

## A NEW LANGUAGE COURSE FOR TOMORROWS' BUSINESS LEADERS *MARKET LEADER*

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**M**arket Leader\*\* is a new Business English course at the intermediate plus/upper intermediate level, intended for both professionals who need to improve their knowledge of English for their day-to-day work, and for pre-experience students specialising in particular aspects of business, who need to understand and talk about key business issues. Developed in association with *The Financial Times*, the course offers a very wide and flexible range of authentic materials from the world's most informed business sources (*The Financial Times*, *The Economist*, *The Independent*, etc.).

The *Market Leader* series consists of a number of specialist books, each focusing on a particular area of business:

- *Banking and Finance*
- *Business Law*
- *International Management*

Each of these is essentially a reading course, concentrating on the systematic development of reading skills, with tasks that require learners to read for gist or for detail, and to analyse text organisation, in order to further their understanding of the texts. Each book consists of 18 units, 2 tests and a multilingual glossary.

In addition, the *Market Leader* series includes a volume on *Business Grammar and Usage*, which contains extensive reference and practice of the most essential structures and functions in Business English. *Market Leader* is accompanied by a dedicated website with a regular supply of new texts and work sheets to download at [www.market-leader.net](http://www.market-leader.net), which learners are encouraged to visit.

In what follows, I shall refer in more detail to two of the books, which are currently available at the Teachers' Resource Centre, the British Council, Bucharest: *International Management* and *Business Grammar and Usage*.

*International Management* by Adrian Pilbeam\*\*\* follows a topic-based syllabus, containing a systematic coverage of essential business issues and up-to-date topics. The material is grouped around four main areas related to different aspects of modern business management:

**Business Strategy**, which covers such issues as efficient organisational structures, global strategies, penetrating foreign markets, factors of success or failure in international mergers or acquisitions, impact of the latest IT developments on the business of the 21<sup>st</sup> century;

**Cultural Issues**, with units on managerial skills and attitudes from different cultures' perspectives, and characteristics of corporate culture;

**Selection, Training and Development**, covering qualification requirements for managers, selection methods and need to recruit globally, as well as approaches to the training and development of managers;

**The International Manager**, with units devoted to issues such as combining corporate culture with local knowledge, reaching top management positions, benefits to an executive working abroad and possible disadvantages, as well as the problems of coming back to the home company.

Each unit is centred around a core reading text, preceded by questions for discussion, which introduce the topic and engage the learners in reflecting on their own experience, giving examples, expressing opinion. The 'while reading' section focuses on understanding the main points, understanding detail, analyzing text organization and understanding expressions/phrases, through various tasks such as general comprehension questions, true/false statements, matching summaries with corresponding paragraphs, explaining reference words, completing a chart, etc.

\*\*\* *Adrian Pilbeam* (Language Training Services, Bath, UK) is known to many teachers of business English in Romanian universities from a training course on *Teaching Negotiating Skills* organised by the British Council and housed by the Department of Germanic Languages, A.S.E. Bucharest, and from his contributions to the *Longman Business English Skills* series.

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\*\* *Market Leader*, Harlow, UK, Pearson Education Limited 2000

The reading tasks in each unit are followed by an extensive section devoted to systematic, thorough vocabulary building through a variety of activities. There are exercises on synonyms, opposites or words with related meanings, blank-filling, word search, collocations, understanding meaning of key terms and expressions by choosing the best explanation or matching with the right definition, word families, linking devices, etc. Learners are also encouraged to expand their specialised vocabulary by using the Longman Business English Dictionary. The exercises not only help the learners to increase their vocabulary for specific areas of business, but develop the necessary skills to deal with new vocabulary independently and use a variety of words and expressions with ease and confidence.

*International Management* creates frequent opportunities for the students to discuss and express their personal opinion through post-reading transfer activities linking the topic to their own work or studies. The 'Over to you' follow-up speaking and writing activities raise challenging issues and present highly motivating case studies, which engage the learners' thinking capacities and allow them to use their existing knowledge and skills and improve their English in a thorough and stimulating way.

The book is suitable for both classroom use and as self-access material, providing a full answer key for the reading and vocabulary tasks and a multilingual glossary of key business and management terms. Being essentially a reading course, the book notably lacks activities for the development of listening skills, which the teacher might wish to supplement from other materials. The course also relies on the teacher's experience and/or intuition in dealing with the various activities, as there is no Teacher's Book to accompany it. Although the format of the activities is not specified, an inventive teacher will be able to adapt the tasks so as to vary the interaction patterns and involve the students in pair and group work.

With its language-driven, but business-oriented syllabus, *Business Grammar and Usage* by Peter Strutt gives learners a thorough grounding in the basic structures, functions and skills they need in business at intermediate levels and above.

Some key features of *Business Grammar and Usage* are:

- clearly specified linguistic objectives for each unit
- clear presentation of the form and uses of the essential structures of English
- an extensive section on functions in business English

- a section on structures used in focusing on information
- a section on business communication skills
- a complete answer key and index of the structures and functions dealt with in the book.

The book covers the major grammatical structures found in common business English usage: verb tenses, conditionals, passives, modals, complex verbs and verbal constructions, nouns and nominal constructions, adjectives, adverbs, etc. Likewise, the functional content was carefully selected to represent those areas that are mostly encountered in business: asking for information, agreeing and disagreeing, complaining and apologising, describing a company/process/trends, giving instructions, forecasting and speculating, etc.

In addition to what similar books offer, *Business Grammar and Usage* includes a very useful section on **Business communication skills**, focusing on language used in managing a conversation and in social interaction, the separate stages and specific language involved in negotiating and presenting, taking part in meetings and telephoning.

Using a convenient layout – left-hand page for reference, right-hand for corresponding practice – the book offers students a concise but thorough explanation of each structure or function, with examples of usage drawn from a variety of authentic sources, as well as plenty of practice exercises and tasks, set within realistic business contexts, directly relevant to the work of current or future professionals.

Designed for both self-access and class use, the book can be used either to support the study of the main course or for stand-alone practice.

To conclude, *Market Leader* is a very useful book for its targeted audience – both in-service and pre-experience learners of Business English. With its unadapted authentic reading passages, it develops a high level of language awareness and text appreciation, while the discussions and case studies make up an excellent resource for building up the students' skills for oral interaction.

As self-access, the material is quite flexible, the various components in the series enabling the learners to move from one topic or activity to another, selecting, restarting and recapping those which they find relevant to their needs. As a classroom course, *Market Leader* would make a useful addition to the Business English teacher's collection, offering them a variety of materials and activities to select from and adapt to suit the students' specific needs.