

Teodora POPESCU

Crina HERȚEG

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*BUSINESS ENGLISH TESTS*

**Alba Iulia, Romania**

**2010**



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Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918”  
Editura Aeternitas  
Str. Nicolae Iorga, nr. 13  
RO 510009 Alba Iulia  
Tel: 004-0258-811412/106  
Fax: 004-0258-812630  
E-mail: editura\_aeternitas@yahoo.com

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## Preface

This test book consists of three parts:

- twelve standardised tests for the students of business and economics who are preparing for the graduation examination and who need a certificate of foreign language proficiency. This part includes transcripts and answer key;
- eight topic-based tests for further practice, with answer key;
- an addenda containing a writing corner (linking words and phrases; useful phrases for letter, report and proposal writing) and a speaking corner (useful phrases for presentations, and for oral interaction), as well as a useful glossary with basic business terminology in English, with Romanian translation.

The selection of topics takes into account the syllabus for the first and second year students of the Faculty of Sciences, “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, concentrations Accounting, Finance and Banking.

According to the academic curriculum, Foreign Language for Specific Purposes courses are taught for four semesters, during the first two undergraduate study years (2 hours of tuition per week). Students opting for Business English are required to be at least at an intermediate stage of language proficiency. In accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching of the Council of Europe this would be Threshold B1 (Level 2, Threshold user). At the end of their studies, the students' level of language proficiency must be that of B2 Vantage (Level 3, Independent User). In social and travel contexts, users at this level can read texts which are longer than the very brief signs, notices, etc. which are characteristic of what can be handled at the two lower levels. They can go beyond routine letters and the most basic newspaper and magazine articles, and have developed reading skills related to factual topics in which they have a special interest or to their own tastes in fiction. In the workplace, they can deal with routine letters and understand the general meaning of a fair range of non-routine correspondence, although complex situations and the use of non-standard language would cause problems. They can handle short reports or articles on predictable topics, and grasp the general meaning of a report or article on a less familiar topic, but misunderstanding is likely where information is not clearly expressed. Instructions and product descriptions within the learners own area of work can be understood, but only the general meaning of more theoretical material (e.g. technical reports) can be understood

without access to support such as dictionaries, even when it is within the learners area of expertise.<sup>1</sup>

However, in view of the ever-increasing demands of the labour market, it is highly recommended that business students in general, should reach the level of Effectiveness C1 (Level 4, Competent User), on completion of their academic studies. In social and travel contexts, users at this level can understand magazine and newspaper articles, although complex plots, arguments and humour may present difficulties. In the workplace, they can understand instructions, articles and reports, as long as, in most of these cases, the topic area is within the learners own field, and no particularly complex concepts and arguments or unusual vocabulary are involved.<sup>2</sup>

For a full description of the Common Reference Levels (self-assessment grid and qualitative aspects of spoken language use, please refer to the tables following this preface.

The standardised tests in the first part of the book consist of five parts, and the test items designed are similar to the ones of Cambridge examinations, especially BEC Higher:

### **I. Listening**

This task consists of a dialogue, usually with two or more speakers. There are eight items, which are three-option multiple choice. The task relates to a topic of interest or concern in the world of work. The text is heard twice. The successful realisation of the task involves the correct interpretation of spoken input, with correct answers often being delivered by more than one speaker.

### **II. Reading**

In the case of the reading tasks, the texts are taken from different business on-line publications. Texts are given in full or slightly modified. The source is nevertheless, in all cases, authentic, and credit is given in each instance. There is one exercise, ranging from the following different types of exercises:

- a text accompanied by four/option multiple choice items. The stem of a multiple choice item may be in the form of a question or an incomplete sentence.
- a gapped text with six sentence-length gaps. The correct sentence must be identified in order to fill each gap from a set of eight sentences marked A-H. One sentence is an example and one other sentence is a distractor which does not fit any of the gaps.

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<sup>1</sup> Framework and Can-Do Statements, ALTE, [http://www.alte.org/can\\_do/framework/level3.cfm](http://www.alte.org/can_do/framework/level3.cfm)

<sup>2</sup> Framework and Can-Do Statements, ALTE, [http://www.alte.org/can\\_do/framework/level4.cfm](http://www.alte.org/can_do/framework/level4.cfm)



- a text accompanied by true-false multiple choice items. The stem is generally a statement.
- a gapped text followed by sub-headings. The correct sub-heading must be identified, according to meaning.

### **III. English in Use**

The tasks for the English in Use section also follow, in part, the model of BEC tests, though other types of exercises have been included. There is, again, one exercise, from among the following types:

- a lexical cloze: a gapped text with 10-15 four-option multiple choice items, most of which test vocabulary.
- a structural (open) cloze: a gapped text in which one word has to be supplied in order to fill each gap.
- an error-correction or proof-reading task based on a text, with 10-15 items. In most lines of the text there is either an extra word that shouldn't be there, or there is a spelling or grammar mistake, which should be identified and deleted. There are, nevertheless, lines which contain no error.
- a word-formation task, based on a text with 10-15 gaps. Prompts are given for each gap and the correct form of the word must be supplied for each gap.
- a matching exercise, based on a text with 10-15 gaps, followed by the missing words in jumbled order. The appropriate words must be given for each gap.
- a matching exercise, in which two lists of words are given, and each word in the first column must be matched with a word from the second column in order to form suitable collocations, followed by a gapped text, in which the collocations found above have to be inserted.
- a matching exercise, in which two lists are given, one with words and phrases, whereas in the second column are to be found their definitions. Each word and phrase have to be matched to their corresponding definition.
- a matching exercise, based on a text, followed by a list of synonyms to some of the words in the text.
- a matching exercise, based on a text, followed by a list of antonyms to some of the words in the text.

### **IV. Writing**

For the writing part, the task requires the elaboration of an extended piece of business writing (200-250 words) such as a report, proposal or a piece of business correspondence (letter of complaint, letter of application, letter of apology, letter of reference, etc.). The task is supplied by the rubric, which

provides an authentic reason for writing, and indicates for whom the piece of writing is being produced, thus offering a more detailed and specific input.

## **V. Speaking**

The speaking test is designed for two candidates, who are required to interact with the interviewer and between themselves, as well as make a presentation on their own. There are three questions to the speaking part. The first one requires the candidate to introduce himself/herself. In the second part, each candidate will speak individually for one minute, making a presentation (as if it were in a business environment) on a given topic. Examples of topic areas include: advertising, career planning, communications, customer relations, finance, health and safety, management (personnel, production, transport, etc.), marketing, recruitment, sales, technology, training and travel. The third part is a two-way collaborative task based either on a prompt which is given to both candidates, or on a role play in which candidates have to assume a certain attitude or opinion.

An answer key is provided, which makes this book suitable for self-study. Where appropriate, several alternatives were supplied. The authors have also included sample answers for all the writing tasks in the first part of the book (letter, report and business correspondence).

In conclusion, the present test book is a useful tool, both for class study, as well as for individual study, for business students preparing for their final examination at the end of their academic studies. Considering the tasks designed, it is also an appropriate material for those who want to sit the Cambridge BEC examinations.

The authors

## Common Reference Levels: self-assessment grid

		A1	A2	B1
U N D E R S T A N D I N G	Listening	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
	Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.
S P E A K I N G	Spoken Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).
	Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.
W R I T I N G	Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.

		B2	C1	C2
U N D E R S T A N D I N G	Listening	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
	Reading	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
S P E A K I N G	Spoken Interaction	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	Spoken Production	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
W R I T I N G	Writing	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

## Common Reference Levels: qualitative aspects of spoken language use

	RANGE	ACCURACY	FLUENCY	INTERACTION	COHERENCE
C2	Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).	Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.	Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turn-taking, referencing, allusion making, etc.	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.
C1	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.	Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skilfully to those of other speakers.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2+					
B2	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he/she searches for patterns and expressions. There are few noticeably long pauses.	Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some 'jumpiness' in a long contribution.

B1+					
B1	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used 'routines' and patterns associated with more predictable situations.	Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.	Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.
A2+					
A2	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.	Can answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'.
A1	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like 'and' or 'then'.

## PART ONE

### TEST 1.

#### I. LISTENING

*You will hear a BBC radio programme on introducing new people to the workplace. For each question 1-8, mark one letter (A, B, or C) for the correct answer. You will hear the recording twice.*

1. New people shouldn't be given too much information about the company because
  - A. secrets of the company shouldn't be revealed.
  - B. people cannot take in too much information at one time.
  - C. much of the information received is irrelevant.
  
2. A typical ice-breaker is to ask about
  - A. the person's first impressions of the company.
  - B. the person's state of health.
  - C. the person's journey to the company.
  
3. Dionne probably uses the expression "I'll give you a quick whizz round" because:
  - A. she knows Helena understands colloquial English.
  - B. she wants to make Helena feel comfortable.
  - C. she is not too well-educated.
  
4. According to David, you can use "just" with zero conditionals if you want your interlocutor to
  - A. feel at ease with asking a favour.
  - B. feel embarrassed about asking a favour.
  - C. stop asking favours.
  
5. When Dionne explains how the photocopier works, she does so by
  - A. using very technical language.
  - B. making a thorough demonstration.
  - C. using simple language.
  
6. David explains that various ways of introducing people depend on
  - A. the physical distance between people.
  - B. the difference in status between people.
  - C. the difference in age between people.

7. Dionne uses signalling language in order to
- A. show off her knowledge.
  - B. make Helena understand better what is going on.
  - C. give the others information about Helena.
8. Clare does not have any questions because
- A. she wants to leave the company.
  - B. she wants to assimilate the information.
  - C. she wants Regina to believe she understood everything.

## II. READING

*Read the text below and the statements that follow, and decide whether they are true or false, according to the text:*

### **Defusing the Bomb**

By BRAD AGRY

*Synopsis: Communicating with the irrational customer, client or business associate.*

Communicating with someone who is angry is one of the most difficult business challenges a business owner can face. Whether this angry person is a customer, client, an employee or outside third party, being on the receiving end of their heightened emotions is stressful. The challenge of someone pounding their fist, shouting at you or making unfair demands, forces you to respond as a disciplined, controlled and effective communicator.

When you are put face to face with hostility, the natural human response is to react in kind; however, in most situations this is not an effective strategy. The key to breaking the cycle is to establish a mutual understanding. By finding a common ground, you can resolve the conflict and begin to build communication, step by step.

In order to be an effective communicator you need to shift the exchange from the emotional to the rational. When faced with a situation where an angry and demanding individual or group has a list of complaints, the owner/manager needs to communicate both an understanding of their grievances and a willingness to collaborate to address them. The four simple steps to 'defuse the bomb' are:

*Inquire:* Being a focused listener calls for inquiring about the other person's issues and concerns. The goal is to not interrupt and to encourage them with eye contact and head nods.

*Empathize:* This means to connect with somebody on their emotional level. To relate to them you must first say, "I (appreciate, understand or share) your (frustration, doubt or concern)." Then, you must commiserate by saying how in the past you too have felt similarly.



*Ask permission:* Asking whether or not an angry person would like to hear some relevant information puts them in control, and thereby decreases their tension. Permission questions communicate that you are a reasonable person doing your best to reach an understanding.

*Explain and offer choices:* It's soothing for the upset individual to have a choice of solutions explained to them. The more solution options you offer for a course of action, the greater their sense of control becomes. This puts them in a more rational state where you can together begin to resolve the situation.

It is important to realize that this model does not always move in a simple and linear fashion. You may often find yourself in a situation when some residual anger surfaces just when you thought the problem had been solved. You may have to recycle through the model again or spend a longer time on individual steps. For example, an angry customer may take a long time to vent their initial anger. Remembering that anger is essentially fear turned inside out, you must let them express it all before you can move to a more rational platform of cooperation.

(<http://www.bspage.com/1article/art-bomb.html>)

1. Well-trained communication skills help a business person to get out of a tense situation successfully. T / F
2. In most situations, when put face to face with hostility, one should react in kind. T / F
3. It is more important to show an understanding of your partners' grievances than to try to solve them. T / F
4. Empathy means relating to the others' problems. T / F
5. Asking for permission helps to increase your partner's sense of being in control of the situation. T / F
6. It is important to let the other party relieve their tension before you go on with your business transaction. T / F

### III. ENGLISH IN USE

*Read the following text about telephone manners and fill in the gaps with the missing words provided below:*

#### **Can We Curb Rude Cell Phone Manners?**

*By Al Neuharth, USA TODAY founder*

July is National Hot Dog Month. Also National Baked Bean Month. And National cell phone Courtesy Month.

I love hot dogs. And baked beans. But what really makes my mouth water is the possibility of more **1**..... cell phone users.

The latter is the **2**..... of etiquette expert Jacqueline Whitmore, who runs The Protocol School of Palm Beach, Fla. She thought it up when she consulted for Sprint PCS and realized how many **3**..... cell phone users there are.

This is the first year cell phone Courtesy Month is being observed. Here's why it's important:

- There are 137 million cell phones in use in the United States.
- Millions of them go off<sup>3</sup> **4**..... every day. In theatres, restaurants, libraries, museums, classrooms, churches. Even at funerals.

Many public places have put in rules against **5**..... cell phone calls. More are considering it. As a lifelong **6**..... of free speech, free spirit and free press, I'm reluctant to side with those who want to curb cell phone use.

But ...

Most cell phone **7**..... inherently are ill-mannered underachievers.<sup>4</sup> Getting a phone call in a public place and carrying on a long, loud conversation gives these wannabes a feeling of importance.

Some cell phone companies encourage cockamamie<sup>5</sup> **8**..... Example: Cingular Wireless has ads on television in which a phone rings and rings at the Statue of Liberty until the great lady reaches inside her robe for her cell phone, steps down from the pedestal and answers her call with a smile.

Those who misuse cells, or encourage their misuse, should heed the wake-up **9**..... during this cell phone Courtesy Month. If they don't, free speech and free spirit may become **10**..... of their oafishness<sup>6</sup>.

(<http://www.etiquetteexpert.com/curb.htm>)

- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| a) incoming                | f) courteous               |
| b) menacingly <sup>7</sup> | g) victims                 |
| c) culprits <sup>8</sup>   | h) brainchild <sup>9</sup> |
| d) rude                    | i) advocate                |
| e) behaviour               | j) call                    |

---

<sup>3</sup> *go off* phr. v. to make a noise; sound.

<sup>4</sup> *underachiever* n. sb who performs worse or achieves less success than expected.

<sup>5</sup> *cockamamie* adj. ludicrous, foolish.

<sup>6</sup> *oafishness* n. stupidity, clumsiness.

<sup>7</sup> *menacingly* adv. threateningly.

<sup>8</sup> *culprit* n. the person responsible for a particular offence, misdeed, etc.

<sup>9</sup> *brainchild* n. an idea or plan produced by creative thought; invention.

## IV. WRITING

*The company you work for has recently been experiencing problems. Your line manager has asked you to contact a firm of consultants with a view to contracting them to assist your company.*

*Write a **letter** to the firm of consultants*

- *giving them information about your company;*
- *describing the strengths of your company;*
- *outlining the problems your company has been experiencing;*
- *suggesting arrangements for a preliminary meeting between the consultants and your company representatives.*

*Write 200-250 words on your answer sheet<sup>10</sup>.*

## V. SPEAKING

### Student 1

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Speak about the importance of punctuality in all aspects of work.
3. Some people say it is better to work for a large company. Others prefer to work for a small company. Use specific reasons and examples to support the first statement and try to convince your partner.

### Student 2

1. Introduce yourself
2. Speak about how to ensure that job advertisements attract appropriate applicants.
3. Some people say it is better to work for a large company. Others prefer to work for a small company. Use specific reasons and examples to support the second statement and try to convince your partner.

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<sup>10</sup> task adapted from CUP (2009), p. 87.