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## **New Ways in Teaching Business English**

**Author:** Chan, C. S. C. & Frendo, E., Editors (2014)

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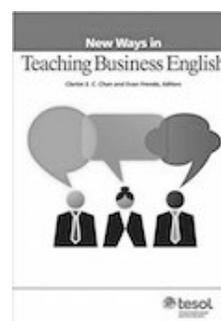
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*New Ways in Teaching Business English* by Chan and Frendo is a collection of various innovative class activities for teaching business English to English as Second Language (ESL) learners. The book centers on helping teachers improve students' language skills, communication skills, and autonomy, as well as make use of authentic materials, technology and the Internet. Providing a broad perspective on how to teach business English with abundant classroom activities that are created by contributors who come from different countries and contexts, the book proves itself to be a remarkable reference for English teachers and learners major in business who wish to teach business English and to improve their language and communication skills in business-related fields.

The book consists of 84 innovative class activities in six parts, each starting with a general indicator, which includes target proficiency level, context, objectives, class time preparation time, and the resources teachers might need for the activity. Following the general indicator is the activity procedure, which is a step-by-step lesson plan. Finally, the teaching idea ends with a helpful list of caveats and options, which are teacher-friendly suggestions of how to use and adjust the activity to make it flexible for different teaching contexts. I like this section of the book because it is very important and useful. Some teachers might not think through different situations and potential problems when employing each activity, so this section helps them consider potential hidden troubles and gives suggestions on how they should respond to different circumstances. Even though the activities in the book are created from a variety of contexts, they could

be easily adapted for use in local situations. For example, teachers may have hard copy materials ready before class where the Internet is not easily accessible to learners, and the book provides teachers with alternate video-sharing websites to display where YouTube is blocked in certain countries.

Part 1 provides eight ideas that business English teachers can use in order to gain a better understanding of stakeholders in diverse contexts. The activities in Part 1 are mainly designed for prospective employers and current employees. In this part, the authors emphasize the importance of seeing and understanding learners' needs, which include not only "target needs and professional needs, but also the subjective needs of the learners" (p. 4). Therefore, the activities in this section primarily aim to build awareness of English needs and English competence in the workplace, to give teachers a better understanding of workplace context, and to discuss the company's future plans as well as personal goals.

Part 2 consists of 22 lessons for enhancing learners' spoken business communication skills, while simultaneously promoting their listening and reading skills through a range of activities. These activities include improving pronunciation by underlining intonation and stress, providing oral fluency practice by incorporating listening and reading into practices, and using English as lingua franca in authentic business contexts. Additionally, different spoken genres that are very important to learners are covered in this section, such as negotiations, presentations, conference calls, panel discussions, and job interviews.

Part 3, which focuses on improving learners' written business communication skills, contains 16 lessons. Although the authors divide the activities into spoken and written sections, this does not mean that written communication and spoken communication are mutually exclusive; rather, they are often intertwined in real-life situations. The authors give a convincing example of why they are intertwined, stating that "if video résumés become more common than written résumés in the future, then the genre of résumés will have to be taught as a spoken as well as a written one" (p. 102). This part of the book includes several genres, such as contracts, invoices, résumés, and letters of recommendation for business English teachers to systematically prepare their lesson plans and activities with the objective of improving learners' written and spoken business communication skills.

The activities in Part 4 focus on how to use authentic materials and language in teaching business English to improve learners' language and communication skills. The authors are aware of the ambiguity of teaching authentic business English that relies on native speakers' intuitions about language use, which are often wrong. Consequently, it is a challenge to provide an accurate reflection of the actual use of the language by speakers and writers in natural contexts for teaching and assessment materials (Biber & Reppen, 2002). This section contains 19 activities centering specifically on language characteristics that are found in authentic business texts, such as company websites, commercials, and infomercials, as well as authentic materials from outside the business world (e.g., government websites and movies). One of my favorite activities in this section is *Using a business letter corpus to explore some ways of making requests* because this activity makes use of Business Letter Corpus and offers learners a broader picture

of the natural ways in which businesspeople make requests in different contexts. Therefore, the use of Business English Corpus can help learners appropriately use accurate language when making requests. What is more, the inclusion of caveats and options at the end provide suggestions of similar activities design and various applications of using corpus analysis in teaching Business English, and point out some shortcomings of the use of Business English Corpus. Teachers of business English will find these activities a helpful and thought-provoking guideline to use authentic materials effectively in their teaching.

Part 5 centers on intercultural perspectives and includes ten activities. The activities in this section aim to raise learners' intercultural awareness and cross-cultural communication skills by including issues such as working in international contexts, different genres and ethics, communication failure, and critical incidents. This section is useful because it touches upon business ethic issues that would happen in real life. With the development of global economic integration, business cooperation among different countries continues to grow, and cross-cultural communication is inevitable. The activities in this section are not only intended to raise learners' cultural awareness, help them explore business ethics, and prevent them from having cross-cultural communication failures in business contacts, but also improve learners' speaking, writing, listening, and reading proficiency. For example, the lesson "*What to do? Creating business ethics videos*" teaches students to understand business ethics, develops comprehensive English skills, and enhances cross-cultural communication skills by discussing different scenarios for business ethics and creating business ethnics videos, which allow students to research cases, write scripts, practice writing and speaking, and correct errors.

Part 6 is the last part of the book. In this section, the authors seek to promote learner autonomy in business English. They highlight the fact that learners should take responsibility and guide themselves to gain autonomy to learn outside their studies (Lee, 1998). They also point out that learner autonomy in business English has not been emphasized by many researchers or practitioners. To fill these gaps, the authors offer eight activities for encouraging business English learners' autonomy, such as integrating learners' reflections on tasks, peer teaching and evaluation, self-directed learning, and workplace observations.

The book provides a wealth of relevant knowledge points and materials, such as target vocabulary and phrases, sentence frames, writing templates, websites, and learning charts, among others. For example, there are examples of conversation starters that may be used in a conference simulation and an authentic apology from the airline industry. However, it is advisable to provide target phrases, sentence frames, writing templates or grammatical features that are being used most frequently in business English combined with authentic materials for each activity in Parts 2 and 3. For instance, in Part 3, when teaching students how to write a cover letter, the appendix only provides a description and explanation of the structure of a cover letter, but it does not provide grammatical features or sentence frames that are often found in cover letters. Both teachers and learners would benefit from writing templates and grammatical features if the authors could include these elements in this activity.

In conclusion, *New Ways in Teaching Business English* is a valuable addition to the field of business English teaching. The book's flexibility of implementing activities and extensive use and suggestions of authentic materials make it easy to be adapted by and accessible to business English teachers from all around the world. Particularly, the inclusion of potential issues that might happen during activities and the appendixes of important materials for activities make the adaptations of each activity feasible in different contexts. Business English teachers and learners majoring in business will find this book a fun and engaging read.

## References

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