Abstract
This paper focuses on the development of the concept of BELF, which originally stood for "Business English as Lingua Franca", but later we have used the abbreviation to refer to "English as Business Lingua Franca". With this change we want to emphasize the domain of use rather than the type of English. The concept of BELF originates from two large research projects conducted at the Aalto University School of Business from 2000 to 2009. The projects were inspired by research into English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and, from that perspective, they set on exploring the language and communication practices of internationally operating business professionals. The findings of the projects showed how the domain of business, and particularly its goal-oriented nature, was significant for BELF discourse and for the perceptions of BELF communication of the practitioners themselves. Overall, it can be argued that for BELF speakers, grammatical correctness is not nearly as important as the genre knowledge of their own specific field of expertise, involving a shared understanding of what, why, how and when to communicate. Thus, we argue that professional competence in today’s global business environment involves communication knowhow as an integral element of business knowhow. Further, in an international context, competence in BELF is a necessity.

Keywords
International business communication, ELF (English as Lingua Franca), BELF (English as Business Lingua Franca), global communicative competence, review article.