

REDEFINING THE ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS COURSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ARE ESP COURSES BY NATURE AUTONOMY FOSTERING?

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Abstract. *Digitalization and the pressure put on universities to produce graduates who not only meet but also exceed the requirements of prospective employers impose the need for redefining the nature and role of today's ESP courses. Alongside mastering the language and increasing the proficiency level, ESP for business courses should also strive to assist students in developing the easily transferrable generic competences, which is in line with the concept of life-long learning. In order to simultaneously develop linguistic and business competences, the ESP for business courses in tertiary education need to be learner centred, interactive, autonomy requiring and autonomy promoting. One way to ensure this is to actively involve students in the process of teaching materials selection and evaluation; incorporate self-assessment and peer-assessment, as well as practices for making students reflect not only on their language learning experience but also reflect on their motivation and needs for learning Business English. In search of an answer to the above posed question, this paper summarises a field research conducted with the ESP for business undergraduate students and teachers at the South East European University (SEEU) in the Republic of Macedonia. The objective of the field research is to give a real and detailed insight into the willingness of students to take a proactive role in the language learning process and the readiness of teachers to leave the comfort zone of being entirely in control of the teaching process. Moreover, this small-scale study aims to offer a perspective of the inclination of ESP for business teachers at SEEU to consider even pre-experienced students as partners in the teaching/learning context. Based on the findings, the paper derives a number of implications and makes specific recommendations with reference to the ESP for business courses at SEEU.*

Key words: *ESP for business, SEEU, language learning autonomy, role and nature of ESP*

1. INTRODUCTION

Digitalization and accessibility of information are among the main reasons for the change of focus in requirements for recent business graduates. Increasingly, 'graduate attributes' are more important than the degree subject studied (Harvey, 2000). For some employers, the degree subject studied is not as important as a variety of other graduates' skills, personal and intellectual attributes. Graduate recruiters nowadays look for oral communication, teamwork, self-management, problem solving, leadership, etc. As a result, in most higher education institutions, including South East European University

(SEEU), great attention is paid to the development of generic skills, such as: communication skills in English, critical thinking and problem-solving, team-work, lifelong learning and information management, entrepreneurial skills, moral and professional ethics, and leadership.

Consequently, increasing the proficiency level is no longer enough. ESP courses should strive to assist students in becoming life-long learners equipped with the easily transferrable generic competences. One way to ensure this is to foster autonomy. We, the ESP teachers, should always bear in mind the fact that: “learner autonomy can be encouraged, but not imposed...” (Edge and Wharton, 1998, p.296). There seem to be two basic preconditions for fostering autonomy in language learning: students’ readiness and willingness to assume the role of autonomous learners and the teachers’ devotion to developing autonomy in language learning as a worthwhile goal.

In order to further the understanding of the theory of autonomy as well as its application in practice and to discover if the two basic prerequisites for autonomy are fulfilled, a case study based on a survey approach was conducted with undergraduate ESP for Business students and teachers at the Language Centre (LC) at South East European University. The field research aimed at measuring students’ readiness for assuming a proactive autonomous role and teachers’ willingness to transfer some of the responsibilities to the learners. The results of the survey conducted are reported, analysed and discussed. Apart from depicting the actual situation with reference to autonomy, the paper derives a number of implications and makes recommendations for the ESP for Business Courses at SEEU.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. ESP for Business Definition and Features

When attempting to define ESP and distinguish it from other forms of ELT, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) point out that ESP should be considered as an approach to language learning and teaching which is guided by learners’ specific reasons and needs. They remind that ESP should not be considered as product which is different from other forms of language learning. The content of an ESP course will definitely vary from that of a General English course, however, the process of learning will not. In their view: “what distinguishes ESP from General English is not the *existence* of a need as such but rather an *awareness* of the need” and what distinguishes an ESP learner from a General English learner is: “a definable need to communicate in English”.

Being an umbrella term, English for Business Purposes or Business English is difficult to define and limit in linguistic terms. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) distinguish between English for General Business Purposes (EGBP) and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP). EGBP courses are usually intended for pre-experienced learners or those who have recently started building their career. They resemble general EFL courses with the main difference that the materials are set in business contexts. As in general English courses, all four skills are equally developed along with a focus on grammar and vocabulary. In this kind of courses, broad range of English is taught through business settings but with language activities typical for any EFL course. Contrary to this, English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP) courses are specifically tailored for experienced learners who bring their business knowledge and skills to the learning situation thus creating the setting and carrier content. Unlike in EGBP, only one or two language skills are

being developed and the focus is on specific business communicative events. What we offer at SEEU are English for General Business Purposes (EGBP) 1 and 2 courses for second year students who have reached at minimum the intermediate level of English.

When it comes to selecting texts for Business English courses, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) remind that the responsibility for choosing texts traditionally resides with the teacher or the institution and is based on the availability and provision of supplementary materials. However, learners can also have an important role to play in selecting texts especially when it comes to developing reading skills. Learners can bring texts for work use or interesting work-related texts that they need to understand, as well as texts they find interesting and valuable. When including students in the materials selection process, “the advantage is that learners ‘own’ the texts and are involved and committed to them”. (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, p.99).

2.2. Definition of Language Learning Autonomy

According to Holec (1991), the creator of one of the earliest definitions of autonomy, it is “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning... to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all decisions concerning all aspects of this learning; i.e.: determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.); evaluating what has been acquired” (in Little, 1991, p.7). He insists on the fact that autonomy is not inborn but a capacity that must be developed with expert help.

David Little, the leading proponent of the theory of language learner autonomy, offers the following definition of autonomy: “a *capacity* – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts” (1991, p.5).

In Holec’s view, taking charge of one’s own learning refers to the capacity to make decisions whereas according to Little, the capacity to take responsibility for one’s own learning lies in the control over the cognitive processes involved in the self-management of the learning process. The remark Benson (2001) makes about these two definitions is that they both neglect an important aspect of autonomous learning: the fact that the content of learning should be freely determined by the learner.

Benson (2001) broadly defines autonomy as “the capacity to take control over one’s own learning”, “an attribute of the learner’s approach to the learning process” instead of “a method of learning” and a “desirable goal of language education”. Because a definition that tries to include all aspects of control would be impractical, he claims that the definition of autonomy should recognize the importance of three interdependent levels of learner control: learning management (learning behaviour), cognitive processes (psychology of learning) and learning content (learning situations).

Little (1991) identifies several basic misconceptions about language learner autonomy and highlights that autonomy is not synonymous with self-instruction, i.e. limited to learning without a teacher; it does not require the teacher to relinquish all initiative and control and consequently does not make the teacher redundant; it cannot be destroyed by any intervention on the part of the teacher; it is neither a new teaching method nor

something that the teacher does to the students; it is not a single, easily described behaviour; and it is not a steady state achieved by certain learners.

Not only Little, but also Benson (2001) reminds about the misconceptions about learner autonomy which stem from terminological and conceptual confusion. For instance, it is assumed that autonomy implies learning in isolation, without a teacher, outside the classroom or autonomy is considered to imply particular skills and behaviours, as well as particular methods of teaching. In terms of autonomy as a new method of teaching, Benson highlights that “there are certain fundamentals on which researchers in the field agree: ... autonomy refers to the learner’s broad approach to the learning process, rather than to a particular mode of teaching or learning” (Benson, 2001, p.1).

According to Littlewood “at the core of notion of learner autonomy are the learner’s ability and willingness to make choices independently” (1996, p.427). He observes that learners who are accustomed to a high degree of teacher control and support may lack the confidence to carry out the skills taught. In his view, the four main components of autonomy in foreign language learning are motivation, confidence, knowledge and skills.

Cotterall defines autonomy as “the extent to which learners demonstrate the ability to use a set of tactics or taking control of their learning” (1995b, p.195). The “set of tactics” refers to setting goals, choosing materials and tasks, planning practice opportunities and monitoring and evaluating progress. Learners will display these tactics to different degrees partially depending on their beliefs about language learning. That is why before interventions aimed at fostering autonomy are implemented, it is necessary to gauge learners’ readiness for the changes in beliefs and behaviour which autonomy implies.

Scharle and Szabo define autonomy as “the freedom and ability to manage one’s own affairs, which entails the right to make decisions as well. Responsibility may also be understood as being in charge of something, but with the implication that one has to deal with the consequences of one’s own actions” (2000, p.4).

Edge and Wharton (1998) argue that learner autonomy in the sense of taking responsibility for one’s own learning is an ongoing process which presupposes acquiring both study skills, such as strategies for effective reading or learning vocabulary and specific attitudes towards study, for instance, self-confidence, independence of mind, etc. They argue that encouraging learners to reflect on ways and reasons for doing things is the most effective way to promote a change of attitude and acquire skills. Apart from skills and attitudes as the most important aspect of learner autonomy, Edge and Wharton add another important aspect of learner autonomy: encouragement of learners to move away from dependence on teachers, classroom and coursebooks, or in other words encouraging students to make most of all other learning opportunities they encounter in their environment.

The opinions regarding the autonomy in language learning and teaching are still divided. Benson points out that: “the idea of autonomy often provokes strong reactions. To its critics, autonomy is an idealistic goal and its promotion a distraction from the real business of teaching and learning languages. To its advocates, autonomy is a precondition for effective learning; when learners succeed in developing autonomy, they do not only become better language learners but they also develop into more responsible and critical members of the communities in which they live” (2001, p.1).

3. FIELD RESEARCH

This section of the paper focuses on the small-scale field research conducted with ESP for Business undergraduate students and teachers at the LC at SEEU. It specifies the research questions and offers details about the participants and data collection instruments employed.

The two broad research questions that guided the investigation were the following:

- Are undergraduate ESP for Business students willing and ready to assume a proactive autonomous role, i.e. take greater responsibility for their learning?
- Are ESP for Business teachers ready to leave the comfort zone of being entirely in control by considering their pre-experienced students as partners in the teaching/learning process?

As part of the field research, two parallel surveys were conducted: a survey of the ESP for Business teachers' and a survey of the ESP for Business students' views and perceptions of language learning autonomy. A major advantage of this small scale field research, which considerably increases its significance, is that it can easily be replicated or adapted to other contexts i.e. other higher education institutions or other ESP courses. Moreover, it does not have to be limited to learning/teaching English only, as it can have a much wider application in other subject specific core courses.

3.1. Data Collection instruments

The main data collection instruments used for this research were:

- Student Questionnaire
- Teacher Questionnaire

Apart from their primary use, to collect information, the questionnaires also served as awareness raising tools for the issue of autonomy in language learning for both students and teachers alike. The students were asked to share their views on the distribution of responsibilities between the teacher and the students; to specify the language learning activities they practise in and out of the language classroom and to self-evaluate their ability to act autonomously. The teachers were asked to decide on their own and their students' responsibilities and evaluate their students' capacity for autonomous learning and their capability to take an active participation in the materials selection since it is assumed that the main reason why teachers do not feel comfortable transferring part of the responsibilities to their students is that they do not see their students willing and ready to assume an autonomous role. This assumption is based on literature on autonomy consulted, semi-structured interviews with ESP teachers and the author's personal teaching experience.

The answers about roles in the learning/teaching process given by students and teachers were compared, discussed and analysed in order to determine what trends in the data suggest the learners' potential for autonomous language learning behavior, as well as the teachers' perceptions of their students' potential for such behaviour. The results from the field research are presented in the penultimate chapter 6 *Illustrations*. The student questionnaire along with the summary of the answers given by students is marked as Figure 1, whereas the teacher questionnaire with the answers offered by the teachers interviewed is labelled as Figure 2.

3.2. Participants

3.2.1. Student Survey

Participants in this study were 30 (11 male and 19 female) randomly chosen undergraduate students attending English for Specific Purposes for Business Administration 2 course. Ten students were chosen from three different ESP for Business Administration 2 groups. The respondents were asked if they would be willing to fill in an anonymous questionnaire about learning English. Each student was informed that s/he did not have any obligation whatsoever to fill in the questionnaire. It was explicitly made clear to the participants that their information would be used only for the purpose of doing research. The questionnaire was available in English only. The research was conducted towards the end of the summer semester 2017. The timing was supposed to ensure students could give informed answers about learning English in the LC at SEEU.

3.2.2. Teacher Survey

Participants in this survey were three Language Center English language high lecturers teaching ESP for Business administration. The respondents approached voluntarily agreed to take part in this research. The participants received oral instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and were encouraged to seek clarification of any ambiguous items included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered at the end of the summer semester 2017. Since teachers are busy people, especially towards the end of semester, the questionnaire was short but concise. It contained four closed questions.

4. FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The overall purpose of this chapter is to summarize and present the results, to offer details regarding the findings of both the student and teacher surveys, as well as to analyse and discuss them.

4.1. Student Survey

Question 1 asked respondents to decide on the distribution of responsibilities in the language learning process. Overall, the respondents did not consider their teachers exclusively responsible for any of the items listed. However, they found their teachers mainly responsible for making students work harder (19); deciding on the length of time spent on each activity (26); deciding what is to be learnt outside of class (18) and choosing what materials to use to learn English (20).

The following were considered as shared responsibilities between students and teachers: ensuring students make progress during lessons; stimulating interest in learning ESP for business; identifying and pointing out strengths and weaknesses; determining the objectives; deciding what should be learnt next and evaluating progress made. Instead of taking the entire responsibility themselves, the respondents would rather cooperate with the teacher. This insecurity is probably due to the fact that the respondents were never taught how to perform the activities listed. Total of 19 of the respondents attributed the responsibility for making progress outside of class to themselves and not the teacher. This was the only aspect students felt most personally responsible for. On the other hand,

respondents felt least responsible for the following aspects: motivating themselves or making sure they make progress during lessons; stimulating their interest in learning English for Business and making sure they work harder; setting time limits or deciding on the time spent on each activity; choosing the materials to use to learn English and deciding what is to be learnt outside the class. This is a clear indication of students' beliefs and expectations which most likely stem from the absence of prior experience in any of the previously mentioned roles. It is expected that students would not regard these as their responsibilities simply because in their language learning history the teacher had always been the expert in charge.

Question 3a focused on activities attributed to autonomous language learners. Watching TV programs or movies in English turned out to be the most practiced out of class activity performed by the respondents (20), followed by using the Internet (15) and listening to English songs (14). Contrary to common belief, keeping a journal about learning English (6) appeared to be more popular than learning about the culture of English speakers (3). It was expected that the practice of keeping a journal would be regarded as tedious, time consuming activity. It is encouraging to see that students recognize the benefit of practising speaking with their classmates and value this opportunity (14).

The final question required students to indicate on a four-point Likert scale the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a list of 23 statements designed to discover if students' inclination is more towards teacher-centeredness or autonomy. Significantly high number of respondents (29) held themselves personally responsible for failing to learn. Twenty two of the respondents preferred classes where they can decide what and how is going to be learnt, and almost the same number of respondents (23) claimed they knew what they wanted to learn. Twenty eight of the students interviewed felt it was important to know the reason behind every activity done in class. Only autonomous learners would take the blame for not learning rather than blaming everyone else and would agree that the success in language learning depends on them just as much as it depends on their teacher.

Contrary to the above mentioned claims indicating willingness to take on an autonomous role, 23 of the respondents expected the teacher to tell them exactly what to do and 28 of them considered the ESP teacher responsible for making them aware of their strengths and weaknesses in the English language. These responses indicate that only in theory do the students express readiness to take on an autonomous role. However, it is obvious that the students interviewed consider the teacher in charge of the learning/teaching process. Holding such beliefs, students do not seem ready for assuming an autonomous role and embracing the transfer of responsibility to them.

Although 23 respondents stated that they could learn Business English without a teacher, having a class and a teacher was considered to be highly important for learning a language (20). The most probable speculation would be that this was the only way of learning students were ever involved in, taking into consideration how languages are taught in primary and secondary schools. About half of the respondents (18) disagreed that a lot of language can be learnt without a teacher. Majority of the respondents (27) wanted the teacher to explain grammar and vocabulary in detail. Although the main concern in ESP for Business courses seems to be improving communication, majority of students are still concerned with grammar and cling to memorising grammar rules. Instead, the accent should be on being able to apply the rule and use it in day-to-day communication.

Unlike the highly teacher-centered statements, other two statements which refer to language learning activities show a lower level of dependence on the teacher. Namely, 25 of the respondents enjoyed projects in which they could work with other students and

more than half of them, more precisely 22, saw selecting new vocabulary to learn as their own responsibility.

As far as the selection of content is concerned, more than half of the respondents did not consider it to be their responsibility by stating that it is not the student's responsibility to decide on the course objectives (19) and only 10 of the respondents wanted to choose their own materials for the ESP classes.

Only 13 of the respondents thought that an exercise was worth doing only if it was marked by the teacher, whereas 18 of the respondents expected all exercises to be marked by the teacher. An autonomous learner would not depend entirely on the teacher for any aspect of the language learning process, including evaluation and feedback. On one hand, insisting on every activity being evaluated by the teacher is evidence of heavy dependence on the teacher, but on the other hand, receiving regular feedback on performance by the teacher assists students to take greater control over their learning. In any language course, ESP or GE, learners are regularly exposed to teacher's evaluation and feedback. What varies is the use both sides make of it. The usefulness of evaluation and feedback provided will depend primarily on the match between the teacher's intentions and students' expectations, which are influenced by their understanding of the language learning process.

When it comes to agreeing with peer correction, the opinions were roughly evenly distributed, 20 participants did not mind their colleagues checking their work and 22 did not mind checking their colleagues' work. This is probably due to the fact that students at ESP for Business 2 course at SEEU are already accustomed to the practice of peer and self-evaluation which are a compulsory element of ESP courses. Twenty one of the students surveyed admitted to not being able to assess their language work. Obviously, for some of the students interviewed the notion of evaluation is immediately associated with the teacher. They find it difficult to separate these two.

As far as the teaching materials for the ESP course are concerned, 19 respondents claimed that it was not the student's responsibility to decide on the course content, 22 believed that it was the teacher's job to select materials for the ESP classes, 20 did not want to choose their own materials for the ESP classes. Contrary to these claims, 25 would like to be consulted regarding the materials to be used in class.

With reference to students' motivation for learning, 20 students said that if they got a good mark they did not worry if they still had questions and 17 of the respondents were motivated to work hard by exams, which is not surprising having in mind the fact that Business English is a credit bearing course affecting students' GPA.

Overall, despite the declarative readiness for a more active involvement in the learning process and the acceptance of responsibility for the success in the language learning process, the respondents showed a great deal of teacher-centeredness and heavy dependence on the teacher by not perceiving decision-making about content, materials, activities and their timing as well as evaluation as their own but as their teacher's tasks. This indicates that prior to making any attempt to promote language learning autonomy, intervention in the language learning/teaching is required.

4.2. Teacher Survey

In the first question the participants were asked to decide on the distribution of responsibilities in and outside of the language classroom. The teachers considered themselves responsible primarily for: identifying and pointing out strengths and weaknesses in English (3); determining the objectives of the ESP course (2); evaluating progress made (2); and stimulating students' interest in learning English for Business (2).

Teachers interviewed considered making sure students make progress outside class (3); choosing what activities to use in class (3) and all the other responsibilities listed as shared responsibilities. They recognized the need to include and consult their students but not to leave the mentioned aspects entirely up to them. These claims are positive, encouraging and promising for fostering autonomy among undergraduate ESP for BA students at the LC at SEEU.

All three ESP for Business teachers interviewed claimed to have sometimes tried to include their students in the process of materials selection. Moreover, all three teachers considered the students they had in their ESP for Business courses in the semester when the survey was conducted as somewhat capable to participate in the process of selecting teaching/learning materials and/or to suggest supplementary teaching materials. The answers provided in the questionnaire and in the follow up interviews with the respondents directly point to the conclusion that these teachers do not think highly of their students' ability to assume greater responsibility and behave autonomously.

None of the teachers interviewed used one book only. They all claimed to have combined materials from various ESP for Business coursebooks at the same level or more precisely to have designed and developed their own materials. In the follow up semi-structure interviews with the respondents it was clarified that they actually modified and adapted rather than created teaching materials from scratch. The respondents unanimously, strongly agreed that if interested and willing, the students should at least be consulted about the teaching materials used. Teachers also strongly agreed that it is their responsibility to make students aware of their strengths and weaknesses in the English language and that it is equally important to tell students why they do the activities in class. All three teachers agreed not only about the value of self-assessment and peer-assessment but also about their students' inability to assess/evaluate their language work and progress without guidance and assistance.

This is a small scale research. Nevertheless, the data obtained from the two surveys and the follow up analysis produced useful indicators of the perceived views of autonomy by both parties involved in the learning/teaching process. How participants view themselves as language teachers and target language learners and users is without question an important finding which leads to direct implications for teaching that shall be elaborated later in the paper.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to make sure that an ESP for Business course is fulfilling its main purpose of helping students to not only increase their language proficiency but also acquire the required generic skills, special attention should be placed on teaching materials, reflection on the motivation and needs, and assessment. Edge and Wharton (1998) remind that: "materials are not capable of making learners autonomous" (p.302), and argue that autonomy results from the existence of a desire for autonomy accompanied by awareness of what one already does and understanding that a choice exists. When learners are given a choice it creates a sense of ownership which is necessary for taking responsibility and engaging in critical reflection on the learning process. When it comes to distribution of responsibility, not only learners but also teachers benefit immensely since it lowers their burden and allows more time for their own development.

Even if students are not directly involved in the process of selecting a coursebook for the ESP course they are attending, they can always be offered a choice of relevant supplementary activities to do individually, in pairs or groups, according to their preference and specific needs, in cases when there is sufficient time in the course, when some time is unexpectedly left at the end of a lesson, when an individual student/pair/group finishes earlier and has to wait for the other students/pairs/groups to finish; they can also be set as homework and out of class activities or as end of course review. This could be a good start which would get students into the habit of taking a proactive role with reference to materials and activities selection.

Using authentic materials and assigning tasks relevant to real life and the realm of business results in adding a dimension of reality and concreteness to an ESP assignment which helps to amplify not only the outcomes of the learning experience but also student engagement. Students should always be told why they do an activity, and if it is not obvious tell them how the lesson learnt could be applied in real life situations.

As was already mentioned earlier in the paper, encouraging learners to reflect on the ways and reasons for doing things is the most effective way to promote a change of attitude towards the learning process and acquire the necessary skills. One of the most effective ways to help students reflect on their language learning experiences is keeping a language learning journal in which students record the motivation and reasons for trying to master a certain language aspect; items they had no problem mastering or aspects they still struggle with accompanied by their personal plan for action in order to deal with the difficult issues; self-evaluate the progress made using provided check lists or can/cannot do statements, etc. By keeping such a journal, the students reflect in order to learn and at the same time learn as a result of reflecting. The effect of the journal can be twofold if a portfolio is added to it for the purpose of practising self- and peer-assessment against evaluation rubrics. A portfolio containing samples of students' work would enable students to learn from their own mistakes, see how they could improve their work and increase the likelihood of students implementing the changes within future assignments. Another reason for the importance of peer-assessment lies in the fact that students learn a lot from each other. They do not learn exclusively from the teacher.

The implication for engaging students in peer and self-evaluation is more than obvious since it is an instrument crucial for fostering autonomy in language teaching. However, a relevant training is required if students are to stop being dependent on the teacher. The inability to self-evaluate lowers students' confidence in their abilities to manage their own learning. Without this belief they cannot develop autonomy in language learning.

Not just in ESP for Business, but in any ESP course, group work should be given priority over individual work. Group work is primarily intended to enable students to work collaboratively or in teams more effectively. However, working in teams develops certain 'softer skills' such as negotiation and compromise which are crucial attributes in the workplace. Apart from group work, in order to maximize students' learning potential in and outside of the language classroom, the ESP teacher should make students aware of their preferred and most effective learning style and include a variety of activities suitable for different learning styles since no single instructional method fits best all learners.

6. ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1 represents the Student questionnaire with the results indicated whereas Figure 2 outlines the Teacher questionnaire with the answers provided.

1. Gender: Male [11] Female [19]

2. It is the teacher's (T), the students' (S) or both the teacher and students' responsibility (B) to:

a) make sure students make progress during lessons	T [13] / S[0] / B[17]
b) make sure students make progress outside class	T [4] / S[19] / B[7]
c) stimulate students' interest in learning English for Business	T [12] / S[0] / B[18]
d) identify and point out strengths and weaknesses in English	T [10] / S[2] / B[18]
e) make students work harder	T [19] / S[0] / B[11]
f) determine the objectives of the ESP course	T [16] / S[2] / B[12]
g) decide what should be learnt next	T [11] / S[2] / B [17]
h) choose what activities to use in class	T [17] / S[3] / B[10]
i) decide how long to spend on each activity	T [26] / S[0] / B[4]
j) choose what materials to use to learn English for Business	T [20] / S[5] / B[5]
k) evaluate progress made	T [8] / S[8] / B[14]
l) decide what is to be learnt outside of class	T[18] / S[3] / B[9]

3. Can you learn English for Business alone, without a teacher? a) Yes [23] b) No [7]

3a. (If Yes) Which of the following language learning strategies do you use? (more than one answer possible)

- a) watching TV programs or movies in English [20]
- b) watching TED presentations on the topic of business with English subtitles only [13]
- c) listening to English songs [14]
- d) reading for pleasure in English (newspapers, magazines, books) [10]
- e) using the Internet for various purposes [15]
- f) practicing speaking English with classmates [14]
- g) learning about the culture of English speakers [3]
- h) doing homework [9]
- i) regularly reviewing after class [6]
- j) keeping a journal about learning English (i.e. reflecting on items which were easy or difficult in class; planning how to practise the difficult items; self-evaluate personal progress using "can do" statements, etc.) [6]

4. Indicate to what extent do you agree with the following statements

1= completely disagree 2= somewhat disagree 3= somewhat agree 4= completely agree

	1	2	3	4
a) If I don't learn, it's my fault	0	1	11	18
b) I prefer classes where I can decide what will be learnt and how	3	6	12	9
c) I know what I want to learn	1	7	16	7
d) I expect the teacher to tell me exactly what to do	3	4	6	17
e) If I get a good mark, I don't worry if I still have questions	5	5	14	6
f) It is not the student's responsibility to decide on the course content	2	9	10	9
g) It is the teacher's job to select materials for the ESP classes	1	7	6	16
h) I want to choose my own materials for the ESP classes	7	13	10	0
i) I would like to be consulted regarding the materials to be used in class	1	4	15	10
j) It's important to know why we do the activities in class	0	2	9	19
k) All exercises should be marked by the teacher	2	10	12	6
l) Exams motivate me to work hard	5	8	7	10
m) An exercise is only worth doing if it is marked by the teacher	6	11	11	2
n) I don't mind my classmates checking my work	5	5	12	8
o) I don't mind checking my colleagues' work	2	6	12	10
p) To learn Business English effectively you need a teacher and a class	5	5	4	16
q) A lot of language learning can be done without a teacher	10	8	7	5
r) I enjoy projects where I can work with other students	4	1	10	15
s) A lot of grammar and vocabulary can be learnt without a teacher	6	11	12	1
t) I want the teacher to explain grammar and vocabulary in detail	1	2	11	16
u) Selecting new vocabulary to learn is the students' responsibility	3	5	15	7
v) I would not be able to assess / evaluate my language work and progress	5	4	15	6
w) The ESP teacher should make us aware of our strengths and weaknesses in the English language.	0	2	16	12

Fig. 1 Students' Questionnaire

1. It is the teacher's (T), the students' (S) or both the teacher and students' responsibility (B) to:

a) make sure students make progress during lessons	T [1] / S [0] / B [2]
b) make sure students make progress outside class	T [0] / S [0] / B [3]
c) stimulate students' interest in learning English for Business	T [2] / S [0] / B [1]
d) identify and point out strengths and weaknesses in English	T [3] / S [0] / B [0]
e) make students work harder	T [1] / S [0] / B [2]
f) determine the objectives of the ESP course	T [2] / S [0] / B [1]
g) decide what should be learnt next	T [1] / S [0] / B [2]
h) choose what activities to use in class	T [0] / S [0] / B [3]
i) decide how long to spend on each activity	T [1] / S [0] / B [2]
j) choose what materials to use to learn English for Business	T [1] / S [0] / B [2]
k) evaluate progress made	T [2] / S [0] / B [1]
l) decide what is to be learnt outside of class	T [1] / S [0] / B [2]

2. Generally speaking, in my ESP for Business classes, I _____ try to include my students in the process of materials selection.

- a) always [0] b) sometimes [3] c) rarely [0] d) never [0]

3. How capable were the students you had this semester to participate in the selection of teaching/learning materials and/or to suggest additional materials?

- a) Highly capable [0]
b) Somewhat capable [3]
c) Not capable at all [0]

4. Indicate to what extent do you agree with the following statements.

1= completely disagree 2= somewhat disagree 3= somewhat agree 4= completely agree

	1	2	3	4
a) If students don't learn, it's their fault.	2	0	1	0
b) Students prefer classes where they can decide what will be learnt and how.	0	1	1	1
c) I use only one course books for my ESP for Business courses.	0	2	1	0
d) I combine materials from various ESP for Business course books at the same level.	0	0	0	3
e) I design and develop my own materials for my ESP for Business courses	0	0	3	0
f) It is not the student's responsibility to decide on the course content.	2	1	0	0
g) It is the teacher's job to select materials for the ESP classes	0	1	2	0
h) If willing to do so, students should also be included or at least consulted in the materials selection process.	0	0	0	3
i) The ESP teacher should make students aware of their strengths and weaknesses in the English language.	0	0	0	3
j) It's important to tell students why they do the activities in class.	0	0	0	3
k) All exercises should be marked by the teacher.	0	2	1	0
l) Primarily exams motivate students to work hard.	1	0	0	2
m) Authentic materials of the content area should be used in the ESP for Business courses.	0	0	1	2
n) Students should be asked to self-evaluate their work using can do statements or rubrics.	0	0	1	2
o) Students should be asked to evaluate their peers' work against given rubrics.	0	0	1	2
p) ESP for Business teachers should get their students into the habit of keeping a journal (i.e. reflecting on items which were easy or difficult in class; planning how to practise the difficult items, etc.	0	0	2	1
q) Selecting new vocabulary to learn is the students' responsibility.	0	2	0	1
r) Students would not be able to assess / evaluate their language work and progress without teacher's guidance and assistance.	0	0	2	1
s) In the ESP courses, teachers should promote learner autonomy (i.e. the ability to take charge of one's own learning and hold the responsibility for determining the objectives, contents, methods and techniques as well as evaluate what has been acquired).	0	0	0	3
<i>Thank you for your cooperation!</i>				

Fig. 2 Teacher's Questionnaire

7. CONCLUSION

Employability of university graduates becomes a number one priority. It is more than obvious that simply mastering field specific vocabulary is no longer the primary objective of ESP courses. The ESP courses in higher education should give students a solid foundation and basis for future learning and development. While improving their linguistic proficiency, students should simultaneously develop business competences. Developing generic or soft competences and skills is considered essential due to the concept of life-long learning. The main aim is to help students learn how to learn in order to acquire knowledge and specialist skills enabling them to initially get a job and then advance by continuously developing professionally. SEEU strives to produce graduates who are properly equipped not only with theoretical subject specific knowledge but also with a broad range of skills and competences to meet the demands of the highly competitive employment market today.

With reference to autonomy, it turns out that after all, ESP for business is not that much different from English for General Purposes in the sense that autonomy requires time and practice. Its promotion should start a lot before tertiary education. The advantage of ESP courses, however, lies in the fact that the ESP students are at a higher proficiency level which makes individual, out of class work more viable. The same applies to the active inclusion of students in the materials selection process and assessment.

This paper should be regarded as the first stage of a more-encompassing, long-term research project. Its immediate follow up would be implementing the recommendations based on the findings from this small scale research in the ESP for Business courses in the upcoming academic years and testing their effectiveness. Consequently, if necessary, the recommendations would be adapted, modified and broadened.

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