

BUSINESS ENGLISH STUDY FOR FUTURE ECONOMISTS: THE ROLE OF GENERAL ENGLISH ATTRITION



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Although this article summarizes some of the findings of a large-scale study of the language needs of economics students, it focuses less on the steps taken while carrying out the research than on the rationale behind it. This rationale relates to the lengthy period of disuse of general English during economics students' first year of undergraduate study (i.e., before they become business English students in the second year). The article presents evidence for processes of general English attrition that slowly set in and are deemed to be particularly detrimental to economics students of business English that require mastery of general English as a necessary prerequisite for further business English instruction.

Accordingly, the article concludes with a discussion of the findings' implications for planning the faculty's (business) English curriculum. It is hoped that this will spur curriculum renewal and, by encouraging reflection on pedagogical and curriculum issues in a tertiary setting, eventually make a case for providing foreign language instruction in the very first year at the faculty, and perhaps at a university-wide level. Likely benefits are the following: combating language attrition, easing the transition from general to business English study (i.e., for both teaching and learning), and, above all, enabling continuity in foreign language study.

Keywords: business English study, needs analysis, general English attrition, triangulation by sources and methods

INTRODUCTION

A major part of this paper focuses on the study conducted (Čepon, 2006) and its findings. The study included several types of analyses of business English (BE) students' linguistic needs that were devoted to determining the importance of BE teaching/learning for the professional needs of future economists, their existing mastery of general English (GE) and BE, their subjective wishes and expectations regarding BE instruction, and their learning

needs, strategies and styles.

This paper also deals with the issue of language attrition and presents evidence for this language phenomenon within BE study in a Slovenian environment – more precisely through the author's experience teaching English as a foreign language (FL) at The Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana (FELU). At FELU there is no organized FL instruction for first-year students, so students of economics spend a year not using GE before lectures in BE start in the second year. This one- (or more) year hiatus is deemed to be the greatest obstacle on BE students' road to successful FL learning. The study findings yielded useful information for all participants in the BE teaching/learning process – among the most beneficial for its potential improvement, the importance of continuous, uninterrupted FL study is emphasized.

LANGUAGE ATTRITION

The factors and situations affecting language attrition are admittedly very diverse – psychological, social, or linguistic (Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999). The expert literature offers various terms for gradual language attrition processes (e.g. regression, loss, shift, death, obsolescence (Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999), decay (Dressler, 1982) and language transformation (Dressler, 1988), which are not explained here. The term consistently used in this article is “language attrition.” The most frequently cited definition of this linguistic phenomenon is that this is “*a loss of any language or its part by an individual or language communities*” (Freed 1982, as cited in Weltens, 1989: 1).

Currently, the main language attrition research areas (merely listed here, but given more attention in the following sections) are possible existence of a learning method that hinders later language attrition (*the method effect*), the importance of individual maturity level and level of achieved foreign/second language literacy, real emphasis on individual language skills, the intensity of the foreign/ second language program, the different effect of second language attrition on language skills (*the skills effect*), the onset of the second language forgetting curve (*the typical forgetting curve effect*) and possible existence of a typical attrition order (*the typical attrition order effect*).

There are no clear answers to two main questions regarding the right learning method – that is, whether formal FL teaching is effective, and which method is the best. Some authors (e.g., Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999) conclude that “*explicit teaching engenders more durable skills than immersion and direct methods.*”

The issue of prior knowledge and its influence on later attrition processes is closely connected with seeking the best learning method. With regard to attrition, some researchers still believe that individuals at all language levels are equally subject to language attrition (Weltens *et al.*, 1989; Bahrck, 1984). In contrast, others conclude that individuals with a high language knowledge are much less subject to language attrition (Bahrck, 1984; Pratella 1969, as cited in Weltens *et al.*, 1989: 206; Godsall-Myers 1981, as cited in Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999: 7; Robinson 1985, as cited in Weltens *et al.*, 1989: 206). Expert literature from the area of the FL literacy demonstrates smaller language attrition in more literate



individuals with better reading and writing skills (Hansen-Strain, 1990; Ohlstein, 1989, as cited in Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999: 16).

At the same time, some authors emphasize the speed of forgetting FL grammar and vocabulary (Weltens *et al.*, 1989), while others suggest that grammatical skill is more prone to attrition than lexical skill with low-proficiency subjects, while the situation should be reversed with high-proficiency learners (e.g. Weltens *et al.*, 1989) /1/. A slightly different view of grammatical skill attrition is offered by Yang (2000: 236) who claims that the gradual increase of a target FL acquisition could be attributed to a target grammar's gradual climb to dominance. In the meantime, '*competing nontarget grammars are probabilistically accessed, resulting in variation (nonuniformity)*' (*ibid.*). Finally, according to Myers-Scotton and Jake (2000) and their Matrix Language Frame model and the Abstract Level model, the Matrix Language (the theoretical construct of a more dominant language than the other language) sets the abstract grammatical frame and thus constraints the participation of the Embedded Language (the other language). In various language contact situations, such as language attrition, and especially when speakers are not proficient enough, a composite Matrix Language arises, in which information from one language may be substituted for by corresponding abstract features from the second language. These theoretical assumptions have been provided clear empirical support in research by Bolonyal (2000) on a composite Matrix Language in Hungarian/English convergence.

The importance of a proper emphasis on individual language skills' combination is obvious because FL attrition studies consistently confirm a smaller degree of forgetting receptive language skills (Spolsky, 1998; Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999). With regard to the question of the relationship between language skills and attrition, researchers have directed their attention to an additional question – that is, whether general skills /2/ are more subject to forgetting than low-level skills. /3/ Researchers (Cohen 1989, as cited in Weltens & Cohen, 1989: 129) have not reached any important systematic conclusions, except the relatively expected theory that recall is more subject to attrition than is recognition (Weltens, 1989), or that productive language skills are more subject to attrition than receptive ones.

The retrieval failure theory of language loss emphasizes that forgotten information is never lost but merely temporarily inaccessible because individuals cannot find the right key to access it (Loftus & Loftus, 1976). In other words, there is interference in the production of the existing information due to blocking of the memory link (Yoshitomi 1992). One of the early signs of decreased retrieval ability is the increase in processing time needed for retrieving the right information (Olshtain 1994, as cited in Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999: 11). Another sign could be, as some authors claim (e.g. Faerch & Kasper 1983, as cited in Tomiyana 2000: 323), the adoption of compensatory strategies – the term used broadly to refer to the use of formal reduction strategies ('reduced' systems adopted to avoid using specific linguistic rules and/or items), code-switching, and interlingual transfer (*ibid.*).

The intensity of the FL study program is another area to which language attrition experts have dedicated attention. The literature states that programs with higher or lower intensity levels encourage stronger or weaker language learning, respectively, which is consequently reflected in various processes of language attrition (Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999)./4/





The question of the onset of forgetting and a method to combat it is another important area of interest. Some language attrition research (Bahrlick, 1984) corresponds completely with Ebbinghaus' findings (cited in Marentič-Požarnik, 2000: 14) according to which forgetting occurs quickly and always within two years after the study process, whereas later attrition recedes. In other words, there is a rapid deterioration in a 'forgetting curve' in an early stage, and stabilization later on. Bahrlick (1984) emphasized that memorizing is stronger with a higher level of acquired knowledge or material that individuals have learned well or for a longer period of time.

However, the reverse pattern has also been observed – an 'initial plateau' with no apparent signs of attrition, and notable attrition in later stages, which in adults then again proves to be the initial phase of the normal forgetting curve (Edwards, 1977; Snow *et al.*, 1984; Schumans *et al.*, 1985; Weltens *et al.*, 1986, as cited in Weltens & Cohen, 1989: 130; Yoshitomi, 1992). In other words, a few years after the study process the material learned should seem safe from the forgetting processes, but only in adult individuals with a relatively high level of foreign/second language knowledge. Ecke (2004) and Yoshitomi (1999, as cited in Ecke, 2004: 332) emphasize a fact that students that did not re-start learning a FL for a long time forgot more structures than students that re-started learning it sooner.

With regard to a typical attrition order, the regression theory/hypothesis is used as a theoretical background for describing the nature of language attrition at the level of interlinguistic skills (Bahrlick, 1984; Weltens 1987 and Yoshida *et al.* 1989, as cited in Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999: 9) and the level of morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. It is derived from Jakobson's claim (1941, as cited in Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999: 9) that attrition is a mirror image of language acquisition – we quickly forget the language structures we learned last, and remember the ones that were learned first (Ecke, 2004).

The regression hypothesis proves to be correct in the case of receptive language skills, which individuals acquire first but forget last (Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999: 9). However, at the level of morphology, syntax, and vocabulary, attrition is much more difficult to study and prove. It seems that some authors have succeeded because they conclude that the basic syntactic patterns that were learned first were remembered the longest (Kuhberg 1992, as cited in Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999: 9), or they describe examples of attrition of the language that the speakers learned last and after they were no longer present in a FL environment (Cohen 1975, as cited in Weltens, 1989: 6).

PROBLEM DEFINITION

As a target language in the Slovenian-speaking environment, English is not naturally present to the extent that would justify studying English in Slovenian schools because in Slovenia it is spoken rarely, or only on special occasions, and most frequently with nonnative English speakers. The lack of natural English contacts outside the classroom thus presupposes self-initiated improvement of English outside the formal educational environment, but also generates considerable differences in prior knowledge between FL students. For the students at the FELU, this situation is even more difficult because they do not have the opportunity

to attend FL instruction in the very first year and thus learn the language uninterruptedly because they spend a year or even more not using it. This situation may extend to more than a year if students fail first-year classes.

Here the important fact arises that, during the transition from secondary school to the university system, students encounter a different type of language, namely BE, and do not simply continue learning GE. The students included in the survey (Čepon, 2006) (especially low-proficiency students) believe that during this period they make insufficient use of additional opportunities to maintain their FL knowledge. This period therefore results in almost complete non-use of English. In the second, third, and fourth years, the students at the FELU attend large BE classes taught by various teachers. These classes are heterogeneous with regard to prior English knowledge and composed of students from various study tracks grouped alphabetically (that is, randomly and not by ability level)./5/

An extensive study was conducted in order to obtain deeper insight into the events in FL study during this special transition period, when several years of studying GE change into studying BE as the secondary-school students become university students. Many findings from this study indicate that FL non-use and especially the unstimulating language environment in the first year at FELU can cause a lack of real internal and external motivation for learning a FL among the students. Indirectly, this causes language attrition processes.

THE STUDY

This study was divided into a quantitative and qualitative part. For the quantitative research, data were collected from October 2004 to January 2005, and for the qualitative research data were collected from the beginning of November until mid-December 2005. In the study, it was decided to use the triangulation method, i.e. procedures used to compare various perspectives or data applying to the same phenomenon but based on various sources or obtained through various methods. The type of triangulation applied in the study was triangulation by sources and methods, which the literature (e.g. Long, 2005) defines as the use of at least two different methods and sources, and comparing these two sources with a third one. However, in this study, five sources and three methods were used: in the quantitative research four sources and one method, and in the qualitative research three sources and three methods. More precisely, the four sources used in the quantitative research included:

- A) A study group of second- and third-year students from the FELU in the 2004/05 academic year (111 participants);
- B) A study group of faculty graduates (54 graduates from the FELU business school and economics program in 1999 and 2000);
- C) A study group of the faculty BE teachers (8 participants); and
- D) A study group of teachers of other economics subjects (16 participants).

Questionnaires, checklists, numerical evaluation scales, and a grammar test were used as the data collection method. The qualitative research was based on the following three sources:



- A) A study group of faculty BE teachers (8 participants);
- B) A study group of faculty graduates (12 participants); and
- C) First-year students (18 participants) /6/,



and the following three methods:

- A) Individual interviews;
- B) Group in-depth interviews; and
- C) Composition of a journal on English use.

The study combined various instruments /7/, and the data were processed with the SPSS 11.0 statistical package. Software for calculating frequency and a χ^2 test was used. A bivariate analysis was used as part of the statistical analysis. The hypotheses about the connection between two variables were tested using a χ^2 test /8/.

The main quantitative research areas included the determination of prior knowledge quality and the method of using GE during studies at the faculty with an emphasis on one/more years of English non-use in the first year. In addition, the study addressed processes of GE attrition and the areas subject to this, self-initiated language (non-)study and dedication, and reading English professional literature, newspapers, and magazines. Furthermore, the study analyzed students' feelings about their own knowledge and the current method of BE study used at the FELU; opinions about the applicability and usefulness of the faculty's BE teaching activities were also obtained from all of the other study participants.

The qualitative research focused on English (non-)use during the time when there is no organized FL instruction. More precisely, the study addressed students' evaluation of their own English knowledge, their talent, their FL skills, their expectations regarding BE study, their awareness and feelings about the process of forgetting English, and (non-) study of GE during the one-year hiatus in FL learning in the first year /9/.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study (*ibid*) were obtained by conducting several types of analyses of student needs at the faculty /10/. Due to the great span of professional situations available to future economists in Slovenia, carrying out these analyses was highly demanding since it was not possible to exactly determine the final goal of studying BE, the target performance repertoire, and the underlying business competences /11/. In other words, for BE teachers, the results confirmed the indefinability of the selection of anticipated language skills and knowledge (of the most frequent language structures, functions, specialized vocabulary, and typical discourses) during the process of BE instruction.

For a long time, experts (e.g., Littlewood, 1984) have emphasized three basic conditions for learning language – that is, individuals' language skills, the true inner motivation for learning languages, and sufficient opportunities to use the language. Unfortunately, students at the FELU do not meet two of these conditions because, in addition to lacking true motivation,

they also lack sufficient opportunities to use English in Slovenia. Namely, many findings of deficiency/lacks analysis indicate limited opportunities for English communication in the natural Slovenian environment, in elementary and secondary school, and in the first year of study at the FELU. Taking into account the results, the majority of language students at FELU expect BE study to be useful only because of potential indirect benefits for their future profession. They also mistakenly believe that a hiatus in studying English in the first year is a welcome help, a relief, and a well-thought-out gesture on the part of FELU management, which should provide them more time to study other business subjects.




As expected, none of the results of the analyses of prior GE knowledge and deficiency/lack analysis indicated serious language knowledge problems, since the majority of students at FELU are theoretically at the level of language independence (i.e., B2 level) prior to second-year BE instruction. Although language attrition literature (e.g. Godsall-Mayers 1981, as cited in Tomiyana 2000: 306; Bahrlick, 1984) argues that learners of high language proficiency are less susceptible to attrition, it would be premature to assume that such learners are in fact less likely to lose language in comparison with low-proficiency learners. Other factors, such as age, literacy and the attrition curve, may also play an important role, not just attained proficiency (Cohen 1989, as cited in Tomiyana 2000: 306; Bahrlick, 1984; Weltens & Cohen, 1989).

As a matter of fact, the results of the deficiency/lacks analysis confirm that, despite being quite proficient in English, the first-year students at FELU are aware of the fact that they have started losing their spoken and written communication skills, which causes uncertainty and dissatisfaction with their own FL knowledge. Taking into account the findings of language attrition theory (Weltens *et al.*, 1989), the subjective feeling of uncertainty and the lack of self-confidence connected with FL skills reported by the students is the most important indicator of the onset of the language attrition process. In addition to these outcomes, students perceive their own written English communication as the most demanding and problematic – the fact that only confirms that ‘*there is a distinct psycholinguistic process involved in the productive versus the receptive skill*’ (Tomiyana, 2000: 322).

All of these facts presuppose that students improve their FL knowledge at their own initiative prior to BE instruction in the second year at FELU. However, the deficiency/lacks analysis confirmed that in the one- or multi-year period of English non-use in the first year, fewer than half of the students decided to independently review their existing GE knowledge, and the majority (54.9%) did not. More precisely, the first year students do not review GE and English grammar, do not learn new words, do not read English study literature, newspapers, and magazines, do not use dictionaries (cf. Vrbinc, 2005), and do not attend FL courses elsewhere. The findings of the current situation analysis and the analysis of prior GE knowledge demonstrate that more talented and employed students forget the language less because they use English at work, and the fact that some students mistakenly confuse the process of forgetting the FL with the process of forgetting the study material in their mother-tongue, i.e., Slovenian.

The regression theory, which draws attention to the fact that language differences are disappearing in the opposite order than they are learned, forms the theoretical background for



many of the present study results. There are many language attrition studies that consistently confirm a lower degree of forgetting receptive language skills as compared to productive skills (Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999; Tomiyana, 2000). If the attrition process is truly the reverse of the acquisition process, as the regression hypothesis claims, then it is only natural for the students' receptive language skills, which all learners normally acquire first, to be forgotten last – as language students at FELU claim. Furthermore, the failure to distinguish between productive and receptive language skills is emphasized as a problematic phenomenon found among language students. This causes them to equate their relatively good reading and listening language skills with comprehensive English knowledge, and creates a false sense of security.

In addition to the regression hypothesis, language attrition literature (e.g. Weltens *et al.*, 1989) also suggests that grammatical skill is more prone to attrition than lexical skill in low-proficiency subjects, while the situation should be reversed in high-proficiency learners. Some authors (e.g. Moorcroft and Gardner 1987, as cited in Tomiyana 2000: 306) have hypothesized that, since low-proficiency learners have learned grammar only recently, it must be relatively unstable, and susceptible to forgetting first. And vice versa: high-proficiency learners must have learned their grammars first, so they are more likely to forget a larger amount of newer lexicon. According to the present study results, the language students at FELU find that they have problems recalling certain English words and that they forget English grammar in general, especially the “more difficult” grammar. These problems make them use less demanding vocabulary and simpler grammatical structures originating from previous, earlier periods of learning English /12/. As Yang (2000) portrays in his target grammar's gradual climb to dominance, it could be hypothesized that a non-target Slovenian grammar, competing with a target English grammar, results in English grammatical skill attrition.

The next extremely misleading finding is that language students feel that in the period of almost complete non-use of English they maintain quite a good contact with English by keeping up with the media, watching films, and using the Internet. The consequences of these outcomes become even more serious when one takes into account the study's findings that language students do not read English professional literature, newspapers, and magazines. Totally in line with language attrition studies which report no loss for receptive skills (Tomiyana, 2000), this ‘no-FL-reading’ tendency cannot be attributed to the students' insufficient reading skills since for the majority of them these skills are quite well developed /13/.

The outcomes of the learning situation analysis and the analysis of students' learning styles and strategies indicate the language students' inability to independently eliminate the essential parts of information, and to focus on details in language learning. Their organizational and systematicity skills are low; therefore in the process of BE learning they require clear ideas, overviews and visual aids on paper, sketches and structural diagrams, learning through doing, and a gradual linear method of presenting language study material due to remembering information in steps. In addition, language students at FELU need to be taught other numerous techniques and methods that result in faster and more successful FL

learning, such as frequent reviewing the study material, forming possible questions/ answers in advance before individual classes, using internal dialogue while learning a FL, trying to work out the meaning of unknown words from the context, practicing pronunciation in a loud voice, and using new words in sentences – to mention but a few.

On reflection, all this presupposes a great deal of help in the process of BE learning that can only be provided by BE teachers. However, this extremely vital form of support for future BE students is impossible to offer at FELU since FL instruction is nonexistent prior to the commencement of BE classes.



CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have indicated that two factors are extremely important for the future professional lives of economics students at FELU in the Slovenian environment: firstly, the mastery of BE, and secondly, the onset of GE attrition process that renders the students' acquisition of new BE knowledge on the basis of the prior GE knowledge more difficult. In the author's opinion, this results from a long period of English non-use, whether general or business, before BE instruction begins in the second year at FELU.

It can be concluded that, in the first year, when students are left to their own self-initiated language study, they would not consider changing their non-existent or inactive method of studying general or BE. To sum up, language students who are already experiencing the effects of GE attrition cannot maintain or improve their deteriorating FL knowledge at their own initiative. Consequently, left to their own resources, they simply resort to daily surfing on the Internet, i.e. practicing reading skills in FL; and listening to music and occasionally watching English-language TV, i.e. practicing listening skills, and thinking that "*that must be what being in touch with English is like*" (Čepon, 2006).

Possible first-year FL/BE instruction would therefore not only raise the number of hours of FL instruction (cf. Čebron, 1998) but above all internally motivate students to learn a FL and primarily prevent the early onset of GE attrition. The majority of experts in FL study (e.g., Terrell, 1989; Pienemann 1984, as cited in Higgs, 1991: 49) still believe that active teaching encourages learning a FL. It has been hypothesized that frequency in FL input could have a role in improving the effects of regression hypothesis (last learned, first forgotten) (e.g. Hansen 1996, as cited in Tomiyana, 2000: 306).

However, one of the major deficiencies of the change proposed is that in the first year students are pre-experience learners who lack business experience /14/ and empirical or carrier content knowledge, i.e. subject knowledge. In the case of introducing first-year language classes, the faculty's BE teachers would thus have to bear not only all the burden of teaching pre-experience learners without any professional knowledge, but also the burden of teaching FL learners among whom (following this study's findings) it is already possible to perceive the beginnings of GE attrition – i.e. the attrition of real content that is the prerequisite for BE study.

In addition, teachers of other specialized subjects and the faculty management at FELU should also contribute their share to facilitating the transition from GE to BE learning after

the hiatus of one or more years – the teachers with demands for regular reading of English professional literature, and a wider and more binding selection of obligatory English study literature, and the management by introducing formal evaluation of students' prior GE knowledge, and above all organizing first-year classes in FL, which would provide vital continuity in FL learning.



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Bilješke

/1/ The problem of studying the individual maturity level, the level of acquired foreign language literacy, and the real emphasis on individual language skills lies in the fact that these studies have been carried out with very young preschool children even though language attrition theory ascribes great importance to the level of individual maturity and the level of acquired second language literacy (Hansen & Newbold, 1998; Hansen & Chantrell, 1998, as cited in Hansen & Reetz-Kurashige, 1999: 16).

/2/ The term “general skills” (also “global skills”) probably refers to the four main/ basic macro-skills. According to CEFRL (2001), there are now five basic language skills, since spoken skills are now divided into spoken interaction and spoken production.

/3/ The term “low-level skills” refers to partial sub-skills/ micro-skills comprising five main language skills. In principle, sub-skills overlap with the global descriptors used for individual language skills in CEFRL (2001).

/4/ In practice, researchers still have not determined whether language acquired during a certain number of hours in an intensive program or course is forgotten equally fast as language acquired in the same number of hours, but over a longer period in a non-intensive program.

/5/ Formally, faculty management does not demand evaluation of prior GE knowledge before the start of BE lectures in the second year and the teachers therefore do not perform such tests.

/6/ The sample of first-year students was selected because of their special situation. They are the key population affected by the one-year hiatus in learning a FL because they cannot continue studying English at the FELU until they enroll in the second year. This is therefore the only group that does not attend English classes and, at the same time, upon enrollment in the first year already faces certain expectations regarding what kind of knowledge should be obtained at the faculty. This is why it was presumed that their views of the situation in the first year would contribute important information to this study.

/7/ The quantitative research data were collected using the following ten instruments: four questionnaires, three checklists, two numerical evaluation scales, and one grammar test.

/8/ This test is based on a comparison of actual, empirically verifiable frequencies with theoretical frequencies, which in this case involve frequencies that would normally occur in a contingency table if the two variables were not connected to each other (Ferligoj, 2001: 162). Every individual test verified the null hypothesis (H_0) that the variables are not connected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) that the variables are connected. Only results that reject the null hypothesis are presented.

/9/ One of the data collection methods used in the qualitative research was composing a journal on English use. It was used in a narrow sense – as a useful means to collect the information required for carrying out the needs analysis, which is reported by several experts (e.g., Parkinson & Howell-Richardson, 1990; Savage & Whisenand, 1993; Reves, 1994; McDonough, 1994; Lundstrom, 1994, as cited in Long, 2005: 45).

/10/ The entire model of the analysis of business English students’ language needs used in this study includes the following procedures:

- Target-situation analysis/TSA;
- Present-situation analysis/PSA;
- Deficiency/lacks analysis;
- Learners’ subjective needs-and-wants analysis;
- Learning-situation analysis/LSA.

/11/ The term “business competence” refers to the ability to take part in meetings and negotiations, present products and information, maintain business correspondence and write reports, or take part in business social gatherings, and not to the mastery of language skills (Ellis et al., 1994).

/12/ As one of the methods of avoiding forgetting, the students mention the frequent use of simplified English, which leads to

conscious non-use of certain grammatical forms such as past perfect, present perfect, future continuous, future perfect, sequence of tenses in reported speech, if-clauses, and “I wish” and “if only” structures.

/13/ Except for one subject, the obligatory study literature in the fall semester of the first year (the 2004/05 academic year) did not include English literature either in the business school program or economics program. During the 2006/07 academic year, the situation was similar: the fall semester course outline for first-year students included obligatory English study literature for only one subject, but labeled as “partial.” It is only in the second and subsequent years that obligatory study literature also includes English professional articles and other professional literature, albeit to lesser extent (cf. <http://www.ef.uni-lj.si/studij/r3p2/meniDODIP.asp>).

/14/ In professional literature (Nieragden, 2007), the terms “hard” and “soft skills” are also used with reference to business experience, which include professional knowledge and the use of resources. “Soft skills” or social skills are used as their opposition; these include the ability to act in conflict situations and authorize others, willingness to learn and work in groups, self-discipline, the ability to work under pressure and solve problems, and so on. BE teachers must be aware that even certain FL learners that have already obtained business experience do not possess these personal or interpersonal skills (for some, even in Slovenian), and therefore they still have to learn them in English.

PODUČAVANJE POSLOVNOGA ENGLESKOG JEZIKA ZA BUDUĆE EKONOMISTE: ZNAČAJNOST GUBITKA OPĆEGA ENGLESKOG JEZIKA

Sažetak

Svrha je ovoga članka istaknuti rezultate iz opsežnijeg istraživanja za koje smo napravili više vrsta analiza jezičnih potreba studenata ekonomije. S njima smo htjeli utvrditi važnost poučavanja / učenja poslovnoga engleskog jezika za stručne i profesionalne potrebe budućih ekonomista, njihovo trenutačno znanje općega i poslovnoga engleskog jezika, kao i njihove subjektivne potrebe, želje i očekivanja o poučavanju / učenju poslovnoga engleskog jezika. Istraživanjem smo isto tako željeli spoznati potrebe za učenjem, strategije i stilove učenja učenika poslovnoga engleskog jezika. U članku navodimo i dokaze o počecima procesa gubljenja općega engleskog jezika i sukladno tome prikazujemo štetu jedno-/višegodišnjeg razdoblja bez učenja stranoga jezika na Ekonomskom fakultetu. To razdoblje predstavlja najveću zapreku na putu poučavanja / učenja poslovnoga engleskog jezika na 2. i 3. godini fakulteta, zato jer je dobro, a ne načeto znanje općega engleskog jezika osnova na kojoj se gradi znanje poslovnoga engleskog jezika. Članak završava preporukama o korisnosti stalne, kontinuirane nastave iz stranoga jezika.

Ključne riječi: učenje poslovnoga engleskog jezika, gubitak engleskoga jezika, triangulacija s izvorima i metodama, analiza jezičnih potreba