

Article

Law and Business Students' Attitudes towards Learning English for Specific Purposes within CLIL and Non-CLIL Contexts

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Received: 15 May 2019; Accepted: 20 June 2019; Published: 25 June 2019



Abstract: English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses are present within most non-linguistic undergraduate studies offered in Spain. In particular, the University of Cádiz has a wide range of ESP teaching being delivered in the four campuses of the institution. Whereas this ESP instruction is thought as a way to help students develop language skills to be applied to their career paths, this very practical and useful goal may not be easily recognized by certain students. While previous research has revealed students' attitudes towards learning ESP were generally positive, little has been said on their progression throughout the whole course. The aim of the present paper is to identify Law students' approaches to a Legal English course taught through a specific methodology. Certain teaching strategies, which are also characteristic of the Content and Language Integrated Learning approach, were applied. For that purpose, the opinions of 88 respondents were collected and analysed during the second phase of their ESP course. Results revealed that although students showed a certain level of rejection before the course started, once they became well aware of the teaching methodology, their opinion changed positively. This would definitely be influenced by promoting students' motivation, as well as the teaching methodology applied.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes; Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); business English; legal English; teacher training; foreign language teaching; Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education (ICLHE); English as a medium of instruction (EMI); teaching methodologies in Higher Education; internationalization of the curriculum

1. Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses are offered in most undergraduate programmes in Spanish universities. A good example of this is the University of Cádiz, where the Department of French and English Philology is the second largest in this institution, with approximately 50% of its teaching staff committed to delivering ESP courses.

Particularly, in the case of Law students studying in our institution, they are required to pass an ESP course during the last semester of their degree. With this being thought as a way to foster the internationalization of their curriculum once there are about to finish their studies and start their professional career, a considerable number of students have identified this insertion of ESP teaching in their undergraduate programme as an obstacle to terminating their degree. This controversial situation has made teachers concerned about the rationale behind these specific students' negative attitude towards what was intended to be a benefit rather than a disadvantage.

In previous studies, ESP students showed to have positive attitudes towards the teacher, the evaluation method and the learning of English as a Foreign Language (Martinović and Poljaković 2010). It is a fact that students getting into university in recent years are enjoying a progressively more international environment, as some of them have already participated in bilingual or plurilingual

academic programmes. They may also have a minimum level of the Foreign Language (FL) certified¹. Most of them are also used to travelling abroad, therefore communicating in a FL in an international context. Nevertheless, having acquired a certain level of the FL, students may show some reluctance to having ESP courses when their studies are not directly related to linguistic content. One of the main reasons for including ESP teaching in undergraduate study programmes is the internationalization of the curriculum, as studying ESP is intended to help students develop the competences their degree offers in international contexts, with international clients and colleagues. Having appreciated the reluctance of a number of students in the Law Degree at the University of Cádiz towards ESP, the present paper is aimed at studying if there is a change in these students' attitudes at the end of the course, and analysing the possible reasons for that change.

The aforesaid reluctance to ESP courses is explained by the students themselves as a consequence of the process of setting aside certain credits (and therefore, academic schedule) to be employed in a language rather than a content course. In most Spanish universities, as ESP courses are present in non-linguistic undergraduate studies through an individual course in isolation during the whole programme, students perceive ESP teaching as anecdotal content and skills to develop.

While this study was conducted within a monolingual undergraduate programme, results will be compared to those obtained in a bilingual teaching scheme in the Degree in Business Administration. As the rejection level in bilingual programmes seems to be less than in monolingual programmes, we wonder whether Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)² is offering our students a unique opportunity through which learning ESP can become a motivating challenge.

2. Materials and Methods

The survey was conducted during the last sessions of the course under the name "Basic Legal Terminology in English" which is located in the Spring semester of the fourth year of the Law Degree. It must be mentioned that the exams had not been held yet and that the survey was circulated under two specific circumstances which might have shortened the number of responses collected, including the following ones: the lesson chosen was one particularly devoted to theory analysis, which prevents a considerable number of students from attending the lesson, as students' attendance is rather prevailing in seminars. This fact is a consequence basically originating from the student/teacher ratio. As the number of students per theory group reaches 76 (in previous years it surpassed 180 students per group), students feel more motivated to attend the seminars in which the 152 students are divided into smaller groups. During the course of 2017–2018, there were no more than 38 students per seminar group. It is also quite revealing to comment on the consequences of dividing lessons between theory and practice, as it provokes a general belief that theoretical lessons are delivered in the form of lectures, thus avoiding the interaction between students and the teacher. As taking part in such big groups of students definitely does not facilitate a student-centred teaching methodology in which the student can play an active role in class, seminars are considered a better context to get trained, particularly in the productive language skills as well as in the field of listening comprehension.

Our survey was conducted in a population of 152 students³, out of which 88 were the final participants in the sample. In total, 69% of the participants were female while the remaining 31% were male students (this gender gap reflects the disparity that can accurately be observed in Law students at the university we are analysing). They were aged from 19 to 51 years old and they were all studying

¹ In a study carried out at the Business Faculty in the University of Cádiz in 2017, 50% of the students said to have a B1 or higher level of English certified before coming into tertiary education.

² CLIL is compared by many researchers to "English as a medium of instruction" (EMI) as well as the term "Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education", ICLHE (Bradford 2016). We will be using the CLIL approach as applied by the project "Quality assurance in Andalusian plurilingual programs in Higher Education" (P12-SEJ-1588) and Pavón and Gaustad (2013).

³ All subjects gave their informed consent for inclusion before they participated in the study. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki of 1975 and revised in 2013.

the Law Degree in the Faculty of Law at the University of Cádiz⁴. Regarding their English language proficiency, most surveyed students reported an accredited English level which ranged from A1 to B1 (54%) according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). From the remaining percentage, 9% had a B2 accreditation and only 1% reached C1. No one had more than a C1 accredited and there were 36% of the surveyed students who still had no FL certificate (Figure 1). At this point, it is significant to highlight that all students at the University of Cádiz (and most universities around Andalusia and Spain) must certify a B1 level of English or any other FL (certain studies require specific languages, as it is the case of the Degree in Business) before obtaining their diploma upon graduation. That implies that 36% of students who, being in the last semester of their undergraduate studies, need to be particularly interested in developing their English language skills, as they will soon be asked to certify their B1 level of English.

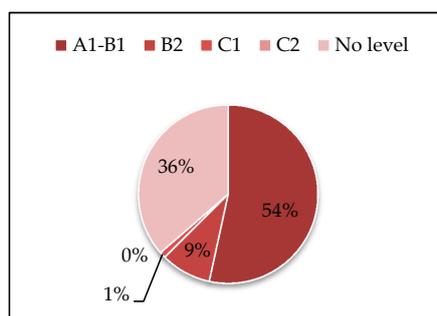


Figure 1. Respondents' level of English certification.

Students were given a list of nine statements (see Table 1) selected and adapted from a previous validated study carried out in the State University of Kashan in Iran (Eshghinejad 2016) and applied to the sample shown in Contero's study (forthcoming).

Table 1. Set of statements adapted from Eshghinejad's 2016 work for Contero's forthcoming study.

Statements to Be Analyzed by the Students Surveyed	
1.	Speaking English in class makes me feel worried.
2.	When I hear a student in my class speaking English well, I like to practice speaking with him/her.
3.	I am not relaxed whenever I have to speak in English.
4.	I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students.
5.	I feel enthusiastic to come to classes taught in English.
6.	Frankly, I study in English just to pass the exams.
7.	I can apply the knowledge from the subjects taught in English in my real life.
8.	I prefer studying in my mother tongue rather than any other foreign language
9.	Studying in English is enjoyable.

3. Results

The results obtained from our study can be classified into the following three main topics: (1) skills expected to be developed by the students in an ESP course; (2) students' positive attitude towards an ESP course which has already been delivered; and (3) students' awareness of the usefulness of ESP in real life. These findings will be described in detail in the subsequent sections.

⁴ While the results show us a considerable disparity in the age of the respondents, we must clarify that only seven students out of the 88 respondents were older than 30. That means more than the 90% of the students were in their twenties.

3.1. Skills Students Expect to Develop in an ESP Course

The surveyed students were asked whether they were expecting to develop law-related or language-related skills throughout this legal English course, as this course seems to help students acquire cross curricular competences.

However, before analysing the students' expectations towards the competences to be acquired in this course, we might need to examine what the course description says regarding this item of the syllabus. In fact, in the description of the course the University of Cádiz⁵ offers for its students, the section referring to competences presents no additional information regarding the general skills mentioned in the main description of the Degree. It is only the section related to cross curricular competences which specifically makes reference to the "understanding of legal language in the foreign language" (Official record of the Law Degree as verified by the (Andalusian Agency of Evaluation and Accreditation 2016, p. 73)).

Nevertheless, other institutions make a more precise description of the competences law students are expected to acquire in the legal English courses offered within their undergraduate or even postgraduate law studies. The following five institutions offer different perspectives towards apparently similar courses, at least, according to the content they cover.

The first of the cases to examine is the University of Granada⁶ which focuses its attention on two main skills, namely, "getting to know contrastive legal terminology in English, French, Italian or German", as well as "communicating and writing legal texts in English, French, Italian or German". This implies that studying legal English is basically offering the possibility to students to learn legal terminology in a FL, and, additionally being able to communicate in legal contexts with non-Spanish speakers.

When observing the cases of the following institutions, we came across these same two competences in institutions like the Distance University of Madrid (*Universidad a Distancia de Madrid*). The course "English for jurists"⁷ is said to help the students develop the following competences:

- To develop the capacity of analysis and synthesis.
- To acquire organizational skills and planning ability.
- To communicate in English in both its written and oral forms.
- To encourage interpersonal relationship skills and manage communication techniques.
- To work in multicultural environments and international contexts.
- To improve the flexibility of the student's communicative capacity to produce specific discourse for different functions, contexts, means, activities and situations in her/his work environment, which will allow her/him to adapt to new situations.

Another institution to mention in the region of Madrid is the University Carlos III de Madrid, as it offers a course titled "Legal and Business English". This course is part of a postgraduate programme, in particular, the Master's Degree in Business Legal Consultancy⁸, which is described in its syllabus by having the following objectives:

- To learn the basic concepts of the Anglo-American legal system.
- To master the basic English legal terms regarding the six aforementioned branches of law.
- To know the peculiarities of Anglo-American legal language, including the differences between British English and American English about legal matters, above all, on so-called false friends which, despite their apparent similarity, may have opposite meanings in English and Spanish.

⁵ https://derecho.uca.es/docs/Centros/Derecho/Oferta_academica/9045.pdf.

⁶ http://masteres.ugr.es/negocios/pages/info_academica/asignaturas-pdf/inglesjuridico/.

⁷ <https://www.udima.es/es/ingles-juristas.html>.

⁸ <https://aplicaciones.uc3m.es/cpa/generaFicha?est=317&asig=16821&idioma=1>.

- To be able to use these skills to explain (oral and written forms) basic aspects of Spanish Law in English in the six areas of Law covered in the course.

In the Andalusian context, it is worth mentioning the course “Introduction to legal English”, offered in the Law Degree at the University Pablo de Olavide (Seville)⁹, which incorporates the following competences:

- Resolution of legal issues within the context of English law.
- Management and understanding of the main institutions of the English Legal System.
- Knowledge and interpretation of legal texts within the framework of English law.
- Development of teamwork synergy to solve problems.
- Acquisition of skills in the management of a proper legal language vis-à-vis the basic institutions of the Legal English System.

Finally, the last institution we will be commenting on is the University of Jaen, where their legal English course¹⁰ does not specify the competences to be acquired by the students in its syllabus but presents the following objectives which may refer to certain skills:

1. To encourage students to acquire competence in reading skills to facilitate the reading of legal texts in English.
2. To develop speaking skills to improve oral communication skills on topics in their field of expertise.
3. To become familiar with the historical and conceptual singularity of the legal system that is applied in the U.K, since this has influenced Civil Law.
4. To become familiar with the basic terminology of the sources of the U.K Legal System and the organization and administration of justice.
5. To become familiar with the distinctive morphosyntactic features of legal language.
6. To improve oral competence through debate technique, which will be based on reading informative texts in the field of Law.
7. To acquire vocabulary from different didactic activities.
8. To apply strategies to infer the meaning of unknown words from reading activities considering the context in which they appear.
9. To know when and how to use a dictionary.
10. To become familiar with the different strategies of extensive and intensive reading.

This observation of the descriptors of the legal English courses present in Law Degrees in similar contexts to the one of the University of Cádiz suggests there is a very close tie established between law-related and language-related skills. This was confirmed by the results obtained in our survey (Figure 2), as most law students (75%) were expecting to develop both legal as well as language skills. Whereas, only 15% of the students predicted they would only be trained in language skills. If we compare these results to the ones obtained in previous studies (Contero forthcoming), there is a slightly higher proportion of business students (83%) that agreed to state that they were expecting to develop both content-related and language-related skills¹¹ (Figure 3).

⁹ <https://www.upo.es/cms2/export/sites/facultades/facultad-derecho/es/oferta-academica/grados/grado-en-derecho/descargas/guias-docentes/2015-2016/opt-semester1/101039-Introduccion-al-Ingles-Juridico.pdf>.

¹⁰ http://www4.ujaen.es/~{javcasas/programa_ingles_juridico.pdf.

¹¹ It must be mentioned that by content-related skills we are making reference to skills to be developed when acquiring content knowledge, that is to say, facts, concepts, theories, and principles that are taught and learned in specific academic courses (The Glossary of Education Reform 2016: <https://www.edglossary.org/content-knowledge/>). In the case of language-related skills, we are essentially covering the four basic language skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading).

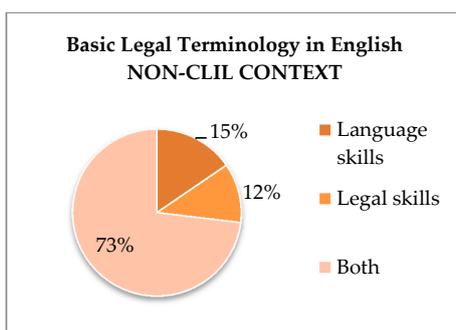


Figure 2. Law students’ expectations towards the skills to develop in their English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course.

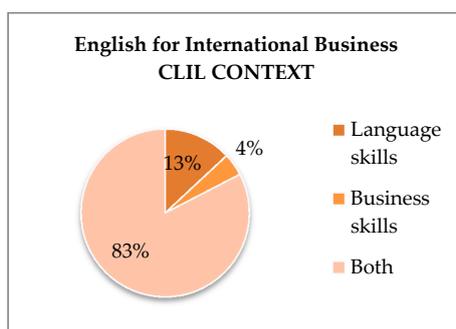


Figure 3. Business students’ expectations towards the skills to develop in their ESP course.

3.2. Students’ Positive Attitudes towards ESP

The participants in the survey were given a list of statements so as to identify their degree of agreement with them by using a Likert scale. Such a scale ranged from 1 to 5, where 1 was “strongly disagree”, 2 “disagree”, 3 “neutral”, 4 “agree” and 5 “absolutely agree”. It must be highlighted that the use of an odd number of options hindered the possibility of obtaining meaningful results and most students avoided to decide upon agreement or disagreement by locating their opinion in the neutral zone. Nonetheless, we would like to draw attention to the statement whose results were closer to 1, meaning strong disagreement. This statement made reference to the surveyed students’ attitude towards learning legal English, as they indicated passing the final exam was not the only motivation they had to study, to come to class and to play an active role in it. This positive attitude towards learning ESP was considerably higher when compared to the results seen in previous studies (Contero forthcoming). As it can be seen in Figure 4, business students were clearly convinced that they had other prevailing motivations to take part in the ESP course which were much more important to just passing the final exam.

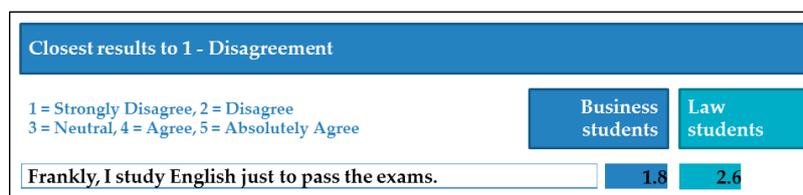


Figure 4. Business students’ and Law students’ motivations to study ESP.

3.3. Usefulness and Applications of ESP in Real Life

Although the previously mentioned neutrality was leading the results of our survey regarding the nine statements displayed to our students, we can also emphasize the statement whose results were closer to 5, that is, to total agreement. It was the assertion that they noticeably saw the application of

their legal English course in their own life. Law students stated their level of agreement was 3.6, which was located in our scale from neutrality to agreement (Figure 5). However, results were more driven towards total agreement when in previous studies (Contero forthcoming) most business students appreciated a clear usefulness of the ESP course they were taking part in in their real life.

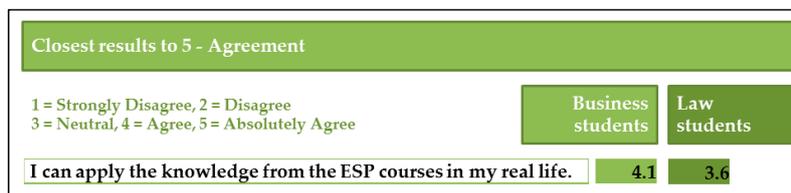


Figure 5. Business students' and Law students' opinions towards the application of ESP in real life.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The following three main ideas can be derived from our study: Law students who are in the second semester of their fourth year at the University of Cádiz, that is to say, those who are bound to finish their undergraduate studies in the forthcoming months, believe that in a legal English course: (1) they will be trained in both language-related and content-related skills; (2) there are real motivations for them to have an active role in the course rather than just trying to get the required qualifications; and (3) they see learning legal English will be particularly useful for climbing the career ladder.

The reasoning behind the identification of these three ideas can be found in the teaching methodology applied in the ESP course. As it has formerly been pointed out in recently conducted research (Contero 2018), a new role of the FL teacher is emerging in the spread of CLIL programmes at university. Three were the main functions attached to FL teachers who started teaching in the context of CLIL programme implementations¹², namely, the coordinator of the bilingual programme, a member of the CLIL teacher training team, and the model for the teaching style of emerging CLIL programmes.

If we focus on the third aforesaid function, it is the ESP teacher who can offer a model to the CLIL teacher on how to develop specific language-related skills by means of an appropriate and modern teaching methodology. It is the Foreign Language Acquisition Teaching Method (Haidl Dietlmeier 1993) which can be suggested as a teaching approach used by FL teachers suitable to be combined with the CLIL teaching approach, so as to put forward certain key methodological strategies which might facilitate the integrated learning of the FL and the content. The reason why both teaching approaches can be easily and fruitfully combined (Contero 2017) is that both teaching methods share a major focus on authenticity. From the linguistic point of view, as Haidl Dietlmeier (1993) pointed out, it is the spontaneous and natural use of a language which fosters the acquisition of a language. That implies language acquisition means authentic exposure to it, thus being able to face real challenges from a linguistic perspective. Besides, CLIL researchers also accentuate the importance of authenticity in this particular teaching approach (Pinner 2013), maintaining the CLIL resources used in class are expected to be authentic (Papaja 2014). It is the ESP teacher that can foster authenticity in class so as to combine the effectiveness of both teaching approaches.

In her study, Contero (2017) presented the CLILUT Pentagon as a proposal for systematizing the five main methodological areas which should be covered in all CLIL Teacher Training schemes for University Teachers (CLILUT). One particular methodological area to be tackled is precisely authenticity, as it can facilitate the applicability of the content in real life, it can be a way to link academic teaching to the students' environment and it can help teachers start addressing concrete concepts in order to progressively incorporate abstract concepts into their teaching, consequently fostering acquisition.

¹² We may always bear in mind both content and FL teachers' worries on the spread of CLIL due to its implications in their roles (Pavón and Rubio 2010).

The final results of our survey demonstrate students' attitudes towards learning ESP are rather positive. However, we should take into account that this study was conducted at the very end of the course. As we explained in the introduction to this paper, students' attitudes were not that positive at the beginning of the course, in which certain preconceptions of what the ESP course would consist of lead students be rather skeptic towards this module of their degree. One of the causes which might have provoked this skepticism is the scarcity of information offered to students regarding the course's competences to be developed and goals to be achieved. If students are convinced from the very first lesson of the purpose for the inclusion of that course in the last phase of their undergraduate studies, they will probably be taking the course in a much more positive attitude.

The reason why this survey was compared to the results obtained in a previous study conducted in the Business and Administration Degree within the same institution is that the business students were also studying ESP. However, this ESP course had the characteristic of being located within the framework of a CLIL context. Students immersed in a CLIL programme are certainly more used to the integration of content and language in a natural way. This suggests they are more accustomed to acquiring and using a FL in an authentic context in which the connection between the teaching goals and their real life is highly perceptible. That made the data obtained in this prior study more positive regarding the students' attitudes towards the course.

The generation of an authentic context in which the acquisition of a FL is facilitated is recommended both within CLIL and non-CLIL contexts. Developing a positive attitude towards an ESP course can be stimulated by a clear recognition of the competences expected to be acquired by the students. This can be done by means of teaching strategies which can be used by the ESP teacher both within CLIL and non-CLIL programmes in order to foster authentic exposure to the FL, therefore creating a real necessity and willingness in the students to learn.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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