AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF IT ENGLISH FOR ESL STUDENTS

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Abstract

All students have objectives when taking an English class, but this is especially true of IT English students. Whether their objective is set by their working place or by themselves, it commonly involves learning the English they need to get ahead at work, connect with international clients, earn more money or maybe even keep their job. How is teaching IT English differs from teaching general English? Learning vocabulary for the work context is the number one priority for many ESL learners in IT English classes. One might be thinking, "But teaching IT English classes requires special qualifications, doesn't it?" It helps them to communicate their message in a simple, effective way. This makes it important to teach common words and set expressions for everyday work situations. In order to achieve these goals, they need specific types of knowledge. Whatever it is, students will not be successful unless the teacher focus on what they need to know. Many teachers of English as a foreign language feel intimidated by the prospect of teaching IT English. This often stems from the perception that teaching IT English is the same thing as teaching IT studies. In fact, it's more about helping learners develop their English skills for use in an IT context. The demand for English teachers in the IT world is high, and if one knows how to teach English at all, he can fill that demand at ease. It is highly possible to have lively and effective classes using the wide range of vocabulary and excellent comprehension. All in all, IT English teaching can be very fascinating and rewarding. Although teaching ESL students requires a variety of skills and techniques, it mostly boils down to good preparation and a professional approach. Armed with really good knowledge, the IT English class will not only be a great learning experience and fun for students, but it will be pleasure for teacher as well.

Keywords: information technology, IT English, tips for teaching IT English, IT for ESL students, how to teach IT English, selection of materials and sources for IT English, classroom activities, how to boost vocabulary.

INTRODUCTION

So how let us think how can we help these students to develop their communication skills for the international workplace?

Hereby I am offering seven top tips for enhancing IT English lessons.

1. Find out what students really want to achieve

You'll be instructing active grown-up students who are going towards achieving the goals. You ought obviously talk about at the starting of the course what they would practically like to attain. This more often breaking things down into such abilities as: information systems, database management, the Internet and the World Wide Web, online communication and security, etc. Teachers ought to offer assistance set for these destinations by analyzing desires of the learners early on. This 'needs analysis' can at that point be shared with the learners and alluded to as a way of keeping them engaged in and stay motivated all through the

course.

2. Get a clear idea about the contexts

A critical part of the needs analysis ought to be a discussion about the context of the course: Why are they learning IT English? Who do they communicate with in their work and under what conditions? Someone who is learning English just to brush up fluency skills will have different needs and expectations to someone who is learning English to supervise a team working in another country. We ought to too keep in mind that information technologies is conducted on a worldwide level and there's a solid possibility that your students will be communicating with other non-native speakers. It's a great thought to investigate cross-cultural communication and discover out how individuals from diverse foundations speak IT English. You may find variety choice of resources on the web relating to cross-cultural communication and there are numerous books on the subject.

3. Select materials carefully

As within the common English classroom, learners will anticipate you to bring materials to course. There are parcels of books and online assets accessible, but it's vital to select materials that create 'authentic' circumstances within the classroom. Likely the most important resource is the learners themselves. They can give you with real materials from their working lives - the things they have to be perused and get it, or perhaps indeed make and display. These may well be books, texts, emails, PowerPoint presentations or reports. Learners will likely anticipate you to require a few of these assets and create your claim worksheets from them. This shouldn't be out of the topic materials! Don't forget: concentrate on objectives and needs. Discover out why these assets are important and what your learners need from the lesson. At that point come to a mutual point with them how to meet these needs.

4. Focus on high frequency vocabulary

Learning vocabulary for the work context is the number one priority for many learners of IT English classes. It helps them to communicate their message in a simple, effective and successful way. This makes it vital to educate common words and set expressions for regular work circumstances.

These include:

•**Lexical sets** (words related to the same topic or situation) – for example, database, internet, browser, virtualization, bookmark, biometrics, wearable.

•**Common collocations with verbs and nouns** (for example, Artificial Intelligence, IT Governance, Green Technology, Disruptive Technology, case-sensitive).

•**Functional language and fixed phrases** –offers, queries, authentic dialogues.

> *Can you log me onto the network?*
>
> *Yeah. Do you have a password?*
>
> *No.*
>
> *You'll need to create one first.*

5. Help students with vocabulary learning

Teach vocabulary items in realistic contexts. For example, phone calls, to-do lists, short emails, text messages etc.

> *Computer help desk.*
>
> *I need your help. I can't log into the system.*
>
> *I can help you with that. You need to hook up your computer. Plug it in and power it up.*
>
> *I've already done all that.*
>
> *So you've turned it on?*
>
> *Yes, it's on. I need you to log me onto the network.*
>
> *You want to get into the system.*
>
> *Yes. I can't get in.*

Then I need you user ID.

It's 46821. Please hurry up because I've got a conference call starting in five minutes.

OK. I just sent you a link.

Really?

Click on the link and then scroll down.

Ah. A message just popped up.

What does it say?

'Are you a robot?' It wants me to type two words in a little box.

Oh. Are you a robot?

No, of course not!

Sometimes robots try to hack into our system.

I'm a human being!

Then just put in the words. Key them in.

It's impossible. I can't read them.

Sorry then. I can't help you.

Why not?

You're a robot.

I'm not a robot. It's impossible to read these words.

Sorry, I can't help robots. Bye.

Ah well. Mission failed. Mission failed. Mission fail. Mission fail. Mission fail. Mission…

While it might be tempting to give students lots of vocabulary to memorize, this can cause overload, be frustrating and ultimately demotivating for learners. Instead, you should aim to present ten to twenty new vocabularies in each lesson as a general rule. Typically it is an achievable number for working memory and helps to build learners' confidence and boost vocabulary. The number of words can be a little more if items are easy to show in images or there is repetition.

Have students make simple decisions about new words, as this helps with recall later. Start with simple tasks, such as matching words and pictures or verb and noun collocations they've seen in a short text (for example, manage a team, call customers, or making a dialogue at front office). Next, ask students to complete sentences using the target words. Then write their own sentences using these words.

Getting students to personalize new vocabulary also makes it more memorable, for instance writing sentences describing their own work routines or making dialogues with their peers Repetition also aids long-term memory, so make sure that new material is recycled in later lessons.

And for the last, make a list of vocabulary games to use for revision exercises, warmers and to wrap up classes.

6. Maximize student speaking time

Learners need to develop their speaking skills for their future work. The classroom is a safe, low-stakes environment for them to gain fluency and confidence.

Try to use the audio and video scripts of short authentic dialogues or an extract from a longer script. Students read the dialogue aloud in pairs or groups. Give feedback by drilling the stress and rhythm of any words or phrases which were difficult with the whole class. Back chaining phrases – starting with the last sound and building up going backwards – is a good way to drill. Get students to swap roles and repeat the task.

You can also use another technique called disappearing dialogue. Put a short dialogue on the board for students to practice in pairs. Then delete parts of the dialogue and ask them to repeat the task, swapping

roles each time. Gradually delete more parts to increase the challenge. Students can reconstruct the dialogue as a final task.

Moreover, surveys, questionnaires, true/false games, information-gap exercises are all ways to practice speaking skills as well as target structures and vocabulary.

Use role plays to practice work skills and functional language. Give learners plenty of time to prepare and write down what they want to say. In a customer conversation role play, put students back to back to increase the challenge and add an element of authenticity. If they can call each other on their mobile phones from separate rooms, it would be even better.

Another great source of discussion topics are controversial subjects. If you are teaching students in the information technology field you can discuss the role of robots in the workplace and their influence on human employment in the future or Internet security/freedom. Hold open class discussions or debates.

If you find some students to be too shy to speak in the front of the class, break them into groups, give them a problem to solve and then bring the class back together. The shy person may not speak in the presentation of ideas session, but they had to speak in their group.

Having class discussions means that you may have to be flexible and go off your lesson plan. Some discussions may last longer than you planned, and some not as long as you had hoped for, but it is the perfect way to ensure that everyone gets a chance to talk.

Similarly, with presentations (for example, introducing your company or your job obligations), give students time to prepare and rehearse. Then you can correct them and give feedback or they could rehearse and film themselves at home and show the final video in the next class.

7. Practice work skills your students need

Students are much more engaged and motivated when the lesson substance is relevant to regular circumstances. Work skills they need to practice include daily life dialogues, working with customers, telephone talks, socializing and giving presentations.

Writing skills are not less important. It may include formal and informal text messages, simple forms, less formal emails to colleagues (e.g. to update on work) and more formal emails to clients (e.g. replying to a simple enquiry).

Make it clear at the start of the class what students will be doing in the lesson. You can refer to the lesson outcome on the course book page or write the lesson outcome in your own words on the whiteboard. For instance, "*Today we will talk about Information Systems*". Start the lesson with the several questions about the topic and you may show the related pictures and check their knowledge about the subject of the lesson. For example,

> *A Discussion Starter*
>
> *What is an information system?*
>
> *Why do we need information systems?*
>
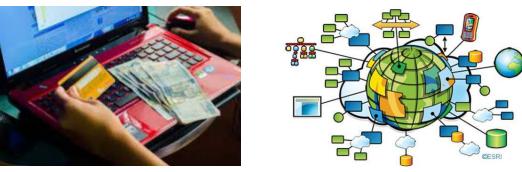> *Who uses information systems in a typical organization?*
>
> *Identify several types of information systems on the images below and describe the purpose*

Picture A.   Picture B.

Picture C.

Picture D.

After discussion of the new topic and the relevant pictures, you may give short definition of the topic as following.

> *"Information systems (IS) are combinations of hardware, software, and telecommunications networks that people build and use to collect, create, and distribute useful data, typically in organizational settings."*

Then give more brief material which includes all necessary information about the relevant topic.

The Components of Information Systems

Information systems are made up of five components that interact to generate information needed by the users in an organization: hardware, software, data, people, and process.

The first three components of information systems – hardware, software, and data –all fall under the category of technology which can be thought of as the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes.

Hardware

Information systems hardware is the part of an information system you can touch – the physical components of the technology. Computers, keyboards, disk drives, iPads, and flash drives are all examples of information systems hardware.

Software

Software is a set of instructions that tells the hardware what to do. Software is not tangible – it cannot be touched. When programmers create software programs, what they are really doing is simply typing out lists of instructions that tell the hardware what to do. There are several categories of software, with the two main categories being operating-system software, which makes the hardware usable, and application software, which does something useful. Examples of operating systems include Microsoft Windows on a personal computer and Google's Android on a mobile phone. Examples of application software are Microsoft Excel and Angry Birds.

Data

The third component is data. You can think of data as a collection of facts. For example, your street address, the city you live in, and your phone number are all pieces of data. Like software, data is also intangible. By themselves, pieces of data are not really very useful. But aggregated, indexed, and organized together into a database, data can become a powerful tool for businesses.

Besides the components of hardware, software, and data, which have long been considered the core technology of information systems, it has been suggested that one other component should be added: communication. An information system can exist without the ability to communicate – the first personal computers were stand-alone machines that did not access the Internet. However, in today's hyper-connected world, it is an extremely rare computer that does not connect to another device or to a network. Technically, the networking communication component is made up of hardware and software, but it is such a core feature of today's information systems that it has become its own category.

At the end of the class, ask students to respond to the questions.

1. What is the role of each component in an organization?

2. What does the effectiveness of IS depend on?

3. What is application software?

4. What spheres of life can systems exist in?

5. Could you give examples of IS?

This is a reminder of the purpose of the lesson. It also helps the students and teachers to reflect on the progress they are making.

Finally, as a home assignment you may give the following:

Research the theme "Benefits of using information systems".

Prepare an essay or make a presentation in class revealing the main issues of the topic with a couple of specific examples.

CONCLUSION

These are just a few tips and techniques for teaching IT English for work to ESL students. It's especially important for these students to start simple, recycle language often and build their confidence in their language learning abilities.

There are various materials, resources, books and online sites which helps adult learners to develop key work skills and improve their knowledge of the IT English language. The content offers practical training in how to communicate simply and effectively in a range of everyday work situations. Try to bring in interesting resources, such as current information technology magazines, podcasts about industry topics, or videos of market news reports, in order to diversify your activities. If teaching online, you can easily screen share things like news articles and videos with your students.

IT English teaching can be very interesting and rewarding. Although teaching the students whose second language is English requires a variety of skills and techniques, it mostly boils down to good preparation and a professional approach.

So, there you have several steps how to conduct IT ENGLISH lessons and collaborate with students and enhance their knowledge in a relevant field. The next time you encounter the words, "you are teaching an IT English class," you will not go weak at the knees.

Armed with these seven pieces of knowledge, the next IT English class you teach will not only be a great learning experience and fun for your students, but it will be pleasure for you as well.

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