

Maria Rees

**English for Business**



Maria Rees, *English for Business*

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important aspects of the introduction of three-year first degree courses into the Italian higher education system has been the emphasis placed on the acquisition of work-oriented skills. A few years ago, internships were organised only for students enrolled in university diploma courses such as Foreign Trade, Tourism and Statistics; now they are an integral part of all undergraduate courses.

As a result of the reform, the content and length of many undergraduate language courses have also changed. Students are expected to acquire specific language skills in their chosen area of study, and they have to consolidate these skills as rapidly and efficiently as possible. *English for Business* has been designed with these needs in mind.

Whereas many of the Business English course books on the market are aimed at professional students, many of whom will already have been working for several years, *English for Business* is intended to be used by students whose work experience is limited and whose language skills have not yet progressed beyond the requirements of a General English course.

*English for Business* provides an introduction to business issues and business vocabulary for students at B1/B2 level.

The book is divided into two parts, with a total of 20 reading texts. All the reading material is taken from web sites. Although a few texts have been shortened for the purposes of this book, no other changes have been made. Each reading passage is followed by a glossary and explanatory notes.

The business issues include marketing, advertising, mergers, franchising, corporate identity, customer intelligence, e-commerce and business etiquette. Topics such as globalisation, trade organisations, immigration, fair trade and consumerism are also covered.

Although *English for Business* focuses primarily on business vocabulary and collocations, the first ten units also contain brief grammar review sections and exercises highlighting some of the aspects of English grammar that cause problems for students at pre-intermediate or intermediate level.

Each unit of *English for Business* ends with a series of suggestions for activities related to the subject in question. In the first part of the book, as well as topics for discussion, web site addresses are provided to encourage

students to find out more about the people and institutions mentioned directly or indirectly in the reading texts. The suggestions in the second part focus more on practical writing activities and oral presentations.

As well as a comprehensive list of irregular verb forms, the Appendices also deal with "false friends"; numbers; the language used in describing trends, and the grammar of newspaper headlines.

A Key is provided for the exercises, which makes *English for Business* suitable for self-study purposes.

An online course in Essential English for Business (written by Suzanna Miles) is available at <http://venus.unive.it/ecoling/eeb>. As well as providing a wide variety of listening and reading comprehension activities related to the topics covered in *English for Business*, this course also covers the practical aspects of business correspondence and telephone skills.

Maria Rees

## UNIT 6

### IKEA WOWS THE RUSSIANS

From the outside, the crumbling Soviet-era housing estates of Moscow look as drab and grey as ever. Yet booming sales at IKEA show that like people around the world, Muscovites are embracing the new cappuccino-chic lifestyle embodied by the Swedish furniture giant.

Sales in Russia topped \$100m during the first year of operation alone in 2000, putting it among the company's top ten grossing stores worldwide. A second outlet has since opened and sales from both have doubled in the last twelve months, Lennart Dahlgren, Russia country manager for IKEA, said last week.

#### **Production plans**

But it is not just Russia's potentially huge market of aspiring consumers that the company is interested in. IKEA also hopes it will become a significant production centre and supplier of goods to its global network.

Worldwide demand for IKEA merchandise roughly doubles every four years, and maintaining supply volumes has become a serious challenge for the company.

Rich in natural resources, Russia is well placed to help satisfy the strong demand. The country boasts an estimated 25% of the world's hard wood reserves, is a major supplier of petroleum products for plastics, and is a leading producer of aluminium. It also has developed textile and ceramic industries and dozens of mothballed Soviet-era factories capable of producing in huge volumes.

"Today we order \$50m of furniture here from Russian factories. In the future we want to buy at least ten times that amount," said Dahlgren.

"People are surprised when I say it but Russian quality is far above that of many other countries."

#### **Red tape obstacles**

In April production is set to start at IKEA's first self-run Russian factory, near St Petersburg. The facility cost about \$15m and will employ 250 people.

IKEA will open a third store in 2003 and has brought forward projects to complete two more outlets after that. IKEA also plans to build a giant \$40m warehouse near Moscow.

But business here has not been all plain sailing for Dahlgren. While production quality may have impressed him, punctuality has not.

“I would say time quality management here is catastrophic,” says Dahlgren, who complains that few producers deliver on time.

Punitive customs tariffs are another headache. Designed to protect Russia’s low quality furniture industry from foreign competition, import duties run as high as 80%.

Russia’s notorious red tape has also caused problems. Commenting on bureaucracy and corruption, Dahlgren said: “I would say I have been frustrated, yes, surprised, yes.”

“If you try to follow every step of the law in this country, nothing would be possible. So many laws here are contradictory, it’s Catch 22.”

“If you have a trusting relationship with authorities — at local, regional or federal level — then almost everything is very quickly possible here, more so than in many other countries in fact.” [...]

From: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

## GLOSSARY

**to crumble** = cadere a pezzi

**drab** = scialbo, ‘grigio’

**booming** = in forte espansione

**to embody** = personificare

**to gross** = guadagnare al lordo

**supplier** = fornitore

**to boast** = vantare

**outlet** = punto di vendita

**duties** = dazi, tasse

**trusting relationship** = rapporto di fiducia

## NOTES

*Wow!* is an informal expression of surprise or pleasure. *To wow* means to perform in such a way that people are filled with enthusiasm and admiration: *Nicole Kidman wowed the audience at London’s Old Vic theatre.*

*Cappuccino-chic*: There are many places outside Italy where drinking *cappuccino* and *caffelatte* is considered to be the height of fashion. The Starbucks chain of coffee shops has been highly successful in promoting the trendy aspects of coffee drinking, especially among young urban professionals.

*Gross* refers to the total amount of something, especially money, before any deductions have been made. The opposite of *gross* is *net*.

A *mothball* is a small ball of camphor used to prevent moths from eating woollen clothes. If a government *mothballs* a factory or a piece of equipment, it decides to stop developing or using it. *Mothballed Soviet-era factories* are manufacturing plants which still exist, but no longer produce the same goods as they did until 1989.

A task that is *not all plain sailing* is one that is complicated and problematic.

Official rules and bureaucratic procedures are called *red tape* when they seem unnecessary and/or cause delay.

*Catch 22* refers to an impossible situation in which you cannot do one thing until you have done another thing, but you cannot do the second thing until you do the first: *You cannot get a residence permit in Italy until you have a job, but you cannot get a job until you have a residence permit.*

The *top* of something is its highest part or point: *the top of the mountain; the top of the tree.*

*Top* also means 'most important' or 'highest': *His office is on the top floor. The company's top ten grossing stores are all in Europe. Eliminating waste is our top priority. He worked his way to the top of the company.*

If something *tops* a particular amount, it is larger than that amount: *Sales topped \$100 million in the first year alone.*

**Exercise 1** What do these numbers refer to in the reading passage?

- 1) \$100 million.
- 2) 2000.
- 3) 25%.

- 4) \$50 million.
- 5) \$15 million.
- 6) 250.
- 7) 2003.
- 8) 80%.

### WORD STUDY

English uses a point (.) and not a comma (,) for decimals:

*15.1 16.3 17.5 per cent*

The numbers after a decimal point are usually read separately:

*6.33 = six point three three      8.134 = eight point one three four*

However, if the number after a decimal point represents a unit of money or measurement, it is read as a normal number:

*£1.60 = one pound sixty      \$7.80 = seven dollars eighty*

*1m 68 = one metre sixty-eight*

Note what happens when numbers are used before nouns:

*a course lasting ten weeks → a ten-week course*

*a woman who is 25 years old → a 25-year-old woman*

*a waiting list of six months → a six-month waiting list*

#### Exercise 2 Translate.

- 1) un periodo di 9 mesi
- 2) un manager trentasettenne
- 3) una vacanza di 10 giorni
- 4) uno sconto di £50
- 5) un profitto di €20.000
- 6) una passeggiata di 20 minuti
- 7) un camion del peso di 3 tonnellate
- 8) un viaggio in aereo di 11 ore

**GRAMMAR IN FOCUS****NOUN + NOUN STRUCTURE**

When two nouns are put together (*furniture industry*, *war film*) the first noun describes the second and has a function similar to that of an adjective:

*a test pilot* (a kind of pilot)                      *a pilot test* (a kind of test)  
*income tax* (a type of tax)                         *a bicycle factory* (a type of factory)

Note the plural forms: *war films*   *bicycle factories*   *test pilots*

It is possible to put more than two nouns together:

*furniture production costs* (= costs related to the production of furniture).

The first noun is usually singular in form, even when it has a plural meaning:

*a shoe shop* (= a shop that sells shoes)  
*a ticket office* (= an office that sells tickets)

Note some of the more common exceptions:

*a savings bank*   *the sales department*   *a goods train*   *a clothes shop*

The noun + noun structure is commonly found in the names of products:

*chocolate mousse*   *banana milkshake*   *toothpaste*   *cherry yogurt*

Some brand names also use the noun + noun structure:

*Cornflakes*   *Diet Coke*

**Exercise 3** Match the adjectival nouns on the left with the most appropriate noun on the right.

- |                                      |                |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1) cheque / address / cookery        | a. company     |
| 2) debit / credit / phone            | b. manager     |
| 3) bus / record / insurance          | c. bill        |
| 4) tobacco / television / radio      | d. spending    |
| 5) company / income / sales          | e. book        |
| 6) area / product / marketing        | f. card        |
| 7) fuel / gas / hotel                | g. advertising |
| 8) consumer / education / government | h. tax         |

**Exercise 4** Using the words in the box, complete the sentences with the most appropriate noun + noun structure.

<i>research</i>	<i>press</i>	<i>conference</i>	<i>price</i>
<i>margin</i>	<i>course</i>	<i>news</i>	<i>degree</i>
<i>bulletin</i>	<i>benefit</i>	<i>market</i>	<i>unemployment</i>
<i>safety</i>	<i>war</i>	<i>profit</i>	<i>belt</i>

- 1) The university now offers a three-year \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ in marketing.
- 2) Most radio stations broadcast a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ every hour.
- 3) Jobless people in Britain receive \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ from the state.
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ is the activity of collecting and studying information about what people want, need and buy.
- 5) If rival companies are involved in a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_, they each lower their prices as much as possible in order to sell more.
- 6) The \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ is the percentage difference between sales income and the cost of sales.
- 7) The Prime Minister will be holding a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ late this afternoon. About 100 foreign journalists are expected to be present.
- 8) A \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ is a strong strap attached to a seat in a car or plane.

**Exercise 5** Use the noun + noun structure to translate the following.

- |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1) studenti universitari | 5) la Banca Mondiale   |
| 2) strategie aziendali   | 6) tassi d'interesse   |
| 3) livelli salariali     | 7) imposta sul reddito |
| 4) politiche sindacali   | 8) aspettativa di vita |

**Exercise 6** Use the words in the box to complete the sentences.

<i>brass</i>	<i>copper</i>	<i>bronze</i>	<i>zinc</i>	<i>steel</i>
<i>silver</i>	<i>iron</i>	<i>aluminium</i>	<i>gold</i>	<i>lead</i>

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_ is a yellow metal that is used both for making jewellery and as an international currency.
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ is a soft, grey, heavy metal that is still used as an additive in petrol and paint.
- 3) Jim and Susan have just celebrated their \_\_\_\_\_ wedding anniversary. They've been married for 25 years.
- 4) She came third in the 800m and won a \_\_\_\_\_ medal for her country.
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_ is used to make electrical wires and drainpipes.
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_ is a copper and \_\_\_\_\_ alloy. It is used to make musical instruments such as trumpets and horns.
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_ is a very strong metal made mainly from \_\_\_\_\_. It is used in bridge building and construction work.
- 8) The aircraft industry uses a lot of \_\_\_\_\_. This lightweight metal is also used for making kitchen equipment, such as saucepans.

**Exercise 7** The verbs in the box all combine with *supply / supplies*. Complete the sentences with the most suitable verb.

<i>receive</i>	<i>provide</i>	<i>disrupt</i>	<i>limit</i>
<i>lay in</i>	<i>use up</i>	<i>cut off</i>	<i>exceed</i>

- 1) As a result of the fire, we have to \_\_\_\_\_ supplies to thirty boxes per customer.
- 2) We should \_\_\_\_\_ a good supply of beer for the party.
- 3) Demand for trained office workers is likely to \_\_\_\_\_ supply.
- 4) The company is going to \_\_\_\_\_ the gas supply for 48 hours starting at mid-day on Monday.
- 5) Bad weather may \_\_\_\_\_ electricity supplies in the south-west.
- 6) Paper & Ink can \_\_\_\_\_ offices throughout the City with high-quality supplies of stationery.

- 7) The villagers will \_\_\_\_\_ all the available supplies of fresh water if it doesn't rain soon.
- 8) The animals did not \_\_\_\_\_ an adequate supply of food, so many of them died.

## VOCABULARY

**Exercise 8** Complete the sentences with the most appropriate alternative.

- 1) Harrods and Selfridges are two of London's most famous \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*warehouses / shopping centres / department stores*
- 2) The \_\_\_\_\_ at Piccadilly Circus sells all the major Italian newspapers.  
*stall / kiosk / press agency*
- 3) Sandwiches, drinks and other refreshments are on sale at the station \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*market / ticket office / buffet*
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_ sell goods to the general public.  
*marketeers / wholesalers / retailers*
- 5) Sign in a supermarket: ' \_\_\_\_\_ will be prosecuted.'  
*robbers / shoplifters / burglars*
- 6) Americans go to a liquor store to buy wine and beer; in England you go to \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*a duty-free shop / a vineyard / an off-licence*
- 7) A \_\_\_\_\_ is a person who sells paper, envelopes, pens and other equipment used for writing.  
*stationer / bookseller / cartographer*
- 8) Marks and Spencer and Littlewoods are \_\_\_\_\_ ; they have branches in almost all of Britain's major towns and cities.  
*chain stores / stockholders / trading channels*

## DISCUSSION

- 1) Find out more about IKEA on [www.ikea.com](http://www.ikea.com). What are the reasons for IKEA's commercial success?
- 2) Russia and other Eastern European countries are making the transition from centralised command economies to the free market. What difficulties has this caused? What effects will this have on EU enlargement?
- 3) What problems are Italian companies likely to find when doing business in the countries in transition?