WHAT BUSINESS ENGLISH EDUCATION IN HUNGARIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CAN LEARN FROM BELF RESEARCH FINDINGS

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Abstract: The fact that English has become the lingua franca in international business and that business professionals use English in completing their day-to-day tasks necessitates that business students in Higher Education (HE) are prepared for working in English and communicating in lingua franca situations. However, entering the international business community involves two types of unpredictability for students. On the one hand, lingua franca communication is often unpredictable due to the diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds of interactants, and on the other hand, it is increasingly likely that students will need to use knowledge which did not exist during their university education. In order to enable students to meet this double challenge and to better fulfil Hungarian employers' expectations regarding fresh graduates' communication skills, it is necessary to revisit the goals and methods of Business English (BE) courses in HE. The aim of this theoretical piece of research is to discuss English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) research findings and to compare them with some of the long-standing assumptions in mainstream BE teaching. Findings in the literature suggest that methods allowing a greater degree of flexibility in pragmatic meaning making are needed to prepare business students for successful communication and work in an international environment.

Keywords: unpredictability, English as a lingua franca, Business English as a lingua franca, mainstream Business English teaching

1 Introduction

Business schools aiming to prepare students to enter the community of business professionals must help students to acquire the necessary skills and competences to be able to work efficiently using English as a language of work. Today many companies belong to an integrated network in which the members are located in different parts of the world. They work together in extracting, transporting, processing resources, and manufacturing, distributing, marketing and selling products. As a result, English is not only used when companies make business deals, but also when their professionals at each level of the organization carry out their day-to-day tasks. Therefore, English language skills have become an integral part of a business professional's expertise (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; Kankaanranta et al., 2015). When English is used as the means of communication between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, it is used as a lingua franca. It is, therefore, necessary that besides preparing students for their chosen profession, business schools prepare them to function as professionals in English and enable them to acquire skills to communicate successfully in lingua franca situations, that is, to use Business English as a lingua franca (BELF).

The task of preparing students for working in an international environment involves two types of uncertainty. First, it is not possible to predict in which industry, company or job students will find employment, or the tasks they will have to do. Moreover, due to automatization and globalisation the skills employers require are constantly changing (Zerényi, 2017). Therefore, employers seek professionals with general skills that enable them to adapt to changing circumstances (Zerényi, 2017). Highly adaptable employees are perpetual learners who possess soft skills such as good communication skills, time management, analytical thinking, empathy, and initiative taking (Manpower, 2021). Besides the uncertainties about professional knowledge, the lingua franca nature of business communication in English entails other types of uncertainty. Due to involving people from different lingua-cultural backgrounds, it cannot be predicted what difficulties speakers will face in trying to achieve mutual understanding when they carry out their daily tasks or negotiate business deals.

Both types of uncertainties point towards the need to change educational practices in HE institutions and to give priority to preparing BE students for unpredictable situations. From a language teaching perspective, it entails shifting the focus of Business English (BE) courses from teaching language elements which students are assumed to use in predictable situations to preparing them for adapting to all kinds of communicative events. It is all the more necessary as Hungarian employers are dissatisfied with the language skills of business graduates' and their preparedness in coping with the challenges a multicultural work environment poses (Loch, 2017). Loch's (2017) findings show that the most common problems stem from the lack of respect for cultural differences, stereotyping, difficulties in understanding different accents, using inappropriate style (being too formal or informal), and poor language skills. The most important competences needed for successful multicultural communication according to employers in Hungary are foreign language skills, ability and willingness to learn, accommodation skills, openness, tolerance and ethical thinking.

In light of the characteristics of the use of English in international business and what employers require from employees, it is necessary to revisit the fundamental theoretical assumptions that determine the aims, the design and the methodology of BE courses. The aim of this theoretical paper is to put forward how English as a lingua franca (ELF) and BELF research in particular can contribute to an approach that is more suitable for preparing learners for the challenges of 21st century business. Although ESP/BE courses are offered to both pre-service learners (those studying to become professionals in a specialist field) and in-service learners (who are already working for a company and need to do certain tasks in English), this paper focuses on the implications that ELF and BELF research findings have on teaching BE to pre-service learners in HE. First, it discusses ELF and BELF research findings about the characteristics of lingua franca communication in English in general and in international business in particular. Then, the fundamental assumptions of BE instruction are examined from the perspective of whether they are suitable for developing the skills needed for successful lingua franca communication. The article will conclude with suggestions as to the methods that can be used to help students prepare for language use in business.

2 Characteristics of lingua franca communication in English

Globalisation has brought about an increase in the number of contacts between people speaking different native tongues and has made English the most often used language in such communicative situations. Firth (1996) defines the English used in such situations as a contact

language "between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication" (p. 240). Although the language used in many contact situations is English, it cannot be characterised as a language variety as is suggested by Firth's definition but rather as language use (Seidlhofer, 2005) in communicative situations where English is the "common language of choice, among people who come from different lingua-cultural backgrounds" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 200). Therefore, when people with different mother tongues use English as a "means of communication" (Seidlhofer, 2005, p. 339), the term English as a lingua franca (ELF) is used, highlighting the importance of it being a "specific communication context" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 200) rather than a specific language variety.

When people use English as a lingua franca, as in all communication, their main goal is to achieve mutual understanding rather than conforming to native-speaker (NS) norms of language use. Since in most ELF situations NSs are not present, speakers may choose to disregard the way NSs use English (Charles, 2007; Widdowson, 2012), as NS norms are not a guarantee for successful communication. In fact, striving to emulate NSs may even cause difficulties (Seidlhofer, 2012) if a speaker insists on using idiomatic language or complicated grammatical structures (Jenkins et al, 2011) regardless of the listener's level of proficiency. Instead, speakers use the language in innovative ways (Cogo, 2008) and negotiate the norms of the particular interaction as they communicate (Illés, 2011). They evaluate their success in achieving mutual understanding on their own terms rather than in relation to NS norms (Kohn, 2015). Therefore, non-native speakers in ELF situations are described as competent in fulfilling their communicative purposes, that is, they are "language users in their own right" (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 137).

However, what might cause a problem for interlocutors in an ELF situation is that during meaning negotiation they can rely on a smaller area of shared knowledge (Sharifian, 2009). What is taken for granted by one interlocutor might be unknown to or known differently by the other. What is more, the native languages of interactants influence the way they use English (Jenkins, 2009; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010); therefore, it is not only cultural differences that have to be resolved but ones arising from differences in communicative practices. In other words, achieving mutual understanding requires more effort from speakers from different lingua-cultural backgrounds than from those with the same native tongue and culture (Hülmbauer, 2009).

Therefore, communicative success in ELF situations, as in every communicative event, depends on speakers' ability to overcome cultural and linguistic differences and the use of strategies to negotiate meaning. For that, speakers must decentre from their cultural assumptions (Sharifian, 2009), and pay close attention to their listener in order to notice cultural differences so that they can collaborate in the "co-construction of meaning" (Cogo, 2012, p. 102). Mutual understanding is achieved through the use of pragmatic strategies which enable ELF speakers to adapt to different interlocutors and to use English in a creative and flexible way (Cogo, 2012; Illés, 2011; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2012). As they engage in negotiation of meaning, they often give and ask for clarification, use repetition and paraphrasing (Dewey, 2014). At the same time, speakers in ELF situations accommodate to their interlocutors, that is, they "adjust their communicative behaviour to that of their interlocutors in order to facilitate communication" (Cogo, 2009, p. 254).

3 Business English as a lingua franca (BELF)

BELF is understood as English used as a lingua franca in international business communication (Charles, 2007; Ehrenreich, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012; Pullin, 2013), and, as such, its conceptualization is different from that of BE. While BE belongs to the English for specific purposes (ESP) branch of English as a foreign language (EFL), BELF draws on ELF research. Moreover, while the 'B' in both BE and BELF denote the domain of business, the 'E' in BE and the 'ELF' in BELF are different. The 'E' in BE refers to the register used in the domain, while the 'ELF' in BELF refers to the way English ('E') is used in lingua franca ('LF') contexts (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013).

BELF communication is similar in nature to ELF communication. As in the majority of interactions NS are not present (Charles, 2007), the way they use English to conduct business is irrelevant. In other words, "*business English* […] does not correspond with *English business*" (Widdowson, 2003, p. 69, emphasis original), that is, with the way English NS business professionals work. Since speakers in each interaction need to create the norms of the interaction as they communicate (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010), the use of English in international business has been found to be fluid and emergent (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Similarly to ELF communication, success in BELF depends on how effective speakers are in using strategies of meaning negotiation, that is, how good they are at accommodating to their interlocutor's level of English and at being ready to cooperate in meaning negotiation.

While interlocutors in BELF communication may only have a small set of shared knowledge as regards the other person's cultural background, what they can certainly rely on is knowledge of how business is conducted by the members of the international business community (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). The area of shared business knowledge comprises the knowledge of "certain roles for the language users (e.g., buyer, seller, manager), the kind of jobs they do (e.g., negotiate deals, manage projects, lead people), the issues they discuss (e.g., prices, recruiting, finance), and the genres they use (e.g., business email, intranet, meetings)" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010, p. 205). Thus, professional expertise is the common ground which serves as a point of reference for meaning negotiation and mutual understanding.

As shared knowledge is a great asset in communication, business professionals highly value established relationships. With long-standing partners, the norms of the interaction have already been created (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010), which enables professionals to fully focus on the job to be done. Therefore, they make efforts to create and maintain good relationships. To do so, they create rapport with their business partners (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) and engage in small talk (Ehrenreich, 2010; Kaankanranta & Planken, 2010; Kaankanranta et al., 2015; Meierkord, 2000; Pullin, 2010; Ranta, 2010). They also make sure to communicate in a way that makes the partner feel good (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). This involves communicating information which is "useful or usable to the recipient, and in a manner appropriate to the context and in line with the expectations of the recipient" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010, p. 397). Good relationships ensure effective and efficient communication, which has direct consequences on the work being done. In fact, the measure of communicative success in BELF is the extent to which the common goal of conducting business is fulfilled (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013).

Before we turn our attention to how the research findings discussed above may inform BE teaching, it is necessary to look at how mainstream BE is conceptualised. Therefore, what follows is first a discussion of the defining characteristics of BE and then the issues that have to be reconsidered.

4 Mainstream Business English teaching

Business English has been defined in two different ways. On the one hand, it is based on the assumption that it is possible to define/delimit a professional field and to make correspondences between the communicative situations characteristic of the field and the grammar and lexis used. Thus, BE has been considered to be a professional register, "a specific language corpus and emphasis on particular kinds of communication in a specific context" (Ellis & Johnson, 1994, p. 3), or "the name given to the English used for dealing with business communication in English" (Talbot, 2009, p. 9). In contrast, Frendo (2005) defines BE as "communication with other people within a specific context" (p. 1). His definition moves away from understanding BE as register and focuses on context of language use, and as such it is closest to how BELF is conceptualised. However, defining BE in this way offers nothing more than saying what is true of all language use because "all uses of English […] are specific" (Widdowson, 2003, p. 61) in that communication always serves a purpose specific to the particular communicative event (Widdowson, 2003).

At the same time, BE is defined as belonging to the English for specific purposes (ESP) branch of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). ESP emerged in response to the demands of professionals in various walks of life to learn to do specific tasks in English. In-service professionals required courses where they could learn the register and the relevant genres as soon as possible to be able to do their jobs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), and this put needs analysis in the centre of ESP course design. Needs analysis determines the learning goals and the content of the course and it is one of the characteristics that sets ESP apart from General English (GE) (Basturkmen, 2006; Belcher, 2006; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). It evolved from identifying the learning gap between what learners can currently do in the language and what they should be able to do (deficiency analysis) to describing the target situation in which learners will use the language (target situation analysis or TSA) with regard to tasks, activities, and skills (Belcher, 2006). However, ESP has moved even further and now needs analysis does not only serve as the starting point in the course development process but is seen as being identical with it (Basturkmen, 2010).

Although conducting TSA might seem to be suitable when designing courses for in-service learners whose needs can be better delineated in terms of the specific tasks they perform and the genres they use, it has been critiqued on the grounds that it "failed to take account of the variation of language use that exists in any target situation" (Basturkmen, 2010, p. 20). The limitations of TSA is more obvious in HE when BE courses have to be designed for pre-service learners: It is impossible to predict in which profession or industry students will find employment, what tasks they will have to do in English or what genres they will have to use. Even if TSA could offer the promise of designing language courses tailored to particular groups of students, it may still not produce the intended result because it does not take lingua franca communicative situations into account and because "linguistic knowledge required for global interactions is unpredictable" (Canagarajah, 2014, p. 771).

Moreover, BE is traditionally understood to have the same characteristics as other ESP branches in that it uses the activities and methodology of the professional field and focuses on teaching the grammar, lexis, register and genres the learners are likely to need in their work (Basturkmen, 2006; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Widdowson, 2003). Since genres show how language is used in conventionalised communicative situations, and these conventions reflect the ways in which the members of the professional community think and communicate (Widdowson, 2003), the knowledge of genres is considered to be a requirement for gaining membership in a particular professional community. Therefore, BE courses aim to cater for the needs of the learner with regard to grammar, register, study skills, and discourse conventions and genres (Basturkmen, 2006; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Frendo, 2005; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Genre-based approaches in ESP pedagogy, and thus in BE teaching, have emerged as a response to the need to explain why a particular group of professionals use language in the way they do. While register analysis, an earlier approach in ESP, was concerned with "the identification of statistically significant lexico-grammatical features of a linguistic variety" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 5), the ESP school of genre analysis sought to take into consideration the socio-cultural, institutional and organizational factors which influence the processes of meaning negotiation in specialist communities (Bhatia, 1993). It has been concerned with how the formal features of texts reflect the communicative purposes of specialist communities (Basturkmen, 2006; Widdowson, 2003). As a result, ESP genre analysis seeks to identify the formal features of a given genre and the strategies used by the members of a professional community to construct and understand that genre, and "to identify pedagogically utilizable form-function correlations" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 16). The findings then form the basis of syllabus and materials design (Wang, 2007).

5 Issues to be revisited in teaching Business English to pre-service learners in HE

The fact that business professionals use English in lingua franca situations rather than with NSs of English entails that the basic assumptions of BE need to be revisited. It is outside the scope of the present paper to re-examine the implications of ELF and BELF research on teaching BE to in-service learners; therefore, what follows is a discussion of the extent to which mainstream BE is suitable for catering to the needs of pre-service business students. For that purpose, needs analysis, the teaching of genres, and the methodology of BE teaching will be examined. As the literature rarely distinguishes BE from ESP especially with regard to genre teaching and methodology, the two terms are used synonymously in the following discussion. A distinction between them is made only where it is relevant.

5.1 What ends do BE courses serve in HE?

The realities of the use of English have fundamentally changed since the 1970s when BE was conceptualised as a branch of ESP within the paradigm of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Today people learn English not only to be able to communicate with NSs of English but to communicate with people from virtually all parts of the world. In EFL the goal is for learners to approximate NS competence as it is seen to be the key to successful communication in English (Seidlhofer, 2012). However, ELF and BELF research has shown that speakers are competent language users even though they do not use the language in the

same way as NSs (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Therefore, BE needs to abandon the traditional goal of language teaching, that is, helping students approximate NS language use (Louhiala-Salminen & Charles, 2006). Not only because this goal is unattainable and in lingua franca language use unnecessary, but also because it non-native speakers (NNS) as language learners which projects the image of them being "defective communicators" (Seidlhofer, 2004, p. 213).

The insistence on NSs being the best models affects the beliefs, attitudes and practices of the EFL profession, which attaches the highest prestige to the NS of English (Dewey, 2014; Kramsch, 1997; Llurda, 2004; Ranta, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2012), even though the NS is an abstraction that does not exist in real life (Widdowson, 2012). Similarly, NS communicative competence is also an abstraction, one which is unattainable for most users of English, given the fact that they are not born and socialised in the target language (Widdowson, 2012). The problem with idealising NS language use and setting the unattainable learning goal of achieving NS proficiency is that language courses focus on training students to emulate NSs instead of helping them to appropriate the language for themselves, to make it their own by creating their own English language identity (Kohn, 2015), and to develop skills to cope with unpredictable communicative situations.

Business English, therefore, needs to draw on BELF research findings and accommodate the changes in focusing on what is needed for successful communication. Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) summarise the differences between the conceptualisation of BE and BELF in the table below:

	BE	BELF
aim for learning	to use English like NS business professionals	to communicate in English in unpredictable lingua franca business situations
success in communication requires	NS-like language skills	flexibility, adaptability, creativity in language use, accommodation skills, code-switching, creating rapport and engaging in small talk
NNS are seen as	learners	language users

Table 1. The summary of the differences between the conceptualisation of BE and BELF (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013, p. 29)

5.2 Needs: What do business students really need?

We have seen that business students' future communication needs cannot be defined in terms of specific lexis, grammar or generic conventions. Therefore, HE institutions are more likely to use the wide-angle approach to course design in order to develop more general skills and language learning strategies which can be used in a variety of tasks and domains (Basturkmen, 2006). If, however, developing English communication skills of business students is conceptualised as in mainstream BE, that is, improving their skills is restricted to using a professional register and field-specific genres, the wide-angle approach may only mean a larger selection of lexical items and genres, not necessarily the development of skills that help students communicate effectively in lingua franca contexts. Moreover, teaching the register, genre and discourse practices of the international business community is useful only

if students' awareness is raised about how business professionals' use of English may change in order to be appropriate to the specific situation (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Therefore, business students need to acquire the skills to be "flexibly competent" (House, 2002 as cited in Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013, p. 31) so that "they are able to analyse a particular situation, including the job at hand, and to act accordingly" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013, p. 31). To sum up, it is not the approach to course design that needs to change but how communication needs are conceptualised.

5.3 Genre teaching in BE: Is it suitable for preparing business students to cope with unpredictability?

The limitations of the current approach to genre teaching in mainstream BE are conspicuous in light of ELF and BELF research findings. The most fundamental limitation of such an approach is that it conceptualises genre as a static and prescriptive concept (Corbett, 2006; Widdowson, 2003) by describing genre as a set of conventions for language use, and by establishing form-function relationships for pedagogic use. This static view of genre is not suitable for preparing learners for lingua franca language use. First, genres constantly change because practices in professional communities change (Hyland, 2004; Widdowson, 2003). Second, the form and content of a given genre depend on the particular purpose the text serves and the context it is used in (Hyland, 2004). Third, professional genres, such as business genres, are frequently used in lingua franca situations where only NNSs are present. Therefore, teaching form-function relationships has a limited value for students, since each lingua franca interaction is different in terms of its norms and ways of meaning negotiation.

Moreover, the traditional approach of ESP to genre is based on the assumption that communicative purposes arise from the communicative needs of a discourse community (DC). However, the nature of lingua franca communication in English suggests that participants in such communicative events belong to a community of practice (CoP) rather than to a DC (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2009). A CoP differs from a DC in that it has the members' common practice, or mutual engagement in its focus rather than geographical or social parameters. All communicative purposes and the genres that arise from these purposes can be derived from the members' engagement in common practices. While Swales conceptualises a DC as "a static set of qualified individuals" (Corbett, 2006, p. 30) with set ways of communication and participation, a CoP emerges during the practice in which its members engage; therefore, its ways of communication are fluid and dynamic. It is easy to see that the international business community can be considered a CoP (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2009). When its members interact, they share a common goal (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Pullin, 2013), they have a mutual understanding of the practices of doing business and the genres of the community, and they have a shared repertoire of specialist vocabulary (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Pullin, 2013).

CoPs differ from DCs with respect to the ways in which one can gain membership in them. While researchers have to master the rules of communication and participation in a DC first in order to be considered members, business professionals become novice members first and learn how to do the job and communicate from more experienced members through participation in the activities of the professional community. As they become more experienced themselves, they move from the periphery of the community towards its centre

(Lave & Wenger, 1991). To sum up, they learn the specifics of their profession, including its special lexis and genres, on the job.

What follows from the above discussion is that instead of ESP's traditional view of genre, ESP needs to adopt a different one that better reflects the sociocultural realities of how English is used today (Bhatia, 2014). Bhatia (2014) proposes a multi-perspective model to genre analysis in which discourse should be treated as text, as genre, as professional practice and as social practice and offers the following definition:

> genre is a rhetorical strategy used within a professional culture to organize knowledge in the form of professional action to achieve the objectives of professional communities. […] Genres, in other words, are constructions of professional community discourse whose meaning is created by and for the consumption of the members of the professional community. This implies that any comprehensive and useful understanding of discourses of this kind must necessarily be informed by the perceptions, experiences and practices of the professional community (Bhatia, 2014, p. 207).

He points out that being outsiders, what is available to the genre analyst, the teacher or the student are only the features of the discourse that can be inferred from the text itself, that is, its lexico-grammatical, discoursal and rhetorical features. Without insider knowledge about the professional and social practices of professional communities, it is not possible to understand how professionals use genres and how communicative purposes are fulfilled.

As a result of genres being embedded in professional and social spaces, genre instruction in ESP faces several theoretical and practical challenges. The most fundamental dilemma is whether or not explicit genre instruction is an aim to be pursued in ESP. Since both the ability to use professional genres and disciplinary knowledge are essential constituents of professional expertise, Bhatia (2014) claims that genres have to be taught, although he admits that it is possible only to a limited degree. First, the classroom does not reflect the realities of the world outside. Compared to the dynamism, unpredictability and complexity of the outside world, the classroom is a predictable, stable and simple environment. Second, in academia disciplinary knowledge is treated independently from discursive knowledge. In order to bring the two worlds closer, Bhatia (2014) suggests that language and disciplinary instruction should be integrated, and that language and subject teachers should work in close collaboration with members of professional communities to gain insight into the workings and communicative practices of such communities.

5.4 BE methodology: Is it suitable to develop the skills business students need in BELF situations?

There is consensus in the literature that ESP does not have a specific methodology (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) and that it draws on the same principles as English Language Teaching (ELT) (Littlewood, 2014). At the start of ESP instruction in the 1960s, the communicative approach became the mainstream methodology in ELT, due to the dissatisfaction with earlier methods and because it emphasised that language use depends on with whom, where, when and for what purpose language is used. When ESP courses promised to teach learners what they needed specifically to communicate in specific, well-defined situations, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and ESP found common ground and

influenced each other significantly (Littlewood, 2014). Since in HE institutions the use of field specific methodology is possible only to a limited extent, but at the same time it is a requirement to increase business students' employability by equipping them with a broad skillset, CLT has become the most frequently used method in BE courses (Littlewood, 2014).

Although CLT emphasizes the social aspect of language use, its major drawback is that it sets the goal of reaching NS communicative competence. Its conceptualisation of communicative competence is based on Hymes' (1972) concept which was developed for ethnographic research in order to *describe* communication. Hymes (1972) identified four components of communicative competence – what is possible in terms of the linguistic code, what is feasible for the individual and appropriate in a given communicative event and what is actually done by speakers. He emphasized that these components are "context-sensitive" (Leung, 2005, p. 122). However, instead of ethnographic descriptions, what language pedagogy needed was specifications of language use that could form the curriculum of language courses. Therefore, the Hymesian theory was expanded and modified by Canale and Swain (Leung, 2005). They identified four components of competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. At the same time the ethnographic descriptions of how certain communities of NSs use English were turned into *prescriptive* guidelines in language pedagogy. These guidelines give the impression of stability, that language use does not change, and also of uniformity, that all NSs speak in the same way. As a result, the language curriculum is based on how the idealized native speaker may use the language in communicative events (Leung, 2005) and the components of communicative competence are developed and measured against NS norms.

Recently, there has been criticism in the literature about the effectiveness of CLT methodology, as ELT professionals expressed doubts about its means to develop communicative competence (Didenko & Pichugova, 2016; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Several possible reasons have been put forward. One of them is measuring communicative competence against NS competence (Dewey, 2014; Illés, 2011; Jenkins, 2012; Kramsch, 1997; Leung, 2005; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2012). Aiming for NS competence hinders language learning in that it is not possible to describe what it means exactly (Widdowson, 2012); therefore, both GE and BE coursebooks present how an idealised NS *might* use the language in a given situation (Leung, 2005). Moreover, due to the unrealistic goal of reaching NS competence, language learners shy away from using the language both in and out of the classroom because they constantly struggle with the feeling of incompetence (Magnuczné Godó, 2014). In fact, research has shown just the opposite: ELF users communicate successfully, which means that they develop their own competence to negotiate meaning (Widdowson, 2012). Therefore, the insistence of CLT on NS norms is not only misplaced but it does not reflect the ways in which NSs communicate in lingua franca situations (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Ranta, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2012).

Secondly, CLT fails to utilize learners' native languages despite the fact that the native language is an important resource both in foreign language learning and in lingua franca communication. The insistence on monolingual language teaching disregards the fact that language learning is not a monolingual but a bilingual process (Widdowson, 2003). Most learners acquire a foreign language in school when they are already competent users of their mother tongue. As a result of the learning process, learners become bilingual, which means that the native and the target language do not only coexist in the learners' mind but influence each other and "fuse into a single signifying system" (Widdowson, 2003, p. 150). When CLT bans students' mother tongue from the classroom, it relinquishes an important and necessary

tool for language learning, that is, making learners notice the similarities and differences between the foreign language and the native tongue (Budai, 2013; Widdowson, 2003). Thus, it ignores not only how languages are learnt but also the general principles of learning, which hold that people learn by relating new information to existing knowledge (Widdowson, 2003). Moreover, switching between languages, as ELF research has shown, is an inherent feature of lingua franca communication. Therefore, using methodologies that exploit the benefits of mediating between languages would better serve students' needs in terms of developing skills for successful communication in lingua franca situations.

Third, CLT emphasizes the use of authentic materials in order to model NS language use (Seidlhofer, 1999). In CLT authenticity means that a text is written for purposes other than teaching the target language (Thornbury, 2006). That is why some business English coursebooks feature articles adapted from prestigious British or American newspapers. However, what is authentic for a NS audience is not authentic for foreign language learners. A text is authentic when its social intent is recognizable for the reader, that is, when textual clues are recognizable and meaningful for readers, or in other words, they "key into" the readers reality (Widdowson, 2004, p. 8). Therefore, texts taken from British or American business newspapers or journals cannot be considered authentic for BE students because the texts are likely to make references to knowledge shared with NSs and thus fail to engage students' knowledge of the world and activate their interpretative processes (Widdowson, 2004; Illés, 2011, 2020). As students cannot engage in meaning making, for them the texts will remain "inert" (Widdowson, 2004, p. 8) because "reality does not travel with the text" (Widdowson, 1998, p. 711).

From what has been mentioned it seems that two types of authenticity are implied in BE. One which characterises the ELT profession in general as discussed above, the other is related to how ESP differentiates itself from GE: It is concerned with teaching the register and the genres which are used by the members of a professional community. This results in BE students emulating the ways in which an idealised English NS business professional goes about his business and communicates in imaginary professional communicative situations outside the classroom. BE courses which focus on emulating professional discourse do not offer students the opportunity to appropriate the language for their own purposes. Therefore, it does not help them develop the skills that are needed in BELF communicative situations. Moreover, authentic texts such as, for example, the executive summary of annual financial statements of actual companies may be suitable for learning the surface features of the genre of the executive summary, but learning those do not shed a light on how communicative purpose is realised linguistically in that particular text. Therefore, what is possible in BE courses in HE is to draw students' attention to what features *might* characterise a particular professional genre. However, it is not possible to provide any information on how the text fulfils its communicative function in the given professional and social space (Bhatia, 2014).

Fourth, mainstream CLT aims to develop skills that learners will use outside the classroom. The traditional goal of CLT is to prepare learners *for* communication with NSs of English; therefore, language learning in the classroom is seen as preparation for real language use outside the classroom (Illés, 2020; Widdowson, 2003). However, language learning and language use cannot be separated (Grundy, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2007) as they are "simultaneous processes" (Seidlhofer, 2012, p. 81). Learners will learn a language only through using it in real communication. Therefore, what teachers need to do is to create conditions in the classroom where learning as communication can take place (Illés, 2020) by

designing tasks that engage students' realities and make it possible for them to communicate on their own terms.

6 Methodological considerations

What transpires from the discussion above is that instead of trying to describe the target situation or train students to emulate NS business professionals, BE courses should develop skills that speakers of English need in order to deal with the uncertainties of lingua franca communication. In other words, BE courses should develop students' capability to use English in a way that is appropriate to the particular situation (Widdowson, 2003). Capability is understood as "a general lingual capability" (Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2017. p. 33) which enables speakers to draw on all the linguistic resources available to them in order to make meaning in all kinds of situations (Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2017; Widdowson, 2003). Capability, therefore, means the ability to use English both creatively and in conformity with the rules of standard English depending on what is needed to communicate successfully (Widdowson, 2003). On the other hand, developing capability is key in preparing students for learning outside the classroom (Widdowson, 2012). As they learn how to negotiate meaning in English, they learn how to realize "different communicative purposes in different contexts of use" (Widdowson 2012, p. 24). This is a skill which transfers to all the situations students will encounter and which is especially important for pre-service learners of BE as it is unpredictable how, where, and with whom they will use English at work.

In order to develop general capability, the most important task for BE teachers is to create conditions for real communication in the classroom. Instead of tasks that simulate out-of-class situations which require students to pretend to be someone else, for example, to act as a marketing manager in a role play, teachers need to design tasks which engage students on their own terms (Illés, 2020; Widdowson, 2003). Tasks which allow different interpretations are especially suitable because these require students to notice differences in interpretations and force them to establish a common ground. During the process students do not only activate their interpretative processes, but also accommodate to each other and negotiate meaning. This way, they learn the language as they use it to communicate (Grundy, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2007; Widdowson, 1978) and at the same time they develop skills needed in lingua franca communication.

Therefore, a pedagogy that facilitates the development of the capability and skills needed for successful lingua franca communication sets the goal of enabling students to make "themselves comprehensible in as many different situations and with as many different types of NNSs as possible" (Sifakis, 2006, p. 157). For that, teachers have to design tasks that make students focus on the listener and tailor their use of language to achieve mutual understanding. As mutual understanding in lingua franca situations does not depend on adherence to NS norms, teachers need to change their mindset from requiring students to conform to NS norms (Seidlhofer, 2009; Sifakis, 2014) to one that allows and rewards creativity when it is used in the process of online meaning negotiation (Canagarajah, 2014; Kohn, 2019). What is key in this process is that students need to be sensitised to notice linguistic and cultural differences, and they need strategies to be able to "avoid or handle misunderstandings" (Kohn, 2019). Teachers may show interactions between NNSs of English and raise students' awareness of the strategies speakers use to achieve mutual understanding (Illés, 2020; Murray, 2012). There are corpora (e.g., the VOICE corpus) with recordings of real-life interactions between NNSs

that teachers can use for this purpose, but films and interviews with famous NNSs are also suitable (Illés, 2020).

Besides developing a general capability of coping with unpredictable situations, BE courses designed for students in HE should also cater for the students' special needs in terms of preparing them for working in the international business community. Therefore, BE courses should use methods which focus on the development of capability while discussing specific content. This means that teachers should design tasks that give students the opportunity to use English in dealing with topics and problems which are characteristic to their specialist field. The methods which have been recommended in the literature as ones suitable for furthering the aim of preparing learners for lingua franca language use are translation (Illés, 2013; Magnuczné Godó, 2014; Widdowson, 2003), problem-based learning (PBL), task-based learning (TBL) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Illés, 2011; Illés & Akcan, 2016; Medgyes, 2014). However, these methods can be used in BE courses as well, if the content is related to the students' professional field.

Translation seems to be a suitable method for developing skills for BELF/ELF communication for three reasons. First, as we have seen, language learning is a bilingual activity, which means that language users become aware of the similarities and differences of how an idea is expressed in their mother tongue and in a foreign language. By doing so, they are able to view the mother tongue from outside, but more importantly, they will develop the skill to see their native language as *one* of the possible systems in which meaning can be made and thus they will be more open to the idea of diverse ways of seeing the world. Second, when translating a source text, the translator has to produce a text which fulfils the same function in both the target and the source culture, that is they have to "re-create as far as possible an equivalent speech event" (House, 2006, p. 348). However, this is not possible without focusing on the reader and carefully considering what the target audience may or may not know. During translation, students need to constantly query themselves about the extent to which their knowledge of the world corresponds to the ways the audience knows it. Given the fact that translation is done for audiences which do not speak the language of the original text and very likely come from different cultural backgrounds, translators need to negotiate the cultural differences that exist between the speaker and the audience (Magnuczné Godó, 2014). This requires good accommodation and meaning negotiation skills (Illés, 2011), just like face-to-face communication with people in international business or in any professional field where English is the most commonly used language of communication. The last but equally important reason is that translation is found to be among the most often used skills in multinational companies in Hungary and central Europe (Sazdovska et al., 2014).

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is also a suitable method for creating the environment for real communication to take place. It offers students the opportunity for using the language through learning about something else. Since it is not possible to acquire knowledge without connecting new information to existing information, the CLIL method activates and engages students' reality (Illés & Akcan, 2016) and in this way it creates the conditions for students to engage with the material and each other on their own terms. In courses using CLIL where the foreign language is used as a vehicle for acquiring subject knowledge, accommodation and meaning making become a daily routine because teaching and learning are not possible without them.

Besides CLIL, TBL and PBL also carry many benefits in educating future business professionals. When students cooperate in completing a task or solving a problem in the BE

classroom, they must accommodate and engage in making meaning, otherwise they will not be able to succeed. Both methods create a genuine communicative situation where students have to interact with one another, just like in a workplace environment. Temporarily, they form a CoP which is held together by pursuing a common goal and the activity they have to do together. In the meantime, they learn from each other, and as a result their knowledge of the world changes. While they are working on a task or problem, they search for examples and analogies, draw conclusions, relate phenomena to their own experiences, make comparisons, summarize information and distinguish between important and less important aspects. As they do all of those in English, they do not only complete the task, but through engaging in real communication, they learn to use English as well (Wilkinson, 2008).

7 Conclusion

In order to contribute to increasing the employability of business students, BE courses in HE need to develop the skills that help students to succeed in the world of international business. As it is unpredictable what knowledge or skills they will need, BE courses designed for pre-service students should focus on improving students' linguistic flexibility, adaptability and learning skills so that they can move fast from the periphery of CoPs towards the centre as they learn how the specific professional community they become members of thinks and behaves. Therefore, business students benefit the most from learning strategies which enable them to cope with unknown situations and to learn new things. What language pedagogy can do to further this aim is to abandon some of its long-held assumptions about language use and language learning. The most important of them is its idealisation of the NS and its insistence on striving to approximate NS linguistic competence. BE teachers need to change perspective from conforming to NS norms to valuing creativity in meaning negotiation. It is also essential to adopt a dynamic view of genres and to draw students' attention to the fact genres and language use as such constantly change; therefore, the most important skills they need is to be able to notice cultural and linguistic differences, to accommodate to them and to negotiate meaning and the norms of the interaction during the course of communication. Second, BE teachers need to reconsider the use of methods other than CLT and create real communicative situations in the classroom that are similar to ELF situations in that they engage the students' reality and, therefore, they require students to adapt and accommodate to each other during task completion.

Proofread for the use of English by: Dr. Nicholas Chandler, Department of Management, Budapest Business School.

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