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**BUSINESS ENGLISH AS AN INTELLECTUAL BRIDGE –
MANAGEMENT OF THE SYNCRETIC CASE STUDY METHOD,
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES IN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT
AND BLENDED LEARNING FOR NON-NATIVE BUSINESS
ENGLISH AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES STUDENTS
IN AN INTERCULTURAL ENVIRONMENT**

Summary. Business English can be viewed as a core cross-cultural competence in today's globalized village. It is also an intellectual bridge for better understanding. This paper is based on my own teaching and education management experience of more than fifteen years in the United States, Canada and Poland where I have taught Business English and management. Instructors of Business English as a second language (ESL) and management sciences could greatly enhance their students' learning by employing the case-study method and e-learning in tandem. I outline the characteristics of what I call the syncretic case study method which is a blend of two case study approaches, the Western Ontario University and Harvard methods. Business English as a central component of curriculum must take into account the interconnected and multicultural world

Keywords: syncretic case study innovation, organizational change in education management, Business English, intellectual bridge, management teaching methods, cross cultural competences

**BUSINESS ENGLISH JAKO INTELEKTUALNY POMOST –
ZARZĄDZANIE METODĄ SYNKRETYCZNAJĄ JAKO CASE STUDY,
ORGANIZACYJNE ZMIANY W ZARZĄDZANIU EDUKACJĄ ORAZ
PROCES "BLENDED LEARNING" DLA STUDENTÓW BUSINESS
ENGLISH I ZARZĄDZANIA W INTERKULTUROWYM ŚRODOWISKU**

Streszczenie. Business English może być postrzegany jako kluczowa kompetencja w globalnej wiosce. Jest on również intelektualnym pomostem lepszej komunikacji

w biznesie. Poniższy artykuł jest podsumowaniem mojego ponad 15-letniego doświadczenia w nauczaniu i zarządzaniu edukacją w Kanadzie, USA i Polsce. Artykuł przedstawia zalety zastosowanie metody synkretycznej, będącej wypadkową metod nauczania za pomocą case studies przez uniwersytety Harvarda i Western Ontario. Business English jako centralna część programu komunikacji w organizacji musi brać pod uwagę powiązany i multikulturowy świat.

Słowa kluczowe: Metoda synkretyczna innowacja, zmiany organizacyjne w zarządzaniu edukacją, Business English, intelektualny pomost, zarządzanie – metody nauczania, kompetencje interkulturowe w zarządzaniu

1. Acquisition of business english communication competence

In the context of a growing globalization paradigm and the increasing importance of English as a global language, communication skills in, and knowledge of Business English and communication management skills is self-evident. A task for instructors of Business English and communication in management lecturers is to discover and develop more efficient and effective instructional programs and methodologies. The acquisition of English as a second language and managerial communication competencies requires on-going analysis and debate. I have concluded that the case study method in an e-learning arena may be one of the most efficient tools for conducting, organizing and managing Business English and communication in organization education. Furthermore, it can lead to the practical acquisition of Business English cross-cultural competences and abilities. Cultural, ethnic, racial, social and linguistic diversity are present in most international business dealings. Even in countries where only minor cultural and racial differences exist, Business English and management teaching as a subject must take into account the interconnected and multicultural world.

The case study method, supported by e-learning, can be a very powerful tool for acquiring communication skills in business and in the sphere of the interpersonal. The challenges are multi-dimensional. The instructor must find suitable cases that can assist the student to centralize and solidify previous knowledge and at the same time provide a rich educational, cross-cultural and linguistic component. Additionally, these cases should focus on the student's acquisition of broad managerial skills, and assist Business English college and university instructors to adapt to their new roles as facilitators of learning in a traditional setting that is supported by e-learning. Sławek Magala of the Rotterdam School of Management has stated that, "Managers are paying lip service to cultural issues; they say that

culture and communication are important, but do little to improve either”.¹ The education of students of Business English, management and the social sciences has often failed to effectively address cross-cultural communication issues and challenges.

In this context, this paper seeks to answer the question of what sort of Business English and management communication skills might be required for global intercultural and cross-cultural competence. Also, I pose further questions regarding which business communication skills are being taught, acquired and fostered in management and Business English courses in colleges and universities where English is taught as a second language, or used for teaching in a non English-speaking country such as Poland. How best to teach so our students so they can acquire Business English and managerial communication skills for cross-cultural and communication competence, both personal and professional, in a globalized world?

2. English as a global language

According to Carmela Briguglio of the Curtin Business School, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia, quoting other researchers in the field, “There would seem little doubt that English is, increasingly, a global language. Even those who decry this fact acknowledge it.”² Although it is difficult to obtain precise data in this area, Crystal³ estimates that nearly one quarter of the world’s population, or between 1.2 and 1.5 billion people, are already fluent or competent in English. And ironically, while the number of ‘native speakers’ or ‘first language speakers’ of English may be declining. Furthermore, Crystal⁴ estimates the number of first language speakers of English in some 56 countries to be around 337 million while the number of second language speakers continues to grow.⁵

Is this enough to make English a ‘global’ language? According to Crystal⁶ English not only has a large number of first language (L1) speakers in a number of countries, but it has also been made the official language in a number of others (e.g. Ghana, Nigeria and Singapore) and a priority foreign language in many more. Kachru⁷ describes the spread of English as three concentric circles. The countries where there are most L1 speakers of English (e.g. UK & USA) represent the inner circle; the countries which were formerly colonized and where English is now the official language (e.g. India & Singapore) form the middle circle;

¹ Magala S.J.: Interface-Magazine of the RSM Erasmus University. Vol. 23, Issue 4, April 2007.

² Phillipson R., Skutnabb-Kangas T.: Englishisation: One dimension of globalization, [in:] Graddol D., Meinhof U.H. (eds.): English in a changing world, AILA Review 1999, no 13.

³ Crystal D.: English as a global language. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Graddol D., Meinhof U.H. (eds.): English in a changing world. AILA Review 1999, no 13.

⁶ Crystal D.: op.cit.

⁷ Ibidem.

and those where English is increasingly being taught as a foreign language (e.g. China, Greece & Poland) are in the expanding outer circle. The growth of English speakers coupled with economic developments on a global scale, new communications technologies, the explosion in international marketing and advertising, as well as mass entertainment have supported the continued expansion of English as a global 'lingua franca.' "There has never been a time when so many nations were needing to talk to each other so much. There has never been a time when so many people wished to travel to so many places (...) never has there been a more urgent need for a global language".⁸

The importance of English as a global language is likely to continue to grow in the foreseeable future⁹ and in the field of business, arguably even more so than in other areas. We need to keep in mind that many, if not most, future business interactions in the global arena will take place between English speakers from different national/cultural backgrounds, only some of whom will be L1 speakers of English. In this scenario, 'native speakers' will not necessarily be advantaged. Indeed they might well be disadvantaged, lured into a false sense of security by the belief that "everyone speaks English," and no extra effort is necessary. This false sense of security can develop in students and professionals in the expanding outer circle countries such as Poland, including international students studying in Poland, many of whom speak English as a second language.

3. The challenge

As stated earlier, our challenge is to better prepare the business graduate with Business English communication skills which will enable him or her to successfully negotiate through a web of multicultural complexities. Our goal is to manage Business English education and the acquisition of Business English managerial competencies to reflect the cultural, racial, social and linguistic diversity present in both globalized trade and in the world economy. The final product is a well-educated business graduate who is not only able to communicate in English, but is well aware of the existing diversity and challenges which he or she will face in the future. In my opinion, the present strategies and methods of managing Business English education do not provide complete answers to the above dilemma. Today's methods largely focus on acquiring either ESP (English for specific purposes), or on independent BET (Business English teaching). Additionally, most Business English courses focus on developing general communication skills. Our curriculum inheritance is characterized as follows:

⁸ Ibidem; Briguglio C.: Focus group interviews with CBS international students. Unpublished manuscript. Curtin University of Technology, Perth 2001.

⁹ Crystal D.: op.cit.

- Historically, Business English teaching and management methods were mainly adaptations to course books.
- The original assumption which was the foundations of the courses, that is, the grammar/vocabulary dichotomy, is invalid. This dichotomy produced ineffective and time consuming methods.
- Grammar as an element was subordinate to lexis.

Peter Daly from the EDHEC Business School (Lille - Nice, France) has also observed case studies available to language learners and teachers and elaborates on a methodology of how these case studies can be exploited to maximize student-talking time in the language classroom. He has stated, “Not all case studies are the same and with different levels of difficulty and skills trained the choice of case study is tantamount to the success of your class”.¹⁰

The most important consideration case study preparation and teaching is thorough case review and appropriate Internet-based support provided to each group commensurate with their level. The use of e-learning resources support business, intercultural management communication and managerial skills acquisition in addition to language skills. My method differs from Daly’s method, in which the principal goal is language acquisition with secondary attention given to the general business managerial communication skills required for one to become competent in today’s intercultural world village. According to Daly, “Case studies are extremely rich in content and can provide the learner with the potential to consolidate already acquired knowledge and train specific language and managerial skills. Language teachers inexperienced in the use of the case study method may be inhibited by the content-based nature of the case study and therefore shy away from using case studies in class. This teaching methodology should help teachers plan their classroom to ensure effective execution of a case study”.¹¹ Daly supports the notion of using suitable case studies which are not too content-led and do not presuppose an in-depth knowledge of a specific subject matter. This is, I believe, a viable alternative. “While there are various publications on the market which respond to the language teachers’ needs, there are some books that offer simulations with prescribed roles”,¹² while others integrate mini-cases at the end of each chapter dealing with a specific topic such as international marketing or finance.¹³

¹⁰ Daly P.: Methodology for Using Case Studies in the Business English Language Classroom. The Internet TESL Journal 2002, no 8(11). Retrieved in May 2006 from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Daly-CaseStudies/>.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Crowther-Alwyn J.: Business roles. 12 simulations for business English. CUP, Cambridge 1997; Crowther-Alwyn J.: Business roles. 12 simulations for business English. CUP, Cambridge 1999.

¹³ Cotton D., Falvey D., Kent S.: Market leader. Intermediate Business English. Pearson Education Limited, Longman 2000; Cotton D., Falvey D. Kent S.: Market leader. Upper-Intermediate Business English, Pearson Education Limited, Longman 2001.

4. Why the case study method?

At this point, I will address some obstacles that instructors discover in utilizing case study methods. Some of the factors which contribute to instructor “discomfort” are as follows:

- they do not feel confident;
- they have never used cases in the past;
- Business English books come with CD’s, and tests, and teacher support materials;
- the case study process is too loosely structured to some instructors who are inured to regimentation and predictability of textbooks;
- reaction to each case is unpredictable;
- Business English books usually carry reputable names and are recommended;
- case teaching may initially require more intensive preparation;
- e-learning support requires the possession of suitable technology and a good grasp of this technology.

Instructors who are accustomed to a transmission style of teaching may feel that teaching is not really happening if they use simulations or case studies.¹⁴ However, the advantages of case studies are numerous. Some of them are set out below adapted from Daly:

It is possible to inspire critical thinking and reflective learning in the learner.

- Change within a learning mode is a fresh approach.
- It is possible to train managerial communication skills, such as holding a meeting, negotiating a contract, or giving a presentation. Case studies force students into real-life situations that require them to get involved in managerial communication.
- The research often elevates the students’ knowledge of the complexities of the interconnected human environment. I believe this makes them better world citizens.
- Case studies foster collaborative learning and team-working skills in the language learner. Extensive research done by my colleague Magdalena Wyrwicka of the Poznan University College of Business and Foreign Languages indicates the following interpersonal skills needed for work success:
 - the ability to make contacts and communication;
 - friendliness and cooperation;
 - ability to adjust;
 - auto-reflection abilities;
 - openness to criticism;
 - ability to compromise¹⁵

¹⁴ Daly P.: op.cit.

¹⁵ Wyrwicka M.K.: Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Poznańskiej. Seria humanistyka i nauki społeczne 2000, nr 50.

- Improvement of the student's organizational skills can be substantial as case studies are sometimes very dense in information. The key is to condense this information into logical sections and organize them so that a clear picture of the problem/issue emerges.
- Case studies can be used to improve the student's written and oral communication. Non-verbal communication skills are also practiced by using case studies as students work together in close-knit groups.
- An instructor without a business background may be trained to effectively facilitate group of students who are studying a case.

It is very important to explain the case to students and in some cases read the case with them to explain what is expected. One can never assume that providing a student with an Internet link to a case, along with a brief explanation of the case, will suffice. I have often found that many advanced non-natives or native speakers do not possess adequate Business English vocabularies. Native speakers in the business community do need to study Business English, as it is a specialized ability and a skill that must be acquired.

5. Blended learning support for case studies

It is the role of the teacher to prepare learning support for the case using the e-learning arena, while adjusting his or her explanations according to the needs of learners. In this way, the teacher is both a facilitator of learning and students acquire both Business English, but also managerial and intercultural management skills which complement the English language competence.

Daly notes, "As far as interactive case studies go, two distinct types of case studies can be identified: those that provide the learner with targeted content input to practice a specific skill such as negotiating, interviewing, problem-solving or decision-making,¹⁶ and those which are more free to interpretation and call on the teacher to choose the preferred methodology and classroom strategy."¹⁷ I advocate methods of case utilization that are based on a combination of analytical review of available options and the discussion of pros and cons of the proposed solutions. The teacher should present business challenges and reference them to current events. The on-line e-learning must be monitored by the instructor to ensure the sources and sites are at a level appropriate for the linguistic level of the participants. The presented problems should accommodate the dialectics of the of Harvard case exploration that is flexible and allows for team and self-directed change. Also, the presentation of each case

¹⁶ Castle K., Palmer D.: Business assignments. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1989.

¹⁷ Witte A.E. (ed.): Interactive cases for business English. Ellipses, Paris 1999.

should accommodate adult learning theory: in other words, the material is meaningful and relevant to each student; the differing levels of case study difficulty that are available respect the fact that different adults learn at different speeds; parallels may be drawn between the students' own language and culture and those of English during the learning process; presentation respects the unique learning needs of adults such as cultural sensitivity and grammar acquisition difficulties; and finally, explanations of difficult concepts may be made in the students' native language.

6. The syncretic case study method

I propose a new paradigm for the instruction and management of Business English and communication in management teaching. The new paradigm includes the following points:

- Intensive teacher business management and postgraduate training in case study utilization, supported in a blended learning arena, before attempting utilization of case studies in the business English to enhance managerial and intercultural management communication competence acquisition.
- The language teacher should use original articles on business topics from the press, such as (Newsweek, The Economist, the business section of daily papers from the US, Canada, Australia and the UK, which are available on the internet daily), as well as government websites in English, websites from organizations including the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), the EU (European Union), UN (United Nations), and those from the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and various non-governmental organizations (NGO's).
- Steve McKenna, of the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand, has correctly observed, as I see it, that the highly analytical Western Ontario case study method and the dialectical Harvard case study method are not mutually exclusive.¹⁸ The synergy of these two methods is in detailed orchestration and modification of both methods. I call this new paradigm the syncretic case study method.

6.1. Formulation of the Syncretic Case Study Method

At present, the use of case studies in Business English as a means of acquiring managerial and intercultural communication competence for second language learners is rare in undergraduate studies where Business ESL and communication in management is taught.

¹⁸ McKenna S.: Organisational learning: "Live" case studies and the consulting process journal. *Team Performance Management* 1999, no 5(4).

Case studies, however, are more often part of the curriculum in graduate, postgraduate and executive Business English and communication in organization education courses. In most cases these courses lack the blended learning intensive support and intercultural communication management component that is needed for the successful implementation of this method.

McKenna observes, “We should expect, however, that the material in and substance of cases, and their interpretation, will vary constantly as they are used with different groups, of different ages, genders and cultures. In addition, we should also expect that the ways in which cases are used in learning will be different.” McKenna makes a distinction between two ways of using cases. He states, “Firstly, there is the so-called Western Ontario analytical approach. It is argued that this approach offers a framework for analysis and management decision and has a number of characteristics:¹⁹

- the case is carefully read;
- the problems are defined;
- the information is summarized;
- the information is analyzed;
- the problem definition is re-examined;
- a number of alternatives dealing with the problem are generated;
- each alternative is assessed according to its advantages and disadvantages;
- the alternatives are then evaluated.

In the interest of achieving competency in both Business English as a second language and acquiring managerial competence, the following adjustments to the “University of Western Ontario” method should be made:

- The case should be carefully read; and difficult vocabulary, idioms, etc., are to be explained using monolingual means while utilizing e-learning support.
- When the problems should be defined, the main problem is highlighted by a Business English instructor. The secondary case challenge should only be discussed with advanced groups.
- The information should be summarized and explained using simple sentences. Clarity in communication is emphasized.
- The information should be analyzed using graphs and a monolingual dictionary with a thesaurus.
- The problem definition is re-examined using a secondary dictionary and an encyclopedia on-line only if needed for clarity communication acquisition competence
- A number of alternatives to dealing with the problem are generated; this can only be

¹⁹ Gilbertson D., Gilbertson D.: op.cit.

accomplished at intermediate to advanced levels.

- Each alternative is assessed according to its advantages and disadvantages.
- The alternatives are then evaluated by the students, but only at upper intermediate to advanced levels.
- Whenever possible the facilitator of learning (a qualified instructor) should relate the case situation to local and regional socio-economic developments, cross-cultural, business and management trends that are eloquent of the global situation and how this situation meaningfully impacts the individual, his family, friends, business, communication competences, intercultural management and society.
- Students recommend an alternative and a strategy for implementation (for intermediate level and above).
- Students recommend an implementation plan, including the parameters of monitoring and control (for upper intermediate levels and up).
- Students present the plan in a formal presentation (for intermediate levels and up) while the teacher acts as a guide; the instructor is available for consultation, for explanation of difficult concepts, for assistance in assignment of roles to team members, and for clarification and confirmation of established goals.

The second method of using cases is the “Harvard” method. This method is more Socratic in style. McKenna states, “The case is explored through dialectic, “Where truth is relative, where reality is probabilistic, and where structural relationships are contingent” (Clough, cited in Barnes et al., 1994). It is an approach, which is premised on enabling “students to discover and develop their own unique framework for approaching, understanding, and dealing with business problems” (Clough, cited in Barnes et al., 1994). This approach mixed with an above “Western Ontario” is particularly appropriate to advanced learners of English, but can be modified for groups at lower levels. Related to the syncretic case method, McKenna suggests, “It could be argued that the “logic of enquiry” captured in the “Western” approach and the “process of discovery” represented in the “Harvard” method are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. We apply creative and imaginative discovery processes, for example, to the “problems” involved in a case and then apply the logic of enquiry to move towards a solution and recommendations. In fact, it might be said that we fit the two styles together, as some writers have done, to provide another approach: the consultancy method.²⁰ However, such an argument oversimplifies the essentially contradictory nature of the rigid and analytical “Western” approach which focuses on the outcome, and the dialectical “Harvard” approach, which focuses on the process. Furthermore, whereas the “Western” approach is concerned with “doing something”, as indeed is the consultancy method, after the application of a template of

²⁰ Ibidem.

enquiry to a problem(s), the “Harvard” approach is more free-flowing in its discussion of case issues.²¹

6.2. Implementing the Syncretic Method in Class

The syncretic case study method is designed specifically for the acquisition of Business English and management skills as an intercultural communication competence. The present target student population at the Poznan University College of Business and Foreign Languages and Global Partnership Management Institute are our Business ESL and management students and groups of managing executives throughout Wielkopolska province/ongoing research 2007-present/. I have somewhat modified Daly’s case study classroom method based on his approach. Daly has divided this section into three parts:

- case study introduction which deals with the preparation of the case study and the introduction of a problem solving analysis;
- case study class work; here the class is divided into sections which include meetings, presentations of findings and discussion of recommendations;
- debriefing the class; this is when the instructor gives feedback on language mistakes, managerial skills and the meeting documents and support materials used.²²

It is extremely important that the case studies are well prepared in advance so that each student knows what his or her role is. It is not sufficient to simply give the case study to the student and hope that they will understand how to use it. This is a mistake made by many instructors unfamiliar with the case study method. There are many ways for an instructor to introduce the case study to his student. The implementation of the syncretic method as I describe in the following paragraphs pertains especially to pre-intermediate and intermediate Business ESL and management sciences students:

The first step in using the case study method is to read the case study thoroughly with your students. Here you can address lexical and grammatical difficulties. Having your student groups each display the background information in a visual form is helpful to discussions of the groups. Use of the blackboard, whiteboard or flipchart to get a clear picture of the company background. As you can see in this example, the main information has been extracted from the case study, which is used later for further analysis.

²¹ McKenna S.: op.cit.

²² Daly P.: op.cit.

Company Name
ABC
Turnover
\$20 m
Profit in 2009
\$52500, 000
Number of Employees
1,400
Head Office
London, Ontario, Canada
Product Range
Biomedical equipment
Technology innovation

6.3. An Example of Visual Representation of Background Information in a Case Study

The instructor guides students in the research on the company which is the object of the case study. I often have students finding a company webpage, if possible. On-line literature can be of rich source of background data on the company, including such things as stock exchange data, the rank of the company in the industry, its market competence and the company's perceived role in the business world and society. This research and background reading helps a student acquire Business English competence, and contributes to the development of critical evaluation skills, so essential as both a business professional and as a private citizen. I recommend extracting only two or three key points to maintain clarity and cogency of communication.

After the case study has been initially examined, provide the students with some input on how they should analyze the case study. The problem solving analysis below is an example of how to get the students to analyze the case critically. During the case exploration phase, the main focus must be on analyzing, synthesizing, emphatic management, and critical evaluation of options. I have found students application of Waldemar Karwowski's method of applying conceptualized management to a case to anticipate variables and reach solutions to be most effective (Karwowski W, Lectures in Poznan Uuniversity College of Business and Foreign Languages 2006 on conceptualized management).

During all phases of the case study process the fusing of the Western Ontario and Harvard case study methods are implemented. The syncretic case method is identical to the Western Ontario method structurally, as outlined below:

- read the case several times;
- define the main issues/problems;
- set out the firm's objectives;
- identify options open to the firm;

- draw up some criteria to evaluate the options chosen;
- select the best option;
- decide on how the option should be implemented;
- draw up an action plan to implement the solution chosen.

Despite the method being focused on outcome, as in the Western Ontario method, the students are to implement the dialectic process of the Harvard method in all phases. That is to say, the creative and imaginative process through dialectic argumentation (Harvard) is required of the group during each phase. Assuming a case study group of six students, the students will rotate into at least one of the three key positions which help facilitate the Socratic approach. During each phase, for example, the three pivotal positions are: group leader, visionary, and Devil's Advocate. The group leader maintains the work and the related discussions; the visionary, is responsible for creating a range of possible explanations, and scenarios with subsequent branches and sequels; the Devil's Advocate plays the eternal critic and nay-sayer regarding proposals and decisions. My observation is that the Western Ontario method gives a sense of form and order to the case study process, which for most students is comfortable. The Harvard method is programmed into all the phases and becomes highly ritualized. Nonetheless, the participants internalize a very important skill: the capacity for self and group scrutiny and skepticism of individual and group decision-making. The well-known pitfalls of cognitive dissonance and Group Think theories should serve as cautionary signposts to both students and instructors. During all phases, the instructor serves as a facilitator to ensure the balance between the two methodological currents.

Importantly, the instructor must pre-teach the language required to discuss the case study. There are many publications on the market for teaching meeting, presentation or negotiation skills. It is important to select the skill you would like to focus on and teach the specific language. If we take meetings as an example, instructors could do some of the following:

- refer students to web sites to read up on the skill being practiced; a web search will reveal any number of interesting sites;
- if students have access to libraries, then they can read up on meeting skills in one of the many communication books on the market;
- brainstorm some key concepts of meetings, such as the type of meetings, the people at a meeting, verbs, etc.;
- move on to the language of meetings: provide the students with useful language input for both the chairperson and the participants, such as the language of contradicting and disagreeing, interrupting, taking the floor etc.;
- familiarize the students with the documents of the meeting - the form and content of agendas, minutes and memos; this should provide the student with more language

input such as matters arising out of the last meeting, absentees, etc.;

- divide the class into small groups; you can either ask them to form the groups themselves, or you can form the groups based on your class lists.

A case study is best discussed in small groups of four to six students. However, it is possible to divide 36 students in a seminar class into six groups of six and have them work on the same case. Students should be reminded it is the nature of business to expect the unknown (many elements of the case may never be known) and take managed risks to reach conclusions.

7. Discussion and conclusions

In my intellectual exploration of the possibilities regarding the instruction of Business ESL and management teaching a quote from Professor Ronald H. Coase, a Nobel memorial prize winner in economics in 1991 for his pioneering work *The Nature of the Firm. Advancing the Knowledge*, has remained as source of guidance for me. Professor Coase stated, “We should begin by taking a walk into the street and studying the real problems of the economic system” and continue, but it’s no good starting off with your techniques and then looking around for a problem to use them on”.²³

It has become clear to me that further research and funding is needed to more accurately discern which specific skills, and at what level, are essential and how should they be taught, fostered and developed in business students to equip them for successful interaction in a multicultural intertwined context. Successful communication and interactions in the future will require:

- an intermediate or higher level of competence with English;
- sensitivity to other cultures and intercultural awareness;
- sensitivity and receptivity to other ‘Englishes’;
- and, most importantly, competence in cross-cultural and intercultural communication.

I recommend using case studies to supplement present Business English and management teaching programs in colleges and universities. I estimate that increasing the use of case studies to 25-35% of course content at the pre-intermediate and intermediate levels, and 40-60% of instruction based on case studies at the upper-intermediate to advanced levels. My experience tells me that the study of grammar, syntax, semantics and structures can largely be done using case as an example of the text before or after discussion of the case.

²³ Parkin M., Bade R.: Economics. University of Western Ontario Canada, Addison-Wesley LTD, 2000.

In the writing of this article I often confronted my own notions of what is really important for our students. It is a source of my professional meaning. I think that the most valuable skill that may be acquired from case studies are the abilities involved in dealing with the unknown. This is a crucial skill for a future manager, engineer, business graduate economist or social scientist. The current era is punctuated by accelerating change, and the unknown is ubiquitous. In our own way I hope our efforts continue to provide bridges over which those who come after us will travel.

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