



Are we all speaking the same language?

Good communication in the workplace keeps the business running smoothly.

Everyone should be able to understand each other and pass on information quickly and easily.

If your staff are struggling with English here's what you can do.

Are we all speaking the same language?

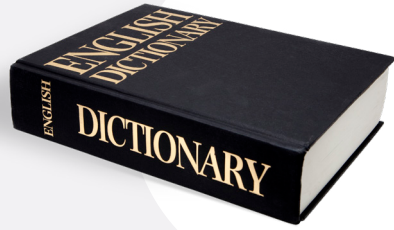
It sounds obvious, doesn't it? When workers are confident with their English, they:

- feel more able
- have a better understanding of specific instructions and policies
- offer an improved customer experience
- can make the workplace safer
- stay with you longer
- feel more integrated and ready to progress.

As an employer, did you know there are opportunities to help your employees improve their language skills?

The main one is classes in learning English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). It's about everyday language and communication and is taught in English.





How do you access ESOL?

The government funds ESOL learning for certain groups such as unemployed workers, but expects you to pay for ESOL in the workforce. However, European Social Fund (ESF) money may be available in your area.

If you have a good partnership with a learning provider or trade unions, they can help secure this, and other learning offers.

Can it help my business needs?

Professional ESOL teachers assess the level of learners' language skills. From there they can tailor learning to practical activities that apply to your own everyday work situations. They can even teach vocabulary specific to your own business or sector.

I'm keen on people having ESOL support from the start – how do I do that?

It is good practice to include ESOL learning as part of inductions, and later as part of learning and development plans. Regular reviews help line managers identify where language support is still needed.

ESOL learning can be informal and non-accredited. But it can get a staff member a qualification, which can be a gateway to further learning and responsibilities in the workplace.

“The role of the union has been critical, the collaborative relationship is the key to success”

How can I provide the basics?

These are the ways you can help:

Easy wins >

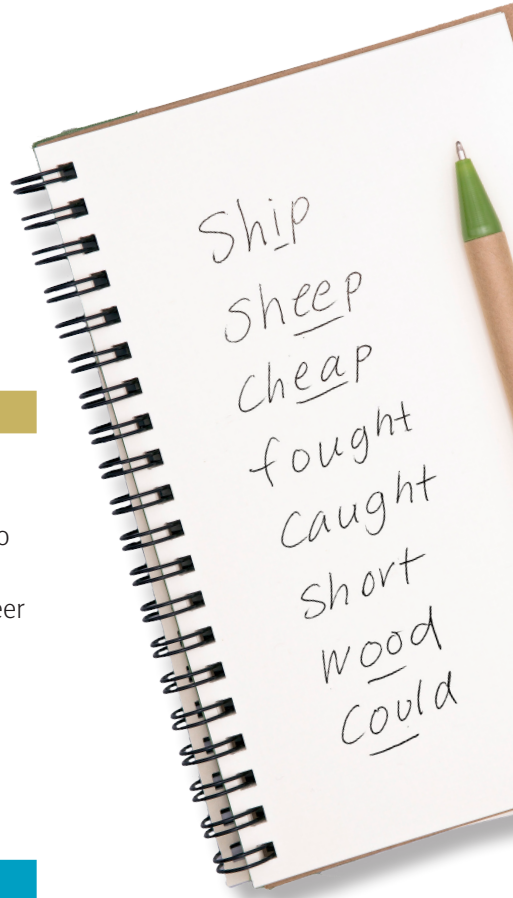
- a room for informal language learning such as discussion groups
- ensure those with shift patterns have access to learning
- work with union learning reps who can give peer support to ESOL learners
- set up a buddy or mentoring system
- provide extra time to read and understand documents written in English
- work with trade unions to find appropriate training provision

Medium support >

- provide a joint workplace learning centre and work with trade unions to offer online learning
- support online learning with face-to-face workshops

Full support >

- classroom-based courses in the workplace with time off
- time off for learning
- arrange training for managers and supervisors to support language learning



Here are some testimonials from other employers:

“This has been very constructive and has certainly improved communications across the site. About 40% of our workforce are from abroad, and given the number specific policies and procedures that staff are required to follow whilst working on the factory a good understanding of English is pretty essential. The courses have made a lot of difference, and we are very happy with the way things have been going.”

Jason Carey, *operations manager* **Airsprung**

“Most food companies now employ staff from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures so spoken and written English to an ever-higher level is a key building block in this training.”

Mike Wood, *group operations manager*
Flagship Europe

“The project is a win-win with benefits for both the company and our workforce. Workers have gained life-skills with minimal disruption to the plant, achieved at minimal cost. The role of the union has been critical, the collaborative relationship is the key to success.”

Nick Phillips, *site manager* **CHEP UK Ltd.**

More case studies:

McVities: a manager's view of ESOL
<https://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/teaching-english-work/union-learning-reps/phil-managers-view-esol>

Better language skills, better care
case study from Sweden highlights managers' role and creative ways to improve language skills <http://languageforwork.ecml.at/Portals/48/HtmlTagFiles/fa79162b-c9b4-418f-8a0d-a53f9f16848c.pdf>





This title may also be made available, on request, in accessible electronic formats or in Braille, audiotape and large print, at no extra cost.

Published by unionlearn

Congress House
London WC1B 3LS

Tel 020 7467 1212
www.unionlearn.org.uk

 *tucunionlearn*

 *@unionlearn*

December 2017

Design by Rumba
Printed by XXXXXX

