



# English for European trade unionists



**Level Three**

**Trade Union Organisation**

**Study Guide**



The ETUI-REHS is financially supported by the European Commission

## Study Guide

### Publicising the union (p.4)

1. UNISON – one of Britain's largest general unions. This is a beer-mat, so people would come across it in pubs, clubs and restaurants. It would therefore be seen by people who are not necessarily members. The message is that the union would help you at work, so that you need not feel alone with your problems. The image shows a woman –so this helps counteract the idea that unions are male-dominated organisations. The message is: we are modern, open, and friendly.
2. GMB, another of Britain's largest general unions. This is the union's logo, and the message is clearly one of protecting your interest at work, of looking after your pay and conditions – and maybe even of protecting your job too. It also projects solidarity, with two stick-figures holding hands.
3. ABEU, the Australian Bank Employees Union. This is an old style banner, with perhaps intricate needlework making up the picture, unlike the computer-generated images above.. It portrays a very traditional picture of the union – with an old-fashioned couple at the centre – they look like the union's founders! The group of people shows solidarity – but perhaps the traditional message is intentional – that is, let's keep *people* in banking –we don't want everything computerised because that means job losses.

## Working with words 1

### Why join UNISON? (p. 8)

Words from UNISON list

Term used	Explanation
unionised workplaces	workplaces where trade unions are allowed to organise.
union recognition	the act of admitting or accepting a particular union's or unions' right to organise on behalf of the workers in a workplace
equal opportunities policy	a policy which systematically aims at eliminating discrimination, whether it be on the grounds of gender, marital status, sexual orientation, race, faith, age or disability.
increased leave	more holiday time



career	progress in job or profession
parental leave policies	policies which allow parents time off to care for their children in different circumstances (e.g. sickness, school holidays etc.)
statutory minimum	the minimum amount allowed by law
stewards	representatives
legal obligations	requirements placed [upon employers] by law
disability	handicap, long-term illness, state of being disabled
sexual orientation	inclination towards one or other gender
non-unionised	not members of a recognised trade union
sacked	dismissed

## Working with reading 1

### The future is reform (p. 9)

- A Fewer people are in unions because of the changing world of work, but they are not necessarily less well paid as a result.
- B To overcome this decline, unions have merged, but this leads to less democracy and less power, and pensions are now a burning issue.
- C The answer lies in a consensual, rather than a confrontational approach.
- D Unions should work for growth in the economy, and address the real problem of the gap between the low-paid and the over-paid.

1. There are more union members in the public sector than in the private sector in the UK. TRUE
2. Union mergers mean more democracy. FALSE
3. Most people think unions are more effective if they enjoy a good relationship with the employers. TRUE
4. The struggle for fair pay is no longer a problem. FALSE



Working with words 2

Vocabulary matching (p.11)

A

**Paragraph A**

1. mean	imply	verb
2. pay	wages	noun

**Paragraph B**

3. notwithstanding	despite	preposition
4. connections	implications	noun
5. seriously reduced	severely eroded	adverb + verb

**Paragraph C**

6. encourages	urges	verb
7. purifying	cathartic	adjective
8. build	capitalise on	verb
9. contradictory	paradoxical	adjective
10. strong	robust	adjective
11. really	actually	adverb

**Paragraph D**

12. achievements	gains	noun
13. ridiculously	ludicrously	adverb
14. catalyst	stimulant	noun

B

- 1 say
- 2 security
- 3 grievance
- 4 entitled
- 5 discipline
- 6 elected
- 7 carry out
- 8 hostile
- 9 tier



## Working with language 1

### Adjectives and adverbs (p. 13)

Adjectives are underlined, and **adverbs** appear in bold:

I still remember the day I went to my first union meeting. I had planned my speech very **carefully** (1) but as the time to start got nearer, I began to feel **terribly** (2) nervous (3). There were loud (4) voices coming from the meeting room but when I opened the door, the noise died down **quickly** (5) and by the time I reached the table at the front of the room there was complete (6) silence. I introduced myself in what I hoped was a confident (7) voice and placed my papers on the table in front of me. **Unfortunately** (8) I did not do it **carefully** (9) enough and the papers fell onto the floor. I was **terribly** (10) embarrassed and bent down to pick them up.

**Formation:** usually; completely; capably; truly

## Working with language 2

### Comparison of adjectives and adverbs (p. 15)

These are some suggestions- but there are many other possibilities:

- 1
  - a. Travelling by **bus** is cheaper than travelling by **train**
  - b. A **taxi** is more convenient than a **bus**
  - c. A **bicycle** can be parked more easily than a **car**
  - d. The least reliable method of transport is a **plane**
  
- 3
  - 1 Non-members don't **earn as much as UNISON members**.
  - 2 As a UNISON member, you can get **more time off to attend courses**.
  - 3 Non-members get injured **more frequently (often) than members**.
  - 4 UNISON members are less likely **to be discriminated against**.
  - 5 You'll get **more generous parental leave** if you have a baby.



4. 1. What do you think is **the most difficult aspect** of being a trade union rep?
2. Who is **more useful** to society, a trapeze artist or a trade unionist?
3. I think women drive **more carefully** than men.
4. They bought **the most expensive** house they could afford.
5. There is nothing **worse** than missing a connecting flight
6. He gave up smoking last year and now feels much **fitter**.
7. That really is **the worst** meal I have ever eaten.

### Working with video 1

#### Recruiting new members (p. 23)

##### International Tailor, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF)

- 1.1 Membership can be doubled if every member recruits one more member.
- 1.2 People think trade unions are like insurance companies because they pay their membership (subscription) fee, then forget all about them until they need help with a problem.

##### UNITE

- 2.1 UNITE started to organise in the textile services, or laundry industry.
- 2.2 Because workers were underpaid, and worked in very bad conditions. Also, it is a growing industry.
- 2.3 It's difficult to organise in this sector because many of the workers are immigrants without papers, and not used to the idea of joining a union, and frightened of losing their jobs.

##### ITGLWF, Africa Region

- 3.1 They held a workshop in Mombasa.
- 3.2 They talked to the workers very early in the morning, before work, during the lunch breaks, and after work (because they were not allowed in the factory).
- 3.3 They managed to recruit 90% of workers in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in Mombasa.
- 3.4 By victimising the workers who has joined up – management calls them in one by one and forces them to sign resignation letters.



🔊 Transcript

**Recruiting new members**

**Neil Kearney, General Secretary, ITGLWF**

Now, if a union says to some of its activists, I want you to go out and recruit 500, 1000 members, that's a tough task, but if the union was to say every single member, 1 for 1, bring us back one more member, you have membership doubled. Now that's one thing we try to impress upon our affiliates, the need to work in that way, not only does that build membership, but it also builds involvement in the union, and gets away from the simple idea that a union is like an insurance company: you pay your membership fee, forget about the union and what it's doing until you have a problem.

**Finding new areas for recruitment**

**Edgar Romney, ex- Vice-President, UNITE-HERE**

One of those areas has been the textile services industry which we in the United States call the 'laundry industry', and that has been a very interesting industry for us because it's an industry that's been growing. This was a sector that no union historically in the US had actually attempted to organise. There was a union, it was called the Textile Processors some years ago - it merged with our union Unite, now Unite-Here, and we realised that this was an opportunity for us to work and try and organise in an industry where workers were underpaid and working under very bad conditions and we realised that this also was a growing industry so we decided to organise and try to help those workers.

Many of these workers are immigrants; many of them have not been in unions before so this is their first exposure – the company attempts to hire and recruit workers that they think will not be vulnerable or susceptible to unions. Many of them are undocumented workers, so they are fearful of their jobs, so this is a particular strategy that companies use in recruiting workers because they wanna make sure that they don't stand up for their rights and they don't speak up and that they certainly will not join the union.

There are bad working conditions; firstly it's dirty and hot, working in a laundry. These workers don't have any health coverage, they don't have any retirement plans, they don't have any protection, and they don't have any respect. And so what they want to do is to organise and join our union so they can get the benefits that union workers enjoy.

**Recruiting in Export Processing Zones**

**Silas Kuveya, General Secretary, Zimbabwe Textile Workers' Union**

I really enjoyed my involvement in Kenya where I had the task to go and help the Textile and Tailors Union in Kenya to organise workers in the EPZs\*. In fact I really enjoyed the organizing and education work as a trade unionist

*\*Export Processing Zones*



**Thabo Tshabalala , Regional Organiser, Africa region, ITGLWF)**

What we did, was we had a workshop in Mombasa, we set up the targets, goals and everything, and we trained workers, the leadership, how to recruit and everything.

**Silas Kuveya**

So the plan was, we break the group into 4 teams where each team was targeting different factories at the same time. We could target workers as early as 5am in the morning before they start work, addressing them outside the factory and because the employers were not allowing trade unions inside, and we could address them, recruit them – we could also target them during their lunch breaks. We were recruiting, addressing them, and also after work including following them up to their home areas within the communities they were staying, talking to them about trade union work and recruiting them.

**Thabo Tshabalala**

The project was marvellous, everything was done alright and it was successful because people did join the union – we signed up thousands of workers.

**Silas Kuveya**

And we managed to achieve 90% of the EPZ workers in Mombasa who were not trade union members.

**Thabo Tshabalala**

And after having signed those thousands of workers that's when the problem begins... once you submit the names of those workers to the company, the company will begin to victimise these workers, one by one, dismiss them. Some of the companies, you provide them with a list, they will go one by one, they'll call them and make them to sign resignation letters and they send them back and say – these people have resigned from the union.

**Working with video 2**

**Unite Here!–New members (p.26)**

- 1 **'Pride' – introductory sequence**
  - 1.1 Workers doing all sorts of jobs – clothing-related, also auto. parts, in warehouses, moving and stacking rolls of textiles, boxes, ironing, working with textile machines, feeding an old person in a nursing home, etc. All the workers look cheerful in their work, and look at the camera. One scenes shows group in UNITE T-shirts, kneeling in a circle, holding hands. Another shows lots of hands together, illustrating bonding, togetherness, solidarity. We also see workers in the street with placards, and a group of women with their clenched fists raised triumphantly.
  - 1.2 UNITE organises in the clothing, textile and high tech. industries, in the automobile parts industry, in distribution centres, in laundries and nursing homes.
  - 1.3 UNITE dates back to the early 1900s when it began organising among immigrant workers in clothing and textile industries who wanted better pay and conditions.



## 2 Negotiating a union contract

- 2.1 In this particular workplace, UNITE distributed a questionnaire and carried out a survey.
- 2.2 By exerting pressure on management by holding well-attended rallies outside when negotiations were in progress.
- 2.3 The workers agreed to accept the new contract, with 1100 voting in favour, and only 146 against.

## 3 Protecting your rights on the job

- 3.1 You go and talk to your shop steward.
- 3.2 He is very proud of the work that he does, helping his co-workers and making their needs known to the company (management).

### Discussion point

Other topics could include training and equal opportunities, for example.

## TRANSCRIPT: UNITE HERE- New members

### PRIDE

Welcome to UNITE. As a UNITE union member, you're joining 100s and 1000s of working people in the US and Canada in the clothing, textile and high tech. industries, in auto parts, distribution centres, laundries and nursing homes. Together we're fighting for and winning better wages, decent health care, a good retirement, safe workplaces and respect on the job.

The roots of our union go back to the early 1900s when immigrant workers in clothing and textile factories started organising unions to fight for better pay and working conditions. Today, that's still what we're all about.

Corporate America is not looking out for the needs of working people – that's why we have a union, but our union can only be as strong as we make it, and the more UNITE members are active and involved, the more power we'll have to win improvements in our lives. In everything that UNITE does, from bargaining new contracts to protecting the rights of our co-workers on the job, from organising new members to taking our fights to politicians and to the public, it's UNITE members who make the union strong.

### NEGOTIATING A UNION CONTRACT

Negotiating a union contract that guarantees wages, benefits and working conditions is one of the most important things we do as union members. The contract is negotiated by union members who are selected to represent their co-workers at the bargaining table, but the real fight is outside the negotiating room, showing the



company that we're united and determined to win. Linda Temme is on the bargaining committee for TJ Max, in Evansville, Indiana.

*'When people stand up together and behind each other you have power, and this power you can take to the bargaining table and then you can get your better wages and your better insurance and your respect and dignity.'*

Your contract should address the problems you and your co-workers are concerned about, that's why it's important to be involved, to have input into what's being negotiated.

*"We found out what people really need from passing out surveys. The surveys really helped a lot in knowing exactly what kind of problems there were out there, and by this we can help the people more."*

Once the bargaining committee knows what their co-workers want, they sit down with company representatives to negotiate a contract but it takes all the members of the local (= branch) standing together to get the best contract possible.

*"By having rallies outside the plant, and within the cafeteria that shows the company that we're united, that you know we're supporting each other and they're not going to walk over us any more."*

*"The last rally we had, the majority of the whole plant was there. There was like over a 1000 people there and that sent a strong message to the company and that makes them stand up and really pay attention, and that's what they said in negotiations, they were just shocked and they also said they didn't get anything out of this contract, we got it all.....with no concessions and no give-back."*

After the negotiating committee and the company have reached an agreement, the members vote on whether to accept the contract.

*"We have 1100 for Yes, 146 for No. We have a contract!"*

*"Going into negotiations, it builds unity, so then as time goes on....and you're out of the contract, you know, into a regular year, then everybody...they don't forget, and they're still in there, they're still fighting and they're still sticking together. It builds a strong union."*

### PROTECTING OUR RIGHTS ON THE JOB

As a UNITE member, when you feel the company has treated you unfairly you can do something about it. You have someone to represent you on the job everyday. Your shop steward, or shop chair is a fellow worker who's been selected to help you resolve disputes with the company.

Anthony Caranja is a shop steward at Liz Claiborne in Seacaucus, New Jersey.

*"My job as a shop steward is to represent the workers and to make sure the contract is not violated by the company."*

When you have a problem at work, you tell your shop steward about it.

*"Sometimes up here it's too hot to work and .....the management need to do something about it." "OK"*

The shop steward knows the contract and knows what the company can and can't do. You and your steward can file a complaint, call a grievance to get the problem resolved.

*"Let's say your air conditioning is broken and you feel hot, you can't work, you feel uncomfortable and you feel something should be done about it"*



A grievance usually starts by a meeting with the supervisor. If that doesn't make it right, you and your steward can go to higher ups in the company and even to an independent judge for a fair decision. With the union, you have rights on the job that the company has to respect, and your steward is there to help.

"I'm very proud of what I do. On a daily basis you are making issues known, you are making the workers' needs known to the company, you are enforcing the contract...that your contract is being respected, that your contract is not being violated. That's what the union's all about – representing workers and fighting for workers, helping them and supporting them, making sure they are respected."

*"It's good to be a shop steward and I'm proud of it."*

### Working with language 3

#### Asking questions (p. 30)

- 1 There are several possibilities: some suggestions are given here:
  - Being a trade union rep is hard work.*  
Is being a trade union rep hard work?  
What's it like being a rep?  
Is it easy being a trade union rep?  
What is hard work?
  - More women should be encouraged to participate.*  
Who should be encouraged to participate?  
What should be done (by the union)?  
What should more women be encouraged to do?  
More women should be encouraged to do what?
  - Union reps can help members with their problems.*  
What can union reps do?  
Who can union reps help with their problems?  
What can union reps help members with?  
Can union reps help members with their problems?
  - Trade union reps need to be effective communicators.*  
What do trade union reps need to be?  
Who needs to be effective communicators?  
Do trade union reps need to be effective communicators?
  - Young people are an important target group for recruitment.*  
Who are an important target group for recruitment?  
What are young people?  
For what are young people an important target group?  
Are young people an important target group for recruitment?



2 There are several possibilities: some suggestions are given here:

- 1 What is the campaign aimed at protecting.?
- 2 Where was the campaign conducted?  
At which universities did this dispute take place?
- 3 What was withdrawn as a result of this campaign?
- 4 What kind of campaign was it?  
How was the campaign described?
- 5 Who does NATFHE challenge?
- 6 What is adversely affected by job cuts?
- 7 What are people encouraged to do by the poster?

### 3 **The Shop Steward's Lament (poem)**

1 There are six direct question forms in the poem:

- 1 Who is the worst paid man today?
- 2 Who's blamed when things do not go right?
- 3 Who gets no rest by day or night?
- 4 Who is this chap?
- 5 What! Don't you know him?
- 6 Or (don't you know) how much you really owe him?

2 The anonymous author of the poem is stating the obvious – he is using questions that he doesn't expect anyone to answer, as the answers are self-evident – to the author at least. Using questions emphasises the impact of the poem – that the shop steward is hardworking, and taken for granted, that no-one really appreciates his work. The poem is written in a rhetorical style.

#### **Discussion points:**

The poem seems based on experience in a factory, or heavy industry such as engineering. Today, a shop steward is more likely to represent nurses, teachers, or someone in the public sector or services sector. Today's union reps are more likely to have received some training, and would work within a team of other elected reps, within a recognised structure that is more supportive and less isolating than the experience described in the poem. Undoubtedly there are still some grains of truth in the poem. Finally, today's shop steward or rep may well be a woman!



Working with language 4

More comparisons: as....as; like or as? (p. 34)

1

- 1 He speaks English as well as you (do).
- 2 She is as big as her sister. [ OR She is bigger than her sister.]
- 3 Your union branch is not as big as ours.
- 4 The buildings in the city centre are like prisons.
- 5 Unions today fight for their members as they have always done in the past.
- 6 She does not attend meetings as often as I do.

2

- 1 easier; easiest (note y>i)
- 2 more considerate; most considerate
- 3 good, better best  
bad, worse, worst  
far, farther, farthest (distance) or far, further, furthest (time)
- 4 The wages are *as low as* they were last year.
- 5

slow	angry	good	intelligent	hard	fast
slowly	angrily	well	intelligently	hard (no change)	fast (no change)

- 6 friendlier and cleverer

3

- 1 The buildings in the city centre are **like** large prisons.
- 2 The union fights for its members just **as** it has always done in the past.
- 3 Works Councils in Denmark are set up by legal statute, **as** they are in France.
- 4 The location of the meeting, **like** the dates, has already been decided by the committee.
- 5 She represented the members in disciplinary cases **as** her predecessor had done before her.





- 2
  - 1 The training course **that** he attended examined industrial development in Denmark.
  - 2 They visited a union **that** was said to be the oldest in the country.
  - 3 You should make sure you talk to representatives **who /that** know about European trade union issues.
  - 4 I asked to speak to the woman, **who** had already sent me several documents.
  - 5 They decided to go to the conference, **which** was to be held in London.
  
- 3
  - 1 Sr. Delgado who chairs this committee is the chief union representative for Nissan.
  - 2 Jane, who is pregnant, works in an insurance office and has not had a holiday for two years.
  - 3 He is a white-collar worker, whose job is office-based.
  - 4 The aim is to reduce labour costs which are the highest in the world.
  - 5 This union which has an agreement with the engineering industry recently went on strike for a 36 hour week.
  - 6 Each company will have a negotiations body whose members will be elected or appointed.
  - 7 The company's decision, which has been widely criticised, is to transfer its operations to the UK.
  - 8 A committee, which was set up in 1969, was appointed to analyse the range of service activities within the trade union movement.
  - 9 I told you about the results of the survey which will be published next month and have been produced by the French Working group.



## Working with words 4

### Media strikes (p. 52)

## Express journalists threaten to strike

Journalists at Express Newspapers have given management until next week to improve a pay offer or face possible strike (1) **action**.

A meeting between National Union of Journalists members and Express executives broke up without agreement yesterday. Express staff voted in favour of strike action this week after rejecting a 3.3% pay (2) **rise**.

NUJ members said Express management, led by editorial director Paul Ashford, stated a preference for spending money on ensuring that the newspapers are published during a (3) **strike** rather than using the funds to (4) **settle** a pay (5) **dispute**.

The NUJ chapel at Express Newspapers met after the talks and issued an (6) **ultimatum**.

If an improved pay offer is not forthcoming by Wednesday, management will be served notice of industrial action, the chapel said.

"The chapel invites the management to come forward with a realistic pay (7) **offer**. Should a suitable offer not be forthcoming by Wednesday next week, the chapel empowers the chapel committee to give the management seven days' notice of industrial action," said the Express chapel in a (8) **statement**.

A spokesman for Northern & Shell, parent company of Express Newspapers, said: "This is not the time to be making a (9) **comment**."

Express Newspapers, owned by Richard Desmond, employs around 400 journalists, of which an estimated 250 to 300 are NUJ (10) **members**.

## ITV staff to strike in protest at pay offer

ITV shows including Coronation Street and Emmerdale face (11) **disruption** after staff across the country voted for strike action yesterday over the company's annual pay offer.

The broadcasting union BECTU said it would announce after Easter when (12) **strikes** would be held, after 55% of its ITV members voted in favour of (13) **walkouts** in protest at a pay offer of 3.3%.

Gerry Morrissey, the union's assistant general secretary, said: "It is unacceptable that ITV executives award themselves huge share (14) **bonuses** but will not give their workers a pay rise in line with (15) **inflation**."

The (16) **dispute** involves several hundred broadcasting, production and studio staff at ITV centres in London, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Norwich, Birmingham and Nottingham.

The technicians union Amicus is also due to hold a separate vote on industrial action among its ITV members over the pay offer.

The unions asked for a 6% pay increase for 2005 but launched strike votes after ITV tabled a 3.3% offer earlier this month.

The strike vote comes in the same month that it emerged that ITV would be making 95 staff around the country (17) **redundant**, after the regulator Ofcom gave the broadcaster the go-ahead to cut its non news regional output in its English franchises from three hours to 1.5 hours a week.

0



Collocation (p. 54)

1

	a strike	a dispute	a stoppage	a settlement	an agreement
have	✓	✓	?	?	✓
make	x	x	x	✓	✓
do	x	x	x	x	x
break	✓	✓	x	x	✓
negotiate	x	x	x	✓	✓
reach	x	x	x	✓	✓

