

Eureka Journal of Humanities and Social Research (EJHSR)

ISSN 2760-4934 (Online) Volume 2, Issue 2, February 2026



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<https://eurekaoa.com/index.php/4>

METHODS OF TEACHING BUSINESS ENGLISH THROUGH NEWSPAPER READING

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Abstract

This paper aims to offer teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) a comprehensive overview of how newspapers can serve as an effective resource for teaching Business English. The primary objective is to help students achieve proficiency in Business English by engaging with the business section of English-language newspapers.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, Business English, newspaper reading, business-related articles, vocabulary, reading habits.

Introduction

Teaching Business English effectively requires engaging methods that combine language skills with practical knowledge of business contexts. One innovative approach is using newspapers as a teaching tool. Newspapers provide authentic materials that reflect real-life business communication, current events, and professional language. They can enhance reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and analytical skills among students preparing for careers in business. The business section, in particular, provides valuable information that directly influences individuals’ economic activities and decisions. For instance, investors can access timely updates and practical guidance to support their decisions regarding stocks, bonds, and real estate. In addition, readers can stay informed about labor market developments, emerging industries, and evolving career opportunities.

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Emphasizing students' reading habits

Students' engagement with newspapers and their various sections largely depends on their individual reading habits. The discussion outlines common themes found in business-related articles, including a series by Alan Friedman entitled "Looking for Work in Europe," published in March 1994 in the International Herald Tribune (IHT). This topic is particularly relevant as it addresses issues that are directly connected to students studying business and language.

The suggested exercises accompanying each article follow a consistent format, focusing on the development of reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, text structure, grammatical competence, speaking, and writing skills. Nevertheless, numerous alternative approaches can also be applied to maximize the effectiveness of newspapers as a resource in Business English instruction.

From a historical perspective, the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution significantly stimulated the growth of commercial and financial activities. Advancements in communication systems further accelerated trade expansion, which in turn contributed to the evolution and improvement of Business English. Nowadays, newspapers have emerged as one of the most extensively distributed sources of information, offering substantial and relevant content, particularly within their business and advertising sections.

The importance of language is emphasized, and it must be tailored to the intended audience. When creating a message for experts, the specific terminology used becomes a key component of effective communication.

It is essential to consider the specialized vocabulary that the target audience is expected to know. This specialized knowledge is highly specific, making it a more critical factor when evaluating the subject matter being presented. Additionally, the widespread use of anglicisms is notable in business contexts, and while these English terms are highly relevant, they typically have equivalent expressions in Uzbek.

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Newspapers - particularly Business English content, along with other communication media and advertisements - are highly valuable resources for ESP teachers. They make teaching easier and support effective research. Educators should understand that newspapers could be used from two key areas: applied linguistics and translation studies.

Most students are not business professionals and may not be accustomed to reading newspapers. Therefore, the first step is to help them become familiar with this medium. It is important to highlight that daily newspapers open up a wide world of information and can serve as innovative and engaging tools for teaching foreign languages.

An overview of the newspaper

It is essential to recognize that newspapers rely on various guiding features (similar to deictic markers) to help readers find the information quickly. These include:

- Boxes that refer readers to articles published elsewhere in the paper
- An index
- Page headings
- Headlines

Most newspapers are organized into different sections, such as news, business, sports, and advertising, enabling readers to easily access content related to specific topics, including economic issues. At times, they also publish special sections, for example, an entertainment or arts and leisure supplement on weekends. Articles typically start with a dateline indicating the place where the article was written.

Exercise: Understanding the structure of a newspaper

a) Take a recent edition of a newspaper (in this case, the IHT) and identify examples of the features that guide readers in locating information. Mark or note elements such as headlines, page titles, indexes, or reference boxes.

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- b) Write down the sequence in which the different sections appear in the newspaper.
- c) Find the following items and specify both the section and the page number where each one appears:
1. The weather forecast
 2. The results of a sports match
 3. An article about a recent election
 4. A report with a dateline from a European country
 5. Details about a cultural event
 6. Stock market information
 7. A letter addressed to the editor
 8. The comic strip section
 9. An editorial piece expressing an opinion
 10. Classified ads

The student's newspaper reading habits

It is important to remember that newspapers contain a wide variety of article types. News reports focus on current events and political developments, whereas opinion pieces that express viewpoints on contemporary issues are typically found on the editorial pages. To review students' newspaper reading habits, they can be asked to reflect in writing or discuss with a partner the following questions:

1. Do you read the newspaper in the same way every time? For instance, do you tend to start with the back pages?
2. What types of articles do you usually prefer- serious news reports, sports coverage, editorials, comics, or advertisements? Why do you choose these?
3. How well do you know the different sections of a newspaper? Are you able to quickly search the information you need?

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4. When you read an article all the way through, what encourages you to do so? Is it your interest in the topic, an appealing headline, or perhaps the article's length?
5. Why don't you usually read the entire newspaper from beginning to end? Is it because of limited time, lack of interest, unfamiliar topics, or difficult vocabulary?
6. Do you find the business section challenging to understand? How frequently do you read it - often, occasionally, or rarely?
7. Do you approach a newspaper in your native language differently than an English-language newspaper? If so, what differences do you notice?
8. Do you expect your newspaper reading habits to remain the same in six months or a year? Would you like to change them? Why or why not?

An analysis of headlines

Headlines are created to grab readers' attention as they browse through a newspaper. They usually summarize the main idea of an article into just a few words, offering clues about both the topic and the writer's perspective. However, headlines can present particular challenges for readers. They often omit small grammatical words, and may include idioms or wordplay, since headline writers aim to be concise, creative, and engaging.

Exercises

1. Look through a newspaper and select five headlines. Based on each headline, predict what the article will be about. Then read the articles to determine their actual subjects and evaluate whether your predictions were correct.
2. Create alternative headlines for those same five articles.

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Topics of business articles

The business section features a wide range of articles, such as:

1. Reports on companies' financial performance, indicating whether they are operating at a profit or experiencing losses.
2. Articles covering newly developed or upcoming products and technologies, along with analysis of how these innovations may influence the company or the broader market.
3. Updates on currency trends, for example whether the dollar is expected to rise or fall in value.
4. Reports examining how political decisions and election outcomes influence the business environment.

Together, these types of articles enable readers to evaluate and understand current economic conditions. The exercises below can be applied to any business-related article. The first focuses on analyzing the article's structure and content. The second aims to build familiarity with business terminology. The third encourages discussion of issues connected to the article and to real-world situations. An additional activity centers on the stock market, helping students interpret and comprehend that section of the newspaper.

1. Analyzing a business article

- a. What is the headline? In what way does it help you anticipate the topic and perspective of the article?
- b. What is the article's objective? For example, does it report on a company's performance, introduce a new product, describe stock market trends, or present an expert's view on economic conditions?
- c. What is the main idea of the article?
- d. Does the article include any forecasts about the future? If so, what are they?
- e. Does the article offer any recommendations or guidance to readers? If so, what advice is provided?

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2. Business terminology

Business has its own specific set of vocabulary. To understand business-related articles, it is important to be familiar with terms like recession, bonds, stocks, futures, and bull market. Read two or three business articles and select at least five sentences containing unfamiliar words. Underline these words and write the sentences down. Then, discuss the terms in class and try to explain their meanings first from the context and afterwards with the help of a dictionary.

3. How is business going?

Students should regularly review the business section of newspapers over several weeks to gather information about the overall economic situation in the country. While reading, they should search for answers to specific guiding questions and be ready to share and discuss their findings with the class.

- Is it currently challenging to find a job? What are the reasons? In which sectors are job prospects the strongest?
- For someone who has money to invest, where do experts suggest investing it now?
- What economic issues is your country experiencing right now?
- Is the overall economic forecast positive or negative?

4. Understanding stock prices

Daily newspapers publish detailed lists of stock and bond prices for companies listed on major exchanges. Investors who hold these securities can track price changes in the newspaper, as can students studying business.

In class, students practice interpreting stock listings from newspapers. They observe that some papers include a guide explaining how to read the data. Next, they select the shares of a well-known company listed on a major exchange, “buy” 100 shares, and monitor the closing price on four different days over a two-week

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period. At the end of the two weeks, they “sell” the shares. While they “own” the stock, they record the required information.

Name of the stock purchased _____

Date of purchase _____ Price per share _____

Date _____ Closing price _____

Date _____ Closing price _____

Date _____ Closing price _____

Date _____ Closing price _____

Date _____ Closing price _____

Students try to determine reasons why the price went up or down.

Looking for work in Europe

On March 10, 1994, the International Herald Tribune published a series of three articles by Alan Friedman titled “Looking for Work in Europe.” Employment is a highly relevant and practical topic for classroom discussion. This series serves as a model for working with business-related articles in class. First, several introductory exercises are suggested for the entire series. Then, a consistent set of tasks is developed, with sample questions adapted to each individual article. The section called “Getting the Message” ensures that students fully understand the content. It strengthens reading comprehension and promotes critical thinking through a variety of activities. The “Vocabulary” section focuses on business-related terms, idiomatic expressions, and key phrases found in the articles. It helps students develop effective strategies for expanding their vocabulary. Various types of exercises are included. In the “Structure and Grammar” section, students analyze the organization of the articles, including paragraph structure, main ideas, the author’s point of view, and relevant grammatical features. After thoroughly studying and analyzing the articles, students take part in written and oral activities in the “Talking and Writing” section, which encourages discussion and active participation.

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The exercises described below are applied to all three articles.

Previewing the articles

a. It is helpful for the teacher to provide background information based on the students' age and proficiency level. This helps generate interest in the topic and activates their prior knowledge before reading.

b. Before reading the articles, students discuss these questions:

Is unemployment a serious issue in your country at present?

Do you believe the situation is improving or worsening? Which professions are considered the most secure in terms of employment? Has this changed recently?

c. While reading, students search for answers to the following questions:

What is the European Community "White Book" or "White Paper"?

What is meant by the term "entitlement culture"? Could this concept apply to Uzbekistan? Why is it considered a problem?

Why is the labor force in Uzbekistan less mobile compared to that in the United States?

The following activities are designed to accompany "In Europe's Jobs Crisis, Growth Is No Answer" by Alan Friedman. A similar structure of exercises can also be applied to the other two articles in the series. However, the specific questions—and sometimes even the types of tasks included in each section—will differ depending on the content of each article.

Getting the message

After reading the article, students decide whether each statement is True (T) or False (F):

- European unemployment figures are predicted to fall by next year.
- Efforts to restore industrial competitiveness work against reducing unemployment.
- Non-wage labor costs in Europe exceed those in the United States.

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- Some businesses are thinking about relocating production to countries with lower wages.
- Europe needs to expand its social welfare system in order to generate more employment.

Vocabulary

Students write one sentence for each of the following words and expressions, consulting a dictionary if needed:

Technological edge

Pie-in-the-sky

To slash regulatory red tape

Nonwage labor costs

Hamstrung

Deregulation

Grammar

In this article, the word “that” is frequently used to introduce noun clauses functioning as the object of a verb. Students reread the text carefully; focusing on these structures, and complete the following sentences using information from the article:

Mr. O’Sullivan fears that ...

The graph in the article shows that ...

In the G-7, everyone agrees that ...

Talking and writing

In the article, a number of people express their views on employment issues. Students discuss the quotation below and write a short paragraph either supporting or opposing the opinion:

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“I have seen no evidence that achieving more competitiveness will solve unemployment. If we are honest with ourselves, the drive to restore industrial competitiveness is hostile to employment.”(Mr. O’Sullivan, participant in drafting the White Paper)

“There is a feeling that we are in a high-wage environment and it should remain that way. People do not want a downward wage trend.” (Horst Siebert, President of the Kiel Institute of World Economics)

Conclusion

Using newspapers in teaching Business English offers a dynamic, real-world approach to language learning. By engaging students in reading, writing, discussion, and role-play based on authentic materials, teachers can develop their students’ linguistic, analytical, and professional skills simultaneously. This method not only improves English proficiency but also prepares learners for the demands of global business environments.

This material is primarily intended for teachers of ESP (English for Specific Purposes), Business English, and technical or scientific English. It highlights the relevance and timeliness of vocabulary taken from newspapers as an effective teaching resource. The overall goal is to motivate students to develop strong proficiency in technical and scientific English by applying the methods and activities described in this article.

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