

Book Review: Business French

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Recommended Citation

Meyer, E.N. (2024). Book Review: Business French. *Global Business Languages*, 24, 70-72.
Available at (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.4079/gbl.v24.5>

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REVIEW

Zoubir-Shaw, Sadia. *Initiation au monde des affaires: De la pratique à la compétence*. Canadian Scholars, 2024. 214 pp. ISBN 978-1-77338-383-5.

Aimed at the B2 CEFR level, the current text reviewed here targets helping students to prepare to take the Diplôme de français des affaires (DFA) (for details on this exam, see <https://www.lefrancaisdesaffaires.fr>). Each chapter features relevant sociocultural readings, practical and task-oriented activities, vocabulary-building practice, grammar review, and podcasts. In addition, each chapter has a similar format in the following order: *Que faut-il savoir?*; *Perspectives socioculturelles et économiques*; *Savoir faire et savoir dire*; *Mise en pratique*; *Regard sur un pays de la Francophonie*. Chapters 1 and 2 provide background information on *L'Organisation de la Francophonie (OIF)* and the European Union. The following five chapters present *Le monde du travail*; *Le monde de l'entreprise*; *Le marketing et la publicité*; *La banque et l'assurance*; and, finally, *La société de consommation et le cybercommerce*. The focus on French-speaking communities, including but not limited to France, is particularly strong and presents a welcome addition to the corpus of current business French textbooks. It stands out, in that it uses French throughout.

Using a scaffolded approach, the timely readings build upon each other, which deepen students' knowledge about key themes, especially in chapters 3 and those that follow. Practical information about job searches, including cover letters and resumes, as well as tips on the desired skills that employers tend to seek are clearly explained. Instructors will appreciate Zoubir-Shaw's inclusion of cultural differences between job search practices in multiple French-speaking countries. The vocabulary, as well as the succinct content, is particularly relevant in that it will help students build knowledge and abilities in the business world. Zoubir-Shaw does an excellent job at presenting the *formules de politesse*, the forms of businesses from *Entreprise individuelle (EI)* to the *Société anonyme (SA)*. The author synthesizes complex terms and concepts, as well as statistics, and presents them visually in ways that the students can process the information effectively. Organigrams, charts, ads, maps, and the consistent use of symbols to indicate different sections of each chapter throughout the text aid in the learning of complex concepts. Students will surely find the chapters on marketing (chapter 5) and on cyber commerce (chapter 7) very engaging due to the visual presentation and relevant materials included. Digital marketing, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in marketing, and key concepts taught in more advanced business texts (e.g., "les 4 P"; "les 4 C") will engage students interested in pursuing business or other careers using French.

For those instructors whose students will not take the DFA, this text remains an excellent choice. In general, the grammar concepts covered in the book build skills at the B1-B2 levels, as this permits students to review concepts that they already have learned and move toward more proficiency, including the past tenses, the formation of comparatives and superlatives, relative pronouns and direct and indirect object pronouns, *si* clauses, and the subjunctive. This aspect, along with the visual aids mentioned above (charts, graphs, etc.), and the student/faculty manual, provides students with opportunities to deepen their language proficiency. While the actual book includes no color images, the accompanying color PowerPoint presentations include the same images from the book as well as additional images. The slides on COVID-19's impact on consumers' purchasing patterns, "*Zéro déchet*" and the principle of the 5 Rs, household

consumption, and examples of companies that use AI in their cyber commerce (*Netflix, Danone, Amazon, Sephora*, etc.) give students learning opportunities through authentic and contemporary issues and examples. The slides are enticing and very helpful to the lesser experienced as well as the experienced instructor. In future editions of the book, the author could consider modifying the slides to meet Quality Matters Higher Education standards. This could be done by using larger and easier to read fonts, being sure to have high contrast between the background and printed words, and avoiding colors not seen by the colorblind (see www.qualitymatters.org for more information and for resources). Addressing questions of access to those with visual limits could be easily addressed by individual instructors. Thus, these limitations do not provide a reason to avoid purchasing the text.

Indeed, the PowerPoints and accompanying podcasts and videos provide particularly strong reasons to purchase the text. The “*Regards sur*” readings, which focus on economic, historical or political between France and other French-speaking countries, do not present content that connects to the chapters, despite the diversity of countries represented. The Francophone countries that conclude each chapter include the following: Senegal, Poland, Canada (*Province de Québec*), Haiti, Burkina Faso, Morocco, and Vietnam. The choice of these particular countries, especially how they dialogue with the chapter in which they are included, is not clearly articulated in the text. The varied authentic documents in each chapter also do not seem to correspond to the featured country (except chapter 3). For example, *Chapitre 7 La société de consommation et le cybercommerce*, makes no mention of Vietnam, and while Vietnam and France do conduct business (p. 207), no apparent tie to cybercommerce is developed in the chapter. Moreover, the associated assigned activity to research relations between Egypt and France in order to prepare a similar *Regard sur* presentation) gives no explanation why one country was featured over another, nor of what specific relations should be discussed. The same can be said of the other chapters’ suggested countries, to replicate the production of the chapter’s *Regard sur* section. The text includes some typographical errors, mislabels the CCIP (Chambre de Commerce et d’Industrie de Paris, the former name of this entity) rather than citing the correct name of Chambre de Commerce Paris Ile-de-France (see <https://www.cci-paris-idf.fr>).

The text presents the *cahier d’étudiants* as a useful tool for the students, although I would highly recommend only sharing several pages of the workbook with students. A benefit for instructors is that answers for the exercises are included in the textbook, and sharing some of the pages that suggest supplementary activities with the students would be helpful. Nonetheless, for many students, providing the answers to everything ahead of completion of the exercises may hamper learning. In contrast to the textbook, the workbook includes color photos in the last third, and instructors can share those with students on the Learning Management System. While it is understandable that using black and white throughout a text reduces costs, this approach makes many images lose visual contrast, and as a result, words and small objects become rather blurry. I found the absence of colored images visually unappealing. Moreover, when ads or flags of various countries are depicted in black and white, they appear visually indistinct. Additional images of people would also help students connect to the images. While the author includes images of diverse peoples, more would be appreciated.

Despite these minor reservations, I highly recommend this text. It presents relevant, compelling information, vocabulary, and concepts that are timely; and it includes particularly useful business concepts from global French-speaking communities. The PowerPoint images and

presentation of concepts as well as the podcasts and videos will interest students and instructors alike and provide wonderful support for in-class discussions.

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