Erzsébet Czákó

IB textbook development for non-English speakers in a European late comer country – the case of Hungary

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Abstract
From time to time the purview of international business (IB) is on the academic agenda. Seminal papers and books have been published on IB as a research field. Less room has been devoted to teaching and textbook issues. This paper addresses this aspect, using a three 3 year textbook development work on a Hungarian language textbook. A motive for the descriptive paper is that the main challenge of this development was the assignment of the purview of IB as a teaching field. A comparison of six IB textbooks was the starting point for that in the paper, this overview, the institutional context and the process of development are discussed. The main conclusion is that answering the question ‘what is international business’ is a complicated but unavoidable first phase of developing a non-English textbook for several reasons.

Key words: international business course content, IB textbook development, international business teaching, curriculum development in the European Union
Introduction

The paper provides some lessons from a non-English language master level textbook development work in a European late comer country in the market system, Hungary. The work was part of the master level curriculum development for matching the European linear education system. It was initiated at the end of 2006 as part of the curriculum development work, in which a general International Business core course was requested. The core courses should be given in the national language by national regulation and be backed by national language textbook by university expectation in Hungary. The task was flattering and demanding since no national language textbook on IB has ever been published, though in the last two decades there have been IB courses in the English language programs. The author has been in charge of the course and the textbook development and of the teaching.

As the European linear education system should fit into the concept of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) some match with international standards at course level seemed to be advisable. The concept of EHEA proposes greater mobility of students, graduates and professors. Internationally compatible courses and textbooks in national languages also may serve as a basis for that. The English language textbooks were taken as reference points. They were applied as sources for the main themes and topics already in the syllabus development stage and as references for international practices. The national textbook development process raised several conceptual and professional issues which might be of interest and instructive.

Dunning’s (2005, 172) words serve as a basis for the first part of the paper: “At any given moment of time, the accumulated (stock) of knowledge and learning capabilities of IB scholars determines the resources and capabilities of IB as an area of study. Together with the incentive and regulatory structures, guiding the motivation and behaviour of teachers and researches, this determines its scope and content.” In the first part there is a short description of the institutional context of the Hungarian language textbook development. Only a few papers were found on IB course or IB course development. Terpstra (1969) Thanopoulos & Vernon (1986), and Vernon (1994) papers were studied. Then a vision developed for creation of the textbook development is discussed.

The second part considers what the content of international business (IB) is as a teaching field by English language textbooks and selected papers. Screening, comparing, and studying textbooks suggested a widely shared stock of theories, topics, concepts, and tools. Reading Peter Buckley’s (ed, 2005) book first led to inconveniences. What is international business as a research and a teaching field? What are their interrelatedness? How can it be managed in teaching? Defining IB as a teaching field is less supported by the literature although there are several great internationally available English language textbooks. Seven English language textbooks (Daniels & Radebaugh, 1986, McDonald-Burton, 2002, Czinkota et al, 2003, Hill, 2003, Parker, 2005, Morrison, 2006 and 2009) were selected and examined to answer ‘what is international business’ as a teaching field. Their parts, chapters and chapter structure will be compared to reveal commonalities. In the classification Vernon (1994) and Dunning (2005) were used as intellectual yardsticks.

The last part of this paper describes the main stages of the textbook development process. The more than 10 authors, the scarce resources and the long time span needed to create the textbook made some advance planning necessary. The development process was conceived as a project. Developing and introducing a new subject matter always raise professional and moral responsibilities for future generations. Contributors with different professional backgrounds were involved in the development. This characteristic also necessitated the project approach.
The conclusion summarizes both academic and procedural lessons. The most important academic lesson is that assignment what IB as a teaching field is not evadable. The answer should and may depend on both theoretical and practical considerations. An international adaptation is a must even in national language IB development cases. The main procedural lesson is not too surprising: textbook development is a long lasting and demanding process.

The institutional context and the vision of development

Terpstra (1969) and Thanopoulos & Vernon (1986) provide survey results on international business education in AACSB member schools. They provide overviews on the early stages of IB teaching and show some institutional forces behind. The general IB courses were the most frequent courses by both surveys. The majority of international courses however belonged to faculties in functional areas. Buckley (2005, 6) states that IB “is a discipline under threat in the USA from institutional changes in most leading universities which are absorbing the subject back into ‘the functional disciplines of management’, although it thrives in Europe and in the emerging countries.” These papers imply that institutional context matters, so an overview of the institutional context is described first.

At the Corvinus University of Budapest the business faculty is organized by mixed principles, to both functional and other fields. IB issues have been untraceable in its organization chart. International political economy and international economics units operate at the economics faculty. Studying the organization chart may suggest that there is no IB education at all. The general IB courses were the most frequent courses by all. There have been only ‘functional disciplines of management’ programs in the national language. These phenomena reflect the university reform paradigm of the late 1980s and the demand for management knowledge in the early 1990s. Adaptation to the European linear education system has brought changes. BA and MA level IB programs were launched in the national language in 2008. Given the tradition and academic resources the programs were accredited by the economics faculty. Conjectures on the labor market needs of the graduates suggested that a general IB course should be added to the curriculum.

The course and textbook development were addressed to an institute which has been responsible for an UG course on Business Economics. Competitiveness research carried on at the institute also gave credits for doing the job appropriately. The UG Business Economics course takes executive considerations as an integrative aspect in discussion of environmental challenges, strategy and functional fields of a business enterprise. Competitiveness research focuses on the issues that may support or hinder international performance (e.g. exports and FDI) of national enterprises.

From the inception of the course development it was clear that textbook development and later on its teaching should be shared by various colleagues. The invited authors belonged to the same institute but they had different research and teaching interest. Each of them had several years of teaching experience in Business Economics, and most of them contributed to its textbook development. The IB textbook development was also considered as an IB research capacity building process. It was in the line with the declared internationalization strategy of the business faculty and was advocated by the director of the institute. It was assumed that gaining insights on the international issues in the individual research topics may initiate further research. Each author was requested to start with mapping, and synthesizing the concurrent IB knowledge in her/his own original research topic.

Mapping the demand for a Hungarian language IB textbook seven national universities were identified with MA level IB program. By an optimistic forecast there are no more than 500 students per academic year who may learn IB. This was a worrying figure of saleable copies in comparison with the projected work to be invested. The national statistics on the internationalization of enterprises suggested however
that there is a growing population of SMEs for IB knowledge. National statistics on them after 2005 signaled a growth in their shares in export and their outward FDI statistics also increased substantially. Some national surveys proposed that one of the main hurdles for their internationalization is the lack of proper IB knowledge and language skills – this fact may create a larger market for the book.

The vision of the textbook and its development

Mark Casson (2005) argues that IB needs more visions than dogmas. He wrote that “Vision becomes less necessary as a field matures, and the precision of formal theory replaces the ambiguity of vision. /…/ Vision is an important element in the development of any theory. It is particularly important in the social sciences because the systems studied are so complex that formalization is difficult.” (ibid. 8 and 34). A compulsory course at its introductory phase may also fall into this category. Formulating a vision for the textbook was supported by also the strategic professional background of some of the authors and by the coordination of the fourteen authors. The vision is used here as “a representation of something based upon a mental picture. It typically represents an interdependent system in an abstract form. The system comprises a set of elements and a set of relationships between these elements. /…/ A vision is typically holistic – it presents a ‘big picture’ of the system as a whole.” (ibid. 9). He distinguishes three types of visions: analytical, romantic, and moral vision. The romantic vision was adapted, which “expresses the state that a person would like a system to be in.” (ibid. 10).

The ‘big picture’ of the textbook was a comprehensive book on the international state of the art of IB in the light of national practice from executives’ viewpoint. The comprehensive book as a genre implied that textbook approach and reference book approaches were intended to be mixed. The textbook approach requested a readable and learnable text which provides applicable concepts. The reference book approach required bases for enlarging the discussed topics for students, professionals and academics. Seminal international IB scholars and their contributions were not well recognized in Hungary. Adapting their works in national language is considered fundamental for understanding applicable concepts and IB related research. Brewer & Rugman (2001) and Rugman (2009) were taken as reference points for international state of the art of IB research and the English language textbooks were taken for IB teaching. International and national practices were supported by cases. The key challenge was the application of executives’ viewpoint. There are several positions for the execution of international business activities depending on the types of MNEs. Taking an MNC there are at least three levels: the headquarters of multinational corporations where the MNC’s internal network is presided, the regional headquarters, and the top levels of subsidiaries in host countries. Taking an enterprise with substantial export revenues top level coordination and a special department responsible for international activities may also be appropriate positions.

IB as a teaching field

For the national and international academic and professional credibility the selected seven English language textbooks (Daniels & Radebaugh, 1986, McDonald-Burton 2002, Czinkota et al, 2003, Hill, 2003, Parker, 2005, Morrison, 2006 and 2009) were used for comparison and each of them were employed in the textbook development. Some of them were available in the university library and used in English language IB courses earlier. Appendix 1 shows their parts and Appendix 2 lists their chapters. In each case the Hungarian textbook details are in the last column. For the authors of our textbook a content analysis shaped the widely shared constitute of IB as a teaching field. Topics and topic groups were set. For further clarifications Vernon (1994) and Dunning (2005) were laid on in mapping IB as a teaching field in Table 1.
Vernon (1994) wrote that “there were at least three distinctive areas that fell loosely under the rubric of international business, /…/ one /…/ problems that national enterprises faced in the conduct of their trade with foreign countries. Another /…/ the problems that managers in the headquarters of multinational enterprises faced in their efforts to preside over an international network. And third area consisted of comparative business practices in foreign countries.” (ibid 215ı6). Appendix 1 suggests that each of the three areas is covered by more than one chapters, i.e. by major parts. The three areas may be interpreted as (i) foreign market entry and internationalization covered by topics 1.1, 1.2 and 4 in Table 1; (ii) managing international business activities, topic group 5; and (iii) environmental factors influencing IB activities – topic groups 2 and 3.

Dunning (2005, 169ı170) distinguished three notions for the word business and concluded that “clearly which interpretation one chooses to take of business /…/ makes a huge difference to the scope of the field of study of (international) business. His first notion is a micro definition, “enterprise or undertaking which engages in commercial activity. /…/ The unit of account is the enterprise, firm or corporation. It is the one favoured by business scholars” (ibid. 169). This may be related to foreign market entry and internationalization of enterprises, and cross border activities and management. The topic groups 4 and 5 fit into this aspect except topics 5.1, 5.10 and 5.11.

His second approach is a macro definition “the activity of commerce, of buying and selling, of purchases and sales, and of transactions and challenges.” By economist scholars it is favored for "analysing and explaining the determinants and consequences of commercial activity, not only from the viewpoint of the individual enterprise, but also from other economic actors, notably national governments, supranational agencies and special interest groups. /…/ More often than not it is a group of firms (e.g. an industry), a region, a country or indeed the world.” (ibid.). This notion is widely shared in the national competitiveness research and national IB education and research. It is traceable in international environment discussions in the textbooks. Topic groups 2 and 3 match this approach.

Dunning advocated a middle course “considering the content matter of the macro definition primarily from the perspective of the business enterprise. This suggests that events exogenous to the enterprise, but which affect the goals, strategy and decision making of its managers, are themselves an integral part of study by business scholars, even though they may not solely or directly address issues relating to the endogenous working firms.” (ibid). Griffith et al (2008) support Dunning’s advocacy. This middle course approach resonate the widely shared contingency approach in business studies. Discussing business activities from the viewpoint of strategy match this approach and topics 5.1, 5.10 and 5.11 fit in.
### Table 1 Topics in the textbooks

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<td>5.11 Corporate social responsibility</td>
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<td>Topic Group 6: Other topics</td>
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Note: The table was compiled by chapter contents. The figures signal the number of the chapter in the textbook that are devoted to the topic in the first column. The figures refer to chapter in Appendix 2. For categorizing the chapters the contents of each were studied. Italic and underlined figures show that the topic is covered in more than one chapter. Merge cells in the case of 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, and 5.8 indicates that two topics are discussed in one chapter.

Dunning (2005, 174-81) proposed three challenges for future directions of IB scholarship: poverty, economic security, and multifaceted organizations (maybe interpreted as roles of stakeholders). Two of these issues appear in Table 1. Social challenges (3.7) respond to the poverty issue and corporate social responsibility (5.11) to the multifaceted organizations. It seems that instead of economic security the ecological challenges may be the third challenge.
As Table 1 indicates the Hungarian language textbook focuses on the topics in group 5 and gives less emphasis on topics in group 3. This comes from three institutional factors. Topic group 3 is nicely discussed and included both in national language education and in research. The international aspects of topic group 5 was missed and neglected and the competencies of the authors cover these fields.

Next to the content there are some structural elements that can support teaching and learning of the textbook material. They are called as supporting elements in Table 2. They applied in the development as compulsory elements to aid understanding and learning.

Table 2 Supporting elements of textbooks

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<td>Recommended readings at the end of each chapter</td>
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The seven English language textbooks suggest that learning objectives, cases, exhibits and review questions are the core elements. Recommended readings are to guide further research on the topic. This element seemed advisable as a master level textbook is also for supporting further studies. These elements were also used to provide further literature on the international and national research findings. Internet sources looked practical given the internet penetration and its increasing role in learning and orientation. Key terms are randomly used. It was adapted as a pillar for learning and knowledge check. It also was adapted to support the translation of national language terms into English. A bilingual key terms section is given at the end of each chapter. One more element was adapted in the Hungarian textbook. The idea was taken from Morrison (2009) “pause to reflect” section to enhance the critical thinking of the reader. Reviews on the first version of our textbook suggested more support for critical orientation of the reader and more efforts were advised in highlighting and making clear the conflicting theories and practices. For that a “dilemma” section was also inserted after the main text in each chapter.
Development stages and the process

Our development process started at the end of 2006 and the course to be based on it was forecasted to be launched in the spring of 2009. Because of changes in the curriculum teaching started in the autumn of 2008. A two phase of course development was planned: the first phase ending with a pilot (first version) textbook and the second with a published one. Given the limitations of our knowledge body and the underdeveloped national language word stock on IB the purpose of the pilot textbook was to concentrate on obtaining knowledge content of IB textbooks and related sources. This purpose was also supported by PhD students studying a bilingual IB course as an elective subject. Their contribution in developing a national word stock for the English language terminology was invaluable.

As Table 3 shows, the process can be divided into 8 stages and three phases. The first three stages closed with the first workshop and were about gaining an understanding on what IB is general and its subfields. International textbooks on various business functions (e.g. marketing, HRM) were also studied. The role of the first workshop was to finalize the parts and chapters of the textbook and to share knowledge on the first lessons on what the content of each was. The second phase as far as the second workshop was about writing and teaching the pilot textbook. Next to the national language courses there was an English language course as well where Morrison (2009) was adapted. The second workshop was dedicated to the discussion of the lessons learnt and the feedbacks to finalize the textbook structure. This event provided bases for the rewriting the chapters and for case development. The unforeseen time delay gave special opportunity for further literature search. Three new sources were of special importance. Rugman (ed., 2009) provided opportunity to refine the research background. Buckley (2009) thoughts on the global factory were illuminating in linking some of the discussed topics. Johanson & Vahlne (2009) online publication helped a lot with elaborating how internationalization theories should be handled.

Table 3 The realized schedule of the development

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In the third phase national cases were developed. Main message of the teaching of the pilot textbook was that cases are necessary for giving reference points for understanding the theoretical and conceptual discussions. National cases were highly demanded.

Academics and professionals were invited to take part in refinement of the pilot textbook. They were requested to give feedback or support by personally or virtually in the second and third phase. Academic contributors were approached to supervise the international and national theoretical
foundations and interrelatedness. Business contributors were requested to give their opinions on the practical relevancies. PhD and graduate students’ contributions were two kinds. They provided technical support and they were requested to study the text by students’ eyes. Authors were grateful for the invaluable comments and observations of the contributors. The distribution of contributors by professional background is given in Table 4. There were altogether 13 persons who contributed to both the pilot and the final version of the textbook. Three persons with national language skills abroad were also involved via e-mail connection. Their insights into at least two different cultures in the field of IB were instructive. Last but not least the publisher’s editing work developed the linguistic and professional style.

Table 4 The contributors by their professional background and participations

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<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD and undergraduate students</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Subsidiary</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNE</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Government</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abroad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
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Note: Subsidiary refers to the MNE’s local subsidiary; MNE refers to enterprises with headquarters in the country and subsidiaries abroad; Government refers GOs responsible for internationalization; Abroad colleagues: working abroad with national language skills, they represent the business, the academic and the international organization fields.

Conclusions

Does developing a national language textbook provide any valuable contribution for the international academic community? Has it any meaning in a field where possession of foreign language skills is a must for both academics and professionals? The answer is probably no for both questions when only the final outcome is considered. Textbooks are not highly regarded in evaluating the academic credentials of scholars. Highly credited contributions are papers in English and they are getting more and more specialized. The learning process of and outcomes for the authors, the knowledge transfer and the synthesizing efforts may tinge the answer. A research capacity building aspect may be a contribution for the international academic community in the long run.

The paper discussed less content and more process issues of the Hungarian textbook development process. Several professional issues on the content of the Hungarian textbook are not discussed in the paper. Four conclusions that may be worth for discourse and further research are drawn.

Taking the orientation of the European Union’s policy implications on the EHEA some adaptation in course and textbook development even in national languages would be beneficial. Its practicalities are in their infant stage. National government regulations set the frame for curriculum development. In Hungary national language educations and related course materials are requested. Discussing the lesson of the Hungarian IB textbook development may be considered as a trial for adaptation. The case suggested that studying English language textbooks can serve as a starting point.

Institutional context shapes and influences the content and partly the methods of national IB research and teaching. Awareness of the institutional context and its impact is instructive in positioning and discussing findings and works both nationally and internationally. Sharing experiences on national
textbook and course development may support discoveries on the commonalities and differences in IB as a practice oriented European discipline.

My proposition is that IB can be considered as a field of study as much as functional areas like accounting, finance or strategy. It has more than five decade history. By Dunning’s word “Ours is a pragmatically oriented discipline and more than our colleagues in most other disciplines, we keep abreast of the most important developments in our subject. /.../ Through our research activities, conferences, seminars, executive training programs and professional contacts, we are afforded a good insight into the workings of international companies and their interaction with the economies in which they operate." (Dunning 1989, 412-3). This pragmatic orientation raises academic challenges from time to time (e.g. Buckley ed. 2005, Meyer & Peng 2005, Hawkins 1984). The lately efforts to constitute the body of IB knowledge (e.g. Rugman & Brewer ed., 2001, Griffith et al, 2008, and Rugman ed., 2009) may serve as guidance in assigning the purview of IB. It is essential for even non-English language textbook developments.

Our textbook were finalized in 2008 and 2009. The crisis induced hard times were not supportive at all. Non-academics asked frequently if the development is timely. An inward looking economic policy orientation emerged and MNCs were considered more beasts than beauties, i.e. more harmful than beneficial in discussions and professional discourses. Even the news on the availability of a national language (text)book on MNCs’ operation might mitigate heated debates. It had the massage that MNCs can be studied and understood and they pose similar challenges in every economy. The textbook may orient the discussions and discourses towards a more professional direction and it may stimulate further local research on IB.
References


Appendix 1 Parts of the selected English and the Hungarian language textbooks

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<td>Introduction and overview (1)</td>
<td>The business in its environment (1-4)</td>
<td>The international dimension and the organization (1-2)</td>
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<td>Country factors (2-3)</td>
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<td>The global monetary system (9-11)</td>
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<td>The strategy and structure of international business (12-14)</td>
<td>Global issues and IB (13-15)</td>
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Note: The figures in brackets show the number of chapters belonging to the respective part. McDonald-Burton (2002) and Parker (2005) were not divided into parts.
### Appendix 2 Chapters of the selected English and the Hungarian language textbooks

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<td>Culture and international business</td>
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