ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS COURSE. THEMATIC UNIT: BUSINESS EVENTS

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Abstract
This didactic unit is aimed at the fifth semester students of the Business Administration, Marketing and International Business program, who have already completed the four basic levels of the Open Lingua program. This proposal seeks to develop skills and competencies that allow them to perform in different fields related to private, public and solidarity economy companies, and in various mediation and negotiation processes at national and international levels. The instructional design of this unit contains real-life situations, focused on the world of business, that allow students to interact in various types of business events. The grammatical and lexical concepts, necessary to interact successfully in these types of communicative situations, are introduced and applied. The educational activities are designed to offer opportunities to interact in business conferences, international exhibitions, and seminars, among others. The contents are framed in natural and meaningful contexts. This leads to a greater understanding of the type of language used in business and the way it is used to communicate. The contents are structured in three lessons in which the level of complexity of the topics, tasks, texts and transitions (4Ts) have been considered. Also, various types of activities that activate and reinforce previous knowledge and that, subsequently, evaluate the progress of the students, are included.

Keywords: Business conferences, business English, business interactions, English for Specific Purposes, international business.
INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language at the levels proposed by Open Lingua contemplates the application of didactic strategies based on the Communicative Approach, thus favoring the learning of English that allows various types of interactions. This thematic unit was designed taking into account the particular needs of the students of the career programs that belong to the Faculty of Economic, Administrative and Accounting Sciences, who require mastery of vocabulary and expressions typical of their specific programs. In the business world, it is important to know how to perform easily and naturally in interactions related to events such as business conferences, international exhibitions, and seminars, among others. This learning resource is based on the postulates of the 4Ts theory for the teaching of English by specific contents that include the topic, the task, the text, and the transition.

In this thematic unit, the students, and even the teachers who wishes to benefit from it, are provided with opportunities to analyze communication situations in a variety of business events, in order to learn and apply different types of expressions that will enable them to communicate effectively when they participate in any of the aforementioned types of events, whether at an academic or professional level. To develop this thematic unit, which is divided into three self-manageable lessons, it is a requirement that students or teachers have passed the four basic levels of English in the Open Lingua program.

OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To develop skills and competencies that allow students to perform in different fields related to private, public and solidarity economy companies, and in various mediation and negotiation processes at national and international levels.

LINGUISTIC OBJECTIVES

1. Identify, list and repeat information questions and answers in the present simple used in different types of interactions at business events.

2. Identify cognates and expressions for the beginning and end of conversations related to the topics covered in each lesson, and use graphic organizers to classify them.

3. Structure and dramatize conversations that include questions and answers in the present simple related to business event situations.

4. Review and restructure conversations about business events by changing the start and end expressions.

5. Integrate specific expressions for the beginning and end of conversation, as well as cognates, to simulate typical interactions of business conferences and other commercial events.

CONTENT OBJECTIVES

1. Identify and use different types of information questions related to business events.

2. Identify and classify different types of businesses.

3. Identify and discuss about different purposes to attend a business event or conference.

4. Identify specific vocabulary from conferences and business events, and apply it in short interactions.
METALINGUISTIC OBJECTIVE

After watching two videos of business conferences (one in Spanish and the other in English), compare and discuss the similarities and differences in the use of the language in both languages.

CONTENT

ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

The English language skills that students and teachers seek to develop with this thematic unit are the following:

- Ask information questions in the present simple and answer them.
- Ask specific questions about business events in the present simple.
- Use appropriate expressions to start and close a business interaction.
- Identify cognates related to the topics covered and use them appropriately.

In order for students to acquire these linguistic skills, the following didactic and evaluative strategies are proposed:

Introductory activities

1. Watch a video about a business conference and identify the cognates.
2. Watch the video again and identify some of the questions and answers worked on in class.
3. Write a short dialogue with different questions, related to business events, and compare them with those used in the video to establish similarities and differences among them.

Application and practice activities

1. Create and dramatize a conversation that includes questions and answers in the present simple with a variety of verbs.
2. Integrate specific expressions for the initiation and closing of commercials of a commercial type, and cognates to simulate interactions typical of various types of business events.
3. Identify specific vocabulary of commercial events and apply it in short interactions.

Evaluation activities

1. Carry out matching exercises for questions and answers used in business event interactions.
2. Write and dramatize a conversation between a businessperson and a participant in a business event specifically designated for this activity.

BACKGROUND

It is very important that UCC students have the opportunity to do their internships in a communicative way and as required by the Open Lingua program — and in particular by the Faculty of Administrative, Economic and Accounting Sciences. As Howat (1984) mentions, the communicative approach has two versions: A strong and a weak one. Both versions are prioritized in our communicative approach. The first one is developed when our students take the four basic levels of English. Through this learning, the fundamental bases are acquired to know how to use what has been learned in terms of vocabulary and grammatical expressions. And the second one is the proper application of language in communicative interactions, such as the thematic unit that we
develop in this document: Interacting in the business world. Therefore, and as stated by Breen (1984), students learn to communicate by communicating. Then, task-based learning establishes a methodology that considers interactions as fundamental elements in the development of a communicative approach settled in different environments. According to different authors, students develop at the same time they learn the necessary strategies to achieve the objectives that make instruction effective and efficient.

Teaching English based on content from other disciplines is a concept that has been addressed for several years, especially in specialized courses offering relevant content from a particular academic discipline. This is known in the world of language teaching as English for Specific Purposes or ESP. This is an appropriate approach for the educational proposals of the ucc, since it meets the needs for the development of generic and specific competencies that allow students to function successfully in various types of work environments. In this type of approach, students can develop communication skills through the development of specific skills or competencies in their field of action, thus integrating the learning of the foreign language with that of the thematic content that the student needs to master in their career. As proposed in this didactic resource, the content is offered in a thematic way and not by subject (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). In this case, the topic is business events and their own interactions.

What is known as Content-Based Instruction or CBI (also known in Europe as Content and Language Integrated Learning or CLIL) has the advantage of allowing the simultaneous learning of the language and academic content that students will learn. They will serve to function successfully in the program in which they are enrolled. In other words, learning English allows the student to acquire, reinforce and apply concepts that are necessary for learning in other subjects. Language becomes the medium through which content is learned (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

For this type of approach to be successful, it is necessary for teachers to establish precisely the language and content objectives to be achieved. This implies that when planning each lesson, the vocabulary, grammatical structures and the organization of the discourse are considered, which requires mastery of the thematic contents to be studied.

The CBI or CLIL has as its pillars ten fundamentals that are:

1. The objectives. The aim is for the student to master both the language and the content. The latter usually contains current topics or of particular interest to students, thus offering natural content for learning the language.

2. The role of teacher and student. It is up to the teacher to define both the linguistic and content learning objectives and the way in which they intend to achieve them. On the other hand, an active participation of the students is expected so that, using the language, they can learn the content and vice versa. Teachers must clarify meanings using various types of resources and strategies, especially relying on the experiences of their students.

3. The characteristics of the teaching-learning process. It is important that teachers guide their students so that they can understand authentic texts, oral and written, in the language they are learning. This is achieved by designing activities that integrate the use of the foreign language and the content, if possible, through interactions with their peers.
4. The type of interaction between the teacher and the student. It is the teacher’s competence to guide their students’ learning by explaining to them how the foreign language can be used to account for the academic content and promoting the development of language skills.

5. The management of the emotions of the students. Learning the content and the foreign language simultaneously requires high levels of interest and motivation among students. This is achieved if they perceive the relevance of what they are studying.

6. The way in which the foreign language and culture are perceived. It should be considered that language is the medium through which content is transmitted and understood, on one hand, and that culture is addressed to the extent that it is integrated into the proposed academic content, on the other hand.

7. The language areas emphasized. It is important to be clear about the language skills that require further development and the type of grammatical and lexical structures that are required in addressing each specific topic. Adequate integration of the four language skills (speaking, reading, listening and writing) in authentic contexts is required.

8. The role of the students’ mother tongue. In this type of approach, a clear role for the first language is not evident. However, its use can be essential at the beginning when students are doing linguistic scaffolding activities designed by the teacher.

9. The type of evaluation. The proposed evaluation strategies must be congruent with the type of content and the linguistic skills established from the objectives and addressed in the classroom activities.

10. The teacher’s attitude towards students’ mistakes. The teacher must correct errors in such a way that they can monitor their own oral and written production. This is accomplished by constantly recycling content to ensure that they are learning to use the foreign language for established academic purposes.

11. Various language skills. Students, in turn, need to be involved in collaborative work so that they can use both the content and the foreign language in a meaningful way to develop different kinds of language skills.

**Practical recommendations on the guide**

The following is the structure of the thematic unit with its three lessons. All this content is presented entirely in English and considers the 4Ts (text, task, topic and target) suggested by McConachie et al. (2006):
### LESSON 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning objective(s) of the lesson</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Task(s)</th>
<th>Text(s)</th>
<th>Transitions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify, list and repeat present simple information questions and answers used in different kinds of business events interactions. 2. Identify and use different kinds of business conference questions.</td>
<td>Business events</td>
<td>Watch the video and answer these questions: • Is this a corporate or business event? • Have you ever attended a business event? • What kind of event was that?</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNRia6PMwxA&amp;feature=emb_logo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNRia6PMwxA&amp;feature=emb_logo</a></td>
<td>Brainstorm and list different kinds of business events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4Ts Consider the level of complexity for every topic, task, text, and transition.</td>
<td>Business meetings</td>
<td>After reading the article “The Most Common Types of Corporate Events”, students have to compare and discuss the differences and similarities with the list. After answering the transition questions about meetings, watch the video “English Phrases for Meetings”. • Task #1: Write a list of key words. • Task #2: Fill out a t-chart with questions and answers presented in the video.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.the-balancesmb.com/corporate-events-common-types-1223705">https://www.the-balancesmb.com/corporate-events-common-types-1223705</a></td>
<td>After comparing the brainstorming list and the article, students have to answer the following question: What do you know about meetings? / What kind of information is usually discussed in meetings?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conferences, seminars and networking events</td>
<td>Watch the video that includes some dialogues. After watching each dialogue: • Task #1: List and repeat some key phrases. • Task #2: Role play a conversation to use the vocabulary to practice questions and answers.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrRamSyNkul">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrRamSyNkul</a></td>
<td>After watching the &quot;Conference small talk&quot; video, students have to classify some of the phrases into cognates, starters and endings.</td>
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<th>Task(s)</th>
<th>Text(s)</th>
<th>Transitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify, list and repeat present simple information questions and answers used in different kinds of business events interactions. 2. Identify and use different kinds of business conference questions.</td>
<td>Conversation ice breakers. Questions and answers to maintain a conversation.</td>
<td>Watch the video and list the cognates, starters and endings in a graphic organizer.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhYjit-k00O">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhYjit-k00O</a></td>
<td>After watching the video and listing the vocabulary, students must explain the kind of business events where those expressions can be used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4Ts Consider the level of complexity for every topic, task, text, and transition.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Watch the presentation about 26 different kinds of events and classify them according to the following categories: Education, social, appreciation, networking and promoting.</td>
<td><a href="https://comedyventriloquist.com/CV/26-types-of-corporate-events-your-business-may-host">https://comedyventriloquist.com/CV/26-types-of-corporate-events-your-business-may-host</a> <a href="https://www.themuse.com/advice/30-brilliant-networking-conversation-starters">https://www.themuse.com/advice/30-brilliant-networking-conversation-starters</a></td>
<td>After classifying the events, students have to say which ones are more relevant to a company and why.</td>
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**Scaffolding Teaching strategies to facilitate content and learning of the language of the area (scaffolding)**
## LESSON 3

### Learning objective(s) of the lesson

1. Integrate specific starters, endings and cognates to simulate a conference business event interaction.
2. Sketch and role play a conversation that includes conference information questions and answers in simple present with the verb to be and other verbs.
3. Identify specific conference vocabulary and apply it in short interactions.
4. After watching two business conference videos (one in Spanish and one in English), students will compare and discuss the similarities and differences in language usage and in the organization of the events.

### Thread (s)

Show the students a video and they must explain in what kind of event it could be used and why [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqkrKsPaYKk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqkrKsPaYKk)

### 4Ts

**Consider the level of complexity for every topic, task, text, and transition.**

**Topic(s) covered in this lesson**
- Business events vocabulary
- Useful starters and endings for asking, clarifying and responding

**Task(s)**

- Watch the "At the trade" video and answer the following questions: What’s his name? What kind of event is he attending? How many days does he plan to stay? What kind of products is he interested in?
- Watch the videos about the different trade shows (one in Spanish and the other one in English) and complete the following activities:
  - Task #1: Discuss the similarities and differences in the organization of the two events.
  - Task #2: Find cognates in both languages. Review all the vocabulary starters and endings studied during the unit, and use them to write and role play a business event conversation. The kind of event is the student’s choice. (Pair work).

**Text(s)**

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GM487I6AMcU
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V45j00LnO_0

**Transitions**

Students answer the following questions: Have you ever attended a trade show? What was it about?

Students answer this question: What kind of event would you like to participate in? Imagine what kind of event you would like to role play with a partner.

### Scaffolding

**Teaching strategies to facilitate content and learning of the language of the area (scaffolding)**

### Assessment proposal

Sketch and role play a conversation that includes conference information questions and answers in simple present with the verb to be and other verbs.

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**Source:** Own elaboration.

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### References


Notas de clase