program. Finally, after more than a year of meetings and information gathering, our plans for workplace courses began in earnest.

Our ELP was still in the early stages of development when this project began, so we had no established curriculum for a program of this type. As a result, we—the director and one of the ELP's principal instructors—had

the freedom and the challenge of developing a program. We certainly thought that a long-term training program would be the best model for the company; however, we realized that we needed to provide a successful short-term program to establish credibility for future work. Thus, we employed a multifaceted approach to ensure company satisfaction with the training: (a) we involved stakeholders (the trainees, their coworkers, and human resource management) in the assessment process, so that their perception of training needs would shape the course content and make it more relevant; (b) we were clear about the objectives of the courses, including what they would and would not cover; and (c) we decided to provide detailed progress reports that would comment on individual accomplishments toward the objectives of the courses. In this way, we anticipated the benefit of the training to the company, and we hoped that our success would lead to opportunities for further training.

This company's English language learners were a homogenous linguistic and cultural group, all male, and all placed in the region on temporary assignment for up to 5 years. They were involved in major manufacturing, and during the time of this project, the company was experiencing a great deal of growth and change. Initial conversations with the company representative about the employees' language needs revealed that nonnative English speakers are partnered with native English-speaking employees of the same or a similar rank in their jobs. The representative continuously emphasized to us that any English training should be directly relevant to the employees' work, and he insisted that the employees would not be able to attend more than one 90-minute training meeting per week. He expressed that each training group should not have more than 10 employees at a time, and he initially asked for 6-month courses.

The company representative thought that there were two primary groups of employees for English language training. The first group included employees who were working internationally for the first time and who would

probably return home after this assignment. Also, many of these employees had not studied English in a long time. Thus, the company representative thought that this "short-term" group should study language specific to their daily work needs. The second group included employees who would likely continue to work for the company in an international capacity after leaving this assignment and who were of a slightly higher English skill level. The company representative thought that this "international track" group was more motivated to improve because of the potential for long-term use of English. So he indicated that they should study "everyday" work English at an accelerated rate while also having the opportunity to improve general English useful in international business.

We were pleased that the company wanted the instruction to relate directly to the trainees' work situations, knowing that this is a best practice for workplace English training (Friedenberg, Kennedy, Lomperis, Martin, & Westerfield, 2003). We had learned that in language training at other company sites, motivation to participate in class had been a problem, and so we hypothesized that relevant course content would increase motivation. However, we did argue that 6-month courses might challenge even the most dedicated student's motivation, instead recommending 4-month courses with 1-week midterm breaks. In addition, inspired by Franceschini and Bronstein (2002), we recommended the implementation of a system to involve English-speaking employees in the training to provide a framework through which the training objectives would be reinforced on the job.

Several factors were crucial to us in beginning preparation for the courses. First of all, limited time was clearly an issue, since we had to view these courses as a single opportunity without promise of continuing any further courses for additional skill building. Compounding this was our commitment to ensuring that the courses were highly relevant to everyday work needs to increase employee motivation for the training. Thus, to provide the maximum learning experience for the

employees and to ensure company satisfaction with the courses for the promise of future work, we hoped to pinpoint which language functions were most necessary for general communication on the job. As we began researching the company's needs, carefully selecting which language functions to teach became paramount.

Curricular Design, Implementation, and Evaluation

Working within these initial established parameters, we began to develop a process of needs analysis as the first stage in curriculum design. We needed to determine which skills the nonnative English speakers were required to have for their jobs and to analyze their current English language skill levels before they began training. The difference between these two needs, called the "Training Gap" by Ellis and Johnson (1994) or the "Present Situation Analysis" versus the "Target Situation Analysis" in Friedenberget al. (2003), would reveal which skills had to be learned. It would also pose the challenge of prioritizing which skills would actually be taught in the course. The ensuing evaluation was basically twofold: assessment of the company needs and assessment of the trainees' language levels and perceived needs.

Assessment of Company Needs

As one step in evaluating the company's needs, we thought that gathering input from the English-speaking partners of the trainees would be beneficial to understanding daily communication. Although these individuals were certainly not linguists, we believed that their constant contact with the trainees would help us better understand how English was used by the trainees on the job. Additionally, we wished to compare perceived needs of both groups. To collect this information, we would have liked to conduct a focus group of the English-speaking partners, as well as widely administer a questionnaire that would ask about communication issues. The focus group was not possible because of workload and lack

of time, so we had to rely on the questionnaire as our primary source of information.

The questionnaire focused on the activities and tasks associated with the workplace, topics of communication, common modes of interaction, and the setting in which most communication took place, as well as opinions on what general English language skills were most needed and what cross-cultural communication factors might have influenced work communication (see Appendix A). The results provided much insight into what the English-speaking partners felt were needs of the trainees (see Table 1). We established that there was a clear need to focus on commands, directions, opinions, and suggestions. Asking for clarification and responding to questions also needed to be addressed, including communicating directly that a statement had not been understood. Finally, the questionnaire also strongly indicated that a focus on participation in meetings would be helpful. In addition, several comments mentioned that the trainees should study disagreeing in English and the appropriate language used to correct other employees. We took particular note of comments by English-speaking partners acknowledging that while courses would be of help, practicing English on the job would make the most difference in skill level. The ELP was directly asked to encourage trainees to practice their language skills with their English-speaking partners.

In a ranking task, in which respondents were asked to indicate which areas of English needed the most improvement, speaking fluency and accuracy ranked strongly, with pronunciation and listening as secondary concerns. Reading and writing did not appear to be quite as necessary. (It should be noted that we did not include vocabulary as an option on this ranking task because we had already assumed from our knowledge of ESP that vocabulary would need to be an integral part of the course.)

In addition to the questionnaires from the English-speaking associates and following suggestions from Ellis and Johnson (1994), we also requested documents in English that

the trainees commonly used, including product specifications, memos, technical reports, company newsletters, and/or meeting agendas. These documents would allow us to analyze the kinds of written language the trainees needed to comprehend and would also serve as an initial corpus for company-specific vocabulary and abbreviations. We also asked for any available company training videos in English, photos of the work process in the factory, and recorded material concerning company goals, common problems encountered at work, and typical meeting discussions. We hoped that all of these materials could be used in lesson planning to provide authentic activities.

Assessment of Language Skill Levels and Perceived Needs

The ELP needed to assess linguistic, functional, and cultural learning needs of the trainees to gain a holistic view of their language-learning needs (Hull, 1996); thus, a “language audit” (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998) was conducted. As a first step, to assess the trainees’ perceived needs, we created a questionnaire similar to the one given to their English-speaking partners (see Appendix B). From this questionnaire we hoped to learn about the trainees’ English communication experiences and what they perceived to be the most pressing “key communicative events” in their daily work (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), as well as any cross-cultural communication issues that might need to be addressed. Distributed to all nonnative English speakers at the company, the questionnaire was written in both English and the L1 to facilitate more detailed answers.

The questionnaire reaffirmed many of the same language functions that the English-speaking partners had indicated were necessary, including commands, directions, opinions, suggestions, and participation in meetings. Clarification and how to appropriately respond to questions were not overtly noted by the trainees, but the need to learn how to disagree was expressed. Several of the

trainees commented that knowing how to persuade in English was very necessary, both within meetings and in immediate problem solving on the job. Interestingly, the questionnaire’s skill ranking task strongly suggested a focus on speaking accuracy and listening skills (see Table 1).

Table 1
Comparison of Trainee Rankings and English-Speaking Partner Rankings

<i>Need to improve</i>	<i>Trainee responses (n=52)</i>	<i>Partner responses (n=51)</i>
Writing skills	5	4
Reading skills	3	5
Speaking fluency	6	1
Speaking accuracy	1	2
Listening skills	2	3 (tie)
Pronunciation	4	3 (tie)

Note: This table compares trainee rankings with English-speaking partner rankings and reflects their respective perceptions about which English language skills are most in need of improvement, where 1 = the skill requiring the most improvement and 6 = the skill requiring the least improvement.

This differed from the comments of the English-speaking partners, suggesting that the trainees could make themselves understood despite accuracy problems. The English-speaking partners found the fluency issue to be more frustrating, while the trainees were frustrated by accuracy. Reading, writing, and pronunciation were secondary concerns to the trainees.

In addition to the questionnaire, the company representative thought that it would be helpful to have access to standardized test scores for each trainee as a means of placement and long-term assessment. We agreed that standardized test scores could provide useful additional information on language skill ability, although limited in scope. At the request of the company, we administered the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) to the majority of potential trainees. The test directly measured

listening and reading skills (*TOEIC User Guide*, 2001). For the ELP, the standardized test served several foundational purposes. First of all, it provided a basic way to group trainees by general skill level. In addition, when analyzed alongside an oral interview (discussed below), it confirmed the hypothesis that for many trainees—with the exception of those who had previous work experience in an English-speaking country—listening and reading comprehension (input skills) were higher than output skills, a finding that helped guide curriculum development.

Since the TOEIC directly measured only the ability to comprehend language input, as a final step of assessment we also conducted oral interviews to evaluate trainees' spoken language. By that point, all nonnative English speakers had been given the opportunity to register for the training, and so the first group of trainees for these courses had been identified. In addition, the previous needs-assessment research had uncovered a list of target functions in English. Based on that preliminary list, we tailored the oral interview questions to attempt to elicit the target language for the course, following examples from Jinright (n.d.). Only participants in the upcoming courses were interviewed. We both attended the interviews; one of us asked the questions, while the other made notes on ability. The interviews were comprehensive, lasting 10 minutes per trainee, and we received permission to audiotape each interview. With the information recorded, the ELP finalized section placement.

The Course Design

Based on the results of the needs assessments, it became apparent that there were several key language functions that the trainees needed frequently (see Table 2). The institute began designing curricula that would target those immediate needs. We quickly discovered that no single business English text covered the exact material that was required. The process of perusing texts resulted in the discovery of some useful activ-

ities (especially listening tasks, as audio accompaniments are difficult to produce); however, in the process of curriculum development, we noted that it was important not to use too much from one text in order to avoid copyright infringement rules.

Furthermore, since our goal was to make the courses relevant to everyday work situations, we wanted to incorporate as many authentic materials into the curricula as possible. As previously noted, we had requested a body of authentic materials that could be used as teaching tools. While the company readily agreed to provide some common forms, copies of company newsletters, and instructional videos, it did not provide access to everyday documents or to recordings of many of the daily meetings in which the trainees participated, citing sensitive information and company privacy issues. Additionally, the company would not allow us to videotape actual interactions between the employees. While we would have preferred to have access to more authentic materials for use in curriculum design, this simply was not possible.

Thus, the final curricula were a combination of tasks and activities created by the instructors based on a set of limited authentic materials and those borrowed from business English texts. For example, the company provided several sets of pictures of on-site, sequenced work in progress, which were used as the basis for an activity on giving instructions. We transformed the only recording of a meeting into a listening activity for the higher-level group (see Appendix C). Another activity developed from authentic materials is seen in Appendix D, which gave students a structured format to practice giving instructions orally. Many of our "authentic" activities were actually developed as the courses progressed from information gleaned by listening to the trainees. Appendix E illustrates this concept: A speaking activity to practice agreeing and disagreeing was created to feature situations that could have been typical on the job. Another example of this type of activity is a meeting role-play (Appendices F

and G), in which a business English textbook activity was altered to provide more context for the trainees.

The 14-week courses were designed to cover six basic language functions based on information gathered from the entire assessment process:

Table 2
Targeted Functions and Strategies

<i>Language functions</i>	<i>Conversation strategies</i>
Asking for and giving opinions	Asking for clarification
Giving suggestions and advice	Using fillers to make time to think
Strategies for participating in meetings	Keeping a conversation going
Agreeing and disagreeing effectively	“Rewording” to check understanding
Giving instructions and warnings	Using politeness forms
Describing a process	

Note: This table details the target language functions and conversational strategies that were established through the assessment process and included in the curricula.

Each target language function was studied and practiced from 2 to 3 weeks, with middle- and end-of-course review sessions. In addition to the six target functions, various conversation strategies were practiced throughout the course, and intermittent tips on cross-cultural communication skills also were provided.

As three proficiency levels emerged during the assessment period, we adapted each course’s materials to move at the pace of the trainees in that level; however, the target language functions remained basically consistent for all three course levels. The assessments revealed that the “international track” group was indeed at a more advanced level, and so we agreed with the company representative that the group’s course could most likely cover more material than the other courses. To facilitate this, the trainees used a low-

intermediate business English text, *Global Links 2: English for International Business* (Blackwell, 2001), to supplement the target language functions.

Because vocabulary learning is such an integral part of workplace language training, vocabulary activities were incorporated into each lesson. For the two lower proficiency levels, the instructor provided weekly vocabulary words to supplement the target language functions in the lessons. The words were selected because of their relation to the target language functions; they were usually content nouns and verbs that were integral to using that function at a simple level. For the “international track” group, the instructor used a vocabulary text that focused on the acquisition of business words. Each week the trainees completed activities to practice the words and were encouraged to intentionally use the words during the week.

Since the courses were limited to only one meeting per week, assignments were given to the trainees to encourage additional practice. These on-the-job training (OJT) assignments typically required the trainees to listen for new words, listen for the target language functions, or practice (speaking) the target language functions. They were then asked to make notes about what they experienced and be prepared to discuss them during the training sessions. The instructors obtained the e-mail addresses of the trainees’ English-speaking partners and sent them the OJT assignments each week to support the out-of-class practice opportunities.

At the end of the course, we conducted post-assessment oral interviews. Identical to the preassessment interviews, they demonstrated the amount of improvement each trainee made in the various target language functions. The ELP compiled the results of the pre- and postassessment interviews and provided individual progress reports to the company. These reports summarized any improvements and recommended areas of further language study for each trainee. In addition, each trainee’s TOEIC score was listed, and so the report

served as a formal description of English language skill level.

Evaluation of the Courses

The process of course evaluation took place primarily at the end of the 14 weeks. First, the trainees were asked to complete a course evaluation form (see Appendix H). The evaluations affirmed some of our procedures; for example, the majority ($\approx 88\%$) of trainees agreed that the training topics and materials related to their daily work and that they were useful and easy to understand ($\approx 71\%$). In addition, the course evaluations affirmed that the target language functions (see Table 2) were relevant and helpful ($\approx 88\%$), particularly the language of suggestions, opinions, and agreeing/disagreeing. In response to the open-ended questions, one trainee wrote, "I've learned many words I've never heard before—words that I can hear at work." Another responded, "After joining the class, I understand more deeply and well what other associates are saying." The progress reports provided further evidence of improvement, which corroborated the results of the course evaluations; the majority of the trainees demonstrated improvement of the targeted language functions in their postassessment oral interviews ($\approx 84\%$).

Opinions were mixed about the OJT assignments—some thought that they were useful practice, while others said they did not complete them. Indeed, the course instructors had already noticed that only some of the trainees fulfilled the assignments each week. One trainee commented in the evaluations that "I would like to increase the conversation with [my] partner," while another indicated that he "need[ed] conversation with partner." Yet another said that "doing the OJT is the most useful" aspect of the courses. From the positive comments of trainees such as these who did complete the assignments, we ascertained that the OJT assignments were a success.

Although there was affirmation of various aspects of the courses, the evaluations also provided valuable suggestions for improve-

ment. The majority of responses suggested that the trainees would like more speaking practice, more vocabulary, more listening practice, and more focus on pronunciation. The evaluations also suggested some things that were out of the ELP's control (e.g., smaller class size or a different meeting time). Comments were made requesting the use of additional authentic documents in the courses; one said that "it would be better if we [could] use actual documentation or materials from work." Another noted that he would like the instructors to "use actual documents or actual mail" in the training. We were able to share these concerns with the company representative.

Some of the comments were difficult for us to interpret. For instance, in answering the question "What improvements would you suggest for further courses?" one anonymous response was "asking for and giving opinions." It was not clear to us if this trainee meant that he simply wanted more instruction and practice with this function or if he intended to say that the ELP should improve its teaching in this area. We identified that one of the main reasons it was difficult to interpret the evaluations was because they were written in English with no L1 translation. Some trainees answered using the L1, and the company's translator provided English translations. However, many trainees responded in English, which resulted in short, incomplete, or sometimes inappropriate answers. Indeed, even the responses that were translated from the L1 were often incomplete, presumably because of lack of comprehension of the question.

As a second step of review, the ELP also conducted an informal self-evaluation. Upon reflection we thought that the objectives for the courses were too ambitious for the time period involved; covering fewer functions more thoroughly might have resulted in even better retention of new language skills. In addition, because there was not substantial time before the courses began to fully investigate needs and levels (for example, oral interviews were conducted almost simultaneously with curriculum design), the ELP

had to rely on the company representative's informal assessment and assurances that certain trainees were at a higher level (he estimated high intermediate for the international track) and could handle more. Even though assessments did demonstrate this group had a higher skill level, they were not able to acquire new language at the originally anticipated accelerated rate. Finally, we did not receive all the authentic materials we requested, and so we also were not able to integrate materials into lessons as well as we had hoped. There were various reasons for this. Many of the authentic materials were ideal for activities at an advanced level, but they would have been difficult to use with most of the trainees. The ELP also did not receive all materials early enough to incorporate them into the courses; many requested materials were provided after the training period had already commenced. While we thought that we had worked effectively within the parameters given by the company, it would have been ideal to have had more time and information before the courses began.

In addition to these points, the administration of course evaluations was an area that required revision. We noted that, in any subsequent work with the company, bilingual evaluative forms would be optimal. In this way, trainees at all levels of language learning would have the opportunity to express themselves in their L1, providing more thorough and helpful insight.

Finally, we noted that the process of involving the native English-speaking partners through weekly e-mails was worthwhile on multiple levels. First, it demonstrated to them that the trainees were making efforts to improve their communicative abilities. Additionally, because the e-mails included an overview of the language foci for the week, many of the trainees reported that their partners would make a point to practice the various functions with them, which provided invaluable "feedback loops" for the trainees (Franceschini & Bronstein, 2002). We hoped that the inclusion of the partners would foster an increased awareness of the difficulties of

learning a new language. We did not have opportunity to follow through on this potential benefit, but through anecdotal evidence gathered from trainee e-mails regarding the OJT assignments we could see that the partners did appreciate the language-learning efforts of the trainees and, in some cases, were working to assist them in their efforts.

Other than the quantitative data available in the course evaluations, the primary methods of evaluation for these courses were descriptive in nature. Administering the TOEIC to the trainees after the courses would have provided additional data to inform results. However, since the test was primarily used for initial placement purposes, and since this possibility was cost-prohibitive for the company, the ELP decided that pursuing the future use of TOEIC for pre- and postassessment was not a requirement.

Conclusion

Preparing and implementing these courses afforded our ELP the opportunity to learn and adapt our procedures for better service. In summary, an outline of the basic lessons gleaned from the process is included in Appendix I. Reflection on the experience underscored our initial sense of success. Even though certain characteristics of the particular situation created challenges in course development, the evaluations and the trainees' progress reports affirm that the courses were indeed beneficial. Course evaluation responses clearly demonstrated that the ELP's assessment and selection of course content was accurate, and that the course material was both relevant to the trainees' jobs and useful in their everyday work. Since this was a primary goal of the course-development process, we counted this as a strong indicator of success. In addition, progress reports from all three courses revealed notable improvement, significant especially for trainees who were able to consistently attend the sessions. Finally, an obvious sign of success was that the ELP was retained to provide further language training for the

company, a positive sign that the benefits of the training were recognized by all stakeholders. Comments from course evaluations and research from the assessments continued to inform our further work with the company as its language-learning provider.

Authors

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Appendix A Questionnaire for English-Speaking Partners

English Language and Culture Institute *Questionnaire for English-speaking Partners*

English Language Needs Assessment of Language-Learning Partners

1. Following is a list of tasks. In your opinion, what tasks do your fellow English language learning colleague(s) need to be able to accomplish in English? Choose the five most important tasks.

- introduce themselves
- introduce others
- instruct others
- give opinions
- give commands
- give presentations
- speak at meetings
- discuss things one to one
- write letters
- write email
- understand discussions at formal meetings

- participate in large group discussions
- show people around places
- take notes at meetings or conferences
- listen to and understand speeches and lectures
- read reports and correspondence
- read newspapers and magazines
- read instruction manuals or technical journals
- engage in small talk
- make a good impression
- make suggestions
- persuade others
- present or discuss offers
- understand presentations
- plan projects
- speak on the phone
- write faxes
- make appointments
- write reports or summaries
- play a role in negotiations

2. If your English language learning colleagues could improve any one aspect of their English language skills, what would it be? (Choose up to three: 1=most important, 2=second most important, etc.)

- Writing
- Reading
- Speaking fluency
- Speaking accuracy
- Listening skills
- Pronunciation

3. Can you think of times at work when you were not able to communicate with a English language learning colleague because of his language skills—instances when you really needed to communicate but couldn't? Describe that (those) time(s).

4. Can you think of times at work when you saw a communication breakdown between a fellow English language learning colleague and another English-speaking colleague? Please describe that (those) time(s).

5. Are there any other issues related to English-language ability—issues that affect job performance and communication at work—that you would like to see addressed in English-language classes?

6. Are there any issues related to cross-cultur-

al communication—especially cultural differences that interfere with work communication—that you would like to see addressed in English-language classes?

7. Please share with us any other comments or suggestions that you may have concerning plans for the upcoming English language courses.

8. How often do you communicate with English language learning colleagues at work?

- Every hour of every day
- Every day
- Every two days
- Once or twice a week
- Bimonthly
- Monthly

Appendix B Trainees' Needs Assessment Questionnaire

English Language and Culture Institute
Survey for English Language Learners
English Language Needs Assessment

Part A: English Needs at Work

1. Following is a list of tasks. What kinds of tasks do you need English for? (Choose the five most important: 1=most important, 2=second most important, etc.)

- introduce myself
- engage in small talk
- introduce others
- make a good impression
- instruct others
- make suggestions
- give opinions
- persuade others
- give presentations
- understand presentations
- speak at meetings
- plan projects
- discuss things one to one
- speak on the phone
- write letters
- write faxes
- write email
- make appointments
- understand discussions at formal meetings

- write reports or summaries
- participate in large group discussions
- play a role in negotiations
- present or discuss offers
- show people around places
- take notes at meetings or conferences
- listen to and understand speeches and lectures
- read reports and correspondence
- read newspapers and magazines
- read instruction manuals or technical journals

2. What is the most important use of your English in the near future?
3. If you could improve any one aspect of your English, what would it be? (Choose up to three: 1=most important, 2=second most important, etc.)

- Writing
- Reading
- Speaking fluency
- Speaking accuracy
- Listening skills
- Pronunciation

4. Can you think of a time at work when you were not able to communicate because of your language skills—a time when you really needed to communicate but couldn't? Describe that time.
5. What phrase most describes your feeling about your need for English at your job?

- not really necessary
- would be useful
- is fairly necessary
- absolutely vital

Part B: Job Information

6. What is your job title?
7. What is your division?
8. Describe your general job responsibilities.
9. What are your main daily tasks?
10. To whom are you responsible?
11. Do you deal mainly with colleagues from your home country, English-speaking colleagues, or both?
12. At work, with whom do you need to communicate in English? (boss, clients, customers, colleagues, suppliers, trainees, staff, etc.)

13. Who would you say is the most important person you will need to speak to in English?

Part C: Language Learning Information

14. What was the last English training course you attended and when did you complete it?
15. What English-speaking countries have you visited?
16. Before you moved to the US for this job assignment, how many times had you been in the United States?
17. In your first language, do you speak very quickly or very slowly?

Part D: Personal Interests

18. What kinds of things do you enjoy talking about? (for example, business, politics, sports, people, music, travel, etc.)
19. What things do you know a lot about?
20. If you had to give a short speech on any topic, what topic would you choose?

(Survey adapted from Pauleen, 1990, as cited in Hull, 1996.)

Appendix C
Sample Activity 1

This task is based on an audio recording of an intracompany meeting. Names have been changed.

Listening Activity: Listen to the first minutes of a meeting. Identify the strategies the speaker uses to ask/give opinions, ask for clarification, and make suggestions.

In your opinion, uh, let's say ... do we have ... ?

Let's say we have ...

Why don't we just go with ...

Do you agree with that?

Well, what's Joe's opinion?

So, why don't we keep ... so let's not ...

I agree, and I think ...

So you're asking me to do what now?

No, I don't think there's a conflict with that.

Let's go ahead ...

Appendix D Sample Activity 2

This task is a role-playing exercise based on information from several intracompany documents. Specifics from documents have been changed, but the basic nature of each role-play remains.

Giving Instructions Role-Plays: Read the following situations. Imagine the conversation that would take place and practice them together in partners. Take turns being the instruction-giver and the instruction-receiver. Note what language you use for group discussion to follow.

1. You are checking the work of an employee on the line. The employee is working on the task described on the attached page (authentic document attached). You check the quality of the tightness of the part he/she has attached, and you see that it should be different. Pretend your partner is the new employee, and correct him/her.
2. You are checking the work of the same employee. You see that he/she is moving a part incorrectly based on the instructions on the attached page. Pretend your partner is the new employee, and correct him/her.
3. You see a new employee take off his/her safety equipment while in the work area. You know that this is against company safety policy. Pretend your partner is the new employee, and tell him/her what to do. (Partner: make up an excuse for why you took it off to further the conversation).
4. There is a chemical spill, and a new employee starts to go get some paper towels to clean it up. You know that this is not the policy for handling chemical spills. What do you say? Pretend your partner is the new employee, stop him/her, and respond to him/her.
5. Your co-worker is clearly misunderstanding the directions for reporting a problem. Give him/her the correct instructions without sounding bossy. Pretend your partner is your co-worker, and respond to him/her.

Appendix E Sample Activity 3

This task is a role-playing exercise. Although not based on specific authentic materials, it provides realistic workplace situations for practice.

Agreement/Disagreement Conversation Practice: Work with a partner. One person will be "A" and the other person will be "B." There are three situations. Remember to use the language for agreeing and disagreeing as well as softeners.

- 1a. You think that working overtime is a bad idea because associates are tired and do not work well if they are always working extra hours.
- 1b. You think that working overtime is a good thing because this is a busy time of year and there is a lot of work to finish.
- 2a. There is an important meeting at 3:00 p.m. You know that the meeting time is 3:00 because the boss just told you. Your associate thinks the meeting is at 3:30. Disagree.
- 2b. There is an important meeting today. You think it is at 3:30. Tell your associate that the meeting is at 3:30.
- 3a. You think the cafeteria food is terrible. Tell your associate.
- 3b. You think the cafeteria food is ok. It's not great, but you eat it sometimes. Your associate thinks it is really bad food. Disagree with him.

Appendix F Sample Activity 4

This role-playing task is based on information we learned during the course about the kinds of meetings and negotiation that trainees were expected to participate in. It was adapted from a business English text (reference below). Specific information about the company has been replaced.

A Negotiation

The Situation

The company has decided to shut down its factory in Sweden and relocate to Hong Kong. A meeting has been called between manage-

ment and employee representatives to decide how best to complete the closure. First, work in your own group. Decide on what you want to say. Then, we will have the meeting.

Group A

You represent the management. You want to emphasize the following points:

- the factory has been running at a loss for two years
- older workers are being offered a generous early-retirement package
- younger workers are being offered one month's salary
- the company is allocating money for retraining
- managers are also losing their jobs
- the offer is already in excess of what is required by Swedish law

Group B

You represent the employees of the company's Swedish factory. You want to emphasize the following points:

- the factory has made a slight profit in the last quarter
- the company provides work for 50% of the local community
- Most of the workers have been there for over 10 years and should receive more than one month's salary
- A lot of the managers who are losing their jobs have been given jobs in other parts of the company

Chairperson

You are the chair of the meeting. Decide how to conduct the meeting so that everyone has a chance to speak. Can you predict any problems? What are you going to do?

(Adapted from Jamall & Wade, 2000.)

Appendix G
Language Cards to Accompany Sample Activity 3

<p>Ask for more information</p> <p>Could you give us some details about ...?</p>	<p>Make a suggestion</p> <p>Let's ...</p>
<p>Ask for an opinion</p> <p>_____, how about you? Name</p>	<p>Ask for an opinion</p> <p>What do you think, _____? Name</p>
<p>Make a suggestion</p> <p>What about ...</p>	<p>Give an opinion</p> <p>I think ...</p>
<p>Make a suggestion</p> <p>Why don't we/you ...</p>	<p>Ask for an opinion</p> <p>_____, what do you think? Name</p>
<p>Disagree</p> <p>Yes, but what about ...</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Yeah, I agree ...</p>

<p>Make a suggestion</p> <p>I think you had better ...</p>	<p>Give an opinion</p> <p>I think we/you should</p>
<p>Disagree</p> <p>I see your point, but ...</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>I like that idea.</p>
<p>Disagree</p> <p>Yes, but ...</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>I think so too ...</p>
<p>Give an opinion</p> <p>I think you should ...</p>	<p>Make a suggestion</p> <p>We/you should ...</p>
<p>Give an opinion</p> <p>In my opinion, ...</p>	<p>Disagree</p> <p>I'm afraid I don't think that's the best idea ...</p>
<p>Disagree (strong)</p> <p>I completely disagree!</p>	<p>Give an opinion</p> <p>It seems to me that ...</p>
<p>Offer</p> <p>I/we would be happy to ...</p>	<p>Request</p> <p>_____, could you ... please? Name</p>
<p>Offer</p> <p>I/we can help with that.</p>	<p>Offer</p> <p>Would you like me to ...?</p>
<p>Request</p> <p>Could you ...?</p>	<p>Request</p> <p>Would it be possible to ...?</p>
<p>Request</p> <p>Would you mind + <i>verb</i> + <i>ing</i> ...?</p>	<p>Ask for more information</p> <p>Could you expand on that?</p>

Play for time That's a very interesting question.	Play for time That's a difficult question to answer.
Say nothing I'm afraid I'm not in a position to comment on that now.	Say nothing I can't really discuss that at this point.
Interrupt!	Disagree Yes, but what about ...
Answer a question Let me answer that ...	Answer a question I think I can address that question.

Appendix H Course Evaluation Form

Course Evaluations: English language training sessions

Part A: Please circle the number that corresponds with your opinion about the question.

- 4—Strongly agree
- 3—Agree
- 2—Disagree
- 1—Strongly disagree
- 0—No opinion

1. The entire course was organized and presented in a professional manner. 4 3 2 1 0
2. All of the training topics/materials related to my work. 4 3 2 1 0
3. The training materials were useful and easy to understand. 4 3 2 1 0
4. The atmosphere of the training was comfortable and helpful to learning. 4 3 2 1 0
5. The teacher was well prepared. 4 3 2 1 0

6. I understood the teaching and the materials. 4 3 2 1 0

Part B: Please answer the questions completely. Answer in English or in your first language.

7. What things about the teaching were most helpful to you?
8. How could the teacher have helped you more?
9. What was the most useful thing you learned in training?
10. What was the least useful thing you learned in training?
11. What was the best thing about the training?
12. What was the least satisfactory thing about the training?
13. What improvements would you suggest for future courses?
14. Was the course worth your time and effort? Explain.
15. How do you plan to continue to advance your English language ability after this course?
16. In general, what would you like to say about your experience in this course, the teacher, and/or what you learned?

Appendix I

Action Points

This is not a comprehensive list; rather, these action points highlight some of the most salient lessons we learned through the process of providing the courses. For further guidelines on designing and implementing workplace English programs, refer to Effective Practices in Workplace English Training (Friedenberg et al., 2003).

Needs Assessment

Request documents in English that workers commonly encounter.
Request access to any audio/video/visual resources.
Gather input from English-speaking employees in the same company.
Distribute needs-assessment questionnaires to the language learners.
Consider administering a standardized test.
Conduct oral interviews with each trainee to determine final level.

Course Design and Implementation

Be clear about course objectives to all stakeholders.
Design as many activities as possible using authentic materials.

For all other course materials, whether created or adapted, strive to make content as relevant to the workplace as possible.

Be aware that although some trainees will be very consistent in attendance, some may be unable to participate regularly because of job responsibilities.

Keep your company representative informed of the progress of the courses.

Establish clear procedures for how to manage any unforeseen changes or events.

Evaluation

Identify the definitions of success for your courses.

Create a course evaluation that includes information needed by the ELP, the teacher, and/or the company.

Translate the course evaluation forms into the L1, if working with a homogenous group, and allow them to complete them in their L1 if desired.

Conduct postcourse debriefings, one with your company representative, and one with ELP personnel involved with the project.

Provide individual progress reports on trainees to the company in a usable format.