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Training Legal Skills in the ESP Classroom: Mediation Activities and Student Self-Reflection

Abstract

A general trend in adult education across the disciplines has been the gradual shift from teaching specialized knowledge to developing various skills. The inclusion of professional skills in the area of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) is often based on the results of complex needs analyses of the target situation that leads to effective course design both for in-service and pre-service learners. While major law schools have recently started putting a greater emphasis on the training of legal skills, the present article suggests that some of those legal skills can be effectively developed in the ELP (English for Legal Purposes) classroom as well, i.e. among L2 learners of specialist language. That holds particularly for the soft skill of linguistic mediation. Promoted by CEFR, mediation is characterized by the situation when an expert speaker needs to overcome a communicative gap arising from a difference in the technical or linguistic knowledge of the interlocutors. The present article shows how a sample activity can be used for teaching linguistic mediation in the ELP classroom and how it can serve as an opportunity for enhancing students' critical self-reflection. It describes a custom-made activity – a role-played lawyer-client interview – and analyses students' subsequent comments on the activity. The paper suggests that self-reflection is deeper if the theory is supplied after the task and that such a practice enhances students' learning process. It is suggested that the findings are applicable not only to teachers' syllabus design and classroom activities design but also more generally to pedagogic theory, e.g. the field of LSP teacher training.

Keywords

mediation; LSP; ESP; ELP; legal English; self-reflection; needs analysis; lawyer-client interviews; legal skills; pedagogy; CEFR

1. Introduction

Due to the global role of English as a lingua franca in everyday and professional communication, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as the dominant subfield of the discipline of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP, cf. Swales 2000), has enjoyed an increasing degree of attention from scholars and teaching professionals in the past years, ever since its emergence in the late 1980s (Hutchinson & Waters 1987). Although English language theorists consider ESP as a general field that comprises two broad areas, namely English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Koester 2012), there are some other, more specific subdivisions that have been offered within the former category, including English for vocational, medical, business, legal, and sociocultural purposes (EVP, EMP, EBP, ELP and ESCP, respectively, cf. Belcher 2009).

While much of the research has traditionally focused on genre analysis (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993; Bhatia 2004) of the texts and the communicative practices within the specialist communities in the different discourse domains, particularly in the area of EAP writing (Hyland 2005; Mauranen 2012), there has been a gradual shift towards other, less mainstream areas such as English for Legal Purposes (ELP; cf. Tessuto 2012). At the same time, however, much attention has also been paid to the teaching aspects of ESP in general (Basturkmen 2010; Flowerdew 2012) and ELP in particular (Krois-Lindner 2006; Krois-Lindner et al. 2008; Bilová et al. 2022; Costello & Kulbicki 2023), partly driven by the practical need to create teaching materials and to design relevant specialist language

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courses in the globalized world increasingly interconnected through physical and virtual mobility of professionals.

Like most disciplines in the field of Languages for Specific Purposes disciplines, Legal English is a subject that lies at the intersection of professional education and language training. However, the teaching of ESP/ELP is not to be equated with content teaching in English; in other words, ESP/ELP teachers are not supposed to teach the actual subject matter itself (such as a specific branch of law), simply doing that through the medium of English (or some other language). That approach is, of course, a well-established educational field in its own right ('CLIL – content and language integrated learning'), which has been developing over the past couple of decades alongside ESP and has been enjoying increasing popularity (cf. Dalton-Puffer 2007; Coyle et al. 2010). In this connection, one should not overlook the relation between this approach and the tradition of immersion pedagogy, despite the latter's emphasis on second language acquisition in a general sense rather than the learners' acquisition of specialist knowledge (cf. Lasagabaster & Sierra 2010; Cenoz et al. 2014).

Arguably, however, the connection between professional education and language training is closer in some areas of ESP than in others, with Legal English being a case in point. In Legal English, these two aspects are morphed together more than in other disciplines because language is the chief tool for lawyers to practice their profession (unlike, for instance, some areas of the medical or technical professions). The education of future legal professionals, thus, calls for the acquisition of not only discipline-specific knowledge but also a broad range of general communicative skills, which are crucial for the successful performance of future lawyers' professional duties. Such skills involve, among others, negotiating, interviewing clients, explaining legal content, etc. (cf. Shultz & Zedeck 2011). While many law schools include courses in legal communication in the students' first language, the possibility of incorporating the actual anticipated future communicative needs of students of law (Chovancová 2014) into the ELP syllabus and course design offers a welcome opportunity to strengthen the connection between language education and the training of practical professional skills.

To this end, the present article seeks to address the gap existing in ELP pedagogy by considering (1) some of the ways in which the practice of such professional communicative skills can be effectively incorporated into the ELP/ESP classroom, (2) how such practice is perceived and reflected on by the students themselves and (3) what implications this holds for the teaching of ELP. The paper is structured as follows: In the theoretical part, it outlines some of the communicative skills crucial for future lawyers and focuses on the linguistic skill of language mediation that has recently been added by language pedagogists – as suggested in the latest version of CEFR – among the key language proficiency skills (Dendrinos 2006; 2013; Chovancová 2016, 2018; Stathopoulou 2015; 2019; Piccardo et al. 2019). Then, based on a sample of actual teaching materials developed by the author and her team, it is shown how the skill of mediation can be effectively taught, and what the students' views on the tasks were, based on an informal survey carried out among law students after working on the sample activity. Finally, based on the results of the self-reflection analysis, the paper outlines some of the implications of this approach for language teaching, highlighting the active role that students' meta-cognition plays in the learning process. On a more general level, the findings of this study are relevant, among other, to LSP course design as well as LSP teacher education (Ding & Campion 2016).

2. Needs analysis, legal skills and the ELP classroom

Any effective ESP instruction has come to rely on needs analysis, which forms an inseparable part of the work of all teachers involved in syllabus design and construction (Hutchinson & Waters 1987; Swales 2000; Long 2005; Huhta et al. 2013). While a proper analysis of the students' needs is indispensable in any learner-centred approach to education, it is actually one of the defining features of LSP as such (Basturkmen 2013).

However, there are several aspects that complicate the issue of adequate needs analysis in the ESP context. First, there are multiple perspectives that will have to be taken into account: as noted by Huhta et al. (2013, p. 10), there may be different needs as perceived by the teachers, the students, and the current (or future) employers. Another complication consists in identifying who serves as a valid source of information about the students' needs: while in-service learners typically have a very concrete and instrumental idea about what they need the language for (and, as practice shows, they may even resist learning anything that goes beyond their immediately perceived needs), the situation is very different with pre-service learners, i.e. the vast majority of tertiary-level students enrolled in compulsory or optional university courses in ESP. Such students cannot be relied on by the ESP teachers to be able to fully identify the relevant situational and professional needs that they are likely to face in their future professional lives. While some help may be provided through 'transferred needs analysis', whereby recent graduates are called upon "to assess the usefulness of the language classes they attended by sharing their fresh experience from the job market and their hands-on experience with the professional environment" (Chovancová 2014, p. 49), such an approach of retrospectively reflecting on the content of the courses is often either impossible or impractical.

It appears that while in-service students' expectations of their future needs may be somewhat imprecise, the ESP teachers' assessments of the same may be similarly introspective and speculative unless they perhaps co-teach with legal specialists or can draw on the latter's expertise (cf. Northcott 2012, p. 220). Not surprisingly, ESP course designers and practitioners may then find some relevant information about their students' expected future needs outside the language learning environment. Interestingly, in the area of legal skills, such needs have been increasingly addressed in the students' professional classes as well, as demonstrated by the general shift towards putting more emphasis on teaching such skills in law schools. For instance, scholars have noted "evidence of increasing convergence between methods used for teaching both first language (L1) and second language (L2) law students", e.g. in the area of writing problem question essays (Northcott 2012, p. 222).

Needless to say, the extent of skills that underlie the future lawyers' professional needs may be quite large. Testing the efficiency and reliability of law school admission tests in order to see which components contribute to the career success of future law graduates, Shultz & Zedeck (2011: 630), for example, identify 26 lawyering competencies. These include some legal skills that are fairly predictable, such as Analysis and Reasoning, Researching the Law, Strategic Planning, and Negotiation Skills, but also some that are somewhat less usual, e.g. Self-development and Stress Management. Some of these 'Lawyering effectiveness factors' directly correspond to language teaching skills ('Speaking', 'Writing', 'Listening'), others concern specific interpersonal functions ('Influencing and Advocating', 'Questioning and Interviewing') and yet others concern general intellectual and life skills ('Problem Solving', 'Practical Judgment', 'Organizing and Managing (Own) Work', etc.

The call for the advisability of incorporating legal skills in lawyers' undergraduate education comes from various sources in the profession. Thus, in the aptly titled article *Legal Education at a Crossroad: Innovation, Integration, and Pluralism Required!*, (Tokarz et al. 2013, p. 22) observe that "law is the only learned profession that sends its graduates into practice without a period of intensive clinical training", claiming more clinical pedagogy and practice-based, experiential learning is needed. However, they also note that some positive changes have been implemented, such as the introduction in 2015 of the requirement for New York Bar applicants to have performed pro bono legal work.

Some more examples of recent re-evaluations of what skills are important for future lawyers may be provided. For instance, the results of UK-based research at the Law School in London concluded that "law teacher interviewees reported high levels of emotional and cognitive student engagement during the new practical elements of tutorials, such as client interviewing and mock trials, coupled with a reduction of students being distracted by their mobile phones in class" (Knox & Stone 2019,

p. 100). Indeed, the new trend also looks at the aspect of employability after law school, reviewing the sets of skills a graduate should possess in order to succeed in the changing job market (Knox & Stone 2019). Most recently, with the fast development of AI, the need for some new professional skills has arisen. The ideal hard skill set is further expanding to include critical thinking, and assessing the relevance and accuracy of AI-generated texts. In this connection, Schwarcz & Choi (2023) observe that “lawyers can use traditional legal skills to refine and verify LLM legal analysis. In the process, lawyers and law students can effectively turn freely-available LLMs into highly productive personal legal assistants.”

Having said that, with AI-assisted research at one’s (arguably educated) fingertips, it is not only hard skills, i.e. legal knowledge, analytical and research skills, but also soft skills that are getting more recognition as a necessary part of a successful professional’s skill set. Chow et al. (2023), for instance, stress this aspect of the current skills expected of lawyers, by suggesting that:

“Empathy is one [skill] that has proved to help improve the professional-client relationship and build up rapport and trust. This can only be more important in legal practice with the advent of artificial intelligence (‘AI’) in law, taking over quite many technical tasks and hence, shifting the role of lawyers to even more increasingly client-focused and expecting the professional relationship with more personal touch than ever before.” (Chow et al. 2023, p. 575)

It is clear that the industry perspective, i.e. taking into account what the legal profession considers to be desirable legal skills for practitioners of the discipline, is valuable for language education as well. This is where a hitherto largely overlooked niche for ESP course design and material development can be found.

3. Legal soft skills in the ESP context: Mediation in a lawyer-client interview

One of the key soft skills that are relevant for any professional situation where communication occurs between specialists and non-specialists is mediation, which has previously been largely ignored by ESP practitioners (but see, for instance, Dendrinis 2006; 2013; Chovancová 2016, Stathopoulou 2015; 2018). While the concept of mediation has a very specific meaning for the legal profession (i.e. alternative dispute resolution, as a way of avoiding litigation), it has recently been also introduced as a distinct linguistic skill: in the Common European Framework for Languages (the 2001 CEFR Compendium), mediation was quoted as one of the four chief language activities alongside reception, production (spoken and written), and interaction (spoken and written). In the past few years, ESP practitioners have thus started introducing aspects of this skill into the classroom, and ESP theorists have begun engaging with the concept in their research more systematically (see, for instance, Korai & Papadima-Sophocleous 2021; Hafner et al. 2023; García-Sánchez 2024).

In one of the early applied linguistic studies of this skill in relation to ELP, Chovancová (2016, p. 23) describes mediation as follows:

“it refers to a communicative skill that enables a person to overcome a communication gap – to provide information in a way that the recipient can not only understand but, based on the understanding, also use to make an informed decision. Mediation needs to be distinguished from translation and interpretation, with which it is sometimes confused.”

Here, a distinction needs to be made between “intralanguage mediation” on the one hand, which concerns the transfer of information between different levels of expertise within a single language, and “interlanguage mediation” on the other, i.e. the processing and transmission of information between different language systems. Clearly, the former is a soft skill relevant for any professional (as well as non-professional) interaction where the lay vs. expert dimensions are involved. In the latter, another complication is added to such information transfer, namely the communication across

different languages, which makes this skill ideal for inclusion in the ESP/ELP syllabus (Chovancová 2018). Arguably, within the field of ESP, the shift to the skill of mediation can be understood as a paradigm shift that is starting to affect the development of a new generation of teaching materials and a new approach to course design, as well as the training of a new wave of ESP practitioners.

As the purpose of this paper is to consider how the practice of mediation in the ELP classroom is perceived by the students themselves, it is also necessary to briefly outline the basic conception of self-reflection from an applied linguistic perspective in the context of legal English.

Self-reflection in language teaching is a well-developed field, having originated in the early 19th century with John Dewey's "ground-breaking work, which emphasized the positive roles that reflection might play in fostering students' self-reflection, critical thinking, and in the demonstrable development of professional values or skills" (Lew & Schmidt 2011, p. 529). Adopting a very practical technique by combining several approaches to the topic, Lew and Schmidt define self-reflection as "the processes that a learner undergoes to look back on his past learning experiences and what he did to enable learning to occur (i.e. self-reflection on how learning took place), and the exploration of connections between the knowledge that was taught and the learner's own ideas about them (i.e. self-reflection on what was learned)." They eventually suggest that "they are believed to assist learners to become better at self-reflection, which leads subsequently to better academic achievement" (Lew and Schmidt 2011, p. 530), though based on their findings, this seems to be more of a tendency than a conclusive fact.

Self-reflection is also encouraged within the legal profession on multiple levels. It is emphasised not only on the level of educating law students, e.g. with the aim of deepening the effectiveness of their studies, where "Australian law schools are required to develop and support students' self-reflection capabilities" (Oakes & Cody 2022, p. 81), ultimately applicable to their eventual employability (Brooman & Stirk 2020), but also on the level of the professional development of practising lawyers. The latter can be attested by both academic or professional research and the sheer number of professional skills coaches offering their services online.¹

The practical part of this paper is divided into three subsections that present the mediation activity, report on the students' self-reflection on the learning process, and outline the relevance of the activity for pedagogical practice. More specifically, Section 3.1 describes how the skill of mediation can be practised in English for legal purposes by sharing a custom-designed classroom activity, Section 3.2 reports on the results of a questionnaire on the students' self-reflection while engaging with the task and Section 3.3 concludes the discussion with an overview of some of the implications of this activity for teaching.

3.1. Interlanguage mediation in ESP course design: A sample activity

Despite popular belief, which is also – regrettably – shared by some members of the legal profession, a well-balanced Legal English course extends beyond the mere acquisition of extensive technical legal terminology and the teaching of 'specialist knowledge', i.e. the content-based learning mentioned above. The ELP team based at the Faculty of Law at my university (Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia) has been fortunate to be able to design a four-semester syllabus for a B2/B2+ Legal English course for first- and second-year law students. The syllabus draws on a topic-based approach and revolves around 15 areas of law to be covered in the ELP classroom, with each of them scheduled

¹ For instance, the UK Beyond Compliance Ltd, which is one such company aiming at law firms, states on its webpage (*How to Master Reflective Practice and why it's so important to solicitors and barristers*) that in 2015 Solicitors Regulation Authority issued a Statement of Solicitor Competence, which under Section 2, among other, lays down the duty to "maintain the level of competence and legal knowledge needed to practise effectively, taking into account changes in their role and/or practice context and developments in the law, including 'Reflecting on and learning from practice and learning from other people'." (Beyond Compliance Ltd. 2024).

to last for approximately three weeks, i.e. three 90-minute sessions. The right balance needed to be established so that all four communicative language competencies were covered (reception, production, interaction, and mediation) throughout the course, with emphasis being placed on the active use of technical vocabulary. For each term, one skill especially relevant to the legal profession has been selected to made prominent in the syllabus so that, with a carefully planned scaffolding, students can become familiar with a set of skills needed for their future professional work. Thus, the basic concept of mediation (explaining legal terms to a lay person) is trained in Term 1; Lawyer-client interview (mediation in context) is practiced in Term 2; Argumentation and Negotiation are taught in Term 3; and, finally, Professional team presentations are delivered by the students in Term 4.

The Lawyer-Client interview, as presented here, is a macro activity designed as a final outcome of carefully planned sets of micro-tasks. The preparation steps for this activity include student language preparation, familiarity with the concept of linguistic mediation, and specificity of the scenario (Lawyer-Client interview). The activity has the added benefit of a real-like quality, which enhances motivation and increases the level of engagement induced by peer interaction. Such affective and social dimensions foster students' success in language learning (Mercer & Dörnyei 2020), but they also considerably contribute to student well-being (Mercer 2022). Though it is important to allow for collaborative learning, it is also necessary to provide time, space and means for individual growth. By implementing self-reflection on this activity, students are given tools to review their individual achievements and consider their language needs, which can help them to develop further and retain more.

The presented scenario involves an intralanguage mediation activity set as an information gap activity. Figure 1 sums up the instructions given to students on cards, as well as the actual legal regulation from the Czech Civil Code given to the student playing the role of the Lawyer. The legislative text is provided in Czech, i.e. in its original and untranslated form:

Lawyer-Client Interview	Scenario: Good Fences Make Good Neighbours
<p>CLIENT</p> <p>You're Mrs. Helen Smith from New York and you have just moved to Ostrava. You speak hardly any Czech.</p> <p>You have bought a house that needs thorough reconstruction. Your construction company say that the work cannot be done unless they use your neighbour's driveway for their machinery. They insist that there isn't any other way of doing the reconstruction.</p> <p>You talked to the neighbour who refused to give permission. He is a reserved man with physical disability that requires him to use a wheelchair. The driveway is rather narrow and he uses it every day to get in and out of his house. The heavy machinery would block his access to his house for a couple of weeks/months. Moreover, his only passion is his garden, and he has some rare flowers in flowerbeds next to the driveway.</p> <p>You've come to see a lawyer in Ostrava for advice. You want to know if the neighbour is obliged to let the builders use his driveway.</p> <p>Ask your lawyer for clarification of your legal position.</p> <p>You are free to make up any other details in response to your lawyer's questions.</p>	<p>LAWYER in Ostrava</p> <p>A new client, Helen Smith from New York, has made an appointment to discuss how she can make her neighbour let her use his driveway to rebuild her house. She does not speak Czech.</p> <p>The law to be applied:</p> <p><i>§1021 Vlastník umožní sousedovi vstup na svůj pozemek v době, rozsahu a způsobem, které jsou nezbytné k údržbě sousedního pozemku nebo k hospodaření na něm, nelze-li tohoto účelu dosáhnout jinak; soused však nahradí vlastníku pozemku škodu tím způsobenou.</i></p> <p><i>§1022 (1) Nemůže-li se stavba stavět nebo bourat, nebo nemůže-li se opravit nebo obnovit jinak než užitím sousedního pozemku, má vlastník právo po sousedovi požadovat, aby za přiměřenou náhradu snášel, co je pro tyto práce potřebné.</i></p> <p><i>§1022 (2) Žádosti nelze vyhovět, převyšuje-li sousedův zájem na nerušeném užívání pozemku zájem na provedení prací.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● greet the client, make her feel relaxed ● listen actively to your client, sum up the main points ● explain the relevant legislation and how it relates to your client's case ● give advice and suggest further steps ● ask if the client agrees, or if she has any further suggestions ● thank her for coming, repeat what you're going to do and say goodbye

Figure 1. Interlanguage mediation: Role cards for a lawyer-client interview (Bilová et al. 2022: 140)

3.2. Promoting learning through self-reflection

In order to boost the students' learning process, the following self-reflection activity was designed to complement the lawyer-client interview activity above, in which the students are asked to actively reflect, after carrying out the activity, on their own role in it (Figure 2):

Read Chapter 5 Úvodní rozhovor s klientem in the book *Právnícká angličtina* and reflect on your own performance as the lawyer in the previous activity (120 – 150 words).

Include comments on:

- active listening
- effective questioning
- using appropriate language and level of formality
- two tips from the book that you consider relevant and would like to use in the future.

Figure 2. Task for a formal written self-reflection after the lawyer-client activity (Source: unpublished materials for students)

The self-reflection as a task for the student performing the role of the Lawyer is set in three stages. The first stage includes immediate private self-reflection (an evaluation of one's own performance of the role), the second involves feedback from the Lawyer's partner (perception from the perspective of the Client), and the third consists of a formal, structured and written self-reflection intended for submission to the teacher.

Deep-end strategy in self-reflection

To enhance the self-reflection experience, a reversed strategy was adopted, exposing the students to the theory after the activity rather than before. The students have study materials available to them in the electronic form in the University intranet, but their compulsory literature also includes the reference book *Právnícká angličtina* [Legal English] (Bilová et al. 2022), which provides theoretical background and additional information, as well as a practical exercise part. In the chapter on Lawyer-client interviews, it provides information on communicative skills, both general and specific ones linked to different stages of the legal consultation. Thus, in this scenario before doing the lawyer-client activity in class, students are given only a list of the stages they should go through but not the recommendations on how the consultation should be conducted from the communication perspective.

The decision to let students have the practical experience before reading the recommendation is a conscious attempt to deepen their self-reflection. The task is set so that they can read the theory on issues such as active listening, effective questioning, and linguistic mediation, and with the memory of their performance still fresh in mind, they can realise what is relevant for them personally, rather than dismiss the recommendations as self-evident, as one is tempted to do before endeavouring a task. Moreover, the structure of the book gives students a more formal framework in which to conduct the self-reflection and consider aspects they might not have thought of otherwise.

Generally speaking, the objective of the self-reflection task is not to disparage students but to allow them to use a high-resolution mirror that would reflect intricate details they would not think of otherwise. Overall, this approach allows students to develop their interpersonal communicative skills, without being explicitly told by the teacher what the problematic issues in their communicative performance are. In the responses concerning their self-reflection on the role-played Lawyer-Client Interview, the students pointed out a number of areas in which they improved after engaging in this activity.

Let us now consider some of the authentic responses produced by the students during the self-reflection task. The mediation activity – and the self-reflection task, which is a part of the activity – was carried out among 65 students in Legal English classes at my university, performed shortly after completing the mediation activity. The responses were produced by the students in a written form (via MS Teams) for the purpose of their self-reflection and were meant to be shared with other students in the class and the teacher. After the termination of the activity, the written notes were processed by the teacher in order to survey the students' opinions on the mediation task. During this process, a number of shared themes were identified in the data, which throw light not only on the

students' perception of the activity but also the pedagogical application of this method in the ESP classroom.

One of the recurrent themes in the students' responses involved the raising of their awareness, based on a critical re-evaluation of their prior skills. In the survey, that conclusion can be attested by such responses as the following:

- At first, I thought I did pretty good (sic) as a lawyer in the Lawyer-Client interview. However, after reading the chapter in the book, I changed my mind.

The response indicates that the fact that the theoretical input was received after the mediation activity enabled the student to re-assess their self-perception of their performance during the prior task, thus raising their awareness and contributing to the efficiency of the learning process.

Another recurrent theme in some of the students' self-reflections concerned the identification of problems in their non-verbal communication, including problematic aspects of body language:

- After reading the book I have to admit that I have to stop fidgeting as it is a bad habit of mine. I have to think about the fact that it could irritate my client.
- The book also taught me to improve my body language and my eye contact with my future clients.

As some students pointed out, they also realized that successful professional communication does not depend solely on their professional expertise, or the ability to mediate – whether interlinguistically or intralinguistically – expert legal content to lay people. They noted the need for establishing a friendly atmosphere and rapport with the client through small talk:

- I think the most important points in the book are the small talk because I think it is important for the client not to be stressed from the meeting.
- I think I do well in making the client feel comfortable as I act friendly and human, which makes it easier for the client to open up and discuss with me everything related to the case.

A related comment concerned one student's self-realization about their lack of empathy, pointing out, once again, the need to attend to the client's psychological well-being:

- I think I didn't show much empathy and I could use phrases like "I'm sorry to hear that."

Yet another recurrent theme in the students' responses reflecting on the activity concerned the dominant role of the lawyer as an interlocutor. The activity has led some students to realise that due to the higher level of expertise, lawyers may dominate the conversation, which can ultimately have a negative effect on the interaction or relation with the client:

- After reading the chapter five from the lawyer textbook I also realised that I often talk too much. I should apply the rule of "silence is golden" more often.

On the other hand, it can also confirm students' beliefs about their efficiency in this area:

- I have considered myself a good listener before so therefore this part of the interview was not a problem.

Last but not least, some students reflected on the linguistic aspects of the mediation activity, coming to the realization that they need to work on adjusting the level of their expertise to communicate effectively with the client:

- In my opinion I wasn't explaining all things clearly and fluently. In the future, I would focus on using plain language.

Some of the insights arising from such student self-reflections reveal the areas that students themselves perceive to be quite skilled at or, on the contrary, that require more conscious attention from them. Thus, the aspects that students have mostly reported not to have much difficulty with include being polite and listening actively, as the majority tend to see themselves as empathetic listeners. By contrast, the topics that they perceived as more problematic included maintaining eye contact, managing nervous body language, mediating legalese, asking relevant and precise questions, and conducting small talk. In this area, they shared very explicit observations that can serve as useful recommendations to others, and they often encapsulated them into communicative maxims (based on Truesdale 1990) that were used as prompts for their reflection (e.g., ‘looking people in the eye’, ‘silence is golden’, ‘body language – stop fidgeting’, ‘put yourself in your client’s shoes’, etc.). Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, they also greatly appreciated the inclusion of theory, such as the ‘funnel approach’ to asking questions.

3.3. Some implications for future teaching

Students’ self-reflections on the mediation activity of role-playing a lawyer-client interview reveal several implications for future teaching. Prior to participating in this specific activity, the students had encountered several micro-activities focusing on mediating various legal terms within the classroom environment. However, the role-played lawyer-client interview meant exposure to this professional genre within a formal setting. The students thus approached the activity more seriously and found it highly motivating, possibly due to the opportunity that it provides for envisioning their professional selves. In that sense, the inclusion of this activity in the syllabus has a demonstrable benefit for the students’ self-esteem and shows direct applicability to their future professional needs.

On a more general level, the pedagogic findings from the self-reflection exercise are two-fold. First, anticipated outcomes were identified by the teachers, namely, the fact that the activity is indeed appreciated by the students, who find it engaging and motivational due to the fact that it makes them feel professional. At the same time, it helps them develop a positive relationship with their classmates by allowing for bonding and shared fun. By swapping the roles, the students also experience the mediation situation from different perspectives, i.e., both as Lawyers and Clients. That may contribute to the development of their empathy, or – as Shultz & Zedeck (2011) put it, the ability to see the world through the eyes of others.

The second finding from the self-reflection exercise concerns some results that teachers may anticipate to a lesser degree and that may even be somewhat unexpected. That includes the list of aspects students find challenging, as well as the confirmation of the assumption that the theory presented to the students is actually appreciated by them. It also appears that reading the recommendations only after going through the experience of role-playing the interview gives the students the necessary distance and tools to analyse their own performance more deeply and critically. In this way, they learn by not following a blueprint with a list of instructions but by reflecting on their performance in view of recommendations provided afterwards, thus enhancing their self-observation skills. Needless to say, in actual classroom practice the impact on the students of such self-reflection can be further enhanced if the activity is followed by another similar one, in which the students may revisit their self-reflections and implement their own recommendations.

4. Conclusions

The discussion above has highlighted the necessity for the inclusion of legal skills in the ELP classroom, based on the needs analysis of students of law and the general trend in the discipline of legal studies to support the pre-service as well as in-service training of lawyers and legal professionals in soft skills. However, the responsibility for teaching such skills does not rest exclusively with the law teachers: the practice of such skills can find its way into the curriculum in some other ways, e.g. in classes on Legal English administered to L2 students. As the ultimate goal

is to equip the prospective law graduates with a set of skills that will make them ready for the job market, a certain degree of overlap is not only unavoidable but also desirable, especially if the legal education is provided in the student's native tongue that is not English. What is, however, necessary is that the language teacher follows trends in legal education and legal profession to appropriately assess what the future needs of their students may be.

As suggested in the theoretical part of the paper, increasing attention is likely to be paid by ESP teachers to the new skill of mediation, whereby “a speaker acts as an intermediary, helping others to understand information that is linguistically outside their reach. In this way, mediation bridges differences in knowledge and requires the speaker to negotiate meanings across different communicative styles, discourse norms and cultural contexts, both within a single language and across different languages” (Chovancová 2018: 53). As a result, the skill of mediation, both interlingual and intralingual, calls for a much more focussed attention in pre-service education. Arguably, innovative approaches from applied linguistics, informed by adequate ESP theory and creative materials design, can take the lead in the administration of the gradual change of educational institutions towards more consciously providing the students with the opportunity to develop this skill.

Practical experience from implementing mediation activities in the ELP classroom has revealed that alongside mediation, another important skill may be simultaneously cultivated, namely that of the learners' critical self-reflection. When asked to reflect on their activities, learners – particularly if given some technical guidance after carrying out the activity – are able to critically assess their performance with the task, thus arguably leading to a better outcome as a result of such problem-based learning. This approach has been found to increase the students' engagement with the learning context. All in all, the students' self-reflection carried out in relation to the sample materials developed with the aim of practising the skill of linguistic mediation indicates that students are indeed highly motivated to participate in the task, least of all because it contains several of the key aspects crucial for future lawyers. Those are not only the essential soft skills development, and the language support, but also the possibility to participate in a realistic legal scenario that they can easily imagine themselves being involved in.

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