

Voices Unveiled: Law Students Speak Out on the Vital Significance of ESP Courses in Legal Education

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Abstract

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This study embarks on an exploration of the paramount significance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses tailored for law students. A total of 40 second semester students taking ESP for law students at Universitas Merdeka Pasuruan participated in the survey after completing foundational legal English courses. Respondents were instructed to complete the questionnaires in 30 minutes to an hour to ensure a careful consideration of all survey issues before responding. The majority of respondents (33 students) expressed a high degree of agreement regarding the importance of ESP courses in enhancing their language proficiency. 55% or 22 students indicating highly content and 38% or 15 students expressing total satisfaction with the materials of the English for law class. 50% or 20 students stated that speaking is the most difficult skill among other 3 English skills. Essentially, it is advisable to mandate that students acquire a foundational understanding of legal knowledge before delving into the study of English for law. While law major needs to master law paradigm, it is imperative when instructing an English for law class, instructors furnish information about their respective law concept.

Kata Kunci:

ESP,

Bahasa Inggris untuk

Hukum,

Mahasiswa Hukum,

Pendidikan Tinggi

Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pentingnya kursus Bahasa Inggris untuk Tujuan Khusus (ESP) yang dirancang untuk mahasiswa hukum. Sebanyak 40 mahasiswa semester dua yang mengambil ESP untuk mahasiswa hukum Universitas Merdeka Pasuruan berpartisipasi dalam survei setelah menyelesaikan kursus bahasa Inggris hukum dasar. Responden diinstruksikan untuk mengisi kuesioner dalam waktu 30 menit hingga satu jam untuk memastikan pertimbangan yang cermat terhadap semua masalah survei sebelum menjawab. Mayoritas responden (33 siswa) menyatakan sangat setuju mengenai pentingnya kursus ESP dalam

meningkatkan kemahiran bahasa mereka. 55% atau 22 siswa menyatakan sangat puas dan 38% atau 15 siswa menyatakan kepuasan total terhadap materi kelas Bahasa Inggris untuk Hukum. 50% atau 20 siswa menyatakan bahwa berbicara adalah keterampilan yang paling sulit di antara 3 keterampilan bahasa Inggris lainnya. Pada dasarnya, disarankan untuk mengamankan agar siswa memperoleh pemahaman dasar tentang pengetahuan hukum sebelum mempelajari studi bahasa Inggris untuk hukum. Meskipun jurusan hukum perlu menguasai paradigma hukum, sangat penting ketika mengajar kelas Bahasa Inggris untuk Hukum, instruktur memberikan informasi tentang konsep hukum masing-masing.

INTRODUCTION

ESP, or English for Specific Purposes, is dedicated to instructing and acquiring English as a second or foreign language among university students and employees, including trainees within their professional environments. The primary objective is the utilization of English within particular disciplines and workplaces. According to Łuczak (2017), ESP adopts a learner-centred approach that prioritizes the development of communicative skills in specific research domains. This method enhances the competence of students and employees in employing English for distinct disciplines or professional duties. The study of English for ESP is crucial for students across diverse faculties and universities. As emphasized by Salmani-nodoushan (2020), English stands as the language at the forefront of scientific, technological, economic, managerial developments, as well as in literature and entertainment genres. Addressing ESP in universities holds significant importance for students as it shapes their capabilities for future careers (Surani, Umalihayati, et al., 2023). In the current era of globalization and standardization, the study of English is imperative, especially for job searches, international travel, and participation in conferences or meetings worldwide.

Legal English constitutes a variant of the English language employed within the legal frameworks of England, the United States, and other nations where English serves as the official language (Mahbub, 2018; Serafini et al.,

2015). Precisely, it serves as a specialized linguistic medium for legal discourse, primarily utilized by legal professions, for instance attorney, judge, prosecutor, and the like in the execution of their duties (Liu & Hu, 2021). In the contemporary era of globalization, the necessity for the legal practitioner to adeptly convey in English, employing the suitable legal language as well as terminologies, are evident due to exposure to diverse legal systems. Furthermore, the predominant use of English in the drafting of international conventions, treaties, constitutions, and regulations underscores the significance of mastering legal English (Łuczak, 2017). It is imperative for legal experts to possess not only a profound understanding of the law but also a proficient command of legal English (Agustina, 2014). Recognizing this, the inclusion of legal English in the curricula of law schools worldwide is increasingly vital.

In the dynamic landscape of legal education, the significance of ESP courses for law students extends far beyond language proficiency. As the legal arena continues to evolve into a globalized space, fluency in English has become a pivotal skill for aspiring lawyers (Alsamadani, 2017). From navigating legal nuances in a diverse, interconnected world to fostering effective advocacy, the journey through ESP courses proves instrumental in shaping well-rounded and globally competitive legal professionals (Vinca, 2017). It is pivotal to unravel the layers of significance behind the integration of English education into the fabric of legal studies, paving the way for a new generation of legal practitioners equipped with the linguistic prowess needed to thrive in an ever-expanding legal landscape.

Moreover, the field of law necessitates precise and nuanced communication, underscoring the significance of English proficiency in legal education and practice. Proficiency in English is imperative for law students, encompassing the ability to comprehend intricate legal texts, compose legal documents, participate in legal discussions, and articulate persuasive arguments (Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017). Furthermore, given the growing prevalence of legal practice and the increasing occurrence of cross-border legal interactions, law students must possess proficiency in English to communicate and collaborate effectively within an international legal context. The incorporation of English for

Specific Purposes (ESP) principles into legal education has the potential to reconcile the tension between general English instruction and the specific linguistic needs of law students (Serafini et al., 2015). However, there exists a scarcity of systematic research examining the English language requirements of law students and offering insights into the effective design and development of ESP programs tailored to meet these needs (Meristo & López Arias, 2020). Many existing English language programs for law students tend to emphasize legal content or focus on general English skills rather than addressing the specific linguistic competencies essential for effective communication and operation within the legal domain (Rachmawati et al., 2021, 2022).

Legal English presents a challenge for comprehension, even among native speakers, due to its distinctive linguistic characteristics. The utilization of legalese, a specialized language employed by lawyers and in legal documentation, contributes to the complexity that ordinary individuals encounter in understanding legal content (Surani, Septiyani, et al., 2023). The intricacy is delineated as unintelligible language present in legal documents, along with a cryptic terminology employed among legal practitioners (Fadel & Rajab, 2017). Henceforth, it is contended that a command of legal English by graduates whose first language is not English enhances their comprehension of legal traditions, regulations, and principles not solely within the framework of native speakers but also in connection with other nationalities.

The effective teaching and learning of legal English in a tertiary education have become significant focal points for lecturers and learners in recent years. In the contemporary realm of legal education, the pursuit of excellence by aspiring law professionals necessitates a nuanced understanding of the specialized language intricacies within the legal domain (Herlina & Said, 2022; Nhac, 2021). This study embarks on an exploration of the paramount significance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses tailored for law students. Beyond the conventional mastery of English, ESP courses for law delve into the specialized lexicon, discourse, and communication patterns inherent to legal contexts (Boroujeni et al., 2013; Liu & Hu, 2021).

Despite the growing acknowledgment of the importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, there remains a notable research gap in understanding the perspective of law students regarding the importance of ESP for law course. While existing studies have explored the general benefits of need analysis of ESP programs, there is a paucity of research specifically delving into the viewpoints of law students in tertiary education context in acquiring specialized English skills in shaping adept and linguistically equipped legal practitioners. Moreover, the literature predominantly focuses on the outcomes of such courses without sufficiently addressing the students' satisfaction on the materials and learning method served by the lecturer that prove effective instruction in the classroom context. This research is needed to be conducted to support their professional success within the legal domain. This research is important to refine the curriculum and instructional practices in ESP courses for law students, thereby better aligning educational interventions with the intricacies of legal language acquisition and fostering more effective legal communication skills.

METHOD

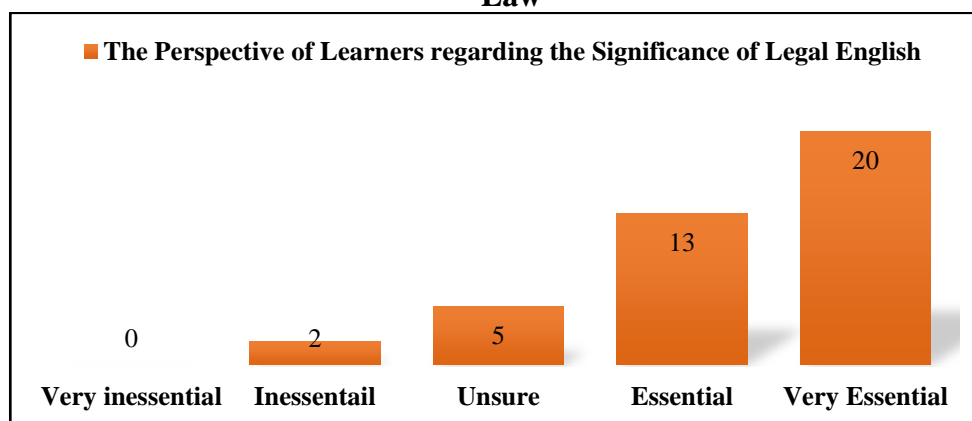
A total of 40 second-semester students taking ESP for law at Universitas Merdeka Pasuruan participated in the survey after completing foundational legal English courses. At this university, English for law class is mandated to be completed by the students to pass the second semester. The instructor employs instructional materials such as "Introduction to International Legal English" in ESP class. Due to the participants' non-English majors, they lack essential background knowledge across various English language areas. The primary method of data collection regarding students' views of the importance of the ESP course was a survey questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of two kinds of statements assessing overall attitudes and satisfaction levels with legal English courses. The participants in this study provided responses ranging from very essential to very essential. Furthermore, the questionnaire's validity was corroborated through the evaluation of three seasoned ESP experts. The survey

questionnaires were distributed through Google Forms to 40 ESP law students. Respondents were instructed to complete the questionnaires in 30 minutes to an hour to ensure careful consideration of all survey issues before responding. The quantitative analysis of the data was conducted using the SPSS program to see the viewpoint of law students in learning English for law courses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The perspective of learners regarding the significance of legal English

Figure 1: The Students' Views regarding the significance of English for Law



Graph 1 delineates the perspectives of learners regarding the significance of legal English. Evidently, a majority of surveyed students were cognizant of the substantial importance attached to legal English. The combined count of participants deeming it either essential or highly essential amounted to 33 out of 40 students. Recognizing the indispensability of legal English is acknowledged as a primary motivating factor for students in their pursuit of proficiency in this domain. The majority of respondents (33 students) expressed a high degree of agreement regarding the importance of ESP courses in enhancing their language proficiency. Many students highlighted the specific linguistic nuances and terminology inherent to legal contexts, emphasizing the instrumental role ESP courses played in refining their communication skills within the legal domain. The result of this study revealed that the majority of participants strongly believe that ESP courses are highly relevant to the specific linguistic demands of the legal

field. The result of this study is in line with the study of Herlina & Said (2022) who claimed that students articulated the unique nature of legal language and its distinct requirements, expressing confidence in the tailored linguistic training provided by ESP courses to meet these demands effectively. Besides, this study also showed that the majority of the respondents feel satisfy about the materials provided in ESP course like illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 2: The Contentment of the Students with the English for Law Course Material

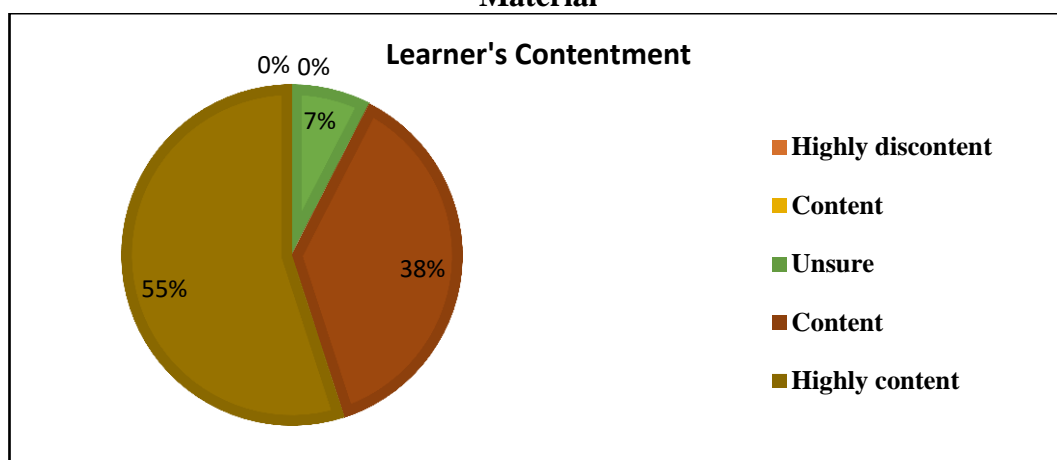
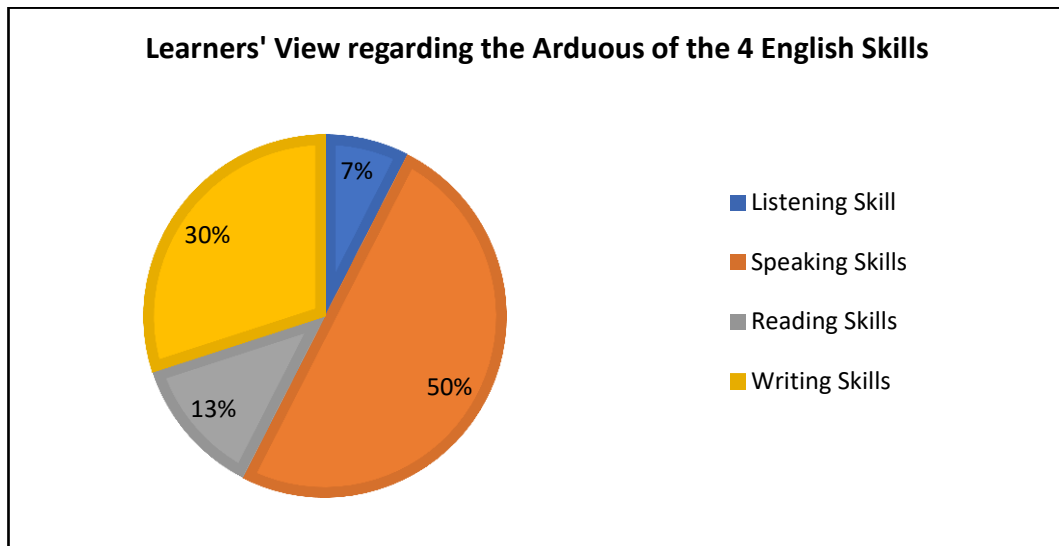


Figure 2 illustrates that a significant proportion of learners expressed satisfaction, with 55% or 22 students indicating highly content and 38% or 15 students expressing total satisfaction with the materials of the English for law class. Conversely, 7% or only 3 of learners who stated that they feel unsure about their satisfactory about the materials provided in ESP law class. Regarding the contribution of ESP courses to understanding legal terminology and communication, the majority of respondents affirmed a positive impact. The result of this study highlighted the perceived value of ESP courses in unravelling complex legal terminology, deciphering legal documentation, and fostering effective communication strategies essential for success in the legal profession. The results underscore the students' recognition of the crucial role ESP courses play in their academic and professional development. The high level of agreement on the relevance and impact of ESP courses on language proficiency and legal communication indicates a positive consensus among the surveyed law students.

Students give a very high response because they think that the course content is directly aligned with the legal context, incorporating relevant case studies, legal documents, and language commonly used in legal practice. The result of this study is in line with the study of Nhap (2021). The researcher stated that providing engaging and authentic materials, such as legal texts, contracts, and court transcripts are needed to immerse students in real-world legal language and situations. Moreover, they think that facilitating opportunities for students to practice language skills in authentic legal contexts, such as drafting legal documents, participating in mock trials, and engaging in legal discussions are essential for their work. By addressing these elements, an ESP course in law can have a substantial impact on students, equipping them with the necessary language skills and contextual understanding to navigate the complexities of the legal profession effectively. Besides, this research also give picture about the obstacle faced by the students among the 4 language skills as showed below.

Figure 3: Students' Views in regard to the Obstacle of English Skills



The pie chart above illustrates the significant proportion of second year students taking ESP law class share a common perspective, identifying legal speaking as the most formidable skills. 50% or 20 students stated that speaking is the most difficult skill among other 3 English skills. 30% or 12 students stated that writing is the most difficult English skills among others. For reading and listening to the record about English for law fields rates of 13% and 7% or 5 and 3

students respectively. This observation aligns with the instructional emphasis at Universitas Merdeka Pasuruan, where the legal English curriculum prioritizes speaking or verbal communication, serving as foundational components before affording students opportunities to develop the English receptive skills, for instance reading and listening about law. In essence, these results authentically mirror the genuine obstacles encountered by law students to learn English, encompassing obstacles of the linguistic intricacies of English for law (Herlina & Said, 2022; Nhac, 2021)

This study was created to shed some lights to the obstacles felt by law major students in learning English for law. The findings indicate that legal English possesses distinct features that set it apart from ordinary English, posing difficulties for learners. Moreover, cultural differences in the legal systems of distinct nations contribute to the lack of equivalence in highly specialized concepts. These findings suggest pedagogical implications for language instructors, as detailed below.

Essentially, it is advisable to mandate that students acquire a foundational understanding of legal knowledge before delving into the study of English for law. While law major needs to master law paradigm, it is imperative when instructing an English for law class, instructors furnish information about their respective law concept. Educators are encouraged to integrate fundamental law concept in English, providing students with a contextual background in the field of law. Various topics regarding law encompassing “criminal law, tort law, contract law, company law, commercial law, international law, and others” have to be mastered before delving into legal English classes (Supardi, 2016). Essentially, law class should be preceded English for law courses to make sure efficient acquisition of legal English skills.

Secondly, a comprehensive review of language and grammar holds significant value in the context of teaching legal English. For different legal topics, learners should engage in a broad spectrum of English language exercise that encompass the different feature of English for law, including the utilization of legal terminologies (Herlina & Said, 2022). This exercise should also encompass

law skills practices as well as role-playing, such as to become an advocate, interview the suspect, negotiate with client, and write the legal document. The practice can facilitate the development of proficiency in legal English. Incorporating high technology in blended lessons, such as mobile devices, can enhance student motivation. This approach allows language teachers to provide stimulating and enjoyable instruction aimed at progressively improving learners' communication skill both oral as well as written English, and their reading and listening English for law skills. The use of the authentic material from law cases for students is highly recommended.

In the contemporary era of globalization, legal professionals with varied legal cultures and linguistic backgrounds often employ English as a means of communication. Nevertheless, the essential challenge arising from the divergence between the national legal systems of countries and the common and civil law systems underscores the significance of engaging in the study of comparative law. Given this context, instructors of legal English have the option to embrace the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach in their teaching methodology (Nhac, 2021). This approach integrates the teaching of legal language with the examination of elements from various legal systems to convey contextualized meaning. The implementation of these recommendations requires considerable dedication from legal English language educators, along with support from instructors specializing in law (Nhac, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The research elucidates the ESP law students' viewpoint on acquiring proficiency in legal English. The preponderance of participants, comprising 33 students, conveyed a pronounced consensus on the significance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in augmenting their linguistic proficiency. Specifically, 55%, or 22 students, articulated considerable contentment, while 38%, or 15 students, conveyed the utmost satisfaction with the instructional materials employed in the English for Law class. Moreover, 50%, or 20 students, asserted that, among the three core English skills, speaking presented the greatest

challenge. The findings have led to the identification of several pedagogical implications aimed at improving the efficacy of the legal English acquisition process. Nevertheless, there are notable limitations to the present study. These findings suggest a strong justification for the continued integration and enhancement of ESP courses within legal education curricula. Based on students' perspectives, further refinement and customization of ESP programs could be explored to address specific linguistic challenges encountered by law students, ensuring a more targeted and beneficial learning experience.

The comprehensive insights gathered from this study provide a foundation for future discussions and initiatives aimed at optimizing ESP courses to better align with the evolving linguistic needs of law students pursuing excellence in the legal profession. Firstly, it focused on understanding the students' learning difficulties solely from the perspective of the learners, omitting the consideration of teachers' perceptions. Secondly, the study's participant pool was confined to English majors, excluding law students. Consequently, the results, to some extent, may not fully capture the behavior of a broader population in diverse contexts. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding, other researchers are warranted to address these gaps in the current research.

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