

## English for dance leaders

This essay shall cover a number of aspects one needs to deal with, while using English as a dance leader. Although it is mainly meant for non native speakers it will cover aspects that native speakers should consider as well. Furthermore it is meant mainly for those leaders that teach at official ECTA events, but again, will cover other aspects too.

### Basics:

There are certain basics one must consider when talking in any language. The two most basic rules in communication are to speak slowly and clearly. To speak slowly is necessary so that everyone can follow what is said. People who are not so familiar with a language will have problems if the speaker speaks too fast. An experienced speaker must be aware that people who are new in a language still translate everything they hear into their native language. When they say something, to participate in the conversation, they form a sentence in their native language, translate that sentence step by step into the foreign language and finally say it. This takes an awful lot of time, not only translating it (twice: to their language and back to the foreign one the conversation is in), but also finding the correct words. If the speaker speaks too fast, they are unable to understand everything. Therefore they miss parts. The conversation goes on and they still think about what was said at the beginning. This will most likely discourage people or even let them become frustrated. Be aware that they might have good ideas, hints or clues, which they want to share with others. They only need time to bring those ideas “into shape”.

The other vital important rule is to speak clearly, i.e. to pronounce every word the correct way without neglecting parts of the word as it is common when using colloquial language. That, however, does not mean that one should lose one’s personal touch. Americans should not stop talking American; neither should a Briton stop talking British. People should only try to speak in a way that others will still be able to understand them. This is not only in the interest of the audience, but as well important to the speaker. He wants that his audience understand the things he has to say.

Another aspect is the complexity of the sentence structure and the vocabulary. The degree of complexity and the choice of vocabulary should always depend on the audience.

It would be inappropriate to use a very complex sentence structure in front of a group of people who are not very familiar with the language. It is just the same with the vocabulary. It is simply not possible to use a wide range of technical terms with people who just take their first lesson in that language.

So when speaking to beginners one should always use simple sentences and simple words. It is, however, not suggested to only use main sentences. This would be the wrong way. Beginners should be challenged and it is necessary to find out what they know and what they do not know.

In conclusion it is vitally important to anticipate the level of knowledge the audience have and to see their needs and weak spots. Only by doing so the speaker can be sure that everyone understands and enjoys whatever he has to say.

Advanced speakers! Be aware that you where a beginner once as well. Do not get annoyed when people ask (more than once) because they did not get what you were saying.

All these basic rules -and this really is what they are: the basis- are based on the theory of the weakest link: Everyone in a conversation must adapt to the abilities of the person with the least knowledge of the language. Otherwise communication is impossible.

Example:

*A knows only 20% of the English words. B and C know 90%. If B used more than 20% only C could understand him, A however could not. If B used, however, only the 20% which A can understand, C would have no problem to follow what is said.*

*A German visits a group of friends in Scotland. The German is familiar with most of the vocabulary of the Scottish language but has rarely the chance to speak Scottish at home. This is his first visit to Scotland after five years. They are all in a pub and the Scottish talk about their day's work. If they spoke slowly and pronounced every word clearly the German would be able to follow the entire conversation. Since they do not (and with this neglect the two basic rules mentioned above) the German has considerable difficulties in following the conversation.*

Teaching (general):

Teaching is a way of communicating. Information is communicated across to the dancers. Therefore it is vitally important to regard the two basic rules of communication: Speaking slowly and clearly.

Before proceeding to the special topics (for dance leaders) I would like to point out one more thing. This is aimed for those who are not too familiar with the English language. While talking and teacher all the same, always be sure to pronounce the words in the correct way. Otherwise misunderstandings occur.

*Example: If you used to sink rather than to think (so pronouncing the ‘th’ as a normal ‘s’ as I am aware a lot of German people do) the meaning of what you say changes.*

to sink<sup>1</sup>: To go down below the surface or towards the bottom of a liquid or soft substance:  
*The ship sinks to the bottom of the sea.*

to think<sup>1</sup>: To use your mind to consider something, to form connected ideas, to try to solve problems, etc.  
*Let me think (= give me time before I answer).*

The problem with the ‘th’ is basically omnipresent. It is not only important when using the words ‘to sink’ and ‘to think’, but with many, many more. So always be sure to use it in the correct way.

If you are struggling with words that contain ‘th’ simply split them. ‘Fourth’ (4<sup>th</sup>) for instance can easily be split:

First you practise to say ‘four’ (which is fairly easy). Afterwards you only practise to say the ‘th’. When you have done that, you put both together: fourth.

Another important example is the exchange of ‘v’ and ‘w’.

The figure is called “vine (3/4/6/8)”, but not “wine”.

Wine is the alcoholic beverage you drink. Vine, however, is a climbing plant, which produces grapes.

Be aware that the meaning changes, when you exchange those two letters.

Teaching (special):

From this point on we will practice together how to manage an entire day of dance activities. We will begin with welcoming the dancers (a). Then we will introduce the dance leader (b) of the upcoming programme and, of course, the programme itself (c) (i.e. the workshop, open rounds, a square dance workshop). We will end with the grand march (or polonaise) (d). Afterwards we will focus on Round Dance and Clogging and are going to introduce a single dance (e) or workshop (f). And maybe we will even have to make an announcement (g) because someone has lost a dangle.

The basic question is: When do we have to use English, rather than German. Since the event we are talking about is an official ECTA event we have to use English all the time, according to §13 of the constitution. Even if that were not so, general rule, dictated by politeness, is to use English whenever there is one person present that is not capable of the German language. The same basic rule is valid for instance for seminars, held at ECTA events (such as the ECTA Convention). The reason for that is that English is ECTA's official language. When you are at home, teaching to your club dancers or introducing a guest caller/cue to them you can obviously use German. However it is only practise you both the dancers and you, if you used English from time to time. It gives you the opportunity to practice speaking English in front of a group and it gives them the chance to get used to the language. So if they go

When speaking on stage, you can always either use set phrases or speak totally free. For the beginners, I would suggest to have some set phrases ready. If you feel comfortable on stage, you can always add things. A joke, a little story, e.g. the history of the event, how it all began, etc. This chapter (Teaching (special)) shall suggest a number of set phrases, which then can be extended with the above mentioned elements (jokes, etc.).

a)

Let's say our dance event starts off in the morning. You will most likely begin with a *good morning*. Since it is very early your dancers won't have much orientation and their eyes will still be closed. So you better tell them the *name of the event* and the *hosting club*. What I didn't mention so far is that you are the master of ceremony for the day. So you continue with *introducing yourself*. You should finish your little introduction with *something nice*. You could thank the dancers for attending your event or tell them to have a good time.

Example:

*“Good morning everybody! Welcome to the Happy Dance Festival, hosted by the Happy Dancers. My name is Joe Public and I will be your host/your MC for the day. Thank you all for coming and I hope you will have a great time.”*

I think it is alright if you contract “it is” to “it’s”. You should, however, not contract “I will” to “I’ll” because it becomes very hard to understand; especially if you have a big hall and therefore some echoes.

*“Good morning everybody! Welcome to the Happy Dance Festival. The hosting club are the Happy Dancers. My name is Joe Public and I will be your host/your MC for the day. It's great that so many of you found their way at this time of day. Have a great time.”*

In British English are nouns, which can be used with a singular verb or a plural verb. The use depends on whether one wishes to refer to the noun as a whole or several different components of the noun. ‘Club’ is such a noun. It can be used either with a singular verb or a plural verb: *“The club has voted.”*. This expresses that the club, as a unit, as a whole has voted.

If one, however, wishes to refer to all the individual people of the club, one needs to say:  
*“The club have voted.”*

Some other nouns of that kind are company, the Vatican, audience

There are also nouns, which can only be used with a plural verb. An example is: police.

Example:

*“The BBC is Britain’s main broadcasting station.”*

It is the BBC as a whole.

*“The BBC produce many documentaries.”*

This refers to the mass of journalists.

*“The Vatican has/have several new members.”*

*“The audience has/have applauded for nearly twenty minutes.”*

b)

Now we are going to introduce our leader. Let’s say it’s a caller. First we need to get everybody’s *attention*. We should do this in a pleasant way. People need to realize that the dance is going to begin. So don’t use “harsh” terms like “Can I have your attention!”. That sounds more like you’re going to make an announcement, such as one about a car parked in the wrong place. We will come to that later on, but for now people should feel welcome and should be motivated to listen to a longer talk. An announcement of a wrongly parked car is shorter than the entire introduction of a dance leader. Or so it should be.

Take your time for the introduction. Don’t only tell the dancers the *name of the leader*. Tell them where *he comes from*, how *long he is calling/cueing*, *which club* he leads. Things like that. If you feel comfortable enough you can even *interact* with the leader. Have a little chat. Bear in mind that you can only have a “stage chat”. Do not actually begin to chat with the leader about the weather or how his wife is.

Example:

*“All right everyone, let’s start! We have Lieschen Mueller as our special guest caller today. She is from Germany and calls mainstream for the Musterklub. She calls since 1984. Lieschen, they’re yours.”*

Origin, name of the club, name of the leader and experience in years are exchangeable parts.

*“Lieschen is from Germany and has been calling for 22 years now. She calls mainstream for the Musterklub.”*

*“Lieschen is a mainstream caller from Germany. She has been calling for the Musterklub since 1984.”*

*Sample dialog:*

*MC to floor: "Well, everybody, let's get started. This is your caller for the next hour."*

*Hesitating to the caller: "Er, have you met?"*

*Caller: "No."*

*MC: "Oh. Ok. Well (to the dancer) dancers this is Lieschen; (to caller) Lieschen these are your dancers."*

It would be good to mention origin, name of the club and experience in years before that dialog. Only, obviously, do not mention the name of the leader. That would ruin the humour of the dialog:

*"I'm proud to present you the caller. She is from Germany and has been calling for 22 years for the Musterklub."*

Then the dialog follows.

c)

You can either introduce the programme spot on its own, or combine that with the introduction of the leader.

Example:

*“Lieschen is from Germany (introduction shortened) and she will call an hour of mainstream for you.”*

*“Now that you know your caller (full introduction of the leader before the introduction of the programme spot) have fun with an hour of mainstream square dancing.”*

d)

OK, we reached the peak of the event. Everyone had a great time and enjoyed the dancing. The floor is crowded with people dressed in their evening dresses and everyone is awaiting your appearance. In for a penny, in for a pound: You said good morning in the beginning so why don't you begin with wishing a *good evening*? After that the procedure is fairly easy. I would suggest you introduce first the officials, in the order EAASDC (including honorary members), ECTA, president of foreign associations then club officials. Then you introduce your staff of leaders. If you like you can then introduce the clubs that are present, but this as well as the actual walking-part of the grand march shall not be covered in here.

#### The “gender-problem”

Rules of society dictate that the gentleman walks on the lady's left hand side; the lady therefore on gentleman's right hand side. It is also clearly stated, that it is always the gentleman that is escorting the lady. He offers his arm, which she gladly accepts. So, one could say, that ‘to escort’ is something, only a male individual can do, but a female individual cannot do.

It is not a question of who is the active (the leader).

It becomes clear with a different example.

*“The soldiers escort the president to the aircraft.” (“The president is escorted to the aircraft.”)*

They (the soldiers) lead him (the president) to the aircraft. They have the leading position (just as the gentleman that offers his arm for the lady to take it).

Since it is always the active part of a couple -the leader- who's name is mention first, you need to adapt the verb (to escort) the correct way.

A gentleman *is escorting* a lady, but a lady *is escorted by* a gentleman.

Example:

Joe Public is the leader. Lieschen Mueller is his partner.

*“Joe Public is escorting Lieschen Mueller.”*

Lieschen Mueller is the leader. Joe Public is her partner.

*“Lieschen Mueller is escorted by Joe Public.”*

*“Good evening everyone. I hope you had a wonderful time and enjoyed yourselves. I would like to thank all of you for coming. I would also like to thank our dance leaders for the great entertainment. Before I do that, by asking them to come up here, I would also like to welcome some official guest. Now you introduce the officials.”*

*Your dance leaders of the day! Calling mainstream: Lieschen Mueller escorted by Joe Public!  
Cueing the open rounds and doing the phase III workshop: Joe Public is escorting Lieschen Mueller!”*

e)

Let’s leave our caller behind and go over to the Round Dance hall. Now, we are a cuer and we are going to introduce the first dance of our tip.

The introduction of a dance includes the *title* of the dance, the *phase* of the dance (if there are ‘plus’-figures they should be named) and the *choreographer*. Some cuers do not mention the choreographer or the phase, because they feel it is unnecessary information, unimportant for the dancer. That might be true. On the other hand I believe it is nice for the choreographer to be mentioned - even if he is not present. It is simply an act of courtesy. To mention the phase of the dance, however, is, in my opinion, vitally important, because dancers sometimes decide only after getting to know the phase, whether they participate in the tip or not. Therefore it is also very important to tell them the ‘plus’-figures (those figures from a higher phase). People are often embarrassed when they are unable to dance a figure. Is that two or three times the case, they will stop dancing all together, just because of the possibility of a figure that they are unable to dance. So if you tell them the ‘plus’-figure beforehand they will at least know what to expect.

Name, phase and choreographer of dance are again exchangeable parts.

One last note on the vocabulary: A dance is always written by the choreographers, never from them.

Example:

*“Axel F is a Cha-Cha from the phase III+2, written by the Russ and Carol Mathewson. The two phase IV figures are an Alemana and a Fence Line.”*

*“Axel F is a Cha-Cha from the phase III+2. There is an Alemana and a Fence Line from the phase IV in it. The dance is written by Russ and Carol Mathewson.”*

*“OK, let’s start with a Cha-Cha. This is Axel F, a phase III+2 Cha-Cha. (Mention the two phase IV figures!) The choreographers are Russ and Carol Mathewson.”*

If there are tricky spots in a dance, mention them to the dancers beforehand.

Remember to speak slowly and clearly throughout the entire introduction!

Right. We told them what they are about to dance. Now we need to tell them how to dance. It is necessary to tell them how many measures they have to wait and it is most common to tell them the first or the first two figures of the introduction. If the introduction is short, you could tell them the first figure of part A as well.

If you have a mixed rhythm dance it is a great help if you tell them what rhythm the first part is in.

Example:

*“Wait two measures in back-to-back-position, men face wall and start with Circle Cha to Butterfly.”*

*“In back-to-back-position you wait two measures. We start with a Circle Cha to Butterfly and a Basic.”*

*“Wait two measures in open position, facing wall, apart acknowledge, together and touch. The dance (now comes part A) will then start with a waltz box.”*

f)

When you need to introduce yourself as the workshop leader, you proceed basically in the same way as it is explained above. You *welcome* the dancers, you introduce *yourself* and of course your *dancing partner*. If you have a female dancing partner, say something nice or even flattering. Women like that.

Afterwards you tell them everything they need to know about the dance you are going to workshop (such as title, rhythm, phase, choreographers). Encourage them to ask questions whenever they have difficulties with a figure.

Example:

*“Welcome to our phase III workshop. My name is Joe Public. My wonderful partner for this workshop is Lieschen Mueller.*

*As I just said, we’ll teach you a phase III dance. It is going to be the Cha-Cha, called “That Happy Dance”.*

*If you have any questions or problems, please don’t hesitate to ask either me or Lieschen. We will be most happy to help you. And remember your question could be someone else’s too. I suggest we show the whole dance, and then it’s your turn.”*

When you are through:

*“Thank you for joining us. I hope you had as much fun as we had. You have been great. Please give yourself a (big) hand. Please give also a (big) round of applause to my partner Lieschen.”*

g)

As already mentioned above, you need to get the dancers’ attention. Otherwise they will not hear your announcement. Now your tone of voice may be a little harsh. Now you can use the phrase “Can/may I have your attention.”. To weaken the harshness, you should say ‘please’ at the end. Then you simply say what you have to say. The basic rule here is:

As short as possible and as long as necessary.

You normally make an announcement during the break. This is the time where the dancers want to relax or chat. Let them have that time, so make your announcement short.

Example:

*“May I please have your attention! A dangle has been found. There is the logo of the “Happy Dancers” printed on it.”*

*“Can I have your attention for just a minute! The owner of the car with the British licence plate K 742 KMB needs to remove his car. It is parked in a parking slot for the disabled. Please move it to another slot.”*

“Could I have your attention please! To the owner of the bundle of one hundred pound notes tied together with a green rubber band. Your rubber band has been found. You can collect it at the information desk.”

OK, now we're through with our event. Why don't you help cleaning up, I go and park the car some place else.

Ah, one more word of advice.

This is not only when you make an announcement, but as well for everything you say over the microphone. Never talk when they applaud. They will not hear you and they are not ready to hear you. When dancers applaud, they want to say thank you. So let them. When the applause subsides you can continue. Also, turn the music down while announcing the next dance of your tip. This makes it easier for the dancer to understand you, especially when they are new in the language or you are in a big hall with much echo.

## Suggestions on further reading

### Suggestions on further reading:

There are many ways to practise and improve one's English. The best and most entertaining ways are: reading books, watching television and listening to the radio.

The suggestion on further reading shall be divided into three categories. First of all the "easy"-level of reading for the beginners. This is for everyone who has a minimum of knowledge of the English language. Second of all the "intermediate"-level of reading. This requires a certain degree of interest in the subject and also requires a more advanced knowledge of the English language as the "easy"-level does. Third of all is the "advanced"-level of reading. This is characterized either by a very complex structure of the text and plot or by a rather sophisticated way of language. This is the level of reading even native speakers might have difficulties with.

### Examples:

#### Easy level:

- "The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13¾", by Sue Townsend  
publisher: Methuen<sup>1</sup>  
ISBN: 0-113-53790-0<sup>1</sup>
- "The Queen and I", by Sue Townsend  
publisher: Mandarin<sup>1</sup>  
ISBN: 0-7493-1352-8<sup>1</sup>
- "Room at the Top", by John Braine  
publisher: arrow books<sup>1</sup>  
ISBN: 0-09-944536-0<sup>1</sup>
- "The Canterville Ghost", by Oscar Wilde<sup>2</sup>  
publisher: various  
ISBN: various
- "Of Mice and Men", by John Steinbeck<sup>2</sup>  
publisher: Penguin<sup>1</sup>  
ISBN: 0140292918<sup>1</sup>

#### Intermediate level:

- short stories by Ernest Hemmingway<sup>2</sup>
- "The Merchant of Venice", by William Shakespeare<sup>2</sup>  
publisher: various  
ISBN: various
- "David Copperfield", by Charles Dickens<sup>2 4</sup>  
publisher: various  
ISBN: various
- "Adrian Mole the Cappuccino Years", by Sue Townsend  
(This is only categorized as "intermediate" (and not "easy") because it is helpful to read "The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13¾" before, which is basically the first part.)  
publisher: Penguin<sup>1</sup>  
ISBN: 0-14-029279-9<sup>1</sup>
- "Murder on the Orient Express", by Agatha Christie  
(This is only categorized as "intermediate" (and not "easy") because it contains passages in French, due to the protagonist Hercule Poirot.)  
publishers: various  
ISBN: various

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<sup>1</sup> publishers and numbers may vary

<sup>2</sup> required reading for German high school students

<sup>3</sup> required reading for English high school students

<sup>4</sup> world literature

<sup>5</sup> bestseller

<sup>5a</sup> bestselling author

### Suggestions on further reading

- “Everything’s Eventual” – short stories, by Stephen King<sup>5a</sup>  
publisher: New English Library<sup>1</sup>  
ISBN: 0-340-77074-0<sup>1</sup>
- “The Great Gatsby”, by F. Scott Fitzgerald<sup>2</sup>  
publisher: Wordsworth Classics<sup>1</sup>  
ISBN: 1-85326-041-X<sup>1</sup>
- “Manchild in the Promised Land”, by Claude Brown  
publisher: Simon & Schuster New York<sup>1</sup>  
ISBN: 0-684-86418-5<sup>1</sup>
- “The Da Vinci Code”, by Dan Brown<sup>5</sup>  
publisher: Corgi Books<sup>1</sup>  
ISBN: 0-552-17951-9<sup>1</sup>

### Advanced level:

- “Macbeth”, by William Shakespeare<sup>2</sup>  
publisher: various  
ISBN: various
- “Hamlet, Prince of Denmark”, by William Shakespeare<sup>3 4</sup>  
publisher: various  
ISBN: various
- “The Grapes of Wrath”, by John Steinbeck<sup>3</sup>  
publisher: Penguin<sup>1</sup>  
ISBN: 0-140-29292-6<sup>1</sup>
- “It”, by Stephen King<sup>5a</sup>  
publisher: New English Library<sup>1</sup>  
ISBN: 0-450-41143-5<sup>1</sup>

There are obviously many more and many more to mention, but the above shall give a good overview.

A very good place to buy books is always [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). If you are not sure if the book you have chosen is the right one for you or you buy quite a number of books, the category “used” might be the right place to look. The books offered there are in good conditions and sold for very moderate prices.

Additionally to a selection of books I would like to offer a (much smaller) selection of dictionaries. I highly recommend to buy a dictionary only after you have seen it and after you have had the chance to take a good look at it. Every dictionary is different in its handling, so make sure you buy a dictionary you are able to work with.

The most common brands of dictionaries are “Langenscheidt”, “Pons”, “Oxford University Press” and “Cambridge University Press”.

There are also different kinds of dictionaries. There are those that simply translate words from English to a different language and there are those that explain English words in English.

Those so called English-English dictionaries are best to improve and practise the understanding of the English language.

A selection of dictionaries can be found at the end of this essay as Attachment I.

<sup>1</sup> publishers and numbers may vary

<sup>2</sup> required reading for German high school students

<sup>3</sup> required reading for English high school students

<sup>4</sup> world literature

<sup>5</sup> bestseller

<sup>5a</sup> bestselling author

Suggestions on further reading

As mentioned above, there are two more very entertaining ways to practise and improve one's English. There is only a very limited number of English radio stations that broadcast in Germany and there is only one station that broadcasts all-day in English: The BBC.

For frequencies and information see [www.bbc.co.uk/radio](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio).

The BBC is also represented in free TV. Check your channel list for BBC World ([www.bbcworld.com](http://www.bbcworld.com)) and watch international news.

Apart from that you can of course simply take your favourite movie on DVD and select English in the language menu.

The author is  
chairman of the  
Translation Committee  
(ECTA RD Council)  
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Attachment I

Selection of dictionaries:

1. Lilliput, Langenscheidt
  - English-language
  - language-English
  - very small format
  - minimum vocabulary
  
2. Large Dictionaries, Langenscheidt Muret/Sanders
  - English-language
  - examples
  - from slang to standard English
  - Phraseology
  - Idioms
  - Comprehensive information on pronunciation, translation, grammar and register
  
3. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Oxford University Press
  - English-English
  - partly with CD-Rom (same contents)
  - more than 183,500 words, meanings, expressions
  - 85,000 examples
  - 2,000 headwords
  - approx. 2,000 new words, expressions
  - 5,000 technical terms (economy, arts, technology)
  - differentiation between American English and British English
  
4. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Cambridge University Press
  - rather similar to no 3.

Attachment II

List of technical terms (Round Dance)

numbers 1,2,3,4,5,6, ...	
across	= hinüber
apart	= weg von
arm	= Arm
around	= um jemanden herum
away	= weg
back	= zurück, rückwärts
beat/count	= Taktschlag
behind	= hinter
between	= zwischen
centre	= Zentrum
choreographer	= Choreograph
clockwise	= im Uhrzeigersinn
counter-/ anticlockwise	= gegen den Uhrzeigersinn
cross	= kreuzen
diagonal(ly)	= diagonal
directly	= direkt
draw	= heranziehen
eighth	= Achtel
face	= anschauen
facing	= gegenüber stehend
forward	= vorwärts
full	= ganz
hand	= Hand
heel	= Ferse
in front	= vor(ne)
left	= links
licence plate	= Nummernschild
measure	= Takt
must	= muessen
must not	= nicht duerfen
one half (of)	= halb (Hälfte von)
one quarter	= ein Viertel
opposite	= (der) Gegenüber
revolution	= Umdrehung
right	= rechts
shoulder	= Schulter
sideways	= seitwärts
step	= Schritt
three quarters	= dreiviertel
toe	= Fußspitze
together	= zusammen
touch	= berühren
turn	= drehen
turning	= drehen(d)
vocabulary	= Wortschatz, Vokabular
word	= Vokabel
wall	= Wand

A full list of these words can be found in the ECTA Welcome Package chapter 16.1, compiled by Don Casper.