

Picture of young man holding a baby

A serious, though understandable, language teacher mistake is to think of business people as denizens of some other, possibly superior planet. To teach business English humanistically, and therefore efficiently, is to see business men and women in their full humanity. At home, in the evening, your business "clients" are spouses, parents, grandparents, siblings, and children.

It is vital, if you are to teach such people, that you take the trouble to see beyond and behind the professional self-presentation mask of "me as salesman" "me as an accountant" "me as a chemical engineer". To learn English well and fast your students need to use deeper levels of themselves than these comfortable professional masks.

One thing common to many business folk are relatively high levels of stress and a feeling that the English class is a chunk bitten out of their tightly-packed working day. It is vital that you do sufficiently involving things in your classes with them to help them to be really present, and to stop their thoughts drifting back to the problems of their work-life. It is therefore useful, for part of your lesson, to forget about business vocabulary and situations and to invite them to think imaginatively, and away from their work. I would suggest you sometimes use relaxation techniques with your business students, especially prior to listening exercises, as it is in this area that high stress levels can induce poor performance. Once the student is relaxed, listening in the target language becomes much easier and more efficient.

Before doing the exercises of the type outlined below, it is vital that you explain the rationale of procedures that may, at first, strike your students as bizarre, rather embarrassing time-wasting.

It is vital that you explain how stress and anxiety strangle the natural ability to learn language that each of us has, and how relaxation will speed up learning.

The rest of this article offers you some guided fantasies which have the double role of inducing relaxation and allowing free play to the imagination.

### Enjoying Colours

Speak as follows in a soft, low voice. Speak slowly. Make sure your own breathing is slow and deep, from the pit of the stomach;

*Please sit comfortably.*

*Remember how you sat as a child when listening to a story.*

*Have both your feet on the ground.*

*Have your back straight.*

*Have your hands on your thighs, turned upwards*

*Have your head upright and your neck straight*

*Breathe in , slowly.*  
*Now breathe out.*  
*Notice your breathing.*

Imagine that you are covered with the colour red.  
Imagine that your whole body looks red.  
Imagine that you are red, right deep into your body, not just on the surface, on your skin

( pause for 15 seconds – leave a silence)

Imagine now that you are orange all over and all through

( 15 second pause )

And now you are yellow all over and all through

( Pause)

And now blue all over and all through

The blue is dark, dark blue. You are dark blue all over and all through

Violet, violet...you are violet through and through

Count slowly backwards from 21, 20 19 down to 1

(pause)

Count up, very slowly from 1 back to 21.

Take the students back through the colours from violet to red.

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Ask the students to come out of their listening mode and ask them to work in groups of three or four, describing how they experienced the exercise.

Round off with some plenary feedback.

**My very own start –up**

*You are sitting comfortably.  
Your back is straight....  
You feel yourself walking slowly in a park  
The air is warm  
The wind is light and gentle... ..  
You begin to dream... ..*

I am dreaming about a favourite activity, a sport, a leisure activity, something I love doing

I want to start my own business, a business connected to this activity... to this sport, to this stuff I like doing.

Who will my business partners be? Who will I choose?

I can see the place we'll use to start the business.

My business plan... my forecasts... My costs...

My overheads... My income... contributions...

I see myself explaining my business plan to the bank  
I see their reaction.

My start-up has been running one year now... I notice what I can see what I can hear... what I feel...

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Bring the students back out of their dream and ask them to take pen and paper and write whatever they want in the wake of listening. Tell them they have the choice of later sharing, or not sharing what they have written.  
Tell them to write a page.

Now invite them to talk to two or three other people about the listening and the writing experience, about the process and only if they want to about the content

### **Eagle Music**

*Please shut your eyes...  
With your eye closed measure a minute any way you wish*

With your eye closed measure a minute any way you wish.  
When you have finished your minute say aloud **END**  
Start measuring a minute now.....

As you listen to this guided fantasy, please let the words turn into **music** in your head.  
Listen to the words and make them in **to your own musical symphony**.

I am an eagle in the Himalayas

I sit on my nest and look out over the landscape

I am huge, a brown eagle. Nothing can attack me. I am sleek and powerful

I am on a crag high above the landscape.

Now I stand, perched on the edge of the nest.

I look across the mountains, range upon range of them.

I look down across the vast valley below, covered in snow.

I am hungry■■■ my little ones are hungry■■■.

I launch myself into the air and glide across the vast valley towards the glinting, white peaks opposite.

Warm air rising from the valley soars me up, high into the sky. The view I see is vaster■. More and more ranges of mountains■■

Something far far away, down on the slope, catches my eye■something moving across the whiteness, very very very small.

I plummet down in a vertical dive. The ground is hurtling towards me, closer and closer and closer■..

I pull out of my dive and beat my wings... I slow down  
and fly on the level...

Something white on the white snow has moved again...  
I hover above it, with my head on one side...

A winter hare, with its off-white coat...

I swoop and extend my talons... wide open, ready to close  
on the hare...

The hare has gone... my talons close on snow.

Rage...rage...rage...at the hare's escape...

I rise slowly on a thermal... resting...

Yet, yes... I am sovereign of all I survey down there  
below me...

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Ask the students to come back into the room and describe whatever they may have experienced, working in groups of four. ( Some of them will have done quite other things than making music from your words.)

### **Conclusion**

I have worked with a number of Polish learners of English and have noticed how hard they tend to work at mastering the language. Sometimes I have wished they would relax a bit more and trust their unconscious faculties, I have wanted them to see that pleasure and leisure in language learning can be as efficacious as grind, blood and tears. When I think of some Polish learners I have taught, I get the image of a mediaeval monk flagilating himself. The activities described above intend to soften the way some learners treat themselves inside.