
Teaching Business English To Japanese Undergraduates: A Culturally Sensitive Approach

SABRINA MALLON-GERLAND

Abstract

Commercial Business English course books appear to be inappropriate for Japanese undergraduate students. These books were written with European middle management work culture and practices in mind, which are far removed from the needs of pre-service Japanese learners of Business English. By adopting a culturally sensitive approach to materials development, teachers at Japanese universities can address their students' needs appropriately. This paper will show how teachers at NUCB were able to induce higher levels of class interaction and a better understanding of language used for business by simulating work related activities.

Keywords: Business English, teaching methodology, culture, second language acquisition

Introduction

According to Bargiela-Chiappini and Zhang (2013), Business English materials and course books, which have been written with a western ideology in mind, may not fit local contexts. In their article they present a case study of Japan's approach to teaching Business English at a business school. In this study, they demonstrate that Japanese Business English is influenced by cultural values for social interactions, which often differ from western societies. The point these two scholars make is that Business English teaching content and constructs should be driven more by research that helps educators and writers recognize that conventional teaching materials need to be adjusted to the local contexts. But most importantly, they argue for a deeper view of Business English that considers local ideologies, practices, systems of thinking and values. In their view, the problem is that these points go unacknowledged by learners and teachers when they "buy into the 'Business English offer' as a package" defined and developed according to US American and British models of management.

This paper aims to add to this discussion by explaining some of the ideological underpinnings of the Japanese cultural context, which Bargiela-Chiappini and Zhang have not outlined. We will see what sorts of challenges and needs western teachers face when teaching Business English at Japanese universities. The aim is to show in which way western Business English course books and materials may be inappropriate for Japanese undergraduate students. And finally, suggestions for teaching Business English in this context will be presented. The suggestions proposed here were implemented at Nagoya University of Commerce and Business (henceforth NUCB), a private Japanese institution. Due to the mission statement changes that took place in 2013, whereby the curriculum should focus on leadership, communication and

employability skills, the Business English program for Communication and Business majors underwent specific changes. Previously, “Market Leader”, a commercial Business English textbook was used for all three years of this subject. It was decided that a new culturally sensitive approach to Business English should be taken. The purpose of this paper is to report on this project.

Japanese universities offering business and commerce courses of studies normally include Business English as a part of their program. Taught over a period of three years, Business English is in fact a mandatory course at NUCB. This particular course is especially important for communication majors since their study focus is English. At this department 60% of the courses the students attend are taught in English by foreign instructors from a variety of countries.

When I arrived at NUCB a year ago, my job was to coordinate the Business English courses: a duty given to me based on my 20-year experience teaching Business English in-company and at universities in Europe. When I began working, the dean informed me that the Business English program was very important and needed to be improved. On the first day of my job, I was surprised to learn that this university had been using “Market Leader”, and that they expected me to teach from it. It is a popular textbook in Europe, but one that I feel is inappropriate for undergraduate students with little, if any business experience. After only a month of teaching, my beliefs were confirmed: students had problems relating to and learning from the course book.

Written by British or American authors, most Business English books are aimed at the needs of Western working professionals. These books cover the most current business scenarios embedded in authentic case studies, recorded interviews, staged office interactions, and newspaper clippings that deal with the challenges of working in a globalized business world. Role-play and work simulated activities are closely aligned to real life practices. With the plethora of materials to choose from, English language teachers are practically never at want. In spite of these materials, teaching undergraduates can be quite challenging simply because the average student lacks the required experience that enables them to fully relate to the materials. This problem could not be more pronounced when teaching Japanese undergraduates.

Undergraduates in Japan generally lack the communication skills needed for Business English practice activities. In addition, the activities in these books assume students enjoy a dyadic, individualistic approach to discussions, or competitive decision making negotiations. Moreover, these books are geared towards the challenges of Western work culture where employees are assessed and promoted as a result of their actions, and not their seniority and where individual thought is valued and expected. For Western teachers in Japan, these materials are more a hindrance than a valuable resource. And, in my experience, students are left confused and unimpressed by the end of the semester, while teachers are frustrated.

In this paper I will explain why these materials offered to educational institutes are culturally insensitive to Japanese learners of English, especially university undergrads. I will then suggest an approach and materials that have, in the meantime, been developed as a result of the named difficulties. However, first I will present background information that helps explain why Japanese students have difficulties learning English. I will then discuss the weaknesses of current commercial Business English materials and finally I will discuss the kind of materials that were developed at NUCB to address these problems.

EFL in Japan

By the time Japanese youngsters graduate from secondary school they will have studied English for six years. In spite of these years of intensive language study, when Japanese students begin studies at a university, not only are they barely able to express themselves in English, they are also unable to understand spoken English. While the Western approach to English foreign language learning focuses on communication skills, Japanese schools are more concerned with testable content such as grammar, vocabulary and trans-

lation. According to Lee (2011), the poor English communication skills is the result of an exam-centered educational focus in Japan's secondary schools, in spite of the MEXT¹ goals that strive for 'internationalization'. The Japanese definition of *kokusaika*, or 'internationalization' refers to a society of people able to speak foreign languages with the aim to communicate with foreigners via the world lingua franca, English (Lee, 2011). Much of the debate surrounding MEXT's school reforms concerns the issue that Japanese students rank lowest in terms of English language ability, especially with communication skills. In Lee's (2011) article three main factors are considered to be responsible for this state of affairs: Japanese philosophy of education, Japanese socialization and Japanese teaching approaches (Lee, 2011).

Stapleton (1995) writes that the philosophy of social order is built on the principles of Confucianism, a Chinese worldview imported to Japan in the 4th century. According to Stapleton (1995), these principles can be found to operate in Japanese schools and that these may stand in the way of adopting a communicative approach to language teaching. The main tenets of Confucian principles are: know your place in society, learn to be satisfied with it, and work and study hard. Moreover, all problems in life can be eradicated if members of society put these beliefs into action. To attain social harmony, children should love and respect their parents, citizens should obey their rulers, and friends and business partners treat each other with mutual respect. As a result of these beliefs, a horizontal hierarchy based on age and social status is expressed in education when students quietly listen, watch and emulate their teachers. Asking the teacher questions is an unheard of behavior. According to the ideals of Confucius, comprehension is the responsibility of the listener, not the speaker. If a student does not understand the teacher, this is a sign of laziness or disrespect. Hence, students are not socialized to discuss issues with their teachers, as the *senpai-kohai* system dictates.

The *senpai* is the elder who mentors the *kohai*, or the younger mentoree, a system that transverses all areas of Japanese life (McVeigh, 2002). The *kohai* is expected to remain submissive but also learn to emulate the *senpai*, hence learn to do things the 'right way'. This socializing system can even be observed in the English language classroom. In my third year Business English class, one student remained silent and inactive during all group work activities, in spite of the course requirement of participation. And, taking a submissive body stance of hunched shoulders, lowered head and hands in his lap, he would avoid all eye contact with his group members. I did not know that he was a first year student, who due to his exceptionally high TOEIC score, was placed in a Business English class for third year students. The university felt he was too strong for the first year classes and should be made to learn from third year students. By entering this context, the *senpai-kohai* system was put into action, hence causing this student to remain silent for an entire semester. In general, the most knowledgeable or skilled person in a particular context will become the *senpai* by default and be expected to take charge of an activity and communicate for others.

Discovery through dialog, a typical method used by western teachers, as a means to develop rational thought through critical thinking, is not considered to be an educational tool in Japan. Consequently, language learning via the communicative approach tends not to be considered an appropriate mode of education. According to Lee (2011), English tends to be taught through the grammar-translation method, in which the teacher lectures in Japanese about English grammar and vocabulary. For this reason prior to admittance to university, the likelihood that students will have heard spoken English during high school is low (Hadley, 1997; McVeigh, 2002; Lee, 2011). It is therefore not surprising that Japanese students have difficulties understanding and communicating in English, at the start of their tertiary studies.

To a Western trained EFL teacher the grammar-translation method is considered to be an ill-advised means for the teaching of speaking skills. However, this approach is the means for preparing students in

¹ MEXT stands for Ministry of Education, Sports, Science and Technology. This governmentally run body is responsible for Japan's school policies in terms of curriculum and educational goals.

Japan to pass the university entrance exam (Hadley, 1997; McVeigh, 2002; 2005; Tatsumoto, 2012). Lee (2011) explains that examinations fulfill Confucian principles of learning through memorization, and hard work through study. Moreover, exams ensure social harmony by diminishing classroom competition and downplaying differences in opinion (Stapleton, 1995). Consequently, written exams are believed to support the ethical values of conformity, equality and diligence (Hadley, 1997).

Further to the points raised in this section is the general negative attitude held by Japanese society towards learning to speak English. Prior to the Meiji Period (1868–1912) few scholars were permitted to study foreign languages. *Kotodama*, the Japanese belief that a culture's spirit lies hidden in a language, was responsible for the Emperor's desire to keep citizens from being corrupted by foreign ideas (Hadley, 1997). During the Meiji Period and after, considerable effort was put into encouraging foreign language acquisition; however, this archaic belief still persists in Modern Japan. Some of my students have disclosed their fear of becoming even moderately fluent in English because this may cause them to "lose their Japanese purity" or even their culture. It is also interesting to note that, those individuals with high English language fluency, prefer to keep this skill to themselves as a way to avoid being perceived unfavorably by colleagues and employers, alike.

Tatsumoto (2012) characterizes the Japanese learning environment as unsupportive. She blames the lack of motivation to learn English on student low expectancy of success. Because education in Japan is teacher-centered and exam focused, students are expected to learn copious amounts of facts in a short period of time. Tatsumoto explains that a large number of students are not able to keep up with the learning agenda set by MEXT, which also causes many to simply give up trying. And because teachers are under pressure to complete the governmentally dictated program, they tend to be frustrated and ill-equipped to help students. From interviews, Tatsumoto found that a significant amount of students lost any motivation to learn English simply because their teachers were inconsiderate towards them when their learning pace was not as expected.

Finally, the role of university in Japan affects how students approach learning English at that stage in their lives. Like universities anywhere in the world, this period of time in a student's life is meant to give them space to grow up. However, the difference between Japan and the West is significant in this respect. Japanese high school students are not given much room for individual development. Their school life is highly regimented in terms of the amount of hours they must invest to pass their exams. Because they should learn from their teachers, they are also not given much space to experiment or discover their own strengths and abilities. The result is immaturity, which has been described as the greatest weakness of the Japanese school system (McVeigh, 2002). However, this is a view held by Western teachers who expect students to be independent thinkers by the time they enter university. Norris-Holt (2002) explains that Western students first learn to be responsible in high school, then at university they are expected to learn to deal with and adhere to social expectations. In Japan the reverse is true: students first learn to understand and deal with social expectations, then they learn to deal with personal responsibility. This means that youngsters learn the value of uniform thinking as this is considered an appropriate mode for social behavior in a society that puts priority on the collective. The result of this behavior is the inability to form an opinion at this age. In addition, because these students have spent years memorizing copious amounts of dry information with no time to review or relate to it in terms of what it all means, their view of the world is limited (McVeigh, 2002).

Bored students is nothing new to teachers, no matter where in the world they teach. However, one of the by-products of the Japanese tendency to overload and rush students through mountains of schoolwork, combined with little time for personal discovery, appears to cause a lack of motivation and underperformance (Tatsumoto, 2012). Since many believe they will not really need English in their future, a view that is based on a lack of understanding of the world, they under-perform. When students become bored it is

not unusual for them to put their heads down on the desk and sleep. During my first year at NUCB I witnessed this behavior in every class, on every day that I taught. The situation is so common that colleagues give each other tips on how to wake their sleeping students.

Another reason for sleepy students is simply a lack of sleep. Besides going to class each day, working part-time is one of the other rites of passage in Japan (Norris-Holt, 2002). Companies are more interested in students who take on jobs, or who are members of the many social clubs on campus. Class, homework and study time combined with a 30-hour workweek, or the demands of club activity means students tend not to sleep much. Hence, if students have difficulties following the course content and the teacher's English, a class with sleepy students is not surprising.

Although these students need to learn about culture and communication, business ethics, marketing, and the like, which are found in generic Business English books, these topics should be adjusted to learners who are learning about these topics for the very first time. Japanese undergraduates require a view to the world of business and the challenges of Business English relevant to their lives. Moreover, course materials should be interesting and interactive to allow students to learn how to form and give opinions. However, the English used should be left at the most basic level to allow students to feel they can manage the challenge of using a foreign language for the first time in their lives. Tasks should be culturally aligned so that students feel comfortable in a new classroom reality.

If these changes are not attempted, students are at risk of losing interest and motivation to learn language skills they will most certainly need in the future.

Business English

According to Ellis and Johnson (1994), Business English should be seen as belonging to the realm of English for Special Purposes (ESP) because it shares the same identifying elements specific to this area of language learning. These include: needs analysis, syllabus design, course design, materials selection and development. However, the difference between the two is the mix of specific content. For example, Business English will more likely focus on communication skills that support work contexts, e.g., meetings, negotiations, presentations, as well as generic vocabulary. ESP, on the other hand, tends to be more specific with regard to lexis needed for a particular industry, e.g., hospitality, legal professions, engineering, etc.

Paltridge and Starfield (2013) claim that although Business English means different things to different people, it is commonly viewed as the language used in international work or business contexts. Learners and teachers may see it as vocabulary needed for routine work situations, communication skills and an understanding of cultural differences.

In general, there are three categories of Business English education contexts, which give reference to the type of students: the tertiary, adult, and corporate contexts (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). In the tertiary education context, students are in general pre-service workers who study English as an additional skill for their future career. In the adult education context, learners have work experience and attend a Business English course at a language school in order to carry out specific work tasks, or to acquire an additional skill. While the tertiary education context is academic in nature, the adult education context tends not to be. Finally, the corporate education context focuses on company specific needs and topics for employee training. As part of the NUCB International Communication major, Business English is a mandatory subject that students study for two years. Advanced Business English is offered as an elective.

It has been pointed out that Japan's students have a solid grammar and vocabulary background but are unable to use the language orally. University professors and instructors are therefore interested in finding ways to help their students master verbal skills needed for communication. One suggestion is the use of a task-based approach. Mojibur-Rahmen (2010) refers to task as a "workplan", which should ideally include

(1) learner input to be processed and used; and, (2) instructions for learners to follow and outcomes they should achieve.

Tasks are important because, as Willis (1996) points out, they give students the opportunity to build confidence by allowing them to engage in linguistic interaction and to experiment with various communication strategies. In this way, students can begin to view language beyond the sentence level so typical to learning materials that focus solely on grammar. Deepa (2012) warns of the adverse outcomes if the series of activities are irrelevant, do not appear to be linked, nor have well defined goals and objectives. She also finds it important that the processes underlying the activities should be well thought through, and that the criteria for assessment need to be valid. If these items are not well planned the tasks lose meaning to the students, thus diminishing the intended learning effects.

Studies support the positive effects of a task-based syllabus (Deepa, 2012; Sultana, 2013). These studies found that meaningful communication can be encouraged if students find the tasks relevant to their lives, and allow for creativity in the process of negotiating meaning. Deepa's management students engaged in activities that typify skills needed by individuals who must manage people. Sultana's engineering students engaged in tasks aimed at describing products, and finding solutions to product design problems. In both cases, the tasks were set up so that students learned about relevant topics through interaction with other students.

Tyagi and Kannan (2013) present a case study showing how a teacher used the "project based" learning approach, which allowed students to investigate and learn about real life issues through project work. By "project" the authors mean a thematic activity of which the outcome is the result of completing a sub-set of interrelated tasks. With a highly pro-active approach, students are responsible for researching and processing information, and for the outcomes. An added value of this approach is the opportunity for students to develop leadership skills, responsibility and a sense of community.

Challenge of Commercial Business English Materials

According to St John (1996), Business English is an under researched area of second language acquisition that has been dominated by a "materials-led" methodology designed and written by authors who were inspired by intuition, or an "informed understanding of business communication" (p. 15). Bargiela-Chiappini and Zhang (2013) argue for more research in the field in order to produce materials that are based on real work situations, and most importantly, fit the local context. In their work, Bargiela-Chiappini and Zhang (2013) inform readers of how different business is considered and taught in Japanese and Chinese business schools. Business English classes include language instruction that follows the Confucian ethics for harmony through vagueness, conflict avoidant behavior and finding a feel for socialness.

The point I argue is that current commercial Business English course books written in the West are inadequate for the following reasons: they are culturally inappropriate in terms of content, the tasks require a high level of linguistic fluency and communicative skills, they assume high levels of maturity, and business experience.

To exemplify how commercial Business English textbooks are over-challenging to Japanese students, I refer to a role-play in which a French salesman is complaining to his new American boss. In this situation, the American boss thinks the salesman should show more accountability by delivering regular reports about his actions. In addition, the boss feels the salesman is spending too much money for the entertainment of clients. The French salesman would prefer to use his sales success as a means of accountability. After the students understand the situation, they should prepare to play the roles of the Frenchman who asks the boss for more autonomy, and to more or less "get off his back". An absurd situation in Japan, this behavior is perceived of as highly inappropriate and rude by Japanese standards. A Japanese employee would never

tell the boss to back off, or even politely ask for autonomy. Even if the teacher decided to use the activity in order to teach students about Western business behavior, the attempt is unlikely to achieve desired results.

Japanese values are said to be “collectivistic”: e.g., group needs override individual ones (Hofstede, 1997). Accordingly, “team players” do not complain or point out deficiencies, nor ask for a raise. In Japan, employees are not “empowered”, and employee opinions are unexpected. Meetings are called to explain decisions, not negotiate them. For this reason, I argue that Business English course books geared towards Western values for management and work practices leave Japanese undergrads confused and uneasy. Teaching from these books does not lead to cultural intelligence; rather they support existing negative stereotypes of the West (e.g., rude, loud, scary). For this reason, undergraduate students generally feel far removed from the middle management activities of Westerners. In my opinion, Japanese students should learn about how business is done around the world; however, Western course materials require a great amount of adjusting and class preparation. Therefore, in the next section I present an approach to teaching Business English that addresses the challenges thus far discussed.

Project Oriented Business English Materials

The underlining principle of the new NUCB Business English curriculum was designed with the following points:

- To deepen basic business knowledge through the medium of English
- To generate interest and motivation to learn English for work contexts
- To create a better understanding of the importance of English in Japanese industry and economy
- To offer opportunities for student responsibility and development of leadership skills
- To offer opportunities to develop student creativity and problem solving skills.

Motivation to learn a second language has been linked to learner attitudes concerning the perceived usefulness of what is being taught (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Therefore, through the simulation of work, the language and activities should appear relevant and realistic in order for students to find them useful and class ultimately, interesting. For this reason, the approach we took involves an extended simulation of work through the allocation of projects and tasks typical to young employees in Japan.

At the beginning of the semester, students “are hired” by a European subsidiary in Japan. The reasoning for choosing a non-Japanese company was to tap into students’ stereotypical expectation that English is learned “to communicate with foreigners”. Japanese students tend to believe that if they work for a Japanese company, they will not be required to communicate in English at work. The realism of the simulation should therefore be ensured. A German company called Zeiss, with an office in Nagoya, was chosen to demonstrate the international nature and global use of English. Students should learn that many more non-natives use English to work and do business than native speakers. The free and ready supply of information available over the Internet was another reason for using a company based in Nagoya. In this way, teachers do not need to invent materials, moreover it adds to the realism of the simulation. It is interesting to note that when students saw the company building near the Fujigaoka subway station, they began to feel a personal connection to Carl Zeiss and the simulation activities.

The activities throughout the work simulation involve projects with tasks young company intakes in a strict hierarchy are likely to engage in. These projects were as follows: team building events, email correspondence, company structure, preparing for overseas visitors, organizing the boss’ overseas business trips, etc. The projects were designed to last over a period of 2 to 4 weeks. Students worked in groups of 3 to 4

students that rotated with each project. As group work is a strong element of Japanese culture, the students were generally very happy with this classroom reality. It offered the weaker students the chance to learn from the stronger ones (e.g., *senpai-kohei*), and reduced the level of stress Japanese students tend to feel about speaking in front of others.

At the beginning of the semester, the students were given the task of planning and carrying out a Team Building Event, which I will describe in detail here. Because Japanese students tend to be excessively shy and exclusive in their relationships, it was necessary to begin with a project that could be used as a vehicle for class cohesion. In project work this step is absolutely necessary for the success of student-centered projects.

The Team Building project requires the coordination of four work groups, each with a different set of tasks. While one group creates all the documentation for the event, (e.g., letters, reports, and photo-documentation), another group researches appropriate problem solving games and then write the instructions for the game. And a third group consisting of the moderators prepares the facilitation of the event. The project lasts three weeks. In the first week students learn about team building; in the second, they plan the event; and in the third week they carry out the event.

During the introduction phase of each work project, students receive a letter and a task list from the boss (see Appendices I and II). Students learn about team building by reading a short text that defines the activity. They also work with a small set of vocabulary needed for the definition and explanation of team building. A dialog between two young employees elucidates further the purpose and implementation of a team building event, followed by a comprehension exercise in which the students can physically carry out the problem-solving activity described in the dialog. The final task in this phase involves Internet research of team-building activities. The students receive a worksheet that includes a YouTube address for an activity called "Missing Chairs", and a form they should fill in while they watch the film. This task should deepen students' understanding of team building. Moreover, it gives students the opportunity to practice using English to give instructions to others, as this is an important part of the project.

The second phase of the project begins in the following week (see Appendix II for the materials). The object is to build the work groups, of which there are four: moderation, documentation, activity and post-activity writing. The work group job descriptions and number of team members needed were written on the board. For this first activity, students were allowed to choose the work group they felt most interested in. Given the degree of shyness, it is important that students feel as comfortable as possible with the job and the people they work with.

Once the work groups are determined, each group receives a work sheet with instructions they should complete before the class is over. To complete the tasks, each work group must meet and discuss their tasks. The moderators need to know the name of the problem-solving activities and post-activity, what it involves and how long these will take in order to prepare their announcements. The documentation group also needs to ask each of the other groups about their activities, names, and the amount of time needed in order to create a schedule and invitation to the event. As can be imagined, the classroom atmosphere is lively through out this phase.

In the third week, the students carry out the Team Building Event. First the groups are given thirty minutes to set up, prepare and practice for the event. When the students are ready, the event commences. At this point, the teacher is an uninvolved observer who takes notes for the feedback session after the event is completed. In one of my classes, the students were quite nervous which resulted in a weak performance. They were given the opportunity to re-group, prepare for a new start and repeat the event. The improvement was dramatic and helped to strengthen student satisfaction in their ability to perform in English.

When using the project approach, teachers must be prepared to hear students interact mainly in Japanese. Although most teachers prefer to hear their students trying to communicate exclusively in English,

Japanese students are generally unable to communicate more complex ideas in the target language. However, the use of the first language is realistic when employees work on a task such as planning an international meeting, organizing business trips, etc. Moreover, in real-life situations, employees read in English, discuss the meaning in their first language, and produce either written or verbal documentation in the target language. When the students became aware of this reality, anxiety could be reduced which lead students to enjoy the activities and improve their performance of tasks in English.

Conclusion

Although the completion of projects reported here is more work intensive in terms of time and energy than activities in commercial textbooks, students were more actively engaged in classwork when a simulated work context approach was taken. The first main indication was the significant drop in students who fall asleep during class. In fact, students reported that they found the projects more exciting, relevant and useful than those offered in “textbooks”. In addition since the projects and tasks were more fitting to their position in society (e.g., students and soon to be job seekers) they found the activities to be relevant and therefore valuable, which ultimately helped them to develop an interest in Business English.

According to Willis (1996), project based learning materials should aim at developing student confidence to communicate in English. A small classroom survey revealed that students felt an increase of self-confidence in speaking freely as a result of the focus on presentations and role-play tasks comprised in the projects. Moreover, students found the group work to be highly motivating. Japanese students are exceptionally shy as a result of the cultural upbringing that emphasizes the in-group and out-group, and vertical relationships. The by-product of this cultural trait is the fear of interacting with those one does not know, which often leads to loneliness among many students, especially those born outside of Japan. Two students reported that the rotating group projects helped them to develop friendships, which in turn helped them to lose their fear of speaking English.

At this point, these results can only be used as qualitative evidence, which should be investigated more deeply in the future. One such study could be to research the extent of the gains in communication skills as a result of these materials. In addition, further investigation and development of the materials in terms of appropriate topics and language input need to be considered. Business English content could benefit greatly from the cooperation with individuals from Japanese industry who could share an emic view of how globalization impacts the work place. In this way, NUCB would be in a more competitive position in terms of equipping students with cutting-edge knowledge and skills. And finally, the acquisition of foreign language communicative skills resulting from project activities is not easily testable. However, since Business English is part of a larger academic program, issues relating to testing do need to be considered.

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Appendix

Team Building Project

Dear Employees,

I would like to welcome you to the Communication Department. As you know, this job includes many important projects. You will have to work in teams to carry out the projects.

Before we start with the work, we first need to become one big team. A good team can work well together and get work done efficiently. A bad team wastes time and poor quality work is the result. Our goal is efficient, high quality output, which means we must be a team with heart and soul. We must learn to work together. And we must learn to appreciate and respect others.

Our first project will be to plan and carry out a Team Building project. The aim is to help people feel like they are a TEAM. We will build team spirit through this project.

If you have any questions, please contact me. I will assist you in any way possible

Let's get started!

Dr G

Head of Communication Department

2. Learning about Team Building (A)

Put the correct word into the empty spaces

Work – strengths – promote – creative – interact – through – appreciation – fun

Team building is important for people who _____ together. _____ team building activities, team members can learn about each other. Team building events help members to see each other's abilities and _____.

Team building activities forces employees to _____ with people so that they can get to know each other. Activities help them to work together better. Team members can also build respect and _____ for each other.

Team building activities also _____ creativity. It is important for team members to be _____ when finding answers to questions at work.

But what are team building activities? They are games, quizzes, or problems that team members should engage in. The purpose of the activities is to make team members talk and work together. The activities should be _____ too.

What do you know about Team Building from this text? Write down answers to these questions:

- a. **What** is a "Team Building Event"?
- b. **Why** is a team building event important?
- c. **How** is a team building event carried out?

3. Learning about Team Building (B)

A conversation between friends: The New Job

Naomi and Yoko are friends from school. They meet once a week at a coffee shop and talk about their week. Naomi is still looking for a job. Yoko started her job only a month ago. She wants to tell Naomi about the Team Building event that her department had last week.

- First read the dialog to yourself
- Take turns reading the dialog with another student

Naomi: How was your week?

Yoko: Really busy! But it was great.

Naomi: What happened?

Yoko: Well, you know that I just started working at that new job. I was so lucky to find a job after graduation!

Naomi: Yes! So how is it?

Yoko: Well I still have a lot to learn. But I wanted to tell you about what we did last week. Our boss told us that we should have a “Team Building Event” in our department.

Naomi: A Team Building Event? What is that?

Yoko: I work for the Communication Department. There are 15 of us and we are all fresh from the university. Our boss said many new employees with a major in English begin in this department. The boss said he always has a Team Building Event to prepare the new employees for working together.

Naomi: Why? What do you do at a Team Building Event? I thought you were already a team.

Yoko: We are a team, but only because we all got jobs and have to work together. But our boss said it is important for new employees to learn to appreciate each other. We should also learn to trust and respect each other. The boss said that a day of activities would help us to be a team. So this is team building. In the end we will be a real team because we had fun together.

Naomi: Really? What kind of activities do you do? Is it a party?

Yoko: No, it isn't a party. We have to do problem-solving activities. In one activity we had our eyes covered. And we stood in a line with our hands on the shoulders of the person in front of us. The last person had no blind-fold so he had to lead us.

Naomi: What? How was that possible?

Yoko: The person in the back would tap on the shoulder of the person in front of him with his hand. If we should go left she tapped the left shoulder of the person in front of her, and the next person had to tap on the shoulder of the person in front of her until everyone took a step forward. And if we should go right, she tapped on the right shoulder. It was difficult, but fun because we walked together.

Naomi: Heh? So are you a team now because you walked together with your eyes closed?

Yoko: Now I don't feel so shy like I did at first. It was so funny it and it made us laugh together. And I found there are some really nice people in my team. Our boss said that team members who respect each other are better employees. So yeah, I feel like a team now.

Naomi: It sounds great! Do all the teams at your company do a Team Building Event?

Yoko: No! I was talking to guy at our company today who said his boss never does this sort of thing. He said his team is not very nice. There are groups who are mean to each other and try to make each other look bad. He said it is awful going to work. And he is hoping to change departments.

Naomi: That is really interesting. I hope my new boss will be nice like yours!

Yoko: I hope so too.

✓	• In a small group, read the part where Yoko tells Naomi how they did the activity.
1.	Try to do the activity
2.	What did you think about the activity? Was it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy • Difficult • Funny • Boring

4. Learning about a Team Building Activity (C)

You will now see a short demonstration of a team building activity called the “Missing Chair” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djI5qloa5uA>

Your task is to:

- Watch the video
- Fill in this form

Team Building Activity	
Name of activity	“The Missing Chair”
How many people?	
Objects needed (ball, blind-fold, paper)	
Description (what did the team members do?)	
Time needed for the activity	

Appendix II

Team Building Event Planning

Dear Employees,

Our department will plan a Team Building Event. To be successful, I will divide the communication department into 4 teams. Each team will be expected to prepare a part of the event.

We will have the following teams:

Activity development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6–8 people • Prepare 2 team building activities • Each activity 5–10 minutes • Prepare instruction sheets for activities 	Invitation and schedule <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2–4 people • Write the invitation letter for the team building event • Write the schedule for the day • Nice lay-out • 1 page
Post-activity meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4–6 people • Learning session • Prepare discussion activity for team • Write 2 questions for learning • How will the employees discuss what they have learned? • 20 min activity 	Moderation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4–6 people • Prepare: welcome, introduction of announcement of activities, discussion activity and the ending

Today we will have a short meeting to decide who will be on the teams. Please look at the task descriptions and think about which group you would like to join.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Regards,

S. G.

Activity Planning Group Instructions

- 6–8 people
- Prepare 2 team building activities
- Each activity 5–10 minutes
- Prepare instruction sheets for activities

Team Building Activity Instruction Sheet	
Team names	
Name of activity	
How many people	
Objects needed	
Goal	
Description	
Time	

Invitation and Schedule Writing Group Instructions

- Write a letter to all members of the Communication Department inviting them to participate in the Team Building Event. The letter should include the following points:
 - Dear Communication Department Employees
 - Name of Event
 - Date
 - Time
 - Venue
 - The reason for the event
 - Mandatory participation of event
 - Sign off (Kind regards,)
 - Name of invitation and schedule writing team members
- Write a schedule of the events. It should be in an easily readable format. Include the times and names of the activities for the day. It should look like the example below. BUT, it should have the names of your activities and the names of the team members for each action.

Time	Action
11.00–11.10	Welcome • Hiro, Mia, Chie (Moderator)
	Activity 1 (put in the name of the activity) • Names of activity team members
	Activity 2 • Names of activity team members
	Discussion • Names of activity team members
	Final Words • Names of activity team members
	End

- Please make a new schedule.
- The schedule should look attractive
- You will need to consult with the other groups

Post Activity Learning Group Instructions

The activities should help the Communication Department Employees become a nice team. Your group will decide how the Communication Department Employees should reflect on the Team Building activities. And it should help them reflect on what they have learned.

Task:

- What 2 questions will you ask employees to think about?

- How will you get employees to talk about the learning process?
- How will you make this learning interesting? Suggestions:
 - Questionnaire
 - Draw pictures
 - Group talk
 - Presentation

Post Activity Learning Session	
Names of group	
Questions	
Activity for reflection	
Objects needed	
Time needed	

Moderator Group Instructions

Your task is to make all announcements during the Team Building Event. A moderator knows what to say before and after each of the activities. The moderator group can divide the announcements between members so that each person has a chance to speak.

Task:

- Look at the different activities planned for the Team Building Event
- Plan how you will announce each of the activities.
- Your job will also be to make sure that the event stays on time. You should prepare how you will tell people that time is running out, or that it is time to move on to the next activity.
- The list below should help you plan what you will say.
- During the event you may prepare cards to read from.

Time	Activity	What will you say?
Ex: 9.30–9.35	Opening Event– • Words of welcome • Explain the purpose of the event	
	Announce first activity • Introduce the activity planner	
	End first activity • Announce end of time • Thank planners and players	
	Announce second activity • Introduce the activity planner	
	End second activity • Announce end of time • Thank planners and players	
	Announcement • Announce end of team activity part of Team Building Event	

	Announcement • Announce Post-Activity Discussion • Say purpose of this activity	
	End of Post-Activity Discussion • Thank the planner and players • Summary of day (very short)	
	End of Team Building Event	

Homework

Dear Communication Department Employee,

Next week will we participate in a Team Building Event. This Event will cover the entire 100 minute session. I expect the Event to be a success. This means, each group should complete their tasks. Everyone should cooperate with each other.

These are the marking criteria for the groups:

- ✓ Participation in project development
- ✓ Completed folder (all papers are in the folder; the folder is neat and up to date)
- ✓ Respect and consideration towards others
- ✓ Amount of work put into your tasks

Please do your best to support the Communication Department.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Regards,
S. G.