

# Business class

**Make or Break: Successes and Failures from the Business World**, booklet and C-60 audio cass, £8.00, David Evans.

**BBC Keys to Business English: Meetings, Presentations and Negotiations**, booklet and C-60 audio cass, £8.00. Prepared with the assistance of Specialist Language Services, York.

*BBC English (Radio), 1992.*

Bryan Robinson

Where do business people do their reading? And where do they buy their books? In my experience many of them read while they travel and a lot of their purchases are made at the airport, so these two *BBC English (Radio)* publications seem to me to fit well into that kind of market. Business readers enjoy picking up things which are easy to handle, and which don't require a lengthy investment of time at each encounter. Management books, like Edward de Bono's *Tactics* are the sort of thing they relish; and ready-to-use phrase books are always popular. So here we have two publications which fall right into this mould.

The basic presentation of these materials is the same; however, there are a number of important differences. To begin with, *Make or Break* is far the more attractive in terms of appearance. The slim 64 page booklet is graced with an eye-catching colourful cover design, and the individual units include a range of authentic graphics, maps, and diagrams - there's even a flowchart describing "How to launder money", something all Telfers need to know about!

Each tapescript is printed in full as an integral part of the unit, and there are glossaries under headings like 'Business-specific', 'Takeovers' and 'Green'.

The 60-minute recording is along the lines of a radio documentary series in which David Evans acts as presenter. The well-chosen themes are topical, but not dated, as they are stories which could easily be back on the

business pages again tomorrow: **BCCI, The Body Shop, and the Coke v Pepsi battle**, are just three examples.

In contrast *BBC Keys to Business English* is quite different. Presentation is in a loose leaf (filofax-compatible) format, and is purely a guide to contents. There is a one-page presentation with a brief outline of the three sections, and a final six-line paragraph on how to use the materials. The rest is broken down into the topics, and within each there are subsections headed by descriptions of the language functions being dealt with, plus brief contextualizations in a fairly straightforward metalanguage; then, lists of exponents. The only variation to this lies in the *tips* offered to readers: sensible practical advice, which learners often do not carry over from their L1 experience, or which simply are not applicable in their L1 culture. These include suggestions like: "Many people repeat the question that has been asked to give them time to think."

The cassette which accompanies this offers no more and no less than the same language exponents, without any formal presentation, recorded in a variety of voices. Incidentally, a nice detail is the fact that for the CD version, the track numbers correspond to the loose leaf page numbers.

The quality of *Make or Break* as entertaining listening is clearly high in its favour. And although the language level expected is high - there are no allowances made for less than near-advanced learners in these authentic recordings, and there are no "tuning-in" listening activities - it would certainly seem good value for the motivated, independent learner.

Ideal in fact, for including in the resource materials of a library or listening centre. *BBC Keys to Business English* will surely have a similar appeal, although I suspect that many buyers will lose interest in it more quickly.

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multiple-choice or question and answer, pre-, while or post-reading. The tasks are not comprehensive language development exercises. Most seem appropriate for use by experienced ESP teachers. Such teachers will probably accept that model summaries should have been put in the key at the end of the book to provide a motivating information gap.

They might also tell their students that multiple-choice questions require a key which is "the best" rather than "the correct" answer, especially as some of the answers are ambiguous. A greater use of true/false questions might have been more appropriate. And transformations which demand unnatural long answers to questions (e.g. 17, Section C, p. 91) encourage a habit we all try to eradicate.

Some of the author's generalisations reflect the differences between doctors' and patients' views on illness and therapeutics, as: "Almost all coughs get better on their own in a few days." (chapter 5, p. 33). Thought-provoking material for discussion in such statements, and my minor reservations do not prevent me from recommending the book as an excellent informative read.

It could also be used, with explanations or modifications, by GCSE and "A" level students, and by careers' officers. I scanned a medical library and found nothing to rival it for its straightforward and generally comprehensible input for those with a modest knowledge of medical science and practice. *Julia Hubert used to be an ESOL teacher and is now a freelance writer and journalist.*

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