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Preparation is everything: Meetings in professional contexts in Hong Kong

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Highlights

- The results of a survey of professionals regarding their meeting-related communication are described and discussed.
- Follow-up interviews with a cross-section of those surveyed are described and discussed.
- The findings are compared and also discussed in relation to the literature on meetings.
- The implications of the overall findings are discussed in relation to ESP.

Abstract

This paper examines the results of an extensive survey of 1,010 professionals across four key sectors of Hong Kong's economy and follow-up interviews with a representative cross-section of 31 of the respondents surveyed. In addition, meetings-related books aimed at professionals are examined to compare their focus and contents with the perceived needs of the professionals in this study. The survey and the interviews were part of a large-scale project investigating professional communication in English in Hong Kong. This paper focuses on meetings as one form of professional communication. The kinds of meetings professionals in Hong Kong engage in are examined along with those aspects of meetings-related communication which the subjects found particularly difficult at one extreme (e.g., listening to different accents, interrupting effectively, and presenting an effective argument) through to those aspects which they perceived to be unproblematic at the other extreme (e.g., taking notes, following a discussion, and expressing opinions). Possible explanations for the survey and interview findings are discussed and their implications for English for specific purposes are explored by comparing the study's findings with the meetings-related skills foregrounded in business English textbooks and meetings-related textbooks generally.



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Keywords

Professional communication; Meetings; Professional competence

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