

Teaching Business English and ESP

Needs analysis: Negotiating a syllabus

Lesson Plan

Students do a speaking activity that makes them think and speak about what they would like to do in class, at the same time as practicing the language of negotiating and presenting conclusions.

Language/ Skill Practiced: Language of negotiating (e.g. *Why don't we...?*) and of presenting conclusions (*We have decided that...*). Classroom vocabulary.

Materials: One copy of Worksheet Page One per student. One copy of Worksheet Page Two per student (optional).

Time: 35-60 minutes (including warmer), plus extension

Preparation: You will need to check that the list of classroom activities on 'Negotiated Syllabus' Page One matches things you do in the classroom, otherwise you could be in trouble! You might also want to change the functional language on Page Two depending on the level of your class.

You will need to decide on a 'getting to know you' warmer for Part One below, e.g. 'Answers on the board' (see last page below) or 'Find Someone Who...'. The best warmer for this lesson is one that illustrates the different types of activity mentioned in the 'Negotiated Syllabus' Page One, especially ideas students may be unfamiliar with such as 'spoken grammar practice'.

This class can be done after or instead of a more traditional needs analysis (see Article for examples).

Procedure:

Part One: GTKY (Getting to Know You) Warmer

- Start the class with a warmer of between 5 and 20 minutes that gives the class (including the teacher) a chance to get to know each other (see notes in Preparation above). There are plenty of these in www.onestopenglish.com. Try for example the first-day lesson plan in the speaking section. Alternatively, try the business 'Answers on the board' activity found on the last page.
- Give students language feedback on the activity after it has finished, e.g. corrections of pronunciation, brainstorming of functional language they could have used.
- Get brief feedback from the students on what parts of their English they have just been practising/ improving. Brainstorm a list of other things that can be done in the language classroom, e.g. from their previous experience of the language classroom. Don't let them debate the usefulness of such activities yet.

Part Two: Negotiating a Syllabus - Pyramid Ranking Debate

- Give out the 'Negotiated Syllabus' Page One and ask students to add any good examples of activities that came up in the brainstorm but are not on the list.
- Ask them to rank the activities in terms of the amount of classroom time they think should be spent on them, as per the instructions on the worksheet.
- Put them into pairs and ask them to agree on a new list by stating their opinions and then negotiating.
- When the first couple of groups have finished, stop the class and go through the functional language for negotiating on Page Two.
- As groups finish, put them into larger groups to continue the negotiation, e.g. by combining two groups of two into a four, or splitting one group up and making two groups of three. When these groups finish, combine again to make bigger groups. The idea is to finish up with two groups of roughly equal size, but you will need to be flexible depending on the size of the class and how much more quickly some groups finish than others. Monitor for use of the negotiating language.
- Before the final presentation of their conclusions by the two groups, go through the presentation language on Page Two.
- **Variation:** It is possible to present the functional language (or simply brainstorm it onto the board) at almost any point in the class.
- **Extension:** You might want to move onto a business situation in which they can use the functional language that they have just been using, e.g. a roleplay of negotiations over price. Most business role-play and pairwork books have examples like this.

Negotiated Syllabus Page One

Put these in order from number 1 (the one to spend most time on in class) to 10 (the one to spend least on)

- Reading articles
- Practicing social and functional English
- Listening to audios
- Watching videos
- Discussing current affairs
- Talking about your job
- Written grammar exercises
- Spoken grammar exercises
- Learning specialist vocabulary
- Learning general English vocabulary
- Other (please specify)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Now work together with another student. Compare your answer, and negotiate a new list from 1 to 10 together.

When you have finished, get together with another pair and negotiate another new list.

Finally, the two halves of the class should present their conclusions.

**Negotiated Syllabus
Page Two
Functional Language**

Negotiating Language:

Put these phrases into three columns below depending on their meaning

- But don't you think that....?
- I see your point, but...
- I couldn't agree with you more
- I agree
- I don't really agree
- Personally,
- You could be right...

Agreeing	Disagreeing

Presenting conclusions language

Give each one a number of stars from 1 to 5, depending on how strongly it shows you believe in your point.

- Our opinion is that...
- We have decided....
- We have agreed that....
- We were both agreed that...
- It seems clear to us that...
- There can be no doubt that...
- Our position is that....
- We thought that maybe...

Business 'Answers on the board'

Work in teams of two or three. Take turns asking questions to your teacher, trying to obtain exactly the answers below from him/ her. You score one point each time the teacher replies with a sentence written below. They can be done in any order.

1. Because I wanted to travel
2. For eight years
3. I was working for a publisher's in Greece
4. I worked as a care worker
5. (When I was) 19.
6. Birmingham (University)
7. I don't have to work in the morning. And I get to meet people from all over the world.
8. Teaching relative clauses.
9. I want to write a teaching book
10. At least until the end of June, after that I'm not sure
11. Lots of patience and a pen.

Now ask and answer similar questions in pairs.