

Developing a teacher-training course in business English

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The aim of this paper is to describe the University of Algiers Business English Curriculum Project developed in the summer 2005, whose main objective is to train teachers in business English teaching. The course we are suggesting can be regarded as an educational innovation insofar as it has been designed to cope with the particular demands of teachers who wish to teach English to business and professional people.

A number of university English language departments, private language schools and public and private institutions have recently perceived a potential market in the business English sector, and realized that EFL-trained teachers, frequently lacking a management background needed to build a solid foundation in business knowledge and in business methodology and practice through an appropriate trainer training course.

This paper includes six sections:

1. Description of the course
2. Course objectives and learning outcomes
3. Targeted audience
4. Length of the course
5. Course requirements and evaluation
6. Course components

It also provides a basic bibliography and webliography

1. Description of the Course

Business English is a term used to cover the English taught to a wide range of professionals. The program may also make room for in-company training

The TTBE is a teacher-training programme aimed at teachers with a university degree in English /TEFL. This programme encompasses professional skills and general language skills. A business background is not needed, nor is experience of teaching business English. The business English teacher does not have to be an expert in any particular field. S/he is primarily a language teacher and the learner, who has the specific content knowledge of business, will bring that knowledge to the course.

The programme will help teachers to build a solid foundation in business knowledge and in business English methodology and practice. It will also help them develop a professional approach to clients and their needs.

The programme is essentially based on a portfolio of practical activities and resource materials but there will also be lectures. The TTBE course will help teachers to do a needs analysis, to set instructional objectives, to make a strategic plan for language learning, to manage a language learning programme, to evaluate progress and to identify and solve language learning problems.

Two options are offered to prospective candidates: a short eight-week course, leading to a Certificate in Teaching Business English (CTBE) and a long fifteen-week course leading to a Master's degree in Teaching Business English (MTBE)

2. Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The lectures, workshops, readings, assignments and activities provided throughout the course are intended to help candidates to:

- Gain an understanding of the professional skills required for teaching BE.
- Develop basic knowledge of business English and identify the methodologies which are most effective in the BE classroom.
- Gain an understanding of the basic business concepts as well as the practices needed for the BE teacher.

By the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate:

- A general understanding of the main professional skills required of a business English teacher (eg. Do a needs analysis, set objectives, make a strategic programme, evaluate progress, solve students' problems, etc).
- A knowledge of the main classroom methodologies regarded as most effective for BE teaching.
- A knowledge of basic business concepts and practices.

3. Targeted Audience

This course is intended for qualified teachers of general English. Candidates should hold a first university degree (Licence d'anglais). Some experience of general English teaching to adults will be useful.

4. Length of the Course

The duration of the short eight-week intensive course is 60 hours i.e. 15 hours per week.

The duration of the long fifteen-week course is 120 hours, i.e. 05 hours per week. Trained teachers could adapt the Teaching Business English syllabus to any level: Beginner (general English), Intermediate or Advanced. The course emphasizes participation, classroom interaction and individual creativity.

The short course will lead to a Certificate in Teaching Business English (CTBE).

The long course will lead to a Master's degree in Teaching Business English (MTBE)

5. Course Requirements and Evaluation

The following evaluation instruments will be used to assess students' achievement:

- class participation, box of tools, micro-teaching and long project assignment (dissertation) for the long course
- class participation, box of tools, micro-teaching, a short project assignment (lesson plan compendium) and examination papers for the short course.
 - a. Class participation and written reflections in journals (10%): the candidates will be asked to write a reflective journal on their learning experience and to hand it in at the end of the course.

b. **Box of tools (20%):** as new practices or activities will be suggested throughout the course, the students will be asked to keep a portfolio of practical activities and to generate ways to apply them in their own BE classrooms. These activities will serve as original, trainer-created resources ready for the learner's immediate use.

c. **Micro-teaching (20%):** the candidates will choose a teaching point and develop it into a lesson that they will teach in a micro-teaching session. Evaluation grids to assess the effectiveness of the lesson will be distributed to all students (and teachers). This will give the candidates the opportunity to share their work and learn from other learners.

d. **Project Assignment for the long course: ; Dissertation (50%) :**

Students will develop a mini syllabus for teaching business English to a specific audience. The project should present the rationale for choosing the topic and the background supporting this choice. It should clearly demonstrate the principles of the business English training covered by the course, and should be documented with their readings and with activities to be implemented in class. The project will be presented twelve months after the course is over. It will be defended publicly before a board of examiners.

e. **Project Assignment for the short course(50%):**

Students will present a compendium of lesson plans (3-4) that they will have already prepared with classmates and the teacher.

f. **Examination Papers (50%):**

Students on the short course will be assessed through three examination papers relating to the three components covered in the course. Each paper consists of four questions requiring short answers or full prose answers.

- Paper #1 is on Business Concepts and Business Social English and is worth 15%

- Paper #2 is on Methodology of Teaching Business English and is worth 10 %

- Paper #3 is on Professional Skills in Teaching Business English and is worth 25%.

6. Course Components

6.1 Component #1: Business Concepts and business Social English

By the end of the course, candidates should be able to:

1. Understand oral forms of business communication
2. Use social English in business
3. Use written forms of communication
4. Understand basic corporate structures
5. Understand basic marketing principles
6. Understand basic financial terms
7. Understand basic terminology related to research and development:
Brainstorming / focus groups / desk-top research / questionnaires / proposals
/ pilot studies / prototypes / working parties / product development / testing
8. Understand basic terminology related to production and quality assurance
9. Understand general business documents

6.2. Component # 2 : Methodology of Teaching Business English

By the end of the course candidates should be able to :

1. Demonstrate a knowledge of different approaches to language teaching and a clear understanding of language learning concepts and their relevant application to business English situations.
2. Demonstrate a knowledge of specific skills:
 - oral skills: making business phone calls, giving instructions, making sales presentations
 - writing skills: writing letters of confirmation, letters of reply, reports
3. Demonstrate a knowledge of TBE materials:
 - authentic materials (newspapers, magazines, business journals, advertisements, documents, video, radio, TV...)
 - company materials (brochures, reports, figures ...)
 - authentic material provided by the client and related to his field.
 - The Internet
4. Demonstrate an ability to adapt texts from authentic material and develop various activities such as :
 - comprehension questions/ true-false statements/ multiple-choice questions/information-gap activities
 - creating tasks to practice synonyms and antonyms, etc

- 5- Demonstrate an ability to evaluate and exploit published TBE or EFL materials as well as give reading lists to the learners and have them perform different tasks: summarizing, contextualizing facts and figures, triggering discussion, etc.

6.3. Component # 3 : Professional Skills in Teaching Business English

By the end of the course, participants should be able to :

1. Conduct an effective needs analysis;
 2. Design business English syllabus
 3. Draw a course plan : select, evaluate and create materials
- for pre-experience learners and job-experienced learners

Conclusion

This curriculum project is tentative and has not been implemented yet. It is hoped that when the course starts off, it will equip teachers not only with the knowledge and skill needed to teach the language but also with an adequate business culture.

Suggested Course Readings: paper and internet sources

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