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Budapest, 2018 ……………………..

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Author of the thesis
Meaning Matters: Content-Based Approaches in Corporate Language Courses

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Introduction

Teaching Business English is a bold undertaking. Lessons may show similarity with courses in Business Management, Leadership Training, Strategy Planning, Finance and Auditing, etc. The higher the language proficiency level of the students, the deeper teachers and students can go into the subtleties of a certain profession, so the English teacher, besides being a language expert, is expected to be a content expert as well. The students are often adult learners, generally with strong expectations and wish to progress their knowledge, and having targets to meet, deadlines to keep, they expect visible results quickly.

Consequently, the teaching process must be highly effective, with carefully chosen approaches, methods and techniques. Special attention should be paid to the needs analysis prior to the course, since Business English teaching in most cases literally counts as service provision, so it is emphatically about fulfilling students’ and the organisation’s needs.

Being a Business English teacher, I am faced with the challenges of teaching at a fast-paced company, where employees have neither the time nor the patience to take any digressions and want immediate results which - sadly - rarely come as directly and quickly as they wish. The question I have asked myself is whether the approaches and methods I am using are adequately up-to-date and effective. What else or how else can I go further and accelerate my students’ progress? Are there still remnants in the way from my Prussian-type education heritage that may hinder development?

While trying to find answers to these questions, I looked within and I looked without. I asked the views of a wider audience: English teachers for all around the Globe and adult English students from several business sectors in Hungary.

My thesis looks at and evaluates the approaches used by present language teachers, with special focus on corporate Business English language courses, with the aim of discovering to what extent we have left behind traditional teaching methods and founded our courses on more modern grounds. The initial hypothesis is that content-based approaches proved to be effective in meeting the requirements of relevance and immediacy that adult students may pose.
The structure of the thesis paper

Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the history of developments in language teaching, with special regards to the main paradigm shifts.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the characteristics and methods of content based approaches.

Chapter 3 reviews some further alternative approaches that are worth considering.

Chapter 4 looks at the situation and issues of language education in Hungary.

Chapter 5 describes the quantitative research, its methodology, and evaluates the results of the online questionnaires as well as discusses the qualitative part of the research and the main findings of the interview.

Final Remarks contains some reflections on the results of the research and the methodology, in light of the fact whether it brought appropriate answer to the initial hypothesis. I also noted here some ideas that emerged during the research and the result analysis, offering them for further study.
1. Paradigm shifts in EFL teaching

Language teaching went through several paradigm shifts during the twentieth century, in response to the evolution of the theories on language and language learning and also because the globalising world required a constant review of methodology in order to increase efficiency. The developing fields in linguistics and psychology impacted the debates on the effective language teaching and led to the formation of contemporary approaches.

As it is often the case with theoretical and philosophical debates, the quest for finding the perfect method does not lack controversies and after a long period of competition for dominance, an era of flourishing diversity can come where different schools of thought can coexist peacefully.

Until the middle of the twentieth century the so called Grammar Translation method dominated language teaching at schools, as a remnant of the long-established status of Latin language. Language was primarily viewed as set of rules and the main task of language learning was to understand and apply the grammatical rules. The most important skills were reading and writing; listening and speaking were considered secondary.

The approach was an integral part of what we know as the “Prussian education method” which had widespread influence and heavily impacted the Hungarian school system as well. The legacy of this system may still be present and it remained a long-lasting task of the primary and secondary school education to eliminate the rest of this attitude and approach.

Alternative approaches to language teaching began to arise with the growing demands to use foreign languages for oral communication.

In the middle of the twentieth century the Audiolingual Method emerged, where language was taught through speaking and this method was the first to teach the language instead of teaching about the language, so we can consider its appearance an important paradigm shift.

A key characteristic was to form new habits through repetition and drilling, so the learner was seen as an imitator and the teacher remained in focus and in control.

The development of the PPP (presentation, practice and production) procedure which is still in use today has its roots in this era. The PPP procedure - although having its merits and still popular among teachers and used in language books - has been questioned a lot for being highly teacher centred.
1.1. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The focus on the teacher was shifted with the arrival of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). First in the language teaching history, the learner became the centre of attention and the main focus was placed on meaning. These are the reasons why the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching can be seen as the main paradigm shift and having a strong influence on what we consider “modern” language teaching approaches today. One of the basic assumptions of this approach is that language is acquired through communication (as opposed to learning about its structure), so learners actually use the language in order to learn it.

Besides giving importance to communicative tasks involving interactions (in groups or in pairs, role plays and simulations), large emphasis is put on meaning, so efforts are made (and have been made since then) to engage the students in meaningful and authentic language use.

Communicative language teaching gradually became an umbrella term, being rather a philosophy than a method in itself. Only after its emergence can we talk about content-based language teaching, because the focus was transferred from form to content. The approaches and methods that followed this period can be seen as the continuation and further developments of CLT.

Types of learning and teaching activities in CLT

The following principles were applied when designing activities in the classroom:

- The focus of language learning should be on real communication;
- The different skills (speaking, reading, listening, writing) are linked, since they usually aren’t separated in the real world either;
- Students are rather let to induce or discover grammar rules than being told these rules;
- Provide opportunities for learners to develop both accuracy and fluency;
- There is a tolerance towards learners’ errors as they indicate that the learner is building up his or her communicative competence (Richards and Rogers, 2014).

The communication continuum (Harmer [2015] p.58)
The comparison can be regarded a “continuum”. Although the communicative “revolution” successfully took place and the communicative activities gained ground in the classroom, some “traditional” elements still persist today. Teachers, nowadays, have the means and the liberty to not only choose, but mix their methods and activities and complement traditional elements with communicative ones (or vice versa).

CLT brought the following changes in the realm of foreign language education:
1. Learner autonomy
2. The social nature of learning
3. Focus on meaning
4. Diversity
5. Thinking skills
6. Alternative assessment
7. Teachers as co-learners

(Richards and Rodgers, 2014, p.106).
2. **Content-Based Approaches**

The way language learners are seen went through complete transformation: from passive receivers in the time of the Grammar-translation method, they became imitators of language in the era of the Audiolingual method and they gained active role as communicative participants and collaborators in CLT.

2.1. **Content-Based Instruction**

Learner’s autonomy has been further enhanced in the **Content- Based Instruction** approach where learners are seen as active creator of knowledge and understanding.

The philosophy of Content-Based Instruction (CBI) is based on empowering students to become independent learners and extend their learning process beyond the classroom (Stryker and Leaver, 1997, p.3).

Teaching is organised around the content or subject matter that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic type of syllabus. Thus, learning content and learning language are interwoven and connected, each supporting the development of the other.

The material design of the course or lesson is determined by the learners’ needs, since the aim of the language learning is to serve real life communication purposes.

CBI was developed and named in North America. In Europe, a related approach is known as

2.2. **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)**

The two approaches (CBI and CLIL) are slightly different in focus and may sometimes have different features, but both share the basic philosophy regarding the primacy of content and putting the main emphasis on meaning.

CLIL has been present in Europe since the 1990s and is described as a response to globalization. It is an educational approach where content (subjects) are taught through the medium of a foreign language to students in all educational levels. While CLIL is not a language lesson, students get the chance to learn the language by studying the content-based subject in question.

So, the focus is dual: learning by integrating content and language.

Several models have been developed and used, and different levels of integration can be distinguished, for example

- **the “sheltered model”**, where learners are given special assistance to help them understand “regular” classes - to be able to study the same content material as regular English L1 students.
- **the “adjunct model”**, where students are concurrently enrolled in two linked courses, one a content course and one a language course, which complement each other with coordinated assignments.
- **the “theme-based” course**, where the language instructor uses content to teach language and the syllabus is organized around themes and topics (Stryker and Leaver, 2007).

CLIL is officially proposed by the European Commission to encourage member states to use this educational approach to create a multilingual population in Europe.

The core principles that both CBI and CLIL are built on:

- **People learn a second language more successfully when they use the language as a means of understanding content.**
- **Content-Based Instruction better reflects learners’ needs for learning a second language.**
- **A focus on the comprehension of meaningful and engaging content is believed to activate a range of cognitive skills that are basic to learning and this supports language development.**
- **Interaction in the learning context is essential to learning.**
- **Intercultural awareness is fundamental.**
- **Comprehension is a necessary condition for second language learning to occur.**
- **Learning of both content and language is facilitated by dialogic talk.**
- **It is not about the transfer of knowledge from an expert to a novice, rather about allowing individuals to construct their own understanding.**
- **Prior knowledge plays an important role and “scaffolding” techniques are widely used in both CBI and CLIL approach** (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

Scaffolding refers to providing contextual supports for meaning through the use of simplified language, teacher modelling, visuals, graphics etc. to facilitate understanding.

The pillars upon which a content-based programme framework is built can be illustrated as follows:
The Cummins Matrix

The relationship between language and cognition (thinking and understanding) is complex. However, what we do know is that effective learning involves cognitive challenge and feedback (assessment for learning). In CLIL settings it is essential to ensure that the language does not get in the way of understanding whilst at the same time it can itself be cognitively demanding. Cummins developed a matrix for exploring the relationship between cognition and language. This has been adapted for CLIL settings in order to audit teaching materials. Cognitively undemanding materials are difficult to justify. Cognitively demanding materials are fundamental to learning. The greatest challenge for CLIL teachers is to develop materials and tasks which are linguistically accessible whilst being cognitively demanding. Over a period of time, the CLIL journey may be from quadrant 3 to 4.

There are various types of content-based courses and CLIL courses, the aims ranging from a more content driven one to more language-related ones. Total and partial immersions are examples of content-driven courses, while topic- and theme-based language classes are examples of a more language-driven approach. So, the goals and objectives of a content-based course will depend on whether mastery of content through second language or mastery of language through content is the focus of the course.

An important feature of content-based approaches is the promotion of learner’s autonomy. Learners are active interpreters of input; what is more, they are invited to participate of the selection of topics and activities. Thus, besides being the characteristic approach for bilingual education for children with putting learner autonomy in the foreground, CBI can be seen a very useful way of adult education (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).
2.3. The Natural Approach

Stephen Krashen’s (linguist, educational researcher) philosophy states that language acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language.

Krashen developed influential hypotheses related to second language acquisition, which had a huge impact on language teaching, including the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the affective filter and the natural order hypothesis.

**Acquisition - Learning Distinction**

Language acquisition - as a result of innate properties of the human mind - is believed to emerge naturally when given appropriate exposure to language input. It happens without conscious effort, through understanding language and through using language for meaningful communication. Acquisition initiates utterances, while learning, which refers to the process to consciously learned rules about the language, acts as a monitor or editor.

**The Monitor Hypothesis**

The cognitive brain can function only as a monitor that checks and corrects the output of the acquired system.

**The Natural Order Hypothesis** states that parts of the language are acquired in a predictable order. For any given language, certain grammatical structures are acquired early while others are acquired later in the process and teachers cannot deliberately change this order.

**The Comprehensible Input Hypothesis**

Krashen argues that language acquisition occurs when learners receive language input which is slightly beyond their current stage of knowledge. Actually, this hypothesis runs counter to traditional methods in stating that we acquire language by going for the meaning first and as a result we acquire grammatical structures as well.

**The Affective Filter Hypothesis**

This assumption states something that has already been in the common accepted knowledge worldwide stating that emotional factors including anxiety, stress or motivation can hugely impact language performance.

Although the Natural Approach’s focus on comprehension and meaningful communication has been widely accepted, some of its aspects are still debated today (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

2.4. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

The idea behind the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT, also referred to as Task-Based Instruction) method is similar to the content-based approaches in holding the view that learners are more likely to acquire language naturally if they are thinking about a non-linguistic
problem. The syllabus is built around tasks, lessons focus on a central topic, a task to be accomplished. Through dealing with the problem, students exchange meaning and discover language.

The approach is seen by some to be the traditional Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) approach inverted – start with the production and work “backwards”.

The TBL lessons include the following sequence

1. **Pre-Task**: The teacher introduces the topic and gives instructions. The pre-task stage can also often include playing a recording of people doing the task. This gives the students a clear model of what will be expected of them. The students can take notes and spend time preparing for the task.

2. **Task**: The students complete a task in pairs or groups using the language resources that they have as the teacher monitors and offers encouragement.

3. **Planning**: Students prepare a short oral or written report to tell the class what happened during their task. They then practise what they are going to say in their groups. Meanwhile the teacher is available for the students to ask for advice to clear up any language questions they may have.

4. **Report**: Students then report back to the class orally or read the written report. The teacher chooses the order of when students will present their reports and may give the students some quick feedback on the content. At this stage the teacher may also play a recording of others doing the same task for the students to compare.

5. **Analysis**: The teacher then highlights relevant parts from the text of the recording for the students to analyse. They may ask students to notice interesting features within this text. The teacher can also highlight the language that the students used during the report phase for analysis.

6. **Practice**: Finally, the teacher selects language areas to practise based upon the needs of the students and what emerged from the task and report phases. The students then do practice activities to increase their confidence and make a note of useful language.

(https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/a-task-based-approach)

Some believe that TBL approach works better with older, more advanced students because of their cognitive maturity.

From the point of view of this thesis paper, it is particularly important to emphasise the usefulness of this teaching approach for students learning English for business purposes. The usage of real-world and job-relevant scenarios empower learners and ensures imminent applicability of the learned material.

**The role of instructional materials**

Instructional materials play an important role in TBLT and the usage of authentic materials including popular media is supported wherever possible. Since TBLT takes a broad, holistic view of language development, with different skills being integrated, technology is now increasingly being used in the classrooms.

**2.5. Critical voices, controversies, debates**

In the professional literature, a lot of debate was raised in connection with task-based language teaching (TBLT), perhaps resulting from the fact that the methodology is in sharp contrast with the traditional PPP procedure and is centred around a principle that teaching mainly aims to create contexts that support language learning.

Critics raised concerns that research in support of TBLT was insufficient and warned that the language acquired with these methods is merely incidental by simply “noticing” grammatical rules during task performance, so the approach does not support systematic teaching of new language. Also, the role of the teacher is assumed to be limited to merely managing and facilitating students’ performance of tasks (Swan, 2005).

One of the most often cited argument is as follows:

‘Task-based instruction (TBI) is frequently promoted as an effective teaching approach, superior to ‘traditional’ methods, and soundly based in theory and research. The approach is often justified by the claim that linguistic regularities are acquired through ‘noticing’ during communicative activity, and should therefore be addressed primarily by incidental ‘focus on form’ during task performance. However, this claim is based on unproved hypotheses, and there is no compelling empirical evidence for the validity of the model. Many advocates of TBI reject proactive syllabus design on doctrinaire grounds, while commonly misrepresenting ‘traditional’ classroom practice. While TBI may successfully develop learners’ command of what is known, it is considerably less effective for the systematic teaching of new language. This is especially so where time is limited and out-of-class exposure unavailable, thus making heavily task-based programmes inappropriate for most of the world’s language.’ (Swan, 2005, p. 376)

Advocates of TBLT refuted the claims that TBLT has inadequate coverage of grammar and admitted that although grammar may not be central, but has an important place within language learning. It is also established that TBLT can be not just output-prompting but input-providing as well (Ellis, 2009).
Several sources emphasised that TBLT can be used effectively alongside a more traditional approach.

**Controversies and debates in ELT: What you always wanted to know about teaching English but were afraid to ask**

Maurice Claypole calls into question the value of the communicative approach in his book *Controversies in ELT: What you always wanted to know about teaching English but were afraid to ask* (2010, Lingua Books, Halifax).

The article “*Goodbye to all that. The death of the communicative approach*” argues that the communicative language teaching method has outlived its usefulness. It is so often misinterpreted and misused and actually it has become an excuse for poor or inappropriate teaching. Claypole claims that the personal attitude of the teacher, and the students’ determination and commitment are as important factors as methodology itself. The example he uses is China, where old-fashioned, non-communicative methodologies are used with just as successfully as it would be with more “modern” methods and high-tech aids.

Communicative lessons can be much fun, appealing to students and teachers alike, but having lively discussions in broken English does not necessarily do much good, according to Claypole.

Some of the reasons that Claypole lists that can cause difficulties (or even failure) in the communicative language teaching are its bias towards native English teachers and an assumption of a certain type of student mindset. Besides, since it does not promote accuracy, it often cannot provide students with adequate knowledge about the language.
3. Some alternative approaches and methods

3.1. Multiple Intelligences Theory

As it was mentioned earlier in this thesis, one of the first paradigm shifts in the history of language teaching was when students (and their needs) became the centre of attention in the learning process. But for a long time, no matter which approach was used, teaching remained of the assumption that “one size fits all”, students were seen as a homogeneous group and a “good” method was thought to work effectively for everybody.

Most recent approaches to language teaching seek to acknowledge the differences learners bring to learning and give space to this diversity with incorporating these differences into the lesson plans and course design.

The Multiple Intelligences Model (MI) refers to a learner-based philosophy that characterizes human intelligence as having multiple dimensions that must be acknowledged and developed in education. The model is based on the work of Howard Gardner (1993) where originally eight native “intelligences” were posited: linguistic, logical, spatial, musical, bodily/kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, then later supplemented with a ninth: existential intelligence (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

All learners are believed to have personal intelligence profiles - so called “MI profiles” - that consists of combinations of different intelligence types and for some intelligences to be more developed than others, having a tendency to favour particular approaches to learning.

The best performances are achieved and the most enjoyable the learning journey will be when the strengths of a learner are built on.

Based on the MI model, further approaches and models have been developed where the differences of learning styles are emphasised.

The teacher’s role is to recognise this uniqueness (as well as his/her own teaching/learning style) when designing the activities for the course. This approach calls for raised consciousness on the part of the educator, and helping students to familiarise with their own style can also be a useful method to develop and promote learner’s autonomy.

3.2. Teaching “Unplugged”

The beliefs and practices of what is known as Dogme ELT philosophy (named after a movement in the film industry that pledged to rescue cinema from big budget, special-effects-dominated Hollywood movies) are formed with the wish to free teachers and students from the over-reliance on materials, aids and technology, and to work with nothing more than the ‘raw
materials’ provided by people in the room. Or, to put it in other words, ‘unplug’ their teaching. (Meddings and Scott, 2009. p 7).

Accordingly, Dogme is about teaching that is

- conversation-driven
- material light
- focuses on emergent language
  
  (Meddings and Scott, 2009).

Proponents of a Dogme approach argue that learning - and language learning in particular - is an “emergent process, and it is less to do with covering items on a syllabus than uncovering the ‘syllabus within’. That is, if learners are supplied with optimal conditions of language use, and they are motivated to take advantage of these opportunities, their inherent learning capacities will be activated, and language - rather than being acquired - will emerge.” (Meddings and Scott, 2009, p.16).

Since the “emergence” of language knowledge is somewhat similar to what was discussed in the part on Task-Based Language Teaching, it can also attract criticism on the ground that the promotion of systematic grammar learning is insufficient. What “emerges” may be seen as incidental, so the application for academic studies may be scanty.

But as the synthesis proposed with similar criticism, Dogme can be seen rather as a philosophy, an orientation than a method in itself. As with other approaches, much is left to the individual teacher’s interpretation, skills and expertise.
4. **Meanwhile in Hungary**

When discussing language teaching developments, reforms and achievements, we need to remember that all these issues are not only time-, but place-bound as well. So, mention must be made of the Hungarian aspects of these topics. Despite all the good intentions declared and all the efforts made, statistics show that in terms of foreign language knowledge, Hungary is still lagging behind the average of the European Union.

A deep analysis of the problems falls beyond the scope of this thesis; neither is it incorporated in the initial research question. However, the general condition of the primary and secondary education deeply affects the status and the tasks of the adult education, so a brief discussion of this topic may be justified here.

In Hungary, students start learning a second language relatively early; it is compulsory to start in fourth grade but a lot of children start it even earlier. The number of contact hours is also relatively acceptable - still, by the time they leave primary and secondary school, their language proficiency is generally lagging behind the expected level.

It is not too far-fetched to state that there should be some general inefficiency in the methods used, or systemic faults, then.

I am trying to list some of the possible problems that experts already pointed out, such as:

- there is no continuity between school types: no matter what level students achieved by the 8th grade, when starting secondary school they generally start again from the beginning;
- Language is treated as just another subject; an end in itself. As the content-based experts already showed, language learning would be more effective if - similarly to the bilingual education - language would be used to transfer some meaning. This would give students what they expect from language learning: practical and relevant knowledge that can be used
beyond test-writing as well;

- The inefficiency of language lessons can also be attributed to the general structure of Hungarian education, where students are overburdened. It is practically impossible to teach something in the 8th lesson of the day.

- Mention must be made of the status of the teachers employed in the public sector; their salary is still lagging behind the level of graduates from other sector; and the working conditions and administrative burdens are crying out for further reforms.

- It is almost a commonplace that in Hungarian education insufficient emphasis is put on developing critical thinking skills. Instead, fact-based knowledge is favoured, still.

- A revision of Hungary's national curriculum was launched in 2017 in response to declining performance in PISA 2015.
5. The Research

5.1. Aims and methodology

The idea was to prepare two similar questionnaires, one for teachers and one for students and thus evaluate and compare their views, attitudes and experiences about language learning and teaching (primarily Business English - this was emphasised in the invitation as well).

Besides the obvious platforms (Facebook, friends) I have posted the questionnaire for teachers on LinkedIn in the ESL Professional group and was surprised that I received more than 90 replies overnight from teachers all over the world.

The structure of the questionnaire was as follows:

After demography-related questions, the questionnaire required some responses to statements on a Likert scale of 1-7, where score 1 signifies strong disagreement and 7 signifies strong agreement.

The statements were compiled to elicit answers on respondents’ attitudes concerning the priorities and proportion of content and form on the lessons. (For example: “The focus of the lesson is on the topic or subject matter”).

My aim was to distil the general view on the desired focus of language teaching. Intentionally, I have placed contradictory statements to check coherence.

Respondents also had to indicate the frequency of using authentic materials during the lesson - a pie chart was prepared to give a general idea.

The second part was two ranking exercise - activities then resources were given to be ranked based on frequency, with the aim to receive a picture about the lessons. What I planned initially was to explore how the general concepts in the first part are reflected in the activities and resources used.

The questionnaires ended with optional open-ended questions, referring to the difficulties currently experienced and also an open-ended statement to finish about their view on the best way a student can learn a language.

I have completed the quantitative study with a qualitative one: I invited an HR representative of a multinational company for an interview and asked her to describe the process and issues of the corporate language courses.

5.2. Survey analysis

Teachers have answered from the following countries:
Algeria, Argentina (2), Australia, Austria, Brazil (4), Canada, China (2), Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, France (2), Germany (5), GREECE, Hungary (11), India (5), Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan (2), Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia (3), Malta, Mexico, Morocco (2), Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Republic of Ireland, ROMANIA, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia (5), Serbia, Spain (6), The Netherlands (2), Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, UK (8), USA (7), Venezuela, Vietnam

Probably because the questionnaire was published on a professional site, mostly experienced teachers are represented among the respondents:

Another questionnaire was prepared for students, where I managed to reach out another segment: respondent students were mostly from Hungary and representative of a younger generation.

Most of the students study Business English in in-company courses and at a level of upper-intermediate or higher:
The first group of questions was to indicate how far they agree or disagree with certain statements. Answers were given on a scale of 7, where 1 meant “strongly disagree” and 7 meant “strongly agree”.

The same question was posed for teachers and the students. The green charts below show the teachers’ answers, while the pink charts indicate the summary of the students’ answers.

The statements of the questionnaire are put in bold:

**Students can learn most when they have free discussions during the lesson.**

As it is shown below, the importance of free discussion was unanimously supported by teachers and students alike (although teachers were more moderately in agreement and there were some neutral and disagreeing answers, too.)

**The focus of the lesson is on the topic or subject matter.**

Again, the majority of both teachers and students supported this idea. I intended this to be the
main question, since the primacy of the content is the basic assumption of all content-based approaches and it seems that very few participants questioned this statement.

It is very important to teach in depth about the structure of the language.

If we compare the distribution of responses with the previous statements, it is spectacular that the number of “neutral” and disagreeing responses increased for these grammar-structure related statements. The proportion of the neutral answers is surprisingly similar for both teachers and students (20-21%).

There are more people willing to learn ABOUT the language, but a significant rate of both teachers and students have doubts about it.

(In retrospection, the statement would have been better to be phrased in a way that it refers more to grammar explanations)
The primary focus of the classes is on practicing communication skills.

Almost everyone accepted this statement; what is more, most of the votes fell on “strongly agree”. Among the students, there was not even neutral answer, among the teachers there was one neutral and one “strongly disagree” statement.

I was wondering about the background of the “strongly disagree” answer and looked at the individual answer. The respondent later on indicated that he/she strongly agrees with the statement that content and language should be given equal focus.

Respondents unanimously supported the idea that language learning should serve a purpose, which is communication; so, it can confidently be stated that the first paradigm shift has completely taken place all around the world.

Language learning is priority, content learning is incidental

This proved to be a controversial statement - intentionally. It is the inverse of a statement of which I expected to hear unanimous agreement about. Here, we can see a very emphatic reservation: 30.2% of the teachers gave NEUTRAL answer, 33.3 % disagreed (strongly, simply
or slightly) and 36.5 % agreed. In other words, opinions differ, but on average it means that teachers wouldn’t give an absolute primacy to either side - probably a balanced view is established.

I have separated the answers of respondents into 3 groups (those who didn’t agree (1), those who were neutral (2) and those who supported language priority over content (3)) and looked at their replies separately to the following question in order to identify their ideas for the priority of the lesson: Equal emphasis is put on the content and the language.

My findings were the following:

(1) Those teachers (31 persons) who replied that language should NOT be given priority over content, on average agreed (with an average score of 5.35) with the statement that Equal emphasis is put on the content and the language.

(2) Those teachers who practically abstained from giving priority to either language or content (29 persons) also agreed with that Equal emphasis is put on the content and the language.

(3) Those teachers who agreed with the idea that language learning is a priority over content (35 persons) although in somewhat less extent, but slightly agreed with the idea that Equal emphasis is put on the content and the language.

Students, on the other hand, seem to maintain the standpoint that content learning should be secondary.

Students can progress most in their language knowledge when they receive a comprehensible input that is slightly more advanced than their current level.

Stephen Krashen’s comprehensible input idea seems to be inevitably acceptable both for
teachers and students. As for the students, there was not a single vote against this statement.

**Equal emphasis is put on the content and the language**

From the previous answers, it is not surprising that this statement was convincing for most of the teachers. More than two-third, 67.7 % of the teachers voted for agreement. Similarly, the majority of students accepted the idea as well.

And now the controversial issue arrived:

**Lessons are organised around certain language functions or structures, with an appropriate topic demonstrating it.**
(In other words: is it still possible to arrange a ‘present perfect’ lesson?)

It was surprising to see that most of the teachers and most of the students still find it a working practice; so, from this statement it appears that learning about language structure still enjoys priority. It is possible though, that the phrasing of my statement was not sufficient.

As for using authentic materials:

Both teachers and students stated that authentic materials are an organic part of the lessons - frequently used.

In this question I asked the teachers about their preferred classroom activities.

It is spectacular from the graph above that “group discussion” is the winner, as the most frequently used activity.

For better visibility, I calculated the average score for each activity and set up the following order of preference (the lower the score the more preferred i.e. more frequently used the activity
is):

**The rank of activities in the order of frequency - teachers’ answers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Group discussion</td>
<td>3,12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reading for information</td>
<td>3,38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Role play</td>
<td>3,45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Watching a video to initiate debate</td>
<td>3,78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gap-fill and vocabulary exercises</td>
<td>3,88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Grammar explanation</td>
<td>4,17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Grammar exercises</td>
<td>4,40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preference order clearly shows that communicative and content-based approaches have supplanted the grammar-centred attitude.

I have repeated the ranking calculation in the case of the students and received the following:

**The rank of activities in the order of frequency - students’ answers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Watching a video to initiate debate</td>
<td>3,13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Group discussion</td>
<td>3,70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reading for information</td>
<td>3,90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Role play</td>
<td>4,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Grammar exercises</td>
<td>4,17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gap-fill and vocabulary exercises</td>
<td>4,30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Grammar explanation</td>
<td>4,83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the students’ ranking, video activities are placed first, to ignite conversation. Logically, group discussions follow.

It is interesting to notice how teachers’ and students’ views differ in the relation of grammar explanation and grammar exercises. It seems that teachers are a little more insistent on giving input. However, there is a slight contradiction here: the majority of students strongly agreed with the statement that supported in-depth learning about the structure of the language (3rd statement of the questionnaire). How is it possible that with strong preference for structured knowledge they still put grammar explanation to the last place?

A possible reason can be that through reading and with all the language input, awareness of the language structure is enhanced as well, and this skill is practised with the exercises, before it is FINALLY reinforced by the explicit explanation.

The students’ order of preference beautifully exemplifies the approach (used by Task-Based
Language Teaching Methodology) that replaced the traditional PPP order.

1. Presentation
2. Check concept
3. Highlight the form
4. Controlled practice
5. Less controlled practice
6. Skills work, discussion, etc.

The rank of sources used in the order of frequency - teachers’ answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Authentic materials (profession related)</td>
<td>3,14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Published coursebook with CD</td>
<td>3,35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Newspapers, blogs</td>
<td>3,42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Videos and films</td>
<td>3,67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Grammar exercises</td>
<td>3,92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“Unplugged lesson” with no material</td>
<td>3,94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Board games</td>
<td>4,51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rank of sources used in the order of frequency - students’ answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Newspapers, blogs</td>
<td>3,30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Published coursebook with CD</td>
<td>3,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Videos and films</td>
<td>3,42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grammar exercises</td>
<td>3,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Authentic materials (profession related)</td>
<td>4,27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“Unplugged lesson” with no material</td>
<td>4,53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Board games</td>
<td>4,97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is remarkable in comparing students’ and teachers’ order of sources is the placement of profession-related authentic materials (first place in the teachers’ list, while only on fifth place on the students’ list).

My explanation would be (allowing that this is merely a tentative idea) that the respondent teachers were vastly experienced professionals (as it can be seen on the initial “years of profession” chart), so they probably gathered a vast amount of resources and this can enable
them to use these so frequently. For students, resources available on the internet are ranked first. Published coursebooks are still favoured with both areas of respondents (and, as it seems, all around the world). But - the fact is noteworthy that they are ranked second AFTER some kind of authentic material!
The “no material” lesson is not too popular, no wonder, since professional knowledge usually requires more serious resource materials than General English classes. Boardgames were not frequented either, perhaps with the same reasons.

Please list some language coursebooks that you find useful during your Business English studies and indicate why you like them:

Students indicated that they used various books. Some of the recurring titles were: In Company series, Market Leader, Business Result, as well as Intelligent Business highlighted for their authenticity.

With the 96 teachers who replied, I found challenging to summarise their opinions of published coursebooks. As it could be expected, opinions and experiences differ in this regard.

I must mention though, that several replies were similar to the following: “None, all too generic and normally behind current business thinking”. The world (and this especially holds true for the business world) is changing so quickly that language books may become (or appear) outdated within a short time.

Lots of mentions were made on self-prepared materials and a variety of sources.

It was great to realise that most of the books mentioned are available in Hungary, too.

The most frequented favourites are: Market Leader (22 teachers mentioned), Intelligent Business (9 mentions), Business Benchmark (3 mentions), Business Result, Business Basics, Business Objectives, The Business 2.0, as well as the ESP and Skills series by MacMillan Education.

Several teachers highlighted that coursebooks nowadays contain digital workbooks (MyEnglishlab) that makes them more interesting to use outside the classroom and make a real step towards blended learning.

In what areas are you currently experiencing difficulties?

More than 25% of the Business English Teachers indicated that he/she is experiencing problems with motivation. Thirteen teachers experience discontentment with his/her professional knowledge (they were usually lacking more in-depth knowledge of the corporate-business realm).

Insecurity to use 21st century technology is also frequently listed among the “difficulties”, as
well as some complaints of students’ cancellation due to work commitments.

As for students, almost half of the respondents have problems with self-confidence in speaking and almost one-third reported difficulties with motivation. The third characteristic area for difficulties was mixed-level groups and some students indicated that the materials used are not relevant to their needs.

And the last (but not less relevant) task on the questionnaire for both teachers and students was to finish a sentence to summarise their view on the prerequisite of effective learning. The question was:

Please finish the sentence:

In my experience, students can learn most effectively when.... (for teachers) and I can learn most effectively when.... (for students)

The most characteristic answers of students were: feeling inspired/engaged with interesting topics, clearly determined requirement and goals, prompt feedback, continuity in the practice. Teachers contributed with ideas like: the lesson should be motivating, engaging, varied in methods, relevant to students’ job, with applicable knowledge, personalized, and supporting learner’s autonomy.

Some insights comparing teachers’ views inside and outside Hungary

Although I have come to several conclusions, there was still something missing from the comparison: In what ways do the opinions of teachers inside and outside Hungary differ?

From the collection of the replies, I separated the two groups and looked at the average results in the hope of identifying potential differences, if there are any:

The average score on the Likert scale for the given statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Teachers total</th>
<th>Teachers in Hungary</th>
<th>Teachers outside Hungary</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students can learn most when they have free discussions during the lessons.</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>-1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The focus of the lesson is on the topic or subject matter.</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is very important to teach in depth about the structure of the language.</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The primary focus of the classes is on practicing communication skills.</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language learning is priority, content learning is incidental.</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can progress most in their language knowledge when they receive a comprehensible input that is slightly more advanced than their current level.</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal emphasis is put on the content and the language.</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons are organised around certain language functions or structures, with an appropriate topic demonstrating it.</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>-1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensible and meaningful content increases students' motivation</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some characteristics immediately grabbed my attention: there is absolutely no difference between Hungarian and non-Hungarian teachers concerning two statements (“The focus of the lesson is on the topic or subject matter.” and “Comprehensible and meaningful content increases students' motivation”) and these two statements are those that are among the most important (emphatic) principles of the content-based approaches.

Taking the negative differences that signify that Hungarian teachers are inclined to agree LESS than the non-Hungarians: I conclude that Hungarian teachers are a little more sceptical of the relevance of free discussions - actually, their stance was converging to the neutral 4 score for the statement “Students can learn most when they have free discussions during the lessons”.

Although I am trying to avoid the trap of being stereotypical, still I cannot help but think about a well-known Hungarian feature that it is not among our strengths to have free-discussions in class. Hungarian teachers nowadays (based on my research) definitely wouldn’t put it on the first place.

However, Hungarian teachers have the tendency to disagree with the statement “Language learning is priority, content learning is incidental” - with an average score of 3.82, which is the lowest average score that occurred in this research. And this convincingly supports the statement - and can be regarded as an answer to my question - that in Hungary the Prussian-era seems to have already passed.

With a similar method (calculating the average scores per persons and thus creating a ranking order) I compared the activities used by Hungarian and non-Hungarian teachers and found the following (quite relevant) differences: Hungarian teachers use more videos and less reading texts than non-Hungarians (which was somewhat surprising for me, I was wondering if it is the sign of a new era after so many years of preference of written materials).

In all “locations”, however, in and out of Hungary, grammar exercises lost their priority and feature the lowest on the frequency list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ average ranking of frequency of activities</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Non-Hungary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar exercises</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group discussion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading for information</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching a video to initiate debate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap-fill and vocabulary exercises</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar explanation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A similar interesting comparison is for the resources used (based on frequency).
Separating the results for Hungarian and international groups, I can see that Hungarian teachers use coursebooks with less frequency - and some of them favours “unplugged” lessons!

Teachers’ average ranking of resources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Non-Hungary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar exercises</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published coursebook with CD]</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Unplugged” lesson, without any material</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos and films</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic materials related to my profession</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers, blogs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boardgames</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3. The interview

After having collected the views of the participants of the language courses, my next goal was to gain some insight into the process of corporate language courses from the point of view of the sponsor or customer: the Company.

I managed to arrange an interview with the Competence - and Organizational Development Leader of a big multinational company located in the North-East region of Hungary. The company manufactures automotive parts and tools and has approximately 5,000 employees at its two factories. My interviewee has been working for one and a half years in her current position and before that she spent more than 10 years as a Training Team-leader for the same company, so she has wide experience of corporate trainings including language courses.

The summary of the interview is as follows:
The language development programme of the company started in 2005. The working language of the company being English, basically every white-collar professional is expected to speak the language in order to communicate with their superiors and the international headquarters.
Mainly white-collar workers and managers take part in the language courses teaching English and German, to a lesser extent Russian or Spanish, while non-resident (expatriate) employees study Hungarian. Although theoretically every employee can be entitled to participate in the programme, due to their shift schedules blue collar workers can less likely to do so.

Classroom (face-to face) education takes place in small groups (3-8 persons) or one-to-one lessons - 90-minute sessions twice per week, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, in order to leave the core working hours unaffected. Another form of the language courses is
organised from the international headquarters of the company: native teacher-led virtual courses can be attended once a week for 60 minutes and besides individual consultation can also be called for.

A total 300-350 employees study within the framework of the programme. The main idea for the language programme, as well as the other competency development programmes, is to provide employees with all the necessary training possibilities for their jobs.

The 60-hour courses start twice a year, while one-to-one lessons are held continuously. There are no language-exam requirements - the main goal is to equip employees with the level of proficiency necessary to their position held. As for the evaluation, the company has its own online placement test for the management information system. Naturally, the contracted language school has their own placement and evaluation system. After the 60-hour course is completed, a level-final exam is taken with a teacher other than the one who taught the course. The prerequisite of taking part in the next course is a successful completion of the level-final exam.

According to the procurement policy of the company, a tender is released in every third year and the accredited training program of the successful tenderer will be purchased. Thus, the main core of the language course is the material and published course books the language school offers as part of the accredited programme. There can be slight modifications to the pre-set syllabus based on the group’s requirements for a tailor-made extension of the material. Individual training needs can be met rather in the case of the one-to-one courses or the individual consultation opportunities of the virtual training.

The emphatic training campaign of the company is also connected to the fact that due to the deficiencies of the institutional language education in Hungary, even highly educated employees’ language proficiency leaves room for improvement, so the programme is supposed to make up for the insufficiencies of the secondary - and tertiary - education.

As for the difficulties experienced with the trainings, the professional mentioned the time schedule of the employees - the intention is to hold the language lessons before 9 am and after 3 pm so that they should not interfere with meetings and other job engagements. Postings abroad sometimes hinder regular attendance on the lessons.

As it is a widely known issue in corporate language trainings, students should sometimes be reminded of the fact that a 60-hour course is not sufficient for making good progress without the complementary study at home. And with having company courses on this scale, it can also be a challenge to find motivated language teachers with the expected proficiency level.
There are regular lesson observations to ascertain that the required quality level is being maintained. These observations sometimes produce controversial results. “It is neither better, nor worse than I used to have at secondary school” my interviewee reports, “we take the book, there is some listening and then do the tasks from the workbook. When someone does not wish to contribute to the lesson, then he/she is not called for.” All in all, the methodology is seen as somewhat traditional. There have been initiatives and experiments to extend the programme with online language teaching both in the form of following an individual virtual plan - especially for those who have difficulties with scheduling participation to take part in the face-to-face classroom sessions - and also webinars and virtual classrooms. These forms of course delivery have not yet been widespread, though.


## Final remarks and implications

The main focus of the quantitative research was to collect and compare views (both from teachers’ and students’ side) on how Business English teaching is carried out these days, what approaches are used and where teachers turn for useful resources.

With a simple method of summary, taking the average score of the statements, I provide hereby the ranked list for teachers and students to highlight the similarities and differences in their view and also to establish general tendencies for our time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ answers</th>
<th>Students’ answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensible and meaningful content increases students’ motivation</td>
<td>The primary focus of the classes is on practicing communication skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>6.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The primary focus of the classes is on practicing communication skills.</td>
<td>Students can progress most in their language knowledge when they receive a comprehensible input that is slightly more advanced than their current level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can progress most in their language knowledge when they receive a comprehensible input that is slightly more advanced than their current level.</td>
<td>The focus of the lesson is on the topic or subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The focus of the lesson is on the topic or subject matter.</td>
<td>Comprehensible and meaningful content increases students’ motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>5.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons are organised around certain language functions or structures, with an appropriate topic demonstrating it.</td>
<td>Equal emphasis is put on the content and the language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can learn most when they have free discussions during the lessons.</td>
<td>Students can learn most when they have free discussions during the lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal emphasis is put on the content and the language.</td>
<td>Lessons are organised around certain language functions or structures, with an appropriate topic demonstrating it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is very important to teach in depth about the structure of the language.</td>
<td>It is very important to teach in depth about the structure of the language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language learning is priority, content learning is incidental.</td>
<td>Language learning is priority, content learning is incidental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first and most important observation is that, on average, participants tended to accept all the statements. Given the fact that score 4 signifies neutrality, none of the statements was met with strong disapproval. But even so, the two least approved statement (both from the teachers’ and the students’ side) referred to a language learning scenario when the main emphasis is put on form at the expense of content.

Thus, the main conclusion that can be drawn from the questionnaires is that a balanced focus is being pursued where attention to language form cannot have exclusivity. Language structures can be examined within the context of and together with the subject matter and all activities should serve the purpose of practising communication skills.

The initial hypothesis that the focus of language teaching (with special regard to Business English) is shifted to content can be confirmed as a generally accepted view nowadays in adult education both in Hungary and worldwide. At the same time, participants of the learning process also strive...
for not to lose sight of learning *about* language structure.

My other observation is that the fact that although the two questionnaires reached participants from very different backgrounds (mostly experienced teachers from all around the Globe and mostly younger Business English learners in Hungary) and still they produced similar outcome may signify that Hungary is up-to-date with the global tendencies in terms of language teaching for adults.

However, my interview with the training professional at a big multinational company leads to the conclusion that corporate language courses in Hungary still have a tendency for somewhat traditional, coursebook-reliant approaches.

There are certain factors that may hinder drawing far-reaching conclusions from this research. First, especially for the student questionnaire, the number of the respondents was quite low to regard it really representative. Similarly, the comparison of Hungarian students’ experiences with that of international teachers can be accepted with reservations. Although, as the statement-analysis shows above, there is a similar picture unfolding, so these experiences - with some reservation - still appear to be comparable.

My research has gained a feature that was not present in the original plan. From the respondents teachers two group emerged with an emerging idea that a comparison could be useful between views and teaching habits of Hungarian and international teachers in order to see how up-to-date our country is. I have made the comparison, but knowing that a bigger sample of data would be necessary for a full conclusion.

For further study, I would recommend questions aiming to explore and compare attitudes to language learning on a deeper level (perhaps with statements that would provoke disagreement) as well as ideas of best practices and innovative activities.
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Appendices

Questionnaire for Business English Teachers

Questionnaire for Business English Students
Questionnaire for Business English Teachers

This questionnaire is meant to support my thesis at Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary. The topic of the research is ELT approaches in corporate language courses. Your answers are anonymous and confidential. Unless you indicate it in the end, your email address is not recorded. Thank you for your contribution! Best regards, Katalin Lantos

*Required

1. In what setting do you teach Business English? *
   
   Tick all that apply.

   - [ ] In-company courses
   - [ ] Language school
   - [ ] Private lessons
   - [ ] Other: __________________________

2. In which country are you currently teaching? *

3. How long have you been teaching English?
   
   Mark only one oval.

   - [ ] for less than 3 years
   - [ ] 3-5 years
   - [ ] 5-10 years
   - [ ] more than 10 years

4. Please list some of the business sectors in which your students work

   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

5. Students can learn most when they have free discussions during the lessons. *
   
   Mark only one oval.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Strongly disagree  [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Strongly agree

6. The focus of the lesson is on the topic or subject matter. *
   
   Mark only one oval.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Strongly disagree  [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Strongly agree
7. It is very important to teach in depth about the structure of the language. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

8. The primary focus of the classes is on practicing communication skills. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

9. Language learning is priority, content learning is incidental. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

10. Students can progress most in their language knowledge when they receive a comprehensible input that is slightly more advanced than their current level. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

11. Equal emphasis is put on the content and the language. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

12. Lessons are organised around certain language functions or structures, with an appropriate topic demonstrating it. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

13. Comprehensible and meaningful content increases students' motivation *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
14. In the lessons I use authentic materials: 
* Mark only one oval. 

- 1 – Never 
- 2 – Rarely 
- 3 – Occasionally 
- 4 – Sometimes 
- 5 – Frequently 
- 6 – Usually 
- 7 – Every time 

15. Please rank the following activities used in the English lessons - based on frequency (1 means the most frequently used, 7 means the least frequently used) You need to tick ONE in each row and ONE in each column * 
* Mark only one oval per row. 

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16. Please rank the following resources used in the English lessons - based on frequency (1 means the most frequently used, 7 means the least frequently used) You need to tick ONE in each row and ONE in each column * 
* Mark only one oval per row. 

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17. Please list some language coursebooks that you find useful during teaching Business English and indicate why you like them:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

18. In what areas are you currently experiencing difficulties? 
* Tick all that apply. 

- problems with motivation 
- lack of professional knowledge 
- lack of technology 
- lack of self-confidence in teaching Business English 
- insecurity in using 21st century teaching methods 
- Other:
19. Please finish the sentence: In my experience, students can learn most effectively when.....

20. If you have any comments or feedback, please let me know:

21. If you are available for a short interview (either in person or online) please indicate your email address
Questionnaire for Business English Students

Please support my thesis research on corporate language courses by filling this questionnaire. Your answers are anonymous and confidential. Thank you for your contribution! Best regards, Katalin Lantos

*Required

1. In what setting do you study Business English? *
   
   Tick all that apply.
   
   [ ] In-company courses
   [ ] Language school
   [ ] Private lessons
   [ ] Other: __________________________

2. In which country are you currently studying? *

3. What is your age? *
   
   Mark only one oval.
   
   [ ] under 25 years old
   [ ] 25-30 years old
   [ ] 30-35 years old
   [ ] 35-40 years old
   [ ] 40-45 years old
   [ ] 45-50 years old
   [ ] 50 years or above

4. What is your current level of English *
   
   Mark only one oval.
   
   [ ] pre-intermediate
   [ ] intermediate
   [ ] upper-intermediate
   [ ] advanced
   [ ] proficient

5. Which sector do you work in?

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

6. Students can learn most when they have free discussions during the lessons. *
   
   Mark only one oval.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

   Strongly disagree  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  Strongly agree
7. **The focus of the lesson is on the topic or subject matter.**  
   *Mark only one oval.*  
   
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8. **It is very important to learn in depth about the structure of the language.**  
   *Mark only one oval.*  
   
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9. **The primary focus of the classes is on practicing communication skills.**  
   *Mark only one oval.*  
   
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10. **Language learning is priority, content learning is incidental.**  
    *Mark only one oval.*  
    
    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |
    |---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
    | Strongly disagree | | | | | | | Strongly agree |

11. **I can progress most when I receive material that I can understand but that is slightly more advanced than my current level.**  
    *Mark only one oval.*  
    
    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |
    |---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
    | Strongly disagree | | | | | | | Strongly agree |

12. **In the lessons equal emphasis is put on the content and the language.**  
    *Mark only one oval.*  
    
    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |
    |---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
    | Strongly disagree | | | | | | | Strongly agree |

13. **Lessons are organised around certain language functions or structures with an appropriate topic demonstrating it.**  
    *Mark only one oval.*  
    
    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |
    |---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
    | Strongly disagree | | | | | | | Strongly agree |

14. **The content of the lesson is relevant and the knowledge can be put to use promptly**  
    *Mark only one oval.*  
    
    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |
    |---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
    | Strongly disagree | | | | | | | Strongly agree |
15. In the lessons we use authentic materials: *
Mark only one oval.

1 – Never
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18. Please list some language coursebooks that you find useful during your Business English studies and indicate why you like them:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

19. In what areas are you currently experiencing difficulties?
Tick all that apply.

☐ problems with motivation
☐ lack of self-confidence in speaking
☐ mixed-level groups
☐ insufficient student speaking time
☐ not relevant materials
☐ Other: ___________________________
20. Please finish the sentence: I can learn most effectively when....

21. If you have any comments or feedback, please let me know:

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________