

# A University Course in English Business Communication and the Actual Needs of Finnish Business Executives

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## *Abstract*

At the intersection of the planning and designing of the Business English courses for the new University of Eastern Finland, the need arose to draw up a new course description. To assure the quality of a new high-profile Business English syllabus and to find whether a language expert's course description meets the needs of authentic business professionals, the views and opinions of Finnish and European business executives were studied by means of a questionnaire. The questions addressed the needs of business executives in terms of their English language and business communication skills. This article discusses the findings of the survey in relation to the course description and my own experience of the teaching of English Business Communication courses. The implications of the study will be applicable to course designing and the teaching of future business professionals.

## *1. Introduction*

Business communication skills in one or several foreign languages (and in the second domestic language Swedish/Finnish) form the language requirement of all Finnish tertiary-level students of Economics and Business Administration. Despite this requirement, there are relatively few ESP needs analyses directly applicable to the context of Finnish language centre teachers and which would provide a more solid basis for planning their particular courses than their general or more specific knowledge of the business domain and their well-disposed intuition (see Cowling 2007). A recent article by Lehtonen and Karjalainen (2008; also see Karjalainen and Lehtonen

2005) addresses the same issue, that is, the real needs of the workplace and the employers in different fields (in their case, in 11 non-business university faculties). The present research and survey originated from the fact that, starting on 1 January 2010, two eastern Finnish universities, the University of Joensuu and the University of Kuopio, will form a new University of Eastern Finland (UEF) with the two existing university language centres, in Joensuu and in Kuopio, merging into one. Such fundamental changes demand reforms across the curriculum.

At the intersection of the planning and designing for UEF Business English courses, a need arose to update the present English Business Communication course descriptions. To ensure the quality of a new high-profile Business English curriculum and to discover the extent to which a language expert's course description meets the needs of authentic business professionals ("authentic" in this case meaning that executives are employed in real-life, and local, business positions), the views and opinions of Finnish (and two other European) business executives were studied by means of a semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix). The questions addressed the needs of business executives in terms of their English language and business communication skills. This paper discusses the findings of the survey in relation to the course description and my own experience as the teacher of English Business Communication skills. The implications of the study will be applicable to course designing and the teaching of business students in the near future.

## *2. Materials and Method*

### **Questionnaire**

To find whether a language expert's somewhat intuition-based course description met the actual needs of authentic business professionals, a semi-structured questionnaire was sent to 28 mainly local business executives. The items to be rated by the respondents (see the questionnaire in Appendix) were created by describing the tasks that would correspond to the aims of the English Business Communication course. The questionnaire included 17 rating tasks (and three open-ended questions) concerning the importance of the

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English language to various functions business executives engaged in their daily work and travel. In addition, the questionnaire inquired about the respondents' gender, background (four questions) and the kinds of problems the executives had encountered during their business travel and/or in other communication situations involving the use of the English language (four questions). The questionnaires were emailed to the human resource managers of three large business enterprises in the North Karelian area and directly to some known directors.

#### Respondents

The home companies of the respondents were firstly chosen on the basis of their general reputation for being major firms in the city of Joensuu. Others were chosen through personal contacts. One of the latter contacts suggested a mailing list of local export firms, which was an excellent way of finding further potential respondents employed by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the province of North Karelia. On the basis of the companies' number of employees and turnover, the respondents represented three sizes of firms: (1) global concerns with turnover in billions of euros (Number of respondents 14); (2) two North Karelian firms with a turnover of €50 million or above (N=4), and (3) local SMEs, whose turnover was under €50 m (N=9).

#### Method

A five-point Likert scale was used to identify the views of the respondents. A sixth alternative point was added in case the question was irrelevant to the respondent (see Table 1). The subsequent nine questions consisted of background questions and semi-structured questions focusing on potential problems that the respondents had encountered in their business functions and engagements. The information in the completed questionnaires was analyzed and compared with the corresponding items in the course description (see Appendix).

### 3. Findings

Since the questionnaire was forwarded by email to further potential respondents, it was not possible to calculate the number of the potential recipients of the questionnaire, and therefore no percentage of response, either. Thirty questionnaires were returned. Two of these were discarded as they had been completed by people working in educational settings rather than in actual business positions. The results produced by the Likert scale are shown in Tables 1 and 2 in absolute figures and percentages, respectively.

The tables show the tasks and situations in which English skills are in greatest demand. The results confirmed my language teacher's intuition concerning the importance of phone calls, writing emails, meetings and negotiations in present-day business encounters. What was surprising, however, was the minor weighting given to English as regards knowledge of different international business etiquette and the acquisition of intercultural competence by respondents. Whether this finding reflects the reality or is caused by the respondents' unawareness of their importance is in need of further investigation.

Importance of English in the business activity						
	Very important	Fairly important	Not important or unimportant	Fairly unimportant	Very unimportant	N/A
Activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 phone/Skype	24	3	-	1	-	-
2 receiving visitors	12	11	3	2	-	-
3 socializing as host	14	13	-	1	-	-
4 socializing abroad	11	15	1	-	1	-
5 presentations	19	7	-	2	-	-
6 participating in meetings	22	3	3	-	-	-
7 video conferences	9	7	5	2	2	3
8 chairing meeting	11	8	7	1	1	-
9 biz negotiations	21	5	-	1	-	1
10 knowledge of biz etiq	6	16	2	2	2	-

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11 intercult. Competence	5	15	7	-	1	-
12 making speeches	5	8	7	3	3	2
13 writing emails	20	5	1	1	-	1
14 writing contracts	12	5	6	1	3	1
15 writing invitations	3	8	9	4	2	2
16 writing complaints	7	7	2	8	1	3
17 reacting to complaints	11	2	4	6	-	5

Table 1. Rating of the importance of being able to deal with the following activities in English in executive position in absolute figures (N=28).

Importance of English in the business activity as %						
	Very important	Fairly important	Not important or unimportant	Fairly unimportant	Very unimportant	N/A
Activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 phone/Skype	85.71	10.71	-	3.57	-	-
2 receiving visitors	42.86	39.29	10.71	7.14	-	-
3 socializing as host	50.00	46.43	-	3.57	-	-
4 socializing abroad	39.29	53.57	3.57	-	3.57	-
5 presentations	67.86	25.00	-	7.14	-	-
6 participating in meetings	78.57	10.71	10.71	-	-	-
7 video conferences	32.14	25.00	17.86	7.14	7.14	10.71
8 chairing meeting	39.29	28.57	25.00	3.57	3.57	-
9 biz negotiations	75.00	17.86	-	3.57	-	3.57
10 knowledge of biz etiq	21.43	57.14	7.14	7.14	7.14	-
11 intercult. Competence	17.86	53.57	28.00	-	3.57	-
12 making speeches	17.86	28.57	28.00	10.71	10.71	7.14
13 writing emails	71.43	17.86	3.57	3.57	-	3.57
14 making contracts	42.86	17.86	21.43	3.57	10.71	3.57
15 writing invitations	10.71	28.57	32.14	14.29	7.14	7.14

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16 making complaints	25.00	25.00	7.14	28.57	3.57	10.71
17 reacting to complaints	39.29	7.14	14.29	21.43	-	17.86

Table 2. Rating of the importance of being able to deal with the following activities in English in executive position in percentages (N=28).

#### *Information about the types of presentations, occasions for making speeches, and the types and media of documents drawn up*

Items 5, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 on the questionnaire (see Appendix) requested additional information on the type of business communication. Of the 28 respondents, 23 provided some information about their writing or speaking activities. The information concerning the types of presentations and occasions for making different kinds of speeches included technical, marketing and sales presentations, seminars, conference papers, specifications concerning product features during customer visits, socializing and thank-you speeches, all of which are imaginable by a language teacher. As regards the channels of current business communication, the email was, not surprisingly, the medium used, with only two respondents mentioning the fax. (This development has been studied and recorded in great detail, e.g., by Louhiala-Salminen 1999, and Kankaanranta 2005).

#### *Other functions or situations where Finnish business executives need English*

Question 20 inquired about other possible functions or situations where Finnish business executives needed English. The replies specified travelling and socially- and culturally-related situations, adding that “executives need English always.” Another linguistic setting suggested was that of dealing with various authorities. Executives at one large multinational firm felt that meetings with colleagues from different countries and training occasions were cases in point. Other situations listed in which English was considered

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important included roundtable meetings and all sales-related functions.

#### *Background of respondents*

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of background information on the business executives and of open-ended questions tapping the respondents' experiences in intercultural business contacts. As regards the gender of the respondents, eight questionnaires were returned by female executives and 20 by male. Since the questionnaires were returned mainly by email, it was easy to discover that two of the 28 respondents were non-Finns. Furthermore, the respondents were asked about their position in the company, which showed a great variety of positions as well as their detailed descriptions. Their jobs ranged from Export Managers (N=3), (Strategic) Buyers (4), Vice Presidents (3), Managing Directors (3), Financial, Technical, Commercial, Purchasing, Project, R & D, Business Unit, Development, HRM, and HR Development Managers to Export Sales Representative, Controller, Marketing Consultant, and Business Adviser.

#### *Frequency of travelling abroad on business*

Two of the respondents did not travel at all on business owing to their positions as human resource manager and financial manager. Thus, if the two non-travelling managers were excluded, the average annual travelling occasions of the 26 respondents numbered 14 (range: 48 to 3 times; median and mode being 12).

#### *Destinations of business travel*

The question about the target countries of business travel elicited different ways of answering the question. Twelve respondents mentioned Europe, while two limited it to EU countries; however, most of the executives listed their travel destinations more specifically. The list of European destinations was dominated by

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Germany and Sweden, the former being mentioned eight times, while the latter received seven mentions. Other countries listed included Denmark (3 mentions), Estonia, France (3), Holland (2), Iceland (2), Ireland, Italy, Norway (2), Poland, Russia (3), Spain, and the vague term, “Scandinavian countries”. A few directors specified all continents as their destination, while others were more informative by giving the USA (8), Asia (5), Africa, North America, and South America as their destinations. It was somewhat surprising that nobody mentioned India, whereas China, Indonesia and Brazil as well as the CIS countries were listed among the target countries. Since most of the respondents were based in North Karelia, it was also surprising that Russia and the CIS countries were visited rather infrequently, considering the growing importance of Finnish-Russian cross-border co-operation.

*Languages used in travel*

As shown in Table 3, it was not surprising that English was the language most commonly used by all of the respondents except for the two who were not engaged in any business travel or international activities.

Languages used in business by respondents in addition to Finnish (N=28)								
Languages used	English	Swedish	German	French	Spanish	Japanese	Finnish only	No Fin only
No of users	26 (incl. 1 NS)	9	9	11 (Belgian)	1 (some)	1 (some)	2	2

Table 3. Languages used by business executives

Previous research (e.g. Rogerson-Revell 2007; Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005) has shown that business executives commonly engage in what is termed Global English, or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which now has more speakers than Standard English, non-native speakers of English outnumbering native English-

speakers by three to one (Graddol [2006]; Skapinker [2007]). Crystal's (2004) estimate for users of global English is 1 billion, excluding native speakers. ELF is described as a variety of native-speaker English which is intelligible enough as English (e.g. Seidlhofer 2005) but which often includes some features of interlanguage and shows interference from the speaker's native language as well (see, for example, Jenkins 2000, 2007). Another distinctive feature of ELF is its use by non-native speakers among themselves, rather than with native speakers (Jenkins 2007: 4), as was the case for most of the business executives of this survey. One exception to the use of ELF in the present study was a native-speaker British person, and it is possible that some respondents' English language skills were of high, near-native standard (level C2 in terms of CEFR), thus transgressing the limits of ELF. There were no questions on the questionnaire directly designed to capture this information, although, to judge from the replies to open-ended questions, it was not difficult to determine the use of ELF rather than Standard English in a majority of responses.

As regards the use of other languages than English, the languages most commonly needed were Swedish and German. This may also reflect the fact that at the moment these are the two other languages most frequently taught and studied in Finnish schools after English. Other languages, receiving one mention each, included French, Spanish and Japanese, the first of which was used by a Belgian executive whose first language was Dutch.

#### *Language problems encountered abroad*

Language problems that the executives had encountered abroad consisted, on one hand, of problems in the respondent's own English skills or their interlocutor's pronunciation, which was specified by the respondents as "poor" English, and on the other hand, of the need to be able to use languages other than English. The former category included the language of contracts, technical terminology and English financial terms whose usage varied between the American- and the Finnish-English usage. Responses to this question also included more technical problems. For example, oral agreements

caused problems since they often needed changes in the subsequent written contracts. Similarly, international decision-making processes were felt to be markedly slower than those that the Finnish business actors had become accustomed to. Another source of linguistic problems was the interpreter's lack of appropriate technical knowledge and experience, which could hinder communication, or the customer's lack of specific technical terminology concerning the product.

Although my business students almost invariably claim that they have no problems concerning small talk, a number of these business professionals had also felt that it was difficult to express themselves in certain social situations because of shortcomings in their vocabulary. (The importance of small talk was underlined by four respondents only, three of whom were female.) Further problems mentioned included the understanding of English spoken by Asians and the decoding of difficult British accents (e.g., in the Manchester area), and quick or "unclear" speech. The need to know the local language was realized in the case of Chinese, German, and Spanish (especially, when losing a suitcase at the airport of Valladolid late in the evening). The spelling of Chinese English also caused problems for some respondents. Finally, one executive mentioned culture- and terminology-related "normal misunderstandings", which naturally belong to human communication.

#### *Language problems encountered with non-Finns in Finland*

The questionnaires indicated that the respondents experienced somewhat fewer language problems in their encounters with international business executives in Finland than abroad. Nine respondents either denied the existence of these problems or provided no answer to the question. One of those who wrote "none" in this bracket elaborated his answer to explain why he had experienced no problems with English in Finnish business contexts, thus encapsulating the philosophy of ELF: "More important to be colourful and get right atmosphere and good sales." Other replies

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hinted at some problems, such as the frequent misunderstanding of spoken language and the necessity of having written confirmations to prevent later disputes. The same problems as in foreign encounters were recognized here as well: shortcomings in their own vocabulary, for example, when preparing a memorandum; difficulties with technical terminology, and the interlocutor's dialect and also a quick or unclear way of speaking. Further problems were experienced by the employees of a large multinational company concerning telephone meetings. If there was no supporting material at hand, it was difficult for Finnish executives to decipher foreign English accents.

As mentioned previously, small-talk situations could also be experienced as stressful. The three respondents raising the topic of small talk at this point were all female, while the male answers focused on (mis)understanding of the technical details and the actual contents of utterances. This complies with Tannen's findings concerning the different conversational styles (Tannen, 1993) that females and males tend to possess. It is possible that Finnish men may not always even notice the inbuilt need for phatic conversation (or "phatic communion"; see Malinowski 1922) in their business encounters. Another interpretation concerning the male respondents' complacency about their small talk might be that their command of phatic communion sufficed in the current business contexts, whereas the female respondents perceived a need for their small talk even to transgress the business context. Interestingly, the British business executive reported the Finnish lack of passion in communication as a somewhat problematic issue, while simultaneously praising their honesty and integrity. The lack of "passion" in Finnish executives' communication in English, as felt by non-Finns, may partly derive from the rather monotonous speech and flat intonation of Finnish in comparison with the intonation-dependent English language, which is often perceived as overdramatic by Finns.

#### *Cultural problems encountered abroad*

While most respondents had recorded at least a few language-related problems in their questionnaire, that was not the case with cultural

problems encountered abroad. As many as 11 executives (c. 40%) left this question unanswered or simply stated “none.” Somebody mentioned how a previous longer stay abroad had pre-empted the problems potentially occurring in the same countries (Sweden and the UK). Similarly, Scandinavian culture was perceived as similar enough to Finnish culture so that no cultural problems were likely to arise in business settings, either. This may not be true as there are well-known examples from a Finnish-Swedish merger where the two corporate communication cultures have proved rather different. Some topics, such as politics, were recognized as inappropriate topics in business encounters. Nevertheless, some real problems did emerge, such as the status of woman in Africa, meticulous adherence to formal documents in Germany, the difficulty of deciphering “yes”, “no”, or “maybe” in some cultures, and the problem of “reading”, for instance, Japanese business executives’ appreciation of the negotiations. In general, the respondents argued that understanding the *real* meaning of what had been agreed upon was not possible without sufficient, pre-existent cultural experience.

In contrast, some respondents pointed out that Finnish business executives could manage in new situations by using their common sense, finding relevant information on business etiquette on the Internet, or as one executive with a good self-esteem contended: “Finnish people can act like Finns. Nothing to be ashamed of.” The Belgian informant’s opinion did differ from that view, however. His point was that Finnish executives often misjudged the (in)formality, for example, when meeting business associates in a restaurant. The British informant, in turn, recognized that cultural problems in business contexts were too numerous to list. An example provided by him focused on the way to approach directors and managers.

#### *Cultural problems encountered with non-Finns in Finland*

Cultural problems experienced in Finland with international business people produced even fewer responses. As many as 16 respondents (57%) made no comment at this point. The few answers reflected similar aspects of the problems encountered abroad, the most important issue being the “real” understanding of the results of

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negotiations, which added that “some Finnish specialities” may create confusion. The opposite view was that there were fewer cultural problems in negotiations held in Finland, which was due to “the home ground better supporting the negotiations.” An unusual problem recorded was “where to find good food for the Japanese.” As regards the replies of the two non-Finnish respondents, one was surprised by the “cool” approach of some Finns in business encounters, while the other said that these problems were too numerous to mention.

#### *Other points mentioned*

The final prompt on the questionnaire invited further comments and produced six responses. A few of these either qualified the respondent’s position and answers (for example, how politeness and natural behaviour or a humorous attitude will compensate for some slight shortcomings of language), while two provided suggestions concerning English language training for business. According to these, there should be more focus on idioms and small talk, which are necessary in everyday communication, and more emphasis on the spoken language, in general, since technical details and terminology are easily and adequately acquired from the professional literature. Another respondent recommended the provision of basic phrases and templates for several such occasions which are already part and parcel of most English Business Communication courses: invitation, agenda, memorandum, request for further elaboration, letters expressing apologies (sympathy), and a thank-you letter after a business visit. The final recommendation by one of the non-Finnish respondents may take business executives a long way towards mutual understanding in international communication: “avoid prejudice and be perceptive.”

#### *4. Conclusions and implications for EBC curriculum*

The findings of this small study showed that the functions and activities planned for the English Business Communication

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curriculum of the University of Eastern Finland seem to match the actual needs of Finnish business executives quite well. Where the main differences lie is in the actual assignment types of the written business communication syllabus. The current study showed that the range of business documents drawn up by practitioners of export trade was so varied that no university English Business Communication course could cover all the topics and tasks suggested in the present survey. The remedy for this might be to concentrate more on the common core of business writing. Considering the surprising range and variety of different written documents mentioned by these executives, it is worth thinking about how useful the teaching of the templates of traditional business documents actually is (for example, business letters/emails for various purposes) and whether a more solid basis for writing English in general, with an enhanced emphasis on the use of the articles and appropriate prepositions, would prove more useful. Although the recent ELF studies (e.g., Jennings 2000; Seidlhofer 2005) have released the pressures of “immaculate” English, for instance, concerning the use of correct articles and prepositions in international ELF communication, the requirements of their accurate and appropriate usage in business communication are still prevalent since there are monetary stakes involved if the contracts turn out to be ambiguous and create false impressions or intentions.

The most surprising fact in the results of this survey was what appeared to be a somewhat nonchalant attitude on the part of some of these business executives towards the importance of knowledge of international business etiquette and intercultural competence. Similarly, the few comments provided on cultural problems perceived by respondents in business settings conform with the answers given in the rating of the importance of (English to) the respondents’ knowledge of various business etiquettes and intercultural competence. As shown in Table 2, these activities were rated as very important by only 21% and 18% of the respondents and as fairly important by 57% and 53% of the respondents, respectively. Naturally, there may be other factors affecting these numbers. For example, if the respondents travelled only in the culturally fairly homogeneous Scandinavian countries, they did not find intercultural competence a very important aspect of their work. In this respect,

however, the present English Business Communication instruction seems to prepare students better for intercultural competence in international business than what its authentic actors regard as necessary at present.

Another reason for these unexpected responses regarding intercultural communication may be the fact that the role of English was not regarded as particularly significant in intercultural competence. Thus, the somewhat surprising percentages may derive from the unclear phrasing of the Likert item in the questionnaire. What was originally meant was how important the respondents rated intercultural communication skills and business etiquette in the teaching of English Business Communication. What the respondents were probably rating was, instead, the importance of English in learning these skills. As is always the case with one-directional written questionnaires, it is difficult to know whether the items or questions have been interpreted in the way the researcher would like them to be. Nevertheless, I was able to identify a few top international actors among the mainly unknown respondents and found that they had deemed these skills to belong within the most important category. Hence, the majority's answers may also indicate that true globalization with its full range of accoutrements has not yet permeated to the professional activities of North Karelian business executives. The implication of this is that Business Communication courses need to stress more cultural knowledge and differences in the manner of communication, for example, in meetings and negotiations. Hence, it is necessary to clarify what demands are imposed on Finnish executives' business encounters with regard to the direct-style communication cultures of northern Europe and indirect-style communication cultures of Asia (Ding 2006).

As oral communication is the basis of meetings and negotiations, the respondents seemed to agree about the importance of English for these aspects of their international activities. The importance of small talk in the context of business appeared, however, undervalued or, alternatively, taken for granted, and therefore regarded as not worth mentioning. As regards the actual business deals, the principal problems occurred in the understanding of what was agreed upon and in the conversion of spoken agreements into written contracts to the satisfaction of all parties. Other problems of spoken language

were reduced to understanding English spoken by Asians or with different British English accents. Thus, the solution to a number of ELF speakers' problems may not be the teaching of "correct", native-speaker English but rather the tackling of the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural problems of ELF speakers. It seems that the topics of intercultural and global communication problems have so far considered business etiquette and related linguistic and social customs in the expressive domain, without really focusing on the problematic features that interference from major languages, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, in extensively industrialized Asia, has created in relation to the English language and communication. Another area seldom focused on in English teaching outside English departments is knowledge of the features of major English dialects (e.g. in the English Midlands). Rather than polishing their Standard English pronunciation, students studying and preparing themselves for professional business contexts should be made aware of the other varieties of English that they are likely to encounter in the global village of international business communication.

In conclusion, what are the implications of this survey for the implementation of the course *English for Communicating in Business*? First of all, most of the business functions and activities included in the aims of the course seem well substantiated in light of the responses to the questionnaire. Yet there is some fine-tuning to be done. For example, the replies indicated that it is more common for the present business executives to react to complaints than to write them. Similarly, hosting visitors is more important than being a guest abroad. The most important revelation produced by the study was, however, the range of different business-related documents created by the respondents. This is bound to give rise to more practice in general factual business writing, on one hand, and in the drafting of various types of contracts, on the other. Although intercultural competence was not highlighted in the importance-rating responses, the open-ended answers suggested quite the opposite and gave workable ideas concerning the most needed skills, such as deciphering the meanings of particularly Asian speakers at both conceptual and linguistic levels. Moreover, a better understanding of a variety of native and non-native English accents may provide access to success in the present-day global market.

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## Appendix

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Purpose of this questionnaire:

Dear Recipient,

In 2009 I shall be teaching a course called *English for Communicating in Business* at the new University of Eastern Finland.

Having written a description of the aim of this course (shown below), I would like to discover what **real experts in Intercultural Business Communication, such as yourself**, think of the relative importance of the following aspects intended for inclusion in this English course.

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Description of the aims of the course:

Upon completion of the course students should be able to communicate effectively in international business contexts using appropriate and strategically optimal methods of spoken and written communication. They should have acquired an awareness of intercultural communication and knowledge of the common principles of international business etiquettes needed in business encounters. They should also know how to create formal English business texts and documents, including the use of politeness strategies that ensure effective communication. And, finally, students should know how to give professional business presentations in an interesting and competent way and how to discuss their topics further.

Thanking you in advance for your time and effort,  
Sincerely,

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Please rate the importance of being able to deal with the following activities in English in your executive position.	1 very important 2 fairly important 3 not important or unimportant 4 fairly unimportant 5 very unimportant 6 not applicable to your position					
Importance of English skills in the activity:	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. English telephone and Skype conversations						
2. Receiving and introducing international visitors to your colleagues in your company						
3. Socializing with international business visitors in Finland						
4. Socializing with international business hosts abroad						
5. Giving presentations (please specify the type of presentations)						
6. Participating in meetings						
7. Participating in video conferences						
8. Chairing meetings						
9. Participating in business negotiations						
10. Knowledge of business etiquettes of various countries and cultures						
11. Having intercultural knowledge and competence						
12. Making speeches (please specify prospective occasions)						

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13. Writing emails at work							
14. Writing contracts (please specify the type of contract)							
15. Writing invitations and replies to invitations (please specify the media)							
16. Making complaints (please specify the media)							
17. Reacting to complaints (please specify the media)							
18. Writing other business documents (please specify which)							
19. Other possible functions or situations where Finnish business executives need English (please specify).							
20. Have you ever felt that your English skills are not adequate? If yes, please specify in which functions or situations.							
<p><b>Background information:</b>                      <input type="checkbox"/> male   <input type="checkbox"/> female</p> <p>Your position in your organization (please give your job description in English and/or Finnish)</p> <p>How often do you travel abroad on business? _____ times per year _____ times per month</p> <p>To which continents/countries do you travel?</p> <p>Which language(s) do you use during your travel?</p> <p>What kinds of language problems have you encountered during your business trips and negotiations abroad?</p>							

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What kinds of language problems have you encountered with non-Finns in business meetings and negotiations in Finland?

What kinds of cultural problems have you encountered during your business trips and negotiations abroad?

What kinds of cultural problems have you encountered with non-Finns in business meetings and negotiations in Finland?

Other points that you would like to add:

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance!

NB! All information on this form will be treated in strictest confidence.