Business English Teacher Competencies:

A Mixed-method Study of the Required Competencies of Business English Teachers for Running In-company Business English Courses at Multinational Companies in Hungary

PhD Dissertation Summary

Candidate: Rita Mészárosné Kóris

Supervisor: Dr. Krisztina Károly, PhD, habil.

2015
Defence Committee:

Head: Dr. Péter Medgyes, DSc
Internal Referee: Dr. Éva Major, PhD
External Referee: Dr. Csilla Sárdi, PhD
Secretary: Dr. Judit Révész, PhD
Members: Dr. Dorottya Holló, PhD, habil.
Dr. Éva Feketéné Szakos, PhD, habil.
Dr. Zsuzsanna Zsubrinszky, PhD
# Table of Contents

1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 4
2 Aims and Research Questions .................................................................................................................. 5
3 Business English Teacher Competencies ................................................................................................. 5
    3.1 Knowledge of the Business English Teacher .................................................................................. 6
    3.2 Skills of the Business English Teacher ......................................................................................... 9
    3.3 Personality of the Business English Teacher .................................................................................. 10
4 Research Design ........................................................................................................................................ 11
5 Summary of Findings .................................................................................................................................. 13
    5.1 BE Teacher Competencies ............................................................................................................ 13
    5.2 Corporate Requirements Imposed on BE Training Courses ......................................................... 15
    5.3 BE Teachers’ Professional Development ....................................................................................... 15
6 Pedagogical Implications ......................................................................................................................... 16
7 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research .......................................................................... 16
References .................................................................................................................................................... 17
List of Publications ....................................................................................................................................... 21
# 1 Introduction

The increasing importance of the English language in professional contexts gave rise to specialized language training in the form of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programmes and courses worldwide. As several multinational companies penetrated the Hungarian market during the 1990s, the importance of the English language increased substantially. In any field of industry, a business professional applying for a position in a multinational firm had to know at least one foreign language and in most cases, English was a dominant requirement for applicants (Major, 2002).

Since the 1990s, this tendency has grown, and as the use of English for Business Purposes (EBP) or Business English (BE) has become even more frequent and significant in international business, it has become indispensable for business professionals to have a good command of English. It has been very difficult to obtain a senior position without acceptable English language competence, and a high level of proficiency in English is a must for managerial and higher executive positions (Ehrenreich, 2010). Furthermore, not only do employers require a sound knowledge of English, but they also expect their employees to master a high level of BE competence (Noble, 2002).

In the past 25 years these trends have resulted in the increase of in-company BE training courses, which have placed a demand on the English Language Teaching (ELT) market in Hungary. There has been a growing need for BE teachers who are able to accommodate the multinational company culture, to meet the requirements of these organizations and the BE learners, and to deliver specific, tailor-made BE courses for business professionals. ELT teachers faced great challenges; such as to enter a new speciality area of language training, to cope with business situations, written and oral business communication, and to develop a complete new vocabulary set that is heavily used in business contexts.

BE, like any field of ESP is a “strange and uncharted land” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 158) for most language teachers, who often resist pursuing a BE teaching career mainly due to the lack of specialized teacher education or training and the challenging, ever-changing nature of ESP teaching (Belcher, 2006; Carreon, 1996; Chen, 2000; Wu & Badger, 2009). Although recent developments in the field of ESP have led to an increased interest in ESP teacher education and professional development (cf. Belcher, 2006; Bereczky, 2012; Carreon, 1996; Chen, 2000; Hüttner, Smit & Mehlmauer, 2009; Jackson, 1998; Sifakis, 2003; Wu & Badger, 2009), little research has been devoted to the difficulties that BE teachers face in becoming a competent BE teacher. While research findings suggest that BE teachers are required to develop specialized competencies (cf. Bereczky, 2012; Donna, 2000; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Frendo, 2005; Jármai, 2008; Midgley, 2003), no empirical research that I know of has been conducted with the aim of assessing the key BE teacher competencies, as expected by the business community in the multinational corporate environment.

Similarly, in the Hungarian context, previous research studies have been devoted to the language competence requirements of employers and the language skills of business professionals (Feketéné Sílye, 2002; Major, 2002; Noble, 2002; Teemant, Varga & Heltai, 1993), and to exploring the BE teacher identity (Bereczky, 2009). A recent study by Bereczky (2012) conducted in the Hungarian higher education context investigates BE teachers’ perceptions of becoming a BE teacher. Although this study yields some important results regarding BE teacher competencies, they are not examined in the multinational corporate setting. Hence, Hungarian BE teachers’ and BE learners’, i.e., business professionals’ perceptions of BE teacher competencies have not been in the focus of any in-depth study.
This study is intended to contribute to the field by filling in this niche as it may yield significant results for BE teacher education, training and professional development of the BE teacher. The results obtained from this study shall help determine the key competencies that BE teachers should have in order to follow a successful BE teaching career. Furthermore, the significance of this study is to help novice teachers understand and get accustomed to the requirements and expectations set down by multinational corporations in Hungary, and provide practical recommendations on how to become acquainted with the identified BE competencies.

2 Aims and Research Questions

The main aim of the dissertation is to identify and reveal the specialized competencies of BE teachers as seen from three different perspectives: BE teachers, language school management and BE learners at multinational companies (MNCs), i.e., the three key players in the field of BE learning and teaching. The viewpoints of these three groups are particularly important, as they are actively involved in the BE teaching and learning process. Therefore, the study explores

i. the perceptions of BE teachers, language school managers and BE learners regarding the special competencies (knowledge, skills, and personal qualities) needed by teachers working in the field;

ii. the requirements imposed on BE teachers in the Hungarian context by BE learners (i.e., business professionals) at MNCs.

As a further aim of the dissertation, the study is hoped to yield recommendations for BE teachers on how to obtain and improve specialized BE teacher competencies in order to meet the expectations of their working environment (i.e., their learners and the MNCs).

My dissertation research sets out with the aim of finding answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: What specialized competencies (knowledge, skills and personal qualities) are needed for Business English teachers in order to be successful in their Business English teaching career?

RQ2: What requirements do multinational companies operating in Hungary set for Business English teachers working for them?

RQ3: What ways do practising Business English teachers and language school managers see for obtaining and improving the Business English teachers’ competencies in order to meet the expectations of the multinational business community?

3 Business English Teacher Competencies

BE teachers are required to develop specialized competencies in order to be successful in their BE teaching career (cf. Bereczky, 2009; Donna, 2000; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Frendo, 2005; Feketéné Sílye, 2004; Jármai, 2007, 2008; Kurtán, 2001, 2003, 2011; Midgley, 2003). The term competence was first related to vocational qualifications by De Ville (1986), who maintains that competence comprises the notions of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Knowledge denotes all the facts, information acquired through education, learning and experience, while skills include the practical
abilities that are needed to perform a specific task or job (Hardi, 2011). Attitudes, however, refer to the personal characteristics, such as creativity, self-confidence, flexibility, openness, sense of humour etc., which enable people to meet the day-to-day challenges of work and be successful in their career.

De Vile’s (1986) conceptualizations of competence can also be applied to BE teaching contexts. BE teachers need to acquire a specific set of competencies including knowledge, skills and personality traits in order to become competent, hence successful BE teaching professionals. As competence is made up of acquired and innate components, it is vital for BE teachers to understand which teacher competencies can be developed and improved through formal teacher training or self-study, and which personal qualities have to be reinforced or suppressed.

3.1 Knowledge of the Business English Teacher

One approach to the classification of teacher knowledge is to draw a distinction between content knowledge and procedural knowledge (Woods, 1996). In the case of general English (GE) teaching contexts, English language teachers’ content knowledge refers to the teacher’s knowledge of the English language, which includes the following four aspects: (1) English language proficiency; (2) analytical knowledge of English (phonology, grammar, syntax, lexis, pragmatics, etc.); (3) the teachers’ knowledge and experience of learning English; and (4) the knowledge of a second language and second language use (Ellis, 2006). In the case of BE contexts, further three dimensions may be added to the teachers’ content knowledge: (5) English business discourse and genre conventions; (6) business terminology; (7) business background knowledge.

Similarly to GE teachers, BE teachers should have a high level of proficiency in English, in-depth analytical knowledge of English, and thorough knowledge of applied linguistics and ELT methodology (Kurtán, 2011; Littlewood, 2014; Medgyes, 1997), the latter accounting for the procedural knowledge of language teachers. Non-native speaker (NNS) teachers of BE can also benefit from their L2 learning experience. Furthermore, the need for a firm grasp of English business discourse and genre conventions as well as business terminology cannot be questioned in the case of BE teachers.

However, many practising ESP teachers and researchers have reported cases where the teachers could not answer students’ content or topic-related questions due to their unfamiliarity with the subject matter, professional genre and discourse conventions (Almagro Esteban & Pérez Cañado, 2004; Belcher, 2006; Carreon, 1996; Chen, 2000; Hüttn er et al., 2009; Wu & Badger, 2009). Consequently, a key question widely discussed by BE experts and teachers is whether BE teachers should know anything about the world of business or not. Provided that some sort of business knowledge is required, the question is: what depth of business knowledge is necessary and how can BE teachers acquire this expertise?

There seems to be a consensus among authors (Almagro Esteban & Pérez Cañado, 2004; Belcher, 2006; Donna, 2000; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Frendo, 2005; Jármáí, 2008; Harding, 2007; Kurtán, 2001, 2003) in that BE teachers are not business professionals and they do not need to be. Most BE teachers have a general language teaching background and do not have hands-on experience in any field of business. Seldom have teachers actually studied business disciplines or had a business career. Therefore, BE authors share the view that BE teachers do not have to be experts in any particular area of business. Unlike in GE teaching scenarios, where the teacher knows much more about the subject he or she is teaching, in BE training “the teacher is not in the position of being the ‘primary knower’ of the carrier content of the material” (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 13). Due to the fact that BE learners often know more about the
business they are working in (e.g. business organizations, policies, functions, processes, products, markets, competitors, partners), BE teachers are required to work in partnership with the students (Gnutzmann, 2009).

In fact, Frendo (2005) calls it a *symbiotic relationship* between the teacher and the learner, where the teacher has the knowledge about language and communication, while the learners know more about the subject area. This partnership between the BE teacher and learner assumes a completely different attitude towards BE teaching, which has to be accepted by both parties. Bell (2002) also maintains that the relationship between BE teacher and learners needs to be equally balanced and both parties should have respect for the other: the trainers for their mastery of the language, and the learners for their business expertise. In these situations, teachers and learners rely on each other’s knowledge in order to get the most out of their language training.

Conversely, some insight into business can be an advantage for anyone attempting to teach BE (Gnutzmann, 2009). According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 70) what BE teachers need is “to understand the interface between business principles and language”. Gnutzmann maintains that ESP teachers should be “located somewhere between a foreign language teacher and a subject specialist” (Gnutzmann, 2009, p. 351). However, he adds that an ESP teacher is “more of a language teacher than a subject specialist” (Gnutzmann, 2009, p. 351). This remark can also be underlined by the fact that most ESP teachers are trained to be GE teachers and later step into the path of becoming specialist language teachers (Gnutzmann, 2009).

Orientation in the business environment is a challenging demand for teachers who have never been trained in business studies or in teaching BE. Although it is assumed that teachers do not need to acquire any substantial knowledge of business, they may need to have the following three abilities in order to “ask intelligent questions”: “a positive attitude towards the ESP content; knowledge of the fundamental principles of the subject area; and awareness of how much they probably already know” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 163).

As Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 163) argue, “the ESP teacher should not become a teacher of the subject matter, but rather an interested student of the subject matter”. They claim that meaningful communication is an integral part of BE training, which cannot be achieved without the teacher’s interest and some knowledge of the subject itself. Ellis and Johnson (1994) also place emphasis on the importance of effective business communication in the BE classroom, which they believe is easier for the BE teacher if they have a good understanding of business.

As a matter of fact, learners of ESP are bound to find learning more motivating from a teacher who is familiar with basic concepts and principles of the given discipline (Almagro Esteban & Pérez Cañado, 2004; Carreon, 1996; Chen, 2000). Consequently, it can be understood why Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) and Gnutzmann (2009) make greater demands on ESP and BE teachers proposing that EBP practitioners should acquire knowledge and understanding in the following areas shown in Table 1.
Table 1
Knowledge of the BE Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EBP teacher’s knowledge</th>
<th>ESP teacher’s knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Dudley-Evans &amp; St John, 1998, pp. 60-61)</td>
<td>(Gnutzmann, 2009, pp. 531-532)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. A knowledge of the communicative functioning of English in business contexts</td>
<td>1. Very high proficiency in the target language, on the level of general but also special uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. An understanding of the business people’s expectations and learning strategies</td>
<td>2. Theoretical and descriptive knowledge of LSP(^1) pertaining in particular to terminology, syntax, pragmatics as well as intercultural differences in the discourse structure of genres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. An understanding of the psychology of personal and interpersonal interactions in cross-cultural settings</td>
<td>3. Subject knowledge (at least of a basic nature) of the academic discipline(s) whose special languages she/he teaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Some knowledge of management theories and practice</td>
<td>4. Ability to select and prepare LSP material in consideration of the requirements and aims of a particular class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. First-class training skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Based on Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), Gnutzmann (2009).

Both Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) and Gnutzmann (2009) recognize the importance of the teachers’ language proficiency in general and specific contexts. Similarly, both authors emphasise that BE teachers should have some subject knowledge of the discipline or business area they teach, an understanding of intercultural business communication, and that of the learners’ requirements. Furthermore, Gnutzmann (2009) lays special emphasis on knowledge of the particular ESP terminology, syntax, pragmatics, and discourse genres. Table 2 contains the compiled list of ESP teacher knowledge based on the above-discussed two sources.

Table 2
Compiled List of BE Teacher’s Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BE teacher’s knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. High proficiency of BE and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Knowledge of BE terminology, syntax, pragmatics, and English business discourse genres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Understanding of intercultural business communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Basic subject knowledge (both theory and practice) of the business area or discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. First-class training skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Understanding of the BE learners’ pedagogical needs, training requirements and their learning strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ability to select and prepare BE materials in line with the course objectives and requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Based on Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), Gnutzmann (2009).

Acquiring such knowledge, skills and understanding is a challenging task for many teachers. It seems apparent that teaching BE places extra requirements on BE practitioners, which may only be fulfilled by continuous professional development using techniques and methods that are best-suited for the individual BE teacher.

---

\(^1\) Gnutzmann (2009) uses LSP (Languages for Specific Purposes) as an alternative acronym for ESP.
3.2 Skills of the Business English Teacher

BE teachers should develop special skills, which may be as significant as the business knowledge in BE teaching contexts. As discussed previously, BE teachers should show an interest in economics, management and business issues and should be willing to learn about the particular industry as well as the everyday professional activities of the BE learners (Bell, 2002; Bereczky, 2012; Donna, 2000; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Frendo, 2005; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Kurtán, 2001, 2003). Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 17) claim that BE, being part of ESP, is a “multi-disciplinary activity” and as such challenges BE trainers to be ready to get involved in other disciplines through teaching. Not only should BE teachers be open to business topics and other disciplines, but they need to be able to do so continuously day by day, as they train business professionals from various companies in different industries, performing a wide range of activities. This requires important skills, namely “the ability to adapt to a particular teaching context” (Frendo, 2005, p. 5) and the ability to change from one context to another. Jackson (1998) and Jármai (2008) also emphasize the importance of adaptability, creativity and resourcefulness, which seem to be some of the key skills of the BE teacher.

Readiness to change is another key skill that BE teachers should possess (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Jackson, 1998). Any time during a lesson or a course, changes may arise that can affect the training process, learning goals, teaching methods, topics, activities, materials or scheduling of the course. BE teachers need to be ready to respond to these changes quickly and effectively. This frequently involves on-the-spot decisions, which may require that teachers be flexible and take some risks in their teaching.

The next skill that BE teachers should have is that of “being a good negotiator” (Ellis & Johnson, 1994, p. 27). It is referred to the ability to negotiate and come to an agreement with the learners on the teaching-learning principles, to establish the ground rules to be followed in the classroom. The acceptance of these terms by both parties is a guarantee of success.

BE teachers should be fully aware of cultural differences in the world of business, in other words they should build up cultural awareness. Cultural differences and cross-cultural business communication may be sensitive issues and exert an influence over BE training. Teachers should take a delicate approach when experiencing cultural differences (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) and consider these differences when planning the course syllabus, selecting materials and organising classroom activities.

Relatively few research studies (Bereczky, 2012; Hughes, 2005; Jackson, 1998; Jármai, 2007, 2008) seem to mention general business skills that teachers within the business world cannot avoid acquiring. The term soft skills is frequently used in business for the abilities that people need in order to communicate and work well with other people (Oxford Business English Dictionary, 2005), and in the case of managers, to manage people tactfully. Group facilitation, team-building, problem-solving, motivation, communication skills, meeting and negotiation skills, presentation and speaking skills, management and leadership skills, time and task management are some of the many soft skills applied in business contexts.

As BE teachers work with business professionals who are often masters of the above listed skills and abilities, BE teachers are advised to study these soft skills thoroughly. Not only should BE teachers know about these soft skills, but it may also be useful for them to apply some of their elements in the BE classroom (e.g. manage groups, activities, time; build teams; motivate students), and eventually be able to perform some of these skills themselves (e.g. giving presentations, negotiating) (Bereczky, 2012; Hughes, 2005). Furthermore, BE teachers need to train learners on how to cope with business situations in English. For this
reason, BE teachers who acquire some knowledge of general business skills will be at an advantage.

Computer skills have undoubtedly become an integral part of BE teaching. As large corporations and multinational companies tend to use state-of-the-art technologies in the workplace, business professionals expect BE practitioners to utilise such technologies in the BE classroom. Being up-to-date with the latest developments in Information and Computer Technology (ICT) and using interactive resources, internet and mobile applications and devices designed for English language teaching and learning give the BE teacher a great advantage (Hughes, 2005).

3.3 Personality of the Business English Teacher

Every teacher has their own personality and it is rather difficult to provide a definite description of the ideal BE teacher. Although individual differences of BE teachers cannot be overlooked, this section attempts to reveal that some significant personality traits may be beneficial for the BE practitioner for pursuing a successful BE teaching career.

Authors (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) seem to agree that BE practitioners need to be outgoing, open-minded, curious and genuinely interested in business issues. Furthermore, BE teachers should be tactful, sensitive to the learners’ needs and be willing to listen to the learners. As personal contact is of considerable importance in the case of a one-to-one situation and in small groups, BE teachers are expected to have excellent communication skills, be capable of building a good rapport with the learners and like working with people (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Ellis & Johnson, 1994). Ellis and Johnson (1998, p. 27) also point out that it is “invaluable (for teachers) to have a sense of humour, but it is also vital that the trainer should be seen to be taking the course seriously.” Furthermore, entertainment and playfulness in the classroom may compensate for high demands of the learners. As Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 167) explained it: “making the methodology more interactive and enjoyable can be a valuable weapon in countering demands for subject-specific ESP”.

BE teachers have to demonstrate their professionalism themselves, for instance, by being reliable and showing their accountability. Donna (2000, pp. 318-319) suggests that BE teachers should “provide a course outline or copies of syllabuses”, “inform all parties about changes”, “keep channels of communication open on a day-to-day basis”. The latter point is particularly relevant as learners appreciate if BE teachers can easily be contacted and addressed with questions and problems at all times.

On the other hand, BE teachers tend to be shy and modest, and lack experience in using marketing and sales techniques so familiar to their clients (Oliver, 2004). BE teachers ought to feel more confident about themselves and their abilities; i.e., personal and professional experience, personal qualities, knowledge, attitudes, and interests. In fact, teachers should not show embarrassment that is a proof of their incompetence and “makes them unfit for their role” (Medgyes, 2000, p. 16). Rather, BE teachers should rely on their self-confidence, take up a business-like attitude and must be able to promote and sell their services to their clients on a daily basis (Oliver, 2004).

Midgley (2003, p. 2) seems to be of the same view when he argues that BE trainers should “go out and sell … (their) skills more actively”. He maintains that BE professionals should shift their focus from “learning English in order to do better business” to “learning to do better business, in English” (2003, p. 3). The author also admits that this would require a great amount of management training skills, sound business knowledge and experience, which is unlikely to be gained without management and business education and relevant work experience. This idea may sound a little far-fetched, but it is not beyond the bounds of
possibility for specialized and devoted practitioners of BE. All in all, “teachers are expected to develop a professional self-image as ESP teachers” (Hüttner et al., 2009, p. 104).

4 Research Design

This research follows a mixed-method research paradigm, combining qualitative and quantitative data in a single study (e.g. Creswell, 2009; Dörnyei, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Litosseliti, 2010; McDonough & McDonough, 1997; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003). As various groups of people play an important role in in-company BE teaching, it seemed to be indispensable to collect data from all the parties involved in order to provide a wider perspective on the subject. As shown in Figure 1, the following four groups of stakeholders were identified who take part in the planning, execution and evaluation of BE courses: BE teachers, private language school managers, business professionals and MNC managers as BE learners.

Figure 1. Involved players of in-company language training

In order to investigate BE teachers’ and language school representatives’ perceptions, personal opinion and experiences, the qualitative data collection procedure seemed to be adequate. On the other hand, the study also aimed to collect quantitative statistical data on the requirements that BE learners set towards BE teachers, so that findings can be generalized to the multinational business community in Hungary. Therefore, in the case of BE learners, the quantitative data collection procedure was followed.

Consequently, this research project includes both a qualitative and a quantitative strand and comprises three phases. The qualitative approach was applied through in-depth personal interviews with BE teachers in Phase 1, and with language school management in Phase 2. In Phase 3, by selecting the quantitative research approach, a questionnaire survey was conducted with BE learners, i.e. business professionals and managers of MNCs. The outline of the three phases can be found in Table 3.
Table 3

**Phases of the Research Project**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project phases</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Research method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Interview study with BE teachers</td>
<td>Qualitative (QUAL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Interview study with language school managers</td>
<td>Qualitative (QUAL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>Questionnaire study with BE learners</td>
<td>Quantitative (QUAN)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All three phases of the research project were piloted before the main studies could occur in order to verify whether the instruments, the procedures of data collection and analysis worked properly, meeting the pre-set goals of the research (Dörnyei, 2010). In Phases 1 and 2, trial interviews were conducted with BE teachers and language school managers, while in Phase 3 a trial run of the questionnaire was performed on a sample of BE learners in order to collect feedback and pinpoint potential problems that might hinder the success of the research. The conducted pilot studies were also seen as feasibility studies in order to determine that the whole study can be successfully accomplished (Given, 2008). Table 4 provides a summary of the relationship of data collection and analysis to the research questions indicating the various phases of the project.

Table 4

**The Relationship of Data Collection and Analysis to the Research Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Project phases</th>
<th>Research paradigm</th>
<th>Data collection</th>
<th>Data analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ1:</strong> What specialized competencies (knowledge, skills and personal qualities) are needed for Business English teachers in order to be successful in their Business English teaching career?</td>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>QUAL</td>
<td>Interview study Business English teachers Pilot study N = 2 Main study N = 6</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>QUAL</td>
<td>Interview study Language school management Pilot study N = 2 Main study N = 2</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>QUAN</td>
<td>Questionnaire study Business English learners Pilot study N = 87 Main study N = 203</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ2:</strong> What requirements do multinational companies operating in Hungary set for Business English teachers working for them?</td>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>QUAL</td>
<td>Interview study Business English teachers Pilot study N = 2 Main study N = 6</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>QUAL</td>
<td>Interview study Language school management Pilot study N = 2 Main study N = 2</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>QUAN</td>
<td>Questionnaire study Business English learners Pilot study N = 87 Main study N = 203</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ3:</strong> What ways do practising Business English teachers and language school managers see for obtaining and improving Business English teachers’ competencies in order to meet the expectations of the multinational business community?</td>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>QUAL</td>
<td>Interview study Business English teachers Pilot study N = 2 Main study N = 6</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>QUAL</td>
<td>Interview study Language school management Pilot study N = 2 Main study N = 2</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As regards the procedures of qualitative data collection and analysis, Kvale’s (1996) seven stages of interview research were followed. The interviews were digitally recorded with the consent of the interviewees and the recordings were transcribed following the transcription conventions put forward by Mackey and Gass (2005). The transcripts were analysed applying the constant comparative method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). To increase the trustworthiness of data collection and analysis, thus of the overall research study, the concept of Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) taxonomy of quality criteria was followed. In order to ensure greater credibility and transferability of the study, a rich description of the research process and the findings were prepared in order to “make the research process transparent to the reader” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 146). Furthermore, peer debriefing and member checking were carried out to ensure that findings are dependable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As regards the procedures of quantitative data collection and analysis, an expert consultation was carried out to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire. Prior to administration, the instrument was tested for response validity by conducting think-aloud protocols with two business professionals. Data management and analysis were performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 17.0 for Windows in consultation with statistical handbooks (e.g. Cohen & Lea, 2004; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Larson-Hall, 2010; Litosseliti, 2010; Mackey & Gass, 2005; Ruane, 2005; Salkind, 2007). In order to determine the reliability of the questionnaires the Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficients were computed.

Following the Concurrent Triangulation Strategy approach of mixed-method research (Creswell, 2009), the three phases of the research project were implemented in overlapping stages and were considered separate, standalone studies where the results did not influence the implementation of the following phases. The integration of the results obtained from the qualitative and quantitative phases occurred at the final stage of interpretation.

5 Summary of Findings

5.1 BE Teacher Competencies

The findings of this study allow the research to conclude with the assertion that high expectations of the business community drive the necessary BE teacher competencies that make BE teachers successful in in-company BE teaching. Thus, BE teachers need to acquire special knowledge, skills and adopt personality traits in order to become competent in the field. Results obtained from the study indicate that language teaching competence, skills and certain personal qualities are the most important attributes of the BE teacher. The fact that most of the in-company BE courses tend to be tailor-made to meet the specific needs of the BE learners suggests that the business community expects BE teachers to gain some knowledge of essential business terminology, functions and processes. However, evidence found in this study implies that business competence is the least required attribute of the BE teacher.

As regards the BE teachers’ language teaching competence, this study shows that all key players of in-company BE teaching attach great importance to the teachers’ English language proficiency including an in-depth analytical knowledge of English, the latest developments and variations of language use, as well as the discourse conventions of BE as a lingua franca use in international business contexts. Findings reveal that the central importance of ELT qualification with ESP/BE specialization cannot be questioned. Furthermore, the interview studies show that gaining hands-on experience in BE teaching...
contributes substantially to the development of BE teacher competencies, the increase of teachers’ self-confidence and to the ability to face the challenges of BE teaching. Less experienced teachers tend to be shy and inhibited, which has a detrimental effect on the effectiveness and performance of their BE teaching. Similarly to the BE teaching experience, the interviewees attached a considerable significance to the selection and application of the appropriate methodological approach in BE teaching. Assessing the learners’ needs, designing tailor-made courses and materials, building on the teacher–learner collaboration and partnership, and achieving the pre-set objectives of the BE course are the key constituents of the BE teacher professionalism.

BE teachers’ business competence comprise the notions of business content knowledge, understanding of the business environment and MNC culture, degree in business studies, work experience in business. The analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data reveal that business competence is considered significantly less important than other attributes of the BE teacher. Despite its lowest ranking, the results of quantitative studies indicate that its contribution to BE teacher professionalism should not be undervalued. Therefore, competent BE teachers need to possess some knowledge of essential business processes and functions in order to provide high quality BE teaching. An interesting finding of the qualitative interview studies is that acquiring a deeper content knowledge actually increases the level of BE teachers’ self-confidence, thus it contributes indirectly to the success of the BE teacher. Understanding the business environment and awareness of MNC culture are among the BE teacher attributes that are of lower importance according to the business professionals participating in the study. However, BE teachers were of the opinion that the business environment has major implications for BE teaching. As a result, the study concludes that BE teachers should familiarize themselves with the business environment and corporate culture, gain a benefit from becoming an insider within the company, as well as the communities of practice of the BE learners. This study also reveals that the business community does not require the BE teacher to hold a degree in business studies or have previous work experience in business. Nevertheless, obtaining a business qualification and/or gaining hands-on work experience in business accelerate the professional development of the BE teacher and contributes significantly to the increased teaching performance and self-confidence of the BE teacher.

Results of all phases of the research study confirm the primary importance of BE teacher skills. Acquiring business communication skills, e.g. presentation skills, negotiation skills, business writing skills, socializing, etc., seems to be vital for the BE teacher for two reasons. First, the BE learners need to use these skills on a daily basis for their business activities and they tend to be familiar with these skills in their own mother tongue. Secondly, one of the key tasks of the BE teacher is to develop the learners’ business communication skills in English. The results of this study show that the BE teacher should have excellent communication skills, which proves to be the most important attribute of the competent BE teacher according to the participants of the study. The findings also shed light on the importance of the BE teacher’s interpersonal skills, which seems to be indispensable for establishing an excellent rapport between teacher and learners. Creativity, resourcefulness, conflict resolution, problem-solving, organizational and time management skills, active listening and IT skills are among the necessary aspects of BE teacher competencies.

The primary importance of BE teachers’ positive personal qualities is recognized by this study. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis reveal that reliability is the most required personal quality of the BE teacher. Furthermore, BE teachers’ credibility, punctuality, positive attitude are also considered of paramount importance according to the participants of the study. Friendliness, openness, flexibility, good sense of humour are among the required attributes of the BE teacher. This study yields interesting results regarding the teacher’s lack
of self-confidence, as the findings shed light on the detrimental effect of insufficient self-confidence on the performance of BE teachers in the classroom, hence the professional success or failure in BE teaching. Among the personality traits of the BE teacher, business-like attitude and business-like appearance of the BE teacher were granted the lowest ratings, implying that the business professionals participating in the study do not consider these aspects of the BE teacher necessary. Despite its lowest ratings, the BE teaching professionals were of the opinion that BE teachers are service providers, therefore, it is necessary for the competent BE teacher to adopt a business-like attitude in their teaching process. According to the interviewees of this study, compliance with the dress code and the code of conduct issued by the company is part of the BE teacher’s professionalism.

5.2 Corporate Requirements Imposed on BE Training Courses

Being a competent BE teacher means providing a high-quality teaching service for the companies and their employees, hence the BE teacher has to focus on customer satisfaction. In this respect, the requirements of the corporate management and the BE learners surveyed are of considerable significance in the BE teaching process. The findings of both qualitative and quantitative studies reveal that the good BE teacher aims to comply with the requirements of their clients, i.e. corporate management and BE learners. The goal-oriented and result-oriented nature of teaching BE requires teachers to face the task of using methods that maximise performance and satisfy the immediate needs of the BE learners in every lesson.

The quantitative study of Phase 3 aimed to investigate how often the business professionals use English language for their work and what the most frequently used activities are. Results show that the respondents do not use the English language frequently for their daily tasks and activities. Statistical analysis of the questionnaire data indicates a significant difference in language use between the business professionals in the various positions. The findings confirmed that people in senior or top managerial positions tend to use BE more for their work-related activities than business professionals in lower positions do. The ranking of the business activities demonstrate that the most frequently used activities are related to passive activities involving reading or writing skills. BE is also used more in making phone calls and participating in business meetings. The lowest-ranking items are related to business traveling, giving presentations, attending conferences and working abroad. Consequently, this study yields considerable results in terms of business professionals’ language use. While research conducted around the Millennium showed that business professionals tend to use English more for speaking activities (Major, 2002), the results of this study shed light on the shift of emphasis from oral communication to written business communication. Another interesting outcome of this study is that a statistically significant difference exists between the frequency of non-native speaker (NNS) and native speaker (NS) communication. Results indicate that this sample of businesspeople engage in business communication more with NNS than with NS.

5.3 BE Teachers’ Professional Development

The BE teachers’ professional development is discussed along two main lines: i.e. BE teacher training and BE teacher self-development. Contradicting opinions were observed among the BE teachers about their own professional development. Conclusions are drawn that teachers with higher levels of business competence consider their own professional development as a great challenge, while teachers with less teaching or business experience
regard it as a heavy burden. The study allows for the conclusion that without having a positive attitude to life-long learning BE teachers are unlikely to succeed in BE teaching.

The definite advantage of BE teacher training lies in its positive influence on boosting teachers’ self-confidence and self-esteem. Having concluded that self-confidence is a key constituent of BE teacher professionalism, the importance of BE teacher training should be widely recognized. Results of the interview studies imply that most teachers resort to various forms of self-development when they need to develop their BE teacher competencies. The interviewees agreed that the most effective way of acquiring business content knowledge is learning from the BE learners themselves. In the case of competence related to BE teaching methodology and practice, gaining hands-on experience in BE teaching is deemed viable.

6 Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the present study have important pedagogical implications for BE teachers, BE teacher trainers and language schools running in-company BE courses. During the preparation, planning and design of BE courses, BE teaching professionals should place emphasis on carefully mapping the exact requirements, expectations and needs of the learners. This is particularly vital as the success of the BE teacher depends greatly on how well they are able to fulfil the requirements of the business community and meet the needs of the BE learners. In line with current trends in the nature of business communication and language use, the BE course curriculum should be geared to effective written business communication rather than oral communication practice. Perhaps the analysis and application of written business discourse genres could be an integral part of any BE teacher training or self-development initiative.

As a broad spectrum of competencies are expected from BE teachers, BE teachers should build on their general ELT competencies and develop specialized BE competencies with a focus on skills and personality traits that are required the most by the business community. Providing high-quality teaching service to the learners requires a certain attitude of the BE teacher. A shift in emphasis from business content knowledge to skills and attitudes should be an integral part of BE teacher education and self-training. Thus, BE teachers should develop skills and personality traits well-suited to the learners’ expectations and the business environment.

As results show, excellent communication skills, interpersonal skills, presentation skills, creativity as well as reliability, positive attitude, friendliness, flexibility and self-confidence seem to play a key role in BE teacher professionalism. Therefore, it might be advisable to include a training module on the BE teacher’s personality development, which would enable teachers to internalize and strengthen these personality traits in order to cope with the challenges of teaching BE efficiently. Furthermore, the findings of this study might help in the selection process of BE teachers at private language schools, applying the teachers’ language proficiency, skills and personality traits as the main criteria of selection.

7 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations and deficiencies of the present study. Firstly, some limitations of the sampling procedures need to be acknowledged. In Phases 1 and 2, the participants were selected deliberately by the researcher based on their availability.
and according to the objectives of the research. While a careful selection process was aimed at, participants beyond the reach of the researcher could not be considered. In the quantitative study of Phase 3, the controlled selection method of stratified sampling was opted for. Although a wide distribution of business professionals and companies were included in the survey, the respondents were targeted in terms of their availability and accessibility. Therefore, conclusions must be examined with caution and generalizations should not be made to the entire business population of Hungary. Secondly, the study had to be limited on geographical location due to time and distance constraints. Although some BE teachers and learners were located in the countryside, the majority of the participants were based in Budapest and the vicinity of the capital city. Therefore, the participants of the present study do not show a nationwide representation.

Further research, both qualitative and quantitative, could be carried out to investigate the opinions and views of the BE teachers on their self-confidence and its positive effect on their BE teaching, hence the role self-confidence plays in BE teacher professionalism. Similarly, an in-depth exploration of the BE learner – teacher relationship and its significant influence on effective BE teaching and learning might yield interesting results. It may also be fruitful to conduct a longitudinal case study to provide a detailed account of the professional development of a novice teacher in the course of becoming an experienced BE teacher.

Furthermore, it may be interesting to conduct a similar survey among companies in selected industry sectors, and confirm whether results show any correspondence or not regarding each industry. Another interesting area for future research could be the analysis of the exact needs of business professionals working in selected positions, e.g. marketing or sales staff, hence the results obtained from such a study would yield relevant information on their specific language needs.

Despite the limitations, the study accomplished its outlined aims and objectives. Having analysed all the requirements, identified the key BE competencies and provided a set of recommendations for BE teachers, we can state that all the research questions of the present dissertation were answered. This doctoral dissertation was written with the intention of presenting a unique study of business requirements and BE teacher competencies through combining the researcher’s experience as a BE teacher with the eye of the business professional. The experience gained from this study shall guide the researcher in her further research activities and BE teaching practice towards a high level of customer service.

References


List of Publications


