# Problem Based Model for Teaching the Aspect of Style in an ESP Writing Course[i]

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**Abstract:** Problem-based learning (PBL) is an effective approach which helps students to integrate the knowledge and concepts previously learned as they solve interdisciplinary and real-situation problems. The core concepts of PBL are using professional knowledge, goal setting, problem resolution, and evaluation of the results. Also, PBL activities meet students' learning interest as well as take into account the effects of individual learning. The main goal of this paper is to improve teaching writing in ESP classes and help students to integrate and apply the learned knowledge. PBL model for teaching the basic principles of professional writing style (clarity, conciseness, tone and word choice) was created according to the principles of PBL implementation: 1. The creation of the problem situation; 2. Problem definition; 3. Decomposition of the problem; 4. Suggesting hypothesis; 5. Self-study (verification of hypotheses); 6. Generalization of results and synthesis of knowledge; 7. Application of newly acquired knowledge on a similar problem.

*Keywords: problem based learning, teaching writing, style, ESP writing*

**Apstrakt:** Učenje zasnovano na rešavanju problema (eng. problem based learning) predstavlja efikasan pristup koji pomaže učenicima da integrišu znanje i koncepte koje su ranije naučili dok rešavaju interdisciplinarne i probleme iz svakodnevnog života. Ključni koncepti problemske nastave su upotreba stručnog znanja, postavljanje ciljeva, rešavanje problema i vrednovanje rezultata. Isto tako, aktivnosti na času problemske nastave podstiču interesovanje za učenje, ali uzimaju u obzir i pozitivne efekte individualnog učenja. Glavni cilj ovog rada je da se poboljša nastava pisanja u jeziku struke i pomogne učenicima da integrišu i primene naučeno. Problemski modelovana nastavna jedinica za učenje osnovnih principa profesionalnog stila pisanja (jasnoća, konciznost, ton i izbor reči) kreirana je u skladu sa principima implementacije problemske nastave: 1. Stvaranje problemske situacije; 2. Definicija problema; 3. Dekompozicija problema; 4. Postavljane hipoteza; 5. Samostalan rad učenika (verifikacija hipoteza); 6. Generalizacija rezultata i sinteza znanja; 7. Primena na sličnom problemu.

*Ključne reči: učenje zasnovano na rešavanju problema, nastava pisanja, aspekt stila, jezik struke*

## 1. Introduction

According to Chris Davis and Mary Birbili (Davies and Birbili, 2000) in written business communication, emphasis is on taking action rather than creative expression, and this difference is reflected in the content, form, and tone of business genres such as a proposal, report, memorandum. Although professional texts can be written by individuals, they often represent the result of cooperation of several authors, and almost always, the text reflects the position of the institution not an individual. Also, there is greater complexity when it comes to target readers and the purpose of writing in the workplace, as opposed to writing classes at school, where the tasks of writing are directed to a main reader – the teacher, and only for one purpose –assessment of

knowledge. Therefore, it is unlikely that the skills acquired in writing classes and knowledge of some general principles will be sufficient to help students in work contexts outside the classroom.

## 2. Main characteristics of Problem Based Learning

Theoretical basics of problem based learning can be found in research and scientific work of the representatives of Gestalt theory, the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner's theory of discovery learning, project-method of American philosopher John Dewey and others. Among all the theories of learning, constructivism, which believes that students are active constructors of their own knowledge, is certainly the most prominent theoretical approach underlying problem based learning.

Savery and Duffy (Savery & Duffy, 1996: 136) list three basic aspects of constructivism that are related to the problem based learning. The first concept of constructivism illustrated in PBL, is that we can understand something only through interaction with the environment, that is, how we are going to understand something depends on our experience and activities in a particular context. The second concept is that learning is the result of cognitive conflict. When students realize that their knowledge cannot be applied to solve problems, they feel tension and the need to change their approach, which serves as a stimulus for further learning. Finally, according to the third concept that connects PBL and constructivism, knowledge must be tested through a process of social negotiation. Working in collaborative groups provides an opportunity to test what we know, what other students know, and in that way improve our knowledge. Different views are used to re-examine our beliefs and serve as a stimulus for new learning.

The educational objective of PBL is to motivate and engage students to explore the "bad structured open-ended questions with which they will meet in their daily lives". These *ill-structured problems* can be described as a complex open-ended questions, which present a minimum of information and provide a lot of ways to solve the problem (Harper-Marinick, 2001: 11). Such complex problems provide a stimulus for learning and integration of knowledge, which helps to retain knowledge and recall it for the later use.

Throughout the literature, researchers list the advantages and disadvantages of the implementation of PBL. The advantages are: improved retention of knowledge, encouragement of lifelong learning, increased motivation, better interaction between students and teachers, improving the skills of problem solving and information gathering, as well as improving metacognitive skills (Duch et al., 2001;

Hung, 2011; Thorpe & Sage, 2002,Yew & Schmidt, 2011).

Uden and Beaumont (Uden & Beaumont, 2006) point out that the PBL promotes learning with understanding. First of all, PBL prepares students for their jobs, helps them in achieving competence, such as coping with problems, making reasonable decisions in a variety of circumstances, research the problem from a holistic approach, the ability to work in a team, respect for the views of other people but at the same time recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses, adapting to changes in the workplace.

One of the goals of PBL is to develop *self-directed learning skills*. SFL is defined as "a process in which individuals take the initiative in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating goals, the selection and application of appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes" (Loiens, Magda & Rikers, 2008). In PBL, students are invited to take responsibility for their own learning which leads to an increase in self-directed learning skills. In the initial phase of problem-solving activities, students are usually gathered in small, collaborative working groups. While the group discusses, talks about the problem, generates hypotheses and identifiesrelevant elements of prior knowledge, they often realise which parts needed to solve the problem are missing (Evensen & Hmelo, 2000). This leads to the "division of labor" phase which is a component of SFL.

Sendagi and Odabasi (Sendagi & Odabasi, 2009) argue that PBL can improve the development of critical thinking because students learn how to analyze a problem, identify the relevant facts and generate hypotheses, identify the necessary information to solve problems and make reasonable decisions about how to solve the problem.

### 3. Problem Based Learning and teaching English as a foreign language

Many approaches to foreign language teaching coincide with the philosophy of learning through solving problems.

Firstly, to improve language skills, students should have the opportunity to communicate with each other. PBL offers many opportunities for students to communicate in a foreign language as communication is generated in a problem-solving task. According to Barrett, "in PBL, students constantly interact and share knowledge because communication leads to more communication; ideas generate ideas, discussions lead to thinking, but thinking leads to further discussion among students" (Barrett, 2010).

Secondly, Krashenexplains (Krashen, 1982) that there is a significant difference

between language acquisition and language learning. Adopting the language is unconscious, while language learning is a conscious process. Children acquire their mother tongue through interaction with parents and the environment. Children acquire language through unconscious process, during which they have no awareness of grammatical rules. This suggests that the native language is acquired through exposure to the language and meaningful communication, without the need for systematic lectures of any kind. The duty of teachers is to create a situation where students will acquire not learn the language. Unfortunately, in foreign language teaching interaction is neglected, even ignored. Most of the courses are related to grammar, patterns, repetition and memorizing. Is this similar to the way the child acquires language? Definitely not. This is language learning. PBL is an effective and innovative approach where learning environment is converted into a place where language acquisition takes place. There is no explicit language learning in PBL. Also, there is no teacher who shows how and what to say in various situations. Students are the ones who shape the situation and are involved in the communicative activity. Language is acquired through problem solving, because students do not think about the language but try to communicate during the activity.

Thirdly, motivation facilitates the process of learning the language, and classroom activities should be purposeful and meaningful, so that students recognize their value in the learning process. In that way, students will be intrinsically motivated. Motivation can also arise from emotional satisfaction. It lies in the power of decision making and excitement of interaction. When it comes to intrinsic motivation, people are not only interested, but they feel competent and determined. According to Stepanovna (Stepanovna, 2000), motivation is an integral part of the problem based learning since it creates pleasant feelings, the conditions for the emergence of real "situation of success"– teaching situations in which a student feels like a winner, a researcher of the new landscape. It is important that each student experiences situation of success and personal victory.

To sum up, numerous authors (Savery, 2006; Barron, 2002, Othman, & Shah, 2013) argue that other techniques employed in EFL learning/teaching such as: the project method, task-based learning, and discovery learning are pedagogies that promote active learning and engage students in higher-order thinking. These approaches try to make learning more meaningful for students and transferable to situations outside learning contexts. They promote lifelong learning and require from students to use task

related language. However, these approaches use problems which are structured, elected by teachers in order to practice desired language functions. Although these approaches use problems to motivate students to use a foreign language, they work in a very traditional teaching format "presentation – practice – production" and there is very little research. When expected results are clearly defined there is less need or incentive for students to set their own parameters. In the real world, the ability to define the problem and a range of possible solutions is extremely important. Thirdly, the main difference between PBL and these approaches relates to the role of the teacher. Only in PBL, teacher supports the process but does not provide information relating to the problem - they are the responsibility of the student.

## 4. PBL and ESP

Pennelll and Miles (Miles & Pennell, 2009) advocate for PBL as a rhetorical pedagogy for business communication. PBL inverts the typical instructional sequence; rather than presenting concepts first and then asking students to apply them, PBL creates situations in which students must learn the concepts in order to solve a "problem" constructed for that purpose. Thus, students learn in an iterative process as they cycle through the three

key questions: 1. What do we know? 2. What do we need to know? and 3. How will we learn it?. Pennell and Miles argue that PBL moves the classroom situation closer to authentic rhetorical learning, with its emphasis on deriving solutions from the situation itself. Another way to conceptualize this switch is to think along a spectrum of how many parameters are given to the students upfront, and how many different types of rhetorical choices students are required to make for themselves. We locate genre-based assignments on one end of this spectrum: In the typical genre-based assignment (e.g. write a memo to your boss requesting permission to telecommute or revise this bad news letter to a client), most of the rhetorical parameters are given – the genre, the audience, and often the tone as well. In such classrooms, teacher and textbook present the necessary information, and students practice the skills at home and turn in their completed draft for review and revision. Farther along the spectrum, there are case-based assignments, in which students are exposed to concepts that they then apply to a case. The specific genre or genres may or may not be assigned; other elements of the rhetorical situation may or may not be spelled out. Approaching the opposite end of the spectrum, in situational assignments, students are placed in a situation and need to figure out

for themselves how to respond, often guided by a particular chapter in a textbook. Their completed projects may include a range of genres. At the far end of the spectrum, we can put PBL. With PBL, students are not provided with a guiding theory or theme for the project; rather, it is up to them to figure out what the situation calls for, how to do what they are being asked to do, and how to do it effectively. Because it prescribes so few of the parameters, we claim that PBL provides an inherently rhetorical framework for the business communication classroom.

## 5. The basic approaches to teaching the aspect of style in ESP writing classes

In the traditional teaching, style is closely associated with the *form*, which means that the style is treated as separate from the meanings, ideas and the writing process. Traditional exercises are devoted entirely to the sentence level and emphasize the impact of grammatical decisions on style in different situations. The style is considered as a local aspect so that inefficient style becomes something that can be easily corrected (Medzerian, 2010). When we give a value judgment on the writing style of the student, the text is treated as a product. The efficiency of the student style is determined in relation to the reader. When the style is assessed based on the effect it has on the reader, writing skills are assessed based on the ability to accurately predict the reactions of the audience and the style is separated from the other components in the process of writing. When we equate style with the finished product, we teach students that style is out of their control and that the revision was in vain because students learn that good style means to anticipate and meet the style preferences of readers and teachers.

Another approach to teaching style, which takes more account of the writer and the *writing process*, presented the idea that the writer's style indicates his or her view of the topic. Writers bring stylistic decision from their view of the world, these decisions determine the selection and presentation of information, including the micro level of diction and sentence patterns. However, Daniel Horowitz (Horowitz, 1986) argues that the process-oriented approach does not consider the professional realities faced by students of foreign language and suggests switching pedagogical focus on writing genres to a specific field of study of students learning a foreign language. Therefore, teachers need to teach students the textual characteristics relevant disciplines, to teach them to analyze their needs, evaluate the expectations of the audience and produce texts that are acceptable in the discourses of certain communities (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005).

Dana Ferris (Ferris, 2002: 51) talks about the importance of *reading* in the development of understanding of stylistics and states that the style of writing is acquired through exposure to the target language (particularly written language) rather than the correction in the classroom. So teachers need to use models of written language when they want to draw attention to style. It is not enough, however, for students just to read these texts; teachers need to point out when their relevant characteristics. Ferris and Hedgecock (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005: 53) believe that the reading of texts helps students to understand the various elements of writing, including the rhetorical structure and stylistic features. Scientists agree that reading and analyzing authentic texts of style can help students to adopt aspects of academic writing style.

The idea of *post process era* in the teaching of writing occurred in the early nineties. Li En Breuch (Breuch, 2002) elaborates on two basic principles of post process theory. First, writing pedagogy requires a dialogue between teachers and students, rather than monologue of teachers. Post process encourages the participation of teachers through a two-way dialogue between teachers and students. Instead of the traditional concept, where the teacher teaches and the students receive, memorize and repeat the knowledge, the author recommends the concept of learning through problem solving (*problem posing concept*) that invites students to play an active role in learning. Breuch (Breuch, 2002) looks at the lecture as a way of mentoring and believes that the relationship between teachers and students should be collaborative. Post process theory advocates the training of students and equalization of power between teachers and students. The role of teachers in the post process is to be a facilitator that provides feedback and encouragement, and in that way making the process of writing more easy.

## 6. The PBL model

In the next section of the paper, we will present a model for teaching professional writing style through the problem-based learning (PBL). Students are encouraged to integrate concepts such as clarity, conciseness, tone, word choice on their own. Students are encouraged to collaborate and discuss in order to finish the given tasks. Based on the results of theoretical analysis of PBL implementation, we concluded that the most effective teaching unit should consist of following seven phases:

1. The creation of the problem situation;
2. Problem definition;

3. Decomposition of the problem into smaller problems;

4. Suggesting the principles of problem solving (hypothesis) – generate possible solutions;

5. Self-study – In this phase, teacher distributes the tasks. Students work in groups and individually to organize ideas and prior knowledge, e.i. define *learning issues* (what do we know and what do we need to know). They research the unknown in order to solve problem (verification of hypotheses) and choose the most valuable solution;

6. Generalization of results and synthesis of knowledge;

7. Application of newly acquired knowledge on a similar problem.

## PROBLEM BASED TEACHING UNIT – PROFESSIONAL WRITING STYLE

**The creation of the problem situation:**

Discuss and try to explain the following statements (quotes).

"Proper words in proper places make the true definition of style." – *Jonathan Swift*

"When we come across a natural style, we are surprised and delighted; for we expected an author, and we find a man." – *Blaise Pascal*

"Let every word say." – *Unknown*

"That writer does the most who gives his reader the most knowledge, and takes from him the least time." – *C. C. Colton*

"I believe more in the scissors than I do in the pencil." – *Truman Capote*

"Never use a longer word when a shorter word will do." – *Ben Franklin*

"I never write metropolis for seven cents because I can get the same money for city. I never write policeman, because I can get the same money for cop." – *Mark Twain*

"A designer knows he has achieved perfection not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away." – *Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

"You catch more bears with honey than you do with vinegar." – *an English saying*

**Definition of the problem:** How to achieve a good style in business documents?

**Decomposition of the problem:**

a) How to achieve clarity?

b) How to achieve conciseness?

c) What is tone? What tone should business documents have and how to achieve it?

d) What is meant by good use of the words (*word choice*)?

**Suggesting hypotheses:**

A)

Clarity can be ruined mostly by modifiers used in the wrong place in the sentence, as well as examples of wrong parallelism. Also, to write more clearly, ambiguous pronouns should be identified and replaced.

When it comes to the connection between clarity and the use of words, it is advisable to avoid the use of acronyms, jargon, clichés and banal business terms and phrases (trying to sound business and professional). Also avoid ambiguous and vague words because precise, direct, specific and concrete words are always a better choice. Of course, our document will be clearer if we use standard and familiar words, simple and plain and not pompous with which our documents sound artificial.

B)

Our documents can be concise and economical if avoid unnecessary nominalization (e.g. make a decision – decide);

You must look for all the sentences that start with who, which, that because you probably can shorten and a large number of unnecessary prepositions. Also be careful not to be too extensive to express something with more words than necessary (at this moment in time vs. now);

After that, we can throw out unnecessary long introduction and comments;

Sentences which start with there is / are and it is / was usually can be shortened;

The most common examples of unnecessary redundancy is tautology – repeating words of similar meaning and pleonasms – the accumulation of unnecessary, superfluous speech. Examples include a) when we use the word with the same meaning (e.g. big in size – big, repeat again – repeat, true facts – facts) or obvious words (e.g. month of June, red in color, subject of chemistry) and doubled/tripled words – e.g. right and proper, null and void, urgent and important, full and complete, acknowledge and appreciate).

Many words express the highest levels and modifiers add nothing: absolutely sure, honest truth. Some modifiers add no information, the meaning is contained in a noun or a verb: e.g. previous experience, join together.

The general and abstract modifiers: very, great, extreme, several, dramatic, paramount, vital do not mean anything. Adjectives and adverbs that add the intensity are also unclear, like really, good, nice and similar words that are commonly used, because the writer cannot be bothered to think of anything more, or simply because they filled the sentence.

C)

Tone means the way in which we address the reader, our relationship with the reader, and our topic. Tone is mostly determined by our choice of words. It can be friendly or cool, optimistic or pessimistic, insecure or secure but it must always be positive, polite, professional and, most importantly, adequately formal. Formal tone is achieved using a passive voice, avoiding contraction, idioms and phrasal verbs, using titles when addressing readers, formal (standard) terms and rare use of personal pronouns I, you, instead of which more use the pronoun we, while informal document written similar the way we talk with a lot of abbreviations and incomplete sentences.

D)

Words or phrases that are popular, modern, with which we want to sound professional and above all to impress.

Short, simple and plain words are much more efficient.

Avoid vague and ambiguous words, only use precise.

Action verbs leave stronger impression.

Use jargon (technical language used by a specific group or profession) when you know that the word is appropriate for the intended audience.

As mentioned with clarity, clichés – too used expressions, slang – non-standard terms used in the conversation, a tautology – unnecessary repetition and pleonasms – use more words than necessary, as the diameters of redundancy that corrupt conciseness and should be eliminated when revising your documents.

Every word you write should have a purpose. Every word should be used for a reason: to convey the message, set the tone or connect ideas. All unnecessary words should be eliminated.

Discriminatory words and expressions which in any case must be avoided: the words that offend members of a particular sex – sexist, race and nationality, as well as words that offend people with special needs.

One must resort to positive words because they contribute to the overall tone of the letter.

**Self-study:**

*Task*

You will work in groups. Answer the following questions.

1) How is the business style different from other styles (literary, personal)?
2) What are three main rules of business style?
3) What is a clear message? How would you define clarity?

4) Why is clarity very important in the business world?

5) How is clarity achieved? What can interfere with clarity?

6) What are misplaced modifiers? Why do they spoil the clarity? Find and give examples.

7) What are dangling modifiers? Find and give examples.

8) Parallelism means _____ ___

9) What's wrong with the following sentence – "When I put the computer on the desk, it broke."

10) Explain the connection between clarity and use of words.

11) Helen Wilkie in his book, Writing, Speaking, Listening mentioned that when writing business documents should **write to express not to impress**? Explain

12) Mary Ellen Guffey Business Communication in Process and Product mentioned the abbreviation KISS. What does this abbreviations mean and how it relates to the clarity of business document?

13) Lauren Starkey in *Goof Proof Business Writing* argues that writers of business documents need to write **to the level of understanding**? Explain.

14) Since clichés are known to all people, can they help you write it clearer? Please explain.

15) What is a buried verb? Give an original example. Why you should avoid them?

16) What's wrong with the sentence – "Profits showed a negative trend."? What do we really want to say?

17) Why good writer would never use the following sentence? "When it arrived, I read your message and am now replying."

*Task*

Correct the following sentences to make them more clear and explain how clarity was ruined.

1. Skilled at social networking, the marketing contract was won by ReachOut.

2. She told Lucy that her presentation was wonderful.

3. After being photocopied, the assistant delivered the report to all team members.

4. He told the boss that he was wrong.

5. In preparing next year's budget, several assumptions had to be made by us.

6. She offered her a job as salesperson, with a reasonable starting salary, commission structure, and the benefits were also good.

7. Many small investors would rather save their money than risking it in the stock market.

8. They are more interested in financial security than to make a large profit.

9. Both recession and the fact that savings accounts yield low interest have led many people to other areas of investment.

10. Here are important tips for protecting your car from our insurance company.

11. Mutual funds not only provide high yield but they offer reasonable security.

12. The investor is taking neither an enormous risk nor giving up to recession.

13. I saw the ad in the paper, but now I can't find it.

14. Take the reports from the desks and dust them with a clean cloth.

15. When I loaded the new program on the computer, it crashed.

*Task*

You will work in groups. Answer the following questions.

1) Why is concision important? How is it achieve?

2) BWC mentions **to go on a witch-hunt**? What do you think it means?

3) What sentence is more economical? Why?

The number of applications to schools of business is on the increase.

Business school applications are increasing.

4) What is redundancy? Give an example. Why should it be avoided?

5) Do you know what pleonasm and tautology are?

6) What do you think the long lead-ins are? Give an example.

7) What's wrong with the following sentence: *There is no one who can do the job better than you.*

8) What's wrong with phrases such as: *due to the fact that* and *in view of the fact that*?

9) Why we should never start a sentence as follows: *I am sending this e-mail because we have just hired a new manager, and I would like to introduce her.?*

*Task*

Make the following sentences more concise.

This is to inform you that per request of yours to ordering new computer equipment we will proceed to do so within seven days.

Pursuant to questions concerning revised guidelines for writing policies, a meeting is scheduled for May 27 to ensure clarification of the above-mentioned guidelines.

The reason she quit was because of the fact that she was sick.

We began the project in the month of April.

He opened the conversation with a reference to the subject of inflation.

The field of engineering is a profession that offers great opportunities.

The human-resources manager spoke to the printing-plant supervisor with regard to the scheduling of employee vacations.

We cannot fill the order until the time as payment is received for previous shipments.

Due to the fact that our manager is acquainted with your sales rep, we are fully cognizant of your price increases.

As a general rule, we would not accept the return; however, we will in all probability make an exception in this case.

This message is to let you know that i received your e-mail and its attachments.

I am writing this letter to inform you that your homeowners' coverage expires soon.

On behalf of the entire staff, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your many years of outstanding service.

There are many businesses that are implementing strict e-mail policies.

It is the CEO who must give her approval to the plan.

*Task*

Answer the following questions.

1) How often have you heard someone complain: "The problem is not what he said but how he said it. Who does he think he's talking to?"

2) What is the tone?

3) What is the appropriate tone (which elements does it contain)?

5) Which documents are considered formal and how we can achieve a formal tone?

6) Which documents we can be informal?

7) Regarding the tone, what should you consider before you start to write?

*Task*

Bearing in mind characteristics of a good business style, think about the difference between the two versions of the same letter. If you had to choose one of two letters, which one would you choose and why?

Dear Mr. Singh:

With reference to your order for a Nashito camcorder, we are in receipt of your check and are returning same.

I beg to inform you that, as a manufacturer, our company sells camcorders to dealers only. In compliance with our wholesale agreement, we deem it best to refrain from direct business with private consumers.

For your information, there are many retailers in your vicinity who carry Nashito camcorders. Attached please find a list of said dealers.

Hoping you understand.

Yours truly,

Dear Mr. Singh:

We have received your order for a Nashito camcorder but, unfortunately, must return your check.

As a manufacturer, we sell only to dealers, with whom we have very explicit wholesale agreements.

Nevertheless, we sincerely appreciate your interest in Nashito products. We are therefore enclosing a list of retailers in your community who carry a full line of our camcorders. Any one of them will be happy to serve you.

Sincerely yours,

*Task*

The following email can be categorized as formal, distant and neutral. Write it up and give it an informal and personal tone.

To: nickhenry@cttinternet.com

Subject: IT support

Dear Nick

I am writing in connection with your email, offering IT support to our organisation.

The range of services offered is impressive and does, indeed, match our requirements. However, I regret to inform you that there is no possibility at present to increase our current budget for IT services. Therefore it will not be possible for us to take up your generous introductory offer. Going forward, we will monitor the budgetary situation and if it changes, I will definitely contact your organisation.

Finally, I would like to thank you again for contacting us.

Regards

Pavel Stokowicz

*Task*

You will work in groups. Try to answer the following questions. The answers that you do not know, you can search for on the Internet.

1) How does the use of words affect the clarity, conciseness and tone?

2) Is it better to use complex or simple words?

3) Is it good to use technical terms?

4) Why should we avoid acronyms?

5) Do you know what slang is?

6) Do you know what the jargon is?

7) Do you know what the clichés are?

8) How would you explain **the trite phrases business**?

9) What is the office speak, management speak, legalese, commercialese, buzz words (five phrases)?

10) What could be discriminatory to say?

*Task*

Correct the use of word in the following sentences and make them more appropriate.

1. I telephoned you concerning the folder I purchased from you, and which I need to submit to my committee tomorrow.
2. The shift from animal and muscle power to machine power was a major achievement for man.
3. It would be advantageous for us to finalize the project: we can modify it at a date to be determined later.
4. They transmitted the invoice by fax, with additional information, but it was evident they hadn't implemented the changes.
5. Jeff Davies is a superb secretary, despite the fact that he is a man.
6. It would be of benefit to us if you could perform the repairs by employing the latest components.
7. Our team must be willing to think outside the box in coming up with marketing ideas that pop.
8. Mark Mendenhall, a manager, and Linda Decker, a supervisor and mother of two, are vying for the position.
9. True to form, our competitor has made a snarky claim that we think is way below the belt.
10. If you will refer back to the budget, you will see that there are provisions that prevent blowing the budget.

*Task*

Group 1: Make a checklist with the guidelines for the verification of clarity;
Group 2: Make a checklist with guidelines for checking the concision;
Group 3: Make a checklist with the guidelines for the verification tone;
Group 4: Make a checklist with guidelines for checking the use of the word.

**Reporting and Synthesis:**

Identify stylistic errors in the following letter according to the checklist from the previous task.

BURGESS FINANCIAL SERVICES
4 Market House, Union Street Warchester, WR1 4ST
Tel. 01234 567890


24 October 20XX
Mr Stephen Morris
24 College Road
Warchester
WR2 3UV
Dear Mr Morris
This is to confirm my telephone conversation with you this morning

regarding your request for a quote for car insurance.

I have taken on board your requirements and conducted a thorough investigation of all the options open to you, leaving no stone unturned and looking at all the policies on offer.

Attached are the details of the best policy I have been able to find for your needs. As I said on the phone, it provides all the standard cover you asked for. The downside is that in the event that you needed to utilise your vehicle for business travel you would need to take out a completely new policy.

If you are happy with the terms as outlined, I would be grateful if you could let me have your cheque for the first premium at your earliest convenience, so that provision can be made for cover as from the beginning of next month.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Burges


**Application:**


Below is the text of the email to a friend about a business trip to Germany. What should be changed so the style of the e-mail becomes acceptable?


I had a fantastic trip to Berlin last week. Horst Kuhn, the guy I was doing business with, was great, and we got on really well. He took me to this amazing restaurant one evening for dinner, and then on to a club, where we met up with some of his friends.

The business side went well, too. His company is very interested in a joint venture with us, to supply financial software to banks and other financial institutions across Europe. Horst reckons that with our complementary markets (they do a lot in Eastern Europe, while we're particularly strong in Scandinavia, France and Holland) we could clean up if we joined forces. The terms he suggested were a bit tricky (he's a persuasive guy, and was trying to get me to agree to them having a 60 per cent share) but I stuck to my guns and managed to persuade him to ask his Board to consider equal shares.

There's still a lot of work to do, but I think we'll get a really good deal out of this. At the risk of blowing my own trumpet, I reckon I'm capable of getting our Board to take the idea seriously.


## 7. Conclusion

PBL is a modern pedagogy, very close to the principles of post-process writing theory, principles of collaboration and active learning, and as such, according to the Breuch (Breuch, 2002) contributes to the development of writing skills in ESP because it is concentrated on the social, contextual even political forces surrounding the writing process.

Furthermore, there are a lot of commonalities between PBL and EFL

methodology. With the introduction of PBL successful active learning is achieved, which provides motivation for learning, because it is interesting and at the same time provides an opportunity for the adoption of all language skills (Stepanovna, 2000). PBL uses authentic materials and encourages students to use language in meaningful contexts because it allows the student to develop a successful aspect of style in teaching writing in the language of the profession. During the problem-solving task, students feel the need to communicate with each other. In other words, students naturally communicate in order to solve the problem. In this way, when troubleshooting the students do not learn the language but acquire it, since they do not think about language but try to communicate during the activity (Krashen, 1982).

Ferris and Hedgcock (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005: 53) believe that the reading of texts help students understand the various elements of writing, including the rhetorical structure and stylistic features. To resolve problem situations students have to think, discuss, highlight and check the hypothesis, as well as read additional literature. Reading and analysis of a style of authentic texts can help students to adopt aspects of professional writing style. Better results with PBL implementation can be expected due to the fact that students have to read extensively and with understanding, in order to collect the information needed to solve the tasks within the PBL class.

Implementation of PBL is just starting to be tested in areas such as English for Specific Purposes. PBL provides an alternative functional approach in the literature for English for Specific Purposes because in this way teachers facilitate the practical application of the language through a series of thematically-organized tasks. Problem based learning recognizes the needs of students in terms of the communication, the communication environment, means of communication, language skills, functions, structure and puts precisely these needs student at the center of teaching foreign languages.

However, given the specific characteristics of language learners (for example, the level of knowledge, time constraints and motivation), some of the principles of PBL must be changed and adapted to the disciplines, but retain the essence of the PBL at the same time.

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[i]The PBL model presented in this paper was written within the research which was carried out for the needs of the doctoral thesis on the topic "Problem based learning and ESP writing skills", which is in the process of being written.

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