

BEHIND THE SCENES OF BUSINESS ENGLISH MATERIALS

SILVINA P. MASCITTI - EFL CREATIVE IDEAS



In today's session we will...



- Debunk some "myths" about BE mat. writing
- Reflect on key elements in BE materials
- Brainstorm starting points for a lesson plan
- Explore how to structure a lesson plan
- Focus on general guidelines
- Analyze one of my lesson plans
- Share useful resources & further ideas



What are some of the challenges you face when making Business English materials?



~~IMPOSTER
SYNDROME~~

LET'S DEBUNK SOME MYTHS...!

I'm not a
materials
writer

Writing
materials is
time-consuming

Grammar is THE
starting point to
create materials

So many
topics to
choose from!

I'm not a
BE expert

I'm not
creative
enough

Stepping out of my
comfort zone (e.g.
coursebook) is risky
and unsafe.



**What do you take into account when making
Business English materials?**



DEI

**REPRESENT SS'
CONTEXT
(field-specific
lexis)**

**PERSONALIZATION
('real-plays' /
case studies)**

**BUSINESS
ENGLISH
MATERIALS**

**21ST-CENTURY
SKILLS**

HOTS & LOTS

**INTERCULTURAL
APPROACH
(ELF / accents)**

**ENGAGE OUR
LEARNERS!!!**

21ST-CENTURY SKILLS

Learning Skills

The "four Cs" :

- Critical thinking
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Creativity

Life Skills

- Flexibility
- Initiative
- Social skills
- Productivity
- Leadership

Literacy Skills

- Information lit.
- Media literacy
- Technology lit.

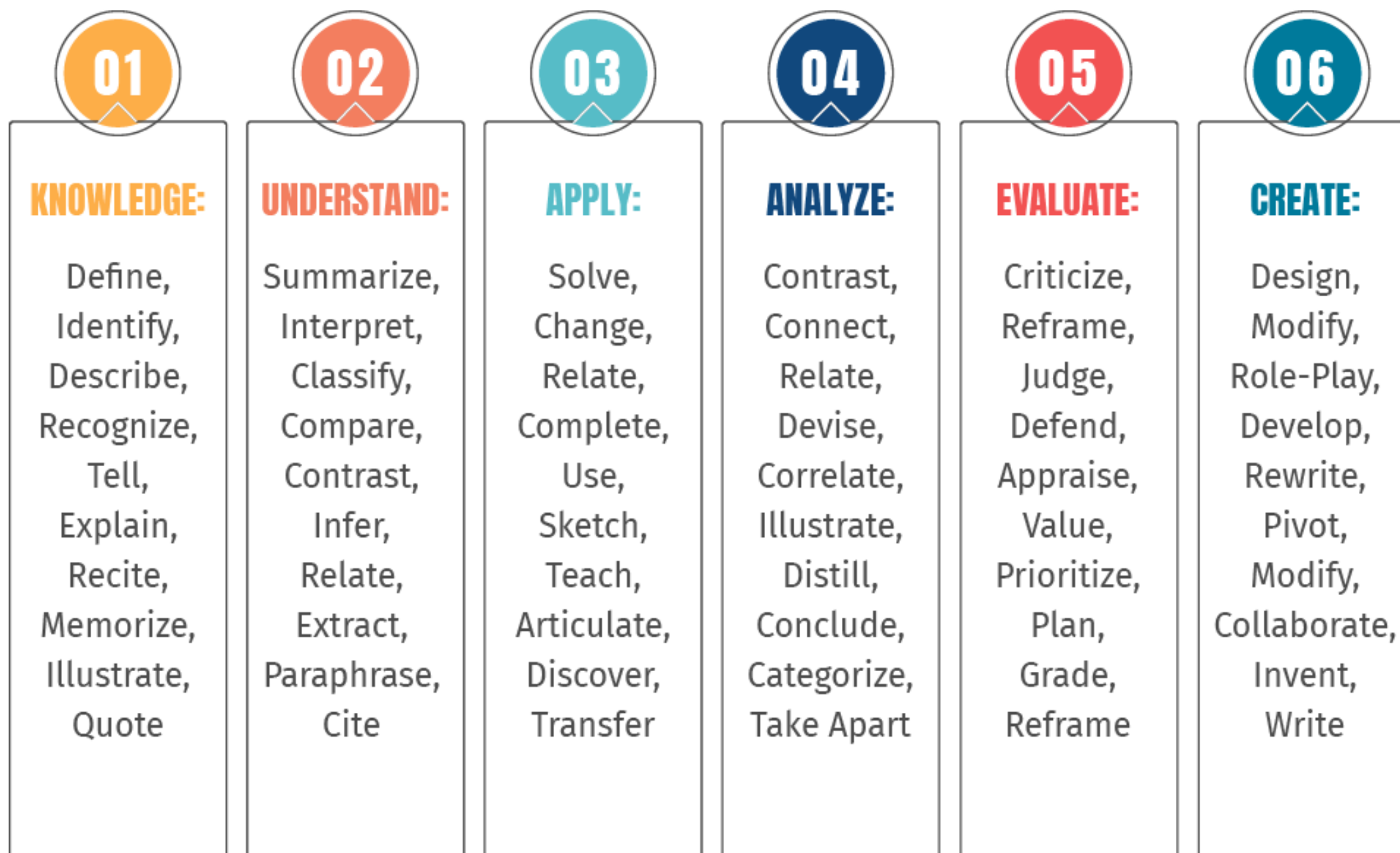
<https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/comprehensive-guide-21st-century-skills>



Recommended webinar: **Developing Global Skills in Adult Learners**
by Rhona Snelling (Macmillan YouTube Channel)

CRITICAL THINKING

Low Order Thinking Skills High Order Thinking Skills



Recommended book:
Critical Thinking in ELT
J. Hughes & P. Dummet
(Nat. Geo Learning)

DEFINE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Develop R/L/S/W skills?
- Teach a grammar point?
- Teach functional lg?
- Teach pronunciation?
- Exam preparation?



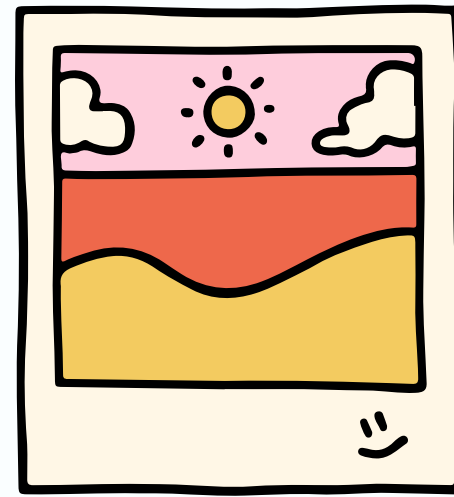
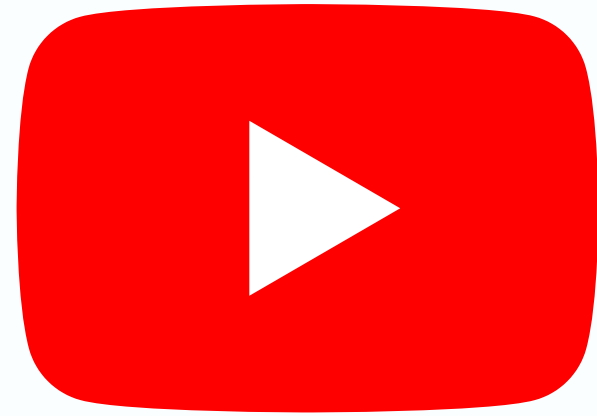
How to conduct a needs analysis - Ethan Mansur (Macmillan)

**NEEDS
ANALYSIS!**

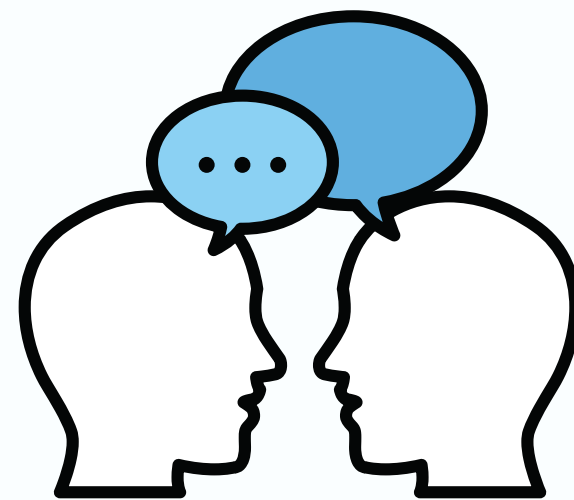


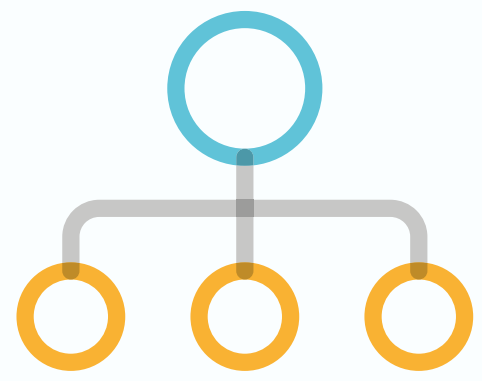
What are your starting points when making BE materials?





STARTING POINTS





(MY...) LESSON PLAN FRAMEWORK

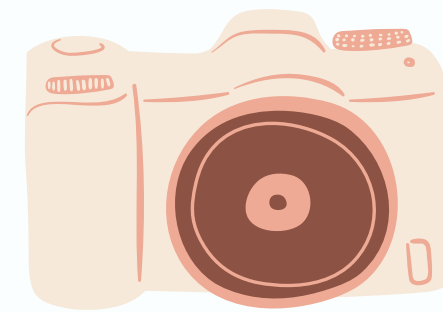
- Before
- While | reading / watching / listening
- After
- Focus on lexis / pronunciation
- Follow-up task

BEFORE WATCHING / READING

- **Lead-in discussion: Activate schemata!**



prior knowledge



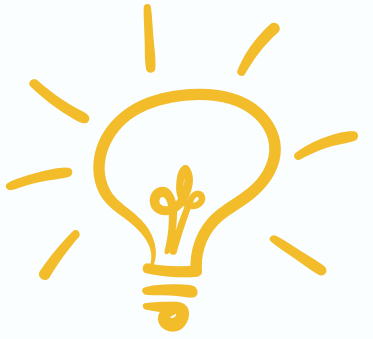
experiences



engagement



BEFORE LISTENING / WATCHING / READING

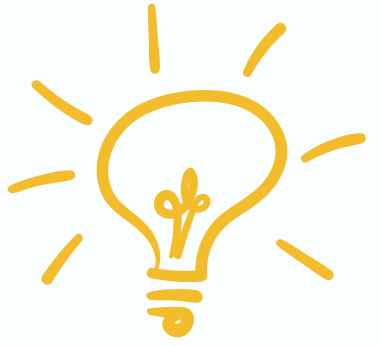


- Don't pre-teach too much! (Esp. higher levels)
- Leave room for inference
- Avoid gap-filling grammar exercises
- CT skills: prediction



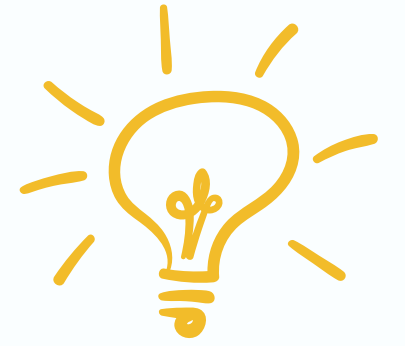
Recommended post: *Why should you use warmers?*
by Sylwia Clayton - Two Fold EFL blog.

WHILE LISTENING / WATCHING / READING



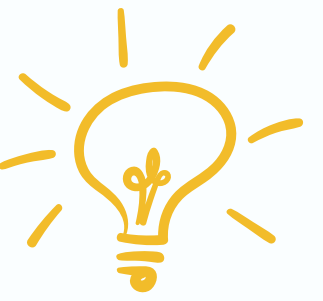
- From general (gist) to specific (detail) info
- Scaffold tasks: chunking (lower-levels / long texts / videos / infographic...)
- Bottom-up skills (Decoding: "Making meaning from all the bits and pieces of the language." *Breaking the Sound Barrier*, Conti, Smith, 2019)

AFTER LISTENING / WATCHING / READING



- Students' reaction, feelings and opinion
- Relate text to Ss' own business context
- Discuss quotes from text
- CT skills: analyze purpose, tone, source, bias

FOCUS ON LEXIS / PRONUNCIATION




- Choose contextualized, meaningful chunks from the text (high-frequency)
- Work on vocabulary, collocations, grammar, pronunciation, connected speech...
- Inductive approach: Guided discovery, work out meaning
- Relate lexis to Ss' business context



Recommended book: *Teaching Lexically*, Dellar, Walkley, 2016

FOLLOW-UP TASK



- The lesson should guide Ss to the final task
- "Tasks should be purposeful and engage students in real communication."  *Activities for TBL*, Anderson, McCutcheon, 2019
- Good opportunity to recycle lexis from the lesson!
(Input flooding)

linking words

present perfect

phrasal verbs

collocations

**COGNITIVE
OVERLOAD!**

conditionals



idioms

connected speech

weak forms



**LESS IS
MORE!**

SOME GUIDELINES



- **Layout:** blank space, easy to navigate
- **Images:** contextualization, representation
- **Consistency:** numbering, bold, font, color, spacing
- **Instructions / Rubrics:** short, clear, simple language
- **Scaffolding:** glossary, useful language box, chunking
- **Tasks balance:** Heads-up /heads-down /heads-together (L. Clandfield)

The Power of Quiet Leadership

Lead-in discussion

Read the characteristics of a good leader below:

- Which ones would you associate to extroverted leaders? Which ones would you relate to introverted leaders?
- Do you think introverts make good leaders? Think about your own experience.



You will watch a short video called "The Power of Quiet Leadership". Before watching, make some predictions:

- Quiet leadership might refer to ...
- The video is likely to be about ...
- The author will probably state that ...

Let's get the ball rolling...again!



On average, I attend _____ meetings every day. (How many?)

Most / Some of these meetings are _____. (Face-to-face, online...)

I _____ hold meetings. (How often?)

- How would you describe your regular meetings and their attendees?

Use the adjectives from the left and add a prefix from the right to make opposites, if necessary. You can also provide others!

organized
punctual
practical
necessary
relevant
respectful
effective
productive
efficient
cooperative
motivating



Starting point:
Linkedin post
by Chris Bate

Ss' experiences

Ss' prior knowledge
CT: prediction

CT: compare / contrast


A2+ / B1
R / L

BUSINESS MEETINGS

Lead-in discussion

1. Discuss these questions.

- a. How often do you have meetings?
- b. Which type of meeting do you prefer: in-person or online? Why?
- c. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each type of meeting?



2. In pairs / small groups, read these five meeting formats and define them with your own words.

- a. Team briefing: It's a type of meeting **in which / where / that...**
- b. Check-in meeting
- c. Kick-off meeting
- d. Brainstorming meeting
- e. Board meeting

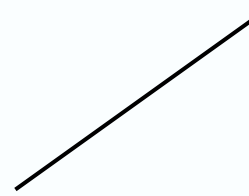
3. Compare your ideas with another pair / group / your teacher.

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| From my point of view, ... | From my perspective, ... | In my view, ... |
| It seems to me that ... | As far as I know ... | I'm pretty sure that ... |

Images: contextualization

Scaffolding

Reading task -
check prediction



4. Match the meeting formats (a-e) in exercise 2 with their descriptions (1-5).

1. The first meeting with the project team and sometimes with the client to establish purpose, set schedules and discuss roles.

2. A meeting of a company's management team. They are usually held at various times in a year to make key strategic decisions.

3. A team discussion where all members collaborate to discuss updates on important topics, share progress and align perspectives.

4. The manager delivers key updates and messages to the team, and the team has the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.

5. An open meeting format designed to generate ideas and bring people together where they can all contribute to the creative process.

Source: Chris Bate

CT: compare / contrast



5. Compare your definitions in exercise 2 with the ones in exercise 4.

In my experience, ... meetings ...

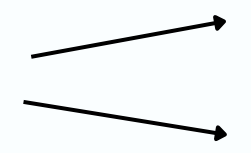
**but
whereas / while
similarly / also
in the same way**

the description says...

Scaffolding



Ss' business context



6. Discuss these questions.

- Which type(s) of meeting (1-5) do you usually attend at work?
- Which one(s) do you like the most / the least? Why?
- Do you remember any funny situation during a meeting? Share it with the class / your teacher.

Link to listening stage



Ss' prior
knowledge
CT: prediction

Ss' business context

Listening for gist

Before watching

7. You will watch a meeting parody. Read these words and expressions from the video and discuss the questions below.




- a. What type of meeting do you think it is? Why?
- b. What kind of topics do you usually talk about in your meetings?

While watching

8. Watch the video "Every meeting ever" and answer these questions.

- a. What is the purpose of the meeting?
- b. How many people are there in the meeting?
- c. What are some of the attendees' roles?
- d. What are some of the ideas suggested?
- e. Is the meeting successful? Why? Why not?

Listening for detail

9. Choose the correct options. Then, watch again and check. 

- a. The time guy is worried about **the duration of the meeting / the work schedule for next week.**
- b. The latecomer arrived late because **he grabbed a coffee on his way / there was too much traffic.**
- c. The negator rejects the publicity event idea because of **the weather / the budget.**
- d. The offended guy thinks that Nancy's concerns are **acceptable / unacceptable.**
- e. The guy with bad ideas talks about the impact of rain in **the irrigation system / the publicity event.**
- f. The rambler had the same idea **three weeks ago / last year.**
- g. The dominator suggests **giving prizes / increasing prices.**
- h. The social networker is **taking notes / using her phone** while the dominator is sharing his idea.
- i. The worst note-taker writes **all the ideas / some ideas** on the whiteboard.
- j. At the end of the meeting, the meeting leader is **satisfied / surprised by the team's reaction.**

After watching

10. In pairs / small groups, discuss these questions.

- a. What is Tyler's style as a meeting leader? How open is he to new ideas?
- b. If you were the meeting leader, what would you do differently?
- c. Which of the ideas do you like the most / the least? Why?
- d. How realistic is this meeting? Can you relate it to your workplace?

Ss' opinion and reaction
Relate to ss' business context

Contextualized chunks:
Ss' infer and work out
meaning, then apply to
own context.

Focus on lexis



11. Read these excerpts from the video and answer the questions.

a. "If you've got one (idea), **throw it out.**"

- What does the phrasal verb "throw out" mean in a business context?
- What was the last idea you threw out in a meeting?

b. "So what we're doing is **coming up with** some ideas for our new marketing strategy."

- Can you use the phrasal verb "throwing out" in this example too?
- Think of two more synonyms of these verbs and use them in examples.

c. "The **schedule** wasn't exactly clear."

- Is "schedule" a verb or a noun in this sentence?
- When was the last time you scheduled a meeting? What was it about?

d. "I think you're **onto something** with this idea."

- Did Tyler like Tripp's idea when he said this?
- What did he mean?

e. "If we **do** something with technology, we **lose** the senior demographic."

- Does Nancy agree with Tripp's idea of using technology? Why? Why not?
- What grammar structure does Nancy use to express her idea?

f. "We still have 100% of the things to **accomplish.**"

- Were the meeting objectives achieved? How do you know?
- What other things can people accomplish?



Follow-up task

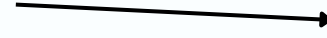
12. Role-play: A brainstorming meeting

You will take part in a brainstorming meeting. Adapt the topic according to your business context. One of you will be the meeting leader and the rest will be the attendees. You can assign other roles too. Use some of the phrases below, which were mentioned in the video.

- I just want to take a few minutes to talk about some ideas for...
- I think we should (implement...)
- I'm just really thinking that ...
- What about?
- I just want to emphasize ... (there's no bad ideas here, we're just brainstorming.)
- Does anyone else have an idea?
- Shouldn't we be moving on to the next topic?
- That's a (fun) idea!
- Interesting but ...



Ss relate topic to own context. Real-play



Scaffolding
Recycling vocab
from the lesson



Image: task
contextualization



TOPICS
(e.g. BE, meetings..)

LEVEL
(CEFR: A2, B1..)

SKILLS
(e.g. R, L, W, S)

**TEACHER'S
NOTES**



INSTRUCTIONS
(hedging / commands)

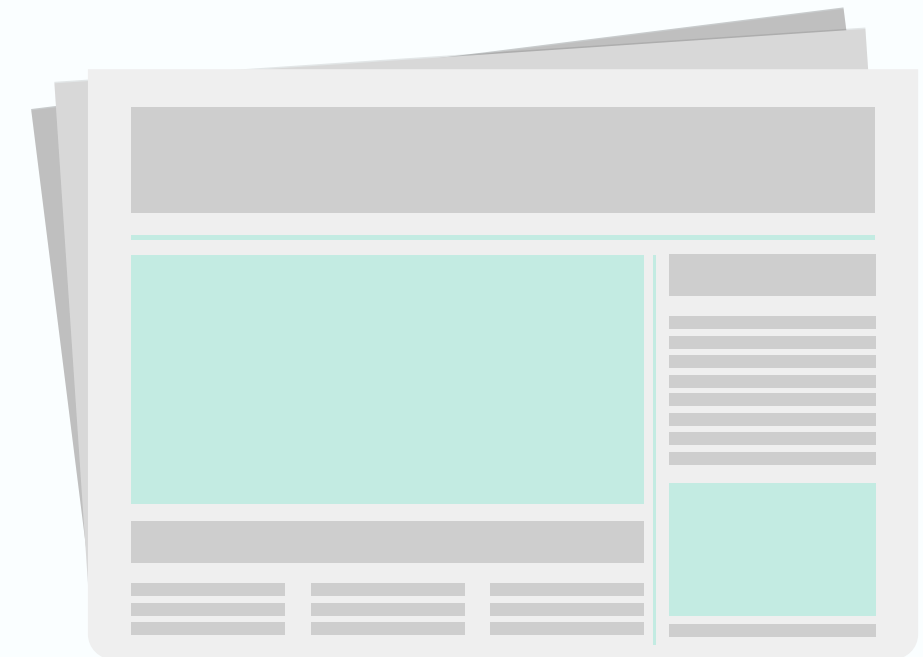
AIMS
(e.g. to discuss, learn,
review...)

ANSWER KEY

SUGGESTIONS
(e.g. mixed-ability class)

USEFUL BE RESOURCES

- TD Lab StaffRoom Fb group (Dublin TEFL, Shaun Sweeney): audio resources recorded by Ts
- Harvard Business Review
- The Economist
- Business Insider
- Forbes
- The Wall Street Journal
- YouTube: Inc, Tripp and Tyler



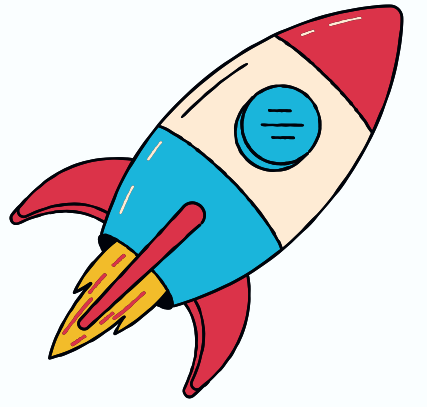
WHICH ONES CAN YOU RECOMMEND?

Continuous Professional Development

- ETPedia Business English (McLarty, Hughes, 2016)
- ETPedia Materials Writing (Clandfield, Hughes, 2017)
- How to Write Business English Materials (John Allison, 2017) ELT Teacher 2 Writer series
- ELT CPD podcast series by Billie Jago
- ELT PLANNING - Peter Clements' blog
- NILE course: Materials Development
- OUP course: Writing your own ELT materials
- IATEFL Business English / Mat. Writing SIGs



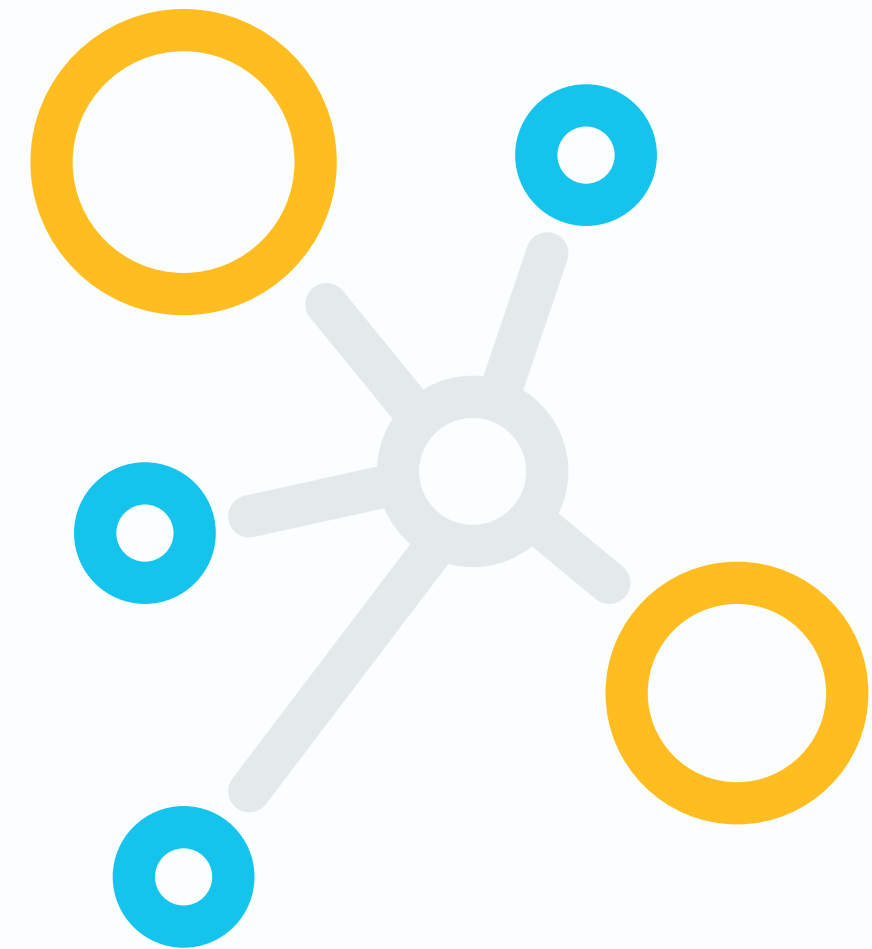
GO FURTHER...



- From your community and beyond...
- Be open to feedback: There is always room for improvement!
- Share your LPs: LinkedIn / Freeed / Fb groups / own blog or blog guest writer
- Find a writing buddy! Read Kath Bilsborough's blog. New Fb group by Bhavna Gupta! 'The Materials Writing Collaborative'

SOME BE TRAINERS ON LINKEDIN

- Chris Bate
- Clive Davies
- Robert Garbett
- Sam Gratton
- Nataša Pešić Grbeša
- Amelia Posleman
- Audrey Smith
- Daniel Smith
- Jane Wescombe
- Christopher Wright ...and many more!



REFERENCES

- <https://www.macmillanenglish.com/us/blog-resources/article/how-to-conduct-a-needs-analysis>
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- <https://www.creatingeltmaterials.com/find-a-writing-buddy/>

THANK YOU!

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