



Languages for Special Purposes in a Multilingual, Transcultural World

Proceedings of the 19th European Symposium on Languages for Special Purposes, 8-10 July 2013, Vienna, Austria

<http://lsp2013.univie.ac.at/proceedings>

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Cite as: Walczyński, M. (2014). When reality forces practicality: Developing business English into a new field of B.A. studies within the Polish tertiary education system. In G. Budin & V. Lušický (eds.), *Languages for Special Purposes in a Multilingual, Transcultural World, Proceedings of the 19th European Symposium on Languages for Special Purposes, 8-10 July 2013, Vienna, Austria*. Vienna: University of Vienna, 165-175.

Publication date: July 2014

ISBN: 978-3-200-03674-1

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When reality forces practicality: Developing business English into a new field of B.A. studies within the Polish tertiary education system¹

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Abstract. The article presents a new development within the Polish system of tertiary education concerning language studies. Due to the growing demand of the labour market for higher education graduates who could combine perfect language skills, including specialised variety skills, with expertise in business, more and more Polish higher education schools are opening studies in specialised languages, especially in business English. One of such schools – the State School of Higher Vocational Education in Nysa and the B.A. programme in business English constitute the topic of this paper. The article starts with some general deliberations on language studies in Poland. Then, the studies in specialised languages are discussed. The core part of this paper is the section on business English studies, their curriculum and its modification as well as the opinions on them expressed by students and graduates. Generally speaking, the paper is an attempt at presenting that reality has forced the practicality of tertiary education and that more professional practice-oriented language studies may soon replace traditional philological studies which emphasise mostly the theoretical aspects of language, paying at the same time little attention to language applications.

Keywords. ESP, business English, higher studies in ESP, curriculum development.

1. Introduction

The objective of this paper is to present a new solution in the higher education market in Poland concerning modern studies in foreign languages which differ from the traditionally understood philological studies (*i.e.* studies with a strong focus on theoretical issues related to literary and cultural studies and linguistics) in that they provide students with more practical skills, competences and knowledge relevant to the current trends in the labour market. Being one of the member states of the European Union, Poland has recently been faced with the new requirements imposed on its labour market and the labour force. In an attempt to meet those requirements, more and more higher education institutions redevelop their study programmes in order to prepare their students to the more and more demanding conditions of the labour market and one of such programmes – B.A. studies in business English – is presented in this paper.

The paper is divided into three major parts. The first section deals with the Polish higher education system and the place of language studies – in its different paradigms – within this system. Following this, the main assumptions behind opening such studies are discussed. This is done on the example of B.A. studies in business English offered in one of Polish higher schools. Moreover, attention is also directed to the curriculum and learning outcomes of the programme under discussion. The curriculum is composed of five major cores which are discussed in greater detail in the paper. Another part of the article presents the results of a survey whose aim was to assess students' and graduates' motivation to take up the studies in question and their satisfaction with them. The last part addresses the issues of modifications and improvements of the curriculum which may be considered tangible proof of the fact that the school makes every effort to offer labour market-oriented higher studies so that its graduates can easily find employment in Poland or abroad.

Generally speaking, the article sheds light on how English for Special Purposes, in this particular case – business English – has been turned into a field of higher studies within the frameworks of Polish as well as European Union system of tertiary education.

2. Language studies in Poland

Higher studies in modern foreign languages has always attracted numerous graduates of secondary schools. It was believed that the mere profound command of a foreign language can lead to an interesting and well-paid career path and prosperous life. However, the recent changes observed in the Polish labour market allow to state that although the proficiency in a foreign language is still highly valued, it is no longer a major factor taken into consideration in the recruitment process. Along with Poland's accession to the European Union, with vanishing borders between countries and virtually unrestricted access to all cultures thanks to the snowballing processes of globalisation in nearly all spheres of human activity, the knowledge of foreign languages is viewed as a must, as a precondition of applying for any employment. Hence, it would be no exaggeration to claim that apart from an advanced command of a foreign language, employers expect their employees to have a specialised knowledge and competence in the area they run their businesses in. However, many programmes of language studies offer no practical preparation for the labour market, paying little (if any) attention to developing students' skills in other than theoretical linguistic and literary fields.

2.1. Types of higher education in foreign languages in Poland

The recent two decades have witnessed a genuine boom in the development of Polish higher institutions. Next to state universities, a number of privately-owned higher schools and colleges were established and many of them offer language studies.

Language studies are in the study programme catalogues of nearly all types of state-owned tertiary education institutions. Virtually all Polish universities have departments and study programmes of foreign languages (only the University of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in Warsaw does not offer study programmes of modern foreign languages). They are entitled to award their graduates with all types of degrees, ranging from B.A. through M.A. to Ph.D. Apart from universities, Polish technical universities and academies of many types offer education in foreign languages as fields of study at B.A., M.A. and sometimes also Ph.D. levels. In 1997, pursuant to the Higher Vocational School Act of 26 June 1997, the state higher vocational schools (sometimes referred to as universities of applied sciences) were established. Many of them were formed through the merger of foreign language teacher training colleges with off-campus branches and faculties of universities and technical universities. Some of them, however, were newly established institutions with no history of tertiary education. Such schools are also entitled to run B.A. studies in foreign languages and many in fact do so. There is also one more sector of state-owned tertiary education which is involved in the studies of foreign languages. There are foreign language teacher training colleges. However, in 2015 they cease to exist and therefore some of them have already been wound up, some have been made parts of other higher schools while still some educate the second- and third-year students and after they graduate, those colleges will no longer recruit new students.

Another sector of higher education in Poland which is related to foreign language education encompasses a large number of non-state tertiary education institutions, among which there are profiled university-like higher schools, technical colleges, management and business higher schools *etc.* Some of them have obtained the right to run language studies leading to a B.A. degree. Only a few can confer M.A. degrees in language studies and even fewer – Ph.D. degrees in linguistics.

From the above sketch, one interesting conclusion can be drawn. Due to the fact that modern language studies were very popular, ranking among top twenty most popular study programmes

in Poland in the past two decades (assessed on the basis of the number of applicants to departments of foreign languages), many higher schools seem to have seen it profitable to offer such studies. This is especially true of privately owned higher schools which – in many cases – admitted students with no prior or very rudimentary command of a foreign language. Of course, this fact can be partially justified in the case of rare and oriental languages such as Danish, Norwegian, Chinese or Japanese because it is quite difficult to learn such a language in a Polish secondary school. However, admitting students who could not express themselves in English or German to the department of English or German seems to have contributed to the deteriorating quality of education in such tertiary education institutions.

2.2. Paradigms of language studies in Poland

By and large, the studies of foreign languages in Poland are pursued within two broad paradigms. The first paradigm is the “traditional philology” paradigm. At this point, a brief remark should be made on the notion of philology. This term is often associated with historical linguistics and the study of old texts and cultures as well as a comparative analysis of language development phases (Malmkjær 1995/2006). However, in Central and Eastern European academic circles, the studies of modern languages, literatures and cultures have come to be known as philologies, which is well evidenced by a collection of names for the departments of modern languages (e.g. “Institute of Slavic Philology”, “Department of English Philology”, “Institute of German Philology”) while these philology-related names in fact denote the studies in the linguistics, literature(s) and culture(s) of modern languages. Most of these philological studies, however, concentrate on theoretical and academic aspects and for this reason the name of this paradigm rightly suggests that it is more theoretical in nature. The umbrella term “philological paradigm” covers all those departments of studies of foreign languages (e.g. English philology, German philology, Spanish philology, Russian philology) which offer their students only a limited number of professional specialisation options. Most of them offer academic specialisations, with no (or very limited) focus on language applications, such as linguistics, literature and cultural studies. Some, however, are more labour market-oriented and educate their students mainly in two professional specialisations which are commonly associated with the work in foreign languages: language teaching or translation. This does not mean that they become more practical than theoretical as still theory seems to prevail in the curricula. However, at present a significant shift in orientation can be observed in the “traditional philology” paradigm studies as new specialisations in language applications are offered to students. B.A. studies in business English, to which the next sections of this paper are devoted, are a good case in point.

The graduates of traditional philologies seem to find themselves in quite a difficult situation as more and more of them find it hard to find profitable employment due to their lack of non-linguistic skills and unsuitability of their knowledge to the real needs of employers. The demand for language teachers or translation theoreticians is relatively small. Moreover, in Poland there are hardly any job opportunities for linguists and literature specialists.

Another paradigm of language studies is the “applied linguistics” paradigm. This paradigm encompasses all those programmes of tertiary education which focus more on professional skills and qualifications developed as an outcome of pursuing studies in one of the professional specialisations such as language teaching, translation, interpreting or languages for special purposes and their translation. In other words, such studies offer their students the possibility of becoming familiarised with the applications of a foreign language in such areas as technology, education or business.

Unlike the graduates of traditional theory-oriented philologies, the graduates of applied linguistics are in a better situation in the labour market as there is increasingly greater demand for graduates with perfect language skills combined with expertise in economics/business/IT *etc.* Equally great demand is for translators/interpreters with some background in non-linguistic fields (economics/finance/IT/ medicine *etc.*). The new, more competitive conditions

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of the Polish labour market, the opening of borders and giving Polish citizens the opportunity for working abroad have contributed to the unprecedented situation in which Polish tertiary education institutions can present their flexibility and adjust themselves to the real needs of the labour market. Some Polish higher schools have seized this opportunity and have come up with new offers for potential students, giving them a chance to combine language skills with expertise in non-linguistic fields such as business.

To sum up this section, it might be stated that like all other aspects of social activity, tertiary education needs changes and modifications and the labour market should be a form of a yardstick, against which the quality and effectiveness of this education should be measured. Therefore, one of the pivotal issues of tertiary education should be to adjust the educational offer to the genuine needs and conditions of the labour market. Some Polish higher schools offering language studies appear to have learnt this lesson well.

3. Studies in specialised languages/languages for special purposes in the Polish higher education context – the case of business English

Due to the demand for professionals who can communicate in both written and spoken specialised varieties of English, several Polish tertiary education institutions have opened B.A. and M.A. study programmes in English for Special Purposes, mainly in business English. Among such schools are Warsaw University and its Faculty of Applied Linguistics, where students can obtain B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees as well as pursue their postgraduate studies in specialised languages. Another example comes from the University of Wrocław, where B.A. and M.A. holders can continue their education in the Postgraduate Studies in Translation, which is a *de facto* business and legal translation programme with strong focus on specialised terminology and its translation. B.A. studies in specialised English (*i.e.* in business English) can also be undertaken in state schools of higher vocational educations, for instance, in Elbląg (B.A. studies in foreign languages in business) or in Nysa (B.A. studies in business English, as presented below) as well as at Częstochowa University of Technology, where at the Faculty of Management, students can study business English, graduating with a B.A. degree.

By and large, there are two models of the organisation of business English studies in Poland. In the first model, business English is just a specialisation of the speciality of philology. To put it differently, students study philology and their language speciality is English philology. They might have a few specialisation options and one of them is business English. The curriculum developed in this way has a number of drawbacks. First of all, as it is English philology, there is a need to include all philological courses and the emphasis is still put on academic and theoretical courses such as literature or theoretical linguistics. Such a curriculum in principle must have a relatively small number of hours devoted to specialisation courses (usually only business language-oriented ones are included) and this results in the fact that there are no or very few courses in business- and law-related issues. Furthermore, since English philology belongs to the arts, its graduates are expected to achieve learning outcomes within the humanities only (according to the National Qualifications Framework).

In the second model of the organisation of business English studies, the programme in question is located on the level of speciality within philology. Compared to the first model, it is higher in the hierarchy of programme modules (programme – speciality – specialisation) and therefore less emphasis is put on typical academic courses (less emphasis on academic courses such as literature, theoretical linguistics) while more focus is attached to hands-on skills and competences needed in business environment and business occupations. Moreover, business English studies constructed in this way offer a relatively high number of hours devoted to specialisation courses (business, economics, management, economy, EU programmes and funds, law). What is also different from the first model is that the graduates of business English are expected to achieve a different set of learning outcomes (the combination of the humanities, social studies and economics). Thus, it may be concluded that in the context of the conditions of modern labour

market, the second model seems to be more preferable as it provides students with more market-related knowledge, skills and competences, which – in turn – increases graduates' chances in the highly competitive labour market in Poland.

4. B.A. studies in business English as an example of market-orientation, flexibility and practicality of higher studies

One of the higher schools whose main aim is to prepare students to enter the labour market with well-developed skills, high professional competence and knowledge is the State School of Higher Vocational Education in Nysa (also known as the University of Applied Sciences). Established on 01 June 2001 as one of several schools with vocational orientation, the school in Nysa offers a number of fields of study within the humanities, economics, technology and medical sciences, including the studies in foreign languages.

The studies in foreign languages (German and English) are offered by the Institute of Modern Languages which comprises three sections: the Section of English Studies (established in 2004), offering traditional English philology studies, the Section of German Studies (established in 2001), where students can pursue traditional German philology studies and the Section of Business English (established in 2007), which provides education in business English. From 2004 to 2009 there was one more unit in the organisational structure of the Institute of Modern Languages – the Section of Czech Studies but due to a rather meagre interest in Czech studies it was closed. As of 26 June 2013, there were 96 students of business English and the total number of business English graduates holding a B.A. degree was 96 (data obtained directly from the Institute of Modern Languages).

4.1. The curriculum of B.A. studies in business English

The main assumptions which formed the basis for developing a curriculum of business English studies were connected with the growing demand for business English specialists in the Polish labour market which was filled by the graduates of traditional English philology who did not know the specialised variety of English used in business environment. Therefore, the newly developed curriculum was different from the curriculum of traditional English philology in that a stronger emphasis was put on developing students' skills in general English language skills (to the B2/C1 level) as well as their practical skills in English for Special Purposes – for business. Those practical skills also encompassed the skills in business translation and interpreting as well as in working in the English language. Moreover, it was assumed that business English students should develop their understanding of major economic and legal processes taking place in business environment. Such students were also given the opportunity for developing their academic skills so that they could pursue their further academic education at the M.A. level. In brief, the major aim of the curriculum was to equip students with hands-on skills so that they could enter the labour market just after finishing their studies. Following the school's mission which stresses the importance of the practicality of higher studies, the studies in business English were organised in accordance with the maxim "Maximum of practice, minimum of theory".

The curriculum has five major components: (1) general education courses, (2) basic courses, (3) specialisation courses, (4) major area courses and (5) vocational practice. General education courses are obligatory for all fields of study at the State School of Higher Vocational Education in Nysa and for all philological studies at the B.A. level and they include: elective courses (e.g. philosophy history, ethics, social communication, introduction to language philosophy), information technology, public life etiquette, intellectual property and copyright, sports. The category of basic courses includes: practical English (*i.e.* speaking skills, listening skills, writing skills, academic writing skills, integrated skills: lexis and structures, practical grammar, practical phonetics) and practical second foreign language with the elements of linguistics (e.g. German, Czech, Spanish, Dutch). The major area courses are typical of English studies and business English and they include the following modules: introduction to linguistics, English descriptive

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grammar (*i.e.* phonetics and phonology as well as morphology and syntax), English-Polish contrastive grammar, business English, theory of translation and specialised languages, customs and institutions of the English-speaking countries, culture and literature of the English-speaking countries). The final category combines courses which provide expertise in business combined with language skills and it includes: translation, interpreting, business correspondence, B.A. seminar in business English and (applied) linguistics, introduction to business, business ethics, company management fundamentals, microeconomics, macroeconomics, office work techniques and ergonomics, commercial and administrative law, economic cooperation in the European Union and European Union programmes and funds.

The courses comprising the curriculum of B.A. studies in business English make up what has been referred to as two cores of the studies. This can be seen in Figure 1.

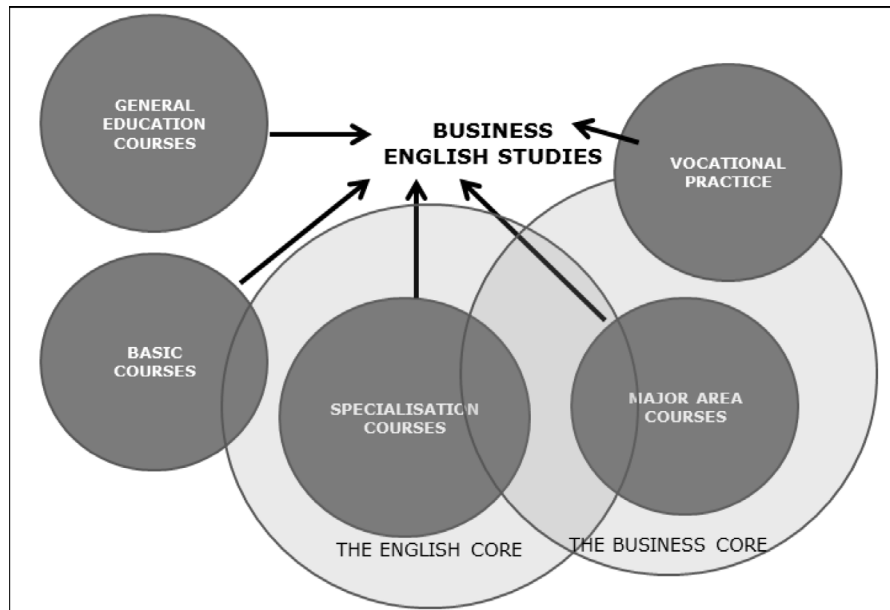


Figure 1: The idea of two cores of business English studies

The idea of two cores – the English one and the business one – helps to combine seemingly distant areas. Thanks to the English core, business English students develop their language proficiency, skills in language applications and the understanding of the English-speaking countries' cultures, traditions and institutions. The business core supports their development of expertise in business issues, hands-on skills in working in a company and practical skills in business, economics and management. It also helps them understand business-related issues and other phenomena connected with the economics, economy and law of Poland, the European Union and the English-speaking countries.

The development of the two cores was motivated by the insights from the labour market. The graduates of traditional English philology, in the course of their studies, had a different set of subjects which can be generally divided into two cores: the English core and the academic core. In many cases this resulted in the fact that they were well-prepared to continue their M.A. academic studies but not to start a professional career due to lack of practical skills and knowledge of business-related issues. The graduates of business English seem to be in a better position. The combination of the English core and the business one helps them to enter the business sector in search of a job just after their studies. It does not, however, limit their possibility of continuing their studies at the M.A. level, as many graduates of business English have done at various universities in Poland and Europe.

The observation of the trends in the labour market has also helped design the curriculum in such a way that business English students are supposed to achieve a unique set of learning outcomes in terms of skills, knowledge and social competences. Among others, business English graduates

are supposed to: be prepared for the changing conditions of the more and more demanding labour market, be proficient speakers of English and its business discourse, have linguistic skills in other business-related discourses (*e.g.* law), be able to analyse the English language at various levels, be knowledgeable about the institutions, economics, law, customs and cultures of the English-speaking countries, have basic academic English skills (essential for those graduates who want to continue their education), have the knowledge and understanding of economics, managements and other economy- and business- related areas, including solid familiarity with the EU issues or have practical translation and interpreting skills as well as business writing skills.

Generally speaking, thanks to the combination of the two cores and the courses they include, it is possible to equip business English graduates with practical and applied skills in both language use and business, to make business English graduates more attractive than the graduates of traditional philological studies, to reduce the need of business English graduates' extra training in business issues, so badly needed by the graduates of traditional philologies who have little (if any) understanding of business issues as well as to make business English graduates more employable and adjustable to work environment.

4.2. Business English students' and graduates' motivation survey

Due to the changing reality of the labour market and higher education, there was a need to find out business English students' and graduates' motivation to take up the studies in question. For this purpose, a questionnaire-based online survey was carried out in 2011 after the first cycle of B.A. studies in business English (started in 2007/2008) was completed. 58 students and graduates participated in the survey. Although there were as many as fifteen survey questions, only two are discussed here. The full discussion of the survey results will be published in 2014 (Walczyński 2014).

The first question of interest was connected with the reasons for selecting business studies and the respondents could select several answers. The most common answers were: "I am interested in English" (43 responses), "I did not want to study traditional English philology" (42 responses), "I am interested in business" (20 responses), "Due to the proximity of the school" (17 responses), "Due to low costs of studies" (17 responses), "Due to good opinions about the school" (16 responses), "Because I did not want to leave my town (Nysa) because I had no other alternative after finishing my secondary school" (7 responses), "I was not admitted to another department" (5 responses), "Due to good opinions about the school" (5 responses), "Because I did not want to leave my town (Nysa)" (5 responses), "I do not know" (1 response), "Due to the high level of teaching" (1 response), "Because my friend studies business English" (1 response).

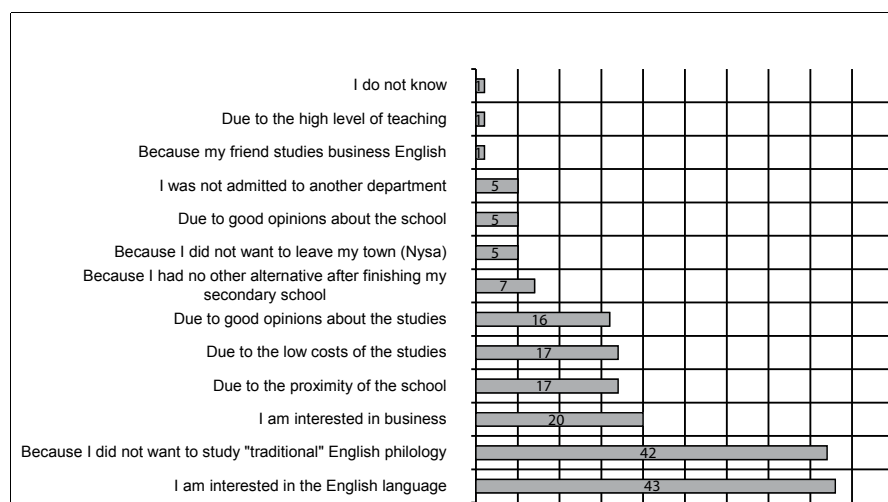


Chart 1: Reasons for taking up business English studies

What is particularly interesting in the results is that there are so many responses proving that business English studies are a good alternative for young people who do not want to pursue traditional English philology which is more academic and theoretical in nature. A positive aspect which emerges from the results is that business English studies are chosen by those interested in

English as such. This may bear witness to the fact that such “applied” English studies may also be interesting for those who share interest in the English language which is a premise of typical philological studies.

The answers provided by the respondents to this question are valuable because they may be helpful (and indeed – were) in re-designing the curriculum of the studies in order to adjust it even better to the conditions and needs of the dynamically changing labour market.

4.3. Business English students’ and graduates’ satisfaction survey

Another part of the same survey concerned business English students’ and graduates’ satisfaction with their studies. This was assessed by means of two questions: the first one pertained to business English students’ and graduates’ opinion about taking up the same studies once again. The other one was a direct question about whether the respondents were satisfied with the studies or not.

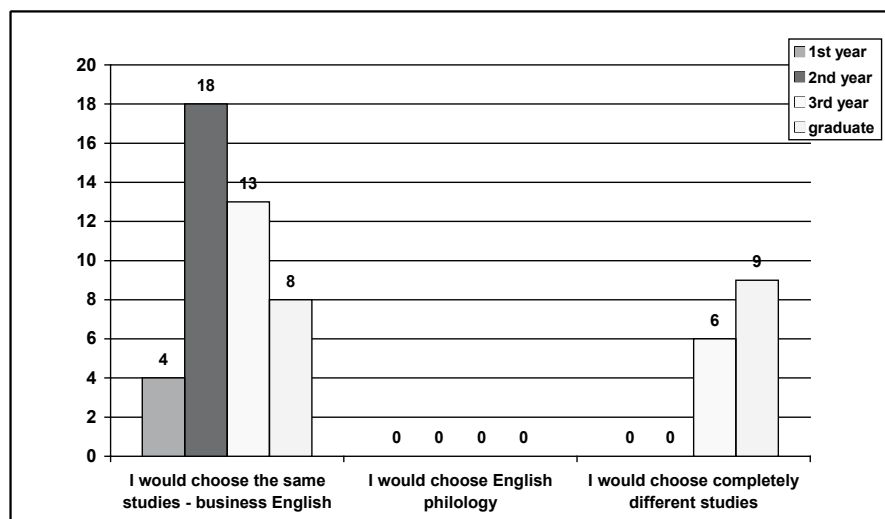


Chart 2: Business English students’ and graduates’ opinions about the possibility of selecting the same studies – the correlation between the respondents’ status and their answers

The results to those two questions can be considered from two angles. First of all, there is a strong correlation between the category of respondents (first-year students, second-year students, third-year students and graduates) and their answers. The data presented in Chart 2 show a number of interesting observations. First of all, the answers provided by the first-year students have to be treated with caution due to the fact that the number of the respondents with this status, who had just started their studies so they had not had a chance to experience the studies in full, was rather small and therefore their answers are not reliable. Secondly, nobody would chose traditional English philology. This may mean that the studies in business English are more attractive in the eyes of the respondents than traditional English philology. Next, it is rather remarkable that 9 out of 17 graduates were probably unsatisfied with their studies and their choice would not be the same. This, however, may be accounted for by the fact that at that time the studies in business English were in its first phase of organisation and ever since there have been numerous changes to both the curriculum and organisation. Such answers could also be caused by the difficulties the graduates had finding employment in the region of Nysa. This problem, at least partially, could have originated from the fact that those people were a new type of graduates of language-related studies and employers might not have fully realised their skills, competences and knowledge as so far they had only had the opportunity to work with traditional English philology graduates who had no expertise in business-related issues. One more interesting fact which results from Chart 2 is that all 18 second-year students would chose the same studies. This may prove that the modifications introduced to the curriculum in the course of the next cycles of studies turned out to be interesting and attractive for students. Generally speaking, more respondents would chose the same studies than there would be those who would not.

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Let us now take a look at the results provided by the respondents to the question about their satisfaction with the studies. Chart 3 shows the percentage distribution of the respondents' answers.

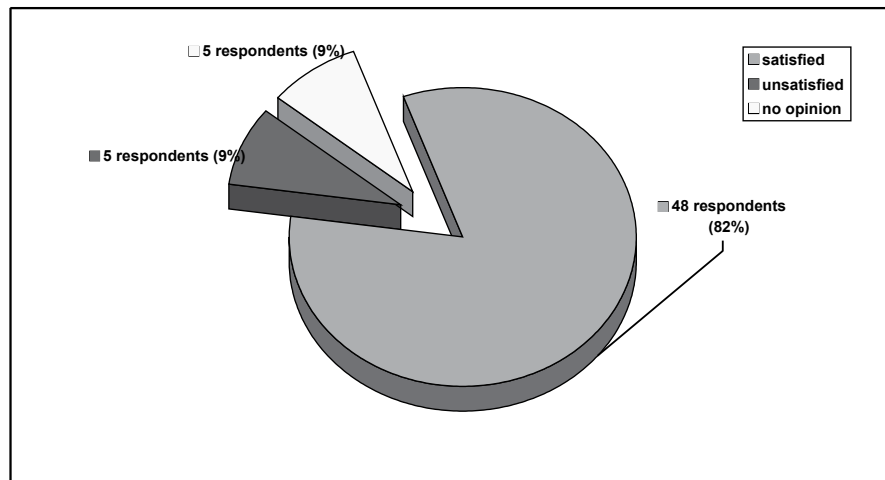


Chart 3: Business English students' and graduates' satisfaction with the studies

On the whole, the majority of the respondents (82%) expressed their positive opinion about their satisfaction with the studies. There were only five unsatisfied respondents (9%) and five respondents with no opinion (9%). Such a great number of those satisfied may bear witness to the fact that higher studies in specialised languages, in this particular case in business English, which combine language skills with expertise in business and which have a very practical orientation are an attractive and interesting option for students.

4.4. Curriculum modifications

The results of the survey as well as the observation of the trends of the Polish and European labour market have helped the staff of the Section of Business English re-develop the curriculum, adjusting it to the needs of employers and introducing or stressing those elements which so far had not been given due attention in the curriculum.

There were several reasons for modifying and improving the first curriculum which was in operation from 2007/2008 to 2009/2010. One of them was a shift in the strategy and mission of the State School of Vocational Education in Nysa, in which there was greater focus on practical skills that students were supposed to develop in the course of their studies. What is more, in informal conversations with the employers from the region of Nysa, it became evident that they expected that their future employees would have more practical orientation to their work as theory could be learnt at any stage. In other words, what they suggested was that the development of skills was more time-consuming and difficult than absorbing theory. Another factor which contributed to thinking about making some changes to the curriculum was the fact that in personal conversations the first graduates of business English, who had already entered the labour market, expressed their positive and negative opinions of the curriculum. The feedback they provided helped to reorganise the curriculum by introducing the badly needed courses such as translation. Furthermore, in the analysis of business English students' linguistic competence and performance during final practical English examinations, it came to light that more stress had to be put on such aspects of English as grammar or pronunciation since students' performances with reference to those aspects were rather poor. Finally, realising the fact that the competition in the market of higher educational services in the region, Poland and Europe was growing stronger and stronger and that there were lower numbers of potential students, the staff of the Section of Business English wished to offer a unique field of language studies which would attract more prospective students.

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So far, there have been three phases of the modifications of the curriculum. The first one took place in the academic year 2011/2012 during which the following changes were made: (1) the introduction of translation and interpreting courses (*the theory of translation and specialised languages* (30 hours), *translation* (60 hours), *interpreting* (30 hours)), the introduction of a new component of practical English: *practical grammar* (60 hours), more teaching hours were devoted to *English phonetics* (45 hours, compared to the previous number of 30 hours) and there was a reduction in the number of the teaching hours assigned to the lecture in *Polish-English contrastive grammar* (15 hours, as compared to the previous 30 hours). Another modification introduced at that stage was a more orderly sequence of courses so that the introductory courses preceded the more advanced ones.

A year later, in the academic year 2012/2013 there was a general shift in the curricula of higher studies, triggered off by the implementation of the National Qualification Frameworks in the Polish higher education system. This resulted in a new curriculum of B.A. studies in business English. New courses whose aim was to develop social competences were introduced. Among them were *public life etiquette, intellectual property and copyright, ergonomics*. This modification also helped to expand the offer of elective courses related to the humanities and social studies. Nowadays, business English students can enrol for such elective courses as *philosophy history, ethics, social communication, introduction to language philosophy*.

The third modification (and so far the last one) has been implemented in the current academic year (2013/2014) and it involves the expansion of the offer of second foreign language options. Nowadays, business English students can select one (or two as they wish to do so) second foreign language course from such options as German, Czech, Dutch, Spanish, French, Russian. Moreover, the number of foreign language teaching hours has been increased from 120 to 180 hours so that it could be possible to discuss the aspects of linguistics and culture as part of such courses. Additionally, there has been a reduction of the number of teaching hours of the courses with similar contents (*e.g. enterprise management vs. microeconomics and introduction to business*).

On the whole, all the modifications have had one major ultimate goal – to increase the employability of business English graduates due to their broad hands-on skills, competences and knowledge developed in the course of the studies. It remains to be seen whether these efforts will turn out to be successful as the first students who have been studying according to the modified curriculum will have completed their studies by October 2014.

5. Concluding remarks: practicality of higher studies – is it the right way?

From the observations of labour market trends and higher education, it emerges that practice-oriented studies are more and more desired as employees need real and labour market-related skills. Such is business English, in which strong focus is put on developing skills and competences which are preferred and useful in the labour market. What is more, it seems the Polish labour market now puts a greater emphasis on skills and competences than on theoretical knowledge because skills and competences are more difficult to develop whereas theoretical knowledge is easier to master. Such is business English, where practical skills in using English in specialised contexts and business, economics and law are taught. Therefore, market-oriented studies are a must if they are to prepare young people for entering the labour market successfully and these young people seem to be more aware of this. Like business English in the State School of Higher Vocational Education in Nysa, other higher schools are opening practical and market-related studies, whose aim is to make their graduates attractive players on the labour market and a good case in point is Łódź University, Poland, one of the most reputable Polish universities.

Of course, the objections may be raised that studies of all types should be academic in nature. However, apart from academic studies, which should be pursued by only a few young people who want to become scholars, scientists and researchers, more people should select the practical options within the higher education system, which will provide them with employment

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opportunities. This is so since the ultimate goal of higher education should be to make graduates professional, competent, easily adjustable, open-minded, tolerant and knowledgeable employees. Therefore, as business English graduates prove, the practicality of higher studies seems to be the right way which is what more and more higher schools have recently come to realise and which open more and more higher studies with a strong focus on practice.

6. Notes

¹ The article is of practical character therefore there are so few references to other authors and sources.

² In the academic year 2013/2014, the author is the grant holder obtained from the Project “Development of the Potential and Educational Offer of the University of Wrocław – the Chance to Enhance the Competitiveness of the University”, carried out within the Human Capital Operational Programme co-financed by the European Union funds under the European Social Fund.

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