BUSINESS ENGLISH IN PRACTICAL TERMS: CASE OF TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS IN SLOVENIA, SERBIA, MONTENEGRO

Slavica Čepon[1], Nadežda Stojković[2], Aleksandra Nikčević-Batrićević[3]

[1]Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, slavica.cepon@ef.uni-lj.si
[2]Faculty of Electronic Engineering, University of Niš, Serbia, Nadezda.Stojkovic@elfak.ni.ac.rs
[3]Faculty of Philosophy, University of Montenegro, alexmontenegro@t-com.me

Abstract. *The article is an attempt to look at the reality of teaching English for business purposes/ Business English from a practical point of view in the tertiary educational environment at three faculties in three different countries, namely Slovenia, Serbia, and Montenegro. The article emphasizes the similarities and negligible differences among the three systems in this respect, drawing on the long historical mutual heritage and also mutual tendencies for further development. Initially, the article introduces Business English as the most entrepreneurial arm within English language teaching/general English and lays down the key similarities and distinctions between the two. Next, the requirements of teaching/learning Business English in general are compared to the demands of teaching/learning English for business purposes/Business English at three different faculties. Eventually, conclusions are drawn from the comparison.*

Key words: *Business English, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro*

1. BUSINESS ENGLISH AS THE MOST ENTREPRENEURIAL ARM WITHIN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

As a target language in many countries worldwide English is not naturally present to the extent that would justify its presence in national schools. To look at the Slovenian, Serbian, and Montenegrin speaking environment and their neighboring countries, English is spoken only on certain occasions, most frequently with non-native English speakers (NNS). In none of the three countries was it taught in schools before WW II, where it was introduced as a mandatory first language, along with German, in the 60ies of the previous century.

The three countries in question here share a long historical mutual tradition. All three have the same goal – the membership into the European Union. In that respect, Slovenia has fulfilled that aim most successfully, Montenegro is pending membership and Serbia is striving to get the member pending status. Here, it is important to stress that despite certain differences or even idiosyncrasies of each educational system, those count as minor and irrelevant for the research presented in this article.

It is undeniable nowadays that NNS worldwide are clearly aware of the importance of English for their future professional life. Much has been elaborated on both good and possibly negative sides of this phenomenon. Considering the fact that in today's world there are more NNS of English than native speakers, i.e., about 375 million speakers of English as the first language and 750 million speakers of English as the second language,

as well as the fact that English has an official or special status in at least 70 countries, it is clear that the importance of English as an international language (EIL) is anything but decreasing.

Nobody can deny the fact that, at the present time, English is rapidly becoming the leading language in international relations, on internet sites, in international aviation, in tourism and international communication for commerce and trade, and the established language of science, research and academic settings in the world. The major journals in practically all disciplines are in English, from the general scientific to more specialist journals. English has become the language of choice for many international scholarly journals, and even many journals of smaller nations' scientific societies, like those of Slovenia and Serbia for example, publish also in English. Despite France being renowned for its cultural and linguistic protectiveness, English is gaining ground even in French universities, with 83% of French lecturers using English in their field of research (Riddle, 2013). In an article for The Economist, Schumpeter (2014) noted that more and more global companies from countries that don't speak English have adopted English as their official language, replacing their own native language. Although it is only one of several languages being promoted internationally in similar ways, its hegemony cannot be disputed. As a result, with the spread of English, a huge demand has been created for teachers of English, and ELT/GE has become a billion-pound business.

We would like to stress a recent situation that further adds relevance to this, namely, the fact that the importance of English has only increased due to the fact that the world has been experiencing an economic crisis. Many countries have been lately undergoing a 'brain drain' as young intellectuals and highly-skilled citizens leave countries for a better life abroad. In the document on worldwide brain drain issued by the World Economic Forum in 2013[1], of the total of 122 countries or regions, Serbia holds the 85th position, while solely in Europe or Middle East it is on the penultimate position (the report is structured as downward increasing). This report takes into account the overall development of a country, efficiency of the economy, the number and level of employment, education, health care system, and the like. For a country as small as Serbia, this is simply a devastating occurrence.

However, the aim of the article is not to raise the question of cultural hegemony of English worldwide, but to discuss another particular aspect within English Language Teaching/General English (ELT/GE) that has been in great demand, namely, a fast-growing activity, and already a major one around the world today - the teaching of English for specific purposes (ESP)[2] as one of the branches of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)/ English as a Second Language (ESL) - themselves the main branches of ELT/GE. Although ESP has had considerable influence on the whole field of ELT/GE in the last thirty years or so, especially in the field of materials and syllabus design, the

---

[1]http://www.weforum.org/search/google/brain%20drain%20serbia?query=brain%20drain%20serbia&cx=005374784487575532108%3Azwr8u4lxoba&cof=FORID%3A11&sitesearch= Retreived 21st October, 2015

[2] Note the emphasis on *Specific*, rather than *Special* purposes. The term English for *Special* Purposes was common earlier but is now thought to suggest special languages, i.e. restricted languages which constitute only a small part of ESP. In practice, the acronym ESP is used without having to clarify what it stands for. The very term emphasises purpose or purposefulness. In other words, it implies that the use of English is specific, and associated with professions, institutional procedures and occupational requirements.

relationship of ESP to ELT is still not quite clear. The consensus nowadays is that ESP is *'clearly a type of ELT'* (Robinson, in Coleman, 1989: 396)[3]. However, the focus of the article goes even deeper into the area of ESP, namely in the realm of English for Business Purposes (EBP)/Business English (BE) - a major arm of ESP, almost an industry in itself[4]. Its position on a tree of 'Englishes' is best approached as if through a funnel with EIL at the top, ELT/GE as its sloping sides, EFL/ESL at the top of the funnel's narrow tube, and ESP at the very bottom, just above where BE, one of its main arms is placed.

BE is most definitely the current growth area in ESP which in slightly more than three decades attracted increasing interest and awareness in today's world. BE course books and other teaching/learning materials are proliferating, and language schools offering BE courses are blossoming. Several developments may have contributed to the expansion of BE, but speaking from the pedagogical point of view, the demand for BE must have originated from a particular kind of learners with the following characteristics: firstly, they were often adults; secondly, they were adults working in businesses, or preparing to work in the field of business; thirdly, due to their specific purpose in learning English they approached BE courses with heightened expectations, and finally, they already had grammatical knowledge of English and were just looking for a different approach, one which would provide them with an opportunity to use this knowledge more productively than had been previously possible. BE relies on and utilizes elements common to all fields of work in ESP, such as needs analysis, syllabus design, selection and development of teaching/learning materials, course design, etc., therefore it must be seen in the overall context of ESP. Despite this, BE is believed to be a needs-directed teaching in which as much as possible must be made job-related, focused on learners' needs and relevant to them. Just like other varieties of ESP, BE works with a number of contexts, requires and uses specific language corpora, and lays emphasis on specific kinds of communication. In BE successful use of English is seen in terms of a successful outcome to the business transaction. Cost-effectiveness is required by both adults paying for themselves and companies sponsoring their staff.

1.1. Key similarities between business English in general and English Language Teaching/General English

BE is not a clearly defined area of ESP, and neither is the demarcation line between BE and ELT/GE. The term covers a variety of 'Englishes', some very specific, others very general, however it always implies the use of English associated with professions, occupational requirements and institutional procedures.

Most BE teachers have been primarily trained to teach ELT/GE, therefore many may not have any or enough relevant training or experience in the BE field. According to a

---

[3] Strangely enough, it has become fashionable to maintain that ESP does not exist and that various specialisations within the ESP process are *'only degrees of general English'* (Kennedy and Bolitho 1984: 135). Needless to say, it would be a bit premature to support such a view. In his article, Strevens (in Tickoo 1988: 1) provides a similar definition: *'ESP is a particular case of the general category of special-purpose language teaching'*. Kennedy and Bolitho (1984: 135) are sure that *'Whatever the niceties of the argument, ESP very clearly does exist'*.

[4] EBP/BE is a part of English for Professional Purposes (EPP) which is itself a part of English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). The latter is one of the two main branches of ESP-the other being English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

survey on the Internet *'only 5 per cent of the ESP practitioners had a special University degree or practical experience in the field they were practising the teaching profession'* (Master 1997, as cited by Mateva in Slavičkova 2001: 66). Consequently, this could be one of the reasons why BE is said to have much in common with ELT/GE.

With hindsight, BE has always tried to draw on the key developments in the area of ELT/GE teaching. As Brieger (1997: 3) points out *'BE, which appeared on the ELT stage as a course programme and learning objective in the late seventies, has been shaped by a range of influences from both the ELT and the non-ELT world'*. An indicative example in BE is the need to focus on functional formulaic key language lists that stems from the mid-1970s and 80s ELT/GE development (Ellis and Johnson, 1994).

Although determining the target group's needs using needs analysis may be considered to be an important tool primarily in BE methodology, learners' needs are in fact considered equally important in BE and ELT/GE and should govern both, not just BE teaching [5]. Similarly, in both kinds of teaching/learning the learners are drawn from pre-service and in-service.

Another quite unexpected similarity between BE and ELT/GE is the constant attempt of BE to put as much emphasis as possible on the general content despite its specificity as one of its main features, i.e. on learners' general ability to communicate more effectively in equally general business situations.

1.2. Key distinctions between business English in general and English Language Teaching/General English

Knowing that the teaching of BE brings together three areas, namely the pedagogic skills of teaching, the knowledge of the foreign language and its typical communication, and finally, business, it is not very difficult to understand that despite evident similarities, there are some quite important distinctions between BE and ELT/GE. They are best described by the famous sentence claiming that the difference between GE and BE is *"in theory nothing, in practice a great deal"* (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 53). Basically, almost everything is different in practice: BE learning materials, BE contexts for listening and reading, the choice of BE vocabulary, the treatment of grammar, BE learners and the interaction between BE teachers and BE learners, to name but a few.

To start with, many BE teachers are not materials' providers as they have to depend on their learners to bring job-specific materials in class, especially if BE teachers are not particularly knowledgeable about the subject content that is being taught. Moreover, even when in their role of providers of teaching/learning materials, it is rarely possible for them to just use ready-made BE textbooks without the need to adapt the published materials, use supplementary, or even write their own materials when no published material exists for a specific target group of learners.

As regards the aims of BE courses, they could be eventually considered radically different from the aims of ELT/GE courses as they will always relate to fulfilling BE learners' occupational and professional or just work- and/or job-related language needs for English most completely. BE is a needs-directed teaching directed towards helping job-experienced BE learners to achieve practical objectives in their business lives. The

---

[5] The authors refer to Dudley-Evans and St John's definition of ESP methodology (1998: 4).

essential characteristic of such learners is that the practical use of the language will be more important than theoretical knowledge about the language. On the other hand, teaching GE is said to be purpose-free teaching of English for no obvious reason (TENOR).

BE strives to develop specialist language knowledge and professional communication skills, not just general language knowledge and general communication skills as ELT/GE, therefore in BE general content is normally mixed with specific content which always relates to a particular job area or industry (Brieger, 1997). Subsequently, the biggest challenge that BE teachers face relates to discerning the particular ESP vocabulary and discourses within specialized ESP content and contexts that are essential to the training of the target group of students (Johns and Price-Machado, 2001). As a result, and unlike in ELT/GE syllabuses, BE syllabuses are quite often more likely to be defined primarily in relation to business performance skills[6] and certain concepts, typically further broken down into formulaic functional language[7].

Unlike GE learners, BE learners need to speak English primarily to achieve more in their jobs, therefore practically everything in BE should be governed by BE learners' language needs, from the types of language studied to the classroom techniques used. These language needs are usually very specific, and cover a wide range of language, from having to perform tasks typically associated with the workplace, such as use the phone, report to superiors, reply to or write faxes and e-mails, to surviving on business trips and negotiating contracts, having presentations and discussing their work in English.

In order to satisfy BE learners' language needs, a great deal of attention in BE should be, at least in theory, devoted to the first step carried out before any BE course ─ analyzing the learners' needs as a process considered the corner stone of any BE course. While the concept of needs analysis should be equally important in ELT/GE and BE, one of the important distinctions between the two is the fact that the purpose of utilizing a needs analysis as a methodological tool in BE is not so much to assess BE learners' existing language knowledge and language needs, but to define the indispensable language needs dictated by the target group's future job language requirements.

To establish a workable course design at least three most important types of needs analysis should be performed: TSA (Target Situation Analysis)[8], LSA (Learning Situation Analysis)[9], and PSA (Present Situation Analysis)[10] (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 123).

---

[6] Business performance skills are vital for holding meetings, having presentations, socializing, report-writing in English, etc.

[7] Formulaic functional areas typically include language for making appointments, introductions, business lunches, confirming plans, recommending, giving opinions, showing agreement, etc.

[8] TSA brings professional information about the learners and includes a consideration of the learners' objective, perceived and product-oriented needs which enables BE teachers to find out about the tasks and activities the learners will be using BE for. In contrast with learners' wants/subjective/felt needs, which are derived by insiders and are cognitively-affective, their objective and perceived needs are derived by outsiders from facts. Product-oriented needs derive from the learners' goal or target situation requirements (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 123).

[9] LSA includes a consideration of learners' wants, subjectively felt and process-oriented needs that derive from the learners' learning situation. It brings to light personal and cultural information about the learners, exposes their previous learning experience as well as the reasons and expectations of learning BE.

[10] PSA looks at the learners' current language use with the aim of assessing their lacks, i.e., the knowledge missing in present but defined by TSA as necessary for their future language use.

In addition, a thorough needs analysis requires also an acknowledgement of the learners' learning needs[11], linguistic, discourse and genre analysis, and finally a means analysis of the environment ─ the classroom culture, the management infrastructure and culture (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998). A clear-cut demarcation line between the learners' overall needs and their course needs is necessary to establish as no BE course lasts long enough to cover all learners' overall needs. A constant characteristic of BE courses is limited time, so needs will invariably exceed the allotted time.

With regard to BE learners' needs, in GE they are rarely as immediate and urgent as in BE where the most important characteristic is the sense of purposefulness, i.e., the purpose of BE is to use the language to achieve an end. In other words, BE course will always relate to BE learners' field of study or their area of work. Another feature quite typical of BE instruction is the sense of urgency or the fact that BE courses are usually on a time restraint. Therefore, unlike GE learners, when BE learners take BE courses, they do not expect them to last very long, but to have their BE needs fulfilled in the shortest possible time. Consequently, the claims for BE are that it is more cost-effective than ELT/GE, focused on learners' needs, relevant to them, and successful in imparting learning (Strevens 1988, as cited in Celce-Murcia 2001). Cost-effectiveness is required by all interested parties - adults already in work and paying for themselves, companies sponsoring their staff, BE teachers and target groups of BE learners.

By and large, not all BE teachers may make the decisions about the course design, but be forced into negotiating with learners about the most appropriate topics. Since learning materials in BE are made job-related as much as possible, a fixed course design laid down in advance and rarely deviated from is a rarity in BE. Since, at least in theory, BE learners should by definition be adults at advanced levels of FL knowledge, also of grammar, no overt additional treatment of grammar is considered necessary for satisfying their occupational and professional language needs. If ELT/GE strives to select a 'right' methodological approach to grammar teaching, BE instruction looks for the right measure of grammar for the target group of learners. Additionally, the focus in BE is not merely on learners' accuracy and fluency, but also on developing the effectiveness of communication, i.e., the total performance, both linguistic and non-linguistic.

A quite important area with major differences between BE and ELT/GE is to be found with regard to BE learners, BE trainers and the relationship between them. In practical ways, ELT/GE and BE teacher's work differ substantially, in fact so much that *"inexperienced or 'traditional' teachers cannot work within an experimental ESP context"* (Johns and Price-Machado, 2001: 46). In reality, BE teachers are more often than not self-made language teachers who have trained themselves, mostly through self-study in a specific area of ESP. They experience all the challenges that ELT/GE teachers have to face, however their role consists of many parts, extends well beyond teaching, and could even be quite different from one BE teacher's situation to another. In order to reflect an extremely varied scope of the BE teacher role, sometimes terms such as practitioner, monitor, facilitator, trainer rather than the term teacher are used. BE teachers seem to have five key roles, some the same as EFL/GE teachers, some in addition to those, namely, they are teachers, course designers, materials providers, researchers, collaborators, and evaluators (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998).

---

[11] Learning needs encompass effective ways to learn the language and skills.

Although both kinds of teachers' stance should constantly move on the continuum that extends from teachers as controllers of teaching/learning activities at one end to teachers as facilitators at the other end, BE teachers face additional roles that ELT/GE teachers may not have to assume. The only common thread with ELT/GE teachers seems to be the traditional role of being 'merely a teacher' as a classroom organizer, a provider of input and a controller of classroom activities, since this is the role that both kids of teachers almost always have to play. The culmination of such BE teacher's role could be a role of a BE teacher as a go-between intermediating between subject specialists on the one hand, and language learners on the other. In practical terms, this role is quite difficult to assume by BE teachers, also due to proverbial subject teachers' aversion to disseminating their greater knowledge of the subject content to language teachers. In tertiary level situations where subject teachers' status is generally deemed higher than language teachers', such subject expert-cum-language teacher cooperation, collaboration or team-teaching is virtually non-existent.

Since BE courses are more specific than ELT/GE courses and the carrier content of the teaching material more complicated, BE teachers may be more often required to take up the stance of consultants of BE job-experienced learners that their ELT/GE counterparts practically never have to adopt. The latter is quite difficult to achieve, and depends on a number of factors, such as learners' culture, wishes and needs, their existing language knowledge, their subject or professional knowledge and status as well as other stakeholders' expectations - not only on the size of the group, timetabling, course length and type, available resources and physical facilities like in ELT/GE classrooms[12].

Unlike for ELT/GE teachers, the knowledge of business content and communication skills training appears to be quite instrumental to BE teachers, not just the knowledge of a foreign language and ELT methodology. However, a reasonable answer to the dilemma of how much specialist knowledge BE teachers should be able to understand might require us to look at this question in a broader context. On the one hand, it is true that job-experienced learners will have gained some practical experience of communicating in real-life business situations, not requiring BE teachers to train them in social interaction, meeting skills, commercial correspondence, and other behavioral skills. The level of business expertise required of BE teachers will be somewhat lower with job-experienced than with pre-experience learners or when the subject content is so specific that the help of experts is absolutely vital.

Furthermore, experts seem to think that BE teachers *"do not need specialist expertise"* (e.g. Johns and Price-Machado, 2001), but be genuinely interested in BE learners' subject matter and possess three characteristics that can be summed up as *"the ability to ask intelligent questions"* (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 163): firstly, a positive attitude towards BE content, secondly, knowledge of the fundamental principles of the discipline-specific carrier content or the subject area, and an awareness of how much they probably already know. Špiljak (1999: 180) claims that BE teachers need to be able to explain *"WHAT something is and WHO does it, but not so much about HOW and WHY. How and why should be responsibilities of other teachers"*. In short, BE teachers should first and foremost be language experts and not 'real authorities' of the specialized carrier content of their students' area of work or field of study.

---

[12] Learners' institutional and cultural expectations must not be forgotten when discussing the role of BE teachers, as certain cultures may not welcome the BE teachers' adoption of other, more facilitating, roles.

However, on the other hand, there is the question of BE teachers' level of business expertise or rather a lack of one. This difference between ELT/GE and BE teachers is not too surprising given the tradition in education of separating the humanities from the sciences. Namely, a great deal of BE teachers normally receive a degree from the Faculty of Arts and have been exclusively trained for teaching literature and EFL/GE. When they as arts-trained teachers in reality find themselves having to teach subject content that they know little or nothing about, quite often some may lack an in-depth understanding of learners' area of knowledge and could feel alienated by the more specialized carrier content[13], i.e., BE subject matter that they are supposed to teach. Consequently, some will have to struggle to master the subject matter in situations in which they are not in the position of being the *'primary knowers'* of the carrier content (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998: 13). It is absolutely vital for BE teachers that their fear of BE subject matter be dispelled as soon as possible, well before they have to cope with unfamiliar business topics, especially the fear of "*hard-core ESP materials where the nature of the business forms the interaction*" (St John, 1996: 9). In reality, BE teaching situation seems threatening only until BE teachers realize that BE learners do not in fact expect them to have specialist knowledge. In a sense, BE teachers should become equal with the students and only use *"his or her greater knowledge of the language and the nature of communication to help them interpret what is happening in the specialist course or training"* (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998: 150).

Although some BE learners may appear to be quite peremptory because of their superior knowledge of the work area, the interaction between BE teachers and BE learners must be such that BE teachers are not intimidated by adult BE learners' positions of authority in real life, but both sides should be recognized as experts. Professionals and business people as language learners may sometimes place on BE teachers the demands that differ substantially from those of ELT/GE learners - the expectation of minute groups, if not one-to-one tuition, or maybe telephone classes, tutored distance-learning, but always short intensive courses, task-based deep-end approach, etc. To put it simply, they expect high quality for money. As such, BE learners usually decide to build language learning into their busy schedules, and not the other way around, BE teachers should respond by providing high standard up-market language teaching/learning strategies and approaches, and most definitely not just blurred handouts. Overall, BE teachers and learners should strive for a constructive working relationship or a partnership in which learners are, first and foremost, clients, and BE teachers providers of language services. In such situations, learners' level of satisfaction is very important, so BE teachers should always try to be results-oriented.

1.3. BE learner-centered approach, pre-experience learners and real content

A comparison of BE courses in general and BE courses at the institutions where the authors come from reveals quite a few similarities as well as also some important distinctions. Since BE shifts the role of BE teachers as givers of information to BE teachers as facilitators of learning, BE teachers have adopted BE learner-centered approach towards teaching/learning BE. Essentially, this approach is not really one single

---

[13] BE teachers deal with two types of content - *the real content*, i.e., language, and the *carrier content* or the discipline-specific subject matter. Focusing primarily on English as the real content is of vital importance to BE teachers.

teaching method, but a combination of a variety of different types of methods. In general, at the three institutions described here, the emphasis is on active engagement of BE learners in their own construction of knowledge, on their commitment and personal involvement in the process of learning and taking responsibility for their own learning.

In theory, BE learners should by definition be a particular kind of learners ─ adults at advanced levels of FL knowledge, and also grammar, who should be treated as subject specialists in their fields of study/areas of work, and as such as a source of information for BE teachers. Besides being a learner, the BE student should also be a provider of information and material, if not expertise, to a BE teacher (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Donna, 2000; Dudley-Evans, 2001).

As a contrast, the students of BE in the tertiary educational environment are neither complete adults nor proficient in English or experts in their fields of study. While BE in general refers to the teaching of English to adults already in work, teaching/learning BE in the tertiary environment normally entails teaching English to pre-service students' of a certain field of study or area of business. Subsequently, their knowledge of the discipline-specific carrier content (the knowledge of economics) is still mostly theoretical and therefore only occasionally used as a source of information for BE teachers. Additionally, their communicative competence may already be rather dubious on enrollment, and, to make things worse, in the tertiary environment they encounter new, unfamiliar FL situations in BE contexts that are completely different from general FL contexts in secondary schools. With such low-experience learners, very few opportunities are provided for BE teachers to draw on their students' knowledge of the carrier content, because they lack any experience of the target situation at the time of BE instruction at the faculty.

Quite indicative of this situation is the ongoing dilemma that all BE teachers experience due to the fact that the difference between the real and carrier contents in BE is not clear-cut. In other words, should BE teachers teach and assess BE learners' knowledge of the carrier content or should they teach a language and assess solely the knowledge of English? Put simply, it is not always easy for BE teachers to distinguish between the two types of content with a target group of pre-experience students as BE learners. The demarcation line being fine, it takes BE teachers a few years of practice to develop the ability to balance content level, sometimes quite specialized, and language level. In short, specialist subject matter is treated only as a framework through which the real content of English is to be brought out.

1.3.1. Developing foreign language skills, business English lexis and fluency

AS a rule, BE courses strive to place less focus on the correct use of language forms or the students' accuracy, and consequently more emphasis is laid on their fluency, on specialist FL lexis and on effective communication, especially on professional communication skills[14] (Čepon, 2012). The opinions of BE teachers on the topic of the development of FL skills for BE purposes appear to be divided (ibid). In reality, the choice of exactly which FL skills to reinforce in the tertiary environment should be based on BE learners' future professions and jobs as not everybody will have the same language needs. However, in the pre-employment situation, the range and variety of

---

[14] Professional communication refers to written, oral, visual and digital communication typical of different workplace contexts and settings.

professional positions and vocational and workplace needs open to future professionals in Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, and worldwide is so diverse that it is practically undefinable. Given therefore the fact that it is not possible to operationally define all future work-oriented macro skills, communication skills and micro skills in English for so many different job tasks, most BE teachers will focus on specific FL skills depending on the language needs of the target group. In other words, BE instruction tends to neglect receptive FL skills of reading and listening slightly more than productive speaking and writing (ibid).

Instead of developing all FL skills equally, BE teachers appear to focus on all of the deficiencies and lacks in the students' knowledge to the same extent, without any set priority, since these are all equally likely to cause the students possible problems in the future. As a consequence, specific work-related learning materials and target discourse samples are not used as well as they could be right for some BE learners, but not for all. Put simply, BE instruction is a mix of general BE content with specialist BE content, or 'soft core' BE topics and vocabulary. In other words, the three institutions provide BE for general business purposes (including business skills, such as business correspondence, report writing, telephoning, participating in business meetings, having presentations, attending business negotiations, business socializing), and not 'hard core' BE for specific business purposes (for accountants, auditors, etc.).

Furthermore, emphasis is placed on building general business skills in English (e.g. presentation, meetings, negotiations, business correspondence, report writing, telephoning, business socializing, etc.) as well as academic skills (such as writing, reading and study skills) and technical skills in a FL (i.e., the expertise needed to do a job).

To move on to developing BE lexis, placing emphasis on BE lexis with pre-experience first- and second-year students who still cannot bring any discipline-specific carrier content into BE study process could be quite demanding. Although building BE lexis is thought to be an indispensable part of building BE competence, the students' lack of the specialized BE lexis of economics in both their mother tongue and English may be so severe that it practically renders the use of BE lexis unattainable (ibid).

Although pre-service students as BE learners will always have a specific purpose in learning English, language fossilization processes (Ellis, 1997)[15] may give rise to students' attitudes that prevent most students from becoming really proficient in English. These processes could be made even worse by the requirement for a special treatment of grammar for BE purposes.

1.3.2. Grammar instruction

Grammar instruction itself is considered inappropriate in BE due to the fact that BE learners should have reached the requisite cognitive developmental stage as well as advanced levels of grammar and FL knowledge before the start of BE instruction in the tertiary educational setting (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Donna, 2000; Dudley-Evans, 2001). Beside, due to the 'washback' effect of the Slovenian (but also Serbian and Montenegrin) secondary-school leaving exam requirements, BE learners may feel certain aversion to teaching/learning grammar (Zavašnik and Pižorn, 2006). Furthermore, even

---

[15] L2 learners' interlanguages fossilize with the occurence of the processes responsible for the cessation of learning some way short of target-language competence (Ellis, 1997).

when grammar is dealt with occasionally for BE purposes, deliberate teacher-fronted discussion of grammatical forms is considered inappropriate. Namely, since explicit grammar input rarely automatically transforms into productive communicative output, BE teachers rarely resort to developing BE learners' metalinguistic awareness of grammatical rules.

By and large, the treatment of grammar and many other tertiary institutions in Slovenia follows along the same guidelines (Čepon, 2012). Essentially, grammar more often than not takes the form of implicit grammar instruction - an approach to grammar that retains a strong communicative quality with a lesser interest in structural and formal properties of a language. It is attention-oriented and promotes intuitive awareness of linguistic norms and not declarative knowledge of grammar (DeKeyser, 2001; Doughty, 2001; 2003; R. Ellis, 2005; Bybee, 2008; Dörnyei, 2009).

In other words, BE teachers resort to brief, incidental instructional attention to linguistic features within a communicatively meaningful context. In such situations a BE teacher waits for a real-time problem-oriented grammatical trigger or tries to redirect the students' attention during input processing to notice varying aspects of FL input. Implicit grammar instruction is employed as an instructional approach aimed at redirecting the students' attention towards the correct input during FL input processing. Put simply, a guiding principle is catching the students' attention in the midst of a grammatical problem as well as raising their awareness of the correct FL input (Čepon, 2012). With a view to achieving that, a variety of ways of bringing the students' attention to grammar is commonly used: a) subtly slipping grammatical discussion in as support for other activities; b) highlighting features of the FL input; c) paraphrasing the students' sentence to highlight the mistake and d) the use of implicit unobstrusive exchanges between the students and the teacher instead of a direct correction, i.e., immediate contingent auditory recasting[16]. Implicit grammar instruction appears to be appropriate for BE students because it tends to take place naturally and automatically. Perceived from BE students' perspective, BE teachers do not seem to make any conscious effort to explain the grammatical rules. However, the downside may be that BE students commonly do not perceive the teacher's implicit feedback as corrections.

Consequently, BE teachers have come to realize that a combination of grammar and communicative activities may be optimum for effective BE learning (e.g. Fotos, 2005). While dealing with grammar, BE teachers are searching for the optimal balance between meaning and form, providing a lot of/enough controlled practice and, at the same time, keeping the students' engagement in situational meaning as primary and their attention to linguistic form secondary (e.g. Norris & Ortega, 2000).

Essentially, BE context in this educational setting requires more emphasis on finding the right measure of grammar for the target group of learners and less emphasis on the selection of a 'right' methodological approach to grammar teaching (e.g. Larsen-

---

[16] Immediate contingent auditory recast has been found to be the one of the most beneficial implicit pedagogical interventions, quite effective in raising students' attention. Recasting should fit into a learner's working memory along with the original utterance with which it is compared.
e.g.
Student: I buyed it yesterday.
Teacher: You bought it yesterday?
Student: Yeah, I bought it yesterday.

Freeman, 2001). In short, BE teachers are trying to sensitize the students to monitoring the input, comparing it with their interlanguage, and improving their output and intake, however without any metalinguistic focus.

1.3.3. Developing communicative competence and collaborative classroom culture of achievement

Knowing English in fact refers to the ability to communicate in English which more precisely involves the productive skills of speaking and writing and the receptive skills of listening and reading. Since the communicative approach as the currently established foreign language teaching pedagogy is not prescribing any specific ways and methods to achieve communicative competence of their foreign language learners (Skela, 2011), developing communicative competence is understood in terms of developing language proficiency and communicative performance, or the ability to perform the communicative functions. In other words, BE instruction is not just developing BE learners' knowledge about the language, but BE learner's ability to understand and use language appropriately and to communicate in authentic (rather than simulated) social environments.

To be more precise in terms of the components of the communicative competence, BE instruction is not directed towards building BE learners' language competence, but more on developing various components of discourse competence (cohesion[17], rhetorical[18] and conversational organization[19]) and functional competence[20] (as parts of the pragmatic competence) as well as sociolinguistic competence[21].

With respect to BE classroom management, it is true that BE teachers are aiming for well-behaved classroom environments, however, BE classroom management tries not to create silent language environments where students whisper, work on their own and do not contribute to a class discussion. Exactly the opposite - collaborative classroom culture of achievement where BE teachers maintain high expectations for student behavior and learning has been adopted. Even more, due to two accreditations of the FELU (Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana), BE classrooms are increasingly becoming intercultural learning environments where an understanding of multiculturalism is promoted and certain multicultural maturity is required.

2. FINAL THOUGHTS IN LIGHTER VEIN

A unifying principle of BE is the fact that it is an evolving practice born out of the needs of business people to do business internationally in English with BE teachers as the obvious providers of language instruction. Although around the world BE may take a

---

[17] Cohesion refers to relationships among two or more sentences in a written text or utterances in a conversation.
[18] Rhetorical organization refers to developing narrative texts, descriptions, comparisons, classifications etc.
[19] Conversational organization entails conventions for initiating, maintaining and closing conversations.
[20] Functional competence comprises the ability to accomplish communication purposes in a language, such as agreeing, answering questions, asserting, commenting, greeting, naming, providing information, reporting, requesting etc.
[21] Sociolinguistic competence refers to the appropriate language use in a social context, i.e., formality, politeness, directness, dialects and language varieties, registers and natural and idiomatic expressions.

variety of forms, depending on a number of cultural and local practices, its status is unlikely to be clearly defined in near future.

The fact that seems to raise its status are also compulsory BE courses in tertiary institutions where learners' performance in English is assessed and tested along with other subjects at the end of the academic year. In the same way, there is a lot of logic in integrating BE courses and subject courses, or at least running BE courses parallel with subject courses to prepare learners more specifically for their professional work in English. Such teaching/learning co-operation at tertiary institutions would exert a beneficial effect primarily on BE learners, but would also ensure that BE is taken seriously by other subject teachers.

REFERENCES

Brieger, N. 1997. *The York Associates Teaching Business English Handbook*. York: York Associates.

Bybee, J. 2008. Usage-based grammar and second language acquisition. In P. Robinson & N. C. Ellis (Eds.), *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Routledge, 216-33.

Celce-Murcia, M. (ed.) 2001 [3rd edition]. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign language*. Boston, Mass.: Heinle & Heinle.

Čepon, S. 2006. *The Analysis of the Linguistic Needs of Business English Students at the Faculty of Economics*. Unpubished doctoral thesis. Ljubljana: Faculty of Arts.

Čepon, S. 2012. Higher education institutions without foreign language continuity. *English language teaching*, 5 (8).

Coleman, H. (ed.). 1989. *Working with Language: A Multidisciplinary consideration of Language Use in Work Contexts. Contributions to the Sociology of Language 52*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

DeKeyser, R. M. 2001. Automaticity and automatization. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and Second Language Instruction*. Cambridge: CUP, 125-51.

doi: 10.5539/elt.v5n8p31

Donna, S. 2000. *Teach Business English*. Cambridge: CUP.

Dörnyei, Z. 2009. *The Psychology of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: OUP.

Doughty, C. 2001. Cognitive underpinings of focus on form. In P. Robinson, *Cognition and Second Language Instruction*. Cambridge: CUP, 206-57

Doughty, C. J. 2003. Instructed SLA: Constraints, Compensation, and Enhancement. In C. J. Doughty & M. H. Long (Eds.), *The Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Blackwell, 256-310.

Dudley-Evans, T. 2001. English for specific purposes. In Carter, R. and D. Nunan (ed.). *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Cambridge: CUP.

Dudley-Evans, T., and M. St John. 1998. *Developments in English for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge: CUP.

Ellis, M., and C. Johnson. 1994. *Teaching Business English*. Oxford: OUP.

Ellis, R. 1997. *Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: OUP.

Ellis, R. 2006. Current issues in the Teaching of Grammar. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40 (1), 83-107.

Fotos, S. 2001. Cognitive Approaches to Grammar Instruction. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign language*. Boston, Mass.: Heinle & Heinle, 267-83.

http://www.economist.com/news/business/21596538-growing-number-firms-worldwide-are-adopting-english-their-official-language-english

Hutchinson, T., and A. Waters. 1987. *English for Specific Purposes: a learning- centred approach*. Cambridge: CUP.

Johns, Ann M., and D. Price-Machado. 2001. English for Specific Purposes: Tailoring Courses to Students Needs and to the Outside World. In Celce-Murcia, M. (ed.) [3rd edition]. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign language*. Boston, Mass.: Heinle & Heinle.

Kennedy, C., and R. Bolitho. 1984. *English for Specific Purposes*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Larsen-Freeman, D. 2001. Teaching Grammar. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign language*. Boston, Mass.: Heinle & Heinle, 251-66.

Norris, J. M., and L. Ortega. 2000. Effectiveness of L2 instruction. *Language Learning: 50* (3), 417-528.

Phillipson, R. 1992. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: OUP.

Riddle, S. 2013. Renaming English: does the world language need a new name? Available at: http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/comment/renaming-english-does-the-world-language-need-a-new-name-20130612-2o2v5.html#ixzz34kMFnneV

Robinson, P. 1989. An overview of English for Specific Purposes. In H.Coleman, (ed.). *Working with Language: A Multidisciplinary consideration of Language Use in Work Contexts*. Contributions to the Sociology of Language 52. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Schumpeter, J. 2014. *The English empire. The Economist*. Available at:

Skela, J. 2011. The treatment of Communicative competence in the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages". *Sodobna pedagogika* (2), 114-133.

Slavičkova, T. (ed.). 2001. *Perspectives: ESP special issue*. Prague: The British Council.

Špiljak, V. 1999. Teaching English for Business, or Teaching Business in English? In B. Tokić et al (ed.) 1999. *ESP: Contradictions and Balances*. Split: The British Council Croatia and HUPE.

St John, M. J. 1996. Business is Booming: Business English in the 1990s. *English for Specific Purposes*, 15 (1), 3-18.

Strevens, P. 1988. ESP After Twenty Years: A Re-Appraisal. In M.L. Tickoo (ed.). *ESP: State of the Art*. Singapore SEAMEO Regional Language Centre. Anthology Series 21.

Tickoo, M. L. (ed). 1988. *ESP: State of the Art*. Singapore SEAMEO Regional Language Centre. Anthology Series 21.

Zavašnik, M., and K. Pižorn. 2006. Povratni učinek nacionalnih tujejezikovnih preizkusov: opredelitev pojma in posnetek stanja v svetu. *Sodobna pedagogika*, 57 (1): 76–89.