English for Business Communication

Second Edition

A short course consisting of five modules:
Cultural diversity and socialising, Telephoning, Presentations, Meetings and Negotiations

Teacher's Book

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# Contents

**Introduction** iv  
**Module 1 Cultural diversity and socialising**  
Unit 1 Building a relationship 1  
Briefing 1  
1 Cross-cultural understanding (1) 1  
2 Welcoming visitors 4  
3 Small talk: keeping the conversation going 6  
Unit 2 Culture and entertainment 10  
Briefing 10  
1 Cross-cultural understanding (2) 10  
2 Inviting, and accepting or declining 11  
3 Eating out 16  
**Module 2 Telephoning**  
Unit 3 Could I leave a message? 18  
Briefing 18  
1 Preparing to make a telephone call 18  
2 Receiving calls 19  
3 Taking and leaving messages 20  
4 Asking for and giving repetition 23  
5 The secretarial barrier 24  
Unit 4 Good to hear from you again! 27  
Briefing 27  
1 Cross-cultural communication on the telephone (1) 27  
2 Setting up appointments 29  
3 Changing arrangements 32  
4 Ending a call 33  
Unit 5 Unfortunately there’s a problem … 36  
Briefing 36  
1 Cross-cultural communication on the telephone (2) 36  
2 Problem-solving on the telephone 36  
3 Complaints 38  
**Module 3 Presentations**  
Unit 6 Planning and getting started 43  
Briefing 43  
1 Presentation technique and preparation 43  
2 The audience 45  
3 Structure (1) The introduction 46  
Unit 7 Image, impact and making an impression 50  
Briefing 50  
1 Using visual aids: general principles 50  
2 Talking about the content of visual aids 51  
3 Describing change 55  
Unit 8 The middle of the presentation 58  
Briefing 58  
1 Holding the audience’s attention 58  
2 Structure (2) The main body 59  
3 Listing information 59  
4 Linking ideas 61  
5 Sequencing 62  
Unit 9 The end is near … this is the end 65  
Briefing 65  
1 Structure (3) The end 65  
2 Summarising and concluding 66  
3 Questions and discussion 68  
**Module 4 Meetings**  
Unit 10 Making meetings effective 74  
Briefing 74  
1 What makes a good meeting? 74  
2 Chairing a meeting 76  
3 Establishing the purpose of a meeting 78  
Unit 11 Sorry to interrupt, but … 83  
Briefing 83  
1 The structure of decision-making 83  
2 Stating and asking for opinion 84  
3 Interrupting and handling interruptions 86  
Unit 12 What do you mean by … ? 91  
Briefing 91  
1 Asking for and giving clarification 91  
2 Delaying decisions 93  
3 Ending the meeting 94  
**Module 5 Negotiations**  
Unit 13 Know what you want 98  
Briefing 98  
1 Types of negotiation 98  
2 Preparation for a negotiation 100  
3 Making an opening statement 101  
Unit 14 Getting what you can 105  
Briefing 105  
1 Bargaining and making concessions 105  
2 Accepting and confirming 107  
3 Summarising and looking ahead 109  
Unit 15 Not getting what you don’t want 112  
Briefing 112  
1 Types of negotiator 112  
2 Dealing with conflict 112  
3 Rejecting 115  
4 Ending the negotiation 117  
**Optional case studies** 119
Introduction to the Second Edition

This second edition provides improvements to the overall design and appearance of the book as well as various small changes and updating of material. The most important content change is the introduction of more practice exercises in response to users' requests. See the paragraph Quick Communication Check below.

Aims of the course

The course is intended as an opportunity for intermediate-level students to develop confidence and fluency in five key communication contexts: socialising, telephoning, presenting information, participating in meetings and handling negotiations. The course has twin aims: improving communication technique and developing and consolidating the target language appropriate to the above communication contexts.

A further key aim is the development of effective learning strategies for both language and communication skills. The teacher's role in this is critical. It is important that certain principles are upheld, such as the need for preparation of communication tasks, the importance of practice, and the need for linking the teaching objectives with perceived professional needs. The students should be encouraged to reflect on their own performance, to identify ways in which it can be improved, and to monitor both the accuracy of their language and the effectiveness of their communication skills.

The course is primarily geared towards improving speaking and listening skills, though reading and writing tasks are also included. Part of the method for the development of fluency and confidence in speaking is the importance of involving students in as much discussion as possible. As a skills-driven course this is especially suitable, as students are encouraged to make their own suggestions based on their own experience, however limited. There is plenty of scope for eliciting students' ideas, impressions and opinions. Classes should be geared towards as much participation as possible. Everyone has experience of all five of the skill areas treated in the course, whether in English or in their own language.

Structure

The five modules can be studied consecutively as a conventional course. However, with some students a module may be studied where specific training in one area of communication skills is required.

There is, nonetheless, a certain logic in the order of the five modules. The first module, Socialising, is a scene setter. It establishes the teaching and learning approach used in the course. The second module, Telephoning, treats a fairly restrictive amount of language as is typical in telephoning. The third, Presentations, is in many ways the core of the course, as skills involved in presenting are often a feature of participating in meetings and negotiations. However, the more interactive nature of the latter two contexts is reflected in the nature of the material in the final two modules. These two, and the Presentations module, contain many recommendations for effective communication strategies and at the same time build up the students' repertoire in terms of language.

The final module, Negotiations, is perhaps, unsurprisingly, the most challenging in terms of language. In many ways, but partly because the language is more complex, effective study of the final module is dependent on having already dealt with the previous module on Meetings.
Listening material

There are over 80 different recordings in the book. The tasks accompanying them range from initial general comprehension points to understanding important details.

The first listening typically concentrates on meaning. Students are asked to identify key information. Check carefully that these main points are understood. It is important that meaning is established before students are asked to think about language. As a general rule, teaching aims should keep these two activities separate. The distinction should be made clear to the students and should influence students’ developing learning strategies.

The second listening task normally focuses on the target language for the unit in question. Encourage students to repeat what they hear and to make notes. Writing down new language normally aids recall, but not all students can be persuaded to do this. In any case, avoid slowing down lessons for excessive writing of models from the tape.

Occasional writing – and even use of dictation – can be helpful.

Some of the later listening material in the final module on Negotiations is more difficult than the earlier modules.

Pronunciation work

There is little overt treatment of pronunciation features in the course. However, it is an option to include this aspect of language training with this material. It is recommended that if you want to spend additional time to focus on features of phonology, the course does offer good, authentic-sounding dialogues. These can be used to sensitize students to the implications of stress, intonation, pausing and thought groups. For further guidance on these aspects, see Speaking Clearly (Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Reading texts

Throughout the book, certain principles relating to efficient reading techniques should be upheld. Explain that it is not necessary to understand every word. The objective is to understand the main ideas. Detailed reading or studying of texts is neither desirable nor is it required.

The tasks accompanying reading texts mainly relate to the identification of key points and are designed to stimulate students’ thoughts and ideas on the topics included.

Language Checklists

The Language Checklist at the end of each unit is a summary of some of the key language that has been introduced in the unit or that can be used in practice tasks and role plays. The Language Checklists are not prescriptive and offer only a sample of the sort of language that can be used. They are included as a support to students, as a possible self-study resource and as quick reference material.

Always check that students understand the phrases offered and that they are able to pronounce them correctly. Remind them that they can be selective, choosing the phrases they prefer, or even alternatives not included in the Checklists.

The Checklists are useful in preparation for the role plays in each unit. Students should also refer back to previous Checklists when they need to.

Quick Communication Check

Each unit now includes a page of exercises designed to offer an additional check on students’ learning. The exercises reflect the target language in each unit, typically represented in Language Checklists. These exercises are designed for self-study use, having an integrated answer key on each page. The Quick Communication Check thus serves as further practice, as consolidation, and as a simple test to check student’s learning.
Skills Checklists

The Skills Checklists summarise the key points of technique for effective communication skills as introduced in each unit. In some cases, further points are included, either for discussion in class or as additional recommendations for students to think about in their own time.

Like the Language Checklists, the Skills Checklists are intended as a source of reference for future work, especially in preparing for telephone calls, presentations, meetings or negotiations where the language used will be English.

Transfer tasks

In most cases the aim of the Transfer tasks is to have students practise target language in defined communication contexts that relate directly to their own immediate environment, their home, their studies or their work. In this way the Transfers aim to create a bridge between the classroom and the student’s world.

Timing

Most units will take around three hours. Approximate recommended timings are given in the Teacher’s Book for each section of each unit. Guide times include neither any material marked as optional nor the Transfer tasks. The latter require homework or out-of-class preparation.

The times suggested are approximate and will vary according to the preferences and competence of the students involved, as well as student numbers. It is important not to labour the material. The tasks are intended to be fairly quick, but use your discretion. Clearly with extended role plays or where preparation is involved there may be some variation beyond the times suggested.