

Email English

Review by Neil McBeath

The Royal Air Force of Oman.

EMAIL ENGLISH by Paul Emmerson. 2004, Macmillan. ISBN: 1-405-01294-3, pp. 96.

Regular readers of the *TESL Reporter* cannot have failed to see Chan and Jixian's Tip for Teachers on *Teaching Business Email Writing* (37(1); 61-65). Coincidentally, Paul Emmerson has produced a textbook entirely devoted to this topic.

The book is composed of 32 double-page units, which are arranged in the following sections: Introduction (3 Units); Basics (9 Units); Language Focus (5 Units); Commercial (6 Units); Problems (2 Units); Direct/Indirect (2 Units) and Personal (3 Units). Many of these sections are self-defining. The five units in Language Focus, for example, are concerned with verb forms (i.e., tenses, comparative forms, sentence structure, common mistakes, and spelling and punctuation). Direct/Indirect, by contrast, is concerned with the pragmatic problem of *Being direct and brief* (pp. 62-63) as opposed to *Being indirect and polite* (pp. 64-65). The exercises are followed by a Phrase Bank Index (pp. 74-84) subdivided into Basics, Arrangements, Writing Styles, Commercial, Complaints and Apologies, Personal, and Reports. The book concludes with an answer key (pp. 85-96).

From this outline it can be seen that while the Notes to Students (p. 4) claim that the book's target audience is "learners of English at intermediate and upper intermediate level," it is also suitable for advanced learners and could be used for self-access learning. The Notes to the Teacher (p. 8) offer surprising freedom: "Work through Units 1-3 of *Email English* in sequence. After that you can do the units in any order."

For this reviewer the main surprise was the absence of emoticons. Unit 2: Missing Words and Abbreviations (pp. 10-11) introduces some of the forms used in sending text messages, but these are entirely graphemic (c=see; yr= your; asap = as soon as possible). This last example is given as an example of "a well-known phrase" (p. 11), but I would suggest that it may be better known in business circles than in general, conversational English. In Unit 1: Formal or Informal (pp. 8-9), moreover, it might have been wise to indicate that emoticons exist, but are used only in informal register. For the rest of the book, the material on Complaints and Apologies (pp. 54-57; 81) and Advice and Suggestions (pp. 68-69) could be incorporated as supplementary material for many

communicative ESL textbooks. It would probably be best, however, to limit the use of this book and to remember that emailing is only one small sub-genre of writing.

This book fills a niche in the textbook market. It deserves to do well, and it will be particularly useful to students of English for Business Purposes. For more mainstream EFL/ESL students, it should be used as a supplementary, rather than a core, text.

About the Reviewer

Neil McBeath is an English Education Officer working for The Royal Air Force of Oman. He is currently teaching ESP courses to aircraft engineering technicians. He holds two Master's degrees and has been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal of the Sultanate of Oman.