
Business Interactions

Review by Lindy Wai Ling Ko Tham, BYU-Hawaii

BUSINESS INTERACTIONS. Candace Matthews. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1987. pp. 208+xvi. Paper \$11.25 (Instructor's Manual available); Cassettes \$18.00.

Business Interactions is a book designed to build up the oral communication skills of ESL/EFL students in business-related fields at an intermediate to advanced level. It consists of ten individual units, four appendices to provide guidelines, and

useful exercises for effective interaction in small group discussions. Each unit is composed of several sections: Phrases, Listening Practice, Controlled Practice, Communication Concepts, Discussion Techniques, Role Playing, and Useful Vocabulary. In addition to the textbook, there are a set of audio-cassette tapes and a teacher's manual.

A wide variety of useful and practical phrases to express ideas on different topics

or functions are covered. The Listening Practice section is one of the means by which the students learn and hear how phrases are used by speakers of English.

The Controlled Practice section has exercises for students to practice and use phrases. The exercises may not all be used, but teachers are advised to include enough for the students to remember and use the phrases. Becoming familiar with the phrases is significant because they add variety to speaking activities.

Each Communication Concepts section gives some suggestions for group interaction. What a good meeting or discussion should consist of is shown and listed in this section of the unit. In addition to the Communication Concepts, Discussion Techniques is another part of the unit in which students can learn some different communication skills (which are as important as their pronunciation skills and knowledge of English grammar) in small group discussions.

In the Role Playing section, four different, realistic situations are offered. Teachers can work with the students and help them choose the most relevant and interesting one(s). They can start with an analysis of the situations given, and follow it with a discussion. After that, the class can be divided into groups and assigned different roles. This part is the most interactive of each unit. The discussion section provides opportunities for the students to interact and practice speaking to each other. After the role play, students can make use of the evaluation scales provided to judge their own performance or that of their classmates. In the back of every unit, new vocabulary items that appear in the unit

are listed. Teachers may teach the new words briefly before any group activities begin so that the students may be able to practice the use of those words.

Pictures or sketches of different everyday activities in a business career are added in the Controlled Practice section to increase the interest of the students in the topics. They also depict a clear image of the situations to the students. Examples of suggested steps for group discussion are shown in the first two units to help students organize their thoughts in an efficient way. The sequence of the units is logically arranged. The students will learn the communication skills and useful phrases from simple to complex through a notional-functional approach.

One more strength of the text is that it provides an overview section for the teacher or the students to look up the functions, discussion techniques, and communication concepts available in each unit. The teacher may also use it to decide when to teach and where to look for materials for a particular lesson.

In summary, *Business Interactions* seems like an effective guide for speaking practice and discussion techniques in business contexts. The register used is very business-like, thus preparing students to get along in the business world and present themselves with both courtesy and politeness.

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