

ABOUT THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF TEACHING BUSINESS ENGLISH

Some EFL teachers may feel intimidated when faced with the prospect of teaching Business English. This is generally because they are concerned that their possible lack of business experience or knowledge about the world of business will be exposed and they will be made to feel inadequate as a result. This concern is often based on the misconception that teaching Business English means teaching Business Studies to learners of English. While in some cases this may be true (pre-service Business Studies courses, for example, where teachers will need to present business concepts and business terminology), a large number of students of Business English are people who are already working in business within their own linguistic environment and who wish, for a number of reasons, to be able to function in their business role in English too. The teacher's role in this second case is not to present business concepts to the learners or to instruct them how to conduct their business. On the contrary, it is to enable such learners to develop their language skills within a business context. Teachers of Business English are first and foremost teachers of English. Where teaching Business English differs from teaching General English will normally be in the choice of contexts for listening and reading texts and in the choice of lexis in grammar and vocabulary exercises, where examples such as "We have just received the invoice" will replace "We have just seen Peter". In addition to such linguistic considerations, there are a number of affective factors that relate to teaching in-service Business English. In many cases learners will be in positions of authority and influence within their company. As such they will often expect their teacher to be informed and experienced and may react badly to someone who is noticeably younger or badly dressed. Similarly, asking learners to give a presentation about their particular product, their company or their current research will also be a highly focused activity, where the teacher can both give guidance at the preparation stage and feedback on performance. A particularly effective general approach for the teacher is to see this kind of teaching as both a teaching and a learning process for the teacher, where a great deal of interesting information about a wide range of business processes can be acquired. In the final analysis, it is important not to be intimidated by the status and professions of the learners but rather to establish the kind of teacher – learner relationship where both sides are recognized as experts – the learners as experts in their particular field of expertise and the teacher as an expert in the field of language teaching and as an indispensable source of linguistic information.

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