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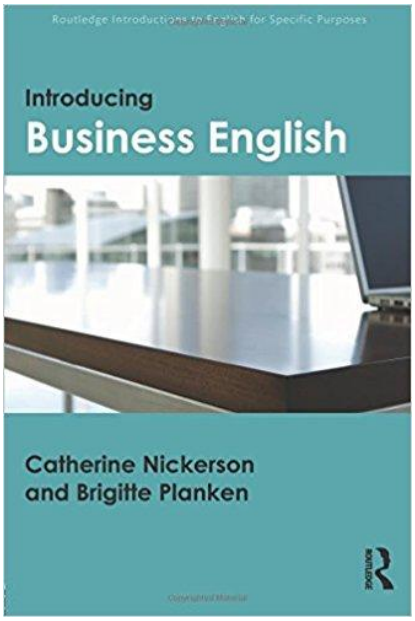
BOOK REVIEW



BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE REAL BUSINESS WORLD AND THE BUSINESS ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Catherine Nickerson and Brigitte Planken. INTRODUCING BUSINESS ENGLISH (2016), London/New York: Routledge. 172 pp., ISBN 978-13-801631-6 (PBK).

The current status of English as an international language is mainly the result of the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the last century (Crystal, 2002). According to Neeley (2012: 1), "[m]ore and more multinational companies are mandating English as the common corporate language [...] in an attempt to facilitate communication and performance across geographically diverse functions and business endeavors". As a consequence, business professionals around the world need to learn English in order to develop their intercultural skills in business-related environments. Business English plays a relevant role within the field of English for Specific Purposes and covers a wide range of learning contexts: from courses to adults working or preparing to work in business settings, general Business English courses, courses designed for employees in a specific company and courses on specific skills (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1996). Despite the fact that a large number of Business English materials, resources, dictionaries and textbooks have been designed, research shows that "their contents bore little relevance to authentic workplace written and spoken English" (Bargiela & Zhang, 2013: 197).

This is precisely one of the main objectives of this book: to explore how business communication research can be incorporated into the Business English

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classroom. *Introducing Business English* is divided into five parts. Part 1 consists of two chapters. Chapter 1 provides a definition of Business English and highlights its importance as a first, second and foreign language. It relates the teaching of Business English to the research field of English for Specific Purposes and depicts its landmark publications. Next, it describes the progress of the field from studies focused on the Anglo-Saxon business world to global business interactions between native and non-native speaker participants, and introduces the concepts of "intertextuality" and "interdiscursivity". Chapter 2 emphasizes the importance of International Business English and Business English as a Lingua Franca because Business English interactions may include native and non-native speakers. It even suggests that the presence of English native speakers in multilingual interactions can cause difficulties for participants who do not speak English as a first language. Next, it focuses on how business professionals communicate effectively in order to achieve work-related objectives and stresses the need to bridge the gap between international business practices and the Business English classroom.

Part 2 deals with spoken Business English and contains three chapters. Chapter 3 introduces general issues related to spoken Business English and describes its main features. Next, it notes the importance of performing research that is based on real language data and particularly underlines the potential contributions of discourse and genre-based studies as they relate to three main types of business talk – meetings, negotiations and service encounters. Chapter 4 stresses the relevance of intercultural communication in business meetings and negotiations and explains how recent investigations have moved their focus from the problems associated with intercultural communication to the description of different strategies that lead to successful communication – e.g. relational and accommodation strategies. Chapter 5 considers the difficulties of translating spoken Business English research findings into teaching practice. It states that spoken English is more spontaneous than written English and, consequently, more difficult to describe from a genre approach. Nevertheless, it examines the work of three researchers who analyze spoken business genres from an English for Specific Purposes approach and offer recommendations for teaching spoken Business English.

Part 3 is devoted to written Business English. Chapter 6 looks at the main characteristics of written business documents and the main approaches taken in their research. It illustrates how business professionals create texts and introduce discriminative moves that enable the readers to recognize a particular text type. It describes the different levels at which a written text can be analyzed in order to be considered a genre and examines several studies that observe genre variation across different cultures. Chapter 7 explores the processes involved in producing business texts and identifies the skills the students need to develop in order to create different documents. Next, it studies reader response to the use of Business English as a Lingua Franca and considers how to translate this information into teaching. Chapter 8 provides suggestions for teaching written Business English. It

outlines the work of several researchers who investigate written communication in authentic business situations and incorporate their findings into the classroom. Next, it describes how people respond to written Business English texts. Last, it highlights the importance of computer-mediated communication and how it demands a more relevant role in Business English courses.

Part 4 is focused on the modern business world. Chapter 9 deals with the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity in Business English. It describes the relationship between written and spoken texts and identifies different types of intertextuality. Next, it explains the connection between professional discourse, corporate activities carried out by the professional community and the context. Thus, it concludes that teaching isolated language skills in the Business English classroom does not reciprocate the multimodal nature of business interactions. Chapter 10 focuses on the new media and its impact on business communication processes. It acknowledges the need for students to become familiar with social media platforms and encourages their use in the classroom. Last, it provides examples of task-based activities and stresses the need to use multiple and interrelated media and communication forms that reflect the complexity of the business world.

The last three chapters in Part 5 look at teaching approaches and course and material design. Chapter 11 describes some approaches used in English for Specific Purposes which could be adapted to the teaching of Business English. It explains how these approaches enable students to learn not only Business English, but also communication and work-related skills. It provides examples of project-based learning, team-teaching and blended learning within different learning contexts that mirror real business communication environments. Chapter 12 deals with the design of Business English teaching materials for different groups of learners and discusses the three main approaches of English for Specific Purposes – needs analysis surveys, communication audits, and corpus-based approaches. Next, it considers how these approaches have been used to design Business English teaching materials and notes that the testing of Business English should respond to the needs of different teaching contexts. Chapter 13 provides a wide range of additional Business English resources: books and textbooks, journals, professional associations, conferences and workshops, corpora and online teaching resources.

This book offers an exhaustive overview of Business English research and its implementation in the classroom. It emphasizes the idea that research findings should inform teaching. Special emphasis is placed on the use of authentic spoken and written Business English and the close relationship between these forms of communication. The book also highlights the importance of multi-tasking and multi-communication. Students should be exposed to complex tasks and activities which involve a variety of different business genres. The activities proposed should raise learners' awareness of the characteristics of everyday communication at the workplace. The practical tasks provided in each chapter enable readers to think over new ideas which would enhance their teaching. This volume is intended

not only for Business English students, but also for Business English teachers who aim to reproduce communicative situations pertaining to the real business world in their courses.

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Reviewed by **MARÍA VÁZQUEZ-AMADOR**
Department of English Philology
University of Cádiz
Spain
maria.vazquez@uca.es

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