5
Research-based Teaching Materials

This chapter will:

- Provide a brief survey of published materials for Language for Specific Business Purposes and Business Communication
- Profile six sets of research-based teaching materials
- Discuss the approaches taken in each case and show how these are related to business discourse research.

Introduction

This chapter will consider the relationship between published teaching materials and the findings of business discourse research. It will look at six sets of published teaching materials where research theory or the findings of empirical business discourse research have been used to underpin the information presented (see Data 5.1 for details). We will look at the theories and other research investigations underlying each book, the types of sources referred to and the approach taken in each case in communicating this information to students. As we will show in our brief survey of published materials in Language for Specific Business Purposes and Business Communication at the beginning of the chapter, research-based textbooks like the ones we profile here are few and far between in the vast array of teaching materials available to teachers and students of business communication, business language and business discourse. Three of the volumes are practice-driven accounts that focus on corporate and technical business communication in the US tradition (Argenti; Andrews; Beamer & Varner), one is theory-driven referring to one particular macro-theory in its presentation of the material (Tietze, Cohen & Musson) and two are data-driven and are grounded in the
discipline of applied linguistics (Koester; Hogarth & Burnett). We will begin this chapter with a brief survey of current LSBP and business communication publications related to teaching and then continue by discussing each type of approach in turn.

Data 5.1 Teaching materials based on business discourse research

Paul Argenti (1998/2003/2005) – Corporate Communication (McGraw-Hill/Irwin); a US textbook which shows how to apply macro-models of communication, making reference to various sources both academic and popular. It also includes use of the case-study method.

Deborah Andrews (1998/2002) – Technical Communication in the Global Community (Prentice Hall); a US textbook focusing (mostly) on written forms of communication (both verbal and visual), making reference to both academic and popular sources. It also includes reference to cultural differences in communicating effectively.


Susanne Tiezte, Laurie Cohen & Gill Musson (2003) – Understanding Organizations through Language (Sage); a UK-based publication which uses a discourse, i.e. social construction/semiology, approach to communication within (business) organizations. It also draws on academic and (some) popular sources.

Almut Koester (2004) – The Language of Work (Routledge); a UK-based publication written by an applied linguist (genre analyst) that provides a good example of European business discourse in an applied linguistics tradition. It includes numerous examples of the analysis of real text.

Willa Hogarth & Linda Burnett (1995) – Talking it Through, Teacher’s Guide & Classroom Materials (NCELTR, Macquarie University); an Australian-based publication written by two TESOL/ESOL specialists, based on the research study with the same title by Ken Willing (1992). It includes numerous examples of discourse-based teaching activities that refer directly to the findings of Willing’s study.

5.1 A brief survey of published teaching materials

In this section, we will present a brief survey of ESBP, LSBP and business communication (BC) materials. We will discuss to what extent published materials have referred to empirical work in business discourse, business language or business communication through reference to the information available in August 2004 on the Amazon.co.uk book ordering website, together with a survey of the book reviews that appeared in three