


<i>Big City</i>			
Author:	Nina O'Driscoll and Adrian Pilbeam (2003)		
Publisher:	Oxford: Oxford University Press		
Sub-Title	Pages	ISBN	Price
Student's Book	Pp	0-19-459209 X	£11.95
Teacher's Book	Pp. xii + 64	ISBN 0-19-459210 3	£5.95
DVD		0-19-459236-71	£75.00



Big City level 2 is the pre-intermediate level of a three-level video/DVD-based course designed for learners who need to learn English in a business context. Level 1 is for elementary students and level 3 is for intermediate students. Unfortunately, there is no upper-intermediate or advanced level course available yet.

Each level has its own syllabus covering core grammar, functions, vocabulary, and business skills which the teacher's book suggests could be used as: (a) supplementary materials to support other business English courses; (b) as the basis for a complete course with the teacher supplementing the video with other business materials; or (c) as a video-based course on its own.

For me, the documentaries are the strong point of the course, in that they expose students to authentic materials and natural speech patterns complete with hesitations, false starts, background noise and regional accents, all of which pose problems for language learners in the workplace. However, some of the materials, especially units 2 and 6, may be extremely challenging for weak pre-intermediate level students, so students may need a lot of support to help them cope with the language in these units. In fact, the teacher's book describes the level of the texts in these chapters as *intermediate upwards*, which seems rather peculiar given that the course is advertised as a *pre-intermediate* level video course.

Level 2 is divided into 9 units of work, five drama episodes with a developing storyline which the teacher's book recommends should ideally be watched in sequence, and four

documentary reports which can be watched in any order.

Overall, *Big City* is an extremely flexible teaching resource, which can be used independently or in conjunction with most general or business adult language courses, and is particularly recommendable for developing vocabulary and listening skills in a business context in the classroom.

The drama series, on the other hand, is a standard scripted ESL drama, which won't have your students hanging on the edges of their seats to see the next episode, but is still, nevertheless, a fairly entertaining and visually enriching way to introduce students to sociolinguistic models for a variety of business situations and language functions in use.

The student book has a clear and attractive layout and includes a wide range of activities to help students expand and improve their listening skills at the same time as building and developing their business vocabulary. Each unit is divided into three sections: before you watch, while you watch, and after you watch, and each section contains a variety of different activities to exploit the language in each section. Particularly useful for teaching are the comprehensive language summaries at the end of each unit and the resource bank of activities and tape scripts for each unit at the end of the book.

The teacher's book is extremely navigable with clearly defined learning objectives for each unit. It offers section by section teaching notes, which include lots of suggestions about different ways to exploit and make the materials more accessible to students, including some very useful ideas on word mapping and vocabulary building. Two other very helpful sections in the teacher's books are the "short routes," which suggest different routes through each unit so that teachers can easily adapt the materials to their classes' learning needs and available class time, and the unit summaries, which are well incorporated into pre-listening activities.

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