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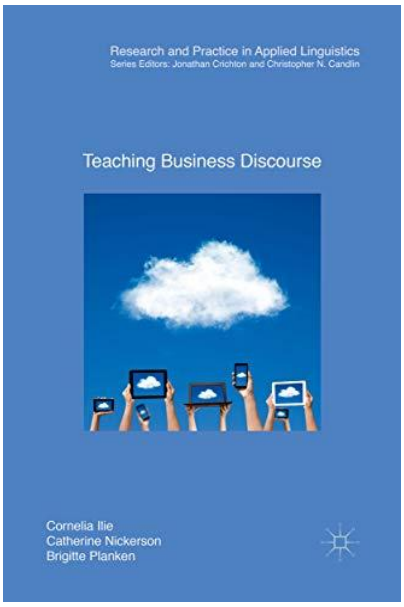
BOOK REVIEW



A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR BUSINESS DISCOURSE TEACHERS

Cornelia Ilie, Catherine Nickerson and Brigitte Planken. TEACHING BUSINESS DISCOURSE (2019), Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. 197 pp., ISBN-978-3-319-96474-4.

The overriding need for researching into teachers' approaches to Business course design has led to the emergence of several studies strengthening the link between English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching and research (Koester, 2010).

Prior to this volume, Catherine Nickerson and Brigitte Planken had set their focus on research-based Business Discourse teaching (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, & Planken, 2013) and explored how Business communication research could be incorporated into the Business English classroom (Nickerson & Planken, 2016). Also, Bargiela-Chiappini, one of their coauthors, had already published *The Handbook of Business Discourse* in 2009, an enriching volume for researchers interested in different perspectives regarding the discourse used in organizational and professional contexts.

In line with these studies, other scholars have identified Business Discourse as a key term to consider when understanding Business English as a variety of ESP, and highlighted the interdisciplinarity of the concept (Minodoraotilia, 2014). Other researchers have focused on the significant role of speech studies disciplines in the teaching of Business Discourse (Gennadyevna, Mikhailovna, & Vadimovich, 2015). Discourse analysis is also present in the work of scholars who have drawn attention to its appropriateness when showing students a critical point of view from which to analyze previous Business English teaching models (Bass, 2014).

More recent studies emphasize the usefulness of Discourse Analysis when dealing with the problems ESP teachers face when teaching Business English to students who are expected to deal with professional discourse in their future (Gabets, 2019).

Teaching Business Discourse is a volume aimed at vividly depicting the past, present and future of the experience of implementing teachers' strategies for training students in Business Discourse. The book is structured into four main parts: the first one is mainly intended to provide a detailed definition of the concept of Business Discourse Teaching, in addition to its implications and approaches; the second one is devoted to research and Client-Based as well as Consultancy-Based Projects, apart from dealing with the materials to be used in Business Discourse Teaching; part III focuses on a more classroom-based analysis of the main concept to tackle – in particular, learning outcomes, teachers' thoughts and case studies are examined in this section. The last part of the book offers guidelines on the resources available for Business Discourse teachers to use in class. All chapters contain an introductory list of contents to be covered, highlighted sections with clarifying information, examples and literature review, as well as a summarizing section, case studies, tasks and references, all of which make each chapter a remarkably complete piece of work.

The notion of Business Discourse Teaching referred to throughout the whole volume is defined in the first chapter. Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, and Planken's (2013) description of the concept is identified as the one which will be applied in this study, intended to denote all forms of communication found in commercial contexts and having the clear objective of undertaking a workplace task. The progress of the concept is analyzed at this point by examining a set of researchers' views on their Business Discourse Teaching-related experience in the classroom. Particularly, Evans's (2012) and Chan's (2017) studies are discussed as being two examples of how ESP researchers and teachers are used to dealing with Business Discourse. Genre analysis is also acknowledged as a predominant approach to Business Discourse, as it has been traditionally focused on work-related texts so as to examine their structure. Written texts are preferred in this research approach. Critical Discourse Analysis, which is said to emphasize the relationship between the writer and the addressee, is the third approach under consideration; however, the authors observe certain kind of difficulty in applying this critical approach in class, as opposed to ESP and Genre analysis. Regarding Organizational Rhetoric, the next approach to mention, it is argued that researchers are rather interested in concentrating on how to use communication in order to persuade others to perform a specific task. Finally, Multimodal Discourse Analysis is acknowledged as a recently developed method which is expected to become more convenient and particularly successful in computer-mediated communication. Multimodality is designed for studying external corporate communication.

The second and third chapters of part I comprise the future of Business Discourse teachers as well as researchers are to face in the upcoming years. New media and digital technologies, internationalization in the business languages used

in corporate communication or the development of a digital and multicultural workplace are highlighted as key factors that have an impact on the Business Discourse classroom. Following this first focus on teaching, research approaches influencing Business Discourse Teaching are explored. These include ESP, Genre analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Organizational Rhetoric and Multimodal Discourse Analysis.

Part II starts with considering some of the most helpful ways of incorporating Business Discourse research into the classroom. The authors examine research principles which can help teachers develop a needs analysis for their lessons and Client-based projects are the first formula to be explored. Healey's (2005) representation of the link between curriculum design and research-teaching nexus is claimed as a matrix that symbolizes an interconnection among different approaches and proves to be key in the design of effective teaching programmes. After that, Consultancy-based business discourse projects are put forward as a method of studying real and authentic language in use (Contero Urgal, 2019) and meeting learners' real workplace needs. In this context, ELAN (CILT, the National Centre for Languages, 2006) is used as an example of a European Union commissioned project designed for investigating the business and trade language used in two thousand companies across Europe. The last chapter in this second part of the volume contains a more eminently practical and teacher-focused analysis on the available materials to be used in Business Discourse Teaching. The importance of this section stems from the description not only of the number of published materials on offer based on Business Discourse research, but also from a framework on how to evaluate their convenience for teaching in this context.

The third part of the book is divided into three chapters that present the profile of the students and teachers taking part in the Business Discourse classroom, in addition to a set of particular case studies designed for business discourse learners. The authors open this second half of their book by pointing out the significance of identifying the learner types that teachers will be meeting in their lessons. In order to highlight the range of classifications that can be done, the authors mention four precise examples: pre-experience business students, pre-experience communication students, post-experience call centre employees, and post-experience multinational employees. Needs analysis as well as an evaluation of the kind of learner to teach in each context are crucial to effective Business Discourse Teaching design. The subsequent section deals with learning outcomes and their assessment. Finally, certain business professions are discussed so as to illustrate the importance of bearing in mind that Higher Education students might be immersed in Business Discourse Teaching as a means of gaining access to the labor market. As regards the second chapter of part III, a collection of interviews are analyzed as an instrument to share teachers' viewpoints on their experience. The renowned scholars chosen as interviewees are taken not only as model teachers to comment on their views, but also as researchers and consultants who can offer an enriching perspective on their Business Discourse practice. On this

occasion, Cornelia Ilie, Catherine Nickerson, and Brigitte Planken are the interviewers of those selected scholars. Part III closes with an account of the exploitation of case studies in Business Discourse Teaching by studying three particular contexts that cover all topics that have been examined in the volume.

Finally, part IV contains one single chapter fully committed to producing a guide on the existing resources that can be found in the field of Business Discourse Teaching. These resources comprise books, journals, professional associations, conferences and workshops as well as post-graduate training schemes for teachers involved in business and professional discourse.

The immense value of *Teaching Business Discourse* lies in its three main characteristics: the first key genuine interest of this book can be found in the combination of research and teaching focuses as two sides of the same coin. Business Discourse teachers are inherently asked to carry out certain kind of research-based tasks. Understanding the close link between business discourse teaching and business discourse research is an essential responsibility for course designers, who can definitely find a source of inspiration in this volume. Secondly, it is crucial to highlight the practical perspective adopted in the book, which is present from start to finish. A wide range of hands-on experience instances delightfully illustrate the research-based approaches to course design aimed at achieving Business Discourse learning objectives. Teachers are thus helped to manage the Business Discourse classroom by means of facing the experience of other scholars in addition to the analysis of the profile of their particular group of students. The third (among others) outstanding feature of this publication is its multidisciplinary value. Being a highly interesting book for ESP teachers to enrich their knowledge on how to manage a business discourse lesson, it can also be a useful source of information for bilingual and plurilingual education stakeholders. The variety of case studies examined in the book offers an enriching set of illustrating instances which can be applied to the design of teaching approaches in which the teaching of business and language learning are planned to be integrated – that is, in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). *Teaching Business Discourse* is an undoubtedly engaging book for teachers, researchers and other Higher Education stakeholders in this teaching and research field.

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