

## Development of Business-Related Competences in a Case Study-Based Professional English Course in Business Administration Studies

Tatjana Sinkus Dr. paed.

Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Latvia

[tatjana.sinkus@llu.lv](mailto:tatjana.sinkus@llu.lv)

**Abstract:** A professional English course in business administration studies at the university should lay emphasis on the specific demands and interests of students studying in this programme and requirements of English language knowledge imposed by the business domain. Development of business-related competences in the professional English course is essential for future entrepreneurs who will use English in multiple business contexts to run a successful and competitive business. The aim of the study was to develop and to appraise such business-related competences as business management and personal management in a professional English course in business administration studies. The author of the article emphasizes the idea that the development of business-related competences can be enhanced if the case study method is applied. The results of the study were obtained in a pedagogical experiment involving business administration students in case study modules within a professional English course. Participating in the professional English case study-based course the students developed business-related competences comprising business management and personal management and the article describes the process of these competences' practical acquisition.

**Keywords:** university education, professional English, business-related competences, case study.

### Introduction

In addition to fostering foreign language skills in a professional English course at the university the educator should take into consideration specific characteristics of student future profession. Business administration students require a professional English course that could help them develop as mature individuals possessing job-specific competences to deal with various sophisticated mental tasks at the workplace, communicate in business environments in the foreign language, be able to run a profitable business and be capable of self-realisation.

The article emphasizes the importance of using a modern approach in the professional English language course in which knowledge is transferred to students not in a complete form but in the process of active participation in cognitive activities in the context of a real-world problem situation (Lateef, 2010; Bojare, Ignatjeva, 2014, Gawande, Al-Senaidi, 2015; Brattseva, Kovalev, 2015; Bridges, Chan, Hmelo-Silver, 2016). The author summarises benefits of the case study method's application in the professional English course in business administration studies and aims to describe the process of developing such vital business-related competences as business management and personal management.

The article suggests that the use of cases can be a very effective classroom technique in the professional business English classroom as it puts the student in the centre of the study process, it is an active learning method which requires a high level of involvement and interaction, intense cooperative discussion, collective analysis of a situation and collaborative problem solving from the students (Popescu, 2016; Davis, Yadav, 2014; Li, 2014; Beckisheva, Gasparyan, Kovalenko, 2015; Al-Mansour, Hussain, 2014; Lundeberg, 2008). The author believes that to understand different peculiar business situations and manage them effectively in the foreign language, case studies should be used widely in the professional English classroom.

A good case can bring reality into the classroom presenting a story that provokes a vivid discussion and stimulate students to solve the problem raised in the case, thus allowing learners to adapt themselves to every day working situations and develop their system of knowledge and an individual approach for dealing with problems connected to entrepreneurship (Thomas, 2003; Richards, 2006; Leenders, Mauffette-Launders, Erskine, 2010).

These days case study is becoming increasingly popular in professional English courses due to its transdisciplinary aspect. In the present study, the aim of this method is not merely to develop the future entrepreneur's skills and promote knowledge of the business domain but also to connect these skills and

knowledge with the foreign language acquisition. The graduates of business administration have to demonstrate the knowledge of the specific foreign language customized to the requirements of their future job. This goal can be achieved namely through the usage of the case study method in the professional English classroom as cases present the student with an opportunity to apply the foreign language material creatively based on their professional knowledge.

### ***Specific context of business administration***

The graduate of business administration studies is a specialist who is able to incorporate various functional areas in an enterprise, e.g., production, finance, economics, human resources, administration, accounting, sales, marketing and logistics in both private and state sectors. Business administration graduates can set up their own businesses or work for firms providing consultancy services.

The most common job opportunities for business administration graduates are in general management of companies and organisations, and administration of certain departments in companies and organisations. In general, students who complete the Bachelor Degree in Business Administration should be able to perform anyone of a wide range of functions at different levels in the field of organisational management and administration.

E. Koc (2017) within the EU project, titled Communicating Professional Competence has developed a competence framework for business administration for entrepreneurs, he suggests business administrators/entrepreneurs:

- to investigate and to evaluate business opportunities (formulating the idea, doing market research, determining necessary resources, assessing risks);
- to plan and to develop the business (creating business plan, listing objectives, setting up investment);
- to set up the business (acquiring staff, renting office, buying equipment, creating marketing plans);
- to manage the business (administering business processes, selling products, establishing realistic goals and objectives, managing staff, maintaining team motivation);
- to review and to improve the business (evaluating business performance, assessing customer satisfaction, optimizing product/services);
- to establish and to maintain a positive work environment, setting professional and effective relationships within the enterprise, resolving conflicts;
- to act in accordance with business ethics, relevant legislation, regulations, and codes of practice;
- to manage and to develop themselves (develop and maintain knowledge and skills necessary for the business, learn continuously, self-reflecting constantly).

There are several business administrations programmes in Latvia offered by such higher educational institutions as:

- University of Latvia (Business Administration, 2020b);
- Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (Professional study programme..., 2020);
- Baltic International Academy (Entrepreneurship,2020);
- ISMA (Professional Bachelor's degree..., 2020);
- Turība University (Business Administration, 2020a);
- RISEBA (Biznesa vadība..., 2020);
- RSU (Studiju programma..., 2020).

The common planned results of the aforementioned business administration programmes cover the following:

- orienting to the processes of the contemporary international economy and business and the ability to analyse them by using statistical, econometric and other methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis;
- ability to orient in global economic environment and to take decisions in the circumstances of global competition;

- understanding the basics of every legal aspect of entrepreneurship to participate efficiently in the activities of international trade, finance and other fields.

According to **Professional Standards of Latvia (Noteikumi par Profesiju..., 2017)** the basic professional tasks of business managers/administrators are:

- to identify or formulate basic business directions;
- to plan, manage and coordinate the company's work in general, select and train personnel, organize and manage the work of subordinate personnel in the company;
- to identify economic and technical development indicators, specific tasks and to consult subordinates;
- to organize and manage transactions, operational processes - concluding transactions with suppliers, customers, other institutions, associations, foundations, organizations;
- to represent the company in business deals with other companies;
- to control expenditure, to ensure planning of material supply and rational use of resources;
- to analyse and evaluate the company's performance, and report to the board of directors, management team and senior executives;
- to organize operational, accounting, statistical records;
- to conclude collective agreements and monitor their execution;
- to organize and manage the work of the board, the commission and the council;
- to prepare conclusions, evaluations and proposals;
- to make decisions about the company's operation and its management and fulfil duties minimizing possible business risks.

On the basis of the described above wide range of functions in the field of business administration and entrepreneurship, common planned results of business administration programmes in Latvia, and the basic professional tasks of business managers/administrators defined by Professional Standards (Noteikumi par Profesiju..., 2017), the author has come to the conclusion that business-related competences can be subdivided into two major subgroups, competences that are required to manage business, and ones that are required for personal self-management as an entrepreneur, in the present article these competences are called business management and personal management competences. The aim of the study is to develop and approbate business management competence and personal management competence in a professional English course in business administration studies.

## **Methodology**

### ***Benefits of case study***

Various authors discuss the advantages of using cases in teaching professional English. Having analysed theoretical research (Yin, 2014; Strelchonok, Ludviga, 2013; Hsu, 2016; Basta, 2017), the author of the present paper has summarized its benefits, on that account the main advantages of the case study method are the following:

- development of a future entrepreneur's individuality, his/her unique style of behaviour in professional environment;
- development of analytical, logical and critical thinking;
- enhanced understanding of the entrepreneurial environment and its problems;
- gain of insight into complexity of 'real world' business situations;
- active involvement in the foreign language learning process, with more responsibility for own learning;
- integration of major concepts of the professional business English course, integrated knowledge from other subjects;
- enhanced understanding of the topics studied: the theory is related to practice and it leads to the in-depth understanding of the issue;
- examining various real business situations from different perspectives, confronting, analysing, and solving problems collaboratively;
- dealing with situations of uncertainty and ambiguity;

- development of decision-making and strategic planning skills;
- taking decisions with incomplete information;
- development of student autonomy;
- distinguishing between facts and opinions;
- development of a future professional's individuality, unique style of behaviour;
- development of foreign language skills: reading, speaking, listening and writing; learning general vocabulary, specific lexis and grammar of English;
- development of interactive skills, questioning, group problem solving skills, skills necessary for collaborative work and partnership;
- development of public speaking skills;
- development of verbal and non-verbal communication skills;
- development of creativity;
- increased student motivation and interest in the subject;
- enhanced confidence in foreign language use;
- development of presentation, negotiation and team-working skills;
- consideration of multiple perspectives;
- awareness of alternative solutions;
- applying knowledge to new and unique circumstances;
- development of learning skills: library skills, interpretation skills, information summary skills;
- development of self-evaluation, self-correction and reflection skills.

The author of the article reckons that the development of all mentioned above skills and features is highly beneficial for the students of business administration. In the case study method, students develop their own unique framework for understanding and addressing problems in the business sphere.

T. Sinkus (Sinkus, 2020, 144) conducted a research on students' opinions about the application of cases in Business English courses and her study showed that the majority of students viewed involvement in cases as an opportunity 'to experience and enjoy more creative and engaging ways of learning, which helped build confidence in speaking English and find new objectives in learning the foreign language. Most students appreciated the opportunity to approach business problems from various perspectives, develop foreign language interactive skills, apply what they learned in practice, reflect on participation in case studies, and increase responsibility for learning'.

Therefore, the case study is one of the most effective teaching methods to prepare potential entrepreneurs for the future career in modern business environment. It was concluded by the author that the case study method application in the professional English course can enhance the development of business-related competences comprising business management and personal management competence.

### ***Business management competence***

Business management competence is indispensable for the success of an entrepreneur since the task of setting up and maintaining a business can be more complicated if this competence is underdeveloped. As T. Sinkus states (Sinkus, 2019, 175), business management competence provides a business person with 'knowledge, conceptual abilities, skills and strategies of various integrated aspects of business domain that can be practically applied in current, unpredictable, ever-changing business environment to plan, set up, develop, manage and improve a business activity'.

Fostering business management competence at the university is not merely supplying learners with theoretical and practical knowledge of the business sphere, an educator should provide potential entrepreneurs with an opportunity to develop certain individual conceptual skills and abilities that can be practically applied in current interconnected and ever-changing entrepreneurial environment. These vital skills and abilities are requisites for competitiveness, innovation, productivity, decision taking, initiative, and communication.

The author of the present paper believes that to develop business management competence a business administration student should:

- acquire knowledge and skills of various integrated aspects of business administration in theory and practice;
- be able to set up, manage and improve a business activity;
- keep up to date with new developments, find out best practices, identify and obtain opportunities that are not obvious to others;
- possess strong critical, analytical, problem-solving and project management skills;
- possess strategic thinking, planning over a timescale recognizing external trends and opportunities;
- be able to participate in team working and lead the members of a team;
- be decisive and resolve issues as they arise, respond flexibly to deal with changing circumstances;
- be optimistic and understand that risk taking means trying something new, and possibly better; assess choices adequately, carefully weighing the possible outcomes;
- be persistent and take repeated actions to overcome the obstacles;
- build trust and long-term relationships with customers, set up an expectation of high level of customer service;
- possess networking skills, which can provide access to information, expertise, collaboration and sales;
- possess the ability to persuade partners and stakeholders to collaborate;
- possess a high level of communicative skills in native and foreign languages;
- possess computer and IT skills;
- be able to conduct research projects related to business.

### ***Personal management competence***

Apart from business management, business-related competence also comprises a personal management competence. A personal management competence of the entrepreneur is a set of knowledge, abilities, skills, character features, behaviours, and attitudes that must be mastered by an entrepreneur individually rather than being shared within a group or team. Developing of personal management competence is highly important in business administration studies since entrepreneurship offers the opportunity to work according to personal goals, interests, values, and beliefs, striving toward their development and realization (Sinkus, 2019, 176).

Personal management competence encompasses cognitive skills and strategies which are necessary to construct personal knowledge and judgments and play an active role in shaping entrepreneurial environment, accomplishing business activities and promoting business, taking initiative and taking ownership in a number of responsibilities. It enables an entrepreneur to manage and coordinate personal time, self-growth, self-confidence, self-awareness; reflect on personal experience, individual strengths and weaknesses and develop on those. If entrepreneurs lack personal management competence, they may give up even despite business prosperity.

The author of the article reckons that to facilitate personal management competence a prospective entrepreneur in business administration studies should develop:

- an ability to set the goals which have importance in business and are compatible with personal values;
- confidence, a sense of self-worth and personal identity;
- self-awareness and coping with stress and emotions;
- set of values, beliefs and principles to distinguish right from wrong;
- responsibility for personal development and promotion, being an active participant of the educational process;
- an ability to manage personal education, evaluating strengths and weaknesses, setting realistic goals, monitoring performance and progress;

- self-reflective awareness, be *able* to think carefully about how to make changes and improvements, invite feedback from others;
- strong organisational and time management skills, an ability to plan workload, build priorities and meet deadlines;
- creative thinking, generating and exploring ideas, trying different ways to deal with issues;
- flexibility when circumstances change, adapting to different contexts, trying different roles;
- confidence in cooperative work,
- an ability to resolve conflicts, empathy and respect to others;
- understanding of own and others' cultures and traditions, appreciation of the benefits of diversity.

To develop business-related competences comprising business management and personal management the author of the article has developed a professional English program and practically approved it involving seven groups of business administration students in a case study-based professional English course. In total, one hundred and seven students of three higher educational institutions: Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, University of Latvia and Baltic International Academy took part in the experiment during four consecutive study years from 2016 to 2020.

The professional English course's syllabus was conceived of as three separate case study-based modules titled Negotiations, Meetings and Presentations. Participating in the lessons students:

- were assigned a case,
- studied it individually,
- discussed it in pairs and small groups,
- studied vocabulary and professional terminology necessary to deal with a case,
- were involved in various activities related to a case, e.g., discussions, role plays, simulations,
- were assessed,
- reflected on their work and the work of their peers,
- and presented their self-evaluation.

Next section presents a detailed description of the process of business-related competences' development in case study modules in the professional English course.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Business management competence's development in case study modules***

Taking part in the case study modules the students learned theoretical and practical aspects of the business sphere and they were provided with environment for business administration training. The case studies allowed to put future entrepreneurs into credible business situations and see how they respond. It helped the teacher prepare students for real everyday business situations and encouraged them to consider different ways of responding to events in business.

The case study modules involved the students in practicing business presentations, meetings and negotiations in English. The topics covered within the case study modules were all related to the theoretical and practical aspects of the business sphere, e.g.: types of business organizations, company structure, contracts, money matters, employment, business etiquette, advertising, business letters, customer service, telephoning, etc. The students developed speaking, reading, listening and writing skills and the use of context-specific vocabulary and idiomatic language. The students' personal experiences and opinions created the basis of all discussions in small groups and whole class activities.

The students discussed the importance of building relationships in negotiations, learned useful phrases for a range of relationship-building techniques; practiced relationship-building in negotiation. They learned professional vocabulary, business terms and strategies for negotiations as well as meetings and presentations, they practiced useful phrases, e.g., for interrupting or clarifying, gave definitions of terms, presented and commented graphs and charts, analysed the cases and shared their opinions, knowledge and experience.

Business management competence's development process in case study modules is summarized in (Table 1) below. The case study modules also provided an opportunity to develop business writing skills.

For instance, one group of students was asked to take the minutes of the meeting called to solve the problem or to write an agenda of the meeting. When the discussion at the meeting finished and the final decision was taken, all students were requested to use the information in a written form. It was a letter, a memorandum, a list of points, a mind map, an action plan, a report, an e-mail or a note – any kind of business writing which best suited the case matter. To do that they needed instruction from the teacher on the layout, style and appropriate tone.

Table 1

**Business management competence's development in case study modules**

| <b>Module's title</b>   | <b>Business management competence's indicators</b>   | <b>Activities in case study modules promoting business management competence</b>   |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Negotiations</li> <br/> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acquisition of knowledge and skills of various integrated aspects of business administration in theory and practice;</li> <li>• developing spoken and written communication skills;</li> <li>• recognizing different business ethics concepts, such as stakeholders, social responsibility, sustainability;</li> <li>• employability/employing people;</li> </ul> | <p>learning useful phrases, vocabulary, skills, techniques and tactics, business etiquette tips and applying the knowledge in the following communicative business English situations within the case study modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practicing socializing, relationship-building;</li> <li>• conducting a job interview;</li> <li>• writing business documents: letters, e-mails, CV, letter of application, notice, agenda, minutes of a meeting;</li> <li>• bargaining;</li> <li>• persuading potential clients and partners and negotiating;</li> <li>• holding meetings;</li> <li>• giving presentations;</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiations</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning from others;</li> <li>• participating in/leading team work;</li> <li>• setting up, managing and improving a business activity;</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussion and sharing of opinions, experience and knowledge on the following topics:</li> <li>• what it means to be an owner of a business and discuss the importance of entrepreneurship to individuals and society;</li> <li>• dealing with complaints at work;</li> <li>• the importance of building relationships with customers and partners;</li> <li>• reasons for business negotiating;</li> <li>• skills necessary in the negotiating process;</li> <li>• how to prepare for negotiations;</li> <li>• principles of negotiation process;</li> <li>• elements involved in every business;</li> <li>• the challenges of growing business and how to meet them;</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• building trust and long-term relationships with customers, setting up an expectation of high level of customer service;</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• involvement in relationship-building techniques: group/whole class work: matching techniques with explanations and then checking with the class;</li> <li>• eliciting examples of these situations from students' own experience;</li> <li>• discussing what can go wrong with each technique (e.g., if they are used too much as cynical techniques, rather than genuine attempts to be nice);</li> <li>• exploring target customers of various companies, exploring competitors' customers;</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conducting research related to business;</li> <li>• keeping up to date with new developments;</li> <li>• finding out best practice identifying opportunities that are not obvious to others;</li> <li>• contextualizing current events or major international trends;</li> <li>• possess networking skills, which can provide access to</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• research on stories of business success;</li> <li>• preparing and giving a presentation about a company including information about its activities, products or services, its size, location of main offices or plants, subsidiaries and its strengths in the market;</li> <li>• writing a narrative about an entrepreneur's life and achievements;</li> </ul>  |

| Module's title  | Business management competence's indicators  | Activities in case study modules promoting business management competence   |
|-----------------|--|---|
|                 | information, expertise, collaboration and sales;   |   |
| • Meetings      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participating in/leading team work; project management skills;</li> <li>• persuading partners to collaborate;</li> <li>• being decisive and resolving issues as they arise, responding flexibly to deal with changing circumstances;</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practicing holding a meeting keeping to the structure: 1) opening meeting: small talk, welcome; 2) following agenda: taking the minutes, watching the time, regaining focus, voting; 3) closing meeting: wrapping up, reminders, thank yous/congratulations, follow-up.</li> </ul> |
| • Presentations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• possessing computer and IT skills.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• talking about the internet, using conversational cards to interview a partner about buying/selling on the internet;</li> <li>• discussion about the most useful sites for business;</li> <li>• usage of computer skills, multimedia to prepare a presentation.</li> </ul>          |

### *Personal management competence's development in case study modules*

Various case-based activities presented the learners with an opportunity to participate in spontaneous and less structured foreign language use. Communicating with peers they could control the topic, chose themselves when to participate, drew on their prior knowledge and made their personal decisions. It lead the students to acquire what they need and want to use in real life professional business setting.

Within the case study process the students were given an opportunity to gain experience in swapping roles with the teacher to manage their personal education, take charge of their learning and become more independent. The learners changed their passive attitude to learning to a more active, leading role and became self-directed.

The students developed their personal management competence by being involved in all aspects of the learning process. The case-based tasks were administered and controlled by the students themselves, they prepared at home and selected the sources necessary for the work on a case, researched the relevant information, set up their goals and objectives to meet these goals, initiated discussions in class, assigned tasks for their peers, shared responsibilities, etc.

Delivering presentations in front of the whole class was an essential and meaningful task for the developing of personal management competence. It required a lot of preparation and effort from the students. They chose a topic themselves, set up goals, created a plan (usually a list of bullet points) that helped them structure their speech, selected visual materials, considered the issues that would be interesting and appropriate for the audience, etc.

Performance for the audience helped the students develop their self-confidence, overcome stress, the students learned how to deal with emotions, manage their time and considered their non-verbal communication.

Involving the students in self-assessment process resulted in increased self-awareness and enhanced motivation. When they were asked to evaluate their own progress, they felt more ownership of the learning process and were better able to identify specific learning goals for themselves, became aware of the ways they learn best. The learners took part in self-assessment questionnaire identified their weaknesses and strengths, monitored their progress and set up new goals for learning.

The teacher used a reflection activity at the end of each module, where the students wrote short descriptions and opinions about their work. There are questions that the teacher used as prompts in self-assessment: What did you do in the module that helped you the most to learn English? What was not particularly effective? What did you do to help yourself understand something when you were not clear? What difficulties do you have?

The students also summarized their learning after each class. They were provided with several prompts: What are two things you learned today? What is the most interesting thing you learned today? What do you know now that you did not know before today? What would you like to do next? Personal management competence's development process is summarized in (Table 2).

Table 2

**Personal management competence's development in case study modules**

| <b>Module's title</b>   | <b>Personal management competence's indicators</b>  | <b>Activities in case study modules developing personal management competence</b>   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiations</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an ability to set goals which have importance in business and are compatible with personal values;</li> <li>• confidence, a sense of self-worth and personal identity;</li> <li>• creative thinking, trying different ways to deal with issues;</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negotiating a pay rise with the employer, preparing to present the problem to the management in a way to persuade them to pay more, mentioning own strengths and achievements, setting goals and objectives to be reached in the negotiation process;</li> <li>• evaluating and coming up with various alternatives to the main goals and objectives;</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Negotiations</li> <li>• Meetings</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-awareness and coping with stress and emotions;</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• giving presentations for the whole class;</li> <li>• taking on the responsibility of leading the meeting;</li> <li>• negotiations with the boss;</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strong organisational skills;</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organizing the meetings;</li> <li>• trying the leading role of the chairperson of the meetings: keeping the discussion focused, using expressions to regain the focus of the meeting, keeping the meeting centred on the items as they appear on the agenda, closing and wrapping out the meeting;</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Meetings</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time management, an ability to plan workloads and meet deadlines;</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staying within the time limits of the meetings, following the agenda, using expressions to keep the meeting flowing at appropriate pace;</li> <li>• keeping to the time limit (5-7 min) in giving a presentation;</li> <li>• coping with the large amount of workload in the course, setting priorities and submitting assignments on time;</li> </ul>           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiations</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a set of values, beliefs and principles to distinguish right from wrong;</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussing the business term collaborative negotiation and contrasting it to competitive collaboration;</li> <li>• discussing such dishonest practices in negotiations as lying, manipulation, intimidation and bribery; discussing the consequences of competitive collaboration and dishonest practices;</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Negotiations</li> <li>• Meetings</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an ability to manage personal education, evaluating strengths and weaknesses, setting realistic goals, monitoring performance and progress;</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• after each case study module, the students are actively involved in assessing their own progress, strengths and weaknesses, they are reflecting on case study performance, self-correcting;</li> <li>• getting feedback from the teacher and peers;</li> <li>• discussing what should be improved and set new learning goals;</li> </ul>                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiations</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-reflective awareness, <i>to be able</i> to think carefully about how to make changes and improvements, invite feedback from others;</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negotiating a pay rise with the employer, company owner, preparing to present the problem to the management in a way to persuade them to pay more, mentioning own strengths and achievements;</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Negotiations</li> <li>• Meetings</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flexibility when circumstances change, adapting to different contexts;</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• running out of time due to an unexpected problem or circumstance (e.g., an important figure is missing in the handouts – offering a brief explanation of the figure, etc.) and being forced to adjourn the meeting;</li> <li>• dealing with tricky questions during meetings, negotiations and presentations.</li> </ul>   |

The students enjoyed taking part in case study modules because they were not told what to say and they were the only decision-makers in the cases. They were managers and the teacher was an observer, mediator and facilitator.

Finally of the professional English course students of three higher educational institutions, in total 7 groups including 107 students studying during four consecutive years from 2016 to 2020, were asked to evaluate their business management competence and personal management competences' promotion in the course. There were 64 respondents in Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, 26 students from University of Latvia and 17 students studying in Baltic International Academy. The results of student reflections are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3

**Student Self-evaluation of business management and personal management competences' promotion in the course**

| Higher Educational institutions                     | Proportion of students indicating business management competence's promotion | Proportion of students indicating personal management competence's promotion |
|---|--|--|
| Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies | 78.13 %  | 67.19 %  |
| University of Latvia                                | 69.23 %  | 57.69 %  |
| Baltic International Academy                        | 88.24 %  | 52.94 %  |

In reflections, in which the business administration students were asked to self-evaluate their competences after the professional English course, 78.13 % of Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies students (50 respondents) indicated promotion of business management competence, and 67.19 % of students (43 respondents) showed an increase in personal management competence. Furthermore, 69.23 % of students from University of Latvia (18 respondents) admitted business management competence's promotion, and 57.69 % of students (15 respondents) indicated personal management competence's enhancement. Finally, 88.24 % of students from Baltic International Academy (15 respondents) indicated business management competence's promotion, and 52.94 % (9 respondents) pointed out that their personal management competence has increased.

### Conclusions

To sum up, the author of the article has developed and practically approved a course program which encouraged intense, active and collaborative learning of professional English. The program acquisition provided the students with foreign language knowledge, skills, abilities and competences in support of their future working life and its complex demands.

To manage and promote a sustainable business, students of business administration should develop such vital business-related competences as business management and personal management. The benefits of developing these competences in business administration studies in the professional English course cannot be underestimated.

Business management competence provides students with knowledge and skills of various integrated aspects of business administration in theory and practice and enables an entrepreneur to set up, manage and improve a business activity being decisive and resolving issues as they arise, responding flexibly to deal with changing circumstances, keeping up to date with new developments and finding out best practices leading a team and persuading others to collaborate.

Personal management competence enables an entrepreneur to set realistic goals which have importance in business and are compatible with personal values, enhances self-reflective awareness and confidence, time management, organisational skills, a sense of self-worth and personal identity, provides with an ability to manage personal education and promotion, evaluating strengths and weaknesses, monitoring performance and progress, being ready for constant changes in business environment.

In the present study, the development of business management and personal management competences was incorporated into the professional English course using case study modules, which provided the author with numerous opportunities to develop these competences. Due to the usage of case study, the

students avoided superficial learning, applied theory in practice, developed deeper understanding and gained experience in future professions.

The students participated actively in cases which were based on various business situations, they approached problems from various perspectives as critical decision makers collaborating to achieve a common goal. Student engagement in critically thoughtful, meaningful, purposeful and relevant experiences transformed the way they learn from a mere accumulation of information to its active usage in profession-related problem solving.

The results of student reflections allow to conclude that such business-related competences as business management and personal management can be developed in the case study-based professional English course in Business Administration studies.

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