

# Understanding a conference talk

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL	NUMBER	LANGUAGE
Upper-intermediate	EN_BE_3805X	English

lingoda





## Goals

- Can recognise and understand the use of euphemisms and how they are used in a business context
- Can use new vocabulary and understanding to read and listen to examples of a conference talk





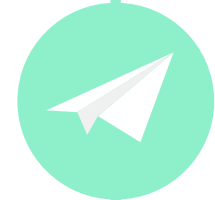
Banks sometimes talk about having  
**under-performing assets.**



Car salesmen might offer you a **pre-loved vehicle.**



The veterinarian had to **put Fluffy to sleep.**



These are all examples of  
**euphemisms.**





## Talk to the teacher

What do these phrases mean?



Fred was unable to make ends meet

We had to let go of the new recruit

Janice passed away



## Talk to the teacher

Why might someone use the phrase ***passed on*** or ***passed away*** instead of ***died*** in a conversation?



## euphemism

**Euphemisms** are words or phrases which are used in place of others to avoid something inappropriate or negative. They are generally used to avoid offending others or to make something mentioned in the sentence obscure. They can also be used to avoid taboo subjects.



Kicked the bucket is a commonly used **euphemism**.  
My car finally **kicked the bucket** on Saturday.



## Brainstorm

**Discuss these polite euphemisms with the teacher.  
What do they mean?**



Jonathon is a couch potato

He does not  
even have a  
roof over his  
head

Davey is of  
humble origins



## Speak your mind

**Why might it be useful to use euphemisms to *soften* language with negative connotations?**





## Translate

**Translate these euphemisms into blunt language.**

I am feeling a little under the weather.

Unfortunately  
there was some  
collateral  
damage.

The team bit off  
more than they  
could chew with  
that project.

Seeing that  
house always  
makes me  
misty-eyed.



## Translate

**Substitute these blunt statements into euphemistic language.**

This project is difficult for me.

The work is not progressing.

I will not finish the work in time.

A vertical sheet of lined paper with punch holes on the left side, intended for writing the translated euphemistic language.

## Euphemisms in business

Euphemisms are often used in business conferences to make problems seem less blunt and express them in a more delicate way. Observe the examples below.

- Our finances this quarter are in **quite negative territory**.
- The head of the marketing department has been **let go** for reasons related to performance.
- We're **falling a little short** of the targets we originally estimated.
  - We are all **recovering nicely** after last month's incident.



I admit I am in a **little over my head** with the project's workload.



## New euphemisms

**incident**

How are you feeling after last week's **incident**?

**issue**

It seems Janine has an **issue** with the new manager.

**speed bumps**

Unfortunately the project has hit some **speed bumps** and won't be completed in time.

**hiccups**

Have there been any **hiccups** so far?

**headwinds**

The economic **headwinds** are looking daunting this quarter.

**to throw a curve ball**

I don't foresee any problems, unless I get **thrown a curve ball**.



## New euphemisms

to be behind the  
8 ball

The sales department are a little **behind the 8 ball** this month.

in the red

Economic forecasts for our company are **in the red**.

churning  
economy

The **churning economy** hasn't helped matters much.

economic  
slowdown

The global market is bracing for **economic slowdown**.

negative territory

We are looking at some **negative economic territory** in the next few months.

unexpected  
complications

I've been handling some **unexpected complications**.



## Excerpt

Listen to the teacher read the excerpt on p. 32 from a business conference.





## Which of these euphemisms were used in the excerpt?

...economic  
slowdown...

...in the red.

...misappropriation  
of company funds.

falling a little short...

...two sandwiches  
short of a picnic.

Despite these  
hiccups...

...strong  
headwinds...

...dropped off the  
radar.

...unexpected  
complications.



## Write in your own words

**What do these euphemisms from the excerpt mean?**

Other companies in the market are also  
in negative territory...

Since the recession we have managed to  
maintain growth and are currently at the  
head of the pack...

We are falling a little short of the targets  
we estimated originally

A vertical notepad with a blue binding on the left and several horizontal lines for writing.





## Conference talks

Like all texts, successful conference talks and speeches follow a basic structure. Conference talks that are well-planned and organised resonate more readily with listeners and get the message across as clearly as possible.

A basic structure for a conference talk can be seen below.

- Introduction

Strong conference talks define their purpose in the introduction.

- Going from point to point

The bulk of talks are made up of explanations, expressed in points that follow each other in a coherent order.

- Conclusion

The purpose and main thrust of the talk is summarised and driven home at the end to best resonate with the audience.

## register

Conference talks generally refer to formal meetings where the participants share their views about a specific topic.

In most contexts conference talks are quite formal affairs. Every workplace is different however, and some companies may conduct their conferences in a more casual manner.

For our purposes in this lesson we will approach conference talks as speeches with a **formal agenda**.



The participants in the **conference** gathered to formally discuss the growth of the company in the last financial year.



## Introduction

Effective conference talks are based on a strong **introduction**.  
Use the introduction to make clear the main purpose of the talk.  
**What is it about?**

Overall, the introduction should welcome and address the audience and drive forward the main point and purpose of the talk.

Ladies and gentlemen...

Thank you for joining me here in Rome on this very windy day! It is with pleasure that I welcome you all to our annual conference on business growth. The main point of what I want to explain to you all today is that...



## Body

- The **body** of the conference talk is where each point relevant to the overall message is explained in detail. The main points should be organised in a logical structure and be linked with **connecting phrases**.

The phrases on the right are useful **connectors** which can be used to link points together in the body of your talk.

**Going from point to point smoothly** is necessary for an engaging and effective message.

- And that brings me to my next point...
- Moving swiftly on to...
- Which brings us to...
- With this in mind, allow me to draw your attention to...



## Conclusion

- The conclusion of the conference talk should be succinct and clear, largely repeating the main points and ideas from the introduction.
- The conclusion of many conference talks also heralds a period of questions and answers where the speaker fields questions from members of the audience. Many conclusions will invite the audience to initiate questions.

- I hope you have managed to draw some inspiration from these brief words.
- And with that, I will open the floor for questions.
- Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your time!
- With this in mind, allow me to draw your attention to...
- The conclusion drives home the overarching point and purpose of the talk. It should leave the audience with a clear understanding of the central idea, but also open the conference to any questions about the talk.



## Introduction - sample

**Read the sample of an introduction to a conference talk below.**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for joining me today at such an early hour. It is with pleasure I introduce you to our quarterly conference on company growth. The message I'd like to drive home to you today is that we have worked hard through a challenging economic period and have come through the other side very successfully. Our revenue forecast reflects a strong quarter of growth in each of our markets around the globe.



## Introduction - sample

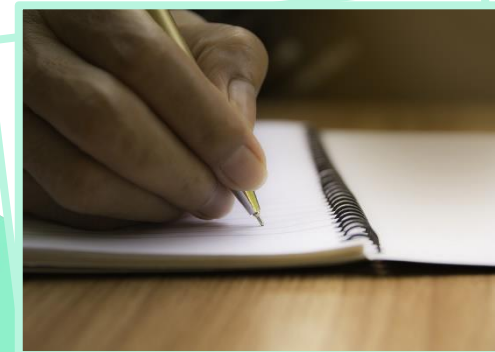
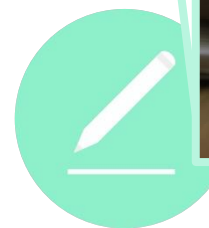
Identify three things that made  
the sample introduction  
effective.





## Write an introduction

**Try writing your own introduction with euphemisms.  
Your company has had a great year of growth and is quickly  
becoming noticed in your industry.**







## Body - sample

**Read this sample of the body to the conference talk above.**

That is not to say we didn't face some considerable hurdles and speed bumps along the way. The contract with our suppliers in January nearly fell through, which would have thrown us a curve ball and put us in negative territory. Our situation would have been very rocky indeed. The salvaging of that contract has given this company the space to flourish. And that brings me to my next point: the hard work and commitment shown by the marketing department. Due to the long hours spent and great effort of the team our brand has become more widely known abroad; our revenue prospects in China are looking increasingly rosy. Which brings us to production. The controversial move to set up a factory in China has eliminated much of the red ink we were seeing in our balance sheets. With cheaper manufacturing costs we have been able to expand our marketing output and keep our fingers on the pulse of the industry. It seems that after our early hiccups we are no longer behind the 8 ball.



## Sequenced activity

**Complete the activities below.**



**1**

Identify the connecting phrases in the sample on p. 25.



## Sequenced activity

**Complete the activities below.**



1

Identify the connecting phrases in the sample on p. 25.



2

Come up with four points to make in your own conference talk.



## Sequenced activity

**Complete the activities below**



1

Identify the connecting phrases in the sample on p. 25.



2

Come up with four points to make in your own conference talk.



3

Connect your points together using the connecting phrases you identified in step 1.



## Conclusion- sample

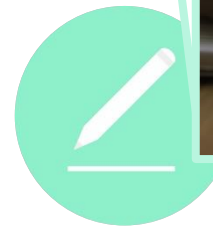
**Read the sample of an effective conclusion to a conference talk below.**

I hope that you have managed to draw some inspiration from these brief words. In short, we have faced a multitude of challenges; a churning economy, speed bumps in the market, and some unexpected incidents in the last couple of months. All things considered we should be proud of our success today. With that, I will open the floor to questions. Thank you very much for your time!



## Write a conclusion

**Try writing your own conclusion to link in with your introduction above.**





## Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





## Transcription

### Exercise p. 14

The message I'd like to drive home today is that we cannot rest on our laurels. Our economic forecast last season was mildly optimistic. We didn't anticipate the incident with our Japanese clients in February, or the economic slowdown which has been affecting the market. We are falling a little short of the targets we estimated originally due to these factors. Despite these hiccups we are looking forward to strong headwinds. Other companies in the market are also in negative territory; some are even in the red, having been badly shaken by this year's economic speed bumps. Since the recession we have managed to maintain growth and are currently at the head of the pack in our industry. I hope our team can draw some inspiration from this and drive forward a strong result in the next quarter and capitalise on our position.







## Homework

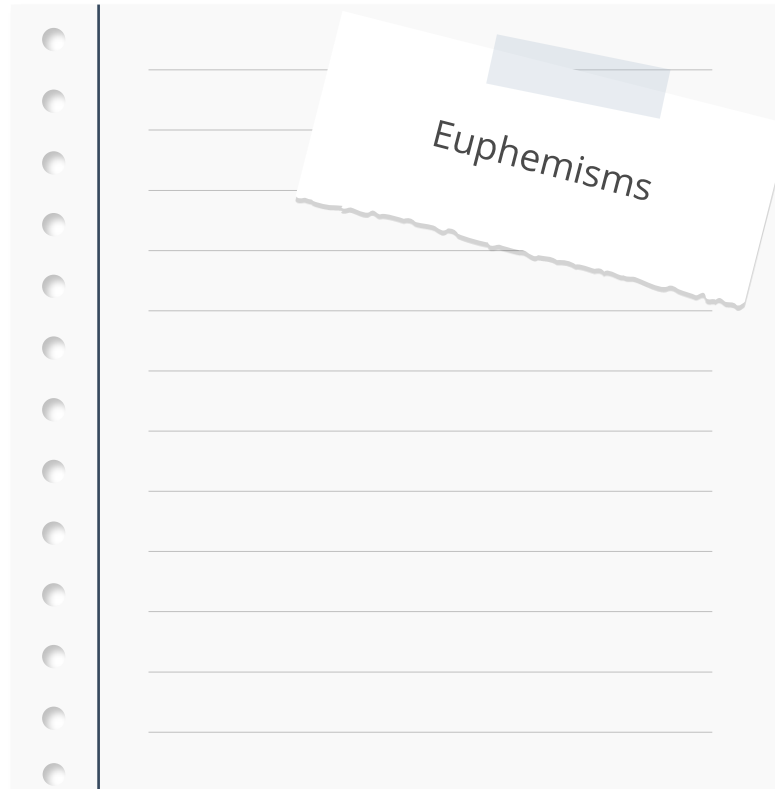
**Write two things you enjoyed and learnt about in this lesson.  
Write two things which were more difficult to understand.**





## My favourite words

**Write a list of your favourite euphemisms from this lesson!**





## Euphemism sentence activity

Place the euphemisms from the last slide into a sentence.

Euphemisms



## About this material

Find out more at  
[www.lingoda.com](http://www.lingoda.com)



This material is provided by

**lingoda**

### **lingoda** Who are we?



Why learn English online?



What kinds of English classes do we offer?



Who are our English teachers?



How do our English certificates work?



We also have a language blog!