

**Smith, Tricia. 2001. Market Leader. Business Law.
London: Longman, pp. 96.**

Ana Almagro Esteban

Universidad de Jaén

aalmagroujaen.es

The textbook *Business Law* (2001) by Tricia Smith meets an urgent demand in the field of English for legal purposes, since this is the variety of English for specific purposes (ESP) which has received the least attention, an aspect that is borne out by the scarcity of research on it and of teaching materials available.

Business Law is one in a series of three Market Leader extensive courses. It is made up of 18 units which are thematically organized. The themes include up-to-date general topics such as arbitration, brand names, patents and intellectual property, and business lawyers, among others. Units have the same length—four pages each—and a similar format—four fixed sections entitled *Before you read*, *Reading tasks*, *Vocabulary tasks*, and *Over to you*. Accruing from this is the fact that *Business Law* mainly concentrates on intensive reading techniques and vocabulary development.

Reading is introduced through authentic, informative texts and law documents from different sources (*Financial Times*, *The Times*, abridged extracts from various types of documents, web pages, etc.). The first section devoted to reading, *Before you read*, promotes brainstorming through the discussion of both general questions and legal concepts pertaining to the text under scrutiny. In this sense, it is worthwhile mentioning that, on many occasions, the questions proposed are related to the students' immediate environment. The section *Reading tasks* is made up of three fixed stages which promote different intensive reading skills. The first of them, "Understanding main points," mainly concentrates on skimming, scanning, and reading for gist, and the core activity it generates is reading the text and answering questions. As for "Understanding details," it implies careful reading and engenders activities such as marking statements as true/false according to the information in the text and locating the part of the text that gives the correct information, answering questions, and explaining what the underlined words refer to in the text. The third stage of

the reading tasks, that is, “Understanding expressions”, also fosters detailed understanding through activities like choosing the best explanation for words or phrases and using appropriate words or phrases from the text to complete sentences.

Vocabulary is practised through a vast gamut of tasks: matching terms with their definitions, using appropriate words or phrases to complete sentences, completing word families, matching opposites, choosing the best explanation for words or phrases, collocations, replacing underlined items with words and phrases from the text that have a similar meaning, justifying who or what the underlined words refer to in the text, ascribing legal terms to appropriate law fields, using definitions to unscramble words, and matching the individuals and institutions with their descriptions.

The last section, *Over to you*, integrates an extensive and heterogeneous array of activities which are a source for oral communication, reading, and writing. By way of preamble, the description of brief scenarios may lead the student to discuss and analyze the case presented or to do some letter writing. Research activities either based on information from TV advertisements or magazines, or on the search of law documents from the Internet, the local Citizens Advice offices, or libraries culminate in writing short reports on the findings, writing up summaries, or commenting to the class.

Business Law also includes additional materials, more pointedly, two checking tests of the 18 units and a multilingual glossary in English, French, Spanish, German, and Polish.

In line with the foregoing, we shall go on to mention the strengths and limitations of the textbook *Business Law*. Among the first, we could highlight that, unlike other manuals in the field, such as *English Law and Language. An Introduction for Students of English* (Russell & Locke, 1995) and *English for Law* (Riley, 1997, 2nd ed.), *Business Law* fits the typical characteristics of a textbook both because of its design and the length of its units, which make it ideal for the distribution of credits that ESP subjects have at university level. It is written for non-native speakers of English, and thus it may be relevant for vast audiences beyond the students’ country, a characteristic that is not applicable to manuals like *A Guide to Legal English. Inglés para juristas* (Fernández & Almendárez, 1994), despite its undeniable usefulness. In addition, *Business Law* does not assume that the reader has a basic familiarity with the sociocultural context within which the subject is being taught, as is the case of *Introduction to Legal English* (Chromá & Coats, 1996). Additional strengths of *Business Law* are that it focuses on aspects concerning the legal culture of both England and America and introduces an extensive overview of reading strategies and help in developing them, as well as vocabulary techniques promoting the acquisition of vocabulary. Furthermore, up-to-date topics of interest to students

may be a source of motivation.

However, limitations to be noted are the following: *Business Law* fails to offer an exhaustive selection of grammar items closely related to the texts introduced and grammar input and practice. Limitations other than these that come into play are the conceptual and linguistic difficulty of most of the texts proposed for the reading activities, the lack of recommendations for exploiting the activities included in the section Over to you by the teacher, as well as the lack of theoretical foundations on which to base the letter writing activities.

If teachers of ESP usually receive language training and, therefore, should make themselves familiar with the content area of their students, the gap between the teacher and that which is taught becomes even wider when it comes to the teaching of Legal English. This is due to the fact that the language of law is difficult even for native speakers of any language. As a result, the lack of recommendations on the aspects mentioned above render it difficult to implement most of the activities included in the section Over to you. Additionally, some activities of this section are not authentic, both because they are created from hypothetical situations in which the student will hardly ever be involved, and because they generate tasks which do not match the ones that the target situation would demand. This is usually due to the intent to present similar situations to the ones described in the texts under scrutiny.

Consequently, *Business Law* might be very useful both for students with a high-intermediate English proficiency and familiar with the field of law, and for experienced ESP teachers. As for the limitations it might present for the teacher, they may be overcome with a familiarization with the field of law and through the collaboration with the content teacher.

References

- Chromá, M. and T. Coats. 1996. Introduction to Legal English (volumes I, II). Pague: Karolinum.
- Fernández, R. L. and I. Almendárez. 1994. A Guide to Legal English. Inglés para juristas. Madrid: Síntesis.
- Riley, A. 1997. English for Law. London: Prentice Hall.
- Russell, F. and C. Locke. 1995. English Law and Language. An Introduction for Students of English. New York: Phoenix ELT.
- Smith, T. 2001. Market Leader. *Business Law*. London: Longman.