Breakthrough Language Series

BUSINESS GERMAN

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Acknowledgements

This book is dedicated to Frances, Stephan and Andreas

Breakthrough Business German would not have been possible without the generous help of a great number of people who have supported me with information and advice at various stages of the project, have contributed visual material and have helped with the recordings. I extend my thanks to all of them. The vast majority of these recordings were made on location with the aid of staff members of Deutsche Bundesbahn Bochum, Parkhotel Witten, Reisebüro Wedhorn Witten, Restaurant zum Ruhrblick Witten, Witt Gasttechnik Witten, Westfalenbank Bochum. I would like to thank them all very much for their kind assistance. Particular gratitude is due to Andrea Gehnich, Cornelia Köpl, Christian Seiler and Christiane Willmes. Doerthe Wagelaar helped with the recordings and devoted a lot of her spare time to preparing the transcripts, for which I thank her sincerely.

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Actors: Wolf Kähler, Paul Hansard, Maria Warburg

Audio producer: Gerald Ramshaw, MAX II

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First published 1992 by

THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS

and London

Companies and representatives throughout the world

ISBN 978-0-333-54400-6 ISBN 978-1-349-12142-7 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-12142-7

ISBN 978-0-333-54402-0 3-cassette pack

ISBN 978-0-333-54401-3 book and cassette pack

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92

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HOW TO USE THIS COURSE

Breakthrough Business German is the ideal course for business people who have little or no previous knowledge of German. Here are some of its main features:

- The key recordings have been made on location in German companies. The starting point for each unit is conversations and interviews with German people employed in a range of jobs.
- The language and the situations are, therefore, authentic – you are taken from boardrooms to the factory floor, from commercial exhibitions to banks financing small businesses.
- Business people have lives outside their jobs, and care is taken to provide training in the language which will help you to survive in hotels, restaurants and on the streets of German-speaking countries as well as in companies.
- The main emphasis throughout is on listening, speaking and reading – the skills you will find most useful in contacts with the German business world.
- Before producing the course, we talked to hundreds of people about *how* they learn languages. The result is that great care has been taken with the *Breakthrough Business* series to ensure that you get enough opportunities to practise the language. We have included in each unit a variety of activities that get you involved in using the German that has been introduced to you in the authentic dialogues.
- This is not a grammar course. You first understand and then you use the language; only then are the main grammar features introduced to provide some cement and to explain how the language works.
- Included in each unit is up-to-date information to ensure you are familiar with key features of the German business scene.

General hints

- Have confidence in us. Real language is complex and there are certain things in each unit which are not explained in detail and which you may find difficult to understand, particularly on the first hearing. We will build up your knowledge slowly, emphasizing only what you really need to remember at each stage and making a distinction between language you need to use and language where you only need to understand the gist.
- Try to practise regularly, but in short periods. 20–30 minutes a day is usually better than 3–4 hours once a week.
- To develop your speaking skills, do say the words and phrases out loud. This articulation of the language is important in building up a degree of confidence and fluency.
- If you don't understand something, don't panic. Leave it for a while. Learning a language is a bit like doing a jigsaw puzzle; it all eventually falls into place.
- Don't be afraid to write in the book and add your own notes.
- Go back over the units you have already studied. You'll often surprise yourself at how much you understand and it helps remind you of the vocabulary.
- If you are not attending language classes, try to pair up with someone else and learn with them.
- If this is the first time you have used a recording to help you learn a language, practise using the pause and repeat-play controls on your cassette or CD player.
- Learning German may take more time than you thought. Just be patient and, above all, don't get angry with yourself.

How the course is organized and how to make the most of each unit

There are twelve units, each one focusing on a particular aspect of business German. Each unit is divided up in the same way. In the first section, you get a number of authentic recordings with transcripts of what is said, together with notes and vocabulary. Each recording is followed by three or four exercises, some practising comprehension, some practising speaking. When the new location recordings have been introduced, explained and practised, all the main words and phrases are brought together in a list called *Key words and phrases*. Then come short sections which focus on grammar, reading, background information and some final 'open-ended' speaking practice.

The book contains step-by-step instructions for working through the course: when to use the book or recording on its own, when to use them together. As the course progresses you may well evolve your own pattern of study and that's fine. As a starting point, here's how we suggest you approach each unit.

Dialogues

First, listen to each of the key dialogues without stopping the recording, just to get a feel for the task ahead. Then go over the dialogue bit by bit in conjunction with the explanatory notes and vocabulary. You should get into the habit of playing the recordings repeatedly to give yourself time to think, listen to sentences a couple of times and repeat them after the speaker. When you feel confident you have at least understood what the dialogue is about and you have become familiar with the most important phrases, move on and do the associated exercises.

Practise what you have learned

These exercises have been carefully chosen to practise key vocabulary and structures. During the course you will come across many different types of exercises. Our presenter, Wolf, will guide you through what to do and there are clear instructions in the book.

Key words and phrases

By the time you get to this section you should be reasonably familiar with most of the words and phrases listed. Use the list to test yourself, covering up and checking what you know, first the English and then the German column. This should ensure that you can remember the most important items.

Read and understand and Did you know?

In these sections you will be able to read the kind of written material – signs, faxes, publicity brochures, etc. – that you are likely to come across in Germany and you are given some up-to-date information on the organization of business and commerce.

Your turn to speak

This final activity is open-ended. It is an opportunity for you to adapt the language of the unit to your own particular circumstances, so there are normally no 'correct' answers. When you've had a go at this guided speaking activity, you will hear a model version on the recording. This will show you what somebody else said and give you a few extra ideas.

Answers

The answers to all the exercises (except where the answers are given on the recording) can be found at the end of each unit.

Grammar summary

This is included at the back of the book as a reference tool.

Vocabulary

At the back of the book is a German–English and English–German vocabulary. This does not replace a dictionary, of course, but you should be able to use it as an alphabetical reference for most of the words you need.

Hints on pronunciation and spelling

On the whole German words are pronounced as they are written. You need to beware of one or two letters: **v** is pronounced like an **f** and **w** like a **v**. So the word for 'father' is **Vater**, spoken like *fater*, and the word for 'wolf' is **Wolf**, but pronounced *vol*f. The combination **ch** is sometimes pronounced rather like **sh** and sometimes like a throaty **k**, depending on the vowels preceding it. Rather than learning theoretical rules, just listen carefully to the recording and imitate the German speakers. If you do this, you should soon pick up German pronunciation. Sometimes in spoken German a final **e** is 'swallowed' by the speaker. This is shown by an **e** in brackets, e.g. **ich geb(e)**.

German uses basically the same letters as English, though note that *all* nouns are written with a capital letter. The letter **ß** is like a double **s** and it is found in the middle and at the end of words. The vowels **a**, **o** and **u** can sometimes be found with two dots over them: **ä**, **ö**, **ü** (called umlauts). They have the effect of changing the sound of the word from **a**, **o**, **u** to **ae**, **oe**, or **ue**, and they also affect the meaning, so keep an eye on umlauts.

All of us involved in producing *Breakthrough Business German* hope you will enjoy the course and find it useful.

Viel Spaß!

Symbols and abbreviations

For cassettes

If your cassette recorder has a counter, set it to zero at the start of each unit and then note the number in the headphone symbol at the start of each dialogue. This will help you to find the right place on the tape when you want to wind back.

For CD players

Your player will locate each unit as a track number. Note the number from your display in the headphone symbol at the start of each dialogue. This will help you find the right place on your disc when you want to repeat play.

◆ This indicates the most important words and phrases.

m.	masculine	sing.	singular
f.	feminine	pl.	plural
n.	neuter	lit.	literally