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Report on Business English:
A Review of Research and
Published Teaching Materials

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THE CHAUNCEY GROUP INTERNATIONAL™

REPORT ON BUSINESS ENGLISH:

A REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND PUBLISHED TEACHING MATERIALS

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SUMMARY

This report provides a critical review and evaluation of literature on Business English for Foreign or Second Language users as represented by research findings in academic articles and dissertations (Part 1). It also contains an examination and evaluation of current published teaching materials with worldwide circulation (Part 2).

In Part 1, the review of research covers five areas: needs analysis, linguistic analysis, discourse and genre analysis, communication skills and cross-cultural awareness. In Part 2, teaching materials have been divided into four main types: business communication skills, business contexts, English language, and business methodologies.

The report shows that there has been relatively little research into Business English and that there is a mismatch between the areas covered by research and those featured in teaching materials. Thus, much of the research has been based on written communications, while the focus of most teaching is the spoken language. As an international language, English is used in both native to non-native and non-native to non-native speaker interactions. Little account is taken of this in the research.

The report also identifies two distinct areas of Business English: English for General Business Purposes and English for Specific English Purposes. The former is targeted more at those with low levels of English or pre-experience and follows the constructs of General English as a Foreign Language Teaching, covering grammar, lexis and functions within broad business contexts. The latter is targeted at those with business experience, usually with at least an intermediate level of language, and may be focused on business communication skills, specific business disciplines or both. It adds constructs from the fields of management and human-resource training to language-learning constructs.

Business English is currently an area of rapid growth with increasing demand for teaching, teachers and materials. It is noted that the underlying business culture is that of Western Europe and the United States of America and that in the present world situation, this is not always appropriate.

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PREFACE

The Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) was introduced in December, 1979, as the result of a cooperative effort between Educational Testing Service (ETS), the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry and International Communications Incorporated. ETS, a not-for-profit private corporation located in Princeton, New Jersey, USA, is a leading center for educational and psychometric research in the United States, and develops and administers a variety of tests. Some of the more commonly known ETS-developed tests for academic admission include the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

TOEIC® was developed by ETS to measure English-language proficiency needed for practical use in the professional world. Organizations use TOEIC to evaluate the skill levels of their employees for purposes such as hiring, assignment to overseas posts, for training, or for promotion to positions requiring English.

Originally administered in Japan, TOEIC has now become an international standard for measuring English proficiency, and is used throughout Asia, Europe and the Americas. In 1995 the test was administered to more than 934,000 people in more than 2,000 public and private organizations around the world.

To ensure that the program continues to apply the most up-to-date techniques and to provide the best possible service to users, a program of research related to the TOEIC test was established in October 1993 under the direction of the TOEIC Research Committee. The Research Committee is made up of two panels: an advisory panel drawn from human resources managers representing organizations that TOEIC serves and a technical panel made up of experts in the field of second-language teaching and applied linguistics.

Under the guidance of the advisory panel, the technical panel was charged with three main tasks:

(i) creating a long-term research agenda for the TOEIC program
(ii) implementing this agenda by calling for proposals, evaluating proposals received, recommending proposals for funding, and reviewing and approving research reports
(iii) providing general guidance and linguistic expertise to the TOEIC program and to researchers working on TOEIC projects

Since TOEIC is designed to be a test of International English, and since it is used primarily by businesses involved in international trade, the technical panel felt that one of its first tasks was to clarify what International English is and what Business English is, and to form some synthesis of current thinking on these constructs. This was intended to help focus the research agenda on relevant issues, to provide guidance to researchers working on research projects and to furnish some basis for evaluating whether TOEIC is consistent with current thinking in linguistics. To that end, the technical panel commissioned two reviews of the academic literature.

Leading scholars in the fields of international English and business English, were asked to provide a critical review of the field, including, where appropriate, research findings, theoretical work and any applied use of these in such form as teaching materials. The reviewers were asked to give special attention to any points they felt would be particularly relevant to a test of these constructs.

The Business English literature review that follows is one of two reviews produced as a result of this endeavor. In recognition of the potential value of this work to language instructors and educators beyond the scope of TOEIC research, this volume is published to proved access to the insights here contained to TOEIC users around the world and to the public.

Special acknowledgement is due to Dr. Ulla Connor of Indiana University in Indianapolis and to Dr. Makhan Lal Tickoo of the Regional Language Centre in Singapore for their comments and recommendations to the authors on an earlier draft of this review.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BESIG	Business English Special Interest Group
BMS	Business Management Series
CPE	Cambridge Proficiency Examination
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EBP	English for Business Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes
EPP	English for Professional Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
EST	English for Science and Technology
ICC	International Certificate Conference
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers
LBES	Longman Business English Series
LCCI	London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LIT	Language and Intercultural Training
LTP	Language Teaching Publications
LTP	Language Training Services
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate

INTRODUCTION

Business English is a rapidly growing field within the area of English Language Teaching and English for Specific Purposes. It is a straightforward term that is widely used and readily understood by practitioners, but its generality can lead to confusion (Johnson, 1993, Pickett, 1986 and 1989 and Johns, 1986). The term can be used to describe courses that range from an essentially English for General Purposes course that includes the teaching of some business lexis, to very specific courses, either in particular skills such as participating in or chairing meetings or report writing, or in particular disciplines such as finance or marketing.

In this report we will attempt to define Business English. We will do this by reference to published research in the area and through the analysis of textbooks, aiming in particular at establishing the construct of Business English that informs these textbooks. The report will be divided into two major sections: Part 1 will deal with published research into both the linguistic and skills **needs** of business people and reports on various investigations of the various spoken and written **genres** used in business communication. It will also examine evidence of current developments provided by **case studies** written by practising teachers of Business English in journals such as the BESIG Newsletter (the newsletter of the Business English Special Interest group of IATEFL) or Language and Intercultural Training (a journal published by Language Training Services). Part 2 will analyse trends in those published **textbooks** that have worldwide circulation.

PART 1: RESEARCH

1.0 DEFINITION

We see Business English as a branch of ESP in that it "requires the careful research and design of pedagogical materials and activities for an identifiable group of adult learners within a specific learning context" (Johns and Dudley-Evans, 1991) and is "designed to meet specified needs of the learner" (Strevens, 1988). Most definitions of ESP (e.g. Robinson, 1991; Strevens, 1988; Munby, 1978; Johns and Dudley-Evans, 1991) use ESP an as umbrella term that embraces two key areas, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). EAP has until recently been the area of greatest activity and refers to the language and skills required by non-native speakers for the purposes of study, usually at tertiary level. In a sense EOP constitutes the rest of ESP, taking in any work-related English language courses. This may include courses for managers, courses for technicians or very specific task-related courses for unskilled workers. In the United States a distinction is usually made between courses for managers and courses for specific occupations. The latter are generally referred to as **Vocational ESL** (Crandall, 1984). Reference is also made to **English for Professional Purposes** (Lomperis, personal communication), which refers to specific courses run for managers in the areas of both business and technology.

The term Business English does not fit neatly into these categories (Johnson, 1993; Pickett, 1986 and 1989). It deals largely with adult learners either working or preparing to work in a business context, but may also include academic Business English required by students following, for example, an MBA course or a course in Finance, Accounting or Banking. We see Business English as an umbrella term used similarly, to the term English for Specific Purposes to embrace both general courses in the appropriate lexis and grammar for business communication. It also describes more specific work, either for carefully selected homogeneous groups from one company, or in specific skills such as running or participating in meetings, negotiations, writing letters, memos or reports. In the same way EAP can be divided into English for General Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP), it would be appropriate to divide Business English into courses in English for General Business Purposes and English for Specific Business Purposes. We therefore reject the tendency among some practitioners to use the term Business English to refer only to the more common-core, nonspecific work and to refer to the specific work as ESP.

We also see the term Business English as referring to the teaching of non-native speakers who need English for business purposes, usually working in a company at managerial level and needing to communicate in English with either native speakers or other ESL speakers with whom they do not share a first language. It is thus distinct from the teaching of communication skills related to business for native speakers. There is, however, much in common, as there is between the teaching of English for Academic Purposes to international students and the teaching of communication and study skills to native speakers. But there is a clear and important difference in focus between a Business English course that concentrates on both language and skills relevant to communication among different companies[1] and a business communication course for native speakers that will focus largely on skills relevant to communication within the company and with the general public, as well as among companies.

We can also draw a distinction between a Business English course designed for learners actually working in a company and an academic Business English course designed for international students following an English medium business course, usually at MBA level. This report will concentrate exclusively on Business English for those in work, as there is as yet very little research on academic business English, with the exception of Charles (1984), Connor and Kramer (1995) and Houghton (in press). Our focus is thus similar to that adopted by Yli-Jokipii (1994: 36), who focuses on "corporate language, organizational language and managerial language."

All discussions of Business English reflect on the paucity of research in the area (Johnson, 1993; Kennedy, Dudas & Hewings, 1993; Robinson, 1991). It will become apparent in this report that there is also a mismatch between the results of needs analysis and the focus of published textbooks on the one

[1]The assumption is that communication *within* a particular national company will be done in the national language. Thus an Indonesian company, for example, will need Business English for communication with other international companies, but will use Bahasa Indonesian for communication within the company and with other Indonesian companies.

hand, and the published research in the area of Business English on the other. Those needs analyses that have been published all point to the importance of spoken skills and genres, and the published textbooks we have investigated reflect this bias in favour of the spoken mode. The published research, on the other hand, concentrates to a much greater extent on written text and on the skills of written communication. The reason for this is clear. It is extremely difficult to obtain data for the analysis of spoken genres. The relatively easier access to written text, and its very "portability," (Myers, 1989) make it much more attractive and straightforward for the analyst. Nonetheless, the absence of substantive research in the oral skills and genres and the reliance on intuition or informed understanding for the preparation of materials has hampered Business English (see, for example, Williams, 1988).

In this report we will summarise published research (Part 1) under two main headings: needs analysis and text analysis, using the term "text" broadly to include both spoken and written text. We can divide text analysis into four main categories. The first has been referred to as Register Analysis (Johnson, 1993), but, given the potential confusion associated with that term, we will refer to it as Linguistic Analysis, using that term to cover sentence-level aspects of grammar and lexis. The second, broadly, is discourse analysis, looking at patterns of organisation above the level of the sentence. This category will be used to encompass both studies of cohesion, turn-taking and genre analysis in which the communicative purpose and linguistic features of the key genres are investigated. The third is the work related to communication skills for business people; this work is designed for native speakers and, therefore, is not strictly part of Business English, but contains much of relevance to it. The fourth is cross-cultural communication, which examines the question of whether failure in communication results from weakness in the language or failure to take into account different cultural perceptions of ways to conduct business. In Part 2 we will discuss the relevance of this research to the teaching and preparation of materials and the ways in which the research is reflected in the materials.

1.1 NEEDS ANALYSIS

Needs analysis is a defining feature of ESP. In the area of Business English, where many courses are tailor-made to meet participants' needs, it has a vital role. Needs analysis may indeed be even more fundamental to Business English than to English for Science and Technology, as learners' needs may vary much more. The methods of needs analysis need not concern us for long, but mention should be made of Pilbeam's Language Audit (1979). Pilbeam suggests that needs analysis should be concerned with establishing both a "target profile of language skills," which sets down the actual activities that the participants have to carry out, and "a profile of personal ability" in which the participants' proficiency in these activities is evaluated. Such a language audit is particularly relevant to in-company Business English and enables the person conducting the audit to decide how many hours of language tuition is required to bridge the gap between the two profiles.

Inevitably, the results of such Language Audits usually remain unpublished and are regarded as confidential by the companies who commission them (Robinson, 1991). But three examples will give an indication of the types of final document produced as a result of the needs analysis, and therefore, of the view of Business English that they follow.

Holden (1993) describes a questionnaire used in Japan to ascertain the types of English language demands faced in participants' jobs. He lists the following "language areas":

- presentations
- negotiations
- telephoning
- writing reports
- writing business letters
- taking part in meetings, trade shows and overseas training
- making sales calls
- entertaining clients or colleagues
- explaining technical processes
- conducting tours of facilities

This provides an interesting list of business activities; it will be noted that of the 10 areas, eight are spoken activities.

Holden's needs analysis is used with companies. The results will vary with the particular companies and course participants, but many such needs analyses are carried out by tertiary-level institutions seeking information to underpin course design for students not yet embarked on a Business career but who need to be prepared for one as part of their academic course. Yin & Wong (1990) list the following Tasks and Skills for accountants. The information was obtained through interviews with practising accountants and lecturers in accounting, many of whom had previously practised as accountants.

Tasks and Skills for Accountants	
Business meetings	Chairing and participating in meetings, writing agendas and minutes
Face-to-face interaction	Disciplining, appraising, getting information, counselling
Business reports	Investigating problems, evaluating alternatives, proposing solutions
Research techniques	Information gathering, drawing up surveys and questionnaires
Graphic aids	Selecting/designing forms to best represent quantitative data
Business memos/letters	Inquiring, informing, selling
Oral presentations	Short individual speeches, team presentations, selling ideas/services

Here there is a greater balance between oral and written activities than in Holden's data, and a concern to integrate the two that seems highly relevant to a tertiary-level course for students following an essentially vocational course.

A similar but much more comprehensive survey of the needs for English in business contexts was carried out by polytechnics in Malaysia where the national language, Bahasa Malay, is the official language and medium of instruction, but English retains a key role in business and industry (Malaysian Polytechnic Survey, n.d.). Questionnaires and structured interviews were used with polytechnic students who had completed their industrial attachment, employers and polytechnic graduates. This survey is the closest in its aims to the ideas of the Language Audit mentioned above in that, as well as listing the tasks required, it assesses the students' actual ability to carry out the tasks. The activities required of students are listed under the four macro-skills of Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing.

It will be useful to list the skills identified under the four skills. It should, however, be noted that speaking is regarded as the most important skill by both employers and graduates (Malaysian Polytechnic Survey: 7).

Language Skills	Problems (Faced by Students/Graduates)	Comments (from Interviews)
Speaking		
Communicative events:		
• speaking to customers	• lack of confidence	• job interviews are in English
• participating in meetings	• inability to find the right phrases	• message is more important than grammar
• handling enquiries	• inability to organize ideas	
• communicating with colleagues and superiors	• pronunciation	
• making and receiving telephone calls		
• answering questions at job interviews		

(Chart continued on page 4)

Language Skills *(continued)*	Problems (Faced by Students/Graduates)	Comments (from Interviews)
Reading		
Communicative events: • reading business letters – letters of enquiry – bank – letters soliciting information – letters from head office to branches • reading reports – sales reports – budget reports – audit reports – monthly reports • reading work manuals • reading memos • newspaper articles • reference material for professional exam	• lack of reading skills • lack of vocabulary	• graduates frequently need to refer to dictionary
Writing		
Communicative events: • writing all the genres listed under reading • messages – telephone messages – intra-office messages • memos • filling in forms	• writing structurally correct sentences • finding the right words or phrases	• use is made of previous examples • use of word-processors has helped with spelling
Listening		
Communicative events: • telephone messages • oral instructions • handling enquiries • understanding lectures at seminars and training programmes	• understanding speaker when he or she speaks fast	• there are fewer problems

It may, however, be insufficient just to find out students' needs. It is also important to establish some of their wants. Rasanen (1991) argues that needs analysis should take account of the students' reasons for taking the course (e.g., promotion), their attitudes to learning languages and the differences in the perceptions that the student and the company have of the student's role in the company. Jones (1991 and 1992) argues that needs analysis has to find ways of showing which needs should be given priority, especially in-house company programmes where there are, in one class, students following different specialties with different needs.

Mention should also be made of the ASEAN—New Zealand English for Business and Technology Project carried out by the Regional Language Centre in Singapore and completed in 1992, which is reported on in Khoo (1994). Part of the project was the establishment of 45 company profiles drawn from Southeast Asia. These profiles provide statistical information on the level of employees' standard of English and the frequency of use in company work of the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, plus translation. It is expected that those consulting the profiles will use them as the basis for more detailed investigation of learners' needs in their own companies.

We believe that these analyses are typical of the many that are carried out but are unavailable beyond the institution in which they are carried out. The in-depth Malaysian investigation is particularly welcome, as it provides the starting point for an informed approach to syllabus design for prework Business English courses run in tertiary-level institutions.

A clear consensus on the relative importance of skills and tasks emerges from these analyses. The first is that the predominant needs are perceived as being in spoken English. The key tasks here are participating in meetings, including negotiations, making and receiving telephone calls mostly related to sales calls and inquiries, and making oral presentations. Other tasks that may at first sight seem more peripheral, such as entertaining and conducting and answering questions at job interviews, are also clearly important. The latter tasks will clearly involve a lot of General English and reinforces Pickett's point that Business English will often be "a lot nearer to the everyday language spoken by the general public than many other segments of ESP" (Pickett 1986: 16).

In the areas of reading and writing, the importance of an awareness of certain key genres will be apparent. The broad macro-genres of letters, memos and reports predominate, but these need to be broken down into more specific genres, such as the various types of letters or reports listed in the Malaysian Polytechnic analysis, before any meaningful analysis can be carried out. It will also be noted that the reading and writing tasks listed in these three analyses are very largely concerned with communication within a company or between companies. Very few relate to communication with the general public. It would appear that this is typical of Business English as a whole, and that there is a contrast here with the focus of many communication skills courses run in North America that give much greater priority to communication with the public and shareholders in companies. This is not to argue that Business English does not ever include communication with the public, but that it will have a lower priority than in courses for native speakers. This point will be explored in more detail in Section 4.

There is a close relationship between the results of these needs analyses and the skills tackled in the various textbooks analyzed in Part 2. This will become clear in the discussion of the materials, but it is now time to consider the actual research that has been published.

1.2 LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

One of the difficulties of Business English is that there is not yet an established common core of business language in the way that there is a relatively well-agreed core of semi-technical lexis and grammar that is widely used in academic scientific and technological subjects and that has formed the basis of EST textbooks (Bates and Dudley-Evans, 1976; Donovan, 1978; Allen and Widdowson, 1974). The very nature of Business English as a "mediating language between the technicalities of particular businesses . . . and the language of the general public" (Pickett 1989: 6) means that there cannot be an easily definable body of lexis and grammar that distinguishes Business English from other varieties of English. Nonetheless, a number of studies have suggested a number of central lexical and grammatical features of Business English. Pickett (1986) lists a number of lexical items that occupy a neutral place between businesses such as *order, invest, invoice* and *turnover*. These lexical items are not in any sense technical, and will be used on occasions in General English, but may appear more frequently in Business English. Pickett also notes that certain more formal items are preferred to the more frequently used General English item; he quotes the preference for *purchase* over *buy* and *overdue* over *late* as examples. Irgl (1987) points out the large range of synonyms that are used to express certain key notions in Business and Economics. He quotes, for example, 60 different expressions used to describe the upward and downward movement of prices.

1.3 DISCOURSE AND GENRE ANALYSIS

In this section we will look at both studies in the area of applied linguistics of cohesion in business writing, turn-taking and topic shift in spoken business discourse, and the rapidly developing work in genre analysis that considers the distinguishing features of key business genres.

1.3.1 Studies of Cohesion

Johns (1980) carried out a detailed analysis of the use of cohesion in business letters, business reports and textbooks concerned with business and economics. Her analysis was based on Halliday and Hasan's system with its five broad categories of cohesive tie: Reference, Ellipsis, Substitution, Conjunction and Lexical Cohesion (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). However, she found very few examples of Ellipsis and Substitution and therefore concentrated on the remaining three categories. Her original aim was to establish whether there were significant differences between the two areas of academic Business English and applied Business English. She found no particular "constellation of features" (Johns, 1980: 36) between these two areas, but interestingly, in view of later work in the area of genre analysis, she did find significant constellations of features in the three broad genres that she investigated. Reports with 79 percent use of lexical cohesion, 6 percent use of conjunction and 14 percent use of references were quite similar to textbooks that had 79 percent use of lexical cohesion, 9 percent use of conjunction and 11 percent use of reference. In letters, the rank order of the three categories of cohesion was similar to that in the reports and textbooks, but the actual percentages were quite different, with 46 percent use of lexical cohesion, 4 percent use of conjunction and 42 percent use of reference. She also noted interesting constellations in the different types of letter. In the lexical cohesion category of *synonym*, sales and adjustment letters both had percentages of 34 percent compared with only 18 percent in the miscellaneous category. She concludes that there is a need to develop an awareness of these features and to teach them as an important aspect of style to business people or students.

Morrow (1989) builds on the work of Johns and compares conjunct use in business news stories and academic journal articles in the area of economics. His use of the term *conjunct* is similar to Johns' use of Halliday and Hasan's *cohesive tie.* He found much higher use of conjuncts in the academic journal articles (taken from the journal *Economic Inquiry*) than in business news stories (taken from the *Wall Street Journal*). He suggests that the difference in use arises from the very nature of the two genres; the writer in the journal article wishes to develop and defend certain ideas of his or her own, while the writer in news story wishes to report certain information in a "factual, objective and depersonalized manner" (Morrow, 1989: 250). Interestingly, this view contrasts with the general perception that it is the journal article that is factual, objective and depersonalized; Morrow shows that the exposition of ideas in the academic article requires careful presentation of the case which, in turn, leads to the need for the use of conjuncts. In the same way as Johns, Morrow argues that his findings have implications for teaching.

Two points arise about these research projects. The first is that both make use of a corpus, albeit a rather small corpus. Johns took 20 letters, 20 reports and 10 pages taken at random from 10 textbooks randomly selected from the business school and economics department book list. Morrow took nine journal articles and 31 business news stories. But the two studies show the potential of the use of corpora, particularly for the investigation of the differences in lexis and grammar (i.e., at the sentence level) between business English texts and other texts. The second is that there would appear to be greater validity in establishing the distinctive linguistic features of key genres in Business communication than in trying to develop a detailed linguistic description of the variety of Business English.

1.3.2 Turn-Taking and Topic Shift in Spoken Discourse

The research on spoken discourse has looked at meetings and drawn on general research into topic shift and the turn-taking system in conversation. Linde (1991) looks at the question of how participants in business meetings manage the change from one agenda item to another. Her data were taken from a small U.S. design company and consisted of one face-to-face meeting of two hours and 30 minutes and three phone meetings totaling one hour and 35 minutes. Linde concentrated on two key strategies: *topic introduction* and *topic closure.* Topic introduction was achieved through a number of resources, specifically *explicit agenda calls, explicit topic proposals, physical introductions of a topic* and *introduction of a topic* *without an explicit marker of its novelty.* Topic introduction can also be achieved through matters arising from outside the context of the meeting (Linde, p. 304-5). Explicit agenda calls occur when one speaker asks another to introduce a topic, such as "What next?" or "So, anything else"? Explicit topic calls state what the next topic is to be, e.g., "On to Q" or "So I'll show my stuff here because . . . this is all kind of straightforward" (Linde, p. 305). Physical topic proposals are nonlinguistic and involve, in Linde's data, fetching, touching or opening a folder.

She found that the resources for topic closure included *preclosing markers* and *explicit topic closings.* Preclosing markers included phrases such as "OK OK" or "Well Well" (Linde, 1991: 302) evaluations of the topic such as "Good for you. I'm glad that that worked well" (Linde, p. 302); reference to work to be done outside the meeting, or body language or other physical actions such as shifting papers or taking out car keys. Explicit closings include phrases such as "OK, that's all I have to say about O," or farewells such as "OK Bye bye." (Linde, 1991: 304).

Linde's meetings were informal in nature and involved two participants who knew each other well and indeed often communicated by telephone. Lenz (1987), on the other hand, analyzed business meetings held in British companies that were formal to the extent that they had a chairperson controlling the meeting. He found that models of both turn-taking (e.g., Sacks et al.) and classroom discourse (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) could account for some of his data, but not for those sections of the data in which one speaker engaged in monologue to put forward a particular point of view on the topic being discussed and used a number of multiunit turns. When an extended turn is used, the speaker assumes the right to maintain the floor for as long as he or she needs to express his or her complex speech act. Once she or he has completed this act, she or he can return the discourse to conversational turn-taking by either nominating another speaker at an appropriate Transition Relevance Place or by stopping talking, thereby allowing another participant, often the chairperson, to self-select.

Micheau and Billmeyer (1987) investigated the differences in strategies used in a discussion of a case study by native speakers and non-native speakers. Their findings are also of relevance to the discussion of cross-cultural differences; but, as they assumed a structure for; the discourse, they will be reported here. They were particularly concerned with:

- transitions from one speaker to another
- successful and unsuccessful strategies for obtaining or ceding the floor
- the distribution and length of turns
- the violation of the norms of the turn taking-system and the repair of those violations

The discussion was in an academic context and thus not totally relevant to business meetings as such. Nonetheless, the results provide pointers for areas of research in actual business meetings. One area in which the interaction was typically academic was in the aspect of obtaining a turn where nomination by the lecturer played a role. This nomination was often in response to a physical bid, e.g., raising a hand or catching his or her eye. However, this aspect actually played a small role, and other aspects that we could expect to find in other nonacademic discussions predominated. The key skill depended on **timing** and **using the rules for predicting transitions** (Micheau & Billmeyer, 1987: 91). Micheau and Billmeyer cite Gumperz (1977) to the effect that the ability to enter a conversation or discussion depends on the ability to predict "transition relevance places" (Gumperz cited in Micheau & Billmeyer, 1987: 91).

Micheau & Billmeyer also note the following points about the interaction:

- Students made efforts to be relevant and succinct (cf. the Grecian maxims)
- Students used what Linde calls "preclosing markers" by repeating or reformulating their last utterance, repeating fillers such as "uh" or "so" and reducing the intensity of delivery (Micheau & Billmeyer, p. 92).
- Students showed a concern for the cohesiveness of the discourse and the solidarity of the group by building on previous points and giving credit to a speaker before attempting to refute the point made by that speaker.

Non-native speakers had the following problems with the above strategies:

- They tended to violate the turn-taking principles by interrupting speakers at inappropriate points.
- They failed to take advantage of the turn allocation possibilities available to them.
- Used turns that were over-long.
- Attempted to enter the discussion through the use of over-elaborate phrases.

We have reviewed five key studies that draw on work in applied linguistics in the area of cohesion and discourse strategies. They have shown that such work is relevant to the study of business communication, but that the question of differences between genres and contexts in which the communication takes place is vital. Thus the contribution of the research in applied linguistics and discourse analysis is rather limited by its concerns with generalized aspects of text and communication. Genre analysis, with its concern with specific aspects of communication and a writer's specific communicative purpose in a text, may prove more fruitful. In the next subsection we review the contribution of the developing field of genre analysis to business English.

1.3.3 Genre Analysis

In this subsection we will be drawing on the work of genre analysts working in the ESP tradition (Swages, 1981 and 1990, Johns, 1986 and Dudley-Evans, 1986 and 1994) rather than the work emerging from the Sydney school (e.g., Martin, 1989, Wignall et al. 1987) which, although of considerable interest, is more related to the school syllabus than adult-level ESP work. The two main advantages of genre analysis for the investigation of Business English texts is that it is concerned with the differences between texts rather than the similarities between them (Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, 1988) and thus provides a tool for developing teaching materials that help business writers develop appropriate skills for all the various different types of spoken and written text that they have to use. This contrasts with discourse analysis as described above which, although interested in genres such as meetings, tends to apply systems of analysis that are based on general conversation or general writing.

Genre analysis has, however, tended to concentrate on written academic text and in particular the academic article. Very little work has been done on business English texts, and even less on spoken texts.

The first question is what needs to be investigated. In business the six most important macro-genres are the spoken events, meetings, presentations and negotiations and the written texts, memos, letters and reports. We feel that genre analysis is, in fact, most useful at a lower level where the text has a clear communicative purpose.[2] Thus we need to investigate different types of letter, such as the letter of inquiry, the letter of complaint, different types of report, etc. Indeed, we would not feel that a letter or a report in itself is a genre. Negotiation does, however, have a clear communicative purpose and can be considered a genre in its own right. An extremely comprehensive list of genres used in business communication is provided by Bucholz (1989: 16) who, in what he refers to as Boston Study, includes the following list of genres as part of an attempt to define the technical writing profession in the United States. He lists the genres to show the extent of writing that a technical writer will undertake, and clearly not of all these will be relevant to a Business English context. The Genres are:

- books
- briefings
- client communications
- documentation
- editorials
- journal articles
- management-status reports
- manuals/guides/instructions
- marketing material such as advertising copy, catalogues, customer release notes, etc.
- newsletters
- online help maintenance
- online help documentation
- proposals
- speeches
- technical bulletins

[2] A genre may be defined as a recognised communicative event with a shared public purpose and with aims mutually understood by the participants. A genre is "within varying degrees of freedom, a structured and standardized communicative event with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their positioning, form and intent." Thus "exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience" (adapted from Swages, 1990)

- technical reports
- test plans
- training materials

A number of these categories are divided into sub-categories. Documentation, for example, is divided into 16 sub-categories, which include application notes, functional specs, procurement documentation, etc.

No equivalent categorization of the spoken genres has been found in the literature. The assumption appears to be that speaking in business contexts consists of meetings, negotiations and presentations, plus the inevitable social interaction that precedes, follows and occasionally interrupts formal spoken interaction.

The analysis of genres relevant to business is extremely piecemeal (Johns, 1986), and much work remains to be done. The investigation of the generic features of spoken interaction is, in particular, patchy. There is an increasing amount of research on the genre of business negotiation, but very little on meetings beyond the discourse analysis reported in the previous section. Ross (1987) did carry out an investigation of one company board meeting (with both native speaker and non-native speaker participants) that was based very closely on Swages' moves for written academic articles. Ross suggests the following five-move pattern for the board meetings (cited in Dudley-Evans, 1989: 76):

1. introducing the field
2. reporting to the meeting (describing work carried out and explaining the current situation)
3. discussion of matters arising out of the report stage
4. decision
5. discussion of future work by:
   5.1 apportioning responsibility
   and/or
   5.2 detailing implementation

These moves, especially 3, 4 and 5, are repeated cyclically.

Ross' model has some potential, especially as he had obtained authentic data in which both native and non-native speakers were involved, but it fails to account for much beyond the structure of the actual tapescript of the meeting. It does not provide an account of how the business status and strategies of the participants affect the discourse of the meeting. The gaps in the research into the language of meetings is emphasized by Williams (1988), who found that there was a serious discrepancy between the language taught in Business English courses concerned with meetings and the actual language used in real meetings. She analysed 30 Business English textbooks published between 1970 and 1982 and found that of 135 exponents taught for functional use in meetings, only seven were actually used in the three one-hour meetings she recorded. The meetings were informal and the participants knew each other well. Her data showed that they used a blunt, more direct approach (i.e., Bald on Record strategies in Brown and Levinson's terms [1987]). For example, the exponents of *disagreement* used most frequently in her data (Williams, 1988: 55) were: (i) *well* + comment (ii) *but* (iii) *yes, but* (five, four and three occurrences respectively, accounting for just under 50 percent of disagreements). None of these exponents was included in the textbooks of that time. She also noted that:

> the speakers' use of language was far more complex than simply realizing function with suitable exponents. There was evidence of care being taken by speakers in selecting strategies and planning their tactics in order to achieve their purpose in the most effective way. Speakers tended to build up arguments and support their information and views in consistent ways. They appeared to exhibit an awareness of the needs of the listeners and of how listeners might react, and select their strategies accordingly. (Williams, 1988: 53)

It is in this area of strategies that the research into business negotiation has developed much extremely interesting and rich data. Negotiation has become the focus of extensive research, both from the point of view of language and discourse and also from the perspective of business and management strategies. Many conferences and workshops within conferences have looked in detail at the language and skills involved in negotiation. The most interesting work has been developed by Lampi (1986) and Charles (1994)[3] who has investigated both native-speaker negotiations carried out in Britain and also one Finnish negotia-

[3]Note that Mirjaliisa **Lampi** (1986) and Mirjaliisa **Charles** (1994) are the same person.

tion carried out by native-speaker Finns in Finland. The strength of her research is that it combines linguistic analysis with analysis of the business relationships involved in the negotiations.[4] She bases her study on six working hypotheses (Charles, 1994: 4-5):

- Business negotiation discourse is dependent upon, and becomes meaningful through, the business relationship within which it is produced.
- As the key to understanding business discourse thus lies in an understanding of the business relationship within which the discourse is produced, research attention should be focused on identifying and structuring those parameters of business relationships that have a bearing on negotiation interaction and rhetoric.
- Sales-negotiation discourse must be described by using terms and concepts that accommodate the context represented by the business relationship instead of separating the context from the descriptive framework; indeed, the analytical framework should ideally be able to show the interdependence of context and discourse.
- Because of the business context, above all the business accountability inherent in a business dealing, the roles that negotiators enact in negotiation events should not be taken at face value; because of the business relationship context, there is a tactical element in business rhetoric that the linguistic description should be able to reveal.
- Because of the business relationship context, there is also a suppressive quality in the power exerted in business negotiations; again, power and powerful language should not be taken at face value. Research should tackle the tactical deference in power assertion rather than the aggressive assertion of power—the going at each other full throttle from the very beginning (as is frequently the case in EFL negotiation courses).
- Findings made from British data may well be culturally dependent at various levels—at the level of national culture, industrial level, or the level of corporate culture.

In her investigation, she found that a key parameter affecting the discourse was whether the business relationship was new or old. In New Relationship Negotiations (NRNs), the negotiators have not met before in a negotiation and do not have a close personal relationship, although they may have met socially. The aim of an NRN is either to create a new business relationship or to develop a previously haphazard relationship into a more structured and permanent relationship (Charles, 1994: 143).

In Old Relationship Negotiations (ORNs) the negotiators from both sides have had a long history of negotiating together, and the two companies have been mutually satisfactory business partners for some time. The aim of an ORN is to enhance and strengthen the relationship.

Another aspect of Charles' research is her investigation of the expected roles of buyers and sellers in negotiations. These roles are more likely to be adopted in NRNs than in ORNs. Charles (1994: 138-39) shows that in sales negotiations, a buyer is expected to restrict the interest shown in the seller's product, to bring out the snags and reasons for not buying the product, to put forward his/her trustworthiness and requirements for high standards, to exert a degree of control over the situation and the seller. The seller, on the other hand, is expected to show enthusiasm towards not only his/her product, but also towards the buyer and the possible deal. He or she is also expected to bring out the positive features of the product and his/her trustworthiness, high standards and desirability as a partner for cooperation. He or she is expected to accept the buyer's control of the situation, but also to seek to share it (Charles, 1994: 140).

The combination of these parameters with the linguistic features of the actual negotiations results in an immensely detailed and rich characterization of both the buyer's and the seller's rhetoric. This is presented in great detail in Charles (1994); here we will summarize the focus of her research by looking at the strategies used by parties in the macrostructural D element (D = development). The D element is essentially the middle part of a negotiation sequence.

[4]For further research into negotiation in business and other contexts, see Firth (1995).

Buyer rhetoric in the D-element of a New Relationship Negotiation (NRN)

1. Referred to interest in sellers and sellers products, BUT:
   - explained and justified that interest
   - used linguistic hedging devices
2. Played down sellers, sellers' products and sellers' chances of getting a deal by
   - emphasizing problems in buying from sellers
   - hedging and mitigating when giving good news to sellers
   - using Bald on Record (direct) strategies to say negative things about sellers' products
   - using Bald on Record strategies to tell sellers good things about sellers' rivals and their products

Buyer rhetoric in the D-element of an Old Relationship Negotiation (ORN)

1. Did not mention interest in sellers and sellers' products, BUT:
   - that interest is assumed to the relationship
   - used direct (Bald on Record) strategies to express enthusiasm toward the deal
2. Emphasized goodness of Sellers by
   - presenting problems as mutual problems to be solved together
   - hedging and mitigating when giving bad news to sellers
   - using Bald on Record strategies to express trust in sellers and embedding bad news within good news
   - hedging and mitigating when talking about Sellers' rivals and their products
   - expressing rivals' goodness as a mutual problem

(Adapted from Charles, 1994: 201)

These strategies can be contrasted with the equivalent strategies for the seller, also in the development element:

Seller rhetoric in the D-element of a New Relationship Negotiation (NRN)

1. Said good things about himself/his company by:
   - emphasizing the good qualities of the products to be sold
   - drawing parallels between his company when the buyer praised rivals, implying that the praise concerns his company too
2. Showed appreciation of buyers by
   - showing empathy towards buyers' problems
   - producing supportive feedback moves
3. When hearing negative things about himself and/or his company/products
   - converted the negative to concern everybody in the field
   - generalized the problem
4. Showed solidarity with rivals

Seller rhetoric in the D-element of an Old Relationship Negotiation (ORN)

1. Did not mention interest in buyer or the deal, BUT:
   - showed empathy toward buyers
   - hedged and mitigated when giving bad news to buyer
2. As in NRNs
3. Used face-saving strategies, not tactical strategies
4. Converted rivals into a mutual problem

(Charles, 1994: 202)

Her main conclusion from the analysis of the Finnish language data was that there was much greater formality in the interactions between the Finnish negotiators compared with the British negotiators, even where the negotiation was an Old Relationship Negotiation (ORN). In fact, the interaction in the Finnish ORN resembled the interaction in a British NRN.

We have gone into great detail on Charles' work because we feel that its combination of linguistic analysis with analysis of the business aspects provides a very detailed and powerful tool for the development of teaching materials and training packages for non-native speaking business people. It also provides an excellent example of genre analysis and of what genre analysis can offer Business English teaching. With its use of authentic data, it provides material writers with an analysis that will help them develop materials that mirror the processes and language of real negotiation rather better than the materials on business meeting that Williams (1988) describes. But, more importantly, it recognizes that non-native speakers need exposure to the discourse skills and business strategies involved in negotiations and by deduction in other oral genres, such as meetings and presentations, as much as to the specific language of these genres. Indeed, Robinson (1991) suggests that native speakers may have as much need of training in these skills as non-native speakers.

There is rather more research on written genres than on oral genres, but again the coverage of this research is patchy. If we take the three key texts or macro-genres, letters, memos and reports, there is only a limited amount of research on the nature of the relationship among them. There is some good research on certain genres, such as the telex (Zak and Dudley-Evans, 1986) now rather out of date due to the decline in importance of the telex, and there is interesting work in the area of written communication for native speakers in the United States, which is relevant to the study of letters and reports (e.g., Dorrell, 1991; D'Aveni & MacMillan, 1990; Hagge and Kostenlnick, 1989; Wells and Spinks, 1990). Bhatia (1993) has produced an excellent analysis of what he refers to as sales promotion letters and job application letters. In the sales promotion letters, he found the following pattern of moves:

- establishing credentials
- introducing the offer
  - offering the product or service
  - essential detailing of the offer
  - indicating value of offer
- offering incentives
- enclosing documents
- soliciting response
- using pressure tactics
- ending politely

He found virtually the same pattern in the job application letters, which used the following moves:

- introducing candidacy
  - offering candidacy
  - essential detailing of candidacy
  - indicating value of candidacy
- establishing credentials
- offering incentives indicating the value of the candidacy
- enclosing documents
- using pressure tactics (pointing out possible constraints on the candidacy—not used very often)
- soliciting response
- ending politely

(Bhatia, 1993: Chapter 3)

Despite the encouraging nature of this kind of study, the work on the structure of letters, memos and reports, which was initially an extensive and important feature of Business English textbooks, appears to have been based either on unpublished research carried out by the materials writers or on their intuition. One exception to this was the UNDP Project of the Government of Singapore (1987), which looked at the teaching of English in business and technology in Singapore. The business volume (1987) presents the analysis of various genres of business letter, namely sales promotional letters, inquiries and replies, orders and acceptances, letters of complaint, adjustment letters, collection letters, as well as memoranda and job application letters. The analysis leads to suggestions for teaching material. The materials published by the English Language Centre at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore (Tan and Kam, 1987), show the influence of the UNDP approach.

Despite the results of these interesting projects, much more research is needed. In fact, two kinds of research seem to be necessary. The first is an analysis of the various genres of letter, memo and report used in different situations and with different purposes. The second is an analysis of the obligatory and optional moves available to the person writing these genres. It has been argued (e.g., Dudley-Evans, forthcoming) that the main need in this area is to distinguish among the various types of letter, memo or report, such as transmittal letter, enquiry letter, response letter, complaint letter, feasibility report, progress report, investigation report, and that the most valid genre investigation will be at this level. A further aspect of the research needed is the interrelationship and intertextuality of these genres as they are used in particular situations. The clearest example of the potential value of a study of this type is provided by Devitt (1991) in a study of the various genres used by a firm of accountants. Devitt argues that texts are the product that the accounting firm offers in return for payment. Clients have recurring queries and problems in relation to their tax problems, and these generate the need for recurring patterns in text (Miller, 1984). Devitt (1991: 338-39) suggests that each text draws on previous texts that have been written in reply to previous queries, and also draws on official tax documents. She suggests that these rhetorical situations are common to the accounting profession and that genres written in response to them in fact define the accounting profession. Thus the actual form and discourse of the various genres do not differ significantly among firms. She concludes that there are 13 basic genres in the accounting profession. These are:

- nontechnical correspondence
- administrative memoranda
- transmittal letters (in which documents are forwarded)
- engagement letters
- memoranda for the files
- research memoranda
- letters to clients
- letters to clients: opinion
- letters to clients: response
- letters to taxing authorities
- tax protests
- tax provision reviews
- proposals

(Devitt, 1991: 339)

Dudley-Evans (forthcoming) has established a similar pattern for a consultant structural engineer who advises on projects involving local authority officials, architects and quantity surveyors. A similar pattern of genres emerges for these projects, and the same intertextuality between the genres can be observed. Dudley-Evans also provides a more detailed move analysis of the genres than that provided by Devitt, but as the genres are not strictly in the business area, they will not be summarized here. The procedure of setting a map of the genres that define a profession is clearly of great potential benefit to research into Business English.

A third and more general map is provided by Yli-Jokipii (1994: 38), who classifies the various forms of business language. She divides business language into *interactive* and *non-interactive*. The term "interactive" is used for communication that involves two parties. It may be spoken, involving face-to-face interaction in service encounters or negotiations, or telephone interaction for negotiations or teleconferencing; or written, using either postal or electronic transmission. Interactive writing involves genres such as memos, letters, telexes and faxes. As noted above, a telex has its own particular organizational and discourse features, whereas a fax is usually just a means of transmitting a memo or letter that does not have its own forms of discourse organization. Noninteractive language involves genres that involve a "one-sided method of communication" (Yli-Jokipii: 1994: 39). Examples are forms, annual reports, progress reports, proposals and advertisements.

It is surprising that relatively little analysis of actual business genres exists. The study of the telex referred to above (Zak and Dudley-Evans, 1986) concentrates on a genre that, as a result of the increased use of the fax machine, is much less used. Nonetheless, the study's analysis of word omission and abbreviation may be of value for the analysis of other genres, especially the short note fax that is now widely used. The study shows that the abbreviations and omissions used in telexes are different from those used in other abbreviated texts, such as the telegram, and that the extent of their use will depend on the audience for the text and on conventions established in a company or a particular department of a company.

1.3.4 Summary of Discourse and Genre Analysis

Despite our disappointment in the extent of the studies of genres in Business English, we feel that this is potentially the most fruitful area of research. To date, the research has established a list of the genres and some indication of how they relate to each other in certain professions. It has not yet provided many detailed descriptions of specific genres. Nonetheless, we believe that it has the potential of bringing together, on one hand, the rigorous linguistic analysis of key texts and, on the other, the analysis of business strategies and the effect they have on the development of the discourse. We have suggested that the approach to the analysis of negotiations presented by Charles (1994) is a model of the kind of research needed for Business English.

1.4 COMMUNICATION SKILLS

There is a burgeoning literature in the United States on business communication. Some of this literature is, however, only of limited relevance to the practitioner or researcher interested in Business English. This is shown by the figures given by Smeltzer (1993: 184) for the frequency of topics in the *Journal of Business Communication* from 1977 through 1991. The list of topics was developed subjectively and inductively. The frequency of topics in percentages was as follows:

Topic	Percentage
Written communication	21.0
Organizational communication	17.5
Pedagogy	16.4
Communication theory	5.1
Technology	5.1
Cross-cultural communication	4.3
Business communication	3.3
Historical perspectives	2.8
Academic career concerns	2.5
Research methodology	2.5
Ethics	2.5
Gender	2.3
Communication skills needed in business	2.0
Information analysis	1.8
Listening	1.5
Practitioner career concerns	1.3
Corporate communication	1.3
Resume/employment interviews	1.0
Document design	1.0
Defining the discipline	0.5

Nonetheless, there is much of interest in this literature about the rhetorical aspects of certain key genres such as the various types of letter, memoranda and report and the importance of the social context of communication. Most of this research relates to the teaching of United States citizens, but there is increasing awareness of the importance of the international context and the need for understanding of different cultural patterns of communication. This aspect of the research will be summarized in the next section. In this section we will summarize a number of studies that we believe to be relevant to this study of Business English.

Of particular interest are the studies of the relationship between the social context of business and the actual nature of the communication. The social context derives from the answering of the three general questions that Faigley (1985: 244) poses for nonacademic writing. These are:

- What is the social relationship of writers and readers, and how does the text function in this social relationship?
- How does this kind of text change over time?
- How does the perspective of the observer define and limit the observation of this text?

To these questions about the relationship between the reader and the writer, we can add the question of how the conventions of both the general business culture and the particular culture of a company affect communication (Driskill, 1989).

Yli-Jokipii (1994) has conducted detailed research into the effect of the social and business context. She has investigated the transactional stages of the buying and selling process and identifies three stages: pre-deal, on-deal and post-delivery. Each stage involves different genres, and a given genre will normally be written by only one of the buyer or the seller. Her conclusions are summarized in the following table (Yli-Jokipii, 1994: 52):

Transactional stage	Situation type	Writer role
pre-deal	inquiry request for quotation offer quotation	buyer buyer seller seller
on-deal	order acceptance of order shipping payment arrangements	buyer seller buyer/seller buyer/seller
post-delivery	reminder complaint adjustment	seller buyer seller

Yli-Jokipii (1994) also examines the effect of the power relationships between the buyer and seller; in this she shows the influence of the work of Lampi (1990) and Charles (1994) described earlier in this report. In the pre-deal stage the buyer has the right to accept or reject the offer and is thus in the position of power. Similarly, at the post-delivery stage, the buyer has the power to express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product. At the on-deal stage the buyer will have power over the order and acceptance of order, but in the discourse associated with shipping and paying arrangements the power relationships will be irrelevant and therefore considered neutral. Yli-Jokipii (1994) refers to positive power (+P) where one party has greater power over the other, and negative power (−P) where one party has less power than the other. Where the power relationship is irrelevant or unidentifiable, this is referred to as neutral (±P). She summarizes the power roles of buyers and sellers as follows (Jokipii, 1994: 53).

Transactional stage	Situation type	Power	Writer role
pre-deal	inquiry request for quotation offer quotation	+P +P −P −P	buyer buyer seller seller
on-deal	order acceptance of order shipping payment arrangements	+P −P ±P ±P	buyer seller buyer/seller buyer/seller
post-delivery	reminder complaint adjustment	−P +P −P	seller buyer seller

Along with the conventions associated with business culture, the level of acquaintance between the buyer and seller will have an effect on the communication, and, in particular, on the formality, familiarity, distance and directness of the discourse.

Other studies of interest draw on a long tradition of analysis of rhetoric, but are often critical of that tradition; Hagge (1989), for example, describes the five C's of business communication: clearness, correctness, conciseness, courtesy and character. To these five two more, coherence and completeness, are sometimes added to make the seven C's. Hagge goes on to argue that these principles are not followed in actual business writing and are essentially a "folk-wisdom" and "vacuous." He also argues for detailed linguistic analysis of the seven C's.

Wells and Spink (1990) describe two principles of business communication: the you attitude and naturalness. The former emphasizes the importance of organizing and writing messages on the basis of the reader's interests, needs and problems. The latter emphasizes the importance of the use of everyday, ordinary and natural language and style.

Johns (1987) describes the Plain English campaign, which aims at the simplification of business documents in English-speaking countries. Her evaluation is that there is little concrete evidence of the effectiveness of this campaign, although most evaluation mentions an overwhelmingly positive response.

The Plain English campaign as reported in a U.S. government document entitled *How Plain English Works In Business: Twelve Case Studies* used the Flesch Reading Ease Test (1979) to assess readability. There are a number of related studies using either the Flesch Test, the Flesch-Kincaird Readability Scale, or the Gunning Fox Index of Readability (1968) to assess the readability of business communication (Wells and Spink, 1991; Dorrell and Darsey, 1991).

The various reports on the use of readability indices have indicated only limited success in clarifying reasons for difficulties in communication. Dorrell and Darsey (1991) suggest that research into reader reaction is likely to be more fruitful. Blyler (1991), taking a cognitive view of reading, summarizes four generally accepted reading-based guidelines for composing. These are (Blyler, 1991: 385):

- presenting contextual material up front in headings, explicit purpose statements and subject-first sentence structures
- using genres as contextualizing formats and organizational strategies that readers recognize
- providing the appropriate amount of detail for readers who are familiar with the writer's field and for readers who are not
- structuring documents hierarchically so that readers can process them top down

She goes on, however, to argue on the basis of a solicitation letter she analyses that persuasive business communication needs to follow four further basic guidelines. These are (Blyler, 1991: 391-94):

- Use contextual material that will involve schemata with appropriate emotional overtones.
- Use language that incorporates more than is directly expressed.
- Use metaphorical language whenever possible.
- Structure documents so that schema change can occur and consensus can be built.

A similarly comprehensive study of the effects of rhetorical and generic appropriateness was carried out by D'Aveni and MacMillan (1990). They looked at the style and rhetoric of letters written by top managers to shareholders in a crisis situation and noted the differences between the letters written by the companies that eventually went bankrupt and those that survived. More specifically, they examined each sentence in the letters to see whether it was concerned with **internal** or **external** attention, and **input** or **output** attention. Internal attention relates to owners, employees and top managers, while external attention relates to customers. Input attention refers to creditors and suppliers, while output attention refers to features such as buyer power, the characteristics of the customer and the type of sales transaction. They found that the successful and unsuccessful firms paid a similar amount of attention to the internal and external environments before the crisis, but that when the crisis hit, the survivors paid much more attention to the external aspects. They also concentrated more on the output environment.

A number of writers have also referred to the need to be aware of the legal dangers of writing. McCord (1991) argues that a business writer must be concerned with rhetorical appropriateness if she or he is to write within the bounds of the law.

1.4.1 Summary of Communication Skills

This research on various aspects of the rhetoric of business communication is valuable in that it supplements, and in many cases provides a wider context for, the rather more narrowly focused linguistic research that has been described earlier in this report. The two types of research are in fact complementary, with the rhetorical tradition providing a perspective on the broader aspects of communication and the applied linguistic research providing a greater concern for the detail of text. It has already been noted that native speakers embarking on business careers may need help with skills as much as non-native speakers, and that a blending of the two traditions of rhetoric and applied linguistics will provide a very powerful tool for analysis of business communication.

1.5 CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

It is widely accepted that cross-cultural aspects of business communication need to be much more widely studied in Business English (Robinson, 1991; Cowcher, 1987), and certainly much interesting research has been reported in the area of business communication. Limaye and Victor (1991) present an overview of research in the area and formulate 10 hypotheses about the influence of intercultural matters on business communication. These are:

1. Traditional Western linear and process models of communication do not represent the complexity of cross-cultural communication (Limaye and Victor, 1991: 284).
2. Businesspersons' perceptions of issues related to negotiations or communication events are influenced by their cognitive frames or unique world views (*ibid,* p. 285).
3. Relative emphasis either on written or oral communication is a function of whether the country has a high- or low-context culture[5] (*ibid,* p. 286).
4. Business organizations in high-context cultures do not emphasize rules and regulations to the extent that business organizations in low-context cultures do (*ibid*, p. 286).
5. Differing time perceptions in various cultures may cause failures in business negotiations between participants who do not share identical attitudes to work (*ibid*, p. 287).
6. Though technologies in business organizations are converging across cultures, meanings conveyed through them (that is, human communication) are not (*ibid*, p. 288).
7. Culture is a more significant factor in influencing work-related values and communication behaviors than factors such as the profession and role (power position) within the organization (*ibid*, p. 288).
8. More and different dimensions of culture are discoverable through administration of different sets of questionnaire items than Hofstede's (*ibid*, p. 291).[6]
9. New and more encompassing paradigms of cross-cultural business communication and management will entail re-examination and redefinitions of what constitutes communication effectiveness (*ibid*, p. 292).
10. Organisational effectiveness must be defined and measured in culture-specific contexts, and identical standards of excellence cannot be applied across the board (*ibid*, p. 292).

Many of the reported studies of cross-cultural differences have been in the area of business negotiation. We have already referred to Charles' findings (Charles, 1994) to the effect that the discourse features of Finnish Old Relationship Negotiations (ORNs) had much in common with British New Relationship Negotiations (NRNs). Neu (1986) also looked at the differences in negotiating style and argued that negotiations can only be successful "when all participants are well-informed and understanding of each others' cultures and attitudes towards negotiations" (Neu, 1986: 56). Unfortunately, her analysis is largely of her American data and has little analysis of other negotiation data taken from another culture. Garcez (1993) does, however, provide a much more detailed comparison of the differences between American and Brazilian negotiators. He shows that the American style is "direct, locally coherent throughout, and reiterated"

[5]A high-context culture refers to a culture in which much of the message is left unspecified; in a low-context culture the message is made explicit (*ibid*, p. 286).

[6]Hofstede (1980) regards four aspects of culture to be fundamental. They are Masculinity-Femininity, Individualism-Collectivism, Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance.

(Garcez, 1993: 106). Garcez refers to this as the "classical point making style" (Garcez, 1993: 109). The Brazilian style, by contrast, is less direct, and builds up towards relevance and coherence. The listener has to relate background information from the beginning of the presentation to the final statement of the point. He also notes that on occasion, the Brazilian in his data will use a style similar to the American point-making style, but that he does not do so comfortably.

Yamada (1990) looked at differences in turn-taking in business meetings between U.S. citizens and Japanese. He found that the American participants tended to take long monologic turns distributed unevenly among participants, while Japanese participants took short turns distributed much more evenly among participants.

The other main area of research into cross-cultural difference is in the area of letter writing. Yli-Jokipii (1994) notes a difference between cultures in the role of the letter. She suggests that in Finland the telephone is much more often used than the letter for communication between Finnish companies, but that the letter is much more common in communication with international companies. She also suggests that the relative ease of communication by fax has given a further boost to the use of the letter. She points to a number of reasons the letter is preferred to the telephone for international communication. The letter has greater legal value than other forms of communication, it allows more time for reflection for both the writer and the reader, and finally, the letter carries much greater weight and prestige than other forms of communication.

Other studies looked more specifically at differences in the discourse organisation of letters. Sims and Guice (1992) looked at the differences in letters of inquiry written by native and non-native speakers. She found that the letters written by non-native speakers deviated in a number of respects from standard American practice, particularly in tone and the use of inappropriate information. The inappropriateness in tone resulted largely from exaggerated politeness, the inappropriate information presented related largely to the provision of unnecessary professional and personal information and the making of culturally deviant requests for evaluation or intercession. The latter features usually resulted in the letters being too long.

Sims and Guice's corpus consisted of letters of inquiry about the possibility of postgraduate study at a U.S. university, and was thus not strictly in the area of Business English. Jenkins and Hinds (1987), however, looked at actual business letters, namely letters of request written in English, French and Japanese. They found that the English letters (written in the United States) were **reader-oriented** in that they attempted to persuade the reader of the advantages of accepting what the writer wanted. They aimed to achieve "voluntary agreement" (Jenkins and Hinds, 1987: 330). The French letters were, on the other hand, **writer-oriented,** by which Jenkins and Hinds mean that they were extremely precise, concise and prudent, largely because they might be used in evidence in the case of litigation. The Japanese letters were quite different from the English and French; they were oriented to the relationship between the writer and the reader and used language and discourse that maintained the appropriate space between the two. A mark of this is the extensive use of set expressions in all except the main body of the letter.

Maier (1992) looked at the differences in letter-writing between native and non-native speakers. The study was carried out at the University of Minnesota, so the native speakers were from the United States. Her non-native speakers were largely Japanese postgraduates. Using Brown and Levinson's model (1987) for politeness strategies, she analyzed the positive and negative strategies used by the writers. In the analysis, she developed a very useful set of strategies used in the letters. The negative strategies used had the purpose of showing respect for the reader and showing the intention of not interfering with his/her freedom of action. She lists these strategies as **apologizing, admitting the impingement, going on record as incurring a debt, being pessimistic and indirect** and **giving deference.** The positive politeness strategies were aimed at meeting the reader's wants and showing that both the writer and reader have the same goals and have much in common. They involve **showing interest, offering a contribution or a benefit** and **being optimistic**. Her main conclusion was that the native speakers used many more negative politeness strategies than the non-native speakers, who had a preference for the rather riskier positive politeness strategies.

Nickerson (1993) also looked at the differences in business letters written in English by British and Dutch writers; she found much greater formality in the Dutch letters and a tendency to avoid the use of 'I' and first names. They also used Opening and Confirmation moves less than the British letters.

Connor and Kramer (1995) investigated the skills used by native and non-native speakers in reading a business case and then producing a report based on the reading. They conclude that two of the non-native speakers lacked the skills and strategies of a successful report writer, and needed tuition in the area of developing an argument from a set of data.

1.5.1 Summary of Cross-Cultural Communication

This area of research has already produced interesting results and is certain to develop in the next few years, particularly with the increasing emphasis on market economies and financial liberalization. As will be noted in Part 2, the research into Business English has generally been based on the European and North American model of business practice. With the growth of international trade and business and the political and economic changes in Russia, Eastern Europe and much of the developing world, that assumption is increasingly inappropriate. The research into cross-cultural communication is helping to provide a better focus. A concrete example is the course book, *International Business Communication*, (Victor, 1992) that sets forward a set of procedures for the conduct of international business, taking into account differences in language, environment, technology, social organisation, attitudes to saving face and authority, non-verbal communication and the concept of time.

1.6 INTERESTS OF PRACTITIONERS

We have discussed the academic or empirical research and research writing that is published in academic journals and noted the gaps in this. Practitioners of Business English, that is those teaching and organizing Business English courses, also write about their work and attend conferences to give papers and exchange ideas. For the one-and-a-half day BESIG International Conference (Nov. 18-20, 1994, Wiesbaden, Germany) 55 workshops and talks were scheduled in the preliminary programme. The papers and publications may take a form that differs from the academic paper, and their content may not be based on academic research, but nonetheless their contribution to the field is significant and represents the current informed position.

In this section we shall consider some of these contributions. Particular areas of interest to us are the approach taken to reporting on work, features of written articles that differentiate them from the academic model, the underlying shifts and trends in the content areas under discussion and the concern with professionalism.

1.6.1 Approach Taken to Reporting on Work

The case study is the most common approach adopted by practitioners. *Language and Intercultural Training* (LIT, published by Language Training Services) actually states in the Aims and Scope, that "The emphasis is on case studies of good training practice with contributions from people working in the field." Similarly, one aim of the BESIG Newsletter (the quarterly newsletter of the Business English Special Interest Group of IATEFL) is to share, and individuals write of their experiences with particular groups of learners, with particular sets of materials, new approaches, etc. At conferences a substantial number of the contributions can be classed as case studies concentrating on course content, materials and methodological approaches. The abstracts for the Wiesbaden BESIG conference suggest that about 30 percent are case studies, mainly sharing supplementary materials (20 percent) or country-based situations (10 percent). Some applied theory papers may appear (less than 10 percent). There is potentially a wealth of data available, but many practitioners do not have the time to analyse it for the purpose of writing articles; income is generated only by running classes. The exigencies of running a business may leave little opportunity for research. The knowledge gained from needs analysis and teaching leads to informed views, and these feed into teaching materials.

1.6.2 Features of Written Articles

In the main, conference papers and articles in, for example, *Language and Intercultural Training* and BESIG do not follow the traditional format of an academic paper. They are generally short, on average two or three pages long and without a formal, segmented structure. With case studies an underlying structure is recognizable, writers move from needs analysis to content and methodological approaches ending with evaluation. Alternatively, the structure may be: reporting on an existing situation, then discussing pressures for change, the responses and evaluation.

In writing these articles authors use very few citations. It is not deemed necessary to ground the contribution within the existing research through a survey of, or even specific reference to, the literature. This compares with the situation in other new and rapidly growing areas such as electronics and computer science (Cooper 1985). When citations do occur they may be to Applied Linguistics, to published teaching material or to books on management, management training or communication skills. Increasingly (see "trends in content" below) the interests of Business English practitioners overlap work from human resource development sources. It would seem that, in the main, Business English practitioners' background experience is in language and language learning; what is perceived as potentially new or less familiar is the human resource development background. Thus it is to publications in this area that specific references are made. Table 1 lists references quoted in 16 articles in five volumes of Language and Intercultural Training. Eleven of the articles have no references; the remainder have a total of 12 references among them, of which five occur in one article.

Table 1 References Cited by Authors in LIT	
Journals	Applied Linguistics Reading in a Foreign Language Language Learning ESP Journal World Language English
Books	The Psychology of Written Composition The Social Psychology of Bargaining Management and Higher Education International Dimensions of Organisational Behavior
Teaching Materials	Company to Company Effective Writing Model Business Letters

1.6.3 Trends in Content

The data for this section is drawn from the two publications, LIT and BESIG Newsletter, plus BESIG conference reports.

If we consider the topics discussed over the first 10 to 15 years of LIT, it is possible to detect quite a strong shift of interest. The trend is to a broadening of interests and an increase in the multidisciplinary nature of the field. We can trace a move from a largely language and language teaching perspective to one that has adopted tenets of the 1990s' business world, globalization and intercultural awareness, quality control and efficiency.

For example, in the early and mid 1980s attention was primarily on language, and the following expressions occurred in titles: analyzing language needs, conducting language audits, language training in banks or for engineers, video in language training, technology and computers in language training. The shift began towards the end of the 1980s. The basic concerns of Business English, as an area of English for Specific Purposes, remain. The term "language" now collocates with a new range of terms in titles such as Managing Language Programmes; Corporate Language Training; Global Trends in Corporate Language Training; Beyond Language Training; Business, Culture and Communication. We see business terminology being incorporated.

The journal *Language and Intercultural Training* began life in 1979 under the title *Language Training*. The current title dates only from 1992. The aims and scope section highlights the reasons for the change: *Language Training* aimed to "present ideas and information about **vocational language training** . . . the emphasis is on . . . good **language training practice**." The scope of the publication has now been expanded to "present ideas and information about **training in language and cross cultural awareness** . . . the emphasis is on good **training practice**." The editor, Adrian Pilbeam, comments that the trends have been towards "shorter highly job-specific courses and an increasing emphasis on skills courses" (1992, 13.1, p. 3).

BESIG members share the same concerns. In the forthcoming conference about 10 percent of the talks appear to be based on management issues, and a further 10 percent include some aspects of cross-cultural issues. The following titles exemplify this point:

- The Cultural Dimension in the Graduate Business Language Program
- Women in Management: A Cross-Cultural Factor
- Team Management Skills—What Relevance Do They Have To Business English?
- Business Gurus in the English Classroom: What Role Can They Play?
- Comparing European and North American Trends in Business English Training

Being an effective business communicator depends not only on verbal language proficiency but also on personal and interpersonal skills. Thus there has been, and still is for some, a debate as to whether the role of language teachers is only as language trainers or also as communication skills trainers. Peoples' position on this may reflect their working situation and the needs of their clients (Smith, 1991). Increasingly, those who work in-company or on company-specific courses are delivering both language and skills.

The growing emphasis on combining skills work and language development in the same course reflects the recognition that there is no clear dividing line between language and skills competence and that an effective user of language is someone who is also aware of the skills of communicating. Similarly, there is growing awareness that the skill of effective communication includes more than the ability to handle interruptions in meetings, control time and contributions. Peoples' behavior and reactions are also determined by their culture, the value systems and attitudes they operate. These vary across nations and affect verbal and non-verbal behavior patterns (see 1.). Intercultural awareness training acknowledges that people need to be trained to recognize and understand their own behaviors in order to value and handle those of others that differ, and to adapt their own according to the needs of a situation.

The scope of Business English has broadened from language teaching to language and communication skills training to training for international communication skills in International English.

1.6.4 Professionalism

The increased demand for Business English courses and the increasing expectations of companies and company personnel are paralleled by a desire among some practitioners for increasing professionalization and quality control. One area of debate circulates around the issue of self-development or formal, degree-type qualifications. For many, self-development through attending a range of short courses, participating in conferences, seminars and co-training is seen as the most appropriate route. Others see the need for some more formal, externally validated route and suggest that existing courses do not satisfy needs (Muskalla, 1992, p. 4).

Short courses of two to five days have been offered for some time by organizations such as Language Training Services and Abbey Communication Training. More recently Regent Teacher Training, in association with LCCI, established a five-day course leading to the certificate in Teaching English for Business. LCCI has now introduced a diploma, delivered by London Guildhall University (previously City of London Polytechnic). This requires attendance at two three-week courses with project work in between, and is intended for those with at least one year's experience.

From discussion it would seem that those particularly involved with company language training require overlapping knowledge and understanding from at least five areas. In addition to an in-depth knowledge of the communicative functioning of the English language and first-class training skills, practitioners also need to understand the psychology of learning. For functioning effectively in the business world, a knowledge of management theories and practice and an understanding of the psychology of personal and interpersonal interactions should be added.

1.6.5 In Conclusion

Practitioners in the field of Business English have a vast store of knowledge and experience, much of which is untapped, although there is a sharing of ideas on practical issues such as new materials and techniques for interactive learning. There is also increasing interest in incorporating relevant aspects from management training and cross-cultural awareness. As stated above, the scope of Business English has broadened from language teaching to language and communication skills training to training for international communication skills in International English.

Strikingly, two areas that rarely feature in conference presentations or written articles are analysis of actual international business interactions and testing. The examining boards are usually represented at conferences and provide information on their tests (in November 1994 UCLES, TOEIC, CPE and ICC feature), but the practitioners themselves rarely focus on testing in Business English situations. There is an increasing demand for qualifications, and this is likely to lead to testing being given a higher profile. As discussed earlier, the problem of obtaining data and a lack of research students mean that little analysis of spoken interactions has taken place. Some practitioners may have access to data, but the time for working on it is limited.

PART 2: MATERIALS AND THE PRACTICE OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

2.1 BACKGROUND

2.1.1 The Market and Course Variables

The fact that Business English is an umbrella term means that there are several very different markets, i.e., different target groups. There is the broad distinction between pre-experience and post-experience, i.e., English for General Business Purposes and English for Specific Business Purposes (1.0); within the latter category particularly the variety of courses and materials available is substantial. Some significant course variables include:

- the course duration: intensive or extensive
- other participants: a company or open registration course
- the specificity of design: where on the cline of tailor-made to off-the-shelf it lies
- the balance between language and skills
- the numbers learning: small group or one-to-one teaching
- the mode of learning: class teaching, telephone teaching, self-study
- the location: in-house/ex-house; in country/overseas

These all have an impact on the kind of materials sought and used and the way in which they are exploited. For an extensive course, learners and teachers are more likely to seek a suitable coursebook to act as a core. On an intensive course, the materials may be specially produced, be generated from and by the participants themselves, or be a selection from a range of published books. A company course offers the opportunity to use company material and the participants' shared situational setting. On the other hand, it can mean participants have widely differing experiences of learning and using English, and so a selection of books for self-study may be required. On an open registration course, the language level of participants may be more similar, but their business experience can be very different and the materials selected may deal only with generalised business situations.

Tailor-made courses may contain no published materials, while an off-the-shelf course could be compiled by using one or more sets of published materials. A course that includes a good deal of skills work may rely less on published material as much of the time is spent in participant activity and feedback on that activity. A course concentrating on language aspects aiming to provide as much input and exposure as possible probably needs a wider range of published materials.

The proportion of each kind of course taught varies from place to place, but there is a good deal of specialisation, in part for competitive market reasons and developing appropriate levels of expertise and in part because of underlying philosophies regarding language and language learning. Thus one business language school may aim to have no more than eight to 10 students at a time and place considerable emphasis on interpersonal interactions both socially and in class sessions, a proportion of which will be one-to-one. Another language school may run open, extensive courses, while yet another may concentrate on skills plus language-based work.

2.1.2 Availability of Materials

Within ESP, the largest sector for published materials is now that of Business English. A major supplier of English as a Foreign Language teaching materials, The English Book Centre (Summertown, Oxford, U.K.), lists more than 150 titles under business, banking and secretarial categories. In contrast, under all the other ESP headings, including English for Science and Technology (EST), medicine, computers and telecommunications, agriculture, engineering, law, hotel, catering and tourism, and study skills/English for Academic Purposes (EAP), there are some 120 titles.

It was in the 1970s that English for Business Purposes (EBP) materials were first published in any number and at this time attention was directed mainly to written language. Of 30 textbooks chosen for a research study in the mid 1980s, "sixteen -90teach some oral English" (Williams 1988:48). Of those 30 books, just eight still feature in the above catalogue (of which at least two are revised editions and one is out of print) and only a handful concentrate on written skills. In other words, in the past 20 years there has been an upsurge in EBP textbooks and a shift in language and content focus.

Significantly too, English for Business currently accounts for nearly all the new publications in ESP. This is exemplified in the table below drawn from the 1994 U.K. catalogues of six of the major EFL / ESP publishers. The table lists the number of titles that each publisher claims as new for 1994.

Publisher	New EBP books	New books in all other ESP areas
Prentice Hall	13	1
Heinemann	1	0
Penguin	2	0
Nelson	1	0
CUP	2	1
OUP	2	1
TOTALS	21	3

Even with the somewhat high (and inflated) figure from Prentice Hall (the company claims as new some of the volumes in the Professional Reading Series that were actually published previously) it is clear that the Business English market is seen as a growth area by publishers.

The speed of information transfer and thus the rate of change within business practices is ever-increasing, and so the lifetime for materials may be shortening. Dating can be a problem, either because of the content chosen or the language used. For example, the utterance "I see that as something for the late nineties, John. Long run . . ." is already, in 1995, difficult to justify (Business Assignments, Casler et al 1989). The material was only published in 1989, giving it a shelf life of just five or six years. In addition, the rapid growth of Business English has brought a lot of new material onto the market. For this reason, this report discusses and samples the more recent material where it is appropriate.

The report covers widely available published material. This represents only a proportion of the materials in existence. We recognise that there is a body of material published locally in other areas of the world with local distribution (e.g., Tan and Kam, 1987). Moreover, many educational institutions have their own well-developed, unpublished materials; some have facilities to publish, primarily for their own students but with a wider market in mind (e.g., National University of Singapore, 1987). These materials may, like the Singapore material, be entirely English medium, or may be in both the L1 and English. Of the unpublished material, some of it supplements existing published materials, while some of it will become the next generation of published material. Much of it consists of local variants to suit individual contexts. The principles of ESP guarantee the continued co-existence of published and unpublished materials.

2.1.3 The Authors

Unlike mainstream EFL, ESP does not have full-time professional authors, i.e., those whose sole activity is writing materials for a publisher and then taking part in public presentations to promote those materials. The volume of sales cannot compare with the mainstream EFL market to support such activity. Authors are all practising teachers, some U.K.-based, others in language institutions or companies, mainly elsewhere in Europe. A number of the most prolific, recent authors of Business English materials seem to be associated with one of a handful of well-known institutions specializing in EBP. For instance, the authors of the Longman Business English Series (LBES ed. Pilbeam) all work for Language Training Services (LTS), York Associates now produces and publishes its own video material (Utley) and members of the company have written the Prentice Hall Business Management Series (BME) (Brieger & Comfort).

The materials stem directly from the teaching needs and experiences of these practitioners with a range of clients, and seem to represent an accepted current practice more than a particular theoretical construct specific only to Business English. Current practice is based upon views of language and language learning that have as their concern communicativeness, learner and learning centeredness, degrees of learner autonomy and functional/notional descriptions.

2.1.4 Underlying Assumptions

It should be noted that the business culture underlying all the materials is a Western European/North American one. While it is only the hard-core business contexts books that contain substantial business content, all the materials assume a familiarity with, and an understanding of this business culture. The existence of marketing, customer care, quality control and the need for them are taken as fundamentals. The role of banks, insurance and the use of computer systems in everyday life and business are taken for granted.

The significance of this has been shown most markedly with the recent economic and ideological changes in Eastern Europe. These concepts have not been commonplace, and this has given rise to two problems for Business English teachers: (i) working within the parameters of the current published materials is difficult because of the different background and (ii) students look to the language teacher to provide both language and content. "It must be realized that teaching Business English in post communist countries is teaching a wholly new business culture" (Birkenmajer, 1991:7). There are other parts of the world where the business philosophies are not identical. There too, the published material discussed here may not be entirely appropriate.

English may be **the** international language of business, but there is more than one business code.

2.1.5 Summary

In this background section we have shown that the number of Business English publications is growing rapidly to cater for a wide range of Business English courses. The materials are written by practitioners and arise from in-house teaching experiences. There are practitioners working in Business English all around the world, and the nature of ESP means the existence of substantial amounts of unpublished and locally published materials. This report focuses on one visible portion of the iceberg, i.e., materials with a worldwide circulation and the underlying business culture of Western Europe and North America.

We have categorised the materials as Business Communication Skills, Business Contexts, English Language or Business Studies Methodology. The English Language category is further divided into general Business English, and supplementary. The materials in each of these groups are discussed in the remainder of this report.

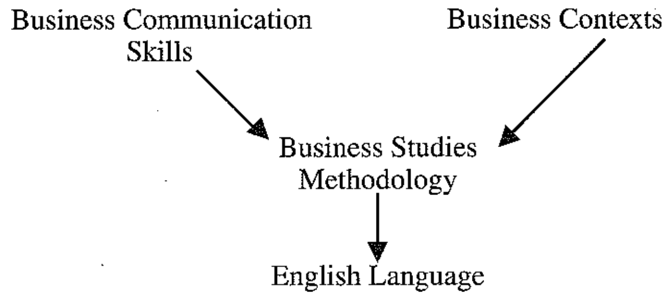
2.2 CATEGORISING PUBLISHED BUSINESS ENGLISH MATERIALS

Effective communication through English in business settings is a composite of various skills and abilities. The characteristics of published materials are affected by these, and it is possible to classify Business English teaching materials in a number of different ways. Ellis and Johnson (1994) refer to five categories: general Business English coursebook packages, supplemenary, job-specific, reference and self-access. The classification that has been chosen for this report is developed from a simple representation of the work situation as illustrated in the following diagram.

Business Communication Skills → English Language ← Business Contexts

This diagram represents "the main features of the work environment that determine (the) linguistic skills required" by an individual according to "perhaps the most commonly held view in the profession" (Cane, 1993:4).

For our classification of published materials, this triangle has been modified as follows:



Business Communication Skills are defined as those that are based almost entirely on language. That is, in contrast to Business Contexts, these do not depend on any specialised knowledge; people in all walks of life are meeting, discussing, corresponding, and these are very language-dependent activities. Although they are based on (verbal) language it is not the (verbal) language alone that is crucial to effective functioning; organisational skills, non-verbal language and awareness of the audience are among some of the other contributing components—an issue that is taken up elsewhere.

These business communication skills are seen as the common core of Business English. They include giving presentations, telephoning and participating in meetings and can be found as titles of books, unit headings in books and modules of training courses for teachers. A more detailed discussion of these skills is given in the section on Business Communication Skills Textbooks.

While business communication skills are those in which language is dominant, business contexts covers features that affect the language but are not wholly language-based. Thus the business sector, the business function and the job description of an individual all determine what topics, and thus what lexis, a communicator will use in the common-core business activities. The opening and closing gambits of telephone calls may be similar for a banker, a design engineer and a market researcher. The detailed discussion in between will, however, be determined by the nature of the business each is concerned with. It is within business contexts that we find the hard-core ESP materials specialising in key business functions and sectors. In this area are materials identified as English for banking, marketing, finance etc.

The third apex of the triangle is that of language itself, in this case English, and we would include not just the concept of language but also the learning of language here. We have distinguished between two groups of materials: the coursebooks that parallel the general EFL coursebooks, i.e., General Business English coursebooks, and supplementary materials.

In the centre of the triangle are materials that require facets of all three apexes; they represent an adoption of a methodological approach from business studies in which case studies or simulations based on real business practice are used to develop business concepts.

2.3 BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS TEXTBOOKS

This is a category of materials in which each book focuses on one of the individual skills perceived as the core of business activity. The following table identifies these core business communication skills:

Listening/speaking	Reading/writing
Telephoning	Correspondence
Socializing	Report writing
Giving presentations	
Taking part in meetings	
Negotiating	

While these are all identified as core, they are often differentiated according to the language level required to operate them. Thus, telephoning and socializing materials are mainly aimed at (lower) intermediate students, while negotiating is targeted primarily at (pre-)advanced students. These core skills have been identified through needs analysis with clients (see 1.1).

There are a number of books accompanied by audio cassettes covering oral/aural skills and also some video-based materials. In addition, CDs as well as cassettes have begun to be introduced; for instance, *Heinemann's Telephone Skills* by David Hough has an audio CD. The books are mostly single-volume, but there is one series, Longman Business English Skills (LBES), currently consisting of eight books, covering the five spoken skills listed above and related exchanges. On the video side, a company with extensive experience of international training, York Associates, has been developing its range of in-house video productions to cover more of these core activities. The written skills are also covered by a number of single-volume publications, but there seems to be less demand for these.

Additional titles in the LBES include *Exchanging Information* (O'Driscoll, 1991) and *Presenting Facts and Figures* (Kerridge, 1992), which can be seen to operate at a different level from the core skills as they are not communicative events in themselves, rather contributions to particular phases of such events as giving a presentation. It is interesting to note that even the core skills are not all operating at the same level (see 1.3). Negotiating is the only one that, in Applied Linguistic terminology, can be described as a genre, where we are defining a genre as "a communicative event with a shared communicative purpose." Negotiations do have one shared purpose, namely to reach a deal, to come to an agreement. None of the other common-core skills areas can be called a genre as there is no single, shared communicative purpose. Some meetings are for decision-making, others are to gather data and views for informing a later decision, others are to share progress. A presentation may be purely informative but may also have a persuasive role; reports are similar. Purpose is one of the factors affecting the direction of communication and language selected. Even for native speakers, the failure to recognise or signal the actual purpose of an interaction plus an inability to switch from one purpose to another can cause communication problems. For example, promotion often means that reports are expected to persuade and provide recommendations rather than merely provide facts. Good report writers can suddenly find themselves heavily criticised when their language fails to illustrate this shift.

Given the absence of research into spoken business genres, it is hardly surprising that the published materials do not yet reflect any genre differences.

There is no one uniform approach to the materials in this area. However, the teaching of expressions, particularly startup phrases, is common to all the oral/aural books.

The LBES material adopts a rather different approach to others, and is the only one to make extensive use of a discourse approach. The material can be used for classwork but is primarily designed for self-study. The general approach is to present short exchanges on cassette for close listening and then for students to complete tapescripts. These extracts are annotated in the margin with the speaker's communicative function or the students complete the annotation themselves:

LBES Socializing p. 26

Dialogue 2 The style is informal
Notes

Emma:	I ____________ be going. I've got a client coming in at three and I want to look through his file.	Indicates that she wants to end the conversation
Tom:	Okay. __________________ then. _____________________ goes well.	Says goodbye and at the same time wishes her a successful meeting
Emma:	Thanks Tom, ________________.	Says goodbye

This means students not only learn the language that is used, but also acquire an awareness of the patterns that many interactions follow. After each section of a unit a language summary is presented, comprising the key phrases used in the dialogues and notes on appropriateness.

LBES Socialising p. 37

Thanking	Accepting
NEUTRAL	
Thank you very much That's very kind of you	That would be very nice I'd like that very much ....
INFORMAL	
Thanks	That's a good idea What a good idea That sounds fun

We see here that the expressions are categorised as neutral or informal. To this extent, these materials do, therefore, distinguish between old and new relationships.

As these seven business communication skills are seen as core to Business English, a short section on each one follows in which the available material is discussed in more detail.

2.3 1 Telephoning

This is recognised as an important skill, and there are several publications which deal with just this. The language level is lower intermediate/intermediate and the focus is on short exchanges not the extended telephone conversation in which business is discussed. These books all provide plenty of practice in listening, and sometimes message-taking. They may also focus on specific language functions and offer practice through role play.

The format of two 1987 publications is outlined below:

Telephoning (LBES) Bruce 1987	Telephoning in English Naterop & Revell 1987
Unit format	
Listen	Listen
Focus on language	Message taking
Language summary	Phrases
Pronunciation	Gap fill
Practice	Language study
	Role play/tasks
Topics	
Getting through	Identifying people
Recorded messages	Getting through
Fixing appointments	Enquiries
Discussing information	Ordering
Bookings	Travel/hotels
Checking	Complaints
Telephone conferencing	Company image

It can be seen that these each have uniform unit formats and begin with listening practice. LBES focuses more on the actual expressions and language used. The CUP publication gives the tapescripts within the unit and focuses more on comprehension of the conversation.

A more recent publication at an elementary level adopts a slightly different approach. *Basic Telephone Training* (Watson-Delestree, 1992) first provides basic telephone language including numbers, dates, times, answering machine messages, wrong numbers and spelling (Units 1-13). Then units 14-28 provide listening and speaking practice based mostly on answering machine messages and not on dialogues; students hear a variety of accents and practice taking down messages and role-playing.

The language level and type of exchanges in these books suggests that the target market is seen as secretarial staff or junior executives. Middle managers may need some of this content but may also have more extended conversations.

2.3.2 Socialising

This is also increasingly recognised as fundamental to good business communication. The actual term "socialising" does not, perhaps, give the most appropriate focus to this area. From the business perspective it has more to do with establishing a good working relationship, through less formal channels, than with actual socialising. The materials focus on the social aspect rather than the building of a good relationship.

Thus topics covered in this category of book include:

Greetings
First conversations
Invitations
Apologising
Thanking/showing appreciation

On occasions such as:

Entertainment	– the theater
	– dining out
	– dining at a colleague's home
Travel	– meeting at the airport

LBES has a pre-intermediate book, *Making Contacts* (O'Driscoll & Scott Barrett), and an intermediate one, *Socializing* (Ellis & O'Driscoll, 1987), which follow the style already outlined. The functions are the unit organizers and each is exemplified through a range of situations/topics. In contrast in *Social Contacts* (Brieger & Comfort, 1990) each unit focuses on a topic and the selected functions are exemplified within that topic.

As social customs differ from one country and culture to another, the books and materials in this area draw students' attention to cultural differences as these extracts from *Social Contacts* (Brieger & Comfort, 1990) illustrate.

> Before a meal, during an interval at the theater or in a bar, it is usual to buy drinks.
>
> (p. 38)

> In social situations you often need to refuse invitations. In your country do you need to give excuses? What types of excuses or reasons are acceptable in your culture?
>
> (p. 39)

In addition, the language and topics of conversation for first meetings may be differentiated from those between well-known colleagues. Typically, students may be asked to decide which topic of conversation or which language expression would be suitable in a number of different situations.

In addition to these specific books, much of the content in the general business English coursebooks covers aspects of socialising.

2.3.3 Giving Presentations

As with socialising, this generally features in most of the general business English coursebooks, but just as one activity or unit. In addition, LBES has a volume entitled, *Giving Presentations*, and there are two videos covering the language and skills of presentations. The LBES volume mentions both informative and persuasive presentations and is based on language exponents; the earlier video covers language aspects of business presentation skills while the more recent one aims to deal with language and presentation skills. *Effective Presentations* (Utley, 1992) starts from an example of a poor presentation. This is then divided into short sections; each poor version is followed by an improved one. The objective is to highlight features such as beginning and ending well, the use of visuals, the effect of body positions and movement as well as the purely linguistic features of language, tone of voice and speed of delivery. The earlier video is Visitron: The Language of Presentations (Howe, 1984). This presents a 30 minute business presentation and then breaks it into sections for analysis and "as a source of modern realistic business English in a large-company context" (Teachers' Manual, p. 1). The material only exploits language aspects, but a trainer could also use it to highlight skills aspects.

Key language areas covered under giving presentations include:

- starting the presentation
- describing
- presenting options
- justifying
- presenting visuals
- concluding

Both Visitron and LBES help learners to focus on key utterances and to analyse the discourse information. Visitron has edited the examples and language summaries on to the screen as well as providing a student workbook. LBES only has the written word:

LBES Giving Presentations Extract	Referring to visuals (p. 59) Notes
...................there are some major differences in these countries.	focuses on his first point of comparison
.......all are members of the common market, and yet Denmark has nearly ...	restates facts on the visual

Summary
Commenting on visuals
In the commentaries which accompany your visuals:
• Keep headlines and other information on the visual to a minimum.
....

In the general business English coursebooks, the activity or unit may mention the overall structure for a presentation and provide language phrases for marking that structure. In all the published material the term "giving presentations" stands for a prepared delivery from a standing position that is likely to be most effective when accompanied by visual aids. For many learners there is also the situation during a meeting of making a presentation from the table and without preparation (cf the extended monologues referred to by Lenz (1987); see 1.2).

Although there is this increasing demand for language and skills work to be integrated, the available materials are primarily English-language teaching only. For input and activities related to, for example, first impressions, body language, impact, and designing visuals a teacher will need access to management or human resource development material.

2.3.4 Taking Part in Meetings

Again, this central activity features in some way in virtually all material. There are several books and videos based entirely on the language of meetings. A functional approach is common, with attention given to developing language for:

- presenting an argument
- giving opinions
- agreeing and disagreeing
- proposing
- interruptions
- opening and closing remarks

The LBES, *Meetings and Discussions* (O'Driscoll & Pilbeam, 1987), follows the series pattern and presents extracts from a range of meetings. In contrast, *The Language of Meetings* (Goodale, 1987) concentrates entirely on phrases for the different stages or functional contributions to a meeting. There are no extracts but, in addition to the phrases, there is language work on collocations, word stress, qualifiers, comparatives and the continuous tense. This is selected as it is "stretched out in time" and thus "includes the listener." This is one of the occasions when reference to the pragmatic effect of language is made. There is a complementary publication, *Meetings* (Goodale, 1994), which presents 10 simulations for post-intermediate students to practice this language (see also the later section, Business Studies Methodology).

Video material includes a York Associates production, Effective Meetings (Utley, 1993) and Visitron: The Language of Meetings and Negotiations (Howe, 1988). Each takes an approach similar to the one adopted for giving presentations so that the benefit of the video over the book is again in the area of non-verbal features.

The functional and lexical phrasing approach to language used in all the materials emphasises the use of startup expressions such as, "May I add something here," "I'd like to comment on that," "I can't agree with that," "Can we come back to that." Given the absence of research into the actual language used in meetings and the language used by those who are effective in meetings, we cannot be certain which phrases for which functions are most appropriate. Nor can we ascertain whether it is functional or strategic language, or both, that is most needed (Williams 1988, see 1.3).

On the whole, the materials currently available in this area treat meetings as a unified whole or single genre. Therefore, the impact of the purpose of the meeting on the course of the exchange and the choice of language is not touched on. Likewise the effect of the business relationship on the course of the interaction is usually limited to the level of formality of the phraseology. Leadership style and the effect of needing to reach a consensus vs. a majority decision or a chairperson's decision and their impact on the nature of the interactions, and thus the language and skills employed, are not explicitly covered.

In interpersonal skills training for effective meetings and discussions, some of the areas involving language given attention are: persuasion, influence, commitment, language for impact, the role of questioning and summarising. One four-and-a-half day course, Effective Meetings and Discussions in English, team-taught at GEC Management College, Dunchurch by personnel trained in human resource development and ESP, spends an entire morning on active listening, summarising and questioning skills and half a morning on persuasion. As can be seen from the lists above, these are not yet core to the Business English teaching materials. Given the process by which materials are developed and published, this may be a direction of the future.

2.3.5 Negotiating

There is limited ESP material available in this area: two books, a video-based package and a stand-alone video. The expected level of learners is high, advanced or pre-advanced, as are their range of experience and general communication skills. The lack of materials in this field probably reflects smaller demand, less knowledge and nondirect experience on the part of ESP practitioners and a need to use input that is related to learners' situations.

The earliest publication, *Negotiate in English* (Lees, 1983) adopted a functional approach. Each unit contains phrases for expressing one of the functions and develops the presentation and practice through a particular topic. The activities comprise listening practice, vocabulary gap-filling exercises and role plays for transfer, together with some intonation practice. The functions selected as appropriate for negotiating include:

Challenge	Defend	Emphasise	Insist
Criticize	Reassure	Propose	Counter-propose

A decade later, the materials have shifted from a linguistic base (i.e., functions) to a process-based approach. The LBES materials, *Negotiating* (Pilbeam & O'Connor, 1992) have taken their underlying philosophy from the Harvard Negotiation Research Project, which sees successful negotiators as those who "pursue (their) own interests while maintaining good human relations with (people) whose interests conflict with (theirs)," i.e., promoting collaborative vs. confrontational negotiation techniques (Fisher & Ury, 1981). The materials aim to develop awareness of the stages in the negotiation process, to present language, to promote listening to others and an understanding of cultural differences. The unit sequence is:

- relationship building
- agree procedure
- exchanging information
- questioning
- options
- bidding
- bargaining
- settling and concluding

The format is similar to other books in the series although "less dry" (Reed and Nolan, 1994:87) and encourages spoken vs. written responses through "self-record prompts." Again, by virtue of the self-study bias, there is little inventiveness and no actual tasks for using the language learned.

The video package is Visitron: the Language of Meetings and Negotiations. This is a professionally produced package from Longman, which is story-based and follows the fortunes of a particular company. There is a good deal of very valuable material, but the story line makes it difficult just to dip in. The package is therefore of most use on an extensive programme. In contrast, many learners requiring language for negotiating are at a level of management, which means their training programmes will be intensive.

York Associates has produced a video, Effective Negotiations (Utley, 1994), using the same formula of good and bad models as their other packs. Like LBES, the material is built around "stages in a typical negotiation" (quoted from their publicity material). The stages selected by the two groups of authors have much in common with each other. Effective Negotiations is built around nine (vs. eight) stages of which two, Establishing Positions and Dealing with Conflict, can be seen as differing slightly in philosophy from LBES's collaborative vs. competitive stance.

The materials available in this area provide learners with plenty of examples of language phrases for using at different stages of a negotiation, some ideas of good practice and some understanding of cultural differences. Negotiation tasks, case studies or simulations are not built-in features. Trainers are likely to need to devise their own activities to generate situations in which this language can be naturally and instinctively produced.

2.3.6 Correspondence

Publications covering aspects of correspondence were among the earliest Business English materials and date from a time when most writing courses were largely product-oriented. The swing towards process-oriented approaches only reached published material later in the 1980s (cf Study Writing, Hamp-Lyons & Heasley, 1987). Several of them have been revised. New editions are available, but the underlying construct has not usually altered. Materials are available for most levels from pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate. Lower-level books include form-filling activities and basic layout. Intermediate materials cover the forms and functions of a variety of business letters, ranging from general complaints and requests for information to specifics such as export/import arrangements.

For instance, *Writing for Business* (Wilson, 1987), covers letters for ordering, sending bills of lading and complaining. Specialized vocabulary and standard phrases are given significance. Longman Commercial Communication (Stanton & Wood, 1988) has the units:

- Enquiries
- Replies to Enquiries
- Orders
- Replies to Orders
- Packing Instructions
- Complaints
- Replies to complaints
- Rejecting orders

There are comprehension questions, and then questions to draw learners' attention to the order of information and some of the linguistic realisations of this. This is followed by gaped letters to complete and a range of other activities such as listening practice.

The main focus of attention is on the commercial aspect of correspondence and rather formalised letters. The target market is rather different from that of the material reviewed in earlier sections, being more for secretarial and clerical assistants than managers. One revised book in this area is the *Handbook of Commercial Correspondence* (Ashley, 1992) which, is for reference, as the title suggests. The new edition does mention fax and E-mail, but the accompanying workbook only provides an exercise for telex.

Another revised book is *Company to Company* (Littlejohn, 1994), but this has a more functional focus. Each unit contains study material that learners then apply through interactive tasks. They write, receive and respond to letters based on role cards. The updating of the material has included making "the language of the example letters more direct, where appropriate, to reflect present day practices" (Note on the second edition).

All the materials provide examples and models for learners to copy but language-awareness raising through analytical activities to identify information patterns and appropriate realisations is not common.

Given the dates of the publications, it is not surprising that little attention is given to modern transmittal methods and the impact these are having on written communications. There is one book, *Telex English* (Palstra, 1988), but the use of telex has largely been superseded by fax and E-mail. While fax is only a method of transmission, its existence is changing the nature of written communications so that a memo style is often adopted, in which points are numbered and listed. Together with E-mail, the result is for some written communications to break conventions of traditional written discourse and to resemble more closely features of spoken interaction. The time lag between changes in practice to changes in teaching to changes in published materials means that materials do not accurately reflect some aspects of current practice. Whether through unchanged constructs or lack of research, even the revised material does not tackle these issues.

2.3.7 Report Writing

The points discussed under correspondence regarding process vs. product approaches, information structuring and language awareness are equally applicable in the domain of report writing. There are very few publications in this area, and they are aimed at higher-level learners, mainly at upper intermediates.

Write for Business (Doherty, 1987) is one set of materials that has adopted a product and process approach and treats writing more as a cognitive activity than the correspondence courses do. The book arose from a course taught around the world, and it is divided into four sections:

1. Language Control: useful to dip into when learners' writing shows a need.
2. Information Control: raises the issues of gathering information, audience, purpose and planning.
3. Writing Tasks: includes writing about data and fax writing.
4. The Long Report: presents a long report and interview excerpts from the author discussing the actual report-writing process and particular features.

There is no fixed unit structure, but the overall approach is from evaluation to discussion to task. Poor and better examples are provided, and discussion points highlight the changes and the reasons behind them.

Business Reports in English (Comfort et al, 1984) also pays some attention to the process of report writing as illustrated by some of the unit headings:

Unit 1 Collecting the information
Unit 3 Selecting and organizing the material

Writing reports seems to be seen as a manager's or executive's responsibility, and the little available material takes account of the cognitive and creative process of writing. In contrast, the published materials for correspondence are still largely built on the product construct of writing. Moreover, they are aimed at a quite different sector of the market from any of the other materials reviewed in this category, Business Communication Skills.

2.4 BUSINESS CONTEXTS TEXTBOOKS

Among the earliest materials published with a focus on specific business contexts were readers. A series called *English for Careers* (Regents Publishing Company, Inc.) introduced students primarily "to the technical vocabulary of their specific field of interest" (quoted from the forewords to each volume). They claimed to "also improve overall ability to communicate in English," but it is doubtful that if used on their own this would have resulted. These were ESP readers, and the titles covered a very wide range of specific fields, with just a handful related to Business English:

EBP	Non-EBP
Marketing	*Medicine*
Advertising and Merchandising	*Atomic Energy*
International Trade	*Civil Engineering*
Accounting	*The Navy*
	The Petroleum Industry
	Agriculture etc.

(The full title of all these titles stated . . . in English)

They reflect an approach that was prevalent in the 1970s when ESP was often viewed as General English with special terminology. Each unit provides a glossary of technical terms, a single long text in which those terms occurred, a long set of WH questions directed at the subject matter and some true/false questions for review purposes. Today's materials illustrate how far ESP and EBP have come in less than two decades. The equivalent updated series for the 1990s is Prentice Hall's *Professional Reading Skills Series* which "is designed to develop your reading skills and improve your familiarity with how English is used in particular areas of work" (quoted from the introduction to each volume). Volumes include:

Accounting
Marketing
Advertising and the Promotion Industry
International Banking and Finance

Thus the business areas that are deemed of interest to learners are similar, and the texts still aim to introduce learners to some of the key language used in specific contexts. However, the texts selected for exploitation are all genuine extracts—vs. specially written—and the scope of sources and text types is much wider. Extracts have been selected from management textbooks, business and trade magazines and journals, the business and management pages of newspapers, etc. although it is rare to find samples of actual business documentation. Exploitation focuses on:

- the processing of information
- appropriate reading skills
- semi-technical vocabulary
- collocation vocabulary
- macro organisational text features

The exercises are varied and divided into pre-reading, skimming/scanning and while- or post-reading activities. These include note-taking, information transfer, matching, true/false, gap-filling and WH comprehension questions.

Outside of readers, one of the key business sectors for which there has been a demand for specific materials is banking and finance. Here there are the greatest number of individual books, but users still consider that there is a "lack of published ESP banking material" (Cassells, 1993:22). The available material includes:

1987 *Bank on your English*
1990 *English for International Banking and Finance*
1992 *English for International Banking and Finance*
1994 *English for Banking*

Typical topics include: bank organizations, foreign exchange and financial reports.

These are generally not multiskill materials; the approach is to present information through written or spoken texts with concomitant emphasis on reading and listening. These materials are generally not concerned with the presentation of grammatical language or skills, but with the transfer of known language and skills into the banking or finance field. Considerable attention is focused on introducing and then using terminology in context. Activities may provide opportunities for writing memos, giving a presentation or holding a meeting, but the materials do not set out to actually teach these aspects.

The most recent materials to be published with a subject/business focus are in the *Prentice Hall Business Management Series* (BME). The series aims to "bring together training material in:

- key management disciplines
- language knowledge, and
- communication skills."

(quoted from the introduction to each volume)

The target market is practising managers and learners on MBA or other business courses. The disciplines covered are:

- finance
- personnel
- marketing
- production and operations

In addition, there is *Language Reference for Business English,* which covers grammar, functions and communication skills in business contexts.

The business content is high and is based on written extracts from some of the Prentice Hall management textbooks and on scripted listening texts. There are activities for comprehension work, language and vocabulary development and tasks for the transfer of learning. Given the aim "the content is largely theory-based and avoids discussion of particular products and services" (Reed and Nolan 1994:86). The materials may give an "impression of dryness and complexity" but provide opportunities for "putting into practice communication skills" and for learners to apply the issues to their own business experience or to an area of interest to them.

All the above publications cover just one business field. *Executive Skills* (Minkoff, 1994) is intended as a main coursebook teaching all four language skills through content from three business fields, namely: human resources, marketing and finance.

As the Business English field develops, publication seems to be following the trend of EST some 15 years ago. That is, there is an increasing demand on the part of teachers and learners for not only material with a broad general content, but also for some more specific content. The last two years have seen a rapid growth in materials built on disciplines such as marketing and finance.

2.5 ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS

In sections 2.3 and 2.4 we have reviewed the textbooks that have most relevance to the post-experience learner. In this section we look at two categories of materials: General Business English textbooks that are aimed primarily at pre-experience students and supplementary materials.

2.5.1 General Business English Textbooks

These are coursebooks that parallel course books in general EFL. They comprise both single volume textbooks and series catering to students at different language levels. The majority seem to be aimed at the lower (pre) intermediate or intermediate to intermediate-plus learner. There are a very few that claim to be for complete beginners. The general assumption seems to be that learners will have studied English at some time in the past, probably at school. There may have been a considerable gap between that learning and the current learning situation, with little or only occasional intermittent active use. In such cases, the previous learning is likely to have stressed reading and writing over listening and speaking and to have laid foundations in grammatical structures without providing much opportunity for active communication.

Coursebooks in this category seem designed for students attending once or twice a week over an extended period of time. They usually consist of a student's books, and this either includes a key and tapescripts, or there is a separate teacher's book. One or two audio cassettes accompany most of these courses. Only a handful of them have an accompanying video. Some also include a workbook for class or self-study work. The main student markets appear to be those not yet at work and those in their first years of working for an organisation. The emphasis is on oral and aural skills; there may be no development of reading or writing skills although some later units can involve writing memos, correspondence or short progress reports. The content of the books assumes a general understanding of how business functions in western market economies; the books do not assume specialised knowledge. Common topics and activities found across a range of books include:

• you and your work:	presenting yourself presenting your job/company
• business travel:	meeting people at airports entertaining clients hotels time off
• meeting people:	face-to-face communication saying the right thing
• descriptions:	describing graphs and trends describing products
• arrangements:	talking about plans changing arrangements arranging meetings
• meetings	making arrangements taking part in a meeting
• telephoning:	leaving messages taking messages making arrangements

These common activities are presented and practiced within a wide range of business contexts. The business contexts that may be introduced include:

- marketing
- advertising
- company structures
- corporate identity/culture
- globalisation
- entrepreneurs
- retailing
- banking

A basic understanding or experience of these concepts is assumed, and the materials can be seen to have a Western European or American view of how business functions. When attention is focused on business in other areas, it is generally Japan that features through, for example, attitudes to and hours of work, plus concepts such as just-in-time and quality circles.

The approach adopted often mirrors that of the parallel EFL market: Every unit has a similar pattern, whatever the topic or situation, e.g.:

- arranging a meeting
  - Reading
  - Study points
  - Accents and pronunciation
  - Activity
- nightlife
  - Reading
  - Study points
  - Listening
  - Activity

Some of the books are based on grammar syllabuses, for instance, *Business Objectives* (Hollett, 1991), *Business Opportunities* (Hollett, 1994) and *The Macmillan Business English Program* (Badger & Menzies, 1993). Others, such as *Developing Business Contacts* (Brieger & Comfort, 1993), combine a grammatical and functional approach. EBP, unlike EST, has not clearly identified a core of grammar items that are more frequent or specific in use than others. However, 50 percent of the grammar section in *Language Reference for Business English* (Brieger & Comfort, 1992e) is given over to verbs. Other areas covered are sentence and clause types, nouns, adjectives and adverbs, determiners and propositions.

As with grammar, there is no core list of functions. Those selected include some common to EST, such as:

- classifying information
- connecting and sequencing ideas
- comparing and contrasting ideas
- cause and effect
- scale of likelihood

Other functions are either general:

- asking for and giving opinions
- agreeing and disagreeing
- advising and suggesting

Or they are more business-oriented:

- describing the organisation
- asserting and toning down information

Units in these coursebooks often follow the standard three-stage approach: presentation, practice and production with language study and vocabulary work normally preceding the practice phase. Some of the more recent publications have moved away from this. For example, *Insights into Business* (Lannon et al, 1993) moves from warmup activities to reading to a language focus and then to a skills focus.

The initial input stage may be through reading or listening texts. Where reading texts are used, it is generally clear (from statements of the source) that articles from a range of publications are genuine (meaning that they have not been written for the purpose of teaching, nor have they been vastly modified). It is less clear when sample letters, memos and other items of correspondence are given if these are entirely genuine or have been constructed. Many businesses are sensitive to market forces and unwilling to have their correspondence copied.

Similarly, the degree of authenticity of the listening texts is not obvious. In a few cases the back cover of the book states that the listening texts are authentic (or re-recordings of authentic data). More often the input is scripted, based on "an informed view" (an author's words).

As the focus of attention is language, the exploitation of the reading or listening input does not usually involve skills development. Likewise, most of the work is at the sentence/utterance level. Language awareness-raising and the impact of different relationships between speakers and different purposes on the choice and appropriateness of language and language functions seem not to be featured in these textbooks. They are intended for pre-experience students and not for the executive.

The amount of authentic material that is included in these coursebooks today is high. They are designed to be visually attractive with coloured photographs, charts and diagrams. This parallels the EFL coursebooks and contrasts with the business contexts or business communication skills books, where photographs are rare and colour, if used, is merely to highlight specific features such as language summaries. Activities are very varied, more so than in the more specialised books, which may relate to the younger and less-experienced target market.

2.5.2 Supplementary Material

As Business English comes of age the range of supplementary material is increasing. In this category fall some of the single-skill books, those that provide grammar or vocabulary support and those that offer ideas for fun approaches such as games.

One of the interesting single-skill books is *In Print* (Revell & Sweeney, 1993), as this adopts a different and realistic approach to reading skills. Each unit begins with a situation and sets a task. All the reading work carried out in the unit is then against this background. Each unit contains several documents from various sources (though there are only a few examples of letters, faxes or report extracts) and exercises for understanding and learning from the texts.

Two speaking-skills books are *Speaking Effectively* (Comfort et al, 1994) and *In at the Deep End* (Hollett et al, 1989), both of which provide a wide variety of activities. *Speaking Effectively* sets up role plays after students have listened to or looked at some stimulus material, which they then relate to their own experience. The topics are akin to those of a general Business English coursebook. There is a language and a vocabulary focus, so these materials belong to that general construct. *In at the Deep End* arranges its activities according to the type of interaction so there are ideas for one-to-one teaching, student pairwork and groupwork. It is also different from the general construct as it takes a deep-end approach. The suggested approach is that after needs analysis, students and teachers should select suitable tasks. Where necessary, students may then carry out some pre-task preparation of their own before performing the task. Teachers record features of the task performance for later review and analysis leading to new work.

Executive Listening (ed. Waistell, 1993), for intermediate to intermediate-plus students, is a good example of current constructs. It comprises both scripted and authentic data. The topics cover general business areas such as travel arrangements, business topics such as cross-cultural awareness and management practice and business communication skills topics such as handling meetings. The materials are designed with both teaching plus self-study in mind as well as the outlook of target learners; "the no-nonsense format and comb-binding are appropriate to training materials—this does not look like a school coursebook" (Light 1994:14).

Another underlying construct in much of the recent material is the centrality of vocabulary. Some of the supplementary vocabulary work develops basic vocabulary on selected general business topics (*Business Words*, Howard Williams & Herd, 1992) or business areas (*Build Your Business Vocabulary*, Flower, 1990). Other material helps learners with the idiomatic expressions prevalent among native-speaker business people (*Business Idioms International*, Goddard, 1994). Vocabulary acquisition is increasingly stressed by many practitioners, particularly in recent years, business verbs and the importance of collocations. *Build your Business Vocabulary* emphasises collocation, as does the individualised learning approach of *Business English* (Wilberg & Lewis, 1990).

At the 1994 Wiesbaden BESIG conference, there were workshops to share ideas on using games, icons, pictures, card games and realia—an indication perhaps, that supplementary activities are important to practitioners.

2.6 BUSINESS STUDIES METHODOLOGY: CASE STUDY MATERIAL

ESP practitioners recognised the need to modify their approaches to teaching to take account of the learning experiences of their students and the conceptual frameworks of the disciplines within which the ESP student operated. In Business English, this has led to the quite extensive use of case studies and simulations. These two terms are not always used in exactly the same way. Goodale, in *Meetings* (1994), states that the material is for simulations. For him, a case study involves comment on decisions that were made, whereas in a simulation, students are trying to solve problems. He writes, "During the simulation you are yourself. You keep your own name and personality. Do not 'act'. A simulation is not a role play and you will not be asked to be someone else." Howe in *Portfolio* (1987) defines the case study approach as "students as outsiders" and a simulation as "students as insiders," who may in this approach "adopt specific roles or responsibilities."

A case study on a business course, such as an MBA, provides large quantities of data that students must process and analyse in line with a specific brief. On lower-level courses the data provided is more limited, and the analysis and discussion required by the brief much less complex. Students are expected to identify the key business features and to apply management theories and principles to the existing situation and evaluate and recommend future courses of development and action. The cases may present just one aspect of a business and focus on, for example, marketing policies, or may take a broader issue like strategic management. They are case studies, and do not require the students to play a role; the analysis and recommendations are made within their personal and professional framework. Students characteristically work in syndicate groups, and are all provided with the same information.

Case studies for Business English students are generally aimed at those with at least an upper-intermediate proficiency in the language. Some mirror cases used on introductory business studies courses and present limited and selected material. *Portfolio* (Howe, 1987), *A Case for Business English* (Pote et al, 1988) and *Agenda Casebook* (Cotton & Owen, 1980) are representative of this category. They differ in their exploitation from straight business cases as they provide language work, may stage the various activities that need to be undertaken and may in fact require the learners to role-play. Moreover, the input on business courses is generally in print, whereas the language case studies may provide some input through conversations and discussions on cassette.

One set of materials that provides multimedia information and extensive data input is *Business Assignments* (Casler et al, 1989). This is the most advanced both linguistically and conceptually. There are eight cases, each with an information file containing a variety of business documentation ranging through accounts, memos, letters, reports, surveys and news articles. In addition, there are audio and video extracts to complement the print data. Guidance for the case and language and skills is provided in a separate deskwork book, and the extent to which it is used is optional. It is interesting that on the back cover of both *Business Assignments* and *Portfolio* there are equivalent statements, respectively "has been certified as realistic business material" and "validated for authenticity by. . . ."

2.7 MATERIALS FOR THE FUTURE

Mention has been made that audio cassette material is beginning to appear on CD cassettes. The more revolutionary development for materials is CD-Rom, and the first materials are appearing. Paul Brett of the University of Wolverhampton has produced a CD-Rom package entitled *English for Business: introduction to a company*. This offers interesting opportunities for students to self-select to work on lexis, grammar and functions at several levels of complexity. Self-study is an important aspect of Business English learning situations. These new technological developments offer interesting possibilities.

Language Training Services were among the first to recognise the need of the market for non-traditional classroom materials, and the LBES is designed as self-study material. The volumes are slim, there is just a single accompanying cassette, and the design is not typical of standard textbooks. The business person does not necessarily feel that he or she has been transported back to the school classroom. Much of the new material being published takes this market feature into account within its design insofar as there are answer keys and reference sections within the student's book. Beyond that, the underlying construct does not seem to be so different in most cases. The *Macmillan Business English Programme* (Badger & Menzies, 1993) goes further than most and contains both a coursebook and a self-study pack to "revise and practice further . . . to catch up on classes missed." Self-study appears to be in addition to rather than instead of classwork.

Business English: An Individualized Approach (Wilberg & Lewis, 1990) takes the self-study and self-directed learning concept the furthest by providing frameworks for "a negotiated syllabus, (with) centrality of student input." The book, also available as a loose-leaf folder, acts as a stimulus for students to record the language they use and hear, thus building their own bank of resources.

Framework materials are increasingly used by experienced practitioners. These are ways of structuring ideas for encouraging learners to work from their professional knowledge and expertise rather than presenting them with predigested materials. The first set of framework resource material for teachers was published two years ago (Reed and Nolan, 1992). They suggest that when "information has already been selected and processed by an outside agent, course participants have a limited degree of investment in the ideas . . . with implications for the amount and range of language to be practiced and learnt" (1993:9). The potential for frameworks is similarly viewed by the authors of *Teaching Business English* (Ellis & Johnson, 1994), as they devote nearly 20 pages to a chapter entitled "Framework Materials;" in contrast, the chapter on published materials is some 10 pages.

Business English courses should be ESP courses and be tailored to the needs of individuals or small groups. The proliferation of Business English material makes it difficult for teachers to systematically select appropriately from the wealth of different materials. The *Complete Business English Course Generator* (Nelson, 1994) provides a computer-integrated system for linking needs analysis to course design and into materials selection. The database covers a wide selection of all the categories of materials covered here, enabling sound sampling and choice.

2.8 IN CONCLUSION

As a result of current economic and political developments in different parts of the world, Business English is currently undergoing a period of rapid growth. Indeed, it is becoming the leading branch of ESP. The situation with Business English is in many ways analogous to the situation with EST and EAP in the 1970s and, 1980s. There is a huge demand for materials, and the publication of various kinds of Business English textbook has seemingly become viable for the big publishers. In fact, publication of Business

English textbooks is at present on a scale never reached with EAP and EST. But, again as with EAP and EST, the publication of materials has been far ahead of actual research into the skills and language required for business communication. Business English is a materials-led movement rather than a research-led movement.

There are a number of advantages with this situation. The textbooks that have been produced clearly draw on valuable experience and good teaching practice. They are well-presented, thereby inspiring confidence in the professionalism of the course and its teachers, a key factor with business people. They also exhibit a good feel for what will work in a teaching situation and provide a variety of activities for classroom use or self-access work. Nevertheless the reliance on the materials writer's intuition about, or informed understanding of, business communication does give rise to some concern. With so many potential exponents for each function, there is a need to identify those that are most common and those that are appropriate for different levels and settings.

There are a number of differences between the ways in which EAP and EST developed in the, 70s and, 80s and the ways in which Business English is developing at present. One is the way in which what we have called English for general business purposes has remained rather different from English for Specific Business Purposes. We have noted that a high proportion of the recent publications in Business English have focused on either specific skills or specific branches of business. Yet there is also a need for courses and materials that provide an introduction to general and low-level aspects of the language of business. Our survey has not revealed a strong consensus on a core that can and should be taught in that kind of situation. Brieger and Sweeney's reference and practice book on the grammar and functions of Business English (Brieger and Sweeney, 1994) does provide a good list of functions used in business, together with examples of exponents. Given the numbers of these exponents, the coverage in the more general Business English textbooks is variable.

We have argued in this report that Business English for foreign and second language learners has been hampered by the lack of research into the actual spoken and written texts produced and used during English-medium native to non-native or non-native to non-native business communication. This is partly, we would suggest, because of access to data and partly because of the attention given to EAP and EST in M.A. courses in Applied Linguistics and TEFL and the number of dissertations on aspects of EAP or EST text that have emerged from such courses and whose findings have eventually found their way into journals such as English for Specific Purposes. With the growth of special conferences on either Business English in general or specific skills such as negotiation, and with the growth in the numbers of students taking an interest in Business English while taking a post-experience M.A. in applied linguistics, there will undoubtedly be much more research carried out and published.

We have also shown that, despite the lack of research, published teaching materials have covered a wide range of skills and subject specialisms. Indeed, we would suggest that the discrepancy between the textbooks and actual data is much less than it was at the time of Williams' original investigation (Williams, 1988) and that published textbooks are now based on a good mix of sound teaching experience and informed understanding of how different texts work in business communication. Nonetheless there is a definite need for greater integration of language work and business strategies along the lines of the increasingly sophisticated work in the area of negotiation language and skills.

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