4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Answers to Research Questions

This section discusses the extent to which published Business English textbooks meet the language needs of the target learner. In response to research question 1 in terms of which topics or subject matter are relevant to the learner, Text 1 covers very general business English terms. Similarly, Text 2 covers general Business English techniques, skills and functional language of presenting information or business communications in writing and on the phone. And 34 units in Text 3 are not at all of relevance to the learner. Then there are in Text 4, for examples, issues of foreign exchange, international trade and cultural differences which are not relevant to the learner. Similarly, in Text 5, Personal Profile (Unit 1), Making Appointments (Unit 8), Hotel Management Policy (Unit 7), Social Conversations (Unit 6) and Cross Cultural Contacts (Unit 13) are but some examples of topics or subject matters which are not of immediate relevance to the target learner. Thus, the texts, especially 1, 2 and 3, contain some relevant topics or subject matter and at the same time many irrelevant ones. One text could be lacking in one or two subject matter but could be found in another. For example, the subject on marketing (strategies) could be found in Text 4 but not on presenting sales achievement found in Text 5. However, generally, the topics or subject matter of the 5 textbooks have not been related to pharmaceutical (drug) sales situations needed by the target learner. Most of texts though have both straightforward, factual and controversial issues that entail problem solving needed by the target learner. And basically the level of the textbooks would not be a problem for the learner as the learner has rather advanced general language proficiency and the texts cater from low to higher intermediate and advanced levels of proficiency.
In response to research questions 2 and 3 on which grammatical components and functions are relevant to the learner, Text 1 has provided more than the required grammatical terms. On the other hand, Text 2 has not provided any grammatical components and language functions nor any explicit explanations on the use of grammar and functions as required by the learner. Similarly, for Texts 3 and 4, there have been no explicit explanation of grammatical and language structure, nor any reinforcement exercises for the latter text. Text 5, however, has provided the language functions and exercises in meaningful situations as required by the learner. But related functions on presenting work project (Unit 5), describing product (Units 3 & 4) and reporting sales achievement (Unit 9) have not been related to the subject matter of drugs.

Next is the answers to research questions 4 and 5 on which language skills and communicative / professional skills are relevant for the learner. For language skills and communicative / professional skills, the main language skills needed by the target learner is speaking while communicative / professional skills are confined to mainly reporting, negotiating, presenting, chairing drug-sales related matters. Text 1 has lacked such focus. Text 1 has mainly dealt with accuracy in grammatical items and business terms. Text 2 has provided the practical production skills of writing and speaking for negotiating, persuading and presenting (not related to drug sales though) but not for reporting or marketing (strategies). In Text 3, the focus has been on speaking (but not preceded by explicit grammatical or functional explanation), and 7 units out of 49 units could have met the communicative / professional skills of the learner except that some of them have been confined to just helping learner prepare the contents for negotiation,
etc. Texts 4 and 5 have focussed on different language skills, at times two at a time in
the units or chapters. Thus, certain units do focus on speaking skills. But even in such
instances, the texts have not provided explicit explanation or models on for example,
the 'Dos' and 'Don'ts' of negotiation or, a discussion on the stages of reporting; and
Unit 13 of Text 3 helps learner write out the content for presentation. This is generally
true of all the texts. And all the textbooks basically have not provided recycling of items
in subsequent units or chapters.

Lastly, the relevance of the approach or style of texts to that of the learner is
addressed (research question 6). No doubt Text 1 has provided the direct explicit
explanation of grammatical items and business terms, but as discussed earlier, it is
lacking in the areas of language and professional skills, etc. Texts 2 and 3 basically have
advocated the discovery process learning or negotiated learning which normally would
have taken extra time and effort. As discussed, the target learner does not prefer this
approach especially in the areas of grammar and functions. Texts 4 and 5 have
provided guided activities and included controversial issues that entail problem-solving
in meaningful situations but as discussed, they too have lacked in other areas, for
examples in professional / communicative skills and drug-sales related matters.

4.2 The assumption "a textbook cannot meet the needs of any individual
teaching-learning situation nor the needs of the individual within it" is supported.

Thus, the results of this study have suggested that there is no ONE textbook
which would completely match the language and skills needs of the target learner even
in this local Malaysian context. Each of the textbooks has been always either lacking or
containing too much of one or many of these areas: topic or subject matter, language functions, grammatical components, communicative or professional skills, language skills; and generally, the syllabus approach or style has not been appropriate. Therefore, the assumption that a textbook cannot meet the needs of any individual teaching-learning situation nor the needs of the individuals within it, seems to be reinforced. It further supports the belief/assumption that the reason is because the textbooks have not been tailored closely to the learner’s needs.

The latter is clearly supported by the basis of writers’ criteria of selecting language to be included in the textbooks. On what do authors base their selection of forms to teach? This question has been raised during the text analysis of Text 1 - Longman Business English Usage. If you have looked at other texts as well, the general observation is possible that many writers may not themselves be native speakers of English nor knowledgeable in business and thus have limited resources to appraise their coursebooks and judge their authenticity. They could have worked on ‘educated’ guesswork or hunches when writing business dialogues and transactions. And obviously, the writers [of the textbooks analysed] would not have known the specific needs of the Manager.

4.3 The Role of Textbooks

Therefore, finding of this study that there is no one textbook which would completely match the language and skills needs of the target learner has raised a similar question posed by Williams (1988). Does it mean then that textbooks are not teaching the correct or most useful and appropriate language or strategies? Hence, does it mean
that textbooks are redundant for ESP? If not, what role does it play in the teaching and learning of business English?

If no textbook is a match to a learner's needs, it then seems to imply that teachers and learners who are currently using textbooks are actually lured and exploited by attractive package deals offered by company publishers. It seems to confirm the observation by Brumfit (1980: 30) that 'to put a book on the open market implies a moral contract that the book has been cleared of basic fault'. It might also seem to confirm the perception of some sections of the public who endorse 'glossy, printed covers'. It further implies that the credibility of teacher-generated materials is questionable. However, I would only be able to contribute some insights into these issues only when text and created materials are tried out on my target learner or any other learner(s). Until then, learners and ESP practitioners would benefit to learn to analyse the content of textbooks to select appropriate texts for their learning/teaching situations. This would be further discussed later.

The results of this study show that there has been substantive mismatch between what have been produced and what the 'teacher-researcher' would like to have. The situation is compounded by the fact that some contexts might be a little too 'advanced' for Malaysians. For example, see pp 140 in Business Objectives (Appendix X). Does the production planning process of baking (bread) in Malaysia actually involve using computers?

It has been further aggravated by another problem that emerged during the text analysis, namely the terminology used to describe the language levels of target learners
and certain terms. For example, my concept of advanced could have been different from that claimed by the author of a textbook.

However, if we argue that textbooks should be done away with because they cannot meet all the needs of a learner, we are actually arguing that since no teacher can meet all the needs of any given learner, teachers should be done away with. No doubt, I can quite confidently conclude that this expectation for ONE coursebook to meet all the specific requirements of an individual or whatmore for a group of learners would be preposterous. However, at the same time, we cannot condemn textbooks just because they are not a perfect fit. I would suggest on a workable compromise.

For one, consider the amount of thought that has gone into the creation of a textbook by the publisher. I have become more sympathetic to the efforts of material writers. The text analysis suggests that contexts are necessarily generalized and the focus is on core language skills in order to meet varied and changing needs of learners.

"My colleague in the German shipyard was scornful of any materials not written directly for a group by someone with direct knowledge of that group. The assumption is that each group is so unique that its needs cannot possibly be met by material developed to meet the needs of another group." (O’Neill, 1982)

As has been discussed earlier, this similar assumption quoted above seems to be supported by the findings in this study. However, if you look from another angle, just as O’Neill has done, this assumption can be refuted. The results of this study support O’Neill’s observation that even though textbooks and learner’s needs are mismatched because of differences, there are also similarities which are often adequate to act as a
creative tool for learning. Note in the discussion under "Did it Match?" and the earlier
discussions how some areas match and how even one book, Text 3 to be exact, has
come very close to match. Almost always a textbook or part of it could be found which
would provide some or part of the core language or skills necessary and useful for my
target learner. Such similarities could be adopted or adapted for the learner. I do not
think I would be overgeneralizing if I say the same for other learner(s), no matter how
unique the needs might be. Certain portions of some textbooks can provide useful and
appropriate language, skills or strategies relevant to the level and needs of learner(s).

Thus, in this sense, the widespread feeling that textbooks are deficient is not
necessary true. Nor is it quite justified to question whether textbooks are teaching the
correct or most useful and appropriate language and strategies. No doubt, it seems to
have confirmed Pilbeam & Leckey's (1987) difficulty in finding published ESP
materials to use. However, the difficult lies in the search for ONE text, most probably,
but there is possibility of use from certain units or sections of various texts.

Textbooks thus do contribute to the learning and teaching of Business English,
in particular. The role of textbooks thus can be concluded as, at best as the main
structural framework and at worst, adapted supplementary materials in the teaching
and learning of ESP, in particular Business English. The possibility of ESP practitioners
and learners resorting wholly to published Business English textbooks as coursebooks is
almost nil.
4.4 Implications on teaching, learning and writing (texts) of ESP - Business English: some pitfalls or issues and recommendations to overcome

The role of textbooks being such then would suggest that there is the issue of how to integrate syllabuses of different texts or sources (form, situational, topic, functional, notional, skills, etc.) into a sensible teaching programme (Swan, 1985) to meet the needs of learner(s). This study has revealed that often there is one which is likely to be the primary organising principle for the course, other syllabus subordinate to it. As discussed in the introduction, Allen (1984) has advocated variable focus of various lessons and McDonough (1986), a range of approaches. What is important then is the activities learners engage, which should be guided by what the needs analysis suggests and what we are institutionally capable of. Thus, as offered by Hutchinson (1987) too, teachers and material writers need to also consider learning needs - how someone learns.

There is one pitfall though to this dependency on needs analysis. Needs analysis tells a lot about the nature and content of target learner needs but it does not tell you how to achieve target competence. However, in this study attention is drawn to the significance of socio-cultural factors (world experiences) affecting learner thus there is implication for ESP programme, design and implementation (Chamberlain & Baumgardner, 1988). The learner’s source of information and background knowledge has not been only from texts but in the everyday media. Look at one of the major interest and source of medical information - internet / e-mail (in the response to the questionnaire).
The possible implication for teaching is that references to other areas of knowledge is an important aid to comprehension - hence the term 'top-down processing' approach in teaching. Terms or things familiar to the learners can be used to contextualise, exemplify or illustrate new ideas. It is believed that such association of new ideas improves retention of new knowledge. Our world experiences are stored in scripts (Schank & Anelson, 1977) or schemata of related events as Rumelhart (1980) put it. Knowledge is stored in the mind as a semantic network of interrelated events or concepts which could look something like the following:

Hence, inevitably, as world experiences change, needs change as well and integration and modification of syllabuses would come in again.

The proposed role of textbooks would also imply that teachers and learners extend their resource banks to authentic company documents and the media and create
their own texts or design in-house materials. In fact, the issue that emerges here is whether the materials practitioners use should be authentic texts or should they create their own simple texts. There has been some divergence of opinion (Widdowson, 1978) over this. Text analysis in this study has revealed instances of 'artificial' whole-sentence dialogues, despite the descriptions available of the truncated nature of authentic oral interaction (supporting observation by Cunningsworth 1987). Expressing opinions functions, for example were often taught explicitly and included terms like "I definitely think that... I consider, I feel, in my opinion". One point here is that there might not be a necessity to be explicit when one does not need to be explicit. There is the danger of teaching students to be over-explicit.

Another example is overtly neutral polite expressions which tend to be favoured by most textbooks. However, in real meetings, there are expressions, like "oh no, yeah, well", and not so polite expressions like 'bugger', 'what a load of crap'. And to focus on a topic, name of topic was usually used, for example, 'sales achievement in March' rather than "Can we now consider the sales achievement in the month of March?". Authentic speakers were more blunt but considered holistically, more appropriate in 'pressured, straight-forward' business situations (paraphrased from Williams, 1988). This raises the same issue of whether textbooks are teaching the correct language and strategies (refer Williams, 1988). At the same time, messages in media and authentic dialogues are often characterised by complex turn-taking, absence of adjacency pairs in opening and closing. The target learner has revealed that he wants to learn to select strategies and plan his tactics in order to achieve their purpose in the most effective way [supporting findings of Williams, 1988]. For example, he wants to know "How to negotiate and win" rather than learning only a list of over-polite, over-explicit or
sentence exponents for functions. This implies the learner wants to be aware of the
needs of listeners and their reactions so that the learner could select strategies
accordingly. Such awareness and appropriate selection can only be truly assimilated in
authentic but characteristically complex situations. This however, raises the question of
whether it is necessary to expose learners to such complex strategies and risk confusing
and discouraging the learner(s). In fact, ‘plucking’ out an authentic text from its ‘body’
of knowledge to be used (in the classroom) is in itself already problematic. Such an
action might deny learners of contextual clues which would aid comprehension which
in turn would have helped learner develop strategies to enable learner to exploit clues
and use them in appropriate situations. Learner(s) could be deprived of this form of
more lasting language assimilation.

Thus, on one hand, authentic materials used in texts might be too high a level or
complicated especially for a non-native learner. On the other hand, if ESP texts are
simplified so that a simple variation might be written to suit the target learner’s language
level, by highlighting rhetorical conventions and avoiding idiosyncracy of styles, it
would be accused of attending only to vocabulary and syntax and ignoring conceptual
structure and rhetorical patterning. So, as Woods (1982) put it, simplicity unless
properly carried out, might cause greater problems than it solved. The context could
become insignificant as learners already know and there is nothing new or challenging
for them to grapple with. *Without new information...no communicative value...become

Bhatia (1983) advocated ‘clarification devices’ or ‘access structures’ alongside
original texts to help guide target learner. But then there would be the problem of
grading texts according to ‘accessibility’ (density of new information, length of text,
etc.) and in varying the complexity of tasks.
The possible implication from the dilemma in the use of authentic materials is that we might not be able to provide ESP learner skills for this particular [authentic] media of communication, but we could teach learner general strategies that would promote interaction or language acquisition in any setting (Murray, 1988). Whatever, this still calls for substantial work to convert the materials from both texts and outside authentic materials into relevant, useful communicative activities with real learning potential. Interesting-looking authentic materials might end up interesting or vice versa depending on the way it would be used. This has implications on the methodology, how to use, adapt and approach texts for successful implementation of an ESP and in particular, a Business English course.

Another pitfall arises in this conversion and methodology for a successful business English course would be teacher's lack of first-hand knowledge of the business world. One suggestion to overcome this pitfall would be a methodology which involves partnership learning. The negotiated / process approach is thus advocated with the teacher as the expert on language and communication strategies, and the learner as expert informant on his or her own specialized professional context. Both have a role in determining the mix of language and skills training. In fact, insufficient specialist knowledge especially in terms of vocabulary need not be a worrying factor for teachers. Findings from this needs analysis of this study have suggested that ESP courses need not include specialist language, partly commensurating with what Pauline Robinson (1991) suggested. For example, the learner did not need the specific vocabulary of his subject area [mainly product knowledge] prior to starting his course. His main needs were on strategies to for example, market his company product and explicit teaching of
language structures and functions. This suggested that what the Manager has needed is
the ability to ‘gloss’ - the technique where teacher would introduce specific terms and
the ability to ask questions when an explanation was not given. And whether the learner
like it or not, to some extent, it would inevitably involve negotiation process between
both the teacher(s) and learner(s).

Such demanding work of ‘conversion’ might also incur the common
lamentation of “no time to indulge in extracting relevant materials nor adapting them
from textbooks”. However, of the two options between extracting or / and adapting
materials from texts and creating own texts, I would opt more for the former. The main
reason is that from my experience during the designing of the syllabus outline for my
target learner, those published textbooks have been my sources of ideas. However, both
options could result in administrative problems not likely encountered if textbooks are
used. Some possible problems are listed below:

1) Even with high-quality photocopiers and word-processors, such materials get
shabby quickly.

2) It costs more to photocopy 100 pages than it does to buy 200 pages bound
together in a book. This is compounded by the not so generous and / or limited
access of copying facilities provided in Malaysian schools and colleges.

3) Storage problem. ‘Created’ and photostated sheets of paper tend to get lost and
confused and are difficult to carry about. Thus, learners find it difficult to look
at them where and when they like such as on buses, at meal times, in parks, etc.

Perhaps such administrative problems can be overcome by being an excellent
organiser. Anyway, in consideration that there is generally no ONE textbook to suit a
particular learner, whatmore a group of learners, the hassle and problem of organizing such materials for the sake of meeting the needs of the learner(s) is definitely worth the trouble.

Another possible pitfall in making conversion and methodology successful is that we cannot see the learning process. It is not something tangible. However, ESP practitioners could heed or adopt the following fundamental principles of learning laid down by Tom Hutchinson (1988) in making materials work in an effective ESP methodology:

1. *Learning is development*
   
   Again the use of existing knowledge here makes new information meaningful.

2. *Learning is a thinking process.*
   
   Set tasks and activities to make learner use their cognitive abilities and world experiences or knowledge.

3. *Learning is an active process*
   
   Involves both psycho-motor activities (limbs, eyes, etc. movements) and processing activities (brain).

4. *Learning is decision making*
   
   Traditional classroom teacher is the decision maker. Advocated is Learner as Thinker - and learner decides what is meaningful, useful, correct and wrong.

5. *Language is not just linguistic knowledge.*
   
   As the study in the paper showed, what the learner actually needs was the "HOW" to negotiate and close a sale successfully!

6. *Second language learners are already communicatively competent.*
   
   Needs analysis shows that the level of competence for the target learner in this study is beyond the threshold level of communicative competence! And the fact is that in the mother tongue, the learner is already a communicator. Such competence can be exploited.
Learning is an emotional experience.

The fact that the target learner in this paper wants to improve in his language (skills) reflects the insecurity in the second language. The learner has implied that linguistic performance equals 'good face' (not surprising in this part of the world and from a culture that emphasises 'face' value in society).

Teachers can boost positive emotions by:

a) maximising pair/group work activity to minimise stress in presentations.
b) starting with tasks that use what learners know.
c) giving time to think and work out solutions to problems.
d) emphasising process, not product

e) primarily considering interest, fun and variety!

8) Learning is not systematic and needs should be considered during the stages of learning process.

This is in line with the process/procedural syllabus approach!

In sum, what is needed is a flexible approach or approaches [thus advocating the earlier suggestions of Allen (1984) and McDonough (1986)]. Such approaches depend on the changing needs of the target learner but which should include top-down processing.
4.5 ‘Final’ Recommendation in the teaching, learning and designing of ESP - in particular Business English texts.

Ultimately, the essence in syllabus design or adoption of text materials for material writers and for teachers respectively, to take note is to combine relevance and appropriateness with power - that is the content should as far as possible reflect the predictable communicative needs of the learner while containing as high as possible a generative capacity - to enable ESP practitioners to adapt or modify such materials to meet varied needs in changing situations. In fact, a research into what teachers and learners actually do with textbooks would cast some insight into overcoming the pitfalls or obstacles discussed. Results would enable the teacher development potential of textbooks to be recognised and actively built into textbook or materials design.

By now, I am quite confident that one possible best approach to the teaching and learning, and designing of ESP, in particular Business English texts, would be to adopt the concept of framework activities (found in the textbook Business English Teacher’s Resource Book). This proposal came in the light of my own experiences in this study and discussion which have culminated in my concluding remarks on the role of textbooks, and also on the earlier discussions on text authenticity, socio-cultural influences on learner(s) changing needs and its implication [top-down processing], the intangibility of learning process, the inevitability of negotiated process of learning, and possible learning principles. Textbooks could employ the framework activity approach. The teacher supplies the framework in the form of a worksheet, checklist and / or questionnaire. The learner supplies the details, based on their own professional experiences; after which the needed language functions and skills illicited, discussed,
practised would very much depend on the expertise of the teacher in cunningly devising activities of value to the learner.

Thus, a textbook could be designed in such a way that they can be used by a variety of learners with a variety of needs, and can be taught by a variety of teachers with a variety of teaching styles. For example, a unit of material can be designed so that it allows a choice of basic objectives elicited through questions:

1) Opinion questions: “What do you think we should do?” “What do you think will happen if we do it this way?” “How do you think we can do it?”

2) Analytical questions to apply in other contexts: “Do you know if we can ...............?” “Can you tell me what then is the best way to.............?”

It would be preceded by a needs analysis to gauge the context, situations which a learner face. Then, teacher would choose relevant texts to elicit and discuss the language and skills. The text content could be a short authentic dialogue and business text or even audio - visuals recordings of authentic business events. After that a task would be set to practise the skills and structures learnt. The next paragraph would deal with the type(s) of texts which would be most appropriate.

Communication in business is predominantly oral and visual-related. Conversational mode is more reflective of real situation and is more encouraged. Thus, one of the tasks to enable the learner to cope with his work situations would be practical demonstration (Hutchinson, 1978) - the use of audio-visual. The teacher does not just lecture about how the process of a negotiation is done, for example, rather the process is carried out, each step explained or elicited as the learner and teacher proceed. The
teacher provides the structure or scaffold for the learner to hypothesise and develop own strategy or strategies to cope with a situation. If the learner does not want to ‘hypothesise’ [as the learner in this study], the teacher could provide or discuss the language, skills and content available in the text. There would also be a structured session where feedback confirms findings and use of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

And based on analysis that suggests the learner needs explicit grammatical and functional explanations, this approach in the teaching and learning of [business] English tends to nullify the notion that structures of ‘academic’ texts are irrelevant. Learners develop fluency in handling ‘visual-related’ discourse - how to structure information logically, how to use structural resources and how to exploit visual clues or presentations only more confidently with the input and awareness of the specific structures and terms.

Therefore, the above approach in the learning and teaching of ESP blends both the conventional style of practising specific discourse patterns and specific structural grammatical items and functions and the more conversational mode in which non-verbal clues have an important role to play. The latter might involve group / pair work - discussion, simulation, problem-solving tasks and presentations to groups / class (cf. Buckley, Samuda, & Bruton, 1978) but with scaffolding provided.
Further implications on teaching and learning - How to Improve Teachers

The approach discussed also suggests that it entails more than just partnership earning. Hence, this implies that we need to be working also to improve the teachers. Strevens (1988) has pointed out that "becoming an effective teacher of ESP requires more experience, additional training, extra effort, a fresh commitment, compared with being a teacher of General English" (p.10), basically because translating needs into design and implementation must be considered in the light of linguistic aspects (linguistic competence versus communicative competence), pedagogical decisions (what skills need to be taught? To what extent? How will they be taught?) and administrative concerns (contact, cooperation).

Materials evaluation as carried out in this study is one of the areas teachers [who are also material writers in view of the role of textbooks] could work on. "Materials evaluation is a means of questioning and developing your own ideas as to what is required" (Hutchinson 1987). And this was basically what I experienced in the course of coming up with a course proposal for the target learner. Published textbooks provided the ideas to meet the Manager's requirements. Furthermore, through such evaluation, as Hutchinson & Waters (1987) discovered too, I too have become more aware of what to look for in materials written by other people. This helps me decide what I want for the learner.

Another supplementary alternative is teachers themselves having first-hand experiences in the business world. Are ESP teachers allowed 'moonlighting', straddling
another job - business related? If the answer is yes, teachers could be on their way to
easily extending their resource banks and converting them into relevant, useful
communicative activities with real learning potential. Perhaps the Education Ministry
might relax the teaching condition and in fact, encourage ESP teachers to ‘do business’
during the holidays especially if the Ministry lacks the fund to send the teachers on
business courses. Business people have often said that you learn fastest OJT (on-the-
job training).

4.7 Other issues or pitfalls as determiners of the ‘goal’ of teachers, learners
and material writers.

On a different note, the text analysis and the above suggestion on the approach
in the teaching and learning of ESP revealed some problems that a learner, a teacher
and a writer might encounter. These areas were not the main focus during the text
analysis, but they would constitute important considerations in looking for appropriate
texts for courses.

One problem could be cultural suitability. For example, the communicative skills
and the structures of language in carrying out those skills successfully as required by the
tasks in the (British) textbooks [like those analysed in this study] might be found to be
very different in Russia or even in China. Halenari (1993) supported this notion in her
study ‘Intercultural Business Telephone Conversations’. She looked at differences in
naturally-occurring business-related conversations of two cultures - Finnish-Finnish and
Finnish-American. In her study of episodes in conversation - opening, non-topical,
business and closing, it was found that English speakers generally wanted to get down
quickly to business and put the main emphasis on business episodes whereas Finnish
speakers seemed to emphasize non-topical elements because of their function of embedding business in a positive atmosphere. This function was also characterised by the tendency to elongate these sequences while English speakers tried to get to the core of the conversation - the business. Humour is a frequent-filler of all Finnish non-topical sentences such as the initial non-topical which precedes business episode, side sequences and pre-close. There was greater tolerance for overlapping speech by Finnish and more frequent initiation of overlapping speech by the English speaker on the assumption that overlapping speech was understood as negative interruption and thus culturally avoided. The researcher concluded by stating that mutual understanding and acceptance were often the pre-requisite of success in business-related talk.

Also, the intercultural business negotiations between for instance, Japanese and American businessmen had previously been investigated. (For examples, Graham & Herberger 1983; Graham 1990) with the conclusion that literature on naturally-occurring intercultural business talk between representatives of different pairs of cultures was scare (Graham 1990 : 239). Similarly, Stalpers and Ulijn, (1984 :1) called for more descriptions of business conversations to lead us to a better understanding of the possible stumbling blocks in intercultural communication. Problems in negotiations due to varying cultural conventions and mirrored in language use could then be better predicted.

Another related problem was that discourse conventions. That of the western different classes cultures were also certainly not universal. Grice's conversational maxims might be realised in radically different forms in different cultures (Keenan, 1976). Even tolerance of silence would be highly culture-dependent (Scollon & Scollon...
1981; Saville-Troike 1985). This issue of culture would be further complicated by the fact that within the superficially same broader culture, there are subcultures, whose communicative styles may differ greatly from one another (Heath 1987, Tannen 1984). Gumperz, (1977/90, 1982/89) had clearly indicated that it was not necessarily the limited grammatical skills of the non-native speaker that might lead to problems, but subtle differences in discourse organization. Scollon & Scollon (1981) also indicated the importance of such subtle differences as the length of pausing, and also cultural expectations about when talking would be appropriate and when not. In fact, according to Hymes (1971a, 1971b, 1972), culturally acquired knowledge (of when talking is appropriate and when not) is communicative competence. Furthermore, the conversational styles of men and women may differ radically (Kramarac, 1981; West & Zimmerman; 1983; Lakoff, 1990; Tannen, 1990).

Hence, such differences discussed might be potential problems not only for the Manager, but for other learners of Business English. At the same time, it could be further aggravated if such cultural differences were not brought to the awareness of learners in textbooks. Is mutual understanding and acceptance, the key to success in business-talk actually considered in the textbooks? It is fortunate that the current importance of content, particularly the social and institutional aspects, has been exemplified by the recent focus on genre analysis. Many current texts do reflect the exciting and fruitful development of genre analysis within ESP. See for examples, Text 5 has a unit, Unit 13 entitled Cross-Cultural Contacts; and in Text 4 - Unit 4 brought in the possible cultural differences during negotiation. [The absence of this aspect in my course design could have affected decision on the relevance of texts in the process of materials evaluation.] Perhaps more ESP textbooks could include more explicit studies
in different speech situations between speakers from various cultural backgrounds and in varying power relationships to enhance understanding of intercultural communication and its potential stumbling block in business, in particular. Awareness of cultural differences and discourse conventions should be built into situations to prevent learners from making social blunders and to enable speakers to handle even simple forms with some degree of subtlety.

Until such calls for more real data on language use and description of business conversations in various cultures and discourse conventions and between sexes, are heeded, textbooks would likely remain ‘deficient’ to a certain extent.

Nevertheless, the potential for misunderstanding would always be present. But at the same time, material writers should be cautious of needlessly offending customs. Awareness of the differences should be brought forward in classrooms for learners to diminish potential frustration and the lurking danger of inter-cultural miscommunication - with dire consequences to business deals and talks.

And finally, when viewed along this line of cultural differences, the real task of use of communicative skills thus begins in a situation in response to a situation in a socio-cultural codified community. Therefore, there is actually no need to mimic communicative competence of native speakers (Brumfit, 1980). Such awareness would help set the goal of a teacher, a learner and a material writer.