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With a specific focus on Austrian adult learners“

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1. Introduction

“ELT [English Language Teaching] course book publishing is a multi-million pound industry” (Sheldon 1988: 237) and a teacher can find a wide range of course books on the market, all claiming that the approach used is best for learners and most effective for meeting their needs. Hence, it is not an easy task for English teachers to select an appropriate course book for their classes. In fact, selecting a course book is one of the most difficult and important decisions teachers will make in organizing and designing their courses. Yet, Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 97) argue that selecting and evaluating course books is basically a very straightforward analytical matching process, where students’ needs are matched to available solutions. This seems to be too simplified a conception of the situation teachers are faced with on a daily basis.

The increasingly global nature of business has caused many business people to realize that they need to improve their language skills in order to be able to deal with business partners from all around the world. In recent years, this has led to an increased interest in specialized forms of English, henceforth referred to as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly Business English (BE) courses, which has resulted in great demand for accompanying course books. Business English has become a promising sales argument for publishing companies. They have responded to this trend by offering a wide range of such books dedicated to business, yet sometimes neglecting the appropriate contents and the specific needs of Business English learners.

As a matter of fact, course books are the most comprehensive teaching sources. Ideally, they are well-structured, making it easy for both students and teachers to recognize this structure and, hence, finding their way through the books. However, in reality course books are very expensive and the descriptions found on the book covers and on the websites are not always helpful for making buying decisions, since these descriptions are an advertisement rather than a truthful summary of the books’ contents. Course books are also a source of practical ideas, which is not unimportant for teachers who, in many cases, lack time for preparation or are not very

experienced. Therefore, course books save time for the teacher. Moreover, there is seldom enough time to cover each and every unit and exercise, and course books can never cater to all possible teaching contexts. It is thus necessary for teachers to select the most relevant topics and exercises for their classes.

The purpose of this thesis is to critically examine a selected number of Business English course books, published by different Austrian and German publishing companies, by exploring in how far they cater to students' needs. This study addresses a number of issues that need to be considered in order to accurately evaluate these course books. The thesis begins by giving a brief overview of conceptual considerations, discussing the meaning of ESP by comparing and contrasting it with English for General Purposes (EGP). Finally, Business English will be defined, characterized, and categorized within the overall structure of ELT. Chapter 3 will examine the learners' needs and what it is that Business English teachers should seek in course books to meet those needs. The thesis will then go on to the methodology of Business English Course books in chapter 4, exploring in how far they cater to students' needs. It will include a report on the most effective methodological concepts and approaches for English teaching in general and finally explore the Business English methodology in particular. According to the findings, the following chapter will develop a list of evaluation criteria which build the base for the actual evaluation of the individual course books in chapter 7.

2. Conceptual Considerations

2.1. Aims

The purpose of this chapter is to define and classify English for Specific Purposes. Clearly, this chapter cannot cover the broad and complex area of ESP, which still can be treated in much more detail in the academic literature. These pages should rather be regarded as an attempt or a first approach to explaining ESP. They will, therefore, give a broad outline of what can be understood by English for Specific Purposes. Hence, Dudley-Evans and St John's definition of ESP will be drawn upon. As a next step, ESP and English for General Purposes will be compared and contrasted and it will be explained what is so distinctive about ESP. Finally, this chapter will restrict the focus to a small area of ESP, viz. English for Business Purposes.

2.2. What is ESP?

ESP, English for specific purposes, is receiving a lot of attention around the world. ESP courses are offered in almost every university, school, or private institution, both to students in English speaking countries and to those whose mother tongue is not English. Looking at the contents of such courses, one wonders what people mean by ESP, since a great number of topics have found their way into this area. Such topics may be from the areas of business, medicine, or technology. In fact, it is rather difficult to offer an accurate definition of ESP because it covers a far too broad area, and what is specific for one course may still be general for another. Thus, it is almost impossible to come up with a universal definition, and going into detail about this would definitely go beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, the following sections will provide an outline of what ESP includes and what the S, for "specific", actually means.

This section begins by looking at Peter Strevens, who presented the following definition of ESP (Ann M. Johns & Donna Price-Machado 2001: 44 quoted in Celce-Murcia (ed.) 2001: 43-54). Granted, this definition dates back to 1988, but it is

nevertheless interesting to see how ESP was conceptualized more than twenty years ago and how it has developed since then.

Strevens' claims for ESP are that it is

- focused on the learner's need and wastes no time
- relevant to the learner
- successful in imparting learning
- more cost-effective than General English.

In other words, Strevens claims that ESP is more learner-oriented than general English. A few years later, Dudley-Evans and St John came up with a more detailed definition of ESP which contains three absolute and four variable characteristics (2001: 4-5).

Absolute characteristics:

- ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learners.
- ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves.
- ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

Variable characteristics:

- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines.
- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English.
- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be used for learners at a secondary school level.
- ESP is generally designed for advanced students. Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

In reference to the first absolute characteristic, Dudley-Evans (2001: 131) points out that "the key defining feature of ESP is that its teaching and materials are founded

on the results of needs analysis". Together with St John, he shares Hutchinson and Waters' (1987: 19) view that

ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning.

Thus, an ESP course is a goal-directed course. So the basic question an ESP teacher is confronted with is always: "What do students need to do in English?" (Dudley-Evans 2001: 131). ESP is, thus, a learner centered approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language.

As for the second absolute characteristic, Dudley-Evans and St John believe that ESP teaching sometimes applies a different methodological approach than EGP teaching.

Finally, the authors hold that the way the language is used and the tasks that are carried out are criterial to an ESP course. The language itself need not be specific, but the practices in relation to the language do. Widdowson (2003: 67) later expanded on this point when he wrote that "you do not acquire the conceptual significance of things when you learn their names". Thus, what is significant in ESP is the way the language is used by means of activities the students engage in. According to Robinson (1991: 2), these activities "may be specialist and appropriate even when non-specialist language and content are involved".

Turning to Dudley-Evans and St John's variable characteristics, ESP meets the needs of learners who must learn English for use in their specific fields, such as science, medicine, technology, business, or academic learning. Students who study ESP need English for work purposes, and it also applies to students who are newcomers to their area of business. The main target group of ESP courses may (but need not) be adult learners who will already have studied EGP and are at an intermediate or advanced level of learning.

2.3. Classification of ESP

First and foremost, it is important to regard ESP as part of English Language Teaching (ELT) and not as an area of separate development (Kennedy & Bolitho 1984: 7).

For purposes of classification, Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 17) suggest an “ELT tree” in which they divide ELT into three different areas: English as a Mother Tongue (EMT), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and English as a Second Language (ESL). EMT can be further divided into various branches. As for EFL and ESL, both can be split in the same way, that is to say into English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). EGP is most commonly taught to students at elementary school and high school, but also to adult students.

Robinson (1991: 3) has divided ESP into two main areas which are presented in the following diagram: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

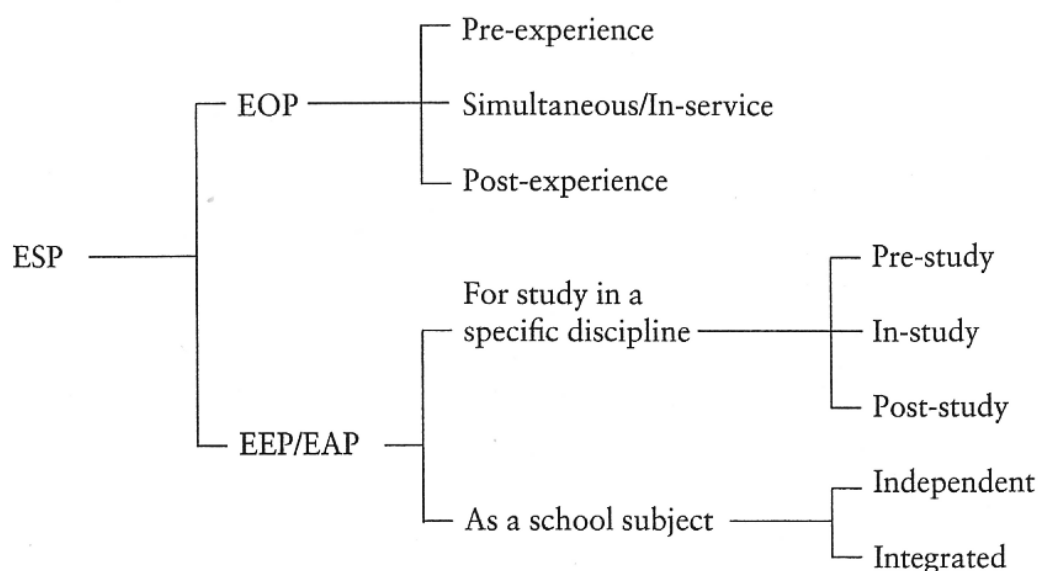


Figure 1: Classification of ESP (adapted from Robinson)

EAP can be further divided into two main branches. One part is concerned with English for studies in ‘specific disciplines’, such as science, technology, medicine,

law, management, finance, and economics. The other branch addresses the English language itself as a subject or discipline. Hence, EAP is generally taught in educational institutions to students who need English for their studies (Kennedy & Boitho 1984: 4), while EOP is not for academic purposes, but for learners who need English as part of their post-academic work or profession (Kennedy & Boitho 1984: 4). EOP is far more specific, as it pertains to both students learning English for professional purposes, such as medical or business English, and to those learning English for vocational purposes, which are less specific than professional English courses. An example by Dudley-Evans and St John (2001: 7) might help to clarify these differences: an EAP course in medical English is designed for medical students, while a medical EOP course is designed for practicing doctors.

Irrespective of how detailed the classification of ESP may be, we should not lose sight of the fact that “ESP is just one branch of EFL/ESL” (Hutchinson & Waters 1987: 18). Moreover, it should be noted that these differences are not as distinct as they may seem. The borders between the individual categories are rather ambiguous and sometimes overlap. However, according to Dudley-Evans and St John (2001: 6), the distinctions are still very important “as they will affect the degree of specificity that is appropriate to the course”.

The following section will highlight the differences between EGP and ESP, with a special focus on the aforementioned individual categories.

2.4. What is the difference between EGP and ESP?

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 53) “the answer to this question is in theory nothing, in practice a great deal”. In fact, the boundary between EGP and ESP, like the boundary between EAP and EOP, is far from clear.

When examining the differences between EGP and ESP, it seems appropriate to look at the respective components of the two approaches. These components are first and foremost the language itself, for example the vocabulary component. As a next step, specificity on the one hand and generality on the other hand will be compared. Finally, the purposes will be considered.

As for the first component, the language, the question arises, whether there is a difference between language for specific purposes and language for general purposes. After all, if we talk about special language, we suggest the existence of a general language as well. However, Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 18) propose that

ESP is not a matter of teaching 'specialised varieties' of English (...) the language is used for a specific purpose but it is not a special form of language.

Considering this statement, a more appropriate term than special language might then be "special dialect" of English (Robinson 1991: 20), since a dialect is not an independent language but part of a language.

Language can be regarded as a tool that enables the speakers to communicate. In this context, Hutchinson and Waters refer to Chomsky's distinction regarding grammar. They, too, make a distinction between "performance", "competence", and "between what people actually do with the language and the range of knowledge and abilities which enables them to do it" (1987: 18). This distinction, though, can be made in both specific and general English. Thus, it is not advisable to look for a difference between ESP and EGP in language.

Turning to the second component of the two approaches, light will now be shed on the specificity and the generality of the language. Dudley-Evans and St John (2001: 8-9) claim that ESP courses can be illustrated as points on a "continuum" where ELT develops from EGP for beginners and becomes more and more specific until it reaches the final stage which aims at students learning English for academic purposes. Figure 2 illustrates this continuum.

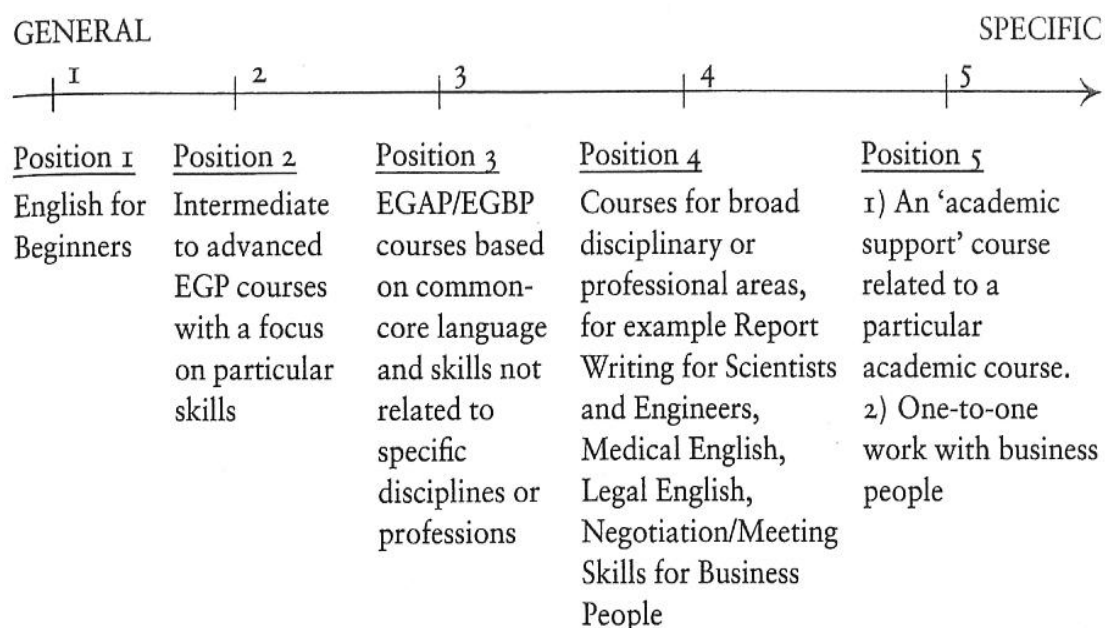


Figure 2: ELT continuum (adapted from Dudley-Evans & St John)

On this continuum, General English for beginners is positioned at the far left and a specific EAP course is at the far right. At the two intermediate levels in positions 2 and 3, the overall course program determines the specificity, and it is only in position 4 that an English course can be referred to as specific, since it aims to support students learning English in their professional areas. In position 5, the course becomes very specific and “can be geared to the specific needs of the target situation and of the individuals concerned” (Dudley-Evans & St John 2001: 9).

This continuum demonstrates that the difference between ESP and EGP is not as clearly defined as one might think, and the transitions between the individual positions overlap. This continuum, though very plausible in theory, seems insufficient to clearly state the difference between ESP and EGP, and is contradictory to Dudley-Evans and St John’s original definition of ESP, in which they state that ESP may be taught to students at a beginner’s level as well. This again proves that ESP can by no means be defined easily, and it can also not be regarded as a distinct discipline in itself.

The term English for *Specific* Purposes as opposed to English for *General* Purposes can be misleading, since particular focus is drawn to the term specific. However our attention should rather be on the purposes, which leads to another possibility of

looking at ESP in contrast to EGP – the definition of their purposes. Widdowson argues that

GPE [General Purpose English] is no less specific and purposeful than ESP. What distinguishes them is the way in which purpose is defined, and the manner of its implementation (1983: 5).

Widdowson further suggests that ESP and EGP have a lot in common except for their purposes. He points out that the “S of ESP links language with purpose” (1998: 3). In his view “[A]ll users of the language serve particular purposes” (2003: 61). It is, however, important to point out that language itself is not specific, it is rather the way the language is used that makes ESP distinct from general English. Widdowson takes up this thought and describes the term ‘purpose’ in more detail by proposing that, in ESP the term ‘purpose’ has a descriptive nature, whereas it is a rather theoretical term in EGP (1983: 6). He further proposes a difference in the utility of the two disciplines by indicating that ESP is “a training operation” providing learners with a “restricted competence”, which helps them carry out specific tasks in their work (1983: 6). By contrast, EGP is, as the term suggests, more general, and it is an “educational operation”, enabling students to cope with a number of general situations, including non-work related situations in English (Widdowson 1983: 6). In other words, in ESP the course objectives are very specific and are equivalent to its aims, while in GPE, the objectives lead to aims (Widdowson 1983: 7). By aims Widdowson means “the purpose to which learning will be put *after* the end of the course” (1983: 7), while objectives are “the pedagogic intention of a particular course [...] to be achieved within the period of that course” (Widdowson 1983: 6).

Recapitulating these facts, one can conclude that the argument put forward by Hutchinson and Waters, who was cited at the beginning of this section, holds true: theoretically there is no difference between ESP and EGP. The difference occurs only when looking at the particular practices of the two approaches.

2.5. Business English

“Every day millions of people all over the world use English in their business activities” (Frendo 2008: 1). The demand for Business English is greater than ever and with the increasingly globalized world of international business, it is more than

likely that this demand will keep on growing. Therefore, the teaching and learning of Business English becomes more and more important in business studies.

Business English can be regarded as a means of communication between individual companies, which enables business transactions between people who are, in most cases, non-native users of this language (Robinson 1991: 98). Here, “[l]anguage is used to achieve an end” where people use English to be successful in their jobs (Ellis & Johnson 1994: 5). In Business English, apart from language knowledge, special focus is put on mastering different business skills. According to Frendo (2008: 1), Business English “uses the language of commerce, of finance, of industry, of providing goods and services”. This, certainly, also involves the cultural aspect of communication. This aspect was neglected in older studies; more recently ESP practitioners have recognized that it is an essential part of teaching Business English.

Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that Business English is not only taught to non-native speakers of English but also to native speakers who are new to this topic. “Hence we might expect [...] business English textbooks which aim to cater for both native and non-native English speakers” (Robinson 1991: 98).

Recent changes in the global economy have led companies to require English courses for their employees. Business English courses may be taught in companies or in language schools to learners with different levels of work experience or no work experience at all (Sylvie 2000: 1). Apart from the language itself with its grammar and vocabulary, the most characteristic skills that are taught in Business English courses include socializing, participating in business meetings, giving presentations, making telephone calls, and creating different kinds of written business communication.

This variety of communicative needs already implies that Business English is not restricted to specific words or expressions that only occur in the business world. There are also other aspects that characterize Business English. These aspects will be discussed in the following subchapter and contrasted to General English.

2.6. General versus Business English

Business communication is closer to everyday spoken language than other forms of ESP. Pickett illustrates this closeness with the help of a diagram suggesting two aspects of Business English communication. The first aspect is communication with the public, which also includes general language. The second aspect concerns communication between businesses, which of course tends to include both general Business English as well as more specialized terminology (Pickett 1986: 16 quoted in Dudley-Evans & St John 2001: 54-55).

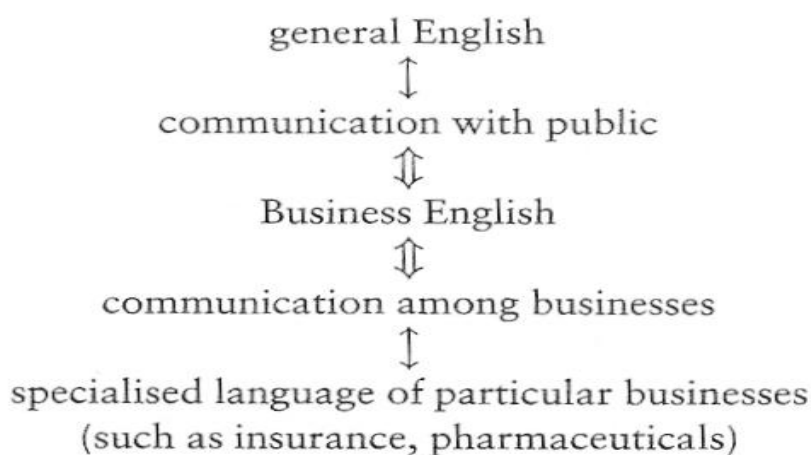


Figure 3: Business English Communication (after Pickett)

To illustrate the truth of Picket's demonstration, I draw on Frendo (2008: 6ff), who considers the following situation:

- A: Excuse me
B: Hi. Can I help you?
A: I hope so, I'm looking for room 235. Mr. Jenkins's office.
B: Yes, of course. It's just round the corner, over there.

This extract of a communication could be regarded as General English. It could take place in any context where a person is looking for someone else's office, in a school for example. However, if this exchange is situated in a business context, for example, a supplier looking for a customer, it suddenly becomes Business English. The language is the same, only the context has changed. It would appear then that from a teacher's point of view, even though there is a difference between General

and Business English, there need not necessarily be a difference in the teaching methodology between the two areas. For further discussion, see chapter 3.

As a further step, this structuring leads me to a distinction between English for General Business Purposes, which aims at pre-experience learners, and English for Specific Business Purposes, which aims at learners who already have job experience. Because they need to be rather general, EGBP courses are similar to EFL courses, but the contents include business topics and general business vocabulary. In contrast, ESBP courses are for learners who bring business knowledge and skills to the course (Dudley-Evans & St John 2001: 55-56).

To sum this chapter up, it can be observed that EBP is not a neatly-defined category of ESP, as it includes characteristics of both specific and general English. Furthermore, it is relevant for native as well as non-native speakers of English. And finally, as mentioned before, it includes cultural aspects.

2.7. Summary

This chapter has set out to define English for Specific Purposes. It has examined the topic from different views and identified the basic characteristics of ESP. Departing from Dudley-Evans and St John's distinction between absolute and variable characteristics of ESP, the chapter classified ESP and positioned it on the ELT tree. As a further step, ESP and General English were compared and contrasted and they turned out to have more in common than first expected. Finally, since this thesis analyzes and describes Business English course books, some major aspects of English for Business Purposes were discussed, and it turned out that, again, EBP is very similar to EGP.

In conclusion, ESP is an "approach to language learning which is based on learner need" (Hutchinson & Waters 1987: 19). Thus, the main purpose of ESP is for study, which ideally leads to an occupation. Learners of ESP are either studying a particular subject of English or intend to find an occupation where English is used on a daily basis. The learners can be either native speakers or non-native speakers whose English language skills may range from beginner to advanced level.

3. Learners' needs

Teaching English implies a number of objectives. These objectives include imparting knowledge about the language, developing and practicing all four language skills, with a special focus on communicative skills, and developing cultural awareness. Before moving on to discussing the specific needs of Business English learners, it is important to differentiate between students at a business school, wishing to learn Business English, and those who are already in a working environment, wishing to learn English for their business purposes. For the first group of students, the main challenge is to understand business itself and not only the English language. Therefore, it makes sense for them to *learn business* through the medium of English. Whereas for students who are already in a business environment, the challenge is to find time to learn English for their purposes. This has to be done as quickly and as effectively as possible. To them, language learning is not an academic exercise, but rather the need to translate their everyday tasks into a foreign language, i.e. English. Here the focus is to *do business* in English.

People working in business need to be able to communicate with their business partners about various specific topics, both spoken and in writing. In the following, both categories will be discussed in further detail.

3.1. Communication needs

3.1.1. Spoken communication needs

Different types of communication naturally give rise to different types of communication needs. According to Frendo (2008: 61), General Business English learners need to be able to do the following:

- Socializing or small talk
- Telephoning
- Presentations
- Meetings and negotiations

Socializing or Small talk

Socializing is crucial for a successful business interaction. A lot of business is done while socializing. For example in restaurants, at the airport, before or after a meeting, or at a trade fair stand. It eases communication and creates positive relationships. This makes it crucially important for learners to be proficient in that skill and most Business English learners very often ask for help with socializing.

All course books offer units especially created to acquire this skill. These units cover meeting and greeting people, where students learn the proper formal and informal language and social conventions. Learners also need to be able to talk about topics such as the weather and journeys. For many learners, it can be a relief to realize that routine conversations about such topics are very unoriginal and that, to a certain extent, they can learn set phrases and responses (Barton, Burkhart & Sever, http://www.etprofessional.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=999:business-skills-socialising-6&catid=108&Itemid=81, 10 January 2009). Another aspect that is often used in course books is the language of dining out or what to say when visiting people at home. Finally, it is also important for students to know how to keep a conversation going and how to encourage other people to participate in a conversation.

The difference between small talk and socializing is rather ambiguous and many course books use either one of the two expressions for the same interaction. For completeness' sake, we will distinguish between the two skills in this chapter, but will not go into further detail about their differences in this thesis. As opposed to socializing, small talk can take place at any time of the day and during any business activity, which of course also includes socializing. Small talk might be expected while waiting at the photocopier or while drinks are served during a meeting. It is also appropriate when meeting someone unexpectedly in the corridor or during a guided tour of a company.

Telephoning

A lot of people find it very difficult to make phone calls in a foreign language. This is because the call normally comes unexpected and there is no time to prepare. Furthermore, there is no body language and the speaker's voice might be unclear.

Students may find that they panic when they realize that the caller speaks English and may make even more mistakes. They may also find it hard to take notes and spell names.

Here again, course books offer a wide range of exercises on making effective phone calls, and there are course books on the market that exclusively deal with this topic. Students need to know a range of fixed phrases, such as getting through, starting and ending a conversation, or asking for clarification. Many course books offer such “useful phrases” along with a number of exercises, helping students to practice and master these phrases. Another important aspect is the ability to spell their names and deal with numbers without the help of gestures and facial expressions. As opposed to face-to-face conversations, in telephoning the focus is on *what* speakers say and *how* they say it. This makes politeness a crucial aspect in conversations, and students need to know the differences between the discursive relations of politeness in their own languages and in the target language. Last but not least, understanding information on the telephone requires good skills in listening for specific information. Therefore students need practice in listening for general understanding in order to gain confidence, which according to Frendo (2008: 66) is “the key to this skill”. This is why the teacher must make sure that learners experience “repeated success” (Frendo 2008: 66).

Presentations

A presentation is a communication situation where one person speaks and the others listen. The aim of a presentation is to “get through” to the audience; everything else is secondary and can be practiced along the lines. Giving effective presentations is very important for Business English learners and even those who are rather confident in giving a presentation in their own language often panic when asked to present in English. This is because they are scared that they might forget what they wanted to say or might not be able to remember all the specialized expressions in the foreign language. They also think that they might misunderstand questions from the audience or might not be able to answer them satisfactorily and run the risk of raising the impression of being less of an expert. Furthermore, there are so many things that can go wrong in a presentation, irrespective of which language it is given in.

Course books need to cover a few key areas like preparation and structure, signposting, and dealing with questions. Students need to be aware of the structure of a presentation and need to prepare their speeches accordingly. It is also interesting to teach body language and vocal techniques, although this might go too far. Furthermore, Business English learners need to know the language of presentations and the use of signposting. Many course books offer a number of very useful exercises on this aspect. Since many students point out that they are afraid of the questions that can be asked after their presentations, this is certainly an aspect that needs to be taught.

Meetings and Negotiations

In the workplace, people have meetings very frequently. Some of the meetings are large and formal, others are small and informal and the language of meetings can be varied. In meetings people normally pass on information, persuade, justify and defend their position. They also clarify if there are misunderstandings and summarize at the end of the discussions.

The same is true for negotiations. We negotiate every day about what to have for dinner or where to meet our friends. In business people negotiate for example about terms of payment and delivery. Many learners find negotiations difficult because they often feel that they are too direct when they speak English. They often find it hard to understand what their negotiation partners say and automatically feel that they are in a weaker position.

Well-balanced exercises would ideally cover the phases of typical negotiations and meetings, which are preparation, discussion, proposals, bargaining, and closing the deal. Just as in telephoning, there are a huge number of set phrases for negotiations that can be useful for learners and help them develop confidence within a rather short period of time.

3.1.2. *Written communication needs*

Writing is not only an important form of communication; it is also a key part of the daily activities of most business environments. It is different from spoken communication in that it is not spontaneous. The writer has time to think what the sender has sent and what the reply should contain. This is an advantage for learners. However, writing also requires planning and organizational skills. It requires skills in spelling, punctuation, grammar, linking paragraphs, and finding the right words. This makes it rather difficult for learners and many complain that their writing sounds like a word-for-word translation from their native language. Naturally, a General Business English learner will not be able to learn writing skills as thoroughly and as elaborately as they would in a writing center.

A General Business English learner should be able to do the following (Frendo 2008: 81):

- Business correspondence
- Contracts
- Reports
- Agendas and minutes

Business Correspondence

Written business correspondence includes writing letters, e-mails, and faxes and normally it expects the receiver to write a reply. In other words, it is interactive. Within these types of written correspondence there is a wide range of variety. Letters, e-mails, and faxes can be formal or rather informal. The contents can vary between a mere exchange of information, offers, placing orders, or for example letters of complaints. A balanced training in Business English writing skills should consider all these varieties. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, in most cases Business English students only have a certain amount of time at their disposal. This is why a well-structured course book should make it possible for learners to acquire as much knowledge as possible within a short period of time. Ready-made sentences and phrases have proved very useful in such cases. Students can use them as so-called building blocks and, thus, find it easier to write a piece of text within a short period of time.

Contracts

As opposed to business correspondence, contracts are statements which do not usually require a written reply and most students at beginner's and pre-intermediate levels will not have to deal with them at all. Teaching how to write them would most probably go beyond the language teacher's competence and fortunately they are always written by legal experts. However, it is important for a Business English learner to know how to read and interpret a contract and to engage in written correspondence in connection with it. A Business English learner will also have to lead discussions and negotiations about a contract's elements. These skills have already been discussed above.

Reports

Reports are written accounts of an event. In a business environment, this might be a research report or a report of a visit. As opposed to contracts, reports are not written by experts but by the business people themselves. Thus a Business English learner needs to know how to write a report. However, due to the level of professional knowledge that is required in order to write a report, this skill is only taught to Business English learners at a higher level. Most businesses tend to have their own report format, which makes it easy for the writer. Moreover, similar to easier text forms such as e-mails or letters, one can also find "useful phrases" with reports.

Agendas and Minutes

An agenda is a list of items which will be discussed at a meeting, while minutes are the written records of that meeting. Similar to reports, most companies also have their own formats for agendas and minutes. The difference to other text forms is that there are no pre-given "useful phrases", which is why usually only Business English learners at upper-intermediate or advanced levels get acquainted with them. In order to be able to write meeting minutes, for example, a Business English learner needs good spoken skills and also excellent listening skills.

For most students it is sufficient to learn how to write business letters, e-mails and faxes in English. Contracts, reports, as well as minutes and agendas are texts which most General Business English students, especially those at the lower levels, do not

require. Most of the course books that are evaluated in this thesis do not go into more detail with these skills.

3.2. The cultural aspect in Business Communication

Cultural aspects in business communication are very complex and elaborate and go beyond the scope of this thesis. However, due to its growing importance, the role of cultural aspects will be briefly discussed in this sub-chapter.

We live in a world that is characterized by intercultural communication situations with business transactions no longer taking place within the borders of our own country. When people from different cultures meet, anything can happen and anything is possible. These people have different expectations of the content and structure of their communication. They encode and decode messages differently, increasing the chances of misunderstanding, even if they speak the same language. Intercultural communication has become a keyword in Business English and a business in itself. Therefore, it needs to be considered in the context of teaching Business English.

Some cultural differences, such as the way people dress and behave, are easily visible, while others are more subtle, so that even the most basic things can become difficult and the smallest differences can lead to misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. Different cultures have different communication styles. For example, in Japan silence is used to express disagreement, whereas participants of Western cultures often talk to fill silence. Learners of a foreign language need to be aware of these cultural differences, and it is, therefore, all the more important to raise Business English learners' awareness to cultural differences. After all, only if they become aware of such differences, are they able to do an even better job in business. The ideal situation for employers is to "have employees who can not only deal with diversity but who can manage that diversity" (Frendo, http://www.etprofessional.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=703:crossing-cultures&catid=82&Itemid=81, 17 April 2009) in order to achieve a successful business deal.

Tomalin and Stempleski (1993: 3) define cultural awareness as someone's "sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behavior on language use and communication". This brings up the question of how cultural-awareness should be demonstrated and taught in Business English course books. According to Valette (1967: 123), chapters on cultural aspects of business communication should cover the following categories:

1. *Cultural awareness*, comprising geographical knowledge, knowledge about the contributions of the target culture to world civilization, knowledge about differences in the way of life as well as an understanding of values and attitudes in the second language community.
2. *Command of etiquette*, i.e., polite behavior.
3. *Understanding of daily life*, including unfamiliar conventions, such as writing a check or reading a timetable.
4. *Understanding of cultural values*, requiring the interpretation of the target culture and the learner's own culture.
5. *Analysis of the target culture*, based on theories of cultural analysis such as the Emergent Model or Basic Needs.

This is undoubtedly an interesting approach, especially because it shows that even in the 1960s it was not possible for linguists and language teachers to ignore the cultural aspect in the Business English classroom. Clearly, it would be ideal to apply this in a specifically created "cultural awareness" class. However, if we keep in mind that Business English courses have to be kept short and simple, it is doomed to fail because it would take too much time to draw students' attention to cultural differences, hence leaving too little time for the linguistic aspect of a foreign language course.

Naturally, due to the growing urgency that people's understanding of other cultural backgrounds needs to be raised, we have gained a plethora of new insights and have developed new approaches over the last five decades. One useful approach is that by Even Frendo (Frendo, http://www.etprofessional.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=703:crossing-cultures&catid=82&Itemid=81, 17 April 2009), who states that before considering other cultures, learners benefit a great deal from understanding their

own cultural behaviors. In other words, in order to raise Business English learners' awareness of cultural differences, it would be desirable to first help them consider their own cultures. We perceive our ways of approaching different business situations as normal in our own culture but we need to be aware of that. Frendo argues that the most important aspect for Business English learners is their intercultural communication skills. And in order to achieve a good command of these skills, he categorizes the classroom activities into cognitive (being didactic) and affective (being experimental). The cognitive activities are designed to help raise students' awareness of cultural differences by reading relevant articles or showing appropriate films. By doing so, they automatically compare different cultures to their own. Whereas the affective activities are designed to let students experience these issues themselves by doing role-plays and simulations. Here again they cannot avoid integrating their own cultural background, which helps them become aware of their own ways of doing things.

To sum up, it seems safe to say that “[i]n order to achieve effective intercultural communication, we have to learn to manage differences flexibly and mindfully” (Ting-Toomey 1999: 3). It is true that a Business English course books cannot completely cater to these needs within a short period of time, which is mostly the case with such courses. However, a course book needs to comprise units which help to raise students' awareness of cultural differences in their business environments.

3.3. Summary

In this chapter Business English was defined and explained and – for better understanding – it was compared to and contrasted with General English. The differences between the two were highlighted, especially from a student's point of view. Clearly, it is important for a teacher to see these differences because only then will teaching Business English be a successful experience for both teachers and students. This insight is also helpful for analyzing the learners' needs in Business English. Finally, the importance of cultural awareness was discussed, especially in regards to Business English.

4. Methodology

4.1. Aims

This chapter presents the appropriate methodology for Business English. The two main methodological concepts, “the four skills” and “presentation, practice, production” will be introduced. Further, two approaches to teaching, viz. the communicative and the lexical approach, will be discussed. Clearly, there are many more methodological concepts and teaching approaches. The reasons for choosing these are twofold. First, they are the most commonly used in various course books, for both General and Business English. Second, they appear to be the most appropriate for teaching Business English. Thus, although the focus of this thesis is on the learner, this chapter will consider the teacher’s point of view and will discuss relevant methodological concepts and approaches with a view to explaining how they can serve the needs of Business English learners.

4.2. Main methodological concepts and approaches

As it is important to tackle the subjects of teaching vocabulary and grammar in an ESP and particularly in a Business English context, the discussion will first turn to the two concepts of “the four skills” and “presentation, practice, production”, before turning to the communicative approach and the lexical approach. The latter two describe “how language is used”, in other words they show “how people acquire their knowledge of language” (Harmer 2001: 78). This insight is relevant to the teaching of Business English.

4.2.1. The four skills

The main purpose of EFL teaching is the development of the four skills, which are of elementary importance for ESP. These skills are: *listening*, *speaking*, *reading*, and *writing*, and according to Widdowson (1996: 57)

speaking and writing are said to be active, or productive skills whereas listening and reading are said to be passive, or receptive skills.

One may well argue that this division into only four skills is “superficial” and “inadequate” (Bloor 1984: 18), especially bearing in mind that it is only valuable if “we look at language activity from the outside” (Brumfit 1984: 69). In other words, it does not consider the fact that language teaching and learning is always a combination of all four skills. Nevertheless, this classification is still a good description of what language learners need to master and it can be regarded as a starting point for further analyses.

Listening is the language skill which learners usually find the most difficult. This is often because they feel under undue pressure to understand every single word. Nevertheless, listening is of vital importance to English teaching and learning, especially ESP. As Dudley-Evans and St John note, good listening skills go “beyond understanding the words and the key points” (2001: 107). Thus, lessons in listening comprehension are an effective means of teaching grammatical structures and new vocabulary items. A number of activities can be carried out that aim to promote and enhance students’ listening skills. Such activities are listening and repeating, listening and answering comprehension questions, listening and carrying out tasks using the received information, etc. (Morley 2001: 70).

Just as any other of the skills, **speaking** can and should not be taught separately. Especially in teaching Business English “listening and speaking are both required within the real time of the communicative event” (Dudley-Evans & St John 2001: 105). There are many ways to foster spoken skills. Discussions are probably the most commonly used activity, followed by role-plays and holding presentations. Moreover, the correct and effective utilization of questions is significant in Business English, since questioning is “a powerful means of controlling communication” (Dudley-Evans & St John 2001: 107). It is not only used to receive information but also to check understanding, to disturb, and to make a point (Dudley-Evans & St John 2001: 107). Many Business English course books nowadays include exercises which especially focus on different forms of questioning. Another aspect of spoken interactions, especially in ESP, are those carried out on a one-to-one basis, for example telephone conversations. This is a particularly difficult task for many students, mainly because, as mentioned earlier, there is no body language to help them, the audio-quality is not always perfect and there is more time pressure than in

face-to-face conversations. Finally, a very common component of Business English is oral presentations, which often concentrate on prepared talk. However, many business people are asked to give impromptu presentations, for example, in meetings, where they are supposed to state their opinion on a specific topic, or present a current position of a current project (Dudley-Evans & St John 2001: 114).

What is quite certain is that examples of spoken English should not be “spoken written English” (Cunningsworth 1986: 19), but should certainly contain authentic aspect of the language. One has to bear in mind that there is a crucial difference between speech and writing which needs to be taken into consideration when teaching a language. Most course book syllabi have spoken and written elements and they differentiate between written and spoken exercises. Speech is more contextualized and allows more hesitations, interruptions, and self-corrections, as well as less planning than writing. It also relies on gesture and paralanguage. In contrast, writing allows more subordination and passives, as well as longer sentences than speech. Writing is structurally elaborate and can be more complex, formal, and abstract than speech. While speech is characterized by turn-taking, writing is characterized by monologue (Hyland 2002: 50). These are characteristics that are connected with the third skill, viz. writing.

Writing is in Cunningsworth’s view “not speech written down and writing ability cannot be adequately taught by simply getting students to [...] do written grammar exercises” (1986: 45). Writing has its own rules. Thus, developing writing skills includes learning to plan, draft, and revise “so that the end product is appropriate both to the purpose of the writing and the intended readership” (Dudley-Evans & St John 2001: 115).

As mentioned earlier Business English students in their early stages do not necessarily need to develop their writing skills to an extent where they are able to write reports or memos. However, it is in fact important for them to develop skills for writing resumes and business correspondence. By any means, the teacher must be aware of the fact that writing is a very tiring task and students usually do not want to spend the whole class with this activity. Therefore writing tasks should be combined with other tasks and should also support and be integrated into grammar and

vocabulary learning. Furthermore, “[l]earners can become aware of the nature of written text by reading” (Cunningsworth 1986: 45), which brings us to the last of the four skills.

Reading is a very well-established and familiar activity in ELT. For ESP learners, reading is an important skill. They do not primarily read in order to focus on linguistic details, but to elicit information from the text and to appropriately apply it for further use. Nevertheless, good reading always requires language skills. Therefore, it is important for successful reading classes in ESP to keep a balance between skills and language development. For teaching purposes “it is necessary [...] to divide what is to be learned into small [...] units which the learner can absorb progressively” (Cunningsworth 1986: 20).

The four skills are by no means separate entities, given that communicative interactions make use of more than one skill at a time. Therefore effective teaching of the four language skills requires a combination of them all, by not only concentrating on one skill at a time.

4.2.2. Presentation, Practice, Production

Presentation, practice, and production – often referred to as the three Ps – is a three stage procedure that contextualizes the language to be taught.

Presentation represents the introduction to a lesson. Here the students are given a language model, engaging in accurate reproduction and choral repetition. This is a very teacher-oriented stage, where error correction is important. At the second stage, the students **practice** the new language in carefully controlled exercises. The teacher still directs and corrects at this stage, but the focus shifts from teacher-oriented to learner-centered. At the final stage, the students have become independent users, rather than students of the language, **producing** language of their own in uncontrolled exercises (Harmer 2001: 80).

This procedure is often employed when teaching grammar. The reason why this is addressed here is that the basic idea of this method is frequently applied in course books.

4.2.3. The lexical approach

In subchapter 2.2.2, it was pointed out that it is important for learners of a foreign language to know a certain amount of vocabulary, which allows them to communicate easily. However, it is also important that learners also know the combinatory possibilities of words. In recent years researchers have shown that there are certain lexical patterns in language use. These patterns are of particular importance for Business English learners, especially those at higher levels.

The lexical approach in language teaching is a term coined by Michael Lewis in 1993. It concentrates on developing learners' proficiency with lexis, or words and word combinations. It is based on the idea that language does not consist of grammar and vocabulary but of lexical units, so-called "chunks", which play a central role in language learning. These chunks become the raw data by which learners perceive patterns of language traditionally thought of as grammar (Lewis 1996: 95).

Special attention is also drawn to collocation, i.e. the way in which words typically co-occur, and the combinations of words in natural speech. There are specific types of collocations in Business English, and good Business English courses must help the learner become familiar with these collocations.

4.2.4. The communicative approach

The communicative language teaching approach, also referred to as CLT, is a learner-centered approach, which emphasizes communication and real-life situations. "It starts from a theory of language as communication" (Richards & Rodgers 2001: 159), making use of communication to teach language. Whereas traditional language teaching places great emphasis on teaching grammar rules, CLT helps students use the target language in a variety of contexts. It creates

activities to teach students how to react in real-world situations. While grammar is still important in CLT, the focus is on communicating messages.

The range of activities and exercises in the CLT classroom is unlimited, provided that such activities enable learners to achieve the communicative objective of this approach. The most preferred activities and exercises are placed in authentic situations where fluency plays an important role (Richards & Rodgers 2001: 172). Such activities include role plays, interviews, information gap exercises, games, pair work, and group work.

4.3. *Business English Methodology*

After having considered a number of basic methodological concepts and approaches as well as Business English learners' needs, one may now ask whether there is a specific methodology for teaching Business English. As one might expect, the opinions on this question vary widely. Some experts, for example Peter Strevens (1988: 43), argue that "ESP does not have to employ any particular method or technique", whereas others, such as Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 4), differentiate between General ESP and specific ESP. They claim that "specific ESP teaching has its own methodology", which differs from General English teaching. With specific ESP they refer to specialized professions and disciplines where the teacher acts more like a language consultant being at an equal status with the learners who have their own expertise. In such a case language teaching can be similar to an exchange of ideas and experiences. This suggests that General Business English methodology is similar to General English teaching and applies a different methodology than ESP teaching.

Any teaching methodology can be applied to any language area, be it general or specific, as long as the teacher meets some basic requirements. As stated by Strevens (1988: 44) these requirements are:

- Shaping the input
- Encouraging the learner's intention to learn
- Managing the learning strategies
- Promoting practice and use

By 'shaping the input' Strevens means that the contents of an ESP course must meet the learners' needs. He further argues that encouraging the learners is an essential element in their learning success. This has nothing to do with the students' own internal motivation. Learners will not authenticate the presented language, if they see no reason for doing so (Widdowson 1983: 91). Clearly, a good course also presents learning strategies to help students learn more successfully. Finally, students need the chance to practice, so that they are able to use their new skills in the future.

As pointed out before, even though activities in a General Business English course need not be specific, some are often similar to those carried out in management training, such as presentations or problem solving techniques. These activities are rather specific. Widdowson points out that "[t]he specificity of ESP refers to the aims of learning and not to the activities that need to be engaged in to bring these aims about" (1983: 82-83). Thus, the specificity of a Business English course is defined by what the learners need to be proficient in. Widdowson argues that "ESP has no pedagogic significance at all", if we can only be specific about its aims (1983: 83). What makes Business English teaching specific, then, is what learners need to be able to do with the language. In other words, only those skills, topics, and themes are included which are required by the learners (Strevens 1979: 190). The challenge is, therefore, to make non-specific activities relevant for the learners. This is best realized by presenting the topics in such a way that students have to activate the same way of thinking for their solution as they would have to in their specialized fields (Widdowson 1983: 91).

In short, the methodology employed in EGP is also appropriate for ESP and thus for Business English, as long as it is suitable for the learners and responds to their needs.

4.4. *Summary*

This chapter reviewed and explained two methodological concepts, viz. the four skills and PPP, and two approaches, viz. the communicative and the lexical approach, all of which are widely used in teaching Business English. This review provides the basis for designing an appropriate evaluation framework.

5. Course books

5.1. *Aims*

In almost all teaching, instructional materials are used. In most cases they take the form of course books, but they can also be non-print materials, such as audio materials and video tapes. In addition to that, many teachers use materials that were originally not meant for instructional use, such as magazines, newspaper articles, or even TV materials, as well as information taken from the world wide web (Richards 2002: 65-6). They all “serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive” (Richards 2002: 65-6). This chapter will start by covering the importance of a syllabus in ELT and list the different types of syllabi. This will help determine which type of syllabus is most appropriate for teaching Business English. Finally, since this thesis is mainly concerned with course books, their role and their typical characteristics will be discussed. This will be followed by a brief outline of the advantages and disadvantages of using them.

5.2. *Explaining syllabus*

A syllabus is basically a “plan of work” (Robinson 1991:34), a list of what is to be covered and in what order; as such it is a guideline for the teacher.

Most Business English learners must be able to communicate within a certain context. Therefore, “the syllabus must reflect the discourse that learners will face in the workplace” (Frendo 2008: 34). Furthermore, teachers must make sure that students’ exposure to language is not random. In other words, the language that the learners are exposed to must be learnable and must be at an appropriate level. Further, it must be achievable, which means that students must be able to achieve the aims of the course within the time given. A course book can be very helpful to reach this aim.

This makes it easy to understand why a syllabus is so important for any ELT and therefore also necessary for our discussion on course books. Every course book has a “plan of work” and is therefore based on a syllabus. Syllabi will therefore be taken

into account in the evaluation of course books performed in this thesis. Every syllabus has its positive and negative aspects and different syllabi apply best to different purposes. Consequently, there are syllabi that are simply more effective than others when it comes to teaching Business English.

5.3. The importance of authenticity

Authenticity is said to be a key concept within the communicative approach, thus particularly relevant for Business English, and the use of authentic material is one of the most important criteria for Business English course book authors. Authenticity is also one of the most discussed topics when it comes to evaluating a course book. It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore these discussions about whether a course book should include authentic reading, listening and writing exercises, particularly when specialists disagree on the exact meaning of authenticity. A considerable amount of literature has been published on this topic. Traditionally, authentic materials have been defined as “those which have been produced for purposes other than to teach language” (Nunan 1988: 99). This view is supported by Robinson (1991: 54) and Lee, who writes that “a text is usually regarded as [...] authentic if it is not written for teaching purposes, but for a real-life communicative purpose” (1995: 324). By contrast, Widdowson claims that these definitions are too broad, arguing that “[A]uthenticity is a term which creates confusion because of a basic ambiguity” (1983: 30). In his view, authenticity can be used to refer to texts written for purposes other than teaching, but it can also be referred to texts that are exploited in ways that reflect the real world for the learners, thus making the texts highly valid in their eyes (Dudley-Evans and St John 2001: 28). In other words, there are two different definitions for “authentic”. Widdowson refers to texts which are designed for proficient speakers or readers of English as “genuine”, whereas “authenticity” refers to the applicability of the text for the learner (1983: 30). For the sake of simplicity and relevance, the expression “authenticity” will mainly be applied in this thesis.

Using authentic materials in the classroom provides a number of advantages to the learners, some of which are:

- authentic materials keep students informed about what is happening in the world;

- they are faster and more up-to-date, which is especially important for Business English learners;
- language change is often reflected in such materials, while not yet incorporated in course books;
- articles in newspapers and other authentic texts contain a variety of different styles that might not be found in course books, and may contain topics of particular interest to the learners.

Authentic materials can also have many disadvantages for the students and for the teachers, for example:

- they may be too culturally specific, thus difficult to understand for EFL students;
- listening materials can include too many different accents, which is especially difficult for beginners;
- the material can become easily outdated, e.g. newspaper articles;
- special preparation is necessary, which can be time consuming for the teacher.

In view of the characteristics of “authentic texts”, the question arises, if a course book can be authentic or if it needs to be authentic at all. After all, Widdowson criticizes the widespread belief that a language that is taught for communication purposes, automatically has to be presented as authentic (1983: 30).

5.4. *The role of course books*

Even though course books are regarded as “the visible heart of any ELT program” (Sheldon 1988: 237) and as a “universal element of ELT teaching” (Hutchinson 1994: 315), controversy over the role course books play in the English classroom is omnipresent. Crawford (2002: 80), for example, argues that despite all the advantages course books can have, they can “deskill teachers and rob them of their capacity to think professionally and respond to their students” and Littlejohn (1994 in ELT Journal: 316) claims that course books “reduce the teacher’s role to one of managing and overseeing preplanned events”, a view that is also shared by Hutchinson and Torres (1994: 315), who maintain that the use of course books “seem to absolve teachers of responsibility”. Richards and Rodgers (1986 in Nunan 1992: 208) on the other hand argue in favor of the use of course books by

suggesting that “instructional materials can provide detailed specifications of content, even in the absence of a syllabus”. Their view is supported by Hutchinson and Torres (1994:...) who argue that course books are “the most convenient means of providing the structure that the teaching-learning system (...) requires” even though they are not entirely convinced of their usefulness. All this serves to show that linguists and teachers by no means agree upon the role of course books in the EFL classroom and that this role is not as unambiguous as one might expect. However, this also shows the necessity of course books for teaching and learning purposes.

When selecting a course book, a teacher always evaluates its contents and objectives and compares them with the students’ needs. By doing so, a teacher will constantly have to make a compromise, because a course book will never cater for all students’ needs, given that a course book is, according to Alwright (1981: 34), a pre-packaged set of elaborate and well-thought-out individual lesson plans. Nonetheless, both teachers and students need a framework to build upon, and course books can provide this framework. Course books can help teachers and students in achieving the aims and objectives that arise from the learners’ needs. However, caution is advised, since “[c]oursebooks are good servants but poor masters” (Cunningsworth 1986: 1). It should be clear that teachers must be primarily concerned with teaching the language, not the course book. In other words, the course’s objective should not be “teaching the course book”. Rather, teachers need to strike a balance between what the book provides and what the students need.

Course books have to fulfill certain characteristics which apply to any kind of teaching material, whether it is used in English for General Purposes or English for Specific Purposes, such as Business English. They should provide clear programs, appropriately structured and sequenced. Business English students may be working full time and have little time attending the class meetings. Business English courses are often very short. Consequently, course books for Business English students must be appropriate for self-study or reference purposes (Dudley-Evans & St John 2001: 172). This means that students should have all the materials relevant for the respective course book, including audio CDs.

Furthermore, course books provide examples of good language practice. This is especially important when English is a foreign language for the students and they do not have many chances to practice the language outside the course (Dudley-Evans & St John 1998: 171). Course books should also “involve learners in thinking about and using the language” (Dudley-Evans & St John 2001: 171). In order to be motivating and stimulating for students, course books have to be challenging; however, the exercises and activities suggested should not be too demanding, otherwise students could lose their motivation.

Depending on how comprehensive a course book is, it may provide some or all of the following (Cunningsworth 1986: 50):

- visual material,
- recorded or videotaped material,
- audio material,
- teachers’ books,
- vocabulary lists and indexes, as well as
- materials for testing.

Visual materials can include pictures, flashcards, slides, etc., all of which are intended to facilitate teaching. Videotapes and audio materials allow the teacher to present language in a contextualized manner (Cunningsworth 1986: 50-2). They can be used in the presentation process of teaching a language, but they also support the skill of listening. Vocabulary lists “should list all the vocabulary items used in a course” (Cunningsworth 1986: 55), supporting both teachers in planning a course and students in revising and practicing. Finally, materials for testing can be used in a number of ways. According to Cunningsworth “we might expect materials for entry testing, progress testing, and achievement testing” (1986: 55), which are yet other tools to facilitate teachers’ work.

5.5. *Strengths and weaknesses of course books*

To begin with, it is important to point out that published course books are typically written by experienced people and thoroughly tested before publication. While there is a great deal of published teaching material on the market (Cunningsworth 1986:

1), Business English teachers may not always be convinced that they should use a course book in the first place. It is thus important to consider the advantages and disadvantages of a prescribed book.

There are a number of advantages when using a course book¹, some of which have already been mentioned earlier in this thesis:

Framework. First and foremost, a course book provides a clear framework which helps both teachers and students to see a structure and a progress in their work (Ur 1996: 184).

Syllabus. A course book also offers a “coherent syllabus, satisfactory language control, [and] motivating texts” (Harmer 2001: 304). Due to the integrated nature of the syllabus, a course book can offer a good balance between all different language contents. The texts are already selected in accordance to the students’ respective levels, which saves the teacher a lot of time in looking for appropriate texts (Ur 1996:184).

Convenience and guidance. It is very convenient since it helps teachers by providing them with guides and additional material that simplifies the planning of courses. Ur also argues that a book “does not depend [...] on hardware or a supply of electricity” (1996: 184). Furthermore, inexperienced teachers find it easier to rely on course books than to compile all teaching materials themselves.

Motivation. A course book can help students, too, since it encourages the students’ learning process. Robinson argues that a course book “is complete not just in the physical sense but in the sense that a whole term’s or year’s course is available to the students at once” (1991: 58).

Autonomy. With a course book at hand, students are more autonomous than those without a course book who have to depend entirely on their teacher (Ur 1996: 184).

¹ The keywords in bold, used in both the list of advantages and disadvantages, have been taken directly from Ur (1996: 184-5).

Students can look back at units they have missed, or look ahead at units they will tackle at a later point in time, if they wish.

However, there are also some challenges associated with using course books:

Limitation. If a course book is used inappropriately, it impedes rather than supports the learning process.

Over-easiness. Some teachers misunderstand the exercises given as '*faits accomplis*' instead of suggestions. If a teacher follows a course book too thoroughly, this may "inhibit the teacher's initiative and creativity", which leads to the learners' "boredom and lack of motivation" (Ur 1996: 185).

Homogeneity. Many course books apply one single teaching or learning approach. For example, some rely exclusively on presentation, practice and production as their main methodological feature, which can be restricting.

Irrelevance and lack of interest. The choice of topics in some course books may not always be interesting for the learners. They may be bland and monotonous, which could de-motivate students and teachers alike (Harmer 2001: 304).

In view of the advantages and disadvantages associated with course books, it seems that teacher experience plays a certain role in the decision of whether or not to adopt a course book. While experienced teachers can probably teach some classes, especially beginners' classes, without course books, course books become indispensable for all instructors teaching classes at higher levels, given the amount of time it would take to prepare a class without having a course book at hand.

Thus, a course book can play a very important role in language learning, and selecting the right one can make the difference between a good and an average course.

Therefore, the question to be asked is not whether teachers should or should not use a course book, but rather which course book they select and how to use it "so that

the outcomes are positive for teachers and learners” (Crawford 2002: 80). The question of which course book to choose will be discussed later in this thesis.

5.6. Summary

In this chapter, the importance and necessity of a syllabus for ELT was discussed and the role of course books in this context was addressed, especially when teaching Business English. It is certainly true that published materials can never completely cover all the topics that students of Business English would need. Thus, it is the teacher’s job to find the most suitable course book and to supplement it with additional material, in order to meet students’ needs. One should always keep in mind that commercial course books support teachers in their profession and “remove much of the burden and time involved in creating materials from scratch” (Nunan 1992: 209). It is helpful for a teacher to have a selection of criteria at hand, which makes the choice of an appropriate course book for a particular teaching situation easier.

6. Evaluation theory

6.1. *Aims*

As argued by Harmer (2001: 301) and McGrath (2002: 24), an effective way of evaluating course books is by applying a checklist. Sheldon (1988: 6) maintains that no set of criteria is applicable to all teaching and learning situations and that we can only commit ourselves to checklists or scoring systems. With all the aforementioned findings in mind, we will now put together a list of criteria which are intended to support me in analyzing and evaluating Business English course books. This list should not only be useful for this study but also for other teachers who want to compare different course books.

By reviewing the literature in the area, this thesis first lists all features that can be evaluated in a course book and describes them in detail. The evaluation criteria are considered from a methodological and practical point of view. *Practical* in this context means all aspects that do not fall into the category of methodology. Some descriptions will be rather short, since they have already been addressed in the previous pages of this thesis, whereas others will be more detailed. The considerations discussed will then provide a point of departure for the evaluation checklist used in chapter 7.

6.2. *Evaluation criteria*

6.2.1. *Methodological considerations*

Since all important methodological features that have to be taken into consideration when selecting and evaluating a Business English course book have already been mentioned, this subchapter is merely meant as a summary and is positioned at this place for the sake of completeness.

Hutchinson (1987: 37) emphasizes that the evaluation of materials needs to consider what criteria teachers have in selecting the right course book for their teaching practice. He argues that

[m]aterials are not simply the everyday tools of the language teacher they are the embodiment of the aims, values and methods of the particular teaching/learning situation. As such the selection of materials probably represents the single most important decision that the language teacher has to make.

Consequently, it is worth questioning what role the course book has that is used in the teaching and learning context (Rea-Dickins & Kevin 1992: 28). In other words, the course book has to be related to the overall aims and objectives of the course. It has to take the learners “as directly as possible towards [their] objectives” (Cunningsworth 1986: 5). In this connection one has to keep in mind what the learners want to do with the acquired language skills.

Furthermore, a course book should be examined with a view to its application of some basic methodological approaches and concepts. In the following, we will partly draw upon Daoud and Celce-Murcia’s sample checklist for textbook evaluation (1979: 302-307), even though this checklist is slightly outdated. However, a thorough analysis of the literature on this topic has revealed that Daoud and Celce-Murcia’s sample provides a good basis and structure and later evaluators have in fact drawn upon this checklist as well:

How are the individual units organized?

This question pertains to the often applied concept of presentation, practice, and production in course books as well as to the general objectives of each unit.

What is the overall “map of the book”?

The map of the book is the list of contents often presented in a tabular form, showing precisely the skills of each unit. Furthermore, every course book should have an appendix containing reference pages, consisting of vocabulary lists, transcript files, grammar reference, additional exercises, and answer keys.

Is the subject matter interesting for the learners?

The topics addressed in the course book have to be of interest to the learners and should not merely serve as a vehicle for the language work (Dougill 1987: 31). Students should be encouraged to discuss their interests while using the language in a communicative way.

Are the four skills applied?

Despite the criticism this concept is met with, it is undisputable that language learners must be able to master all four skills, and a course book should offer a balance between listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities. A balance should also be recognizable between accuracy and fluency activities (Hedge 2000: 358). After all, these skills should prepare the learner for real-life communication.

Are the objectives for each task and units clearly stated?

Learning objectives can hardly be reached if the teacher and the learners are not aware of them. Therefore the course book's objectives must be clearly identifiable. When students know why they are learning something, it makes activities and tasks more meaningful for them.

Is the course book authentic?

It seems difficult to estimate if students regard a text as authentic in the sense of it being of interest to them without actually asking them. Therefore, the evaluation of the course books' authenticity in this thesis will focus on the question whether a text or exercise is genuine. In other words, whether it has originally been created for purposes other than teaching. After all, as argued in chapter 5.3., this is, in fact, an important aspect for Business English learners. The tasks in a course book claiming to be authentic, should be of practical use and interesting for the learners and should prepare them for real life business situations.

Are cultural aspects taken into consideration?

There is a close relationship between culture and language. Especially learners of Business English, who will most probably deal with people from abroad, need to be sensitized towards different cultures.

Is there variety in the tasks?

The tasks should appeal to different learning styles and should not favor one type of learner over another. They must be appropriate for different learning situations and learner needs.

Is there explicit reference to grammatical terms and concepts?

(Hedge 2000: 358)

As pointed out in chapter 3.3.4, even learners of ESP need some grammatical instructions. A course book should assist the teacher in explaining grammatical patterns presented in the individual units.

How is new vocabulary introduced?

It is especially important for Business English learners to have a solid knowledge of vocabularies, both general and Business English, and be able to use it in business communication. Therefore a communicative or lexical approach is very useful and straightforward in Business English teaching. Furthermore, new vocabulary should be repeated in subsequent chapters so that it can be practiced and reinforced.

Does the course book encourage learner independence?

(Hedge 2000: 358)

Especially learners of Business English might not be able to attend courses regularly due to work commitments. Therefore a course book should make it easy for students to go through the units they have missed by themselves. This also includes the availability of additional exercises and audio material for self-study.

6.2.2. Practical considerations

Having dealt with the methodological aspect, we will now turn to the practical aspects, which must not be neglected when evaluating course books. The practical considerations are concerned with aspects outside the scope of methodology. Besides the rather mundane but important issues of its price and the availability of a course book, important concerns are also the general and overall impression of the material and its technical quality. This category also includes additional material that comes with the course book, such as audio and video tapes or CDs that offer additional exercises for the students, for example for self-study, vocabulary lists, teachers' books, and materials for testing. But also additional material that can be downloaded from the World Wide Web and finally the appeal and design of a course book are addressed.

What is the first impression of the course book?

The first impression after briefly flicking through a course book may decide whether or not it is used in the language classroom. The overall appearance should therefore be attractive and appealing. It should convey the impression of being up-to-date and the description of the book as well as its title should match its contents. This is clearly a very subjective point of view, but certainly not unimportant.

Is the course book of high or low quality?

This aspect is closely connected to the first impression but goes a bit further. It concerns the durability of the book. In most cases it is easy for the user to assess whether a book can be used in more than one course by taking a closer look at its cover and at the quality of paper and printings.

How are illustrations used in the course book?

“Good design attracts attention and arouses interest. It creates motivation in the reader to read further” (Ellis 1987: 91). Illustrations in a course book can serve an important function by helping the reader to recognize what this page is about. They can help the learners to understand the relationship between the texts, exercises and photographs. Therefore, they should be “clear, simple and free of unnecessary details that may confuse the learner” and also be printed “close enough to the text [...] to help the learner understand the printed text” (Daoud and Celce-Murcia 1979: 305). However, they should not be too dense or unappealing, too childish, sexist, or culturally offensive. An attractive book makes use of color, but not to an extent that it distracts learners, rather than appeals to them.

What additional materials are available?

A complete course book should consist of more than merely the students’ book. It may provide some or all of the following:

Workbook. Every course book should consist of at least a student’s book that is used in class and a workbook that can be used by the students to do different exercises autonomously.

Visual material. This includes not only pictures, charts and diagrams in the course book, but also flashcards, wall charts, slides and the like. Effective visuals should be usable – “it should be possible to teach with them and through them” (Cunningsworth 1986: 50).

Videotaped material. This is a very popular form of language presentation. It offers students both an aural and visual input and makes exercises not only easier but also more realistic (Cunningsworth 1986: 52).

Audio material. Course books usually include many listening exercises, which are recorded on CD. However, in most cases these CDs are only available to the teacher and students will have to buy them separately. Especially in the case of Business English, where students may need to study the individual units autonomously, it seems quite important that the CD is available with the course book at no additional cost. Furthermore, many course books offer additional CDs, which can be used both as audio material and as CD ROMs with a large number of additional exercises on grammar and vocabulary.

Teacher's book. Some teacher's books simply reproduce the students' book with a few additional notes for the teacher, indicating the objectives of each unit. Others, however, are of great assistance as they “take the teacher step by step through every stage of every unit” (Cunningsworth 1986: 52), accompanied by many additional exercises, which are of enormous help, especially for inexperienced teachers.

Vocabulary lists. A vocabulary list should list all the new vocabulary used in the course. Some course books simply list the vocabulary in an alphabetic order, others list new words according to their appearance in the individual units, while other course books offer both versions. No matter which version is used, such lists are of tremendous help for students who can look up new words there as well as for teachers who can quickly check whether a particular vocabulary is familiar to a student. This is especially important when teachers wish to introduce additional material in class.

Materials for testing. There are many purposes of such materials. They can be used as entry tests to assess the students' level. They can also be used as progress tests. Such tests are very often placed after a specific number of units in the course books. Progress tests are not only useful for checking students' progress during a course, they also provide teachers with important feedback, which helps them to "become more aware of the learning difficulties faced by the students" (Cunningsworth 1986: 55). That way, teachers can improve their own performance.

6.3. *Checklist for the evaluation of Business Course books*

The evaluation of the course books is divided into five stages, each of which consisting of a number of criteria that will be commented on. Since the evaluation is not always very straight forward, some criteria have to be left out and others have to be combined, in order to give an elaborate and complete picture of each book. At stage four, an individual unit of the course books will be examined, while all other stages concern the complete course book. At stage five, some conclusive remarks will be offered.

Stage one – general information

- ✓ title of course book
- ✓ author
- ✓ publisher & date of publication
- ✓ stated level

Stage two – practical considerations

- ✓ first impression and quality
- ✓ illustrations and design
- ✓ additional materials

Stage three – organization of the course book

- ✓ "map of the book"
- ✓ length of the units
- ✓ syllabus

- ✓ appendix

Stage four – methodological considerations

- ✓ objectives
- ✓ subject matter
- ✓ PPP
- ✓ four skills
- ✓ grammar
- ✓ vocabulary
- ✓ authenticity
- ✓ diversity
- ✓ cultural aspect
- ✓ attractiveness to the students

Stage five – conclusive remarks

- ✓ how do the authors describe the book?
- ✓ does it correspond to the given descriptions?
- ✓ can it meet the learners' needs in Business English?
- ✓ is it recommendable as a business English course book?
- ✓ conclusive remarks

6.4. *Summary*

Business English teachers are looking for materials that represent different aspects of language as systematically as possible. A course book should be comprehensive, appealing, and appropriate for an individual course (Cunningsworth 1986: 20).

Faced with the masses of teaching materials, an ESP teacher always tries to find *the* best book. With a number of selection criteria at hand, this process can be facilitated. In this chapter the most important arguments of an appropriate course book will be summarized by dividing them into methodological and practical considerations. With the help of these considerations a checklist has been created, which will be used for the evaluation of course books in the next chapter.

7. Course book evaluation

7.1. *Aims*

In this chapter a number of selected Business English course books will be evaluated with the help of the previously created checklist. Each course book will be introduced and evaluated individually.

7.2. *The course books*

7.2.1. *“In Company”*

Stage one – General information

title of the course book	In Company
<i>author</i>	Simon Clarke
<i>publisher</i>	Macmillan Publishers Limited
<i>date of publication</i>	2004
<i>stated level</i>	elementary

Stage two – Practical considerations

In Company is a set of four courses ranging from elementary to upper intermediate, each consisting of a student's book with CD ROMs, a teacher's book, audio tapes and audio CDs.

The book is in standard paper size. It is compact and light and it seems to be of high quality with glazed paper, many colored illustrations, and large pictures. The graphics and drawings are appealing and are obviously created with the help of a specific graphics program, which gives the impression that the book is up-to-date.

The headings of each unit are rather short and therefore draw the reader's attention. They summarize what is to be expected in the following unit. For example, the first unit entitled “Who are you?” shows different forms of introductions and the way

people spell their names and tell their age. The sub-headings divide the unit into small parts, which are easy to oversee.

Most of the pictures are not related to a specific topic or to the discussed topic, which is misleading and disturbing for the user. Each unit is packed with many exercises and texts, which is generally problematic, because too much information can be overwhelming. This may cause students to be discouraged, which again could mean that they drop the course.

A good course book is not only characterized by its contents and the way it is structured, but also by all the additionally provided material. The course book contains a self-study section with grammar and vocabulary exercises in the end. There is no separate work book. The actual course book includes an exercise section in the end. The reason for this might be that one book is easier for students to handle than two. Moreover, from a production point of view, one book is also cheaper. However, by including both parts in one book, an author may run the risk of keeping the workbook part too simple for the sake of lightness. It is most probable that this is what happened with this book. The practice section is unfortunately very limited. It dedicates only two pages of exercise to each unit, which is definitely not enough. Teachers working with this book may have to provide students with additional material.

It is also very common and absolutely necessary for a foreign language course book to provide a vocabulary list at the end. Unfortunately, *In Company* does not provide such a list. It is neither included at the end of the book, nor is there any other additional material on vocabulary. Especially at this low level of English proficiency, learners need some vocabulary reference. Students could of course purchase a dictionary and it could be argued that looking up words in the dictionary is even better than looking them up in a specially created word list of a course book. After all, by doing so, students already learn at an early stage that they need to take a closer look at the words and translations, since no dictionary offers only one single translation to one word. Nevertheless, some students prefer learning vocabulary with the help of the word list, because dictionaries can be confusing for beginners. This is

why every foreign language course book should include a word list for quick reference.

Many course books offer a CD-ROM along with the hard-copy version. As for additional material of the *In Company* series, this course book, too, offers a CD-ROM providing extensive self-study practice for the learner. Not all students will probably react equally to this offer. Some of them may approve of it immensely and prefer working with it. If they are used to working on a PC, a CD-ROM may be perfect for their needs. On the other hand, other students, for example older ones, may fear using the PC and therefore avoid the CD-ROM. It is therefore a good idea to offer it with the course book, so that learners can decide for themselves whether or not to use it.

The course book comes with a teacher's book, which provides full teaching notes with further suggestions for classroom use. It also provides tape scripts with highlighted target language. The same tape script can also be found in the students' book. Undoubtedly this is advantageous, because students can immediately see what the language focus is, but the tape script is useless to students, if they do not have the audio CD at their free disposal. Furthermore, the course book offers answer keys, additional exercises and worksheets that can be photocopied.

The series offers two further features for all levels. First, a case studies resource pack book with business case-studies that can be photocopied, follow-up activities, and an additional CD. The second feature is a test CD-ROM, which includes placement tests, progress tests, and end-of-course tests, as well as answer keys and listening transcripts.

The more additional material a course book series offers, the better for both the students and the teachers. Clearly, this is also a financial matter but it is, in fact, very helpful for teachers to have additional materials at their disposal, so if a course book series succeeds in offering a whole package, this is definitely an argument in favor of the course book, and thus also better for the publishers from a business point of view.

Stage three – Organization of the course book

The map of the book expands over two pages and lists the different skills and activities in columns and the individual chapters in rows.

Units and topics

The course book consists of 20 units. These are introduced under the headline “Unit and topics”. Each unit has a title and is assigned to a particular general area. There are four general areas: ‘Information’, ‘Connecting’, ‘Survival’, and ‘Issues’. ‘Information’ addresses rather general subjects, where students learn to exchange information about companies, routines, experiences and other aspects of their working lives. In ‘Connecting’ students acquire language skills and skills for communication by phone and by e-mail. As for ‘Survival’, students focus on skills and strategies for dealing with common problems in business life. And finally, the topic area ‘Issues’ deals with job interviews, journeys and travels, as well as the internet and technology. The “topic area” also has a nice illustrative feature: An icon that is shown beside each unit heading and is assigned to each of the four general topic areas. The same icons can also be found next to each unit in the book.

Tasks and activities

As the name implies, this category informs about the tasks and activities the students will do. They include a great number of role plays, discussions, and gap-filling exercises.

Reading and listening texts

This category shows a balance between a large number of listening and reading activities. In order to offer the user an overview, these activities are not only listed but also marked with the letter ‘L’ for listening and ‘R’ for reading.

Grammar and lexis links

This category is highlighted in yellow throughout the book. Even in the map of the book, this category is highlighted in the same color, which again shows the user the connection between the individual categories.

The course book is based on a lexical syllabus. It puts a strong emphasis on lexical and vocabulary items. Here, the learners get the possibility to consolidate and increase their lexical range through word building and collocation tasks.

A closer look at the individual units of this course book reveals that the units are not equal in length. They vary between three and six pages and it is not clear why the lengths of the units vary. This results in an inconsistent organization of the course book. This means that the units do not always start on the same page, the beginning of the units is sometimes on the left and at other times on the right, thus making it easy for the student to overlook the beginning of a new unit. Different unit lengths can be problematic, since students may unconsciously expect a regular unit pattern. If they are used to rather short units, they can easily feel intimidated by a longer one, which might interfere with their general motivation.

The appendix is rather scant. It consists of three sections: Firstly there are grammar and lexis exercises for each individual unit. However, as mentioned, each unit is dealt with only over two pages, which means that it does not provide enough exercises. This section is followed by a number of additional exercises to be carried out in class. Here, again, the additional exercises are not sufficient, leaving no opportunities for the teacher or the students to choose. The last section of the appendix consists of tape scripts with the target language highlighted. This is helpful for the students, as they can see at one glance what they have to focus on.

Stage four – Methodological considerations

In the following, one unit of the course book will be analyzed. For this purpose, the author has chosen the Unit entitled “Who are you?”, which relates to the general topic of “Information”.

A typical first unit, students should be able to introduce themselves and others. They should be able to pronounce numbers correctly and to spell their names. As for grammar, they learn the verb *to be* in its affirmative, interrogative and negative form. They are also introduced to subject and possessive pronouns.

The subject matter of this unit is rather simple and straightforward and serves the purpose of introductions. It starts with a listening exercise. The students listen to five conversations and are expected to tell where these conversations take place (at the airport, in a restaurant, at a hotel, at a conference). As a next step they are given the transcript of the five conversations and are supposed to listen once again while at the same time completing the gaps. By doing so, they get acquainted with typical phrases they need when meeting people and the verb *to be*.

A listening exercise may not be the best way to start because it requires a high degree of concentration from the students, which can be very discouraging for them, especially at a beginner's level. Students mostly reject listening exercises because they are very difficult for them. Thus it seems more appropriate to start with an interactional communication exercise to get the students started, rather than listening, reading, or writing. Even grammar is more appealing to learners than listening. This exercise is followed by a grammar exercise where students are introduced to the verb *to be*.

As for the subject of numbers, the students are directly confronted with the different forms of pronunciation, again accompanied with a large number of listening texts, before they are offered a text with spaces on "The football business", which naturally includes many different figures the students have to fill in.

The unit concludes with an introduction to the alphabet and instructions on how to pronounce the letters individually. The students then get the possibility to spell names.

Whereas the first part of this unit concentrates mainly on grammar, the second part puts its focus on vocabulary. Here, the students can read a text about the famous football player Ronaldo. The title of this text is "Simply the best". The text is filled with superlatives that should not be used to such an extent at the elementary level. Concerning vocabulary, the unit contains a number of new words that are related to Business English, such as *'income'*, *'trademark'*, *'publicity'*, or *'bargain'*. In the following exercise the students are asked to assign the words in the text to the given paragraphs.

As for the four skills, all the units in this book are generally rather imbalanced. It is true that the students get many chances to do listening and speaking exercises, but there are very few rather short reading texts and even fewer writing exercises. One can of course argue that writing comes at a later point in time, since the first writing exercise is not found until the end of the fourth unit. However, when analyzing the book, one finds that the skill of writing is generally neglected. The same is true for the first unit where too much focus is put on listening skills, while the other three skills are disregarded.

If we consider that a course book is authentic when the contents are of interest and appealing to the students, *In Company* can definitely be regarded as an authentic course book. It covers a great number of activities that business people have to master in their daily work, such as writing e-mails, telephone conversations, organizing a conference or a business trip, socializing, talking about trends, or travelling. Moreover, the topics are generally of a current nature. The course book contains articles taken from newspapers; however, the companies mentioned are imaginary, which is different in other course books (see 7.2.2.).

As regards the intercultural aspect, the book contains a number of texts and topics that are not exclusively English or American. There are texts on Swedish castles, French and Spanish companies, and an Iranian businessman. It also presents some codes of behavior for various business occasions in an entertaining manner.

Stage five – Conclusive remarks

The course book's title *In Company* raises the students' expectations that they will be introduced to topics that are especially relevant in the workplace, indicating that it excludes all irrelevant information, such as topics which are of interest for General English learners, and instead specifically focuses on Business English. It indicates that the activities introduced in the individual units reflect real world situations, thus allowing students to be well-equipped with skills which help them deal with everyday situations in a company.

According to the website description, the course book “trains students in the language and skills which are immediately transferable to the workplace” (2004: <http://www.macmillanenglish.com/Course.aspx?id=28294&producttypeid=28242>). It goes on stating that the course book is intended for “professional adults who are seeking to realize their full potential as self-reliant speakers of English in both professional and social situations”. These claims appear to be over-ambitious because the book fails to address the target group it intends to reach. It is true that the topics discussed in the individual units are interesting and appealing to students but they are also of interest to young students and do not necessarily appeal to more mature learners. This is especially apparent in topics such as the football player Ronaldo or the coffee-house-chain Starbucks. The same criticism can be applied to the graphics and layout of the course book. As mentioned earlier, the book contains many colored illustrations and pictures, which are attractive at first sight. However, the use of layout and colors appears excessive and again may appeal to teenage rather than mature learners. Furthermore, the course book puts a lot of emphasis on grammar, which on the one hand is understandable because it is, in fact, an elementary level course book, but on the other, it bears the danger of focusing too much on linguistic aspects rather than on the business aspect. As a result, the main focus of the course book is backgrounded.

Another weakness is that the students’ course book does not offer a CD with the listening exercises introduced in the various units. Therefore, students cannot listen to these exercises in a relaxed atmosphere at home. However, it provides a CD-ROM with grammar, vocabulary, and listening exercises for the students’ home use. This definitely facilitates the students’ individual work with the course book and slightly makes up for the missing audio CD.

In addition, *In Company* focuses strongly on grammar and offers little opportunities for the learner to participate in open and uncontrolled discussions. This, of course, may be due to the fact that the book is for elementary level students, who need more guidance in their production of a foreign language than students at higher levels.

Another major drawback is that the book does not offer a vocabulary list. Therefore, students must either administer their own vocabulary lists or buy a dictionary in addition to the course book.

In Company would have been a far more useful course book, if it had considered all these aspects. Moreover, with the different lengths of the units, it does not appear well-organized. It seems to be unmotivated and gives a chaotic impression of hastiness, as if it has been created in a hurry.

7.2.2. “New Basis for Business”

Stage one – General information

title of the course book	New Basis for Business
author	David Christie
<i>publisher</i>	Cornelsen Verlag
<i>date of publication</i>	2003
<i>stated level</i>	Pre-intermediate

Stage two – Practical considerations

The book is a little smaller than the standard paper size, which makes it easy to hold. It is light and compact and the cover is of high quality material. The pictures on the front cover are appealing and positive. They show people in different business situations, apparently communicating and understanding each other. It definitely raises curiosity.

The first impression after flipping through the glossy pages is a little overwhelming. The pages are filled with a lot of information; and seem very crowded and dense. There are many colored pictures. It seems as if too much color has been used and the page design appears a bit chaotic. The illustrations are not always directly related to the topics in the respective units. Nevertheless, at a closer look, the structure of each unit seems well-organized and clear. The headings are short and in most cases to the point. Some are misleading, for example “Skyline” is a unit where the reader might expect a topic on travelling and sightseeing, while it describes

company plans. The book contains 'green pages' after each unit, summarizing new grammar and vocabulary and offering additional exercises.

The course book comes with a number of additional materials, including an audio CD. Apart from the 'green pages' the series also offers an additional Pocket Workbook for additional exercises and a Key to Self Study for students who do not have the possibility to attend classes regularly. As for exercises in class, there is also an extra book containing additional handouts. This course book also offers an interesting alternative to printed materials. A teacher can choose from a number of on-line handouts, progress checks and language games.

Stage three – Organization of the course book

As in most course books, the map of the book expands over two pages and is very clearly arranged. This one, too, lists the units in a column, while the table is divided into four parts horizontally: The unit headings, topics and vocabulary, grammar, and finally a business file.

Units and topics

The course book consists of ten units, each divided into two parts. They all cover business topics, starting with simple introductions and meetings, and continuing with job descriptions, office life, meetings, and finally writing business letters and entertaining visitors.

Grammar

The grammar aspects are not surprising. They cover the tenses, starting with the present simple tense and go as far as present perfect. Furthermore, students are introduced to adverbs and adjectives, comparatives, question forms, possessive pronouns and finally the passive form.

Business File

Each unit has a business file, where students are introduced to typical business situations, such as introducing themselves, telephoning, writing e-mails, making appointments, negotiating, writing reports, and company visits.

Although the course book concentrates heavily on grammar, it does not exclusively apply a grammar syllabus. Instead, it offers a combination of a grammar and situational syllabus. This becomes especially clear in the “Business files”.

The units are of equal length. They all consist of six pages of regular unit, followed by two pages of “Business File” and four pages of grammar and vocabulary exercises.

The appendix is comprehensive. It consists of six parts. First, there are a number of so-called “Partner Files”, approximately two or three for each unit. These are additional pair work exercises for class. The second part of the appendix shows a helpful list of numbers, dates and times. It exemplifies how dates are said and written differently in Britain and in the USA, which can be rather confusing for students. It also gives a short summary of the most important prepositions of time. Next, it offers a short summary of how telephone numbers and addresses are expressed, again highlighting the differences between American and British English. A rather long section of “Business Correspondence” follows in the third part of the appendix, displaying letters, e-mails and faxes. Each of these correspondences consists of a detailed description of characteristics of the different ways of business correspondence, such as the layout, structure, and typical expressions used, followed by some examples. The appendix further contains in its fourth and fifth part transcripts of the listening exercises and both a unit word list and an alphabetical word list. Finally, it also offers a list of the most common irregular verbs.

Stage four – Methodological considerations

In general, each unit starts with a statement of its objectives and is divided into two parts. The unit starts with a warm-up exercise and continues with listening, speaking, and grammar exercises. Theoretical grammar input is given in the form of blue boxes. In the ‘Business File’ students get the possibility of practicing their speaking skills in a number of different pair-work tasks. This file is followed by the ‘green pages’, which summarize the most important grammar aspects in this chapter and offer students some exercises which they can do individually in self study.

In this stage the unit called “Work and Leisure”, which gets students to talk about their lives and careers will be analyzed. In this unit, students will ask each other about places, people and things, and they will talk about their interests. The ‘Business File’ includes calling a company for product information and completing an order form. As for grammar, they are introduced to the past simple and the past continuous tenses.

Since students are supposed to talk about their lives and careers, they are first offered an example of how to fulfill this task. In the first part of this unit they are introduced to a person called ‘Eckhard Kellermann’, who talks about his career and his present job. Students can listen and at the same time read along. Subsequently they are introduced to a number of grammar topics before they finally get the chance to talk about their own lives and careers.

The second part of this unit deals with places and leisure time activities. Students now learn that Eckhard Kellermann looks after a big client in Denver/Colorado. In the first exercise, students listen to a conversation between Kellermann and his client from Denver, who describes the place where he lives. He also mentions in one sentence that he ‘likes skiing’. In the following exercise, students work with their partners and describe people and places they know. Then they talk about their hobbies and things they like and do not like. This is an interesting aspect, since they are only introduced to this topic with one line from the dialogue.

As for the ‘Business File’, students are introduced to the most important stages of telephoning. They are offered some useful phrases and also get the chance to practice a phone call. This part of the course book can be regarded as authentic because it prepares students for real life business situations.

The course book is mainly based on the methodological concept of Presentation, Practice, and Production. Students are first given a language model – in this case it is the listening exercise at the beginning of the unit. This is followed by a number of exercises, where students are supposed to practice the new language until they finally get the possibility to produce language of their own when talking about their own lives and careers.

Students must be able to directly apply the learned language in real life business situations. This is what makes a course book authentic. This particular book fulfills this condition quite well. Especially the 'business files' at the end of each unit are directly applicable in real-life situations. They consist of very useful phrases that can be used in real-life situations and they offer exercises, helping the students to intensively practice these phrases. In the Unit on "Work and Leisure", for example, the Business File offers a number of exercises on calling a company about product information, followed by exercises on how to complete an order form. Next, the learners are provided with a grammar summary.

A disadvantage of this book is that it concentrates very strongly on grammar, to an extent where other aspects of language teaching easily fall behind, so that it is necessary for the teacher to come up with additional exercises for the students in order to compensate for this deficiency. The same is true, of course, for the Unit we are discussing. As mentioned before, the grammar focus is on the Past Simple and the Past Continuous and every exercise, no matter whether it is spoken or written, focuses extensively on grammar use.

The course book consistently tries to support the learners in expanding their vocabulary. This is done by a number of communication exercises but also by a number of exercises in the self study section of the 'Green Pages'. However, these exercises sometimes seem a bit trifling and even childish. An example would be an exercise where letters are deranged and students are required to put them together so that they compose different expressions of leisure activities.

New Basis for Business pays special attention to the cultural aspect, not only in the units as such where real life companies from different countries are introduced and integrated into the lessons, but also in the vocabulary part of the 'Green Pages'. Here a so-called 'Culture Spot' explains and introduces different areas of American and English social life. These areas are always compared and contrasted and sometimes even compared to German social life. Examples include the differences between the education systems in the USA and the UK in comparison to Germany.

Politeness and the use of polite language are also very important aspects in English language, which is paid attention to in another culture spot.

To put it in a nutshell, the learners' cultural awareness is raised as regards certain aspects of life in the countries of their target language. The course book, however, neglects multiculturalism and the fact that business is not only done in English-speaking countries, but around the globe where English is merely the lingua franca between different cultures.

Stage five – Conclusive remarks

The title *New Basis for Business* indicates that the learner can expect to acquire some basic knowledge on business matters in English. The suffix *New* raises the question whether there might have been an *Old Basis for Business* or merely a *Basis for Business* and what is actually new about this course book. In fact, *Basis for Business* was published in 1998 and the course book at hand is the second revised edition published in 2003. Another question that needs to be asked is whether it is necessary to grant grammar such an important role in a Business English course. It is true that grammar constitutes the basis for every language and it is also important to understand it and to use it appropriately. However, it is to be doubted whether a course which has its main focus on business should concentrate as strongly on grammar as this course book does.

New Basis for Business has been designed for learners at level A2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching, in other words the course book is for learners who have successfully passed the beginner's level of English. It aims at students wishing to acquire a solid basis in Business English, offering them exercises with typical everyday business situations, such as telephoning, writing e-mails, participating in meetings, travel language, looking after visitors, social English, and using the internet. The language used is appropriate for English pre-intermediate learners and is appealing to adult students. However, the author of the course book overlooks the fact that students need to practice newly introduced topics with the help of various exercise. It is true that the book contains a self-study section with additional exercises for the students, but nevertheless there should be more of that. This lack creates the impression that the

course book tends to focus on quick progress. Therefore, it might not be appropriate for students who have not learned English before.

A positive aspect of this course book is that it offers a word list for students' reference. Another valuable characteristic is that it is balanced on the four skills, despite its strong focus on grammar.

The course book is very well structured and clearly arranged. The 'Business Files' and 'Culture Spots' are especially appealing. They are very useful and interesting. The book has a real life aspect to it, since it covers a number of topics that a learner will need in various business situations. However, on the negative side, it should be mentioned that the course book does not provide any texts or exercises that could lead to the next grammar point. Furthermore, some exercises are dealt with excessively but are not introduced adequately. For example, the above mentioned exercise on likes and dislikes in the "Work and Leisure" unit, which is only shown in one line of the dialogue. Therefore, a teacher must use a number of additional exercises in class, according to the learners' needs.

There is a substantial difference between *In Company* and *New Basis for Business*. While, as mentioned above, *In Company* aims more at young students, *New Basis for Business* attempts to reach the mature learners and it is successful in its aim in that it focuses more on authentic business situations and presents texts that are more interesting for mature learners.

Apart from the disadvantages the book obviously has, I would recommend it as a Business English course book for mature students who have had some kind of English learning experience in earlier years, because of its quick progress and its strong focus on grammar.

7.2.3. “Further Ahead – A communication skills course for Business English”

Stage one – General information

<i>title of the course book</i>	Further Ahead – A communication skills course for Business English
<i>authors</i>	Sarah Jones-Macziola and Greg White
<i>publisher</i>	Cambridge University Press
<i>date of publication</i>	2005
<i>stated level</i>	lower intermediate

Stage two – Practical considerations

The book is standard paper size with glazed paper and rather light. Flipping through the pages, it reveals a number of pictures, graphics, and great use of color. It seems a bit chaotic at first sight, but also raises the reader’s curiosity.

The course book contains many colored pictures and graphics and most of them directly relate to the texts. The pictures are either drawn or photographed and each unit is identified by its icon on top of the page. The chaotic first impression gives way to more structure when looking at the individual units more closely. Each subunit is highlighted in red and there is a green box with objectives on top of the page at the beginning of each unit. The grammar boxes are purple and the vocabulary boxes are green.

The course consists of a learner’s book that comes with a CD ROM. The CD ROM provides the learners with additional exercises and audio material to meet the demand for the Business English Certificate (BEC) Preliminary Exam.

Other components are a learner’s book, two audio CDs or audio tapes, as well as a home study book that also comes with an audio CD or an audio tape. These provide learners with an opportunity to continue their studies at home. The audio material also allows learners to improve their listening skills at their own pace.

The course book further provides a video that is thematically linked with the learner's book. It presents the themes in the course book in an authentic context and provides extension and revision material.

Ultimately, the book offers a teacher's guide with detailed suggestions on how to exploit the material in the learner's book. In particular, it gives comprehensive support to non-experienced Business English teachers, and it offers a number of activities that supplement the learner's book contents and can be photocopied.

Stage three – Organization of the course book

The learner's book only offers a list of contents, as the "Map of the book" can be found in the teacher's book. The reason for this is neither self-evident nor explained in the book. Given the intended age group of the students working with this book, it is difficult to comprehend why they should not learn about the teaching objectives the book pursues.

The book contains 20 units, four of which are review units. The "Map of the book" consists of four categories. The first category describes the objectives of each unit. The other categories are on grammar points, on the business content, and finally a list on all additional activities that can be found in both the students' and the teachers' books.

Objectives

The objectives tell us what the students will learn in each unit. Clearly, the tasks are rather easy, even for students at a lower intermediate level. In this course students learn how to describe different things in a business context, such as companies and company structures, facilities, different products, trends and processes, as well as a company's history. They further talk about various business topics, such as company structures, imports and exports, schedules, ways of promoting a product, the cause and effect, and work conditions. They learn how to discuss and negotiate the language for dealing with complaints and telephoning, how to make and change arrangements, as well as how to write effective business letters, and give brief presentations on given topics.

Grammar points

The grammar points should be rather easy for students at this level. Difficulties may arise in connection with the business content. This course basically covers all important grammar points, starting with questions and question tags and dealing with all the different tenses, as well as conditionals and reported speech. It also addresses adjectives and adverbs, as well as pronouns, modals, and the passive form. Again we can see that there is no difference between General and Business English students when it comes to grammar.

Business content

This category makes the difference between a General and a Business English Course book obvious. In relation to the objectives of the unit, it describes the business content of each unit, for example “advertising a product”, “types of industries”, or “business ethics”.

Resource activities and File Cards

This category lists additional exercises that can be found in both the students’ and the teachers’ books. The resource activities consist of a few exercise sheets that can be photocopied. They provide further practice in the relevant language points, but can also be used as warming-up activities or for revision at the start of the next lesson.

While these activities seem to be a very good idea, there are only seven of them interspersed in the 20 units, which means that they fail to cover all topics and language points.

The file cards on the other hand can be found in the students’ book and are very useful as additional communication exercises. They, too, can be used either as warming-up activities or for revision at the start of the next lesson.

This course book is another example of a traditional grammar syllabus. Each unit introduces a new grammatical feature and the contents are deliberately and carefully chosen according to this aspect. If this was the only evaluation criterion, then this book would not be evaluated as very helpful for teaching Business English, since grammar is in fact a very important aspect in teaching English, but it is not the only

aspect that has to be considered. The authors of this course book competently combine grammar points with real-life business content. All the business topics definitely provide a basis for later jobs in a business environment.

All units are six pages long and can be taught within approximately three to four hours. Every fourth unit is followed by a revision unit, which consists of four pages of additional exercises.

The appendix is rather sparse as it only consists of so-called *Files* that provide additional communication exercises for the students. They are followed by the tape scripts of the listening exercises. The course book also offers two word lists, both of which are English-German. The unit word list presents the new vocabulary in each unit in order of its appearance. The second wordlist presents the vocabulary in alphabetical order. It also states the unit where this new word appears for the first time. This alphabetical word list can be a very helpful tool, especially when it comes to preparing a new class.

Stage four – Methodological considerations

Each unit starts with a statement of its aims and is divided into three parts of two pages each. The different parts of each unit are categorized into one, or a combination of the following:

- ✓ Warmer/Discussion
- ✓ Presentation
- ✓ Language focus
- ✓ Reading
- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Speaking
- ✓ Vocabulary
- ✓ Writing

Towards the end of the course book, there are two units that specifically pay attention to cultural aspects. In this stage one of these two units will be examined, namely the one called “Socializing”, in order to show how the different categories are introduced.

This unit discusses the subject of gift-giving when visiting clients abroad, organizing a free day while on a business trip, and eating out. The first part of this unit, which is about gift-giving, starts with a discussion exercise. In this case, students are asked to look at a picture and discuss the presented solutions to a problem. This exercise is intended to raise the students' awareness and interest and at the same time introduce them to the topic and to new vocabulary.

In general, the reading texts and accompanying activities are designed to provide learners with genuine newspaper articles and texts where students can practice the main ways of reading; i.e. skimming and scanning, as well as intensive and extensive reading. Most texts have illustrations, charts or photographs providing learners with a context, which the teacher can use to prepare the students for the reading. Since the readings are mostly situated at the end of each unit, students already know the subject matter and the necessary vocabulary. Therefore, they will probably find it easy to give their opinions on an illustration. In this unit, students have the opportunity for one of the few reading exercises in this course book. Here, students are asked to read a text and answer comprehension questions afterwards.

This exercise is followed by a listening exercise. This unit offers only two listening exercises, which is very uncommon for this course book. It normally has more listening exercises. As listening is one of the most difficult tasks for students of a foreign language, irrespective of the level of proficiency, most students become very nervous when they are expected to do a listening exercise followed by oral or written tasks. Students at elementary levels may downright reject it or may refuse to do such exercises. In this course book, plenty of exercises are given to improve the students' extensive and intensive listening skills. Moreover, they are given full transcripts in the course books. In this unit, students listen to an interview between a reporter and an employee of an American company about gift-giving and taking and the company policy on this matter. This is followed by some comprehension questions, which ideally can also lead to discussions among students about accepting gifts and when this can be understood as accepting a bribe.

The second part of this unit is about planning a free day and focuses on speaking. Generally, in this course book each unit moves from very structured and supported to freer discussion-type activities. The easier speaking activities are supported with helpful phrases that are typical in given situations. The practical exercises that follow are always supplemented with a flow chart with prompts suggesting the development of the spoken interaction. As for the free speaking activities, mostly the file cards at the back of the course book are used. For these exercises, it is important for the students to take some time in order to prepare their roles thoroughly. Once they have realized that they are in a safe environment with their teacher by their side, helping them if the need arises, the students will probably enjoy these exercises, because they give them the chance to speak freely and to apply their knowledge. Furthermore, these activities help learners to gain more self-confidence in speaking, which is especially important for people in business.

The main aim of writing exercises is to make learners aware of different forms of register and to provide them with models of common business correspondence. The writing exercises are never treated as separate entities; they are rather follow-up exercises of other skills. For example, in this unit on “Socializing” students are expected to write a letter following a role play. This provides them with a real-life and authentic context, since it happens ever so often in real-life business situations that a person makes a phone call and subsequently summarizes the agreements in a written form sending it to a business partner.

Generally, students are given the opportunity to analyze new language and to practice it in a variety of ways, usually involving a combination of written and listening exercises. Furthermore, each *Revision and Consolidation* unit offers summaries of new grammar and a list of useful words and expressions where students have the opportunity to write down their personal translation. They also have the possibility of extra practice in the *Home Study Book*.

As already mentioned above, the course book provides two different word lists in the appendix. In the individual units, new vocabulary is mostly presented in a yellow box. Students are often expected to look at the new words accompanied by an exercise to practice the given vocabulary; for example, students are asked to match the new

words with icons in a picture or to categorize them in a table with a corresponding umbrella term.

The authors of this book obviously make a point in bringing grammar and vocabulary skills across in a very traditional but still effective way. Nevertheless, students may still need more exercises and grammar practice when they are not yet adept at it. In this case, the teacher would have to use additional exercises from specialized grammar workbooks.

Stage five – Conclusive remarks

The course book's title allows some interpretations. *Further Ahead* might mean that students working with this book could be more successful than others who are not using it. The subtitle is by far more interesting, since it claims that this course book is a *Communication course for Business English*. In fact, it is a communication course when the spoken form of communication is taken into consideration. However, the course book neglects the written form of business communication. Therefore, the subtitle of this book is only partly suitable.

Further Ahead targets adult learners for Business English at lower intermediate levels. It is appropriate for both learners who wish to learn English as a Foreign Language with a special focus on business in order to advance their chances of finding a job and those who are already working in a company.

The contents in this course book all cover business areas. They start with the simple topic of meeting people as well as introducing oneself and others. Interestingly, this is a topic that is repeatedly dealt with in any course book irrespective of how basic or advanced the stated level is. The course book continues with everyday business topics, thus offering the students the possibility to get acquainted with a number of typical business situations and at the same time to learn about new vocabulary and business phrases. Therefore, if we consider the contents and most of the tasks in the course book, it can be regarded as authentic. However, it contains few genuine texts. The same is true for the listening texts which are all artificial.

As regards the four skills, *Further Ahead* does not balance them sufficiently. Some chapters offer an excessive amount of listening exercises, while the book does not offer enough exercises for reading and writing. The listening exercises are mainly used as an example for further speaking activities, which is a useful way of introducing speaking activities. What I miss in that book, however, are listening texts as ends in themselves. There is not a single one, which is a serious deficiency. Clearly, business people must have proficient skills in listening and speaking and they can only be self-confident, proficient, and at ease with any language, if these skills are balanced. Business people not only need to be good at listening and speaking in order to be able to give convincing presentations and hold persuasive meetings. A person who wants to be successful in business internationally needs to be able to understand written information and to communicate in writing as well. I *Further Ahead* does not seem to develop the students' reading and writing skills to the extent that would be desirable. The teacher, therefore, may have to provide students with additional exercises, since the supplementary material offered in this series is insufficient in this regard.

The question arises whether the course book meets the students' needs for authenticity. The answer would be "yes and no". Yes, because the speaking and listening exercises, no matter how targeted they are, do in fact refer to real-life situations. Granted, these situations convey the impression of having been cleared of spontaneous reactions which no one can predict. But at the same time they offer a fairly good idea of how business communications can develop and therefore provide the students with a solid basis which they can build on in the future. At the same time, the answer to the above question is also "no", because the reading texts are mostly very artificial and extremely targeted.

The course book has a number of strengths, such as its clear, comprehensive, and simple structure. It contains no surprises and it is easy to get used to the methodology used in the course book. The units are sequential and the knowledge that is brought across builds upon previous knowledge. This makes it rather difficult to use one unit of the course book for other courses without teaching the whole course book. Although it is possible to leave out one unit and continue with the next, a teacher would have to cover some missing points in the unit that has not been

covered. Furthermore, the structure of this book does not allow the teacher to teach the units in a jumbled order.

Although the course book offers a comprehensive amount of additional material, teachers may still have to come up with their own exercises, since those offered are insufficient or simply inappropriate for the needs of future business people as they only cover the grammatical aspect of the language.

Overall, the course book seems to have more advantages than disadvantages. It can definitely be used for students wishing to learn Business English and it is certainly appropriate for adult students. However, it is only applicable for long-term courses and students who miss a lecture might find it hard to cover the subject matter by themselves. Moreover, since the last edition dates back to the year 2005, it would be worth considering publishing a new and up-dated edition.

7.2.4. “*Business Opportunities*”

Stage one – General information

<i>title of the course book</i>	Business Opportunities
<i>authors</i>	Vicki Hollett
<i>publisher</i>	Oxford University Press
<i>date of publication</i>	1994
<i>stated level</i>	Intermediate

Stage two – Practical considerations

As most Business English course books, *Business Opportunities* is a standard-paper-sized book of high quality with glazed paper and colored pictures and graphics. The course book’s design is clearly arranged and makes it easy for the reader to follow. No embellishments or unnecessary exaggerations are used and the colors are harmonious and subtle. The beginning of each unit is marked with the title on the top left of the page and a colored bar on the left side. There is a description of the unit’s objectives and the covered tasks. The course book contains both drawn and realistic pictures which correspond directly to the topics discussed.

The course book, which is here referred to as the Student's Book, comes together with an additional workbook, which offers additional exercises to the students for their work at home. It also consists of a teacher's book and an audio tape. Furthermore, there is an accompanying video, consisting of eight short comic episodes. These episodes can be used in any order and cover all the essential language functions needed by students at this level. The online pages on this course book are sparse and pointless. Apart from a rather brief description of the course book and its components, one can find merely one link to a few evaluation tests with an answer key, which can be printed and photocopied. These evaluation tests can also be found in the teacher's book.

The teacher's book is quite helpful, but far from perfect. It offers a very detailed step-by-step guide on how to teach the individual tasks in the course book, which is particularly helpful for new teachers, because it virtually takes the teachers by the hand and leads them through the lesson. Each unit in the teacher's book is divided into three parts: the presentation, the language work, and the skills work. These parts also correspond with the classification in the "Map of the Book", which is helpful in order to obtain a general overview.

Stage three – Organization of the course book

The "Map of the book" extends over four pages and is not necessarily as coherent as such maps usually are, which is a bit disturbing in the beginning. The course book consists of fourteen units; each is divided into three sections showing the topic, the language, the vocabulary and pronunciation, as well as the skills work covered in the course book. The issues of the individual units are those typically addressed in Business English course books. Therefore they contain no surprises.

The individual units are not of equal length. They vary between eight and twelve pages. This is generally not to be supported, because each unit should be organized and structured equally. This is also true for the number of pages. The reason for this is that students do need such a consistency, even though they might not be aware of that. If they see that the following unit is even longer than the one before, they may feel frustrated and discouraged, which is not very beneficial and will not lead to the

expected positive result. The same is true for the format of each individual unit. Students unconsciously respond to that as well. As teachers, we have to keep in mind that our target group is adult students whose experience with lessons in a foreign language could date back a decade or more. Therefore, they might be disinclined to take another course in a foreign language.

The appendix is surprisingly detailed. Some of the speaking activities require pairs of students to exchange different kinds of information. This information is provided in the role-play notes, which cover quite a few pages at the beginning of the appendix. They are followed by a transcript of all the listening texts in the course book. The next part of the appendix contains a detailed and well-made summary of grammatical forms and functions. However, given the way it is structured, it definitely presupposes that students working with this book already have a firm grasp of grammatical structures. At this level, however, this is not necessarily the case. The grammar notes also provide some explicit and nicely drafted information on letter and fax layout. This, by the way, shows that the book was published in the early nineties. It is doubtful whether this kind of information would still be found in a more current edition of a course book. Finally, the appendix also contains an alphabetic glossary with explanations in English.

Stage four – Methodological considerations

The fourteen units follow more or less the same format. The construction of the units in *Business Opportunities* is clearly based on the three Ps. The first section is a presentation of the language. In the second part, students are given the possibility to practice the new language forms while being strongly supported by the teacher and the course book. Finally, in the last step they get the chance to produce language freely with the help of their new knowledge.

This paragraph will go into detail as to how the individual units are structured using the example of the seventh unit entitled “Telephoning to Exchange Information”. The unit’s stated objective is to “exchange factual information accurately and precisely” (1994: 66) and the tasks which should help to achieve this objective are listed as follows:

- ✓ to deal with queries about an invoice,

- ✓ to make travel enquiries,
- ✓ to spell and write down English words over the phone,
- ✓ to check and correct factual information,
- ✓ to give effective explanations by paraphrasing,
- ✓ to place and deal with orders over the phone (1994: 66).

Each unit starts with a *Presentation*, where the topic and key language points are presented in the form of a listening comprehension. This is generally carried out in two steps. At the first step the students are expected to listen for the content of conversation by picking up specific points of information according to given questions. Here they listen to the entire conversation. In a second step, the conversation is replayed to the students while they are expected to shift their focus from the mere information to the forms of language used. In order to help them, they are given extracts from the conversation and are asked to complete them while listening. In the specific case of this unit, this activity is followed by a pronunciation exercise where students are expected to complete a chart, filling in the sounds of the alphabet into the appropriate column.

The listening exercise is structured in an appropriate manner, as students learn to listen for different kinds of information and at the same time are casually exposed to language. This presentation part could last for about one hour, maybe even longer, depending on the students' abilities or motivation, which can vary individually. Since this is the beginning of the unit this means for the students at least one hour of listening and filling in exercises without actually speaking, except for the teacher's explanations. This can be exhausting for the students and could lead to demotivation.

The next section on Language Work provides controlled practice of the language. In the case of our unit on telephoning, the Language Work takes up the pronunciation exercise and continues with yet a few more listening activities. It is true, though, that the focus shifts to oral practice with a few written exercises which should be carried out in pairs or small groups. This has the advantage of maximizing the amount of practice that the students get. Here, the students are asked to practice what they theoretically heard in the first part in a controlled manner. They are not yet allowed or

supposed to involve in free conversation. In this particular unit, students get some language practice by matching words to their explanations, by completing a crossword puzzle, or by practicing politeness in the form of indirect questions. Here again, the students are provided with the phrases they need and are merely supposed to change some vocabulary which is also provided in a grid. Unfortunately, speaking is generally limited to an absolute minimum. The students are merely expected to utter a few expressions or words, not even complete sentences. This might be acceptable at a lower level, but not at an intermediate level. Overall, the exercises are at too low a level for intermediate students.

As for the final section, the Skills Work, the students finally get the chance to speak accompanied by a reading, writing, or listening task. The speaking tasks should represent a recapitulation of all the knowledge that the students have acquired so far. They are freer and no longer controlled as in the previous sections. In this particular unit, students are required to role-play, placing an order with the help of given information. The second speaking activity is a humorous one. It is surprising, though, that it does not fit the subject matter of telephoning at all. In this activity, students are supposed to tell the class about a car accident. They are given prompts and expected to be precise in their narration. This exercise, no matter how comic and fun it might be, appears misplaced and is not coherent with the subject matter. Apart from that, if we assume that students at an intermediate level do really need as much control as is pretended in this course book, they would be totally overwhelmed by and surprised about the sudden freedom they have in these speaking activities.

Stage five – Conclusive remarks

Ideally, the title of the course book tells us what to expect. In this case, it promises the student to get a number of opportunities of acquiring and practicing Business English skills.

According to the course book's cover description, *Business Opportunities* is meant for business people and students of business. The objectives and tasks which should help the students achieve these objectives are stated at the beginning of each unit, sound convincing, and make sense. However, unfortunately, in the course of the unit it becomes clear that the presented activities may not lead to success,

which is frustrating both for the students and the teacher. Students may find the Presentation and Language Work activities too bland, as they have no connection with the activities that are presented in the Skills Work sections. Thus, the tasks may be either too simple or too challenging for the students. Both are not necessarily motivating aspects for a course book. The course book also seems to require a lot of additional exercises in order to make up for its deficiencies, which is also not very motivating for a teacher.

As for the four skills, the course book concentrates too much on listening skills with an inappropriate application of the speaking skills. Reading and writing are presented, but only very sketchy and inappropriately. This is definitely a deficit in this course book.

Teaching grammar in a very theoretical manner is always problematic, as students tend to find this boring and uninspiring. Especially when it comes to teaching adults, it is very important to give them an understanding of the overall structure and when to use which grammatical forms. After all, this is what they are expected to do – correctly apply grammatical forms. We have to consider that although their schooldays were a long time ago, most adults do remember grammar in its most basic concepts, and, unfortunately, they also remember the theoretical methodology of their grammar lessons. Therefore, it is important to show them that it is not only an abstract and obnoxious component of a language which has to be mastered no matter how, but it is necessary in order to be able to express oneself and being understood.

To cite an example from my own teaching experience, I often explain to my students that there are six tenses in German – three past tenses, one present tense and two future tenses. By contrast, there are twice as many tenses in English because there is always a simple and a progressive tense. Naturally, students always feel intimidated by this prospect at first, but then I explain that this is actually an advantage because then they have a better chance of expressing themselves accurately, and thus the chances of being understood are higher.

At this level, especially adult students are still not very proficient in grammar, and therefore require a lot of explanation and practice. "Business Opportunities" however, seems to totally ignore this fact. There is a very good grammar section in the appendix which summarizes all the grammatical forms in a very understandable and clear manner, but it contains no exercises at all. One would expect at least a few practically oriented communication tasks embedding major grammatical forms. It is true that Business English course books should not be too grammar-oriented, but the exact opposite of that is also not desirable.

The course book emphasizes vocabulary work. Every unit contains at least one vocabulary exercise, which appears at varying stages of the unit and the exercises are always put in a real-life context. As mentioned in the previous stage, the course book also provides an alphabetical glossary with English explanations. This is a positive element, because it helps students to get acquainted with the target language. At this level it is not necessary to give a German translation to each and every new expression. This only leads to a double tracked way of thinking on the part of the students and it does not help them acquire a foreign language. With the monolingual glossary, students automatically get to know other English words, which make it easier for them to explain a word or an expression, if the need arises or if they cannot think of the original expression.

Despite the deficiencies *Business Opportunities* has, there are some positive aspects in this course book. Most of the activities in the Skills Work section are appealing, because they are highly entertaining, only not in context with the other activities in the book. However, they can be used as additional exercises for other Business English courses. Another aspect worth mentioning as advantageous is the Glossary, which offers English explanations for new vocabulary.

In conclusion, this book does not appear to be appropriate as a main source for a Business English course because of its several deficiencies.

7.2.5. “New Business Matters”

Stage one – General information

<i>title of the course book</i>	New Business Matters Business English with a lexical approach
<i>authors</i>	Mark Powell, Ron Martínez, Rosi Jillett
<i>publisher</i>	Thomson Heinle
<i>date of publication</i>	2004
<i>stated level</i>	Intermediate/Upper-Intermediate

Stage two – Practical considerations

After having evaluated four course books, it is not surprising that this one, too, is of standard paper size and of high quality with glazed paper and colored graphics and pictures. However, this course book has a different structure in comparison to the other course books. The pictures are all realistic photographs – no cartoons or sketches – which unconsciously makes a very professional impression. Even the choice of colors and the picture on the front page are very appealing and arouse the reader's curiosity. The book cover is in a discreet green color. The picture on the front page shows someone holding a suitcase in his hand. The background is blurred; one can only see the suitcase, which again shows a world map. This automatically elicits an association of dynamics and vitality, of achieving success and being able to be part of this world, if only one can master the content of this book.

The course book comes together with an impressive selection of additional material. It provides audio CDs and audio tapes, accompanying the listening exercises in the course book, a work book, which includes exercises preparing students for the BEC Vantage exam, a teacher's book, and an Exam CD ROM for teachers, allowing them to create, customize, and correct tests. It also provides a CNN video with fifteen segments, supported by worksheets in the appendix of the course book.

Stage three – Organization of the Course book

The book provides fifteen units. A so-called “Skills Unit” follows every third unit. The skills are “Meetings”, “Telephoning”, “Presentations” and “Negotiations”, which are basically the most important skills business people should be proficient in.

The “Map of the book” is divided into five categories. On the outer left it displays the most important information being the unit’s title and the page where it can be found. It is followed by a category called “Text”. Every unit has a reading text, which is omnipresent in every unit. The first task in every unit is a speaking activity, which is referred to as “Discussion Topics” and is used as a warmer. The mix-up in the order of the listed tasks leads to some confusion, as one tends to look for the activities in each unit according to their listed order in the “Map of the book”. The reason for this unusual sequencing is not clear at that point. A further category is “Language Focus”, which contains grammar and vocabulary building activities. It is followed by “Fluency Work”. The expression suggests that this is another speaking activity. The units are of equal length and discrete entities for themselves. They can be regarded as individual and independent modules which can be taught separately.

The appendix of this course book is versatile. It consists of fifteen worksheets that accompany the CNN video sequences, reinforcing the topics covered in each unit. They are followed by an answer key to the Crosschecking and Language Focus exercises in the individual units. As expected, one can also find a transcript of the listening texts and a glossary. The glossary is divided into two parts. The first part displays an alphabetical word list with English explanations. The second part of the glossary categorizes the same words into partnerships. A student can, for example look up the word “budget” and will find all the word partnerships that go with it.

Stage four – Methodological considerations

It is easily observable that “New Business Matters” is a Business English course with a lexical approach. The authors claim that at this level it is no longer necessary for the learners to acquire new words, but they need to be able to combine the words they already know into new phrases and expressions (2004: 3). Therefore, they shift the learners’ focus to carefully created texts to make them aware of these word combinations and collocations.

The individual units' structure is consistent and makes up for the slightly chaotic assembling of the "Map of the book". Each unit starts with a warm-up speaking activity. The activity itself is created in a way that motivates students to speak and give their opinions. This is not only due to very interesting topics throughout but also due to quotes or questions that, to some extent, get the students to voice their opinions on the given topic. This activity is followed by a two-page text, which is easy to read but still challenging enough to capture the students' attention. At the end of each text, a vocabulary task crosschecks the students' understanding of various new words. The text is clearly the most important part of each unit. Maybe this is the reason why it is positioned as the first category in the "Map of the book". As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the "Language Focus" mainly concentrates on vocabulary and grammar points. However, one cannot expect ordinary tasks. The exercises strongly rely on the previous text and offer the students another possibility to establish their understanding of lexis and language form. After providing the students with many new words and phrases and after showing them how these words and phrases go together and which expressions are fixed, the students finally get another opportunity for a speaking activity, which is called "Fluency Work". This activity is comparable to a mini-project where students work together in pairs or in small groups. They are given a real-life business situation or a realistic problem and are assigned to different groups. In these groups the students are then expected to come up with a solution for this problem and to present the solution in class.

The objectives of this course book are also clearly noticeable. Each task aims at establishing the students' lexical proficiency, thus allowing them to apply their newly acquired knowledge and, as a result, to achieve a more fluent and self-confident language.

The topics that are covered in this course book are interesting and vivid. Students may enjoy discussing these topics because they are of general interest. Especially the CNN video segments seem very interesting for students, although they can be challenging because the language used in CNN news broadcasts is at a high level. The journalists usually talk at a fast pace and the topics are quite specialized. Thus, the video segments require all the students' concentration. Then again, most

students succeed in understanding the features, because it is generally easier to understand a spoken text in a foreign language when it is supported by a motion picture.

Stage five – Conclusive remarks

The course book's title *New Business Matters* implies that the learners will be introduced to real-life business situations. The book uses a lexical approach, which means that the students' proficiency in applying Business English terminology is especially focused on. Therefore, it is understood that this course book aims at students at an intermediate level who are already acquainted with business life and the grammatical basics of the English language. At this level, students no longer need to spend time on learning more grammar or vocabulary, but they want to be able to combine the words they already know into sentences and expressions they use in business life.

The course book's authors claim that it is a "fast track to fluency in the special English of business" (2004: 3), helping learners to quickly develop the ability to articulate themselves in Business English at ease. This is especially interesting for higher level Business English students, who typically, due to a lack of time, need to learn a lot in a short period. Whereas other course books were created for Business English courses that meet on a weekly or even daily regular basis, this book is more a collection of different business-related topics that can be used for both a regular course and a shorter seminar. The individual units can also be used separately as additional material to other course books.

New Business Matters also claims to be an authentic course book. The situations presented can be found in real-life and the companies mentioned are all well-known to every learner, such as the Coca-Cola-Company, The Ritz, or Apple. It remains to be seen whether a course book can be regarded as authentic just because it introduces realistic and well-known company names and brands. However, it can be described as genuine, thus motivating for the students because it uses these omnipresent names.

Furthermore, in comparison to the other course books evaluated in this paper, *New Business Matters* is the only one which focuses on the cultural aspect in such an extensive manner. Although it particularly contains two units on the cultural point of view, it succeeds in incorporating this issue in every unit. The unit on “Corporate Entertaining” deals – unsurprisingly – with entertaining visitors. The Language Focus and the Fluency Work both draw on the topic of describing food and taking guests out for a business lunch. It is understandable that this topic is often used by course books in order to address cultural diversity. However, since virtually every course book uses this particular topic for the same reason in every level of proficiency, it would be desirable to find a different topic on cultural diversity in a course book.

Based on the above analysis, one can definitely recommend this course book for short seminars addressing specific topics. However, it is not necessarily the most appropriate book, if a teacher is looking for a teaching aid for an entire long-term course.

7.3. Summary

This chapter has given an account of the most commonly used Business English course books in the Austrian and German teaching sector, while it by no means provides a comprehensive record of all the course books offered on the market. The above evaluation was designed to assess Business English course books and to determine what course books can and should be offered to provide learners with a rich input of information and skills. Each course book was analyzed according to practical and methodological considerations, which were concluded by an individual evaluation by exploring the overall suitability of each course book for the reported target group. Overall, these findings suggest that General Business English course books should definitely include tasks that can be found in course books targeted at learners of General English. However, they must also consider the students’ needs as regards a specific focus on Business English.

8. Conclusion

This paper has provided an account of and the reasons for the widespread use of Business English course books with a view to finding a number of criteria intended to facilitate the selection of the most appropriate course book for a specific group of learners.

First, an attempt has been made to define the concept of Business English, which has shown that this cannot be done as straightforwardly as one might expect. The reasons are the various learners' needs, resulting in different target groups. As a further step, Business English has been classified into General and Specific Business English. This classification clearly makes it difficult for authors to create a course book that appeals to as many students as possible. After all, there are always financial and economic aspects associated with writing and publishing a course book. Learners' needs have to be met, just as the publishers' ideas of a profitable product have to be met. Most of the Business English course books on the market cater to the needs of General Business English learners. For this reason, this thesis has concentrated on evaluating General Business English course books.

Returning to the hypothesis stated at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that both general and specific English course books can have a number of similarities in terms of their methodology. At the same time, one has to bear in mind the target group of Business English courses and these learners' needs. This is where the two genres can differ.

A course book must meet a number of criteria, in order to legitimately claim the title of Business English. First and foremost, it should correspond to the learners' needs. In this context, it is crucial for the teacher to know the difference between General and Business English. Many Business English learners decide for a Business English course, rather than a General English course, expecting better opportunities on the job market. They definitely need to be taught the basic grammar of English. Therefore, authors of a Business English course book must cover the basic structures of the language. However, they should always keep their target group in mind, catering to the specific requirements of Business English learners as opposed

to General English learners. Furthermore, a competitive course book should always strive for a balance in the basic methodological concepts and approaches. Finally, Business English course books should have a clear role as a support for learning. It may well be the case that Business English courses have to be short and compact in order to fit into the learners' business schedules. Therefore, a course book, specifically created for Business English customers, needs to allow them to study individual units at their own pace, which is why these units should be self-explanatory.

From this study it is apparent that the perfect Business English course book for every teacher and every student does not and cannot exist. After all, the learners' needs are as diverse as the number of course books offered on the market. It is true that a teacher will often have to make a compromise when choosing a course book and it is also true that supplementary materials will have to be provided in order to achieve a satisfactory result for the students. Nevertheless, a well-organized and structured course book can, in fact, greatly assist teachers in supporting their students.

The findings of this thesis add to a growing body of literature on evaluating ELT course books, particularly those on ESP. Even though the methods used are tailored to the evaluation of Business English course books, especially published for the Austrian and German market, they may also be applied to other ELT course book evaluations in other countries.

Finally, a number of limitations need to be acknowledged. The most important limitation is the fact that, due to logistic reasons, the current study was unable to evaluate all Business English course books on the market. Therefore, the evaluation was restricted to those five course books the author of this thesis is most familiar with.

Moreover, the research has highlighted a number of questions in need of further investigation. First, the study was limited to the teachers' point of view. Thus, in order to obtain a comprehensive view of the applicability of the evaluated course books in the Business English classroom, the students' opinions should also be taken into consideration. This can be done by an especially created questionnaire that covers

items on the learners' specific needs. A further study can be carried out on the cross-cultural aspect in English Language Teaching and Learning. The importance of this area is undoubtedly well-known to many researchers, teachers, and students. And a lot of research has already been carried out. This can be seen from the fact that the cross-cultural topic has found its way into ELT course books. However, there is a great need for further investigations in this area, which will hopefully lead to a greater variety on the way this topic is addressed in the various course books.

The findings in this paper suggest that there are a plethora of Business English course books on the market. It is the teachers' responsibility to select the most appropriate course book for their learners, bearing all the different aspects and criteria in mind. It is a challenging task, but in the end, it is also rewarding for all parties involved.

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Abstract

Evaluating English Business Course Books With a Specific Focus on Austrian Adult Learners

Recent developments of English language teaching have shown an increasing interest in English for Specific Purposes, especially in Business English, due to the increasing global nature of English.

The aim of this paper was to critically evaluate a number of Business English course books aimed at Austrian adult learners by exploring in how far they cater to students' needs. The paper was divided into four parts. The first part was meant to briefly introduce the meaning of English for Specific Purposes by comparing and contrasting it to English for General Purposes. The second part examined the learners' needs and what English teachers should look for in Business English course books. This has naturally lead to a closer examination of the methodology of course books in the third part, exploring the most effective teaching approaches for Business English. In the final part, the paper focuses on the individually chosen course books and evaluates them according to the previously mentioned criteria.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from this paper is that both general and specific English course books can have a number of similarities in terms of their methodology and that the perfect Business English course book for every teacher and every student does not and cannot exist. This is due to the plethora of course books on the market and the uncountable differences in the students' needs. However, a well-organized and well-structured course book can nevertheless assist teachers in supporting their students. It is the teachers' responsibility to select the most appropriate course book to cater to their students' needs. This research paper is meant to add to a growing body of literature on Evaluating English course books.

Abstrakt

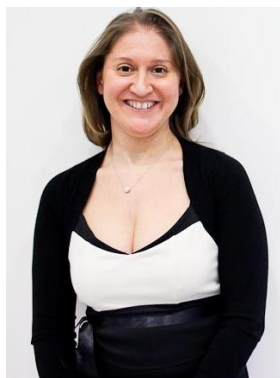
Die Evaluierung englischer Wirtschaftskursbücher mit einem speziellen Augenmerk auf erwachsene Lernende im deutschsprachigen Raum

Durch die neuesten Entwicklungen im englischsprachigen Unterricht ist ein erhöhtes Interesse an Englischunterricht für spezielle Bedürfnisse, vor allem jedoch auf Wirtschaftsenglisch, feststellbar. Dies kann man vor allem auf die wachsende Rolle des Englischen in einer globalisierten Welt zurück führen.

Das Ziel dieser Diplomarbeit war eine kritische Evaluierung einer ausgewählten Anzahl an englischsprachigen Wirtschaftskursbüchern, die speziell auf die Bedürfnisse des österreichischen Markts für Erwachsenenbildung ausgerichtet sind. Fokus der Evaluierung war die didaktische Eignung der Bücher für diese spezielle Zielgruppe. Die Arbeit besteht aus vier Teilen: im ersten Teil wurde der Unterschied zwischen Englisch für spezielle Bedürfnisse im Vergleich zu Englisch für allgemeine Bedürfnisse herausgearbeitet. Der zweite Teil beschäftigt sich mit den Bedürfnissen der Lernenden und den Aspekten, die die Englischlehrer bei der Auswahl von wirtschaftsenglischen Kursbüchern beachten sollen. Dies führte im dritten Teil zu einer detaillierten Untersuchung der in den Kursbüchern angewandten Methodik um die effizientesten Herangehensweisen an das Lehren von Wirtschaftsenglisch dar zu stellen. Der letzte Teil der Diplomarbeit evaluierte eine ausgewählte Anzahl von Kursbüchern anhand der in den vorhergehenden Kapiteln dargestellten Kriterien.

Die herausragendsten Ergebnisse waren auf der einen Seite, dass es bei Englisch für allgemeine Bedürfnisse sowie bei Englisch für spezielle Bedürfnisse eine Reihe von Parallelen in Bezug auf die Methodik gibt. andererseits wurde festgestellt, dass es ein für alle Lehrer und Lernende gleichermaßen gut geeignete Wirtschaftsenglisch Kursbuch nicht gibt und auch nicht geben kann. Dies liegt am hohen Angebot an Kursbüchern und den unüberschaubaren Bedürfnissen der Lernenden. Nichts desto Trotz kann ein gut strukturiertes und aufgebautes Kursbuch den Lehrern dabei helfen ihre Lernenden zu unterstützen. Es liegt in der Verantwortung der Lehrer jenes Kursbuch aus zu wählen, das am Besten den Bedürfnissen der Lernenden nach kommt. Diese Diplomarbeit reiht sich damit in die Vielzahl an Literatur zum Thema der Evaluierung von englischen Kursbüchern ein.

Lebenslauf



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