

【Book Reviews】

Textbook Review of *Business Result: Intermediate*

John Hughes & Jon Naunton, Oxford University Press
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Business Result Intermediate is the fourth installment in the Oxford University Press “Business Result” series. Other levels in the series include *Starter* (1), *Elementary* (2), *Pre-intermediate* (A2-B1) (3), *Upper-intermediate* (5), and *Advanced* (6).

The textbook is written by John Hughes and Jon Naunton. Lead author Hughes is an award-winning English Language textbook author with over 50 titles to his credit. Among other things, he also runs his own teacher training website, www.johnhugheselt.com. The co-author, Naunton, is also a teacher and teacher trainer who has published many ELT textbooks.

Oxford University Press’ (n.d.) online catalog succinctly describes the purpose of this series as follows: “Business Result Second Edition offers business professionals more communication and language practice than ever before, helping students to develop relevant communication skills they can use immediately in the workplace.”

The primary purpose of the fourth book in this series is to illustrate realistic business situations in diverse settings and develop communication skills pertinent to tackling those situations. The book consists of 15 units, each of which can be divided into two lessons. The actual length of the book is 159 pages, including practical files, communication activities, and audio scripts. Considering other textbooks, this book is rather long. The textbook is content-intensive and challenging to cover in just two semesters. However, the whole book could be covered if the students were working professionals, as the catalog describes.

All the units begin with a “Starting Point” in which questions related to the unit’s content are asked. This serves as a warm-up activity and helps students to familiarize themselves or at least think about the topic being taught. First, students can discuss these questions with their partners, and a few can volunteer to answer by standing up. The whole process can be completed in seven to ten minutes if the content is familiar. The starting point is followed by “Working With Words,” in which students read article sections, blogs, and so on to answer the relevant questions of different activities. These activities are designed to bolster students’ vocabulary range and understand adjectives, verbs, and nouns. In most cases, this section includes listening activities related to the content of the reading. From my informal observa-

tion, I have found that most of the students find this part rather easy.

The following section, “Language At Work,” mainly deals with grammar and its practical use in real business scenarios. “Language At Work” is followed by “Practically Speaking,” which deals with everyday communication activities. This segment contains four exercises and can be completed in under 25 minutes. The next section, “Business Communication,” usually starts with a question followed by a listening exercise and related activities. “Talking Point” provides students broader business ideas and concepts which may be relatively new to Japanese University students, such as stack ranking (Unit 4) and shadow work (Unit 9). The content of “Talking Point” of Unit 1 (Speed Networking) and Unit 2 (Corridor Conversations) can be effectively used on the first day of the class so the students can get to know each other and set up a positive tone for the rest of the semester.

Content wise, the textbook deals with wide ranging business issues, from facilities to work life balance. It also deals with customer service, cyber security and negotiation techniques. Overall, it contains issues pertinent to be a successful businessperson. A detailed table of contents is shown below.

The book comes with online resources and practice for students, the latter of which is very effective for analyzing students’ progress and assisting them as needed. For teachers, the e-book can be accessed online at <https://www.oxfordlearnersbookshelf.com> and is very easy to use. Audio files can also be played online through the website mentioned above. Almost inevitably, some students will forget to bring their textbooks, so projecting the book on the screen is equally beneficial for teachers and students alike. The teachers’ book provides detailed guidance for almost all of the activities.

The textbook is very resourceful, written thoughtfully, and serves the purpose as stated; however, this book is designed for working professionals. Most of the students in the reviewer’s class work part-time; however, some don’t and devote themselves full time to their studies and the university’s extracurricular activities. In the beginning it was somewhat challenging for students without prior job experience to talk about their work and companies, but as the units progressed, they got used to talking about Japanese companies. This situation can be overcome by asking students to design their own imaginary company in the first class in a new notebook designated for the course. Then, in every class, they can add different activities from the textbook and form a proper imaginary company. For example, they can design volunteer activities (Unit 3), write crowdfunding proposals (Unit 9), write their company’s environmental policy (Viewpoint 5), and so on. If followed from the very beginning, this develops students’ business-related vocabulary and can be of great help to any potential future entrepreneurs in the class.

Listening is one of the most challenging aspects of this book for Japanese students. Many of them find it difficult to understand some listening activities the first time around. Thus, some audio has to be played at least twice, which is time-consuming. This may be due

Table: Table of contents of *Business Result Intermediate*

Unit	Title	Working with words	Language at work	Practically speaking	Business communication	Talking point
1	Working life	Describing work	Present simple and present continuous	How to show interest	Networking	Speed networking
2	Work life balance	Work-life balance	To + infinitive and -ing form	How to say “yes”	Exchanging contact details	Corridor conversations
3	Projects	Projects	Present perfect and past simple	How to give short answers	Updating and delegating tasks	Scenario planning
Viewpoint 1: Sharing a workspace						
4	Services & Systems	Services and systems	Comparative forms and modifiers	How to be approximate	Explaining features and benefits	Stack ranking
5	Customers	Customer service	Present tense for future reference	How to say “sorry”	Making and changing arrangements	Upside down management
6	Guests & visitors	Business travel	Articles	How to address people	Welcoming visitors	Cultural expectations
Viewpoint 2: cultural communication						
7	Working online	Online security	Obligation, prohibition and permission	How to sequence an explanation	Teleconferencing	Online, but are you working?
8	Finance	Finance and money	Talking about the future	Will	Presenting visual information	Investment opportunities
9	Logistics	Logistics and supply chains	Direct and indirect questions	How to use say and tell	Placing and handling orders	Shadow work
Viewpoint 3: cybercrime						
10	Facilities	Describing a place of work	Quantifiers	How to use too and enough	Making suggestions and recommendations	The Hawthorne effect
11	Decisions	Decision-making	First and second conditionals	How to use if	Negotiating	The decision game
12	Innovation	Innovation	Superlative forms	How to praise and thank people	Presenting new ideas	Music to your online ears
Viewpoint 4: The Falkirk Wheel						
13	Breakdowns	Breakdowns and faults	Relative pronouns	How to check someone understands	Discussing and solving problems	A breakdown in public relations
14	Processes	Processes	Passive forms	How to explain process	Dealing with questions	Lean coffee
15	Performance	Personal quantifiers	Past continuous and past perfect	How to generalize or be specific	Appraising performances and setting objectives	Extroverts, introverts and ambiverts
Viewpoint 5: Green appeal						

to the fact that this textbook is based on British English while Japanese students are mostly used to American English. However, audio scripts are transcribed and can be found at the back of the textbook, which is helpful but should not be used from the very beginning of listening activities. In terms of content, some units of the textbook appear rather late, for example, Unit 10 (Facilities). As mentioned above, students can start building up their imaginary company, starting with their company's facilities. Unit 10, therefore, can be swapped for Unit 1 or Unit 2. The teachers' manual indicates that each unit can be taught independently, thus not affecting the general flow of the content in terms of difficulty level.

One of this book's hidden but resourceful aspects are the "Key Expressions" in the "Business Communication" section. For example, when students are asked challenging questions, either they freeze or resort to the Japanese language; however, using "Key Expressions" [Unit 4] such as *That's a good question* would sound very professional. These expressions could be used from the very beginning of each unit. The colorful design and pictures of people from diverse backgrounds depict an actual international workforce and keep students motivated. It would have been beneficial to students if the textbook featured a translation of key terms in Japanese. Some teachers might want to provide this to their students.

In conclusion, *Business Result Intermediate* is a well-designed textbook not only for English learners but also for students of business and business management. This book undoubtedly helps students think outside the box by introducing international business scenarios and ideas especially from a Western perspective. The authors have put much effort into ensuring the contents are clear and not repeated. The textbook can be used as a stand-alone textbook for intermediate-level students with some small modifications.

Acknowledgement

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Reference

Oxford University Press (n.d), *Oxford University Press, English Language Teaching*, accessed 08 December 2023, https://elt.oup.com/catalogue/items/global/business_esp/business_result_second_edition/business_result_second_edition_intermediate1/?cc=jp&sellLanguage=ja