

The Business English Teacher:

Professional principles and practical procedures

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English is inarguably the lingua franca of the business world – and this means many people throughout this business world need English lessons. It also means English teachers can travel the world having a fascinating life teaching bankers in Berlin, *jamón serrano* exporters in Barcelona, university students in Bogotá or would-be immigrants in Sydney. But it can be difficult for teachers to move from general English into business English, just as it is to move into English for academic purposes or exam preparation courses. Many teachers are nervous or feel they are inadequately qualified so they are reluctant to take or seek opportunities to teach business English. Others jump in unprepared and struggle with course content and delivery methods, fail to satisfy students, and end up with quite negative perceptions of this specialty. *The Business English Teacher* is of great value in addressing both of these issues. It provides insights, methods, lessons and ideas that can take several years of business English teaching to acquire. It focuses on meeting students' needs holistically, and clarifies what a teacher needs to be, know and do, whilst also providing a wealth of practical material.

The Business English Teacher is well organised. It starts with an introduction to the world of business English teaching. Then there are sections on teaching lower level students, the key business English focus areas, and on English language and skills development with a business focus. Each of these three sections is made up of outlines of lessons or tasks for use with a range of students (in fact the bulk of the book's pages are very practical classroom activities or lessons). Finally there is a small section focusing on continuing professional development.

The introduction gives a 'who, what, where and how' of business English teaching. This is invaluable for teachers new to the field or wanting to move into the field. It would even be of value to teachers whose experience of business English teaching has been in a limited context, such as teachers who have only taught non-working students as opposed to experienced business people or vice versa. The three sections of lesson activities are all very clearly formatted. They all have simple, clear procedures and, as a rule, require few resources to employ. They very often have suggestions for adaptations for different student levels, needs, business experience and so on.

One issue perhaps is that there is often little support for teachers in terms of following good methodology when using the lesson materials. Teachers will need to put in a fair amount of work planning many of the tasks despite how straightforward the lessons may sound. One example of a trap for newer teachers is the procedure: 'have your students read the text for the general idea'. Given this so-called 'task', the majority of students will naturally read very thoroughly. Likewise, the instruction 'when learners have difficulty pronouncing key words, drill them...' isn't really specific enough for a less experienced teacher, who may need strategies to help learners with problem phonemes, word stress and so on.

Another issue is that the bulk of the material is really aimed at students who are currently working in business positions with English needs, and the tasks involve students bringing material from their job to work on in lessons. In Australia, the majority of business English students are not working at the time of their study and some have no business experience at all. This means teachers will need to source or make 'authentic' business materials, such as emails and financial reports, to be able to use these lessons. This will involve quite a bit of work and a real reduction in the motivational impact of the materials.

Finally, the section on professional development is a bit too basic. For most teachers it's a given that they should evaluate their lessons after teaching (although they may not do it) and that observing other teachers is a good idea. Likewise, reading the business section of newspapers to keep abreast of topics is nothing groundbreaking. Teachers would need to look elsewhere for more useful ways to continue to develop their teaching.

Overall, this is a very valuable, long overdue publication. Its contents address things either not focused on by other resources or not brought together in one book before. For colleges that have or wish to have business English courses, it's an affordable teaching and training resource. For teachers, it's a great tool for a confident and effective entry to this large, lucrative, and fascinating area of teaching.

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