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M O V I N G F O R W A R D

Language Capability Unlimited - Experience with G.I.T.

Whenever I spoke English I realized my "Palatinate heritage" and felt I needed an exceptional, really good language training to keep me on track. I searched in magazines, asked friends and after all that I read an article in HANDELSBLATT about G.I.T., an institution that seemed to offer what I was looking for. After a test on the phone I was prepared to take the plunge and decided for their Management English Seminar.

At the beginning I was slightly reserved – I did not wish to sing English or to relax in a comfortable chair on request or even order; I wanted to work! Sure, I have heard about the special learning effect "through the backdoor", changing from active to passive training sessions which should help to anchoring the new vocabulary into our longterm memory. Our senses – Listening, Seeing, Speaking and Feeling (gesture) are involved in the learning process and should guarantee the success: "Suggestopädie" is the magic word! After a lifetime of training in the more military style of Germany's school system, I had difficulty in accepting relaxation by listening to music and the story simultaneously. But I gave myself a chance and after two days – it finally clicked – my brain switched from closed to open (about 50 % of students had experience with G.I.T.). After having finished the second 12-hour day I realized that I had started speaking English to myself, dreamed in English, repeated phrases in English without having prepared before. The climate amongst the attendees was excellent, beside studying the story, divided into 8 lessons with many new words, unknown phrases and a lot of idioms to be learned. Within 4 days we developed into "serious competitors" by launching new products and creating new marketing strategies, organized meetings and we were the best representatives of our companies by presenting our charts to the audience. Neither did it seem that someone missed their mother tongue in handling the tasks, nor were we failing in English vocabulary when we dealt as global players trying to reach our business goals. Everything went well, so that at the end of the seminar I was completely enthusiastic and awaited the "Nachbearbeitungsprogramm" impatiently. I used the G.I.T. cassettes regularly. I loved the background sound I was familiar with and my teacher's voice saying "It's repeating time now...".

It remained to be the keyword to call G.I.T. again and to register for the Executive English class.

"Repeater myself" – Continuing with G.I.T.

When I returned I felt a bit sceptical as to whether my 100-per-cent expectations concerning the same quality in content, teacher, students' willingness for high performance, could be met once again, although my favourite theme, the MBTI test, was on the agenda.

The MBTI – Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Our teacher informed us about the history and C.G. Jung's theory concerning personality types, which was published in 1921. His holistic approach lead him to believe that many sicknesses are caused by an imbalance between soul, spirit and body. Jung believed that each of us has particular tendencies and preferences for particular functions of our personality. A healthy personality development, therefore, requires a lifetime development of these tendencies and not trying to change them. For Jung, personal maturity meant the capability of being able to get along with our own preferences and not feel threatened by others. At the same time Katherine Briggs was doing research independently in USA. Her goal was the same as Jung's: take these seemingly obvious personality types and put them into practical, applicable categories to make them useful for a larger public to use. She recognized that her theory fit like a glove to Jung's. She and her daughter, Isabell Briggs Myers, published a series of questions trying to make their theory "measurable", which was proven to be "timeless". In 1962 the first inventory was put on the market.

The MBTI describes differences between normal, healthy people. These differences sometimes are the source of misunderstanding and miscommunication. The MBTI helps you to identify your unique gifts and therefore, better understand yourself and potential areas of growth. It can help people see that approaching problems in different ways can be healthy and productive. It helps you to understand and appreciate those different from you and make constructive use of differences (By G.I.T.)

After a short discussion with our tutor, providing more details and hints on how to deal with the test, all participants were interested in finding out quickly whether their own beliefs matched the results of the test. Surprise, surprise – 98 % agreed with the written categories of MBTI types.

The biggest advantage, we realized afterwards, as we continued with our story to find a practicable solution for a demerger of an international conglomerate. Research about mergers concentrates usually on technical and financial facts omitting the most important: the impact on human factors. Now the MBTI knowledge influenced our decision as to who would be the best, who should become CEO after the demerger. The results were excellent and everybody could see how quickly we adapted to new techniques when presenting them in English.

The SIX THINKING HATS

In the following lessons, Whitney, our tutor, offered a new method for meetings: Lateral Thinking. According to the dictionary, lateral thinking is seeking to solve problems by unorthodox or apparently illogical thinking. Or, as Edward de Bono explained, “you cannot dig a hole in a deeper place by simply digging the same hole deeper”, which means Vertical Thinking. Lateral Thinking emphasizes the searching for different approaches and different ways of looking at things: to move sideways to try different perceptions, different concepts, different points of entry, which means “to dig several holes”.

How can you manage this task in order to optimise the results of meetings, solve general problems or especially improve the output of project teams? Usually people tend to select colleagues who share their own values, have the same personality structure or background and try to reach a conclusion to their own opinion. In order to avoid unbalanced decisions, Bono recommends appointing people with different strengths representing

“The Six Thinking Hats” (heads):

- one who brings in information known or needed (White Hat)
- one providing feelings, hunches and intuition (Red Hat)
- one representative of optimism, values and benefits, assuring why the project will work (Yellow Hat)
- a “judge or devil’s advocate” saying why it will not work (Black Hat)
- an optimist who offers possibilities, alternatives and new ideas (Green Hat)
- and an all round talent managing “The Thinking Process” (Blue Hat).

In my opinion the most difficult part, is to combine hard and soft facts, to balance between rational and emotional arguments, to ensure to make headway within the project and finally to formulate a conclusion which all team members could agree to.

(If you think this material would be enough for the 5 days training, you may underestimate the ambitious targets of a G.I.T. seminar).

The Random Input

The next “topic on the agenda” was to practise The Random Input, a simple creative technique. It is widely used where you need new ideas. You obtain a word, which has no connection to the product, situation or problem to be improved,

- from a dictionary
- close your eyes and stab at a word on a newspaper or book
- or from any other source

and put it together with the word standing for the subject itself. (ie. office copier + nose (smells when the paper is out or the cartridge is empty). From this juxtaposition you seek to develop new ideas. At first glance, it seems to be an absurd way to find a solution. But, as our experience in the field of public transportation proved, it worked well. Not always, but often, the random word is quite close to the focus and at the end of such a brainstorming you may have found several solutions which could be sophisticated, depending on budgets, technical staff or future innovations.

When we discussed the results between the small working groups, quickly went through the scripts once again, checked practicability, refined recommendations, sorted out the too exotic ideas and finally presented our drafts, we noticed the exploitation of creativity within “our community”. Everybody had delivered a huge quantity of ideas, impressions, thoughts, suggestions, which nobody could have expected in advance.

After all, we reviewed the seminar: While studying new words, phrases, typical terms, business behaviour, training with role plays and negotiation skills, you gain a lot more than that, you increase your experience in the fields of psychology, management techniques or the latest organization methods. A highly motivated troop of English learners exchanged business cards, confirmed to each other the improvements and, of course, expressed our thanks to our tutor before leaving and applied to G.I.T. for the next “Upper Executive English Seminar”.

Irene Kollakowski

PS. Some expressions are taken from G.I.T. records.