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**ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES:  
ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT ESP CURRICULUM  
AT THE FACULTY OF LAW AND BUSINESS STUDIES  
DR LAZAR VRKATIĆ**

**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this paper is to determine the effectiveness of the ESP courses within the English language studies at the Faculty of Law and Business Studies Dr Lazar Vrkatić (FLV) from the students' perspective. These courses constitute a major part of the curriculum, and it is therefore important to assess their effectiveness. Another aim is to provide a description of these courses which includes goals and outcomes and course contents.

The English studies curricula traditionally include courses that develop theoretical and communicative competencies comprising language skills but also linguistic, literature-related and cultural knowledge. However, another aspect that has become increasingly important in the past twenty years is the ESP competence. Within the English language program at the FLV the students are offered courses in Business and Legal English, as these areas have proven especially important for their future careers.

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Assessment of the courses on the part of students was conducted during the spring semester in 2021 with 37 students (including 29 recent graduates). They were offered an online questionnaire with the aim of assessing the impact of the courses on the students' education, academic and professional skills and competencies and their applicability for the students' professions. The results show that the students' overall perception of the ESP courses is that they are useful and that learning outcomes are adequate skills and competencies. The respondents also provided constructive criticism by pointing out not only strengths (quality instructors, adequacy of topics, usefulness of the courses etc.) but also weaknesses (need for modernization of some topics, increase of the practical work and class load, etc.).

It can be stated that the ESP courses at FLV are generally of adequate quality, however, some ideas and implications for the future curriculum and syllabi improvements are offered in the concluding remarks.

**KEY WORDS:** ESP, curriculum, syllabi, goals, competencies, course content

## 1. Introduction

The English Studies curricula at the tertiary level traditionally include courses that develop theoretical and communicative competencies: language skills, linguistic, literature-related and cultural knowledge. Another aspect that has become increasingly important in the past twenty years is the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) competence. The English Language program at the Faculty of Law and Business Studies (FLV) offers courses in Business and Legal English, as these areas have proven especially important for students' future careers. At FLV, the aimed competencies of the English Language studies (Bachelor) include communicative competence both as an independent goal and an inseparable aspect of all other competencies. The aim of this paper is therefore to determine the quality of the ESP courses within the English language curriculum at FLV by an analysis of the students' assessment

of the courses' impact on their academic and professional development. The students' assessment can thus be seen as an indicative measurement of the courses' effectiveness for achieving certain competencies and enhancing employability.

### **1.1. On ESP communicative competencies**

The concept of communicative competence was first introduced by Dell Hymes (1966, 1972), as a response to the perceived inadequacy of Chomsky's definition of "linguistic competence" (1965) from a sociolinguistic perspective (as cited in Celce-Murcia et al. 1995: 10). The notions that language proficiency involves both the knowledge of phonology, morphology, syntax, etc. and that the social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately underlie the communicative approach to second language teaching and learning. The seminal model of communicative competence was developed by Canale and Swain (1980, pp. 1-8) and further elaborated by Canale in 1983. This model specified four components of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. Celce-Murcia et al. (1995, pp. 10-11) narrowed down the broad concept of sociolinguistic competence and named it "sociocultural competence", stating that it is necessary to possess sociocultural knowledge to successfully employ the resources in other components (linguistic, strategic, actional and discourse competence). In 2007, Celce-Murcia modified her model of communicative competence, renaming actional competence as interactional competence, and adding one more component – formulaic competence. Sociocultural competence, or "how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication", is relevant to language learning in the broadest sense, and therefore to language for specific purposes as well (Celce-Murcia 2007, pp. 46-49). As she further elaborates, formulaic competence, defined as the ability to use appropriate formulaic language, and interactional competence (consisting of actional, conversational, and non-verbal competence) are components of communicative competence that is especially relevant for ESP learners and teachers.

The status of English as a global language has led to the growing assertiveness of non-native speakers who see English as a tool with which they can express their own values and identities, create their own intellectual property, and export their goods and services to other countries (see Graddol, 1998, pp. 2-4; James, 2009, pp. 46-47; Novakov, 2016, p. 1). This inevitably involves learning specialized vocabulary and register related to different domains, which is the goal of the ESP competence. Non-native speakers, therefore, would need to possess a level of expertise in a specific domain and the ESP knowledge in the same domain in order to communicate and do business effectively in a globalized world. The students of English, on the one hand, possess a higher level of communicative competence than the average non-native English speaker, and that includes the ESP competence. On the other hand, their knowledge of a specific domain such as law is often lacking, compared to legal professionals and law students, for instance.

Since the 1960s, ESP has grown to become one of the most prominent topics in English language learning, teaching, and research, due to three main reasons: the rise of English as a global language, shift towards communicative competence in language learning, and learner-oriented approach (Luka, 2014, p. 8). As observed by Anthony (2018), ESP is

an approach to language teaching that targets the current and/or future academic or occupational needs of learners, focuses on the necessary language, genres and skills to address these needs, and assists learners in meeting these needs through the use of general and/or discipline-specifics teaching materials and methods (Anthony, 2018, as cited in Wozniak, 2020, p. 172)

Most of the definitions of ESP (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, pp. 16-20; St. John, 1996, pp. 3-7; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, pp. 2-10) reflect Anthony's description, and can be broken down into several features:

- ESP learners tend to be adults
- ESP is goal-oriented (learners learn it because they need it for practical application)
- ESP courses are based on stakeholders' needs analysis
- learners need a special professional vocabulary.

Basturkmen (2010, p. 3) also concludes that “ESP courses are narrower in focus than ELT courses” because they center on analysis of learners’ needs which can be viewed in terms of the students’ work- or study-related needs, not personal needs or general interests.

Observing the identified characteristics of ESP courses in general, it can be stated that the tertiary education students represent an adequate population for implementation of such courses in many respects, the most generic one being that they are of the right age and cognitive maturity to be able to acquire abstract concepts. Following, and in line with the current economic and political trends in Serbia and the region, the needs analysis is such that it warrants the implementation of ESP courses that encompass the areas of business and law<sup>4</sup>. Some of the goals the ESP courses should include are developing skills (general communicative skills, but also the more professional ones, namely translating) and knowledge of specific vocabulary, and of course, some basic content knowledge in these areas.

In the following sections of the paper, the ESP courses within the English language program at FLV will be described in terms of the theoretical foundations. They will also be described in more detail, focusing on the specified goals, aims and contents. To provide context and to present the rationale behind the introduction of the ESP courses, a short history of the English program is provided at the beginning of the following section (Section 2). This segment provides a substitution for an actual needs analysis – the circumstances described below serve as the grounds upon which the needs have been identified in the general job market.

In Section 3 the research aim is presented, which is to comment on the quality of the ESP courses’ outcomes based on the students’ assessment. The outcomes are viewed in terms of the competencies gained and the applicability of the gained skills (communicative skills, translation) and knowledge (specific vocabulary) in their field of work. Several research questions have been formulated in order to arrive at conclusions.

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<sup>4</sup> Some similar study programs: University of Montenegro; Mediteran University, Montenegro; Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary.

## 2. English language curriculum at FLV: Changes in the name and courses

When the FLV English program was first founded in 2006, it was called *Business and Legal English Studies*<sup>5</sup>, in line with the overall goals and objectives of the institution, which was to provide a practical and applicable higher education. One of the objectives was for the program to provide competencies that were market-oriented and applicable. Within the English language program, such competencies included communicative (translation, pragmatic, sociolinguistic and grammatical) as well as professional skills necessary for the transition from academic to business world (fundamentals of law, economics, business communication, IT courses). The program included courses that were designed to equip students with the content knowledge in Business English, Legal English, Translation, Law, Economics, etc. With Serbia involved in the EU integrations process and the influx of foreign investments, it seemed sensible to educate professionals who could be involved in the translation of legal documents, interpreting in business and legal settings, and other kinds of business communication.

In 2010 the program name was changed to *English Language Studies*<sup>6</sup>, now reflecting the more traditional approach to the study of English at the tertiary level in Serbia. This change was a reluctant one, brought on as a necessity to accommodate for the lack of flexibility of the employers, mostly in education, who expressed severe skepticism towards diploma holders with a novel program name. The curriculum was expanded to include more linguistic disciplines, teaching methodology, and literature courses. The inertness of the labor market and administration in Serbia, as was briefly mentioned, was one of the reasons, which meant that the professional title of Bachelor of English Philology (180 ESPB) was not recognized/verified quickly enough, and graduates were being dismissed in favor of state university graduates, who still earned the earlier title of English Language and Literature Graduate. On top of that, for most graduates, it was still easier to find employment in

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<sup>5</sup> The original name was *Poslovno-pravni engleski jezik*.

<sup>6</sup> The changed name *Engleski jezik*

the education system than in business or industry; therefore, they need ed teaching competencies and a readily recognizable degree title.

Since the institutional objective was flexibility and adaptability of its programs, the FLV English program has continued to adapt and change, but the core component is still made of ESP courses. The knowledge and skills that the students obtain have proven to be an asset on the labor market.

As mentioned above, the FLV English language curriculum encompasses courses in Business and Legal English, as these domains have proven especially important for the students' future careers. The analysis of the courses will include the following aspects: goals and outcomes, content/syllabi, and teaching methods. In line with the latest trends on the labor market, the course syllabi were updated before the latest accreditation cycle in 2018/19. A number of changes were introduced, e.g., the ESP courses were moved to the higher years of study. Additionally, the syllabi contents were updated, and the IT field was introduced into the Business English courses as knowledge in this field provides students with necessary professional skills and tools.

The ESP courses at the FLV English program consist of the Business English strand (three courses) and the Legal English strand (three courses). The courses used to be labelled as 1, 2, and 3 (e.g., Business English 1, Business English 2, etc.), but in the second accreditation cycle (2014), the course titles were changed to reflect the course contents: Business Correspondence in English, English for Banking, English for Finance; Introduction to Legal English, English for Corporate Law, Legal English for Modern Business. In the 1st and 2nd accreditation cycle, all ESP courses were mandatory; in the last cycle (2020) the final courses for both strands (English for IT and Finance and Legal English for Modern Business) became elective.

The overall goal of BE courses is to introduce students to the contemporary English language of business (business correspondence, banking, finance). The overall outcomes of these courses are that students understand the BE register and style, have acquired extensive BE vocabulary, and can communicate (in speech and writing) in business settings.

The overall goal of LE courses is to introduce students to the fundamentals of English legal terminology, register, and style, and to introduce students to Legal English vocabulary related to contract law, corporate law, and property law. The overall outcomes of these courses are that students understand the LE register and style, understand differences between common and civil law, understand specific features of the UK and US legal systems, have acquired extensive LE vocabulary related to contract law, corporate law, and property law, and can communicate (in speech and writing) in legal settings.

### **3. Aim of the research and research methods**

The aim of the paper is to gain an understanding of the courses' effectiveness through the students' assessment. We wanted to establish the impact of these courses on the students' academic and professional development, which required an insight into the knowledge, skills and overall competencies developed during the courses. Several other points of interest were made, including the students' comments and recommendations for the improvement of these courses, as well as their desire to continue professional development in these areas as indications of an awakened interest or the lack thereof. Further on, based on the information retrieved from the students, the aim is to establish whether the courses achieve their stated goals and outcomes, and if not, to offer recommendations for their improvement.

The method consisted of an online survey, administered at the end of the spring semester in 2021, aiming to gather both quantitative and qualitative data (described in detail in the following text).

Questions in the survey reflected the following research questions:

- Are the courses useful in general?
- Are they applicable in our graduates' professions?
- What competencies/outcomes have the students acquired?
- What are the key strengths of the courses?
- What are the areas in need of improvement?



Is there a difference in the students' assessment of legal and business strands of courses?

The instrument used for the research was an online questionnaire (Google Forms) constructed by the authors for the purpose of this research. The questionnaire consisted of 27 items total, divided into three sections as follows: general section (7 questions), Business English (BE) section (10 questions) and Legal English (LE) section (10 questions). The two ESP sections mirrored one another but hosted specific competencies and skills gained in each strand of courses.

The purposive sample consisted of 37 participants, current 3<sup>rd</sup> (N=5) and 4<sup>th</sup> (N=3) year students and recent graduates (N=29) of the English program, who responded to the online questionnaire during the spring semester 2021. In each section, the participants had multiple choice questions, yes/no questions, and open-ended questions which allowed for longer answers. The data were analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistic procedures where appropriate, and qualitatively (for open-ended questions). Categorizing was carried out by the researchers, inductively (Cohen et al., 2000, pp. 283-284). Illustrative examples of verbalizations were given verbatim and underlined where specific wording was of direct importance.

## **4. Results**

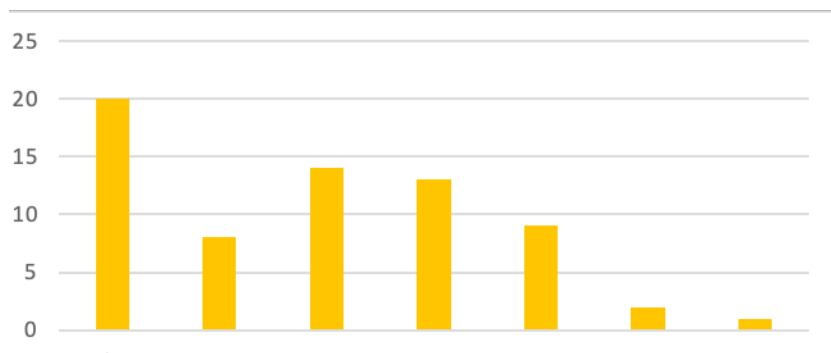
### **4.1. General section**

In this section, we aimed to establish general but relevant data about the participants, namely, to establish the relevance and validity of their subsequent assessment of the ESP courses. The questions included: their status (year of study or having graduated), employment status (and job title/description); general interest during studies; self-assessment of their motivation during studies and average grade during studies/previous year.

24 respondents stated that they are currently employed, only 7 of them working in non-educational vocations.

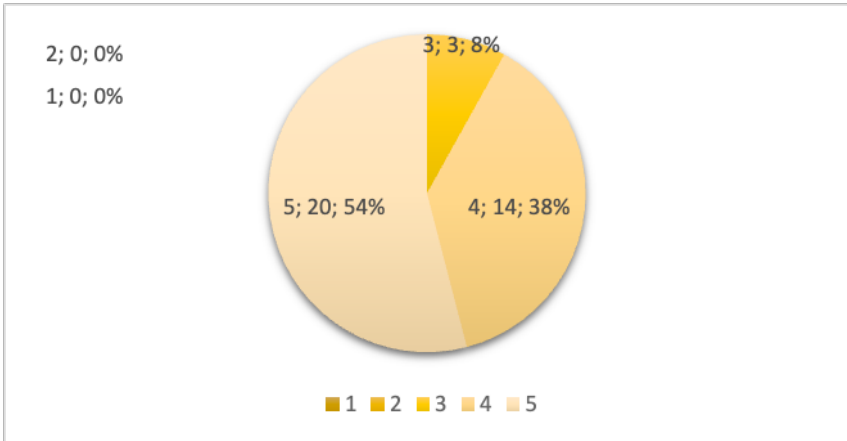
In response to the question pertaining to their area of interest, respondents were allowed to check more than one option, as well as to provide other interests, not listed in the answer sheet. The following breakdown was achieved: 20 respondents (54.1%) claim to be interested in teaching to younger or adult learners, with 8 of them (21.6%) being interested in teaching ESP. 14 respondents (37.8%) are interested in translation as an area of expertise, 13 (35.1%) in English linguistics, and 9 (24.3%) in English literature. Additional interests provided by respondents were writing (2) and intercultural studies (1) (see Chart 1 below).

*Chart 1. Respondents' interest in the field*



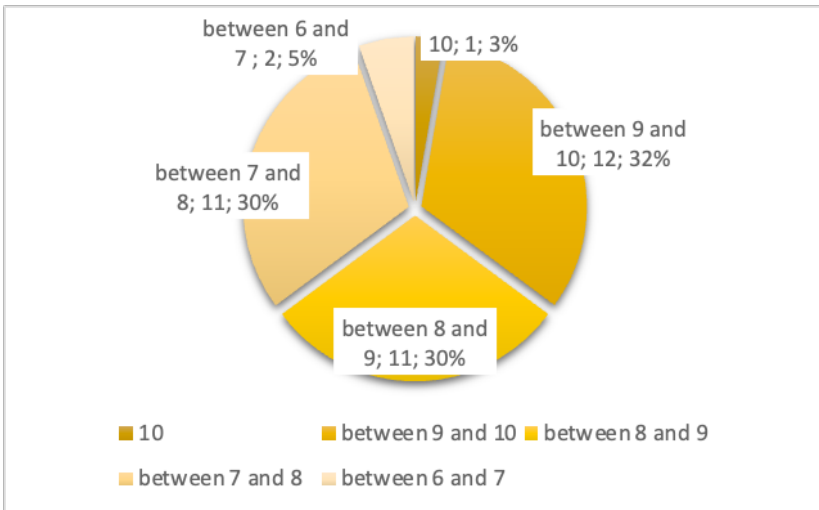
On a scale from 1 to 5, all the respondents assessed their motivation during studies as very high, averaging 4,32, with the following breakdown: 20 respondents (54.1%) marked it as 5, 8 (37.8%) respondents as 4, and only 3 (8.1%) of them marked it as 3, as shown in the Chart 2 below.

Chart 2. Self-assessed general motivation during the studies



The respondents' reported GPA is also high; 65% of the students' GPA is above 8.00. One student reported GPA of 10.00 GPA, 12 respondents reported 9.00-10.00 GPA, 11 students reported 8.00-9.00 GPA, 11 respondents have the GPA between 7.00 and 8.00, and two respondents reported GPA between 6.00 and 7.00, as shown in the Chart 3.

Chart 3. Respondents' GPA.



## 4.2 Business English section

In this part of the paper, the results pertaining to the BE will be explicated, however, some of the charts will be presented following the LE results in order to illustrate differences of the students' perceptions of these two ESP strands.

In the section focusing on the Business English set of courses, the following questions were posed:

1. Have you had previous knowledge in this area? (yes/no)
2. Have the BE courses fulfilled your expectations? (5-point Likert scale answer)
3. Follow up question: elaborate on your answer. (open-ended question)
4. BE courses proved to be useful (5-point Likert scale answers)
5. In BE courses I gained the following competencies and skills (Check-box options offered and an open option)

I have acquired relevant terminology

I am using business register adequately

I can use required grammatical structures

I can write business letters and participate in other forms of business communication

I can translate business related texts

I have acquired other business-related skills

Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. Have you had a chance to use the gained skills and competencies at your job? (yes/no)
7. Which of these courses proved to be most useful? (Choice of the three options: Business Correspondence in English, English for Banking, English for Finance).

8. Suggest ways to improve these courses. (Check-box options offered:

Change of topics

More classes

More practical projects

A different textbook

Inclusion of additional areas

Other \_\_\_\_\_

9. Elaborate on your answer. (Open-ended question)

10. Would you pursue professional development in this area? (yes/no)

Only 30% of the respondents had some previous knowledge of Business English (see Chart 11 given in section 4).

Question “Have the BE courses fulfilled your expectations?” revealed an average of 3.9 (on a scale from 1 to 5). 11 respondents (29.7%) awarded the highest grade (5), 17 respondents (45.9%) awarded 4, 4 respondents (10.8%) awarded 3, 4 (10.8%) respondents awarded 2, and only 1 respondent awarded 1.<sup>7</sup>

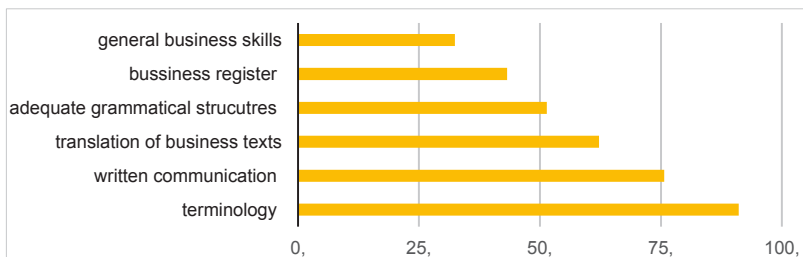
To the question “Were the BE courses useful?” on a scale 1-5, the average grade awarded was 4.6 out of 5. The overwhelming majority of respondents (27, i.e., 73%) considered the courses useful (awarded 5/5), with only 6 respondents (16.2%) awarding 4, and 4 respondents (10.8%) awarding 3. There were no grades lower than 3.

The next question required respondents to mark the learning outcomes that apply to them. The learning outcomes will be discussed by order of frequency and shown in the Chart 4. Most of the respondents (34, 91.9%) state that they have acquired business terminology; 28 respondents (75.7%) state that they can write business letters and other types of business correspondence; 23 respondents (62.2%) state that they can translate business related texts; 19 respondents (51.4%) can use adequate grammatical structures; 16 (43.2%) state that they are skilled in using business register and 12 respondents (32.4%) state that they have acquired general business skills.

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<sup>7</sup> For questions 1, 2 and 3 Charts 10 and 11 are given in the section 4 of the paper.

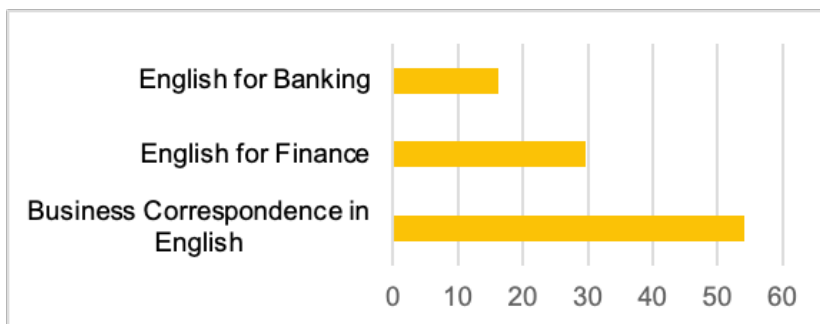
*Chart 4. Acquired skills and competencies in the BE strands*



The acquired skills have been reported as having been used in the respondents' jobs with 22 respondents (59.5%) while 15 respondents (40.5%) state that they have not had that opportunity yet (Chart is given in section 4).

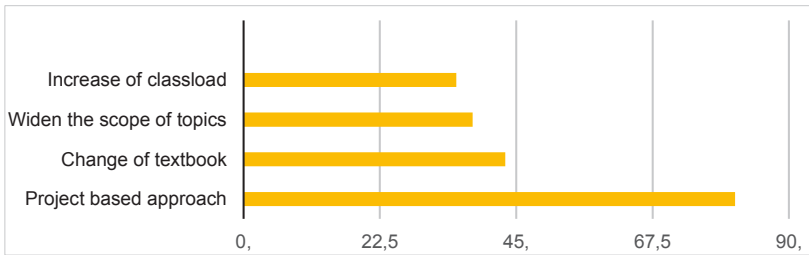
When choosing the most useful BE course attended, most respondents (20, 54.1%) state that the most useful BE course was Business Correspondence in English. This course is the first in the BE strand, providing the fundamentals of Business English. The next course by usefulness is English for Finance (11 respondents, 29.7%), which is the final course in the BE strand. English for Banking, the second course in the BE strand ranked third, with 6 respondents who opted for it (16.2%), as can be observed in Chart 5.

*Chart 5. The most useful course in the BE strand (expressed in %)*



The next question prompted respondents to mark the best ways in which the BE courses could be improved. The overwhelming majority (30 respondents, 81.1%) state that a project-based approach to learning would be the best way to improve the BE courses. 16 respondents (43.2%) suggest that changing the course book would also be the way to improve the courses. 14 respondents (37.8%) suggest expanding the topics to include other areas of business, while 13 respondents (35.1%) think that the class load per week should be higher, as shown in Chart 6.

*Chart 6. Suggested improvements to BE courses (expressed in %)*



The respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate on their answers in the open-ended question that follows. Based on their elaboration on the negative aspects of the course, we identified the following three features:

1. inadequacy of the textbook
2. translation as the main teaching method
3. lack of practical projects

Textbox 1. Illustrations of respondents' verbalizations of the BE courses' weaknesses<sup>8</sup>

**Textbook**

- *The textbook should be updated*
- *The textbook is outdated, limited, containing too much theoretical knowledge which is impossible to acquire because we are students of language, not economics.*

**Translation**

- *The classes were focused exclusively on translating textbook materials, the contents of which were familiar only to the students who had finished an economics vocational school.*
- *Less translating in class*

**Lack of practical projects**

- *Higher class load and more practical projects would help students use the skills and terminology more effectively and apply them in more interesting tasks.*
- *We took more of a theoretical approach to things; I think there should have been more practical work*

Based on the respondents' elaboration on the positive aspects of the BE strand, we identified the following three features:

1. Course contents (vocabulary, terminology)
2. Expertise of instructors
3. Interesting topics

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<sup>8</sup> Students' answers were translated from Serbian into English to accommodate for the international readership.



Textbox 2. Illustrations of respondents' verbalizations of the BE courses' strengths

**Course content**

- *Course materials were useful*
- *The terminology was explained clearly and concisely*
- *The course focused on the most important topics*
- *Lots of useful vocabulary and interesting units*

**Teaching quality**

- *In a word – teachers!*
  - *Professor [] and [] were both excellent.*
  - *Professor [] put in a lot of effort, as well as the assistant [], who tried to relate every aspect of the course with everyday life and work*
- Interesting topics

- *Interesting, I wouldn't have minded if there had been more work to do*
- *Very interesting*

Most respondents (29, 78.4%) state that they would like to continue to improve their knowledge in Business English (Chart 11 is given in section 4).

### 4.3. Legal English section

The questionnaire consisted of the following questions:

1. Have you had previous knowledge in this area? (yes/no)
2. Have the LE courses fulfilled your expectations? (5-point Likert scale answer)
3. Follow up question: elaborate on your answer. (open-ended question)
4. LE courses proved to be useful (5-point Likert scale answers)

5. In LE courses I gained the following competencies and skills  
(Check-box options offered and an open option)
- I have acquired relevant terminology
  - I am using legal register adequately
  - I can use required grammatical structures
  - I can communicate about legal topics in writing and speech
  - I can translate contracts and other legal texts
  - I can differentiate between different law branches
  - I understand the differences between the US, UK, and Serbian legal systems
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you had a chance to use the gained skills and competencies at your job? (yes/no)
7. Which of these courses proved to be most useful? (Choice of the three options: Introduction to LE, English for Corporate Law, Legal English for Modern Business).
8. Suggest ways to improve these courses. (Check-box options offered:
- Change of topics
  - More classes
  - More practical projects
  - A different textbook
  - Inclusion of additional areas
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
9. Elaborate on your answer. (Open-ended question)
10. Would you pursue professional development in this area? (yes/no)

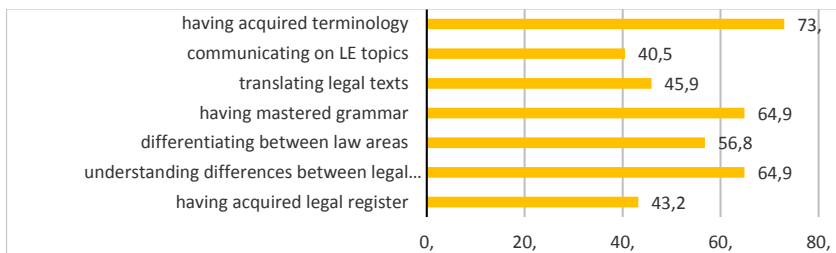
Most of the respondents (86.5%) did not have any previous knowledge of Legal English.

To the question “Have the LE courses fulfilled your expectations?”, on a scale 1 – 5, the average grade awarded was 3.8 out of 5. 16 respondents (43.2%) awarded the highest grade (5), 7 respondents (18.9%) awarded 4, 7 respondents (18.9%) awarded 3, 4 (10.8%) respondents awarded 2, and 3 respondents (8.1%) awarded 1.

To the question “Were the LE courses useful?” on a scale 1-5, the average grade awarded was 4.6 out of 5. The overwhelming majority of respondents (24, i.e., 64.9%) considered the courses useful (awarded 5/5). 11 respondents (29.7%) awarded 4, and only one respondent awarded grades 3 and 2, respectively.

The next question required respondents to mark the learning outcomes that apply to them. The learning outcomes will be discussed by order of frequency and shown in Chart 7. Most of the respondents (27, 73%) state that they have learned legal terminology. 24 (64,9%) respondents state that they can use adequate grammatical structures and understand differences between the UK, US, and Serbian justice systems. 21 respondents (56.8%) can differentiate between areas of law, and 17 respondents (45.9%) can translate legal texts. 16 respondents (43.2%) state that they are skilled in using the legal register, and 15 respondents (40.5%) state that they can communicate about legal topics in writing and speech.

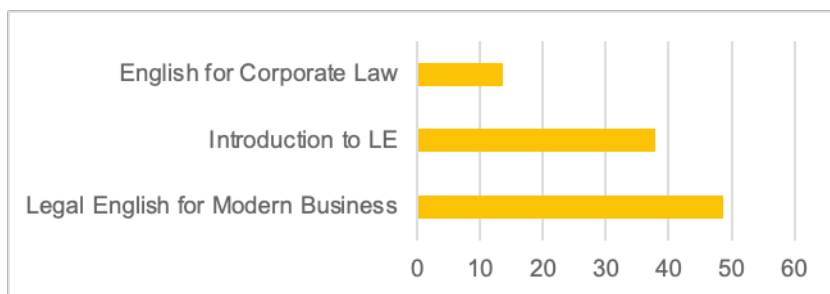
*Chart 7. Skills and competencies acquired in the LE strand (expressed in %)*



25 respondents (67.6%) state that they have not had the opportunity to use the acquired skills in their chosen career, while only 12 respondents (32.4%) state that they have had that opportunity.

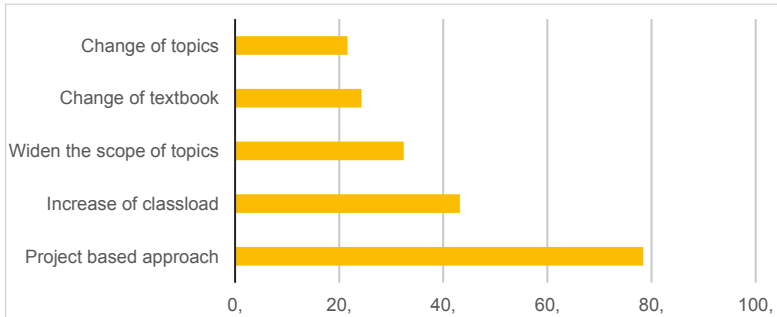
Most respondents (18, 54.1%) state that the most useful LE course was Legal English for Modern Business, which is the final course in the LE strand. The next course by usefulness is Introduction to Legal English (14 respondents, 37.8%), which provides the fundamentals of Legal English. English for Corporate Law, the second course in the LE strand, was judged as the most useful by 5 respondents (13.5%), as shown in the chart 8.

*Chart 8. The most useful course in the LE strand (expressed in %)*



The next question required respondents to mark the best ways in which the LE courses could be improved. Again, the overwhelming majority (29 respondents, 78.4%) state that a project-based approach to learning would be the best way to improve the LE courses. 16 respondents (43.2%) think that the class load per week should be higher and that it would improve the efficacy of LE courses. 12 respondents (32.4%) suggest expanding the course syllabus to include other topics. 9 respondents (24.3%) propose changing the course book, while 8 respondents (21.6%) propose a change of topics, as illustrated in the Chart 9.

*Chart 9. Suggested improvements to LE courses (expressed in %)*



The qualitative approach to this confirmed the numeric data. The respondents were again given the opportunity to elaborate on their answers in the open-ended question that follows. Their elaboration on the negative aspects of the course revealed three major areas for improvement:

1. lack of practical projects
2. more classes per week
3. topics (change and update)

Textbox 3. Illustrations of respondents' verbalizations of the LE courses' weaknesses

**Lack of practical projects**

- *It would have been useful to include practical application of the concepts. The biggest problem was the lack of practical work.*
- *I don't recall having any practical projects in this course, apart from translation.*
- *More practical work*

**Class load**

- *Maybe the class load should be higher because we're totally unfamiliar with the terminology*
- *More classes and practical projects would be helpful in learning the terminology which is extensive and sometimes a bit obscure.*

**Inadequacy of topics**

- *The EU Law is one of the more useful topics – I may be mistaken, but this topic was barely mentioned during the course*
- *Translation practice, such as: translating medical and other documents, court interpreter exam preparation, translating an examination of a foreign national*

Most respondents (25, 67.6%) state that they would still like to continue to improve their knowledge in Legal English, despite the complexity and their relative inexperience in the subject (Chart is given in the following section).

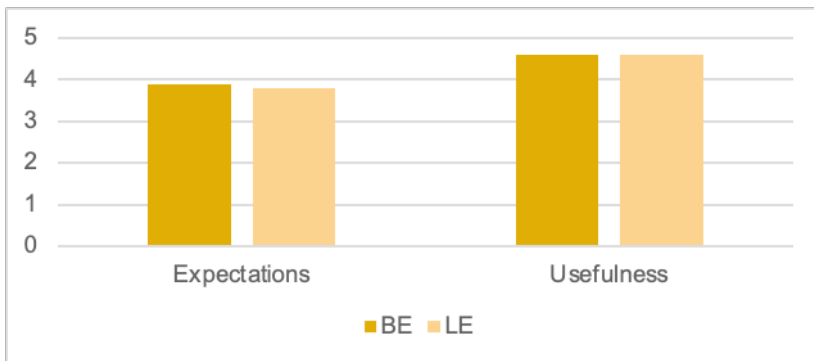
## 5. Discussion

The results obtained for BE and LE can now be compared and discussed. It can be observed that the respondents, mostly graduated students, reported high levels of motivation during studies ( $m=4.35$ ) as well as academic excellence (65% of students scored GPA of 8 or higher). Of the overall sample ( $N=37$ ), 29 respondents have obtained their

BA diplomas, and 24 report that they are employed. The high motivation and academic success at the studies suggest that the respondents represent a valid and relevant source of data. This became increasingly important in the questions pertaining to the weak points of the ESP courses. As students with high motivation and a solid rate of success, the respondents gave constructive, objective, and critical assessment of the courses from a positive attitude and not one that might show begrudging due to the lack of their own success.

As outlined in the introduction, in 2010 the curriculum was modified from a business oriented one to a more traditional one, focusing on teaching and translation competencies. This is once again confirmed in the respondents' answers, as the most prominent interests during their studies were teaching general English, translation, and linguistics, followed by literature and teaching ESP (s. Chart 1). It is not surprising to find out that 2/3 of the employed respondents reported working in educational settings. Therefore, students' assessment of the ESP courses' usefulness and the fulfillment of their expectations (s. Chart 10) is even more relevant.

*Chart 10. Comparison of BE and LE: Fulfilment of expectations and overall usefulness*

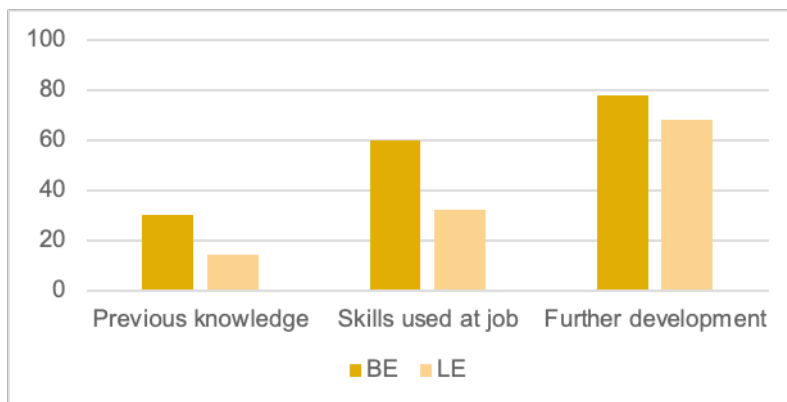


Irrespective of the respondents' evident inclination towards teaching and translation, the respondents claimed that their expectations were fulfilled to a satisfactory level (BE 3,9 and LE 3,8) estimated

the usefulness of the ESP courses very highly (4,6 both strands). Considering the students' previous knowledge, or rather the lack thereof (see Chart 11 below), these assessments attest to their overall satisfaction with the courses.

The respondents singled out the most useful course within the two strands (s. Chart 5 and 8, respectively). Business Correspondence in English and Legal English for Modern Business are believed to be the most useful courses by 54,1% and 48% respondents, respectively. The other two courses in each strand scored significantly lower (29,7 and 16,2; and 37,8 and 13,5%). These results should serve as a signal to the program administrators and instructors to critically assess the identified weakness and apply the suggested changes, especially when it comes to the courses that scored the lowest.

*Chart 11. Comparison of BE and LE in terms of respondents' previous knowledge, acquired skills and further development (expressed in %)*



Previous knowledge is one of the most prominent predictors in the acquisition of the new material and its successful long-term processing resulting in functional knowledge (Ausubel, 1968: 38). These findings, although not surprising, might seem contradictory given the students' success. However, as Biggs (1999: 38) proposes, apart from the previous knowledge, motivation and students' intentions and orientations will play the major role in successful learning.



When it comes to the applicability of the acquired skills at respondents' jobs, a major difference ( $p < 0.02$ ) between the BE and LE strands can be observed. Namely, merely 30% claim that they have had an opportunity to use the knowledge and skills acquired in the LE courses. Meanwhile, 60% of the respondents have reportedly used BE-related skills and competencies (see Chart 11). The reasons for this are multidimensional, ranging from the respondents' job type (mostly teaching) to their possible avoidance of such jobs. Some of the respondents criticized the inadequate balance of the theoretical and practical work in class, which may have resulted in the feelings of inadequacy for such tasks.

*Textbox 4. Inadequate competencies for LE related tasks: respondents' verbalizations*

- *I think I have not mastered legal terminology*
- *Not enough links between theory and practice, not related to real-life situations.*
- *I think there was room for more practical work, to get a better understanding of Legal English*
- *Lack of practical and real-life situations*
- *Law is really not my area of interest*

Examining the third aspect presented in the Chart 11, we can conclude that the respondents have expressed a positive attitude towards further academic and professional development in the areas of both Business and Legal English. Although a slightly higher number can be observed within the BE strand (78% comp. to 68% in LE strand), the difference is not statistically significant ( $p < 0.3$ ). This result is encouraging, as evidence of at least two positive outcomes: the ESP courses have proven to be useful, and their design and execution has been assessed as adequate overall.

Additionally, addressing the gained competencies in both strands as per results (see Chart 4 and 6, respectively), and comparing

them to the theoretical approaches to the ESP competencies stated in Section 1.1, and to the courses' goals as outlined in Section 2.1, it is safe to claim that the ESP courses are well-designed and adequately executed and that the learning outcomes are satisfactory and to the students' benefit. Some of their verbalized answers are illustrative of this conclusion.

*Textbox 5. Respondents' verbalization of work-related benefits of the ESP courses*

**Legal English**

- An interesting and user-friendly course which introduces the basic legal terminology and explains the main concepts
- Interesting and useful
- After years of study, I can understand and translate legal texts
- We had lots of opportunity to gain Legal English skills: I can amend a contract, fill in the important details, and give advice as to which contract clauses can be a benefit or a detriment.

**Business English**

- The course explained the terminology clearly and concisely, so it was easy to use it further on. Lots of practical skills.
- Most important topics covered: from making a business plan to theoretical knowledge
- Well-structured courses, even for students with no previous knowledge
- It was terribly difficult for me, since I had no previous knowledge. I've learned a lot, however. Extremely useful courses for daily life and work.
- The most useful skill I gained is the practical application of Business English, which I've put to use in various positions in the IT sector. I had the advantage of knowing how to use vocabulary and structures related to business and finance, as well as how to reply to business emails.

The respondents' criticism of some aspects of the courses can be seen in their detailed comments on the areas of improvement for both ESP strands, as given in Textboxes 1, 2 and 3. Students recommend several changes, but the most prominent one is the increase in practical work, for which some very specific suggestions were given: project-based approach, attending court proceedings, more writing, role-play etc. Other than this, modernization and widening of topics have also been suggested, specifically including technological developments, ESP in other fields, as well as getting advice from alumni working in the business and legal sectors as to include topics and tasks likely to be found in the future careers. While the textbook used in the LE strands was deemed as adequate, most students strongly object to the BE textbook and recommend switching to a more modern and less economics-oriented material. Class load is identified as another area of possible improvement, with the emphasis on increasing the number of practical classes per week.

## **6. Concluding remarks**

In this paper the authors analysed the ESP courses included in the English language program. The courses are divided into two major strands, Business and Legal English, each strand consisting of three separate but related courses. With respect to the current theoretical framework on the ESP competencies, as well as the goals and competencies outlined in the curriculum and the ESP courses' syllabi, research was carried out to determine whether the learning outcomes match the stated goals.

Most respondents evaluate both strands as useful and most of them state that they have acquired competencies and skills in both areas. However, the BE strand was identified as the more applicable in the respondents' careers. Despite that, the respondents would still like to further develop their knowledge in both areas.

It can be concluded that the ESP courses offered at FLV generally meet the contemporary attitudes and standards regarding the learning outcomes; however, there is room for improvement, evident-

ly. Making continuous improvement to the ESP courses should be one of the objectives of the English program. The respondents' answers offer different suggestions, such as publishing customized course books for the ESP courses, including more practical tasks and project-based work, providing students with opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-life situations (e.g., court interpreters in moot court, interpreters in business negotiations, translating contracts) increasing the class load per week, etc. Since the BE strand has been evaluated as the more applicable of the two, it might be advisable to make all BE courses mandatory in the next accreditation cycle. On the other hand, the LE strand has been evaluated as less applicable and therefore, the three LE courses might be condensed into two (Introduction to LE and LE for Modern Business) or conversely, an effort should be made to introduce new topics and try different teaching approaches.

A large number of respondents state that they would like to further develop and improve their knowledge in both BE and LE. In line with the contemporary concept of life-long learning, the English program might therefore provide opportunities for current students and alumni to do so by offering refresher or advanced courses in Business and Legal English, as well as courses in other ESP areas.

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## **ENGLISKI ZA POSEBNE NAMENE: PROCENA AKTUELNOG KURIKULUMA KURSEVA ENGLISKOG JEZIKA ZA POSEBNE NAMENE NA FAKULTETU ZA PRAVNE I POSLOVNE STUDIJE DR LAZAR VRKATIĆ**

**REZIME:** Cilj ovog rada je da se ispitivanjem stavova studenata utvrdi efikasnost kurseva engleskog jezika za posebne namene. Ove grupe predmeta čine ključni deo studijskog programa Engleski jezik na Fakultetu za pravne i poslovne studije dr Lazar Vrkatić (FLV) te je izuzetno značajno ispitati njihovu efikasnost i svrsishodnost. Rad takođe ima za cilj da ponudi opis ovih predmeta, njihove ciljeve i ishode, kao i nastavni sadržaj.

Nastavni plan i program studija Engleskog jezika tradicionalno uključuje predmete koji za cilj imaju sticanje teorijskih i komunikativnih kompetencija razvijanjem jezičkih vještina ali i usvajanjem znanja iz oblasti lingvistike, anglofone književnosti i kulture. Međutim, posljednjih dvadesetak godina akcenat se sve više stavlja na sticanje kompetencija u oblasti engleskog jezika za posebne namene. U okviru studija Engleskog jezika na FLV-u, studentima se nude kursevi Poslovnog i Pravnog engleskog jezika jer su se znanja iz ovih oblasti pokazala kao izuzetno značajna za njihove buduće karijere.

Procena svrsishodnosti kurseva sa aspekta studenata sprovedena je u toku prolećnog semestra 2021. godine na uzorku od 37 studenata (uključujući 29 skorašnjih diplomaca). Studentima je ponuđeno da popune onlajn upitnik kako bi se procenio uticaj pomenutih kurseva na njihovo obrazovanje, akademske i stručne vještine i kompetencije, kao i da bi se sagledala primenljivost stečenih znanja u budućoj profesiji studenata. Rezultati pokazuju da studenti u velikoj meri smatraju korisnim kurseve engleskog jezika za posebne namene kao i da su pohađanjem stekli adekvatne vještine i kompetencije. Ispitanici su takođe izneli konstruktivne kritike, navodeći ne samo prednosti (kvalitetan nastavnički

kadar, adekvatnost nastavnog sadržaja, korisnost stečenog znanja, itd.) već i određene slabosti ovih kurseva (potreba za osavremenjavanjem nastavnog materijala, stavljanje akcenta na primenu naučenog, povećanje radnog opterećenja studenata, itd).

Opšti je utisak da su kursevi engleskog jezika za posebne namene na FLV-u zadovoljavajućeg kvaliteta, ipak, u zaključku se iznose određeni predlozi i ideje u želji i sa ciljem da se postojeći kurikulum dodatno unapredi i modernizuje.

**KLJUČNE REČI:** Engleski jezik za posebne namene, kurikulum, silabus, ciljevi, kompetencije, sadržaj kursa