

ANDREEA ILIESCU

A GUIDE TO BUSINESS ENGLISH

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FOREWORD

A Guide to Business English is aimed at students of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, combining current business theory, business idioms, tips to better frame one's discourse, useful insights into grammar, and a wide range of exercises.

The coursebook comprises twenty units, whose topics have been chosen to provide learners with key economics concepts and extensive business English lexis. Moreover, *A Guide to Business English* is designed to ensure that students gain new understanding of relevant business principles and ideas.

The units are fivefold, including the following sections: *Texts*, *Building Your Vocabulary*, *Structuring a Discussion*, *Grammar Overview*, and *Practice*. Firstly, the texts introduce and develop economics-related theories and concepts, making the material highly engaging. Secondly, *Building Your Vocabulary* section addresses students' need to improve and broaden their vocabulary. English richness is exploited in terms of a host of explained idioms, whose significance is also projected through sentences. Thirdly, the *Structuring a Discussion* section tackles students' interest in conveying informed messages, in a fluent and natural English. In the fourth place, the language syllabus, approached throughout *Grammar Overview* section, covers topical subjects. In the fifth place, the *Practice* section enables students to revise the theoretical issues dealt with. For instance, the translation exercises raise students' awareness with regard to the dissimilarities between Romanian and English word order. In the same vein, such exercises are meant to test students' capacity to transfer a particular

amount of information from the source language to the target language, ensuring that they capture the specificity of both languages.

The coursebook also touches upon *phonemic transcription*. To this end, the introductory unit brings into focus the basics of phonemics, providing students with a means to self-assess their progress in pronunciation.

English pronunciation is not a matter of speculating about. Furthermore, *phonemic transcription* is considered the first step to be taken whenever students are genuinely interested to embark upon a linguistic journey. They will undoubtedly reap the benefits of becoming acquainted with the way these symbols work.

A series of sayings has also been included within the body of the coursebook, with the purpose to lend a paremiological touch to it, thus encouraging learners to analyse the conciseness and universal truths the aforementioned examples encapsulate.

The *Appendix* includes further examples of English idioms and phrases.

To conclude, I would highlight that *A Guide to Business English* equips learners with the language they need to get their point across in a business environment.

Andreea Iliescu

UNIT I

SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION. THE BASICS

‘I don’t think there are easy ways to learn languages - I don’t think people who promise sudden quick fix methods are to be believed. We learn slowly, and we learn by working hard.

As far as pronunciation is concerned, the most important thing is listening! I think, often we try and pronounce things correctly before we can really hear what the differences are. How do we check out whether we’re doing that?

Record ourselves

I think we need to record ourselves and we need to record what it is we’re repeating and listening to. So, the most useful thing perhaps is to listen to the radio with a tape recorder, to record a little bit of the radio, and then to say it ourselves, and to compare how we’ve said it, with the way it was said on the radio, in the language we’re learning.

It’s a slow process. We need to spend a lot of time rehearsing.

I remember when I was learning French: for instance, for hours and hours as I was walking or cycling, or whatever - I was trying to produce those sounds, difficult sounds that I was learning.

The more we do that, the more we pick up when we hear them. And of course the other thing about pronunciation is, as we improve our pronunciation that also improves our comprehension. As we learn to make these distinctions between similar sounds, we start hearing them - and that makes understanding easier.

Spelling is a problem

One of the biggest problems in English is that the spelling gets in the way because there are so many ways of spelling the same sound. Also because letters may be written and not pronounced and because letters may be written and pronounced in an unexpected way.

Is there a difference between pronunciation and fluency?

They're quite different. Pronunciation is getting the sounds right, and of course it's also getting the intonation and the rhythm right - it's not just individual sounds, it's pushing them all together.

Fluency perhaps overlaps there a little bit. Fluency is saying things easily. Being fluent is more a question of being confident in the vocabulary, and how to put the words together in the grammar - being confident in that - and just being confident in your ability to express yourself and having a go'.

(Source: Martin Parrott at bbclearningenglish.com)

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Phonemic transcription is to a language learner what musical notation is to a musician. For all its limitations, it is the best tool we have to show to the eye what is addressed to the ear alone, thereby enabling us to separate our perception of sounds from their orthographic representation.

One of the most striking characteristics of English is the lack of correspondence between spelling and pronunciation. In ordinary orthography, the same letter can represent a variety of sounds, and different letters, alone or in combination, can represent the same sound. Take, for instance, the sequence *ough*, which can convey at least nine different sounds, as in *dough* /dɔʊ/, *bough* /baʊ/, *lough* /lɒk/, *cough* /kɒf/, *ought* /ɔ:t/, *hiccough* /'hɪk.ʌp/, *rough* /rʌf/, *through* /θru:/ and *thorough* /'θʌr.ə/.

To highlight the absurdities of English spelling, the famous Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw was reportedly fond of pointing out that *fish* might just as well be spelt *ghoti*. The rationale was very simple: *gh* as in *tough*, *o* as in *women*, and *ti* as in *nation*.

Among the major reasons for this inconsistency is that the English spelling system has remained relatively static since printing was introduced in the 15th-century England, while pronunciation has changed a great deal since then. As a result, most English words carry, as it were, remnants of their original pronunciation in their spellings. Another reason is to be found in the plethora of loanwords that have entered English, and which have, in turn, carried with them unconventional phoneme combinations and exotic letter sequences. This state of affairs is perfectly illustrated by the following anonymous poem:

When the English tongue we speak,
Why is *break* not rhymed with *freak*?
Will you tell me why it's true
We say *sew* but likewise *few*?
And the maker of a verse
Cannot cap his *horse* with *worse*;
Beard sounds not the same as *heard*;
Cord is different from *word*;
Cow is *cow* but low is *low*;
Shoe is never rhymed with *foe*.
Think of *hose* and *dose* and *lose*;
And think of *goose* and not of *choose*;
Think of *comb* and *tomb* and *bomb*;
Doll and *roll*, *home* and *some*;
And since *pay* is rhymed with *say*,
Why not *paid* with *said*, I pray?

We have *blood* and *food* and *good*;
Mould is not pronounced like *could*;
Wherefore *done* but *gone* and *lone*?
Is there any reason known?
And in short it seems to me
Sounds and letters disagree.

(Source: *Transcribing English. The Nuts and Bolts of Phonemic
Transcription*, p. 1)

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English, a Living Language

Perhaps one of the first things to understand as you begin a study of the English language is that it is constantly changing. It is a living language, adapting to an ever-changing world which, in its turn, requires new and varied means of communication. The English language has embraced industrial, technological and social changes, and we as its users decide what will and what will not survive.

There are always people who yearn for the English language of the past. They believe that English now exists in a corrupted form, simplified and less subtle than its sophisticated antecedent. Their argument suggests that change is a new phenomenon running parallel to the breakdown of society. Taking this to its logical conclusion, we must therefore expect the English language to continue to deteriorate until it exists in a form no longer recognizable or comprehensible. The linguistics pessimists who view the English language in this way are concerned about several factors: supposedly decreasing standards of literacy marked by poor spelling and grammatically incomplete or 'incorrect' sentences; the use of informal spoken language in written contexts; allegedly inaccurate pronunciation; and