
CREATING CONTENT FOR NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS: TOOLS YOU CAN USE



Today I'm going to talk about tools you can use to create content if there will be employees in your course who are non-native English speakers.

First, little explanatory note on how I came to this topic:

Used to teach English as a second language

University level, both U.S. and overseas.

Students were adults entering English-medium departments,
undergraduate or graduate

Tools I'm going to talk about:

Things teachers in ESL world use to prepare lessons, exams, other
materials

Like to start with small example from my own experience here at GP.

GP PROJECT

- New Client: Chain of Convenience Stores
- Two WBTs for Employees
- Kickoff: Client had concerns about existing training
 - Employees (team members) weren't absorbing it
 - Too much text onscreen; "dense paragraphs"

Last December assigned to a project in which the client was a chain of convenience stores, here in U.S.

2 employee training WBTs

At kickoff, client told us why they didn't like existing training.

Employees weren't absorbing the material

Too much text onscreen

Too many dense paragraphs

GP PROJECT

- Reading proficiency of average team member: 6th grade level
 - Incomplete schooling
 - English was their second language
 - Both
- Goal:
 - Pitch to team members' actual reading level
- Draft Storyboard: "Considerations: Team members demonstrate differing levels of educational achievement and English language proficiency."

In context of this discussion, client said:

Reading proficiency of average team member – 6th grade level
Either because of incomplete schooling, because English was their second language, or both

Client wanted to make sure

We pitched to team members' actual English level.

There you can see the statement we had on the storyboard cover page.

TODAY'S WORKFORCES

- Increasing workforce diversity
 - Active diversity goals
 - International expansion; companies finding overseas partners
 - Country populations are increasing in diversity
- Diverse U.S. organizations:
 - Employees can have different native languages
 - Different countries, or within one country
 - All speak English in the workplace or the Webex meeting
- Challenge: Create training in English for a workforce whose members don't bring the same level of proficiency or learning history to the English language

I'm getting the impression this situation is not necessarily uncommon here in the U.S..

There's increasing workforce diversity. The reasons we already know.

Diverse organizations based in U.S.

Might employ people who speak different native languages

May be located in different countries or same

All speak English in workplace or Webex mtg

This presents CDs and IDs with a special challenge:

Create content in English for a workforce whose members don't bring the same level of proficiency or learning history to the English language.

So how do you meet that challenge?

WHAT'S A CD TO DO?

- Global English

As we know, first thing you would do, and main thing you would do:
Align your text with global English standards

That, however, is the one thing I'm not going to go into.
We already have an excellent resource on that.

WHAT'S A CD TO DO?

- Global English
- 2020 CD&E Symposium: "Global English for Everyone"
 - Erika Kauppi-Lefere and Katie Radloff
 - Teams: Block 2 session > "Recording" heading

That's the great session that Erika and Katie gave at the symposium in the spring.

Global English for Everyone

Recording of the session still available in Teams.

Block 2 session.

So you can head on over to Teams to check that out.

TOOLS

Match the level of content to the level of learner

Tools:

- English Proficiency Index
- English Vocabulary Profile (EVP)
- CEFR
- Glossary options

Instead, I'll talk about other tools available, in case you haven't seen them.

These tools:

Can help you match the English level of your content to English proficiency level of your learners.

These tools are:

English Proficiency Index

English Vocabulary Profile

This will require a little bit of background on a thing called the CEFR

Then an option or two on Glossaries and Dictionaries.

So let's start with the English Proficiency Index.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY INDEX

- Education First ("EF")
- Broad picture of a country's English skills
- General view of target audience capabilities
- www.ef.edu/epi/



The Proficiency Index

annual survey of language learners around the world
conducted by Education First, a Swiss company that does language
training and cultural exchange.

If your training

for employees in a country where English is not the main language
you can use the English Proficiency Index to get a general sense of your
audience capabilities.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY INDEX

Profile:

- Overall English score
- Rank
- Average level of education
- Household internet penetration
- GNI
- Region-by-region breakdown



For each country on the list, the Index includes a profile.

Each profile has:

overall English score, on a proprietary English test that Education First administers.

Each profile also includes things like:

average level of education

household internet penetration

gross national income.

Also has breakdowns by region.

Not scientifically accurate, because the people self-select as already being interested in English.

But you can use this to get a quick, basic sense of the probable English capabilities of your learners.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY INDEX



For example, Netherlands ranks first.
First in Europe, first in world in 2019
70 on EPI test.

Azerbaijan ranks 33RD out of 33 countries in Europe.
85th out of the 100 countries on index.

Information might not change your content or how you write it very much.

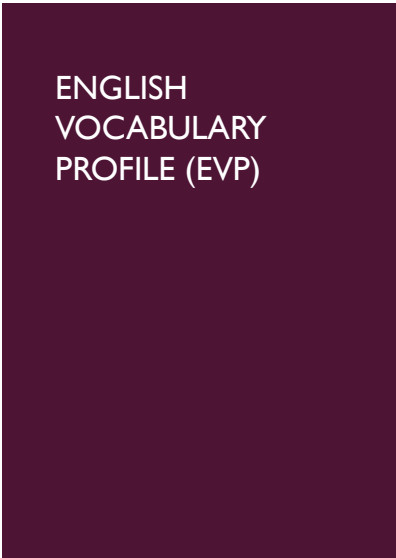
But if your training is going to be taking place in Netherlands
Be confident that they'll be able to handle the English you use

Whereas:

If your training is going to be in Azerbaijan
You might want to look more carefully at your content

Take steps to make it as easily understandable as possible.

Like I said, it's not scientifically accurate, but it just gives you kind of a ballpark of how good a country's English is.



ENGLISH VOCABULARY PROFILE (EVP)

- Online database of English words
- Maintained by Cambridge
- Graded according to placement on CEFR scale
- www.englishprofile.org

The next tool is the English Vocabulary Profile.

The English Vocabulary Profile:
Online database of English words

Words in database:

Graded according to their placement on a scale used in what's called the CEFR.

That stands for the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

So before we talk about the Vocabulary Profile, we need to take a quick look at the CEFR.

COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES (CEFR)

- Standardize language proficiency assessment
- A way to talk about skill level
- A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2
- www.coe.int/lang-CEFR



The CEFR

Had its origins in the formation of the European Union.

Purpose was to standardize language proficiency assessment across the Union.

Now used by a lot of different orgs around the globe.

Basis for comparing curricula, learning materials, assessments, and things, no matter which language. In other words, it's just a way to talk about skill level or language proficiency.

Uses a 6-level assessment:

A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2

A1 is a beginning learner

C2 is someone with full mastery.

Used anywhere that language qualifications would be necessary to

document.

Education

Also in employment

Situations that call for translation or exchange

So that's the CEFR.

COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES (CEFR)

- Same framework can be used to assess content
 - Books, speeches, etc.
 - Paragraphs
 - Words
- www.coe.int/lang-CEFR



Interesting thing:

You can use same framework—A1 through C2—to talk not just about language development but also about content.

Books, paragraphs, even individual words can be graded on 6-level scale.

ENGLISH VOCABULARY PROFILE

- Grades each word in English
- Which level of learner can be expected to know specific words
- Based on word's frequency or difficulty
- *Bread*: A1
- *Expenditure*: C2
- www.englishprofile.org/wordlists/evp

The screenshot shows the EnglishProfile website. At the top, there's a blue header with the 'EnglishProfile' logo and the tagline 'The CEFR for English'. Below this, there are tabs for 'British English' and 'American English'. The main heading is 'English Vocabulary Profile Online - British English'. There's a search bar with a dropdown menu showing 'Search'. To the right of the search bar are buttons for 'Search', 'Advanced Search', and 'Word List'. Below the search bar, there are two dropdown menus: 'Topic' and 'Part of Speech'. There's also a checkbox for 'Hide culturally sensitive words'. At the bottom, there's a table with columns: 'Base Word', 'Guided Word', 'Level', 'Part of Speech', 'Topic', and 'Details'. The table is currently empty.

That's what the English Vocabulary Profile does. It grades each word in English.

In other words:

Shows what level of learners can be expected to know a specific word

Example:

Bread is an A1 word

Expenditure is a C2.

ENGLISH VOCABULARY PROFILE

British English American English

English Vocabulary Profile Online - American English

security Go Ad Verb Adj Adv Pre Con Select All Search Advanced Search Close Results

Topic: - Select - ▼ Part of Speech: - Select - ▼

Hide culturally sensitive words ☐ Yes

Results 1 - 3 of 3 Sort by: Base Word ▼ Ascending ▼ Display #

Base Word	Guideword	Level	Part of Speech	Topic	Details
security	SAFE SITUATION	C1	noun		Details
security	PROTECTION	B2	noun	politics	Details
security	CONFIDENCE	C2	noun	people personality	Details

Here's what the screen looks like.

First, you notice you can choose American English or British English.

Here I put in the word "security."

Thinking about training courses on security.

Information security and so on.

British English
American English

English Vocabulary Profile Online - American English

Topic:
Part of Speech:

Hide culturally sensitive words: ☐ Yes

Results 1 - 3 of 3
Sort by: Display #

Base Word	Guideword	Level	Part of Speech	Topic	Details
security	SAFE SITUATION	B1	noun		Details
security	PROTECTION	B2	noun	politics	Details
security	CONFIDENCE	C1	noun	people: personality	Details

EVP tells me:

That sense of "security" is a B1 word.

Someone of lower intermediate proficiency would be expected to know it.

An advanced beginner would not.

Notice:

Security in terms of a safe situation, like job security, is a C1. Only advanced speakers would be familiar with that use.

ENGLISH VOCABULARY PROFILE

security · nov07 · 11:11 · 49 · 174 (144) · 1

Save to Bookmarks

Log out

security (PROTECTION)

 Protection of a person, building, organization or country against threats such as crimes or attacks by foreign countries

Dictionary annotation

security threat (example)

security measure

security (defense) measure

the security measure they took at securing the system

the word information that they were developed and handled security

The new measures will improve the security of the system

General examples

It is about a team that is trained to be able to escape from a maximum security cell. It is an action film. (The security Engineer Team for Small)

+ security (SAFE SITUATION)

 when something is not likely to fail or be lost

+ security (CONFIDENCE)

 confidence about oneself and the situation that one gets

If you click on the details, you can get definitions and examples.

USING THE EVP

SAMPLE USES:

- Learners are high school graduates, limited English exposure
 - Restrict vocabulary in your course to words up to B1
 - B2, C1, and C2: Eliminate or define
- Learners are professionals, advanced degrees (e.g., STEM),
 - Restrict vocabulary up to C1
 - Allow all words; define level C words
- For training in another country
 - Check CEFR level of country using the EF EPI
 - Alter vocabulary accordingly
 - www.efset.org/cefr

No guidelines on how to use EVP.

It's a tool. You decide how you want to use it or if you want to use it.

Here are some sample ideas.

For example, if you find out:

Your learners have limited English schooling

You might decide to restrict vocabulary in your course to words up to B1

On the other hand, if learners are professionals

With advanced STEM degrees, for example

You might decide to allow any word up to C1.

Another idea. We talked about Netherlands and Azerbaijan earlier.

The English Proficiency Index does have a page that correlates the two scales.

USING THE EVP

www.efset.org/cefr

The CEFR and EF SET

The EF SET has been designed to align to full CEFR spectrum from the very beginning. The CEFR sets out six levels of foreign language mastery, and EF SET is aligned as such.



Here's what it looks like.

For Netherlands, with a score in the 70's, it seems like you could feel comfortable using any vocabulary.

Azerbaijan's score was in the 40's.

Very low proficiency

You might want to try to limit your content to B-level vocabulary.

USING THE EVP

SAMPLE USES:

- Learners are high school graduates, limited English exposure
 - Restrict vocabulary in your course to words up to B1
 - B2, C1, and C2: Eliminate or define
- Learners are professionals, advanced degrees (e.g., STEM)
 - Restrict vocabulary up to C1
 - Allow all words; define level C words
- For training in another country
 - Check CEFR level of country using the EF EPI
 - Alter vocabulary accordingly
 - www.efset.org/cefr
- For support about language choices

Finally, you can use it as support.

If ID or client wants something phrased a certain way:

You have reservations for one reason or another

Might be able to use the EVP and Proficiency Index to back up your argument.

COURSE GLOSSARY

- Options:
 - Expand it
 - Pitch definitions to language level of audience

The final thing I'd like to mention is your glossary.

If your course has a glossary, whether it's alphabetical or pop-up, a couple things you can do with it.

First thing, expand it.

People in your course who speak English as a second language will be challenged by more than just typical glossary words.

Second thing is what I'll talk about.

Pitch your definitions to your learner's language level.

COURSE GLOSSARY

- Pitch definitions to language level of audience.
 - Look at definitions from a learner's perspective; alter as needed
- Dictionaries
 - Written for native speakers
 - Assume a level of understanding about the environment the definitions apply to
 - Definitions: whatever language is required
- Option: learner's dictionary

In other words, look at the definitions from a learner's perspective.

Dictionaries, at least English dictionaries:

Typically written for native speakers

Assume a level of understanding about the environment the definitions apply to

Also, as I'm sure you've seen, dictionaries:

Indifferent to the difficulty of the level of language used to define a term.

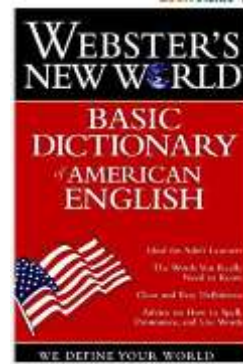
Whatever it takes to define it, that's what they will use.

So sometimes the definition may be more of a burden than not having the entry in the glossary at all.

May want to look at a learner's dictionary.

LEARNER'S DICTIONARY

- For adults
- Adequate # of entries



Of course, a lot of learner dictionaries are written for young people
Have a lot of pictures and things.

So you need a learner's dictionary written for adults.
With adequate number of entries

Webster's Basic is the one I used to order for students.
It has about 50,000 entries, so it's useful in a lot of situations.
Unfortunately, you have to buy it.

LEARNER'S DICTIONARY

www.learnersdictionary.com



Luckily for us, there is a freely available option.

Learner's Dictionary dot com.

Published by the same people.

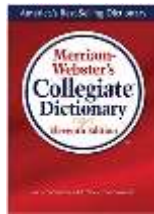
Pitched a little higher than Webster's Basic

May be better suited for the type of learner we're providing content for.

COMPARISON: "POLICY"

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary:

A definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions.



Webster's LearnersDictionary.com:



Here's an example of the differences.

Looked up the word "policy"

Thinking of workplace guidelines

That sense is a B2 word

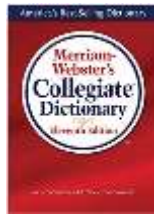
Webster's Collegiate:

A definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions

COMPARISON: "POLICY"

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary:

A definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions.



Webster's LearnersDictionary.com:

An officially accepted set of rules or ideas about what should be done.



Learner's Dictionary dot com.:

an officially accepted set of rules or ideas about what should be done.

LEARNER'S DICTIONARY

<https://learnersdictionary.com/>



To me that sounds like it might be useful to somebody who's doing job training, doesn't know the word and just quickly get oriented on a definition.

Well, that's all I have.

English Proficiency Index

- www.ef.edu/epi/

English Vocabulary Profile

- www.englishprofile.org/worldlists/evp

CEFR

- www.coe.int/lang-cefr

Learner's Dictionary

- <https://www.learnersdictionary.com/>

THANK YOU!

So, thank you all for the time. Here are the websites, if anyone wants to snag or write them down. If there are any questions, I can try to answer them.