

國際會議語言

Language for International Conferences

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Preface: Many professionals—diplomats, agency representatives, environmentalists, and business people—have to take part in international meetings which are mainly conducted in English. The English language of such meetings follows definite patterns. This lecture presents you briefly all the English language strategies you need to participate effectively in the international meetings.

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I. Characteristics of Conference English

A. Ten Most General Features Found in English for International Meetings

1. Using *would*, *could* or *might* to make what you say more tentative.
2. Presenting your view as *a question* not a statement.
3. Using a grammatical negative (adding *n't*) to make a suggestion more open and therefore more negotiable.
4. Using *an introductory phrase* to prepare the listener for your message.
5. Adding *I'm afraid* to make clear that you recognise the unhelpfulness of your response.

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6. Using words which qualify or restrict what you say to make your position more flexible (*a bit* difficult, *a slight* problem.)
7. Using *not* with a positive word instead of the obvious negative word (*not very convenient*, *I don't agree*.)
8. Using a comparative (*better*, *more convenient*) to soften your message.
9. Using a continuous form (*I was wondering*) instead of a simple form (*I wondered*) to make a suggestion more flexible.
10. Using *stress* as an important way of making the message more effective (It *is* important...)

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- B. General Terminology
- C. Issue-Centered Terminology
- D. Key Words and Sentence Patterns
- E. Language Strategies:
 1. Procedure for a Formal Meeting
 2. Presenting an Argument
 3. Opinions
 4. Agreeing and Disagreeing
 5. Interrupting
 6. Clarifying
 7. Questioning
 8. Proposals
 9. Persuading
 10. Degrees of Importance and Certainty
 11. Compromising (primarily applied to international negotiations)

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II. Stylized Patterns in English for International Meetings

These stylized patterns are mainly based on the work of Malcolm Goodale.

1. Procedure for a Formal Meeting
Opening
<p>Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I declare the meeting open./ The meeting is now called to order.</p> <p>Shall we get started?</p> <p>Let's get down to business, shall we?</p>
The Minutes
<p>May I read the minutes?</p> <p>Would some one move that the minutes of the last meeting be accepted?</p> <p>Has everyone seen the minutes?</p> <p>Can we take the minutes as read?</p>
The Agenda
<p>Has everyone received a copy of the agenda?</p> <p>The first item on the agenda today is...</p> <p>I would like to add an item to the agenda.</p> <p>Could we delete item 5 from the agenda?</p>

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The Subject

The purpose of today's meeting is ...
 The first problem we have to consider is ...
 Perhaps we should first look at ...

Giving the Floor

I'd like to give the floor to the delegate from Taiwan.
 Delegate from Japan, would you like to say something about this?
 Delegate from Australia, I think you know something about this problem.
 Delegate from the United States, have you got anything to say?
 What are your views on this, Delegate from New Zealand?

Taking the Floor

Excuse me. Mr. chairman, may I have the floor?
 With the Chair's permission, I'd like to take up the point about...
 Could I just make a point about...?
 Could I say something here, please?

Finishing a Point

Has anyone anything further they wish to add before we move on to the next item on the agenda?
 Has anyone anything further to add?

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Directing

We seem to be losing sight of the main point. The question is ...
 This isn't really relevant to our discussion. What we're trying to do is ...
 Could you stick to the subject, please?
 Let's not get sidetracked. The issue under discussion is ...

Keeping order

We can't all speak at once; Delegate from Japan, would you like to speak first?
 Delegate from Singapore, would you mind addressing your remarks to the Chair, please?
 I shall have to call you to order, Delegate from Indonesia.

Moving to a New Point

Could we move on to item 4 on the agenda?
 Now, I'd like to turn to ...
 Can we go on now to...?

Postponing discussion

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, with your approval, I propose to defer this matter until we have more information at our disposal.
 If no one has any objections, I suggest that we leave this matter until our next meeting.
 Perhaps we could leave this for the time being. We can come back to it later.

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Proposing

With the Chair's permission, I move that ...
 Mr. Chairman I'll second that motion.
 I would like to propose the motion that ...
 Would anyone like to second the motion?

Moving to a Vote

Perhaps we should take a formal vote on this.
 Can I ask for a show of hands?
 Let's put it to the vote.
 Could we take a vote on it?
 Can we move to a vote on this?

Voting

In the event of a tie, I would like to remind you that I have the casting vote.
 Those for the motion, please?
 Those against?
 Any abstentions?
 The motion is carried unanimously.
 The motion has been rejected by 6 votes to 5.

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Consensus

It seems that we have a consensus.
 Can I take it everyone's in favor?
 Are we all agreed on that?
 Well, it looks as if we're broadly in agreement on this.

Any Other Business

Closing

I declare the meeting closed. /The meeting is adjourned. Thank you, Distinguished Delegates.
 Ladies and Gentlemen.
 That concludes our business for today. Thank you.
 Well, I think that covers everything.
 That's all for today. Thank you.

2. Presenting an Argument

Beginning

I would like to begin by ...
 I would like to make a few remarks concerning ...
 I would like to comment on the problem of ...
 I would like to mention briefly that ...
 There are three points I'd like to make.
 The most important points seem to me to be ...

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Ordering

First of all, we must bear in mind ...
 At the outset ...
 To begin with ...

Introducing a New Point

I would now like to turn briefly to the problem of ...
 The next issue I would like to focus on is ...
 Turning to ...

Adding

In addition, ...
 I might add that ...
 As well as ..., there is also ...
 Not only ..., but also ...
 Furthermore, ...
 Moreover, ...

Giving an Example

Let me give an example ...
 To illustrate this point, let us consider ...
 A case in point is ...

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Balancing

On the one hand..., but on other hand ...
 Although ..., we mustn't forget ...
 Whereas ..., we have to remember ...
 In spite of ..., I still think ...
 Despite the fact that ..., I ...

Generalizing

On the whole, ...
 In general, ...
 Generally speaking, ...
 By and large, ...
 All in all, ...
 All things considered, ...

Stating Preferences

I'd rather ... than ...
 I prefer ... to ...
 I tend to favor ... as opposed to ...
 ... has an advantage over ... in that ...
 The main advantage of ... is that ...

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Concluding

Let me conclude by saying ...

I'd like to conclude by stating that ...

Allow me to conclude by highlighting the fact that ...

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that ...

I would now like to conclude my comments by reassuring you that we are fully aware of the fact that ...

3. Opinions

Asking for an opinion

What's your opinion of...?

What's your position on...?

What do you think of...?

I'd like to hear your views on...

Asking for a reaction

Could I ask for your reaction to...?

I was wondering where you stood on this question?

Where exactly do you stand on this issue?

I wonder if you'd like to comment, Delegate from South Korea?

Giving strong opinions

I firmly believe that...

I'm absolutely convinced that...

It's my belief that...

There's no doubt in my mind that...

It's quite clear that...

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I'm certain that...

It's my considered opinion that...

Giving neutral opinions

I think that...

In my opinion, ...

It's my opinion that...

As I see it, ...

As far as I'm concerned...

From my point of view...

Giving tentative opinions

It seems to me that...

I would say that...

As far as I'm able to judge...

I think it would be fair to say that...

Bringing in to answer a question

I'd like to ask my colleague to give us her views on that.

If I may, I'd like to ask my colleague to reply to that.

I think my colleague is more qualified than I am to deal with this question.

I would like to bring in my colleague who has studied this matter in more detail than I have.

Perhaps Delegate from Spain would care to answer that.

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Bringing in to present a point

Delegate from Taiwan, would you like to come in here?
 Allow me to give the floor to Delegate from Sweden.
 I would like to invite Delegate from Iceland to present his views on...
 I'd like to call on Delegate from Norway to present her views on...
 Delegate from Mexico, would you care to comment?
 I think Delegate from Nigeria would like to make a point.

Summarizing

Well, if I could just sum up the discussion...
 To summarize, I think we are in agreement on...
 To sum up, there seems to be...
 In short, ...
 Briefly, the main points that have been made are...
 Well, at this stage I feel I should summarize the matter as it stands...
 If I may just go over the main points raised so far?

4. Agreeing and Disagreeing

Strong agreement

I completely agree.
 I agree entirely with your point of view.
 I'm of exactly the same opinion.
 I'm in total agreement.

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Neutral agreement

I agree.
 I think we are in agreement on that.
 I think you're right.
 I think we can accept your position on that.

Partial agreement

I would tend to agree with you on that.
 I agree with you on the whole, but it could be said that...
 I agree in principle, but...
 By and large I would accept your views, but...
 Although I agree with most of what you've said, I find it difficult to agree with your point about...

Softening Strong disagreement

Frankly, ...
 To be quite frank, ...
 To put it bluntly, ...
 With respect, ...

Strong disagreement

I totally disagree with you.
 I don't agree at all.
 You're completely mistaken.
 I disagree entirely.
 Under no circumstances could I agree to that.
 What you are saying is just not feasible .

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Softening neutral disagreement

I'm afraid...
 I'm sorry, ...
 With respect, ...
 I respect your opinion, of course, however...

Neutral disagreement

I don't completely agree with you on that.
 I really can't agree with you on that.
 I can't say that I share your view.
 We'll have to agree to differ.
 I'm not totally convinced by your argument.
 I can't accept your point of view.
 I can't help feeling that...
 I feel I must disagree.
 I really must take issue with you here.

Tactful disagreement

I agree up to a point, but...
 To a certain extent I agree with you, but...
 You have a point there, but...
 I take your point, Delegate from Brazil, but have you considered...?
 I can see your point of view, but surely...
 I have some sympathy with your position, but...

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5. Interrupting

Interrupting

May I interrupt you for a moment?
 Sorry to interrupt, but...
 If I may just interrupt you for a moment, I'd like to...
 I don't want to interrupt, but...

Taking the floor

Could I come in at this point?
 Could I say something about...?
 If I could just come in here...?
 If no one objects, I'd like to say a few words about...
 If I could say a word about...
 I have a point to make here.

Commenting

I wonder if I could comment on that last point?
 Excuse me, but I'd just like to point out that...
 I'd like to add something here, if I may?
 May I just draw your attention to the fact that...
 Excuse me, but I think it's relevant to add that...
 Before we go any further, may I point out...

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Coming back to a point

As I was saying...
 Coming back to what I was saying...
 Perhaps I could resume...
 If I may just going back to the point I was making...
 If I could continue...
 Your question leads us back to ...
 To return to ...

Preventing an interruption

Perhaps I could return to that point later on...
 If I might just finish...
 With your permission, I'd rather finish what I was saying.
 With respect, I should like to finish the point I was making...
 If you would allow me to continue...
 If you would be so kind as to let me finish...

Pre-empting an interruption

There are two points I would like to make.
 First, I would like to reply to Delegate from Japan, and then I would like to comment on...
 Very briefly, ...
 I'd just like to...

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6. Clarifying

Asking for confirmation

Would I be correct in saying that...?
 If I've understood you correctly, you're saying that...?
 Correct me if I'm wrong, but...
 Am I correct in assuming that...?
 When you say..., do you mean that...?
 Are you saying that...?
 Basically, what you're saying is ...

Asking for a repetition

I'm afraid I'm not quite clear what you mean by that.
 I'm sorry, I didn't quite follow what you said about...
 I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean.
 I'm afraid I didn't quite get your last point. Could you go over it again please?

Correcting misunderstandings

I'm afraid there seems to have been a slight misunderstanding.
 We seem to be talking at cross purposes.
 I think you've misunderstood me.
 That isn't quite what I meant.
 With respect, that is not what I said.

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Rephrasing

Perhaps I haven't made myself clear. Basically, what I'm trying to say is...
 Sorry, I'm probably not making myself clear. Let me put it another way...
 Perhaps I should make that clearer by saying...
 Allow me to rephrase that.
 To be more specific, ...
 Put simply, ...

7. Questioning

Asking general questions

Would you mind...?
 I was wondering if you...?
 I wonder if you could...?
 May I ask...
 Would you mind if I asked...?

Asking for further information

Could you be a little more precise?
 I'm sorry, but could you explain in a little more detail?
 Could you give us some details about...?
 Would you care to elaborate on that?
 Could you expand on that?

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Playing for time

That's a very interesting question.
 That's a difficult question to answer.
 I'm glad you asked that question.
 You have raised an important point there.
 I'm sure you will appreciate how complicated this matter is.

Saying nothing

Well, it's rather difficult to say at present.
 I'm afraid I don't have enough information at my disposal to answer that.
 I'm afraid I'm not in a position to comment on that just yet.
 I think we can leave the problem of ...aside for a moment, the real issue is...
 I don't think we have enough time at our disposal to consider all the implications of this particular aspect of the problem.

Questioning

It depends on what you mean by...
 I'm not quite sure what you mean by that.
 I'm afraid I don't quite follow...
 I don't think it's quite as simple as that...

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8. Proposals

Proposals, recommendations and suggestions – strong

I strongly recommend that...
 I suggest most strongly that...
 I advise you most strongly to ...
 In our view, it is high time that...
 In my view, the only viable solution is...

Proposals, recommendations and suggestions - neutral

I propose that...
 My proposal is that...

Proposals, recommendations and suggestions – tentative

I would propose that...
 If I may make a suggestion, we could...
 I would like to put forward a proposal that...
 I wonder if I might suggest...
 Wouldn't it be a good idea to...?
 Wouldn't it be better to...?

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Expressing total support

I am fully in favor of...
 This proposal has my full support.
 I can thoroughly recommend that...
 I should like to express my total support for this...
 I totally agree with...
 I entirely approve of...

Expressing support

I am in favor of...
 I would certainly give my backing to...
 I would certainly endorse such a proposal.
 I see no objection to that.
 I would not be opposed to that.

Expressing partial support

My initial reaction is favorable, but...
 With certain reservations, I would support your proposal.
 I shouldn't like you to think that I'm necessarily against this in any way, but I can't help wondering...

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Expressing total opposition

I am totally opposed to the proposal.
 I see no valid reason for supporting the proposal.
 Frankly, I think that's out of the question.
 I'm afraid this proposal leaves a great deal to be desired.

Expressing opposition

I am opposed to the proposal.
 I'm afraid I can't support the proposal.
 As it stands, I would not be able to give it my backing.
 Without substantial changes, I cannot give the proposal my support.

Expressing tentative opposition

On the face of it, this seems quite a good suggestion, but...
 I can see many problems in adopting this.
 I'm not sure the proposal is feasible.
 This proposal is likely to present difficulties.
 I'm not convinced that this proposal is really worthwhile.

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9. Persuading

Asking questions

Have you taken into account...?
 Has it occurred to you that...?
 Do you realize that...?
 I was wondering if you'd thought of...?
 Wouldn't you agree that...?
 Wouldn't it be a good idea to...?

Adding information

There are, if I may say so, certain points you should bear in mind...
 There are other considerations. For example, ...
 If we look at it in another light...
 Seen from another angle, one could say...
 I wonder if you've considered...

Challenging

I wonder if that view is justified in the light of...
 I don't think you fully appreciate the fact that...
 It would be in your own interest to...
 I would be inclined to..., if I were you.

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Expressing reservation

I have certain reservations about...
 I think we should give ourselves time to reflect on...
 I'm rather worried about...
 Under no circumstances should we come to a hasty decision on this.
 I am afraid such a decision might lead to...
 I feel that in view of...it would be prudent to...
 I can't help feeling that...

Reassuring

There's no cause for concern as far as ... is concerned.
 Let me assure you straightaway on that point.
 I can assure you that...
 We understand your concern about... and we assure you that we will do everything in our power to...
 We share your concern about this, and you may rest assured that...
 You need have no fears about...

10. Degrees of Importance and Certainty

Emphatic views

I particularly want to emphasize the fact that...
 It is essential to realize that...
 This issue is highly significant.
 I feel this is a vital issue.
 I consider this point of the utmost importance.

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Neutral views

I attach considerable importance to...
 Allow me to emphasize at this juncture that...
 We mustn't underestimate the importance of...
 It is well worth noting that...
 We cannot stress too much the importance of...
 Let me say again how much importance I attach to...

Tentative views

I would like to remind you that...
 I wish to draw your attention to...
 We cannot overlook the fact that...
 I believe this warrants further discussion.

Playing down a point

These are minor issues when one considers...
 But this is only of secondary importance.
 But this is, after all, a relatively small point.
 I'm afraid I regard that as of relatively minor significance.
 I'm afraid I'm not totally convinced of the importance of...

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Degrees of certainty

Certain

I'm certain that...
 It's certain that...
 There's no doubt that...
 Without doubt, ...
 Undoubtedly, ...

Probable

I'm almost certain that...
 It's highly probable that...
 It's quite likely that...

Possible

This could well...
 It's possible that...
 It's not out of the question that...
 It's not impossible that...
 I think there is every possibility that...

Unlikely

It is highly improbable that...
 It is highly unlikely that...
 There's very little likelihood of...

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Uncertain

I'm not certain that...
 I have doubts about...
 I doubt if...
 There is some doubt as to whether this...
 I'm uncertain about...

11. Compromising

Offering a compromising

We are prepared to..., on condition that...
 I think we could..., provided that...
 We are ready to..., on the understanding that...
 We are willing to..., with the proviso that...
 We are more than ready to ..., as long as...
 I believe we can..., if...

Asking if it's acceptable

Is that acceptable?
 Would that be acceptable?
 Would that be satisfactory?
 Is that acceptable as a compromise solution?
 We hope that this will be acceptable.

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Adding a condition positively

We see no objection whatsoever, provided that...
 If we agreed, it would be conditional on...
 Our agreement is to be reached, if it is conditional on...
 If we agreed, we hope you would reciprocate by...
 If you would be prepared to, then we could...

Adding a condition negatively

We'd be rather reluctant to..., unless...
 I don't think we could..., unless...
 We wouldn't be prepared to..., unless...
 We have certain reservations about..., and unless...we...
 Only if you..., would we be prepared to...

Accepting a compromising

I think that would be perfectly acceptable.
 We see no objection to that.
 That seems to be a reasonable compromise.
 In a spirit of compromise, we would be willing to accept your offer.
 To meet you halfway on this, I think we could agree to your condition.

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Rejecting a compromise

We are not entirely convinced that this is a viable solution to the problem.
 Although we want to avoid a deadlock as much as you do, we find your offer unacceptable.
 You leave us with little alternative but to...
 In that case, we should very reluctantly have to...
 In which case, we should be virtually obliged to...
 You put us in a difficult/an awkward position.

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III. Q & A Session

IV. Conclusion

Globally concerned, every “world citizen” must be good at English for international meetings in the 21st century, with a view to informing, instructing, and persuading his/her audience on certain targeted issues in the meetings. To acquire a good command of English for international meetings, one must first have the issue-centered professional knowledge for participating in the meetings to be held (e.g. trade and economy, environmental protection, science and technology, and foreign affairs, etc.). Then, the meeting participants are in need of practicing the English for meetings introduced above as fluently as possible. In other words, the subject matter is less important than speaking accurately and fluently in the English for international meetings. The best way of learning and using it is through constant exposure to international meetings abroad and simulations at home.

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