

**BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE DESIGN:
A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, English seems to be an indisputable lingua franca. An increasing number of non-native speakers use it to communicate among themselves and with native speakers on issues of global interest in various fields: administrative, cultural, diplomatic, economic, scientific, social, etc. Not surprisingly, an impressive number of people resort to English language courses to achieve a proficiency level that would allow them to join this global conversation that they are interested in.

English language courses have themselves adapted to the learners, by providing content that is suitable for their needs. Hence, there is a wide range of so-called courses in English for Specific Purposes (ESP): focusing on increasing the participants' economic/ legal/ technical ... vocabulary, as well as on domain-specific writing or speaking skills. Furthermore, teaching methodologies continuously adapt to learners and domains, as do the technologies used in classrooms.

In this ever changing environment, it seems only natural that educators design and test new approaches, methods or materials. New books and articles are published every year to disseminate the findings of projects on classroom experiments, reconsidering educational principles and means to conduct efficient teaching and learning processes.

The book "Business English Course Design: A Teacher's Perspective" tackles the question *What makes a Business English course stand out?*. To answer it, the authors start from the role of the teachers, basic educational principles, and general considerations on ESP. Subsequently, a significant part of the book is dedicated to practical aspects of language teaching and learning in the business field.

Chapter 2: Teachers' profile aims to delineate the portrait of the teacher in general, and the English language teacher in particular, as seen from a European perspective. We review the current norms regarding the professional competences teachers are expected to have by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, comparing them to local/ national norms as evinced in Romanian legislation and

programmatic documents. To reach the desired competences, junior teachers are supposed to be assisted by more senior ones, who undertake the role of mentors. Consequently, we also briefly discuss the role of mentors and peer-assistance in career development in (language) teaching.

Chapter 3: A brief overview of educational principles and methods highlights the necessity for teachers to be well trained in pedagogical issues. By paying attention to their learners, teachers will observe the variations in knowledge and ability, as well as in psychological traits. By everyday classroom experience, introspection, peer observation and continuing professional training, educators will enlarge their array of teaching methods and strategies, so as to accommodate each and every type of learner they encounter. By employing a variety of assessment tools, teachers monitor and foster learner achievement, course improvement and, ultimately, self-development.

Chapter 4: Business English language course design capitalizes on both theoretical and applied issues in the field. Firstly, we relate the teaching of Business English to the encompassing notion of English for Specific Purposes. Secondly, we briefly consider the specific needs of Business English students. Thirdly, we present a wealth of ideas related to topics such as: selection and/ or design of relevant materials, blended learning, the use of web resources etc. Fourthly, we propose practical activities to encourage students' use of language skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing, grammar, vocabulary), as well as of more general self-evaluation skills.

Chapter 5: Conclusions summarizes the main findings and attempts to assess whether the book has provided a clear and coherent answer to the question it sprung from.

Acknowledgements

This book has emerged from its authors' own experience as Business English teachers at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies – ASE, Romania. For more than a decade, we have been challenged to improve our own knowledge of (general and business) English and educational tools, by our stakeholders: students in various business Faculties, colleagues in the Department of Modern Languages and Business Communication, faculty and university management staff, representatives of the business environment or of the national (re)accreditation body. Our interaction with each of them has enriched us both as human beings and as professionals.

We have also benefited from the support of our peers from other educational institutions. On regular basis, we have met and exchanged good practice examples on occasions such as: national or international conferences, or teacher training courses. Among the latter, we dearly remember the project entitled “Quality, innovation, communication in the system of continuing training of didactics specialists”, jointly undertaken by the Romanian Ministry of Education and six top Romanian universities, which we participated in during the summer of 2013. Chapter 2 and – to some extent – chapter 4 of this book stemmed from debates and assignments related to this project.

Last but not least, we are all indebted to our families for patience and moral support. We hope they too will benefit from our interest in education and foreign language teaching in a business environment, as the latter has constantly challenged us to open up to others while improving ourselves.

CHAPTER 2

A TEACHER'S PROFILE

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A TEACHER'S PROFILE

The aim of the present chapter is to offer an example of how the recent legislation regarding national education in Romania can be enforced, with focus on the development of junior English teachers' competences during their first year of employment. We will briefly present the core competences that a teacher should possess, as well as the role of the mentor who assists the junior teacher during the induction period, according to national and European legislation.

2.1. Teachers' professional competences at EU and Romania level

The paramount role that teachers play in society has naturally triggered a lot of reflection on what it means to be a good teacher; an impressive number of books deal with either the personality or the professional competences a good teacher should possess in order to efficiently contribute to the moulding of characters and the formation of successful professionals, irrespective of the field the latter would operate in (cf. Bartlett 1990, Furlong and Maynard 1995, Head and Taylor 1997, Turner-Bisset 1999, Westerman 1991, a.o.).

'What makes a good teacher?' is a question that receives specific answers from various stakeholders. Learners expect kindness, closeness, on the one hand, and fun and practice-oriented teaching, on the other. Parents consider that their offspring's academic results and interpersonal conduct are influenced by the teacher's professional and personal abilities. Fellow teachers expect a certain level of 'professionalism' (which might be defined as adherence to a set of commonly agreed standards), cooperation and mutual respect. Local and central education authorities demand compliance with complex regulations and procedures as regards the teaching and learning process, continuing professional development, learners' academic results etc. Employers expect graduates to prove their mastery of the profession they train for, as well as readiness for lifelong learning.

The European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, is another stakeholder interested in providing a clear framework for teachers, against the background of the knowledge-based society. In 2005, the Commission elaborated the "Common European Principles for European Teacher Qualifications" which states both the key principles that characterize the teaching profession and the key competences teachers should possess across the EU, irrespective of the subject they teach or the

country they teach in. There are four Common European principles regarding education, as presented in Table 1, and three key teacher competences, as epitomized in Table 2 below.

Table 1. Common European principles regarding education
(European Commission 2005: 2-3)

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Details</i>
✓ a well-qualified profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All teachers are graduates from higher education institutions. ➤ Teachers working in the field of initial vocational education should be highly qualified in their professional area and have a suitable pedagogical qualification. ➤ Every teacher should have the opportunity to continue their studies to the highest level in order to develop their teaching competences and to increase their opportunities for progression within the profession. ➤ Teacher education is multidisciplinary, to ensure that teachers have <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ extensive subject knowledge ○ a good knowledge of pedagogy ○ the skills and competences required to guide and support learners ○ an understanding of the social and cultural dimension of education
✓ a profession placed within the context of lifelong learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teachers should be supported in order to continue their professional development throughout their careers. ➤ They and their employers should recognise the importance of acquiring new knowledge, and teachers should be able to innovate and use evidence to inform their work. ➤ They need to be employed in institutions which value lifelong learning in order to evolve and adapt throughout their whole career. ➤ Teachers should be encouraged to review evidence of effective practice and engage with current innovation and research in order to keep pace with the evolving knowledge society. ➤ They should be encouraged to participate actively in professional development, which can include periods of time spent outside the education sector, and this should be recognised and rewarded within their own systems.
✓ a mobile profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mobility should be a central component of initial and continuing teacher education programmes. ➤ Teachers should be encouraged to participate in European