

The importance of speaking English

„Okay, readers of the *Wirtschaft Nordhessen*, let's agree to put our honest feelings „on the table“ right from the start! After all, this is going to be a four month „relationship“ and as the author of this four-part „Business English Culture Series“, I naturally want to know, upfront, if you see any relevance at all for „Business English“ in your day-to-day business life here in Hessen?



Portrait of the writer as a golf player: Gerry T. Kierans
Photo: private

More importantly, I am also keenly intrigued about your „knee jerk“ response to seeing this „Business English Culture Series“ printed here before your eyes in the *Wirtschaft Nordhessen*, a „Business German“ magazine, in English only! This is the first time ever that the *Wirtschaft Nordhessen* has published an article in English only. I will tell you that the decision to print these articles in English was deliberately provocative. The editor knows full well there will be controversy. So be honest! What is your first reaction to seeing only English words?

I will also openly tell you, at the outset, that one of my principal objectives in writing this series is also to be provocative (but hopefully not confrontational) in an attempt to ultimately leave you the *Wirtschaft* reader with a greater acceptance of the significance of „Business English Culture“ for your business activities here in Hessen, and indeed I dare say, your future likelihood for business success, or failure!

Moreover, another fundamental *raison d'être* I am writing this Series is to offer you a simple „reality check“. As I humbly see it, you as a German business professional, have to face the reality that the English language (as an accidental residual by-product of European colonial history) has become the language of business in the global economy. Therefore, you individually, and German businesses as a whole, must learn „Business English Culture“ to communicate effectively with other European and International clients. Thus, you have a simple choice!

Dear readers of the WN, for the very first time we decided to publish an article completely in english. In times of international changes and nations coming nearer to one another we are convinced that this little experiment is worth a try. Making Nordhessen's business life more international is only one of our proposals. So feel invited to enjoy reading and learning as much as You like.

W. Ruß-Rohlf

Either embrace this reality enthusiastically (or at least reluctantly) or bury your head in the sand on the beaches of the Nordsee.

Now, having said this in such deliberate blunt terms, I know that many of you may now feel not only threatened but insulted, by such arrogant assertions. However, don't throw the *Wirtschaft nordhessen* magazine down in contempt yet and please continue reading! Your feelings that the English language is a threatening menace are ill-founded! These feelings may stem from your past experiences in learning English in school which was most likely very unpleasant. I say this because it is my observation, as a Professional Educator, that English was, and continues to be, taught completely wrong in the schools here in Germany. (Note to

teachers: I told you this would be provocative!). So forget your past experiences with learning English. It does not have to be disagreeable and it ought to be, simply above all else, fun!

Need of standards

If you are honestly feeling threatened, please consider the following. If I had asserted above that the world needs uniform electrical standards so that when we travel abroad with our laptops we could finally rid ourselves of those annoying adaptors, none of you would feel threatened! If I had proclaimed that the European-conceived metric system, undeniably the most logically sound system of measurement in the world, should finally be accepted by the United States so that they can communicate better with the rest of the entire world, you would probably applaud my comments! So why then does my assertion that „Business English Culture“ should fulfil similar common ground communication functions in our „global village“ world evoke such emotional, even retrenched, reactionary feelings?

The answer is simple, or as said here in Germany, „Das ist klar!“ You do feel, albeit unjustifiably, threatened! Please note that I have simply stated above that you must recognize the pre-eminent and ubiquitous role of the English „language“ in today's global economy. I have not said that Germany should abandon neither its native language nor its cultural heritage. China, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa and

Saudi Arabia all face this same reality. Further, my frankness does not mean I am unsympathetic to your feelings. My two years of teaching Business English to top management here in Germany, for example, MBA students at Kassel International Management School, and also my personal business experiences in Canada, the U.S.A., the Caribbean, the Far East and Europe, have prepared me to be sensitive (despite my provocations) to these fervent feelings. The challenge posed to all of us is how can we can best learn „Business English Culture“ and still preserve our own country's language and unique business culture? As a Canadian, I can tell you that if there is any country in the world that is truly vulnerable to American cultural imperialism, it is Canada (38 million citizens living right „next door“ to 380 million Americans). So I can assure you that I truly do have deep empathy with many of you here in Germany who may view, „Business English“ as a „Trojan Horse“ of Yankee economic and cultural hegemony. (Parallels with comparable sentiments over the War in Iraq are obvious but as this is a Business article I shall not digress). So, once again, in the spirit of „putting our cards on the table“, you now know where I am coming from! Thus, with an honest preamble to this four-part series completed, I will now finally start with the Part One theme, „Business English Playtime“.

Mix business with pleasure

Aside from perhaps unpleasant experiences in the past with learning English in school, it is my opinion that the greatest obstacle to learning Business English for many of you is lack of time! As a teacher of business managers and as a business professional myself, I am fully aware of how little time is left over in our lives. Our responsibilities for career, work, family and home consume seemingly every spare moment and leaves precious little time for „playtime“, let alone learning a new language! Recognizing this fact leaves me with one inescapable strategy when teaching Business English to busy professionals. Learning Business English can only be accomplished when it is incorporated into the daily activities we are already performing, be that in the office, at home, or during any residual playtime! Furthermore, to maintain enthusiasm, there needs to be simple strategies (see the „Biz English Playtime Tips Box“) and also an immediate, reinforcing, and profitable „pay off“.

When it comes to „Business English Playtime“ one beneficial lesson we can learn from „English Business Culture“ is to learn how to „mix business with pleasure“. After all, North American business professionals face the same problem of little playtime, indeed even more so, since management „across the pond“ receives on average only two to three weeks holidays per year! Out of necessity, they have mastered the art of conducting

both business and playtime concurrently. To illustrate, one striking example of this is called Business Golf!

Yes, believe it or not, North Americans (and the British, Japanese and Chinese) use the Golf Course as their office board room! I have met many German managers at Kassel International Management School who have been invited to play Business

Golf on business trips and they were panic stricken for they were totally ill-prepared to know what, when, and how to negotiate in this new business environment. Their fear was compounded by the fact that many did not know how to play golf! They instinctively recognized that it is acceptable for them to look foolish because they are not golf pros BUT they did not want to act foolish by being unaware of the rules and etiquette

of „Business Golf“ and thereby likely „loose face“ and possibly fail to achieve their business objectives.

Accepting the challenge to prepare German managers with all the necessary skills of „Business English Culture“, I now also teach German managers how to play „Business Golf“. This „Business Course on the Course“, called the Management Golf Tournament, teaches beginner and experienced golfer-managers the basic rules and etiquette of „Business Golf“. More importantly, I also teach: how and when (precisely!) to negotiate business deals successfully on the golf course; how to use golf for B2B networking; how to „dress for success“; and, how to use Biz Golf here in Germany with German clients. In short, the mission of the MGT Open is to teach management how to „mix business and playtime pleasure“ so that managers can foster deeper relationships with clients, colleagues and corporate staff for mutual, profitable benefit. One of the outcomes of learning „Business English Culture“ should be to achieve increased personal and corporate profit should it not? If you would like to learn more about The MGT Open, with the next event on June 2nd at the Bad Arolsen Golf Course, I invite you to explore the www.MGTOpen.com web site.

In concluding, The MGT Open concept is presented here in this article to underscore that when it comes to learning „Business English Culture“ one of your strategies should be to learn English during your „Playtime“ activities. In the next three articles, I will demonstrate how your can learn „Business English Culture“ at the office, in cyberspace and in face-to-face negotiations. Until then, maybe we will meet at the MGT Open, on the tennis court, or playing basketball or volleyball at the beach. If we do meet, you can be as honest as I have been about your feelings toward „Business English Culture“. You need not feel threatened however, while enjoying your playtime, even though I will undoubtedly encourage you, out of professional responsibility, to practice your Business English!

Gerry T. Kieran ■

Biz English Playtime Tips:

1. While relaxing and watching TV, turn on CNN or view your DVD in English.
2. Subscribe to an English Business Magazine or newspaper.
3. If you drive in your auto frequently, listen to Business English books on CD's.
4. Prepare your shopping list in English.
5. For leisure, read an easy novel, such as Harry Potter, in English.

LICHTWERBUNG
 S C H I L D E R
 S I E B D R U C K
 FAHRZEUGWERBUNG
 NEONSCHRIFTEN
 LEUCHTRANSPARENT
 PLANENBESCHRIFTUNG
 FASSADENBESCHRIFTUNG
 GLAS- & METALLÄTZUNG
 VERGOLDUNG

Erika®
REKLAME

WERBEPYLONE
 BANDENWERBUNG
 MAGNETSCHILDRE
 ORIENTIERUNGSSYSTEME
 RELIEFBUCHSTABEN
 LICHTOBJEKTE
 FUNKUHREN
 VORDACHANLAGEN
 BAUSCHILDRE
 MONTAGE - SERVICE
 DIGITALDRUCK



Dörnbergstraße 7 · 34233 FULDATAL
 Telefon 0561/98177-0
<http://www.erika-reklame.de>

HALLEN
 Planung → Konstruktion → Ausführung



BESONDERS PREISWERT.
Verschenken Sie kein Geld!

KREUTZ SYSTEM-BAU

Grimbachstr. 25 · 57339 Erndtebrück
 Tel. 02753.598700 · Fax 02753.598710
 Verkauf: Burgring 15 · 54570 Mürtenbach
 Tel. 06594.18222 · Fax 06594.961224
www.kreutz-systembau.de

copy
 print

KYOCERA
mita

BUSINESS PARTNER

F-H Fröhlich
 Handelsgesellschaft mbH
www.Drucker-Fax-Kopierer.de
 Telefon (0 56 62) 94 88-0

KYOCERA
mita

SERVICEPOINT