

Book Review: Business French

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REVIEW

Reisinger, D. S., Raycraft, M. B., & Dieu-Porter, N. (2021). *Affaires globales: S'engager dans la vie professionnelle en français, niveau avancé*. Georgetown University Press. 213 pp. ISBN 9781647120313.

Affaires globales: S'engager dans la vie professionnelle en français, niveau avancé presents itself as a contemporary intercultural business textbook with a broader scope of disciplines and geographical areas for intermediate to advanced French learners. From a theoretical standpoint, it embraces a communicative approach and follows the principles of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Revised World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages reflected in the “can-do” statements of each unit (ACTFL, n.d.). It aims to prepare students to pursue career opportunities in the francophone world by strengthening their intercultural competence and to develop transferable skills by mastering tasks and entrepreneurship principles, including exposure to the international professional exams of the Paris Île-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Instructors will appreciate the detailed table of contents which is supplemented by a *table des matières* (summary) that clearly reflects the overarching goals of the textbook by showcasing can-do statements and intercultural questions and guidelines, in addition to professional tasks, for each unit.

The textbook is divided into seven units, starting with traditional business chapters about communicating in the corporate world (*communiquer en entreprise*), job searching (*trouver un poste*), working in the francophone world (*travailler dans le monde francophone*), selling internationally (*vendre à l'international*); followed by promoting global health (*promouvoir la santé globale*), being a diplomat (*être un diplomate*); and finally, committing for the planet (*s'engager pour la planète*). At the end of the book are ten appendices dedicated to professional guidelines (*repères professionnels*) for writing professional documents and for common verbal business interactions. The textbook has a well-designed companion website that stores complementary audiovisual materials. Additional materials are available for instructors only, with a suggested weekly schedule, as well as supplementary resources pertaining to grammar review, activities, and film suggestions for each unit. This textbook goes beyond the content usually offered in business French textbooks by incorporating chapters relating to the fields of international affairs, global health, and sustainability. This interdisciplinary approach is one of its biggest strengths and sets it apart from others. It also aims to cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit by providing learners the opportunity to work on an ongoing start-up project. The content of the textbook not only reflects contemporary business trends, but also societal issues such as sustainability.

The structure of each unit remains consistent throughout the seven units, making the book very user-friendly and accessible. Units begin with target vocabulary and a short paragraph to introduce key issues, then continue with an analysis of an infographic and audiovisual materials (interpretive mode of communication), followed by a reading comprehension section (interpretive mode of communication) and several activities (including some targeting the presentational mode of communication). Several subtopics are developed in each unit where this sequence of vocabulary, infographics, audiovisual, reading comprehension and activities is repeated for each before ending the unit with the concluding section containing materials and tasks that allow learners to apply their recently acquired content knowledge and language

competence. Examples of concluding activities include a case study, a longer interview (*perspectives professionnelles*), and components of the ongoing start-up project. Each unit offers increasingly difficult communicative tasks that have clear real-world implications, while also targeting interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes of communication. Furthermore, the activities encourage students to reflect on their underlying cultural values, or debate their opinions (e.g., *ça se discute*, “worth debating”). Because the textbook uses examples from the entire francophone world, different practices in business can be apprehended through the lens of national cultures. Specific cultural questions are asked in each unit.

An overview of Chapter 5 shows how the authors curated authentic francophone materials from different geographical areas, and how they designed professional tasks that target the three modes of communication, all the while preparing students to pursue global careers. Chapter 5, *Promouvoir la santé globale* (Promoting Global Health), encompasses three main topics: NGOs, global health challenges, and the use of technology in medicine. In the section on NGOs, after the presentation of target vocabulary, the definition of global health is introduced with questions regarding the conceptualization of health. It then leverages an infographic about global health components from the *Faculté de médecine de Genève* (Medical School of Geneva University), prompting students to discuss this concept of global health and to give examples for each component, using the interpersonal mode of communication. The audiovisual section offers a short video of the French NGO *Médecins sans frontières* (Doctors without Borders), followed by an activity involving the website of *Médecins du Monde Belgique* (Doctors of the World – Belgium), encouraging students to reflect on the differences between the two NGOs, as well as on the legal context of humanitarian aid. Other tasks include describing in their own words the current missions of *Médecins du Monde* and using LinkedIn and the career section of the NGO website to find volunteering opportunities, and then pairing with another student to discuss their findings. The reading comprehension portion incorporates information from the *Médecins du Monde* website regarding the working conditions of volunteers. Several activities build off of this reading, placing students in the situation of a recruiter for the NGO, then discussing how health is a cultural concept and how cultures need to be considered when caring for people, and concluding with a written task (blog post) where students reflect on how their own cultural products and practices may have impacted their health. The next topic considers global health challenges, and the final one how technology can be leveraged for health. In the concluding section of Chapter 5, a case study featuring the start-up HydroIQ (which aims to manage access to clean water, which is essential to health) is set in Sub-Saharan Africa and learners are given the professional task to convince potential government officials in Cameroon to buy its products. The section on professional perspectives includes interviews of three *Médecins du Monde* volunteers, one who worked in Niger in a context of famine, and two others in Haiti following the 2010 hurricane. The “*lancer une start-up*” (launching a start-up) task of the unit consists of creating a marketing campaign. This description of Chapter 5 demonstrates the great variety of activities found in just one unit, with some ideal for in-class activities, and others (like the blog post or the comprehension activities) that can be completed independently. Moreover, by encouraging students to use LinkedIn or specific websites, the authors ensure that the materials will remain up to date. Each unit follows a similar structure to the unit of Chapter 5, making the organization of the textbook predictable and thus easy to follow. It is worth noting that the layout of the textbook is engaging; it incorporates colors, clearly identified sections, and visual aids such as infographics, pictures, and icons. The layout certainly increases its appeal to both students and instructors.

Despite all these notable qualities, some recommendations can be offered for future editions. For example, the presentation of the vocabulary could include a lexicon with translations in English, as well as word families and warm-up vocabulary activities. Although grammar reviews are available for instructors, it would be beneficial to incorporate them into the textbook or its companion site for students' ease of access. This would enable them to strengthen their language proficiency and fulfill the textbook's goal of helping students progress to a more advanced level of proficiency. The greatest reservation that I have about the textbook deals with the task *lancer une start-up* (launching a start-up) at the end of each unit. It does not feel organically connected to the focus of some units. It could be more efficient to create a specific unit dedicated to entrepreneurship for a new edition that would incorporate more detailed content regarding the launch of a company with country-specific approaches, as well as principles and professional guidelines (*repères professionnels*) to develop a business plan and a pitch. Many students and instructors would appreciate an engaging final project similar to presenting a pitch like on the *Shark Tank* show from ABC network (a reality TV series where entrepreneurs pitch their ideas to business angel investors).

Another suggested modification would be the alteration of the units' sequence. Unit 3: *Travailler dans le monde francophone* (working in the francophone world), which is general and introductory in nature, could be placed before Unit 2: *Trouver un poste* (job searching), since industry knowledge is helpful to searching for a job. Similarly, Unit 7: *S'engager pour la planète* (committing for the planet) could be placed before Unit 5: *Promouvoir la santé globale* (promoting global health), due to its economic and managerial approach to sustainability. The rest of the textbook, Unit 5 on global health and Unit 6 on diplomacy, broadens its scope and could naturally conclude it. This suggested modified organization of the units would more clearly reflect the interdisciplinarity of the textbook.

Overall, this textbook can only be highly recommended due to its global perspective, versatility of themes, and impeccable execution. Because of its wealth of materials and tasks, it is probably best used over the course of two semesters. *Affaires globales* delivers on its promises; it is relevant to today's global affairs, and deliberately communicative, interdisciplinary, and intercultural.

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