

Business English Today: The Need for Intercultural Approach



Anna Zelenková and Jana Javorčíková

Abstract The paper explores the present state of teaching Business English (BE) at universities in Slovakia. BE is theoretically presented as a foreign language under the umbrella of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) which is generally based on students' needs. BE in economic disciplines should cover the present and future needs of students. These needs are evolving due to the advances in internationalization of higher education as well as the labour market and business in Europe and in the world. The paper defines specific purposes of teaching and learning BE at Slovak universities, its aims, priorities, and specific features in order to define the criteria for skills and intercultural competences required for today's globalized business world. Based on selected indicators in ESP, the theoretical study gives a rationale for intercultural directions in the teaching of ESP and BE. Historical insight helps to recognize the present state of BE teaching and learning and suggest the revision of future orientation of BE at universities towards a more inclusive subject integrating a broader scope of cultural competencies—English for Economic Disciplines (EED). The authors of the study explore the content, methods, and constraints of the proposed new approach to teaching ESP (BE).

Keywords English for specific purposes · Business English · Higher education · Intercultural competence

A. Zelenková (✉)

Department of Professional Communication in Business, Faculty of Economics, Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia

e-mail: anna.zelenkova@umb.sk

J. Javorčíková

Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia

e-mail: jana.javorcikova@umb.sk

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1 Introduction

International business today and the labour market in Europe is characterised by cultural and linguistic diversity of the workforce and the workplace. Business operations get international dimensions and require from business professionals not only confident use of English and other foreign languages, but also mastering the cultural and intercultural aspects of business communication in order to establish themselves successfully on the international labour markets.

Studying foreign languages is part of the curricula at philological and also most non-philological faculties preparing graduates for various fields of economic disciplines, such as business management, banking, marketing, public economy, tourism, etc. Foreign languages are connected with the content of the subject study (foreign languages for specific purposes) to allow communication in a given field. The aims of developing foreign language competence (and specifically English language competence) are projected for the present study needs and future, professional, job-oriented needs of graduates. Therefore, it is essential to define the needs of the language users, establish the role of cultural and intercultural competence, and decide what role cultural studies play in the teaching of ESP and BE classes.

However, in terms of preparation of future business professionals, it is also essential to redefine the traditional concept of ESP in terms of the method of teaching which, since the 1960s (the 1990s in Slovakia) has inclined towards communicative language teaching. It is our assumption, as we will explicate in this study, that business professionals need to master the cultural as well as linguistic aspects of foreign language use and gain professional communicative competence, which, specifically in business life, guarantees effective communication in the intercultural business environment. In order to achieve this, it is inevitable to reconsider traditional ESP and BE and their constructive elements (goals, methods, and approaches).

2 Aims and Methods of the Study

The aim of this study is to present teaching ESP and its specifics in relation to the development of intercultural competences for future business professionals. The article outlines the development of ESP teaching in the context of Slovak university education. The authors attempt to define the factors that influence today's focus of cultural studies from the perspective of the learners' needs and teaching and learning objectives in various business-related academic and professional areas. The analysis of theoretical background and current methodology of teaching foreign languages and other related academic disciplines that have an impact on the content and focus of teaching ESP was taken for the starting point.

The general concept of this study lies in the assumption that traditional concepts of ESP and BE do not fully comply with the present-day requirements for real business life. Therefore, a new way of linguistic and cultural preparation of future business

executives should be considered. For the purposes of this study, we suggest a more broadly organized denomination “English for Economic Disciplines”—methodologically and content-wise significantly different from ESP and BE in terms of integration of interculturality and communicative competence into traditional ESP and BE. To justify the establishment of EED, the authors will explore the discourse on the nature of General English, ESP, BE, and their hierarchy (with an insight into the historical development of these fields in Slovakia). Further, the study explores communicative and intercultural approaches to language teaching and their essential role in the preparation of future business professionals. Finally, we will analyse and evaluate three aspects of methodological praxeology of EED, which require innovation in order to integrate all the aforementioned elements into effective teaching: content, methods, and aims that affect EED. The authors postulate that teaching EED should involve developing students’ intercultural competence.

2.1 Terminology Database: ESP, BE, and Intercultural Competence

ESP, emerging in the 1960s and developing across decades, has now entered a general academic lexicon. To define ESP, researchers have approached it from different points of view. Some of them tried to define it as a specific language (Stevens, 1988) and specific vocabulary development (Felices Lago, 2016; Kacetyl & Klímová, 2015; Míšková, 2009); others focused on specific needs (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1997; Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Hutchinson & Waters, 1991; Jordan, 1997) and teaching methodology (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1997; Hanesová, 2007; Zelenková, 2010). We base our definition of ESP on Dudley-Evans and St John (1997) who suggest the absolute and variable characteristics. The absolute characteristics include:

1. ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners (e.g., English for chemists; business people, etc.; authors’ note);
2. ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;
3. ESP is centred on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse, and genre.

The variable characteristics are:

1. ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English;
3. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be designed for learners at secondary school level;
4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students;
5. Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems.

In their observations, Dudley-Evans and St John agree with the previous definition of Hutchinson and Waters (1991, p. 19): “ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning”. Similarly, Ellis and Johnson (1994) and Donna (2000) stress the importance of the analysis of the needs of students and future users of the language.

Other authors addressed the teaching/learning aims of ESP in terms of competences, such as linguistic, communicative, and cultural competences (Hammerly, 1985) and were concerned with the pedagogic approach and principles to achieve these aims. According to Wang, Ayres, and Huyton (2010) it is necessary to improve practice-oriented competences to prepare students for the later job demands in the business sector, including language proficiency (problem solving in job-related situations in the business sector, such as handling customer relations and customer wishes). These requirements are in compliance with the linguistic competences in terms of “what can I do with the acquired language” as stated by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001, 2018).

BE thus might be considered one of the areas of application of ESP. BE (as defined by the British Council, for example) varies from General English in a broad sense, as the content is different—topics are related to the work place or world of business (Mehta, 2019, p. 1). The topic of business culture and cultural aspects of business, which is in our focus, is in most cases covered usually solely by one unit (e.g., Managing across cultures) introducing students only to a few rather contextless cultural differences.

Here, however, lies the core of the problem, regarding the scope and content of BE for the globalised business environment. Teaching ESP or, alternatively, BE, nowadays presents new challenges for teachers, course designers, curriculum planners, and course book writers, which lie in internalization of the study contents and approximating students culture as well as language or, in other words, language *as* culture. Anthony (2011) and Mehta (2019) anticipated the forthcoming shift of ESP (BE) towards interculturality:

[Business English] is changing and very soon the difference between General English and Business English may not be so easily demarcated. With new General English course books coming out with titles like ‘Natural English’ and ‘Skills for life,’ the focus is changing as the role of English as a *lingua franca* is reaching new heights. Publishers recognise that the demand for English is now more than ever an instrumental demand. (Mehta, 2019, p. 1)

We agree with the view of Mehta and, in this study, we would like to expand this point to prove that there is a need for a thorough redefinition of the teaching contents of traditional BE and within the context of the analysis of the needs of students, integrating the communicative language teaching and intercultural CLT and ITC.

2.2 *Historical Insight into the Teaching of ESP (BE) in Slovakia*

In order to understand the developments in the teaching of ESP at non-philological faculties in Slovakia, it is necessary to take into consideration the continuum of development of ESP goals, methods, and procedures in the context of Slovak education system from the second half of the twentieth century up to the present. The milestones that were chosen include the time before 1990 (covering the years of former Communist system, detached from the world by the Iron Curtain), after 1990 (indicating the years of abrupt social changes and the opening towards the world and introducing CEFR), and after 2002 (the year when the Bologna declaration was adopted by the Slovak legal system and the process of internationalization of education started). The individual moves and related changes in diachronic perspective (including those of the cultural element) are illustrated on selected indicators in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that, prior to the 1990s, the cultural element in BE was represented mainly by the study of the so-called ‘high culture’ (literature, history, geography, social and political system, and other fact-based information, i.e., “realia” or “country studies”) of a target country. ESP resembled the country studies taught at philological faculties, as then-popular assumption was; the study of culture was a part of the study of literature (Kačmárová, 2012). This concept of “realia” was effective until Williams and Hoggart proved the mutual influence of language and culture (Turner, 2005).

The 1990s were a significant milestone in teaching ESP; it has experienced a great boom and English became a universal *lingua franca* of business and communication. This cluster of linguistic and extralinguistic phenomena influenced the increasing inclination of ESP toward teaching cultural competences, as demonstrated by indicators selected in Table 1, resulting from two reasons:

- 1) practical professional reasons to study language (e.g., intercultural communication in practice),
- 2) academic reasons (e.g., opportunities for learning and student mobilities as a part of the European programmes framework).

Another reason that affected the global tendency toward intercultural approach in ESP teaching was plurilinguism, i.e., multilingual competences (Bříová & Bubáková, 2011) which are necessary for modern business.

2.3 *Synchronic View of ESP (BE) at Non-philological Faculties in Slovakia*

Having explained the historical shift of ESP (BE) in Slovakia, it is crucial to explain the core of the difference between ESP taught at philological (e.g., those preparing teachers and interpreters) and non-philological (business-oriented) institutions in Slovakia in terms of the cultural component. This difference dramatically affects

Table 1 Diachronic view of the development of the ESP goals, methods, and competences listed by indicators

Indicator	Prior to 1990	After the 1990s	After 2002
Entry level	Beginners, pre-intermediate	Pre-intermediate	Pre-intermediate, intermediate (B1, B2, C1); beginners excluded
Aims	Reading and translation of professional texts, mastering the vocabulary	Communication with professionals	Communication with experts in the intercultural (global) environment
Focus and content (including culture)	Teaching general English with partial focus on ESP and communication Fact-based studies of so-called “realia” of the target country (USA, UK; rarely Canada and Australia)	Teaching ESP; special emphasis on students’ needs Rapid development of teaching ESP in specialised economic disciplines, such as business management, economics, tourism management, finance, and banking	Teaching ESP with special emphasis on academic and professional needs of students
Teaching method	Grammar-translation, direct method, infrequent attempts of communicative approach	Communicative approach, translation to mother tongue or vice versa minimised	Communicative approach, post-method, eclectic approach
Target skills	Mastering grammar, vocabulary, reading and translation of non-authentic texts (mostly produced by non-native speakers)	Teaching integrated skills necessary for effective professional communication (reading, writing, speaking, listening; translation to one’s mother tongue is not taught as a special language skill)	Communication of professionals in the intercultural environment, intercultural communication, translation re-established as a core skill; translation and interpreting

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Indicator	Prior to 1990	After the 1990s	After 2002
Course books	Course books and study materials compiled by national authors	Foreign course books, authentic materials	International course-books, commercial course books, national course books (E-learning, dictionaries, online resources, the Internet)
Evaluation and assessment	Oral exams with little emphasis on writing skills (locally set assessment criteria)	Oral and written exams focused on four basic skills (regional criteria); first attempts to compare national and international standards	Testing of four/five integrated language skills, introducing international criteria (CEFR, UNICert® (UNICert®—international system of language education, assessment, and certification at non-philological faculties based on the document of leading German universities [used for ESP courses]), etc.)
Innovations of curricula		CLIL- and CBL-based teaching of specialised disciplines, beginnings of the intercultural direction of teaching ESP, formulating the need for intercultural communication and enhancing its role in ESP	Integration of the studies of culture as a distinctive phenomenon which affects international business communication Curricula and subjects taught via CLIL (CLIL—content and language integrated learning—learning a foreign language via content of a specific subject or vice versa: learning a specific content by the use of a foreign language; in American discourse, the term content-based learning/instruction is often used (CBL/CBI) instead) and CBL, study programmes and subjects taught in foreign languages as a result of the internationalisation of education (English-medium studies)

Source Adopted from Zelenková (2015), pp. 39–40

different students' needs that justify the inevitability of the shift in the ESP focus towards teaching language *as* culture.

Whereas language at philological faculties is *medium* per se (e.g., serves to explain a linguistic/cultural phenomenon), at non-philological faculties, it is an instrument to reach further goals, e.g., establish business contacts, give a presentation and, eventually, close a contract. Mastering the language thus means mastering the culture of one's economic partner. Major difference between the role language plays at philological and non-philological institutions thus lies in the needs of the end-user (speaker) to integrate the cultural component of the target language and target countries into discourse.

As a result, teaching ESP at business-oriented institutions has wider goals than mere linguistic and cultural ones; it focuses on the field of study or study programme in the given academic discipline and aims to prepare the graduate for smooth *functioning* in an international study environment and later in more and more internationalised work/business environment, which puts intercultural and communicative competencies at the forefront. Figure 1 shows specific goals of ESP and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) versus English for Academic (EAP) and General Academic Purposes in specialised disciplines, such as economics, medicine, etc.

To specify the teaching of ESP for business and its cultural component, we can start with the two main strands of English for Specific Purposes as defined by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 6): English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). These two strands differ mainly in learning objectives. English for Occupational Purposes focuses on skills needed to perform a certain job (such as language skills for future profession, professional jargon, or negotiation skills, customer orientation skills, etc.). English for Academic Purposes covers specific English studied for and in various specialized disciplines at the university, such as medicine, economics, engineering, technology, management, and others. Across all these specific fields of English, the general EAP plays a crucial role: teaching the integrated language skills of reading (academic texts), writing (for academic purposes—note-taking, summarizing, and mastering various genres), speaking (discussions, arguments), listening, and culture studies should be developed. As business is an international activity today, the cultural component that should be included makes the major difference between ESP for various disciplines and BE.

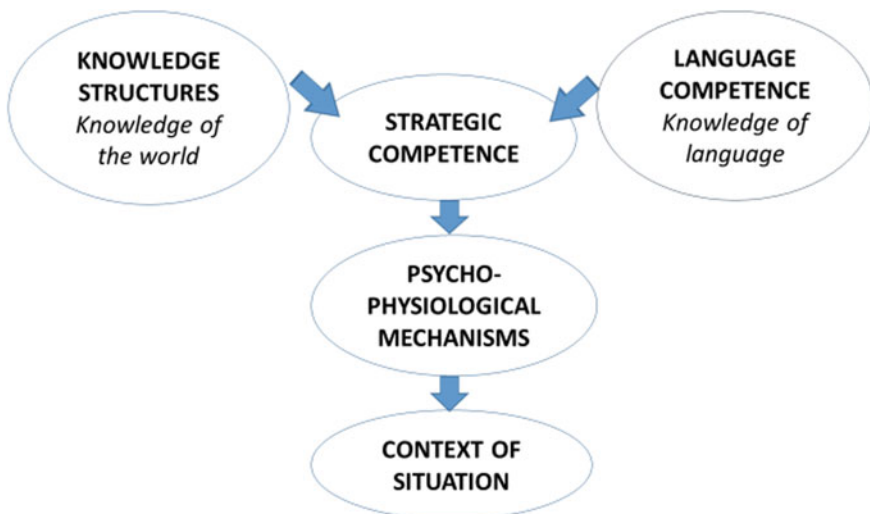


Fig. 1 Component of communicative language ability in communicative language use. *Source* Adopted by authors from Repka, Pčolinská, and Šipošová (2015), p. 73

To sum it up, the major difference in ESP (BE) lies in the necessity to master not only the language, but also the component of cultural awareness and competence. Such goals challenge traditional teaching of ESP and the place of intercultural competence between the target communication competencies. Moreover, successful graduates and future professionals should be able to cross cultures in intercultural communications and situations (Lustig & Koester, 2009, pp. 28–32). In the long run, a graduate of a non-philological programme focused on intercultural studies (unlike a graduate at philological faculties) will be prepared to communicate with experts in their professional field, to handle the situational use of language and the differences and similarities in communication at different levels and in different forms—written and oral, verbal and non-verbal, in a variety of culturally diverse environments. Traditional ESP and BE thus gain new constructive components—intercultural competencies and communicative competencies indispensable for successful business communication. What we mean is not just a minor extension of the original aims and procedures of ESP (BE) but a major revision of the very basic grounds of the fields in debate. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, in order to distinguish innovated approach to teaching ESP (BE), this new type of study will be denominated English for Economic Disciplines (EED).

3 Methodological Pragmatics of EED

In the next part of the study, attention will be paid to the practical methodological questions of how to implement EED effectively into the process of teaching English to future business professionals, in terms of teaching contents (Sect. 3.1), methods (Sect. 3.2), and EED syllabus design (Sect. 4).

3.1 Content of EED: Communicative Language Teaching Versus Intercultural Language Teaching

As stated before, except for traditional ESP and BE competence, EED requires implementation of two constructive components—intercultural competence and communicative competence. Communicative approach to language teaching, according to Richards (2006, p. 2), contains the following aspects of language use:

- knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions,
- knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written, as opposed to spoken, communication),
- knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, comments),

- knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies) (Richards, 2006, pp. 2–3).

Professional educators, however, vary in their opinions on how to achieve maximum communicative competence and its constructive competencies. Many linguists (e.g., Bachman, 1990; Savignon, 2017, originally published in 1983) expanded the Hymes' model of communicative competence/performance (Hymes, 1972, pp. 269–93). For example, Scarcella and Oxford (1992, p. 63) distinguish four sub-competences of communicative competence:

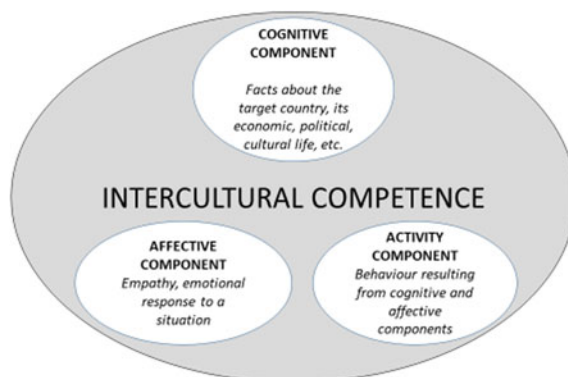
1. Linguistic sub-competence, which refers to the knowledge of the linguistic code of a language (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation).
2. Discourse sub-competence, which is concerned with the ability to generate not only individual sentences, but also connected texts.
3. Sociolinguistic sub-competence, which involves the knowledge of cultural and social context and communicative situations.
4. Strategic sub-competence, which generally refers to the strategies one uses to compensate for imperfect knowledge of language rules and breakdowns in communication due to performance variables. Interlocutors may sustain communication through paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, literal translation, code switching (oral > written), generalization, and avoidance of difficult constructions.

In response to communicative theories of the 1980s, Bachman (1990, p. 85) developed a simplified model of communicative competence integrating five phenomena: knowledge structures and language competence enhancing strategic competence leading to the context of the situation via psychophysiological mechanisms.

The model of communicative competence by O'Grady, Dobrovolsky, and Aronoff (1997, p. 480) further distinguishes three fundamental sub-competencies of communicative competence: language competence, strategic competence, psychological competence, and their sub-specifications. Such a rapid development in the research of communicative competence proves its mutable and dynamic nature (Repka, Pčolinská, & Šipošová, 2015, p. 74) as well as its complex character.

The communicative approach deals with the method of teaching, whereas “interculturality” deals with the teaching contents. The intercultural language teaching focuses on teaching intercultural communicative competence which, according to experts, presents a number of “[new] challenges in the form of communication situations to which interlocutors ought to respond adequately” (Lustig & Koester, 2009, pp. 28–32). Intercultural competence is manifested by an acquisition of the summary of cultural information (cognitive component), new cultural patterns, and emotional skills (affective component) and behaviour, taking into account cultural differences and specificities of individual cultures (activity component, which means also intercultural communication). This triangulation framework is based on the pedagogical requirements for the development of the student's personality in the educational

Fig. 2 Components of intercultural competence.
Source Developed by authors



process. Figure 2 shows the set of intercultural competence components in ESP for business.

Communicative language teaching thus organizes the “how” of language teaching, whereas intercultural competences control the “what” of language teaching within EED. The idea of the implementation of more cultural components into preparation of future business professionals has resonated in the professional discourse. One of the supreme European institutions, the Council of Europe, formulated the need to develop intercultural competence in teaching ESP in the context of understanding the current model of skill competences, which represents not only the knowledge and control of language, but also includes “a component of cultural knowledge and awareness” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 26, p. 104).

In teaching ESP at universities specialised in economics, this fact is even more significant as the students are trained to communicate with representatives of other cultures with the aim of building international business contacts. The correct use of language enhances effective communication, establishing and maintaining business contacts, while situation-bound and culture-bound, incorrect use of language (stemming from a different cultural background), ignoring the nuances of the language and culture, may lead to failure in closing a contract and, finally, be detrimental to the establishment of business partnership. In various cultures, people communicate politeness, demands, requests, and rejection in various ways, seen as polite in some cultures but impolite in other cultures (Hidasi, 2014). These differences can cause tensions, misunderstandings or even conflicts in international communication.

However, teaching intercultural competencies as a part of ESP at non-philological faculties is still far from common. A relatively common mistake in foreign language teaching is to assume that learning a foreign language automatically mediates intercultural competence, just because language inevitably carries certain crucial cultural phenomena. The current prevalent methodology still operates with a relatively narrow conception of the relationship of language and culture and is not quite clear in the case of the acquisition of intercultural competence (Lazár, 2015). Kramsch (1998, p. 12) also points out that language is still being taught as a fixed system of formal structures and universal linguistic features. Culture represents a kind of an “appendix”,

or, in other words an added element to language, to the extent that it further widens the gap between culture and language instead of approximating the two phenomena. Many teachers thus teach language and culture, not language as culture.

A solution is at hand: Kramersch, for example, proposes a framework for teaching culture which divorces itself from the traditional dichotomy between general and specific, i.e., language and culture. Teaching foreign language should serve as a platform for dialogue and joint efforts to minimize the differences (Kramersch, 1998, p. 12). In order to communicate effectively, we need not only good command of language (i.e., to become *linguagewise*), but also we need to know how to use it appropriately according to the situation of the speaking activities and with respect to the cultural environment and its social context (Byram & Fleming, 1998). Zelenka defines the latter as becoming *culturewise* (Zelenka, 2007, p. 32).

3.2 Methodology of EED: Transformation of the Traditional ESP (BE) for the Purposes of Teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence

In order to answer the questions of methodological pragmatics how to achieve maximum communication and intercultural competence of students in EED, we need first to establish the basic goal of modern ESP for non-philological students. Generally, this goal relates to the general language skills as defined in CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), including intercultural competence as a part of language capabilities. Based on CEFR, basic goals of ESP for non-philological students (or, alternatively, EED) may be stated as follows: Language users will reach the communication competence, which is adequate to specific social context in which they operate and communicate. First, emphasis should be put on acquisition of communication competence necessary for successful performance in academic (university) environment, i.e., to manage communication in students' educational context (such as studies, study skills, university, and mobility). Gradually, a wide range of fact-based information from various foreign sources expands these basic communication competences. Eventually, language users use and integrate their own expert opinion and expertise in oral and written speech and master four sub-competences, as defined by Scarcella and Oxford (1992, pp. 75–80):

1. Linguistic competence, which represents the control of the language system and the linguistic means typical of the professional language communication; in EED, linguistic competence means mastering of the following:
 - integrated skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking in professional (economic) situations,
 - individual skills: pronunciation: phonetic and phonological features, intonation, sentence and word stress,

- vocabulary register: specific economic and business vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, hypernyms, etc.
2. Sociolinguistic competence, which represents the modelling of speaking activities of the interlocutors who possess a spectrum of language resources and the ability to use them according to the communication context. Sociolinguistic competence presupposes awareness of the cultural context in which the user needs to know the language to use it properly in a given situation, and it represents the capability, which is now a component of intercultural competences. For example, a response to the question “how are you?” differs from country to country. In some countries, the only socially acceptable answer is simple and pre-formatted (“I’m fine”); in others, it is almost impolite not to go into great lengths, and not to mention individual members of one’s family, their medical condition, job, and social life. Thus, proper functioning in the new culture might be even more important than mere mastering the linguistic rules of a foreign language.

A so-called “culturewise” level of using a foreign language (Zelenka, 2007, p. 32) incorporates many verbal and non-verbal elements (including proximity, body language, social skills, codes and taboos, directness and indirectness, politeness, formality, and interpreting the meaning. For all the aforementioned data, Paige (1993, p. 171) introduces the term “cultural effectiveness”, referring to one’s ability to function in the foreign culture. Sociolinguistic competence is the key competence of students of EED, as lack of it may result in delays, injuries, and even deaths, and so it is detrimental to work progress. Future business professionals thus ought to be trained in sociolinguistic competences to foresee potential cross-cultural situations in which only the awareness of cultural differences helps to avoid misunderstanding.

3. Discursive competence, which is typical of the communication professionals, for a professional style, for instance:
- mastering special economic and business-related language, such as business terminology: e.g., double entry book-keeping, single-entry book-keeping, protectionism, deregulation, economy of the gold standard, bear market, bull market, marketing,
 - mastering the general, culture-related vocabulary: *the V4, municipality, Department of Treasury, NYSE,*
 - mastering business jargon (business speak): buzzwords, vogue words, euphemisms, blends, abbreviations, e.g., *Brexit, infomercials, VAT, GDP, GDPR, GPO,*
 - mastering soft skills, such as presentation skills, management skills, business meetings skills, negotiations, discussions, interrupting or keeping silence—just to name those where cultural differences play an important role.
4. Strategic competence, which represents the ability to overcome the collapse of communication and other potential failures and hurdles that barrier effective communication, such as:

- the ability to overcome the collapse of communication (the right phrase of term) and replace it with a generic or general one (e.g., *first class flight ticket* vs. *business class flight ticket*),
- the ability to become aware of and anticipate potential intercultural differences, and behave with cultural sensitivity.

4 Discussion: Intercultural Competence and EED Syllabus Design

It is necessary to mention that all of the abovementioned sub-competences are a stable part of teaching EED. The problem lies in the depth or intensity of their representation in the syllabus. EED can be taught as topic-based (syllabus is organized around the topics, such as management, marketing, investments, shares, market structure, and many others), in which the focus is on the acquisition of the specific content of students' major studies in a foreign language. This content-based language learning is almost parallel to students' studies in their native language. In this type of syllabus, the development of communication in business situations is limited as the foreign language curriculum is usually determined by the school policy (the curriculum guarantors like to see the topics). Culture-specific topics are marginally covered, by one or two lessons, such as management across cultures, cultural differences in body language and some business activities. The learning outcome in this case is students' mastering of the specific content in terms of definitions of specific terms and performance of understanding of business/economic issues. Academic and generic skills (those which are transferable onto other context, for example in a future job, such as researching, note taking, listening to lectures, study skills, team work, co-operation with partners, negotiations, presentations, and academic writing skills) are developed.

We assume that if the syllabus is based on communication for business, a more communicative language is studied (revolving around business situations, such as dealing with clients, dealing with complaints, telephoning, ordering, delivering goods and services, etc.). This type of functional-notional syllabus allows for the inclusion of cultural aspects more than the content-based syllabus, but has little space for the development of cultural awareness and competences, as defined above. Cultural issues are often presented ad hoc, marginally, even in a grotesque way, which only contributes to the stereotyped perception of cultures instead of developing knowledge about culture, understanding of other cultures, or one's own culture and the attitudes to otherness (Byram, 1997). There is little space to teach culture as a phenomenon that determines our language and behaviour. In this case, the learning outcome is the acquisition of situational language and its (culturally) appropriate use. At this point, we agree that, for future jobs in business, it is necessary to acquire appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication. It is necessary to know certain usages and standards of conduct, as well as the use of specific means of communication—oral and written. The question is which language the course designers ought to choose, given there

are many constraints concerning the attainment of the goals for professional and intercultural communication.

In order to set a concise set of educational aims for EED, it is necessary to identify potential constraints, i.e., external factors, such as the university educational policy controlling the scope and content of EED. Effectiveness of EED lies in the scope of the subject. It is a fact that university educational policy dramatically affects the number of teaching hours allotted to EED, which may depend on the study programmes, guarantors, and their understanding of the importance of modern language needs. The choice of content may well depend on the same factors. Thus, implementation of EED may depend on the autonomy of English teachers and their ability to implement real communication practice into the syllabus. There are also financial constraints to EED; the number of teaching units for foreign languages is limited and, usually, the first to be cut by management when introducing cost-saving measures at business oriented institutions. Thus, for lack of teaching time or finance, the teachers cannot address all the criteria set for EED, such as developing both the academic and professional language, communication skills, and intercultural awareness.

5 Conclusion

Europe has recently gained a profile of a multicultural society. On the one hand, this may bring an opportunity for cultural enrichment; on the other, it can lead to conflicts of different cultures and cultural misunderstanding. The perspective of cultural understanding and thread of cultural clashes clarify and justify the importance of intercultural competence as a means to communicate and act in intercultural situations in order to achieve mutual understanding of interlocutors.

Today, English, a new *lingua franca*, fulfils a very different role in international communication from English some 50 years ago. In the ethnic, social, and linguistic “superdiversity” (Morgado, 2017, p. 11) that we are witnessing today in cosmopolitan business encounters, English is used for communication in international and intercultural setting, where “communication constantly intersects other variables of ethnicity, cultures, mother tongues, and social status” (Morgado, 2017). Communicating in plurilingual and multicultural environment therefore requires other skills for intercultural dialogue (Council of Europe, 2016), such as accepting and valuing cultural diversity. For effective communication in this situation, modern English speakers (including business professionals) need to acquire skills to address, manage, and resolve conflicts that may arise between parties due to clashing world-views, conflicting attitudes, different communication styles or verbal/non-verbal behaviour. As Morgado confirms, besides acknowledging cultural diversity, the intercultural communicative competence entails “knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication while new attitudes are added such as self-efficacy, civic mindedness, and tolerance for ambiguity” (Morgado, 2017, p. 10).

Business study programmes (including their language sub-programmes) ought to respond to the challenges modern times lie on pose for language users promptly and

adequately. Internationalisation of education, increased cooperation of universities, and the mobility of students made possible by various EU programmes also bring new challenges; future business professionals study communication for an international environment (e.g., for mobilities) where they meet a diversity of cultural backgrounds. For such academic performance, they need to be prepared by a curricula programme of ESP (Camiciottoli Crawford, 2010).

Currently, the aforementioned international and intercultural links between professional and academic areas represent key factors for the transformation of ESP teaching. In the field of ESP, the academic focus and the building of intercultural competences have gradually gained their forefront position. As demonstrated by this study, the adoption of the Bologna declaration (1999) and adaption of its principles to the University Education Act in Slovakia (2002), which brought the implementation of the Bologna process in Slovakia enabled the internationalisation of university education in Europe and reinforced innovative approaches to teaching ESP.

One of the aims of the presented study was to clarify and justify the need for innovation of ESP. With regard to the political and social changes in Slovakia since the 1990s, teaching ESP dramatically changed its nature; currently, it is a dynamically developing didactic discipline that increasingly emphasizes the development of a cultural dimension of communication with the aim of developing intercultural competence for academic and non-academic purposes.

Moreover, innovated ESP (thus called by a new term English for Economic Disciplines—EED) uses the knowledge of a diversity of disciplines (such as economic and communication sciences, anthropology, cultural studies, sociology, and many others), which are incorporated directly into textbooks in the form of tasks developing cultural awareness. Examples are diverse—e.g., comparing intercultural differences, finding common features, solving intercultural problems and misunderstandings through case studies, critical incidents, individual or group projects, and intercultural web projects.

New globalised era also requires many more tasks from the ESP (EED) instructors. Integration of the diversity of disciplines into teaching requires extended linguistic-pedagogical education; teachers' professional profiles should include intercultural competences in a broader scope of disciplines. For example, in addition to their basic English language teaching, Slovak teachers provide CLIL/CBL-based courses in economic disciplines and their expertise represents added value in the overall foreign language profile of those philological and non-philological institutions that want to succeed in the international educational field. Academic and intercultural skills acquired in English-medium studies become beneficial for students' graduate profile; these skills are transferable onto the study of other subjects and to real-life situations.

To sum up, in global contexts, the transformation of ESP by integrating intercultural competence into traditional curricula (and thus creating a new concept of English for Economic Disciplines—EED) contributes to language users' expertise on linguistic and cultural levels; via these, it also enhances understanding and cooperation between diverse individuals and communities. In the era of globalisation (including both pre-Brexit and post-Brexit times), English serves and most likely will

serve as common ground not only in *languagewise*, but, more importantly, also in the *culturewise* sphere, as a medium integrating many diverse cultures. It will mediate understanding between people and nations; and its users, if properly instructed on the intercultural potential of proper language use, will become cultural ambassadors in business and non-business discourse.

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Anna Zelenková is Associate Professor at the Department of Professional Communication in Business, Faculty of Economics, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. She has been teaching English for Specific Purposes, intercultural communication and managerial skills in English for more than 20 years. As a teacher trainer, she develops intercultural teacher training programmes and participates in educational projects. Her professional and research interests include pedagogic approaches to the teaching of foreign languages, intercultural competence in

business, and teacher development. She is the author of six textbooks and two monographs on the methodology of intercultural education.

Jana Javorčíková has worked at the Department of English and American Studies in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, since 1997. She specialises in cultures and literatures of the English-speaking countries (she currently teaches courses in American studies, Canadian studies, and selected courses in intercultural communication). Her recent publications include a coursebook of US studies entitled “Explorations in American Studies” (2019; co-authored with Michael Dove) and “A Modern Coursebook of Cultural Studies for Philologists” (2019). In 2010, she contributed to a two-volume reader on Canadian culture entitled “Slovak Immigration to Canada: Narrated Histories and Written Histories” (2010) integrating intercultural research of thirteen European countries. She has also published widely in the fields of American studies and literature. In 2005–2006, she spent a year teaching literature and culture at Minneapolis Community and Technical College in Minneapolis, Minnesota.