

Languages for Specific Purposes in Educational Contexts

Editors

Stanisław Goźdz-Roszkowski

Aleksandra Beata Makowska



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Łódzkie Studia z Językoznawstwa Angielskiego i Ogólnego Łódź Studies in English and General Linguistics

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Introduction

The collection of articles in this book presents some of the latest developments in the study of languages for specific purposes from the educational perspective. These contributions come from selected papers read during an international conference “Languages for Specific Purposes. Education and Career Opportunities (SPECLANG)” held at the University of Łódź in March 2016. The present volume is one of three volumes devoted to educational contexts and work-related aspects of using specialised languages. The other two volumes published in German and Polish include *Fachsprachen – Ausbildung – Karrierechancen*, edited by Agnieszka Stawikowska-Marcinkowska and *Języki specjalistyczne. Edukacja. Perspektywy. Kariera* edited by Jacek Makowski, both volumes published with Primum Verbum. Łódź. All these volumes reflect a growing interest in teaching specialised languages for occupational purposes. More specifically, they reflect the commitment of the University of Łódź to creating new and innovative programmes designed to meet the challenges of the present-day corporate environment. The recently launched BA-level programme in *Linguistics for Business* is just one example. Started in 2013, this interdisciplinary programme combines a clear focus on specialised languages (business, finance, law, logistics, etc.) with a fair knowledge of economics and management. The aim of the SPECLANG conferences (which are held every 1,5 years) is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and good practices in the area of teaching specialised languages. The present volume is intended as a step towards achieving this goal.

About the book

This volume opens with a contribution from **Halina Sierocka**, who in the chapter *Perceptions of Language and Subject Specialists on the Linguistic Needs of Law Students*, investigates how legal and language specialists view the needs of law students as regards learning English for professional purposes (i.e. Legal English). The empirical study contributes to the perennial debate on the distinction between the pedagogic content and subject matter knowledge and their importance in teaching English for Specific Purposes. Its results are promising as they suggest that there are a number of aspects that both groups of specialists agree upon and they could benefit from each other's experience and knowledge thus creating a positive impact on teaching and learning of English for legal purposes at any tertiary education institution.

Aleksandra Matulewska and **Tomasz Janiak** in their chapter *Towards a Model of Comprehensive Teaching of the Language of Logistics* provide a valuable insight into the complexities of designing an effective course in the language of logistics. Just as in the previous paper, the authors address the issue of varied needs and expectations of both learners and teachers. They recognise the growing importance of logistics as one of the most dynamically developing sectors and offer a tentative model of comprehensive teaching of the language of logistics.

The next two chapters focus on teaching specialised language in medical contexts. First, **Jozefa Artimová** in the chapter *Latin as a Language for Specific Purposes in a Textbook for Bachelor Programme Students of Midwifery-Obstetrics*, describes challenges faced by anyone wishing to be involved in teaching or learning a "dead" language as an LSP. More specifically, the author focuses on a project (IMPACT – Innovation, methodology and quality of language education and professional education in foreign languages in the tertiary sphere in the Czech Republic) launched at the Language Centre of Masaryk University which led to the creation of a brand-new, authentic and innovative teaching material tailored to the needs of students of Midwifery-Obstetrics.

In a similar vein, the contribution from **Sylwia Makara-Paciorek** on *The Use of the Mobile Platform Android in Teaching English for Medical Purposes in the Project Vetionary* demonstrates how the task of teaching English to veterinary medicine students could be facilitated by resorting to specialist veterinary dictionary made available in the form of a mobile application. The author shows that this cutting-edge Vetionary project is not only a convenient and effective electronic tool to disseminate specialist knowledge but it also aims to create a community around the project by involving students in its further development.

If English is the most commonly described specialised language, then business remains a domain which has received considerable attention from researchers and language educators alike. In the next three chapters, their authors set out to reveal the ways in which Business English should be effectively taught to prepare students to face the growing pressures of the current job market, especially in the corporate environment.

Aleksandra Beata Makowska in her chapter on *Tailoring the Business English Course Syllabus to Market Needs* argues that preparing business English courses should reflect the highly varied and dynamic contexts in which English is used. A general Business English course very often fails to address some very specific and highly specialised needs of its learners. The chapter points to the central importance of carrying out a thorough needs analysis before any such course is designed and implemented. This issue is then discussed and illustrated in a case study which describes the design of a syllabus for a Business English course taught as part of a BA programme „Linguistics for Business” offered at the University of Łódź.

The next chapter *The Development of Basic Business Correspondence Skills by English Philology Students* written by **Teresa Maria Włosowicz** continues to explore the issue of optimising language resources to help students develop their Business English skills. In her chapter, the author discusses difficulties and challenges linked to business correspondence based on her study of how students have acquired the writing skill over a period of time. The results of the study shed new light on the most commonly encountered problems.

This business English part of the volume closes with a joint chapter *Authentic Materials in the LSP Classroom – Responding to Demands of the Job Market* written by **Aleksandra Beata Makowska** and **Joanna Duda**. The authors start with the assumption that standard textbook materials very often do not meet students’ needs because they fail to reflect the realities and interests of local business environments. To address this issue, this chapter draws on several specific examples to demonstrate how authentic materials are used in Business English courses taught as part of the BA programme „Linguistics for Business” at the University of Łódź.

The next chapter *University Cooperation with Business Environment in the Digital Era* by **Jarosław Płuciennik** and **Michał Wróblewski** deviates slightly from the other contributions to this volume. It takes a broader view of the relations between academic and business environments by describing what the authors refer to as ‘disruptive innovation’ occurring in the area of higher education. This innovation is linked to the recent phenomenon of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and development of Big Data. Arguing that education is becoming a social service, this chapter advocates the need

Introduction

to focus on basic soft skills as well on specialisation and narrow academic disciplines. The authors clarify their position by describing a case study, i.e. an educational project called iProfessionals.

The last two chapters address the issue of terminology in specialised languages. **Sanja Kiš Žuvela** and **Tomislava Bošnjak Botica** in their chapter *BFFs or False Friends? Internationalisms and Their 'Equivalents' in Croatian Musical Terminology Standardisation* explore the evolution of music-related terminology in Croatian. This evolution is described in terms of a tension between internationalisms based on classical Greek and Latin foundations and prevalent in most of the 20th century and the formation of new terms having their roots in the native language. Set against this background, the chapter presents the results of an ongoing interdisciplinary research project, Connusterm, which aims to standardise basic musical terminology in Croatian.

In summary, the chapters in this book, provide examples of cutting-edge research in languages for specific purposes approached from the educational and teaching perspectives. With the range of perspectives and didactic contexts outlined in this volume, I hope to stimulate discussion on ways in which the process of teaching specialised languages in tertiary education could be facilitated and made even more effective. I also hope that this selection of chapters will shed new light on the role and place of specialised languages in the wider context of challenges faced by students in the course of their future employment prospects.

Stanisław Goźdz-Roszkowski

Perceptions of Language and Subject Specialists on the Linguistic Needs of Law Students

Halina Sierocka

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Abstract

Many researchers highlight the fact that it is a convoluted task to make a distinction between the pedagogic content and subject matter knowledge while teaching English for Specific Purposes. Other scholars claim that subject specialists differ significantly from language specialists due to different teaching methods, as well as due to the status of disciplinary entities.

This paper endeavours to show the outcomes of research conducted at the Faculty of Law, University of Białystok, among subject-specialists teaching law in English and language specialists teaching Legal English. The aim of the research was to investigate how both groups perceive the needs of law students as regards learning English for professional purposes (i.e. Legal English) and what methodology they exploit to make the process of learning Legal English effective. The study assumed mainly a qualitative methodology encompassing a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The author also hopes to shed some light on possible ways of effective co-operation between language and subject specialists, which would contribute to better language acquisition on the part of the law students.

Keywords: language specialist, subject specialist, needs analysis, English for Legal Purposes.

1. Introduction

The demands of a Brave New World (the end of the Second World War and the Oil crisis which had a major impact on the world economy), the revolution in linguistics (which meant focusing more on the ways in which language is used in real communication instead of concentrating on the features of the language) and focus on the learner (the demand to design language courses specifically to

meet the different needs and interests of learners) are the three factors, according to Gatehouse (2001), which significantly contributed to the emergence of English for Specific Purposes. Language studies have moved on from the image of hobby and the satisfaction of intellectual kudos and are now viewed as a valuable tool in facilitating success in professional life, therefore specifying the situations in which the student will use the language is of critical importance. This objective may be accomplished by means of needs analysis which is, as Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 54) claim, “the irreducible minimum of an ESP approach to course design [...] since it is the awareness of course design of a target situation that distinguishes the ESP learner from the learner of General English.”

Even though there is a considerable amount of literature (Widdowson 1983; Brindley 1989; Benesch 1996; Long 1996; Spratt 1999; Benesch 2001; Deutch 2003; Basturkmen 2006) on the critical approach to needs analysis and some abundant problematic areas are mentioned like the fact that objective needs may not match subjective needs, or perspectives and perceptions of needs differ and are often in contradiction, or as some scholars claim it is a tool that may serve the interests of the institutions at the expense of learners, still numerous scholars and authors (Munby 1978; Hutchinson and Waters 1987; Robinson 1991; West 1994; Jordan 1997; Dudley-Evans and St John 1998; Deutch 2003; Jeong 2005; Cowling 2007; Songhori 2008; Kassim and Ali 2010; Wozniak 2010; Akbari 2011; Tsao 2011; Lockwood 2012) consider needs analysis (also known as needs assessment) a crucial instrument in designing and conducting any language course, not necessarily an ESP course. Jeong (2005) remarks that the necessity for needs analysis arises from the assumption that when language teaching is focused on what learners are interested in, language learning is most effective. Furthermore, as Bacha and Bahous (2008) highlight, a needs analysis facilitates the recognition of what students need to study and what teachers need to teach hence contributes to a considerable extent to effective ESP (thus English for Legal Purposes) syllabus design, its development and implementation and better helps students to achieve learning outcomes.

2. Purpose and context of the research

The aim of the research project was to investigate how teachers of English for legal purposes perceive the needs of their law students in terms of course content, skills that would be essential at prospective work or methodology used (i.e. learning strategies, aids, the role of grammar, etc.). The teacher of English for legal purposes is assumed here not only as a linguist teaching Legal English to law students (hereinafter referred to as language specialist)

but also an instructor teaching law in English (hereinafter referred to as subject specialist). In addition, the research project endeavours to answer the question whether and to what extent both language and subject specialists differ in the perception of their students' prospective linguistic competences.

The research was carried out at the University of Białystok among teachers of the Department of Foreign Languages who teach Legal English and teachers of the Faculty of Law who teach their subjects in English. As an outcome of the Erasmus mobility program, introduced in 2002 at the Faculty of Law, there are now 77 courses taught in foreign languages, 54 of which are conducted in English, 9 in German, 11 in Russian, and 3 in Spanish, which provided a solid background to do the research.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Sample

The sample for the whole study comprised 34 teachers working at the Faculty of Law, of the University of Białystok. The research was carried out among 9 language specialists and 25 subject-specialists. For the purpose of the research, it was assumed that a language specialist is an instructor teaching English to law students, whereas a subject specialist is an instructor teaching law in English.

3.1.1. Language specialists

There are 10 teachers teaching Legal English, all employed at the Department of Foreign Languages (interdepartmental unit of the University of Białystok, providing services to all faculties), however one of the teachers (unfortunately a very experienced one) without reason refused to participate in the research.

The language specialists are all experienced teachers of General English (the least experienced teacher has been teaching for 13 years and the most experienced for 24 years). As far as teaching English for Specific Purposes is concerned i.e. Legal English, the spread of experience is wider (from 4 up to 25) but teachers with fewer years of experience (4–12 years) predominate. In the main the language specialists have a degree in applied linguistics or English philology. Three of them possess a PhD degree in arts and one of them graduated both in English and in law.

All of the language specialists teach law students (mostly those in their first and second year of studies). Some (33%) also teach Legal English to legal professionals (judges and legal advisors) and occasionally to translators and academics. Aside from their teaching activities, 78% of the language specialists

use Legal English in translation and court interpreting and 55% of them use it for designing their teaching materials for classes with law students.

The majority of language specialists (67%) took up teaching Legal English because they were directed to teach at the Faculty of Law. It was not their intended choice or question of interest but an obligatory allotment within their work contract. Only one respondent (11%) started to teach Legal English because she or he was interested in the subject. The other reasons for taking up the post concerned: being burned-out after teaching General English for too long (11%), by coincidence (11%).

The majority of language specialists learnt Legal English on their own (67%), working mainly with authentic material. They also find attending conferences and workshops on Legal English useful in learning the subject matter (33%). Some (33%) believe they learnt a lot preparing for their classes.

3.1.2. Subject-specialists

27 subject specialists teach their subjects in English at the Faculty of Law. 25 of them participated in the research. Two of them, despite much effort taken by the researcher to contact them neither answered telephone calls nor emails. As far as experience in teaching law in their native language is concerned, there is a huge diversity here. This research group encompassed both very experienced instructors (38 years of experience) and those who have just begun their professional career (2 years of experience). Most of the subject specialists however possess relevant experience (13 years on average) in teaching their subject. The subject specialists have been teaching law in English for 6–7 years on average but there are some teachers who have been giving lectures for over 14 years as well as those who have just started teaching law in English. All of the subject specialists possess a PhD degree in law and eight of them (32%) hold the title of Associate Professor (*dr habilitowany*).

All the subject specialists teach their legal domain in English to international students (mostly Spanish) who come to the faculty within their Erasmus mobility programs. The students are usually in their second, third or fourth years of studies.

In keeping with the language specialists, the majority of subject specialists (56%) started to teach legal English because they were asked to do so due to the Erasmus student mobility programme implemented at the Faculty of Law, by the University of Białystok. Unlike language specialists, subject specialists could refuse to teach in English if they felt their linguistic competence was inadequate. Some subject specialists took up teaching Legal English for professional development (32%), or because they wanted to be exposed to English (24%), or to improve their linguistic competences because they often

participate in international conferences (12%). One respondent undertook to teach law in English because it represented a challenge.

The subject specialists learnt Legal English by various ways and it is frequently not by the same method. The most common way of learning subject-specific vocabulary covers working on their own initiative using authentic material (80% of subject specialists exploited this method) attending foreign conferences, workshops, overseas programs and scholarships (40%), attending Legal English courses and workshops (32%) and working on the preparation of material for their own classes (16%).

3.2. Research instruments and research questions

The research project assumed a qualitative and quantitative methodology encompassing a questionnaire (Appendix A) and a semi-structured interview conducted with language and subject-specialists.

The research questions referred to the following aspects:

- general objectives law students desire to achieve during the Legal English course;
- the skills which are most useful in the students' domains;
- the course content (the coverage of particular legal domains and the role of grammar and vocabulary);
- teaching and learning strategies and methods which are most efficient while learning Legal English;
- the reasons for their learning Legal English.

Specific research questions included in the questionnaire and interview were as follows:

- *What would law students like to achieve during the legal English course?*
- *Which specific objectives within the four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) are the most important to them?*
- *Which particular discipline of law is the most useful for law students?*
- *What is the role of grammar in such a course?*
- *Which skill/skills is/are the most helpful for them while learning a foreign language?*
- *Which is/are the most effective way(s)/grouping(s) of studying for law students?*
- *Which is the most important element of Legal English learning?*
- *What aid/aids is/are the most helpful in the process of foreign language (including Legal English) learning?*
- *What do law students need Legal English for?*

The data essential to answering the research questions is both quantitative and qualitative in character and were gathered by means of the needs analysis

(Appendix A) carried out among all specialists. The questions included in the questionnaire were expanded and/or clarified during the interviews. The specialists' reflections were of a qualitative character. The collected data were interpreted and conclusions drawn. Finally, further suggestions and recommendations were made.

4. Results of the study

4.1. General objectives law students desire to achieve during the Legal English course

Both groups were asked to mark the two most important general objectives of the Legal English course which law students might want to achieve. As figure 1 shows, half of the subject specialists (50%) considered developing

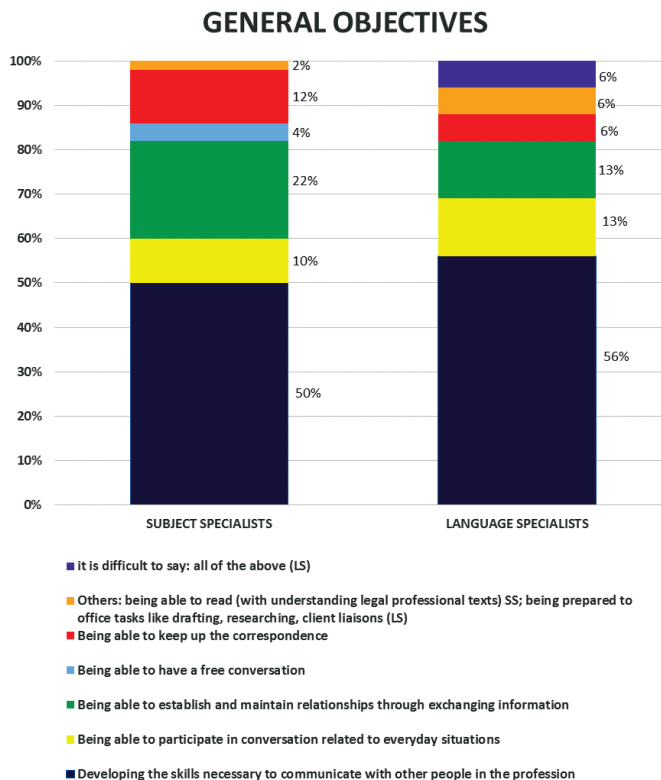


Fig. 1. General objectives of law students for Legal English courses in the eyes of subject and language specialists

Source: own study