English for Specific Contexts

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English for Real Estate Agents





Seminar Paper

by

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1. Situation, Students' and Needs Analysis

1) Situation and Target Group

My target group are 10 people who work as real estate agents in my father's company. The company is situated in Vorarlberg, a little province of Austria that used to be far away from a multinational and —lingual society. But as the number of people from abroad is increasing rapidly today and as some of the employees don't seem be able to cope with the new requirements of the job, namely being able to communicate with clients and business partners in English, the management together with the employees decided to let them participate in a course for English communication.



2) Students' Profiles

Due to my personal relationship to most people of the staff of my father's company, I was able to pick out 5 of them, have a quick interview with them and let them talk (honestly) about how they estimate their own English skills.



Sabine K. is the leader of the team and was the person who inquired whether the company could pay for an English course. She is 40 years old and attended a HLW – some 20 years ago. Sabine is a very communicative person, she likes to travel and get to know new people and countries. Her only problem is, that she is not able to talk to people in English in the way she would like to be.

She is able to understand much more than she is able to produce in the foreign language. As the leader of the team, she would like to become a worthy representative of the company, even for English speaking clients and therefore she is interested in a course that mainly strengthens her communicative competence, both in spoken and in written English. Considering the competence grid for English by the Institute Beatenberg, I would place her at level B2 in "Understanding" and B1.2 in "Talking" and "Writing".



37-year-old Stefan L. is also a very communicative person, but only as long as his mother-tongue is concerned. He didn't like language courses at school (he was in a HTL) at all, but obviously passed the exams somehow and tends to ask for help at a colleague if he is confronted with foreign clients. According to his statements, I would estimate his command of English at level B1.1, both in "Understanding" as in "Talking" and "Writing".



Denise S. is a 22-year-old woman, working in the company since she has left school (BORG) three years ago. She is a rather timid and silent person, but very reliable and kind-hearted. Her job is mainly concerned with organisational matters, but also with handling clients and their needs at the telephone. Her receptive knowledge of English is quite good (B2) but if she has to talk to people, she feels insecure. Therefore, she would like to improve her productive command of

English, which she describes approximately at level B1.2.



Nicole G. has been working in the back office since she was 17, right after she had finished school (Handelsschule), which was about 20 years ago. She has become the team leader for her department due to her social and professional competence. She is quite proud of that position but feels an increasing lack of language competence as far as English is concerned because she is the one who normally is confronted with doing the smalltalk both with clients and managers

from other companies who visit the managers, for instance. She sees her level at B1.1, both in receptive and in productive skills.



Andrea F., a 43-year-old mother of two sons, is also not really satisfied with her command of English, especially the writing competences. She attended a Handelsschule and she was quite good at school in English. Afterwards she spent a year in the USA. Andrea also has to welcome people or make phone-calls, which is not too demanding for her. But she is an ambitious person and is very much looking forward to the language-challenge. She would

estimate her command of English at level B2 in "Understanding" and "Talking", but only B1.1 in "Writing" right now.

2. Goals and Objectives

Main Goal

The course participants should be able to communicate with English-speaking clients in their business field in a friendly, adequate and convincing way to rent and sell their properties and represent the company as well as possible.

Objectives

After my English course for real estate agents the course participants should be able to

- 1) Welcome English-speaking clients appropriately, which means
 - ... for visitors at the office:
 - a. **to inquire** about clients' well-being and start a friendly conversation
 - b. **to offer** clients a seat/a coffee/something to drink in order to ensure a good atmosphere





- ... for clients at the phone:
- c. **to fix** a date & place for a future meeting with clients (give directions properly, describe how to get to a certain place name important buildings, landscape features etc.)
- d. **to ask** for correspondence of phone partners effectively (be sure of spelling and correct numbers).
- 2) The course participant should be able to describe the object (flat/house) in idiomatically correct English (written & spoken), which means
 - a. **to name** the most important features of flats/houses
 - b. to explain main advantages of their object convincingly.



- 3) Due to the technological requirements of the company, the course participants should also be able
 - a. **to write** grammatically-correct, well-structured emails to people who are interested in certain objects
 - b. **to formulate** convincing announcements for newspapers or magazines in order to advertise their flats and houses.
- 4) As doing the job of a real estate agent well has a lot to do with being able to sell not only the objects but also a positive image of the company, the course participants need to be able
 - a. **to demonstrate** a willingness to communicate and interact with
 - b. **to convincingly explain** the main advantages of buying or renting at their company.

3. Advertisement

ENGLISH FOR REAL ESTATE AGENTS

Experienced, young and motivating English teacher offers courses for C O M M U N I C A T I V E C O M P E T E N C E for real estate agents.



Do you hesitate to talk with English clients? Are you insecure how to express your opinion in English? Do you feel ready to re-fresh your English skills? Then come and join our course!



Time: starting on 1st March 2010

every Wednesday, 18:30 – 20:00

Place: Attemsgasse 2-4, SR 3

E-mail contact: office@english-course.at

Phone number: 0316/214923



4. Course Schedule

| udents |
|----------------------------|
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5. Detailed lesson plan for session 4

Real estate vocabulary – a workshop

The participants can choose as many exercises as they want and the order that is appropriate for their speed and needs.

General instructions:

I recommend that you write down all the new words you did not know and that you want to remember in a short phrase in your vocabulary book or on your vocabulary cards.

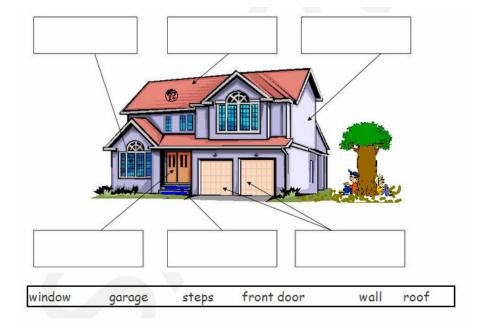


We've got enough time today to work on your vocabulary expansion. So, please relax and give yourself as much time as you need.

Pair work: Describing houses

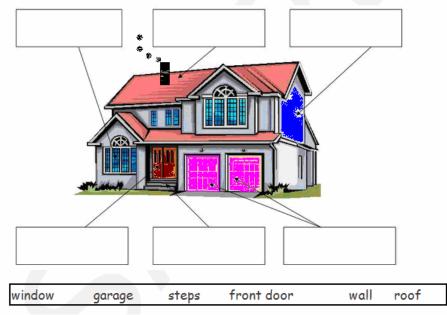
Sheet for A)

On the top you see a picture of a house, beneath in the box are the corresponding terms. First, please match them correctly! Then describe your house to your partner. He/she has got 7 differences in his/her picture. Find them out by describing your house but don't show him/her your picture.



Sheet for B)

On the top you see a picture of a house, beneath in the box are the corresponding terms. First, please match them correctly! Then describe your house to your partner. He/she has got 7 differences in his/her picture. Find them out by describing your house but don't show him/her your picture.

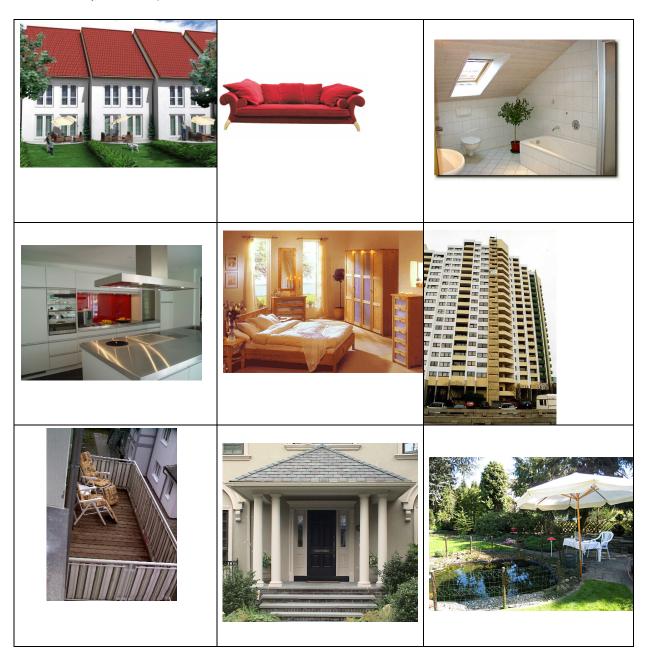


Vocabulary game: "Twins"

Each partner has got 9 pictures of houses, flats and furniture - 7 of them are the same, 2 are different.

Describe your pictures properly so that the partner can find out whether he/she has the same ones or not. At the end compare your cards and check if you have found the odd one out.

Sheet for partner A)

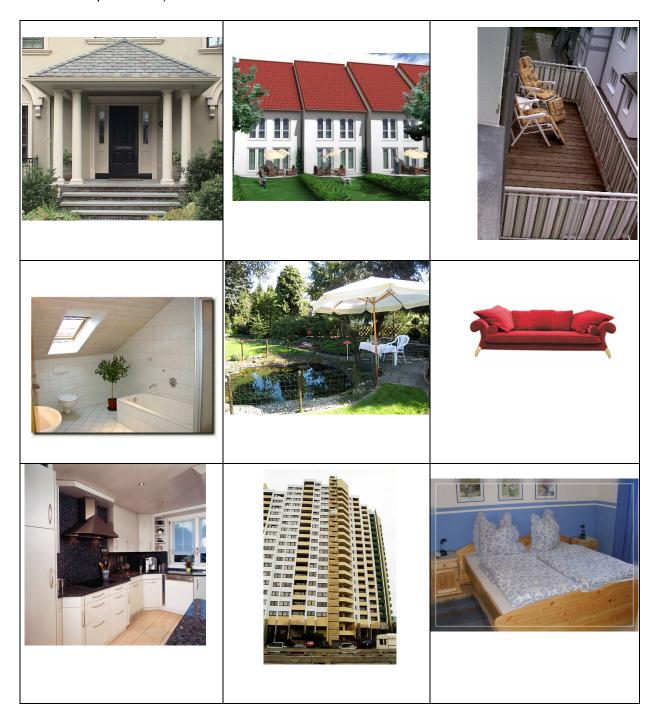


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Sheet for partner B)



Property & Real-Estate – Vocabulary and colour associations

First, match the terms with the correct definition. Secondly, formulate a sentence using the new terms correctly! Thirdly, think about a colour that you associate with the term and choose it for your vocabulary entry.

| tenant | a room or group of rooms to live in, usually on one floor |
|--------------|--|
| elevator | a compartment for moving people from floor to floor in a building |
| leasehold | a number of buildings on a large piece of land |
| for sale | a person who owns an apartment, house, office etc and lets it to a tenant |
| let | a person who rents an apartment, house, office etc from a landlord |
| storey | a person whose business is to sell or let land or property on behalf of others |
| yard | adj. [of a house, apartment etc] let with furniture - to furnish v. |
| freehold | offered for purchase; to be sold; available to be bought |
| estate agent | one of the levels of a building |
| furnished | space or ground surrounding a building, often with flowers, trees etc |
| rent | storey of a building at the same level as the street or ground |
| development | the holding of land or property for a predetermined period of time |
| landlord | the holding of land or property for an unlimited period of time |
| apartment | to give the use of a building etc in return for periodic payments or rent |
| first floor | to make periodic payments (monthly etc) for the use of a building etc. |

Solution sheet:

| | I . |
|--------------|--|
| apartment | a room or group of rooms to live in, usually on one floor |
| development | a number of buildings on a large piece of land |
| elevator | a compartment for moving people from floor to floor in a building |
| estate agent | a person whose business is to sell or let land or property on behalf of others |
| first floor | storey of a building at the same level as the street or ground |
| for sale | offered for purchase; to be sold; available to be bought |
| freehold | the holding of land or property for an unlimited period of time |
| furnished | adj. [of a house, apartment etc] let with furniture - to furnish v. |
| yard | space or ground surrounding a building, often with flowers, trees etc |
| landlord | a person who owns an apartment, house, office etc and lets it to a tenant |
| leasehold | the holding of land or property for a predetermined period of time |
| let | to give the use of a building etc in return for periodic payments or rent |
| rent | to make periodic payments (monthly etc) for the use of a building etc. |
| storey | one of the levels of a building |
| tenant | a person who rents an apartment, house, office etc from a landlord |

Pair work: "The impact of globalization on real estate brokers' activities"

- 1) First, only read the headline above and write down 5 words that you expect to find in a newspaper article.
- 2) Now look at the text below and put your words in the text.
- 3) Read out your new text to your partner every time he/she notices a word that doesn't fit, he/she has to say "Stop!".
- 4) Your partner now reads out his/her text to you and you have to listen very carefully in order to find out the odd words.
- 5) At last, read the text silently for yourself and choose 5 phrases that you want to remember. For your vocabulary entry, use them in you own sentence.

The impact of globalization on real estate brokers' activities

Globalization has had an immediate and powerful impact on real estate markets, making them an international working place. The rapid growth of the Internet has made the international market accessible to millions of consumers. A look at recent changes in homeownership rates illustrates this. Minority homeownership jumped by 4.4 million during the 1990s, reaching 12.5 million in 2000, according to the Fannie Mae Foundation. Foreign direct investment in U.S. real estate has increased sharply from \$38 billion in 1997 more than \$50 billion in 2002 according to Census data.

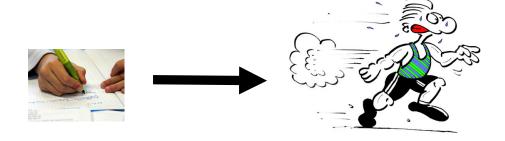
Most local real estate agents view the foreign market as a significant revenue potential and may have already worked with international clients in their local market, new immigrants or more sophisticated investors from different cultures and from other countries. For example, they provide value-added services that help overseas relocation employees figure out which inoculations their children need and how to register a car in the United States. Real estate brokers want to keep central to the transaction, protect the best interests of their members and address the unique needs of each multicultural global client by acquiring specialized training and designations. (See below for more)

In 2007 the Mexican Association of Real Estate Professionals in Mexico, AMPI, and the NAR, National Association of Realtors in the US, signed a bilateral contract for international real estate business cooperation. Also at the local level, many other state and local associations are helping other countries achieve the same result. For instance, in New Mexico, a historically multicultural state, under the RANM, Realtor Association of New Mexico and the President's Advisory Council, is looking into forming an ambassador association to help a foreign country into signing a bilateral agreement with the NAR. In New Mexico, there are 4500 licensed real estate professionals and only 14 or 15 CIPS designees, out of whom, only 6 speak a language other than English.

Gapped text:

Choose the correct word and fill the gaps! Write the words that are new for you in a whole phrase into your vocabulary book.

| 1. This house is definitely within your afford to buy this house price range - cost - dollars | = You can definitely |
|---|---|
| 2. I don't think they would think they would agree to a price below \$2 - do - go - be | below \$200,000. = I don't |
| 3. The first step to buying the house is to g - approval - approbation - appraisal | get a mortgage |
| 4. It's a little below below what it is worth house - market - real estate | value. = It's being sold slightly |
| 5. I'll the know what price you're willing to pay press - praise - present | owners with your offer. = I'll let the owners |
| 6. This house was from the owner due to non-payment) - closed - enclosed - foreclosed | (= repossessed by) the bank |
| 7. This is one of the most | (= popular, looked-for) |
| 8. I have one perfect for you bunker - bungalow - shotgun shack | (= one story house) that would be |
| 9. In real estate, one often uses the word 'nice way of saying "small".- miniscule- minute- cozy | '" as a |
| 10. This house has both an attic and a (= a basement where some of the window - look-out - locked-in - lights-out | s are above ground level.) |



Walk and Talk

If you feel ready to move a bit, take your vocabulary cards/notes and walk up and down the hallway speaking the new phrases out loud. This activity is very useful to revise the new phrases because your brain is much more activated than if you only read through your notes silently. So, please don't feel embarrassed and try to find your own "rhythm". Repeat the phrases as often as necessary until they sound natural for you.

6. Detailed lesson plan for session 7

Advanced email writing



For the teacher

Quick overview:

| General purpose | Task | Form | Time |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| I) Get people activated | Discussing a provocative statement | groups of three | ~ 5 minutes |
| II) Let people see where they stand at the moment | Writing an initial email | individual | ~ 15 minutes |
| | Gathering ideas how to start an email | whole class | ~ 5 minutes |
| III) Building up writing competence | Worksheet: Beginnings and endings | groups of three | ~ 15 minutes |
| | Worksheet: Levels of formality | pairs | ~ 20 minutes |
| IV) Integrating new | Rewriting the initial email | individual | ~ 20 minutes |
| language | Discuss email with partner | pairs | ~ 10 minutes |

For Students

I) Get people activated

Statement:

According to the Society for Human Resource Management, more than 36% of employers look at employees' email and over 70% believe it is an employer's right to read anything in the company's electronic communication system.

Personnel Today

Introductory questions

What is your first reaction to this statement?

What are reasons why employers should be allowed to read your emails/what are reasons against?

What are the consequences for you as an employee if you know that your boss can read all of your email correspondence?

II) Let people see where they stand at the moment

Write an email to William Miller in London who has written to your company asking for information about a ficticious flat in Dornbirn, Herrenmahd 23. You don't have to show it to anyone afterwards, it should just help you to see where you stand at the moment and what you especially have to work on during this lesson. Please raise your hand if you have questions!

III) Building up writing competence

Question for whole class - answers will be collected on

- 1) What can you say at the start of your message?
- 2) How do you express it idiomatically correct and formally appropriate?

Beginnings and endings

Go together in groups of three. The table below shows possible ways to begin and end an email. Discuss the following questions in groups of three. At the end, we will compare the results:

- 1. Which expressions could you use in a business email to McKenzie James, a potential customer whom you have never met before? Why?
- 2. Are there any expressions which you would probably not use in a letter? Why?

| Salutation Hi Good morning Dear Hello nothing | Name Mr McKenzie Ms James McKenzie James Mc Kenzie nothing | Introduction The reason I'm writing is Your name was given to me by I am writing to you to I am the Sales Manager at This is just to let you know that | Conclusion I look forward to hearing from you. Hear from you soon. If you need any further information, do not hesitate to contact us. nothing | Final salutation Best/Kind regards Best Cheers Yours sincerely All the best nothing |
|---|--|--|--|--|
|---|--|--|--|--|

- 3. Look at the extracts from emails below and decide whether you think each is a beginning or an ending, and if the style is formal or neutral, as in the examples.
- a) Re your inquiry --> beginning, neutral
- b) Please accept my sincere apologies for having to cancel our meeting. --> beginning, formal
- c) Good luck with the presentation.
- d) Thanks for yr message.
- e) Following our telephone conversation of today, I enclose our offer to provide you with...
- f) Kindly give the matter your prompt attention.
- g) Thank you in advance for any help you may be able to give me.
- h) I am looking forward to seeing you.
- i) I write to inform you that...
- i) Say hello to Pete.

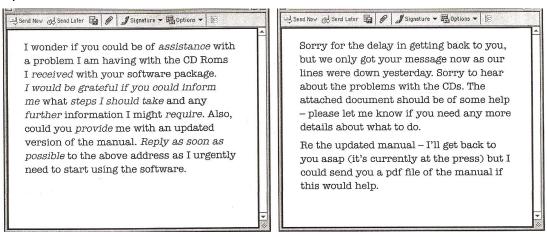
Levels of Formality

Go together in pairs and do the following tasks:

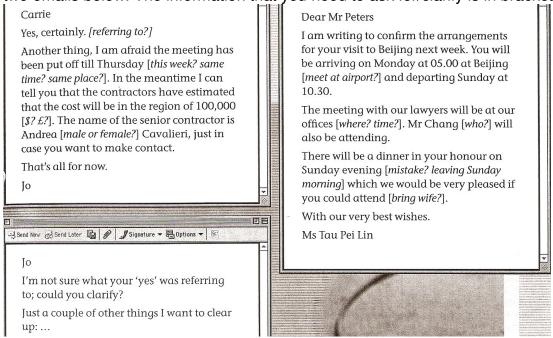
1) The following examples of formal words can help you to make your emails sound more sophisticated. Match the formal words 1-7 with the less formal equivalents a-g.

1 ascertaina use2 commenceb start3 particularsc payment4 prior tod find out5 remittancee end6 terminatef details7 utilizeg before

2) Look at the two emails below. Which is formal and which is informal? Look at the words and expressions in italics in email 1 and find the equivalent expression in email 2.



3) Sometimes emails are so concise or are written so quickly that the meaning is not clear. In such cases you may need to ask for clarification. Write a reply to one of the two emails below. The information that you need to ask for/clarify is in brackets.



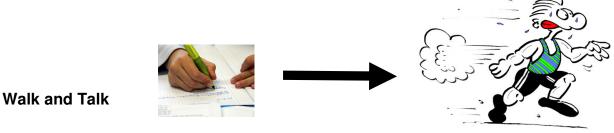
IV) Integrating new language

Rewrite the initial email:

After you have heard a lot about register and politeness now, write the email to William Miller in London who has written to your company asking for information about an invented flat in Dornbirn, Herrenmahd 23, again and try to integrate what we have discussed today.

Exchange emails with a partner and try to improve and correct each other's work. If you think you have both written perfect emails, please raise your hand and I'll come to discuss them with you. You can hand it in the next lesson.

Homework: Revise your vocabulary but don't get bored – it is much more effective and exciting if you are physiologically active!



If you feel ready to move a bit, take your vocabulary cards/notes and walk up and down the hallway speaking the new phrases out loud. This activity is very useful to revise the new phrases because your brain is much more activated than if you only read through your notes silently. So, please don't feel embarrassed and try to find your own "rhythm". Repeat the phrases as often as necessary until they sound natural for you.

7. Reflection Sheet

| | Topics | Competences | ~/+/* |
|----|-------------------------------|--|-------|
| 1 | Introduction | | |
| | Information about the course | | |
| 2 | How to welcome clients | I can inquire about clients' well-being and | |
| | | start a friendly conversation. | |
| | | I can offer clients a seat/a coffee/something | |
| | | to drink in English in order to ensure a good | |
| | | atmosphere. | |
| 3 | How to deal with clients on | I can fix a date & place for a future meeting | |
| | the phone | with clients (give directions properly, | |
| | | describe how to get to a certain place – name | |
| | | important buildings, landscape features etc.). | |
| | | I can ask for correspondence of phone | |
| | | partners effectively (be sure of spelling and | |
| | | correct numbers). | |
| | | | |
| 4 | Real estate vocabulary | I can name and explain the most important | |
| | | features of flats/houses. | |
| 5 | Designing office material | I can use vocabulary in ads appropriately. | |
| | | I can explain main advantages of their | |
| | | flats/houses convincingly. | |
| 6 | Email writing basics | I am able to understand English emails. | |
| | | I can filter out important information. | |
| 7 | Advanced email writing | I can write grammatically-correct, well- | |
| | | structured emails. | |
| 8 | Professionalizing phone-calls | I am able to integrate new vocabulary in | - |
| | | active use at the phone. | |
| | | I can successfully negotiate with E. clients. | - |
| 9 | Work on personal interaction | I am able demonstrate a willingness to | - |
| | | communicate and interact with clients. | |
| | | I can convincingly explain the main | |
| | | advantages of buying or renting at their | |
| | | company. | |
| 10 | Professionalize interaction | I can reflect about and am able to critical | - |
| | | discuss points for improvement for myself | |
| | | and other course participants | |