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Preferred Teaching Methods for English for Legal Purposes: A Survey of Law Students at the University of Likasi (DR Congo)

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Abstract: English is the working language of international legal and mining practice, yet French-medium law faculties in the Democratic Republic of Congo allot it few hours. This article asks which teaching methods law students and legal professionals at the University of Likasi consider most effective for learning English for legal purposes. A cross-sectional survey was administered to a stratified sample of 84 valid respondents (54 students and 30 professionals) drawn from a population of 702, with a design margin of error of ±10 per cent. Endorsement is reported with Wilson 95 per cent intervals and checked against a worst-case treatment of non-response. Respondents overwhelmingly favoured teacher–student interaction (97.6 per cent), group debates (91.6 per cent), student presentations (87.8 per cent) and translation-supported teaching (93.5 per cent). Active formats were preferred to lecturing by 86.9 per cent (CI 78.1–92.5), and this preference was strongly associated with an advocacy-oriented goal (Fisher's exact test, $p < .001$; odds ratio 23.8). Rejection of English-only teaching was firm among respondents but sensitive to non-response. The findings concern perceived, not measured, effectiveness. They suggest course designs built on simulation, staged presentations and principled use of French.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes; legal English; teaching methods; learner preferences; law students; DR Congo.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context and problem

English has become the principal working language of transnational legal practice, international arbitration and cross-border commercial contracting (Mattila; Crystal; House). Legal English also behaves as a distinct register: it is syntactically dense, heavily nominalised and lexically technical, so that mastery cannot be assumed to follow from general competence in English (Tiersma; Bhatia).

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) feels this shift acutely. French remains the official language of legislation, adjudication and higher education, and Congolese substantive law still draws on the Belgian civil-law tradition. Yet the country's southern and eastern borders face English-medium administrations, and the extractive economy of Haut-Katanga runs largely on mining conventions, joint-venture agreements and arbitration clauses drafted, negotiated or litigated in English. Former graduates of the Faculty of Law of the University of Likasi (UNILI) who work in mining companies report that promotion often depends on a command of English acquired largely outside their legal training (Mulenga Mutamba). Many of them, as barristers, solicitors or company legal advisers, struggle to interpret the work contracts their employers submit to them in English, which gives the question a concrete professional stake.

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Institutional provision has moved in the opposite direction. The ministerial decree of 27 October 2017 allotted English 150 hours across the three undergraduate years and 60 hours across the two Licence years (MINESU, "Arrêté ministériel n° 342"). The Licence-Maîtrise-Doctorat (LMD) maquette later cut the allocation in the Faculty of Law to 35 hours in the first year (Bac 1) and 35 hours in the final year (Master 2) (MINESU/CPE). Where time is this scarce, the choice of classroom technique carries weight, because every hour must serve the profession the students are about to enter.

1.2 Research gap

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) scholarship agrees that course design should begin with learners' needs (Hutchinson and Waters; Dudley-Evans and St John). Needs analysis has, however, concentrated on what should be taught, namely content, registers and skills, rather than on how learners expect to be taught. The legal-English literature records a persistent preference among law students for practical, skills-based instruction (Northcott), but in the sources we were able to consult, learner preferences regarding teaching techniques have rarely been documented for French-medium faculties of law in Africa. The present article addresses that gap for a single, well-defined setting.

1.3 Aim and scope

The article reports one component of a wider doctoral needs analysis conducted at UNILI (Mulenga Mutamba): the component on teaching methods. It examines which techniques law students and legal professionals consider most effective for learning English for legal purposes: strategic recourse to French (translation support), student presentations, group debates and teacher–student interaction, together with the wider choice between active, simulation-based formats and lecture-based teaching. Two limits frame the claims. First, effectiveness here means perceived effectiveness: the survey records what respondents believe works, not what has been shown to work, so the study makes no efficacy claim. Second, the design is cross-sectional and confined to one institution, so the findings are exploratory and generalise, with caution, only to the populations sampled.

1.4 Research question and hypothesis

One question guides the analysis; it is the fourth research question of the doctoral study. RQ1: Which teaching methods do law students and legal professionals at UNILI consider most effective for learning English for legal purposes? It is examined through two operational questions: to what extent each of the four techniques is endorsed, and whether respondents prefer active, simulation-based formats to lecture-based teaching.

The article tests the fourth hypothesis of the doctoral study, restated here as H1: respondents prioritise interactive, simulation-based methods over frontal lecturing, and this preference is significantly associated with an advocacy-oriented professional goal. H1 has two testable components. H1a: the proportion preferring active formats to lecturing exceeds 50 per cent, that is, the lower bound of its 95 per cent confidence interval lies above 50 per cent. H1b: preferring active formats is significantly associated with an advocacy-oriented goal, as against a goal of simple comprehension, at the 0.05 level.

1.5 Structure

Section 2 builds the theoretical framework. Section 3 describes the sampling, instrument and analysis. Section 4 reports the results, Section 5 discusses them against the literature, and Section 6 draws limited conclusions for course design and states the study's limits plainly.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 ESP as a needs-driven approach

Hutchinson and Waters insist that ESP is an approach to language teaching, not a product, a course type or a body of specialised vocabulary. Its foundation is a single question, why does this learner need to learn a foreign language?, from which decisions about content, materials and method should flow. Strevens distinguishes absolute characteristics of ESP (design to meet specified needs, content related to disciplines and occupations, language centred on the activities concerned) from variable ones; Dudley-Evans and St John refine that list, adding that ESP is typically designed for adults at tertiary level or in the workplace, and for intermediate or advanced learners. Both conditions fit law students and practising lawyers. Jordan's bifurcation of ESP into occupational and academic strands is useful here, because a sample of students and practitioners straddles both and must be read accordingly.

Munby's Communicative Needs Processor formalised the analysis of the target situation. Hutchinson and Waters criticise it as static: it specifies what learners will need to do with English later, yet neglects their present perceptions and the conditions under which learning proceeds. The now-standard remedy is West's distinction between Target Situation Analysis, which concerns the language required in the destination, and Learning Situation Analysis, which concerns the conditions, constraints and preferences bearing on how that destination is reached. West further separates objective needs, derived from verifiable facts, from subjective needs, derived from learners' own wants and expectations. Teaching-technique preferences belong to subjective needs within Learning Situation Analysis. Belcher's observation that ESP answers learners' "imagined futures" as well as present needs is directly relevant: students anticipate a profession that practitioners already inhabit, so the two groups may judge techniques

differently, a contrast that the pooled analysis of this article cannot resolve.

2.2 Legal English and the specificity debate

Whether ESP requires its own methodology is contested. Widdowson argues that specificity lies in the use to which language is put, not in a separate code, and Robinson and Watson Todd likewise find few features of ESP methodology that General English teaching could not share. Hyland answers that genre, authenticity and communicative purpose develop precisely because specialised instruction ties activities to the discipline, and that weaker learners need not master generic forms first. Dudley-Evans and St John add that ESP teaching should reflect the methodology of the disciplines it serves and that the teacher often acts as language adviser beside learners who hold subject expertise. Basturkmen identifies two conditions for ESP learning: acculturation into the target discourse community, and comprehensible input pitched at the learner's professional register.

For legal English, the specificity case rests on discourse evidence. Bhatia's genre analysis identifies stable conventions across statutes, contracts, judgments and pleadings, including heavy nominalisation, complex conditional structures and binomial expressions. Tiersma traces them to law's concern with precision and the pre-emption of ambiguity. Trosborg shows that deontic modals such as shall, must and may encode obligation, permission and prohibition, so that a single mistranslated modal can change the legal force of a clause. Two consequences follow for method. Techniques should approximate the professional activities students will perform, and some classroom attention to linguistic accuracy, and to the relation between English and French legal expression, is professionally justified rather than merely traditional.

2.3 From methods to principled pluralism

Richards and Rodgers propose that any method be analysed at three levels: an approach (theories of language and learning), a design (objectives, syllabus, roles) and a procedure (techniques). Under this scheme the Communicative Approach, built on Hymes's notion of communicative competence and Canale and Swain's grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic components, organises teaching around interaction, simulation and task. In English for Legal Purposes this has meant role-play, negotiation and simulated client consultation, together with explicit attention to form, which keeps accuracy in view. Yet Kumaravadivelu argues that the age of single, packaged methods has passed and that teachers need context-sensitive strategies, not allegiance to one method. Mellow's principled eclecticism gives this pluralism discipline: techniques are combined according to explicit goals and consistent principles, not by habit. The framework therefore treats the four techniques studied here as procedures to be selected for a context, not as rival methods.

The use of the first language illustrates the point. Communicative traditions have often minimised French in the English classroom, but Cook argues that the first language is a resource whose judicious use supports learning, and Hall and Cook's review of own-language use documents its wide presence in classrooms and argues for its principled acceptance. Cognitive load theory (Sweller) supplies a plausible mechanism: when content is conceptually dense and the target language still demanding, brief first-language clarification may reduce extraneous load. The mechanism is a hypothesis, not a demonstrated effect in this setting. Learners' stance on translation, then, is better read as a view on where French belongs in a lesson than as a request to abandon English.

2.4 Interaction, presentations and debate as learning conditions

Socio-constructivist theory explains why interaction might matter. Vygotsky located development in the zone between what a learner can do alone and with assistance, and Wood, Bruner and Ross described the supporting moves of a tutor as scaffolding. In second-language classrooms, Lyster and Ranta's analysis of corrective feedback shows how teacher responses to learner errors can prompt repair. Teacher–student interaction is therefore the technique with the clearest theoretical warrant for a specialised register, where an informed interlocutor can calibrate input and feedback.

Lave and Wenger's legitimate peripheral participation describes how newcomers learn by taking part, at reduced risk, in the practices of an existing community. Moot-court debate and role-play approximate that participation, although a classroom simulation is not itself membership of the legal community, and the concept should be applied with that qualification. Presentations develop public speaking and autonomy, which advocacy requires, but they also expose learners to foreign-language classroom anxiety (Horwitz et al.), which may discourage precisely those students who most need practice. These considerations suggest that endorsement of individual presentations may be more guarded than that of interactive formats, a pattern the descriptive results can show but not explain.

2.5 Preference, need and efficacy: the analytic frame

The framework distinguishes three things that are often conflated. A need is what the target situation requires; a preference is what learners say they want; efficacy is what demonstrably improves learning. This study measures the second and uses it as evidence for Learning Situation Analysis, interpreting it against theory about the first and without claiming the third. Preferences carry weight for two reasons: they signal the expectations that shape engagement

with a course, and they are the subjective-needs data West treats as a legitimate component of analysis. They cannot, however, adjudicate between techniques on grounds of effectiveness, and the discussion in Section 5 respects that boundary. Self-report also carries known limits, including acquiescence and social desirability, and respondents may judge techniques they have never experienced; these limits shape how the results can be read.

Two propositions follow, and together they form H1. Because the techniques studied rehearse or support professional practice, respondents should prioritise interactive, simulation-based formats over transmission-oriented lecturing (H1a). And because learners tend to choose the format that structurally resembles the skill they intend to perform, that priority should be tied to an advocacy-oriented goal rather than to a goal of simple comprehension (H1b).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study is a cross-sectional descriptive survey within a predominantly quantitative, post-positivist design. The questionnaire is the principal instrument, chosen because the research question requires standardised, comparable measures of stated preferences across a numerous and heterogeneous population (De Ketele and Roegiers). Documentary analysis of the ministerial decree of 27 October 2017 and of the LMD maquette supplies the institutional context reported in Section 1. The wider doctoral project also embeds a small qualitative component, following the embedded design described by Creswell and Plano Clark; it addresses other questions and falls outside the scope of this article. Because the survey records what respondents say they believe, it cannot establish which technique produces better learning, and this limit conditions every claim made below. Perceived effectiveness remains a legitimate object of enquiry, because the beliefs of learners and practitioners shape engagement with a course (Section 2.5), but it is distinct from measured effectiveness.

3.2 Population and strata

The target population comprises all law students registered at the University of Likasi in the 2023–2024 academic year, together with a complementary group of legal professionals (practising lawyers, lecturers and other legal practitioners), whose inclusion is warranted by the presence of Anglophone mining investors, and the legal work they generate, in the Likasi area. The population was confined to individuals able to form an informed judgement on the importance of English in legal training and practice, which yields a mother population of N = 702. The two groups form the strata of the design: students, whose views concern the training they are undergoing, and professionals, whose views draw on the English they use at work. They are treated as strata of one population, not as separate populations, because the course under study is meant to serve both.

3.3 Sample size and allocation

Sample size was determined with Cochran's formula for proportions, $n_0 = z^2p(1 - p) / e^2$, where z = 1.96 (95 per cent confidence), p = 0.5 (the most conservative assumption, since the true proportions are unknown) and e = 0.10 is the accepted margin of sampling error. This gives $n_0 = 96$. Because the population is finite, the correction $n = n_0 / [1 + (n_0 - 1) / N]$ reduces the requirement to 84.6, that is, 85 questionnaires (Cochran). A margin of ±10 per cent is conventional for exploratory needs analyses of this size; a ±5 per cent margin would have required 249 questionnaires, about 35 per cent of the population. The questionnaire was administered to 85 individuals and 84 returned a valid instrument, a validity rate of 98.8 per cent. The sample was allocated between strata in proportion to their shares of the population, and the valid sample comprises 54 students (64.3 per cent) and 30 professionals (35.7 per cent) (Table 1).

Table 1. Stratified allocation of the valid sample

Stratum	Valid n	% of sample	Basis for inclusion
Students of law	54	64.3	Direct exposure to the English syllabus under study
Legal professionals	30	35.7	Professional exposure to English in the Likasi legal and mining environment
Total	**84**	**100.0**	**Cochran's formula, e = 0.10, N = 702**

Source: author's survey data (doctoral study, University of Likasi, 2023–2024 academic year).

With n = 84 drawn from N = 702, the realised margin of error is ±10.0 per cent, as designed. Item-level valid sample sizes are smaller, ranging from 53 to 84, so that the margin rises to ±13.0 per cent for the least-answered item. The margin is a design value that presupposes probability selection within strata; estimates are therefore treated as

indicative of the populations sampled, not as exact. All intervals in Section 4 are computed on each item's own valid n.

3.4 Instrument

The questionnaire has two divisions: an identification section recording background variables (age, sex, level of study, specialisation, professional activity and sampling stratum) and a substantive section of fourteen items grouped into curricular exposure, content preference and methodological preference. This article analyses the methodological block, which asks whether respondents favour four techniques (Items 10 to 13): translation into French, student presentations, group debates and teacher–student interaction. Respondents could justify their answers, and the reasons they volunteered are reported qualitatively. An open category, "other teaching methods" (Item 14), allows unanticipated answers. Two further variables were coded from respondents' answers: preferred format (active, simulation-based methods versus lecture-based teaching) and professional objective (public speaking and advocacy versus simple understanding).

Items are closed and dichotomous (Yes/No), a format that guarantees comparability and suits a descriptive aim (Dörnyei) but has two consequences. First, each item measures endorsement of one technique independently, so the instrument cannot rank techniques against one another. Second, dichotomous items invite acquiescence, so uniformly high endorsement must be read with caution. Because each technique is measured by a single item, no internal-consistency coefficient such as Cronbach's alpha is computed or claimed. Content validity rests on deriving each item from the Target Situation and Learning Situation framework of Section 2. A pretest with a small group drawn from the target population checked clarity, ambiguity and completion time, and led to minor changes of wording.

3.5 Data collection and ethics

The questionnaire was administered directly, in self-completion mode. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained at the point of administration, and no nominal identifier was recorded, which secures anonymity. The instrument was kept brief to limit respondent burden.

3.6 Data processing and analysis

Responses were coded numerically (1 = No, 2 = Yes, 3 = No response), entered in SPSS and recalculated independently in R to detect software-specific errors. Item non-response is not imputed, and every percentage is reported with its own valid denominator. Missing data are handled item by item rather than listwise, because non-response differs sharply across items, from one respondent on the last two items to 31 on the immersion item, and a listwise rule would shrink the analysable sample for every analysis. For each technique, endorsement is the percentage of valid "Yes" responses, reported with a 95 per cent Wilson confidence interval, which behaves better than the normal approximation near the extremes and in small samples (Wilson). As a sensitivity check, each lower bound is recomputed under the worst case in which every non-respondent to the item would have answered No.

H1a is evaluated with a fixed decision rule: it is supported if the lower bound of the interval for the share preferring active formats exceeds 50 per cent. H1b is tested with Fisher's exact test, preferred to the chi-square test of independence because one expected cell count falls below 5 (Agresti); the odds ratio with its 95 per cent confidence interval and the phi coefficient quantify the strength of the association, and the significance level is 0.05, two-sided. No inference is drawn about differences between the four techniques, because the same respondents answered every item and the dichotomous format does not support ranking. Students and professionals are pooled, since subgroup counts at this sample size support stratum-level comparison only weakly. Three threats remain and are carried into Section 6: self-report bias, the single-institution design and the pooling of two strata.

3.7 Safeguards on data integrity

Three safeguards protect the integrity of the figures. Percentages are checked against marginal totals. Every cross-tabulation is computed twice, in SPSS and in R, and the two outputs must agree. Finally, the hours of English that respondents report are cross-checked against the decree and the maquette, a documentary–survey triangulation of the kind De Ketele and Roegiers recommend.

4. Results

The results follow the order of the research question. Percentages are computed on valid responses for each item, and intervals are 95 per cent Wilson intervals. Each table is followed by an interpretation before the next question is addressed.

4.1 Profile of the respondents

The 84 respondents are predominantly male (56, or 66.7 per cent, against 28 women) and mostly single (57, or 67.9 per cent). Ages range from 21 to 63 years (median 25, mean 31.0, SD 11.4). By level of study, 48 respondents are in L2 (57.1 per cent), 29 in M1 (34.5 per cent) and 7 in DEA (8.3 per cent). By activity, 54 are students (64.3 per cent), 16 are lawyers (19.0 per cent), 13 hold teaching-related posts (15.5 per cent) and 1 is a merchant (1.2 per cent). Private and judicial law is the most frequent specialisation (52 respondents, 61.9 per cent), followed by economic law (19, 22.6 per cent) and public law (13, 15.5 per cent) (Table 2).

Table 2. Profile of the respondents (N = 84)

Variable	Category	n	%
Sex	Male	56	66.7
	Female	28	33.3
Level of study	Licence 2 (L2)	48	57.1
	Master 1 (M1)	29	34.5
	DEA	7	8.3
Activity	Student	54	64.3
	Lawyer	16	19.0
	Teaching-related post	13	15.5
	Merchant	1	1.2
Specialisation	Private and judicial law	52	61.9
	Economic law	19	22.6
	Public law	13	15.5

Source: author's survey data (doctoral study, University of Likasi, 2023–2024 academic year). Percentages are computed on valid responses.

Interpretation. The sample is neither homogeneous nor purely a student body. The gap between the median and the mean age reflects a core of L2 and M1 students in their mid-twenties combined with a smaller tail of older, practising professionals. Because these groups relate to English differently, the pooled results below describe a mixed population of learners and practitioners, not students alone. All respondents are at Licence 2 level or above, so the findings concern advanced students and practitioners, not first-year students.

4.2 French as a resource: translation support and immersion

Of the 53 respondents who answered the immersion item, 48 (90.6 per cent; 95 per cent CI 79.7–95.9) reject English-only teaching and 5 accept it. Of the 77 who answered the translation item, 72 (93.5 per cent; CI 85.7–97.2) favour translation-supported teaching and 5 do not (Table 3). The two items were answered by different numbers of respondents, so they are treated as two separate measures and not as mirror images of one another. The five respondents who accept immersion and the five who reject translation are too few to be characterised further.

Table 3. Endorsement of teaching techniques, with 95 per cent Wilson intervals

Technique	Valid n	Yes (n)	%	95% CI	Worst-case lower bound (%)
Rejection of total immersion (English only)	53	48	90.6	79.7–95.9	46.5
Translation-supported teaching	77	72	93.5	85.7–97.2	76.7
Student presentations	82	72	87.8	79.0–93.2	76.7
Group debates	83	76	91.6	83.6–95.9	82.3
Teacher–student interaction	83	81	97.6	91.6–99.3	90.0

Source: author's survey data (doctoral study, University of Likasi, 2023–2024 academic year). Worst case: every non-respondent to the item (out of 84) counted as No.

Interpretation. Both items point the same way: respondents want French to have a place in the English classroom. Many of those who favoured translation qualified their support by warning that it can encourage negligence if used indiscriminately, which suggests that French is wanted to resolve conceptual ambiguity, not as a default crutch. This reading is consistent with the own-language literature reviewed in Section 2.3, although the survey cannot show that such use improves learning. The immersion item was answered by only 53 of 84 respondents. If all 31 non-respondents had accepted immersion, rejection would fall to 57.1 per cent, with a lower bound of 46.5 per cent, below 50. The rejection of immersion is therefore firm among those who answered but not robust to non-response, whereas the endorsement of translation support remains above 76 per cent even in the worst case.

4.3 Student presentations, group debates and teacher–student interaction

Of 82 valid respondents, 72 (87.8 per cent; CI 79.0–93.2) favour student presentations. Of 83, 76 (91.6 per cent; CI 83.6–95.9) favour group debates and 81 (97.6 per cent; CI 91.6–99.3) favour teacher–student interaction (Table 3). Even in the worst case, in which every non-respondent would have answered No, the lower bounds remain at 76.7, 82.3 and 90.0 per cent respectively.

Interpretation. Endorsement is high for all three techniques. Their intervals overlap, so the data do not show that interaction is more strongly endorsed than debates or presentations, and the dichotomous format would not allow such a ranking in any case. The justifications differ in kind. Presentations were justified chiefly by the practice of public speaking, debates by professional simulation, with the value of a mock trial most often cited, and interaction by immediate correction and the completion of the teacher's input. Dissent was small and reasoned. Ten respondents rejected presentations, and most of those who gave a reason cited anxiety about their linguistic competence, a pattern consistent with the foreign-language classroom anxiety literature and a warning that students who most need oral practice may avoid it. Seven rejected debates, and some cited logistical constraints such as reduced hours and large groups, which point to institutional rather than attitudinal obstacles. Only two rejected interaction.

The worst-case analysis matters here for a further reason. Non-response was low on these three items (two, one and one respondents), so the lower bounds barely move, and the conclusion that large majorities endorse each technique does not depend on how the few missing answers would have fallen. The same cannot be said of the immersion item, where a third of the sample is missing.

4.4 Active formats, lecture-based teaching and professional objective

Seventy-three respondents (86.9 per cent; CI 78.1–92.5) preferred debates and presentations to lecture-based teaching, and 11 (13.1 per cent) preferred lectures or syllabus-only teaching. The professional objective was public speaking and advocacy for 72 respondents (85.7 per cent) and simple understanding for 12. Among the former, 68 of 72 (94.4 per cent; CI 86.6–97.8) preferred active formats; among the latter, 5 of 12 (41.7 per cent; CI 19.3–68.0) did (Table 4).

Table 4. Preferred format by professional objective (n = 84)

Preferred format	Public speaking / advocacy	Simple understanding	Total
Debates / presentations (active)	68	5	73
Lecture / syllabus only	4	7	11
Total	**72**	**12**	**84**

Source: author's survey data (doctoral study, University of Likasi, 2023–2024 academic year). Fisher's exact test, $p < .001$; odds ratio 23.8 (95% CI 5.2–109.7); $\varphi = 0.55$.

Fisher's exact test gives p .001 (two-sided), with an odds ratio of 23.8 (95 per cent CI 5.2–109.7) and φ = 0.55. The chi-square statistic, $\chi^2(1) = 25.2$, leads to the same conclusion; it is reported for continuity with the doctoral study only, since one expected count (1.57) is below 5.

The preference for lectures is concentrated in one group. Of the 11 respondents who preferred lecture-based teaching, 7 hold the comprehension goal, which represents 58.3 per cent of that group (CI 32.0–80.7), whereas only 4 of the 72 advocacy-oriented respondents (5.6 per cent) preferred lecturing. The two categories of preferred format are coarse: the active category merges debates and presentations, and the survey does not record how respondents would combine lectures with active work in practice.

Interpretation. The association is strong and supports a practice-matches-purpose reading: respondents oriented toward advocacy overwhelmingly choose the formats that resemble the skill they intend to perform, namely oral and adversarial argument, whereas those content with simple understanding are split. Two cautions apply. The interval around the odds ratio is wide because only 12 respondents hold the comprehension goal, so the size of the association is imprecise even though its direction is not in doubt. And both variables were coded from the same questionnaire, so part of the association may reflect consistent answering. This is, moreover, the only place in the survey where active formats are contrasted with an alternative, which gives it more discriminating power than the four Yes/No items.

4.5 Reading the results with their limits in view

Four features of the data qualify every statement above. First, endorsement is uniformly high across dichotomous items, a pattern that is compatible with real consensus but also with acquiescence, and the survey contains no reverse-worded item with which to separate the two. Second, the sample pools students and professionals, so the percentages describe a mixed population and cannot show whether the two groups differ. Third, valid sample sizes fall from 84 to 53 across items, which widens the intervals and, for the immersion item, makes the result sensitive to non-response. Fourth, the respondents' perceptions of effectiveness are not evidence of effectiveness. These limits do not remove the main pattern, a consistent preference for active, profession-simulating formats, but they define how far it can be pressed in the discussion that follows.

4.6 Verdict on the hypothesis and answer to the research question

H1a is supported: the share preferring active formats is 86.9 per cent and the lower bound of its interval, 78.1 per cent, lies well above 50 per cent. H1b is supported: the association with an advocacy-oriented goal is significant under Fisher's exact test (p .001) and large in magnitude (Table 5). Both verdicts are given in the qualified sense appropriate to a cross-sectional design with a moderate sample, which corroborates the hypothesis rather than proves it.

Table 5. Verification of the hypothesis

Component	Test / decision rule	Result	Verdict
H1a	Lower bound of the 95% CI for active-format preference above 50%	86.9% (CI 78.1–92.5)	Supported
H1b	Fisher's exact test, preferred format by professional objective, $\alpha = 0.05$	$p < .001$; OR = 23.8 (CI 5.2–109.7); $\varphi = 0.55$	Supported

Source: author's survey data (doctoral study, University of Likasi, 2023–2024 academic year).

Interpretation. In answer to RQ1, respondents perceive interactive, simulation-based methods as the most effective, with debates, presentations and teacher–student interaction all endorsed by large majorities, and they want French available as a controlled resource. The survey cannot rank the four techniques against each other, and effectiveness here remains perceived effectiveness. What it can show is a consistent preference for active, profession-simulating formats over lecturing, anchored in an advocacy-oriented goal, together with identifiable obstacles of anxiety, time and class size that any course design must address.

5. Discussion

5.1 Main findings

This study asked which teaching methods law students and legal professionals at UNILI consider most effective for learning English for legal purposes. The answer has three parts. Respondents prefer active, profession-simulating formats to lecture-based teaching, and that preference is closely tied to a goal of advocacy (H1a and H1b). They endorse debates, presentations and teacher–student interaction by large majorities, although the instrument cannot rank these techniques. And they want French to remain available as a controlled resource, a finding that is firm among those who answered the immersion item but sensitive to the large share who did not. Each result concerns perceived effectiveness; none shows that a technique improves learning.

5.2 Interpreting the findings

The association between format and goal fits the practice-matches-purpose reading anticipated in Section 2.5. Respondents who expect to plead, negotiate or argue in English choose the formats that rehearse those acts, whereas those who seek only comprehension are divided. This agrees with the needs-analysis tradition, in which the learning situation is read against the target situation (Hutchinson and

Waters; West): respondents' subjective needs about method are coherent with their objective need for oral advocacy, not arbitrary.

The justifications offered for each technique map onto distinct learning conditions. Teacher–student interaction was valued for immediate correction and for completing the teacher's input, which corresponds to the scaffolding described by Wood, Bruner and Ross and to the repair mechanisms analysed by Lyster and Ranta. Debates were valued as professional simulation, which echoes the approximation of professional participation discussed through Lave and Wenger, although, as Section 2.4 noted, a classroom simulation is not membership of the profession. Presentations were valued for public-speaking practice, yet they attracted the most reasoned dissent, anxiety about linguistic competence, which agrees with Horwitz and colleagues: the learners who most need oral practice may be the most likely to avoid it.

The wish for French support does not contradict the preference for interactive methods. Read through Cook and through Hall and Cook, it is a request for principled own-language use in a register where a mistranslated modal can alter legal force (Trosborg). The caveat that respondents volunteered, that translation can encourage negligence, matches the position that own-language use should be judicious and purposeful. Principled eclecticism (Mellow) therefore describes the demand better than allegiance to one method, in line with the post-method argument of Kumaravadivelu.

The results also bear on the specificity debate of Section 2.2. Respondents did not ask for generic communicative activity; they asked for debates, mock trials and corrective dialogue tied to legal practice, which favours Hyland's view that specialised instruction anchors activities in the discipline over Widdowson's emphasis on use alone. The evidence is indirect, however, because the survey did not offer general-English alternatives against which to compare specific ones.

The composition of the sample calls for one further reading. Students and professionals were pooled, so the preferences reported combine expectations of a profession not yet entered with experience of one already practised, the contrast that Belcher's idea of imagined futures leads us to expect. The pooled figures cannot show whether the two groups judge techniques alike. They show only that, taken together, a population that mixes learners and practitioners converges on active formats, which is itself informative for a course designed to serve both.

Two cautions temper these readings. First, uniformly high endorsement of dichotomous items may partly reflect acquiescence (Dörnyei). The contrast between active and lecture-based formats, in which about one respondent in eight chose lecturing and the choice varied sharply with professional goal, is the one result that shows respondents discriminating between alternatives. Second, the justifications are interpretations offered by respondents; the survey cannot confirm that interaction corrects errors more effectively or that debates build professional identity. A methodological note follows from the sensitivity analysis: the conclusions on active formats and on the three techniques withstand the worst-case assumption about non-response, whereas the conclusion on immersion does not. Claims about French in the classroom should therefore be made more cautiously than claims about active formats.

5.3 Comparison with earlier studies

Few studies document preferences about method among law students learning English, and the four works considered here differ in context and design. The comparison is therefore informative rather than conclusive.

The closest design is the attitude survey by Bykonia and colleagues among law students at a Ukrainian penitentiary service academy, which examined teacher and student responses. Their results show a shift from teacher-centred to student-centred teaching and in student preferences, and they call for methodological innovation that serves the professional skills students need. Our finding that respondents prefer active formats to lecturing converges with this shift. Their study concerns Business English and cadets, and ours legal English in a French-medium African faculty, so convergence across such different settings strengthens the plausibility of the pattern without establishing its generality.

Sysoyev and Zavyalov propose teaching English to law students through content and language integrated learning, in which legal content and language are learned together. Our respondents did not name this approach, but their justification of debate as mock-trial simulation describes an activity in which legal reasoning and English are used together, which is the logic of CLIL. The CLIL literature also makes such courses depend on a teacher competent in language, subject and method (Zavyalov), a condition that echoes the respondents' demand, reported elsewhere in the doctoral study, for an English teacher with legal knowledge (Mulenga Mutamba).

Toshmatov observes that English in Uzbek law faculties is confined to the first two years, at two hours a week, that groups are small (ten to twelve students) and that methodological research on these junior years is scarce; he proposes professionally oriented content and tasks for reading authentic texts. The time constraint resembles that of UNILI, where the maquette allocates 35 hours in two promotions only, and respondents who rejected debates cited reduced hours. The contrast in group size matters: some respondents pointed to large groups, so interactive formats may be harder to run at UNILI than the preference alone suggests. Our sample, moreover, consists of advanced

students and practitioners, not the junior students on whom Toshmatov focuses.

Bydantseva reviews the literature on methods that raise motivation when English is taught to law students. Read against that review, respondents' endorsement of interactive and simulated formats may signal an expected motivational benefit, and the anxiety of those who reject presentations is the corresponding risk. Because our survey measured neither motivation nor anxiety directly, this link is an interpretation to be tested, not a result.

Together with Northcott's overview of legal English, which records law students' preference for practical instruction, these studies suggest a recurrent pattern across very different systems: learners of legal English ask for practice that resembles the profession. The four works compared here come from Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, so the present study widens the geographic range of the evidence with a case from a French-medium African faculty, where that preference coexists with a demand for French as a resource. The comparisons support a modest claim only. They do not show that such formats outperform alternatives, because the evidence compared here consists largely of attitudes, proposals and reviews, and ours measures no learning outcome.

5.4 Implications for course design

The findings are offered as design hypotheses, not prescriptions. Four follow. First, interactive, simulation-based formats can serve as the organising frame, with debates built around legal content so that language and subject are learned together. Second, presentations can be staged from paired and small-group work to individual delivery, so that anxiety does not exclude the students who most need practice. Third, French use can be planned explicitly: the concept is presented in English, comprehension is verified through brief French clarification, and the lesson returns to English for practice. Fourth, the obstacles that respondents named, namely hours and class size, must be addressed, because a preferred method that the timetable cannot support will not be implemented. These design hypotheses presuppose teachers who command both English and the legal content of the course, so staffing and teacher development belong in any implementation plan.

5.5 Directions for further research

Four extensions would test what the survey cannot. A rank-order or Likert instrument would allow techniques to be compared, and reverse-worded items would help to separate consensus from acquiescence. Stratum-level analysis with adequate subgroup sizes would show whether students and professionals differ. Observational or quasi-experimental work comparing interactive and lecture-based sections would address efficacy, which perceived effectiveness cannot. Finally, replication in other Congolese faculties of law would test the reach of the pattern.

6. Limitations and Conclusion

6.1 Limitations

Seven limitations bound the claims made here. First, the study measures perceived effectiveness. Respondents' beliefs shape engagement with a course, but they do not demonstrate learning gains, and no outcome measure was collected. Second, the items are dichotomous, which prevents ranking and invites acquiescence; no reverse-worded item was included to separate consensus from agreeableness. Third, valid sample sizes fall from 84 to 53 across items, and the conclusion on immersion does not survive the worst-case treatment of non-response. Fourth, students and professionals are pooled, so the study cannot say whether the two groups differ, and respondents are at Licence 2 level or above, so first-year students are absent.

Fifth, the ±10 per cent margin of error is a design value that presupposes probability selection within strata, and the intervals reported are wide; the estimates are indicative of the populations sampled, not exact. Sixth, the preferred-format and professional-objective variables were coded from the same questionnaire, so part of their association may reflect consistent answering, and the odds ratio is imprecise because only twelve respondents hold the comprehension goal. Seventh, the design is cross-sectional and confined to one faculty, which limits generalisation to other Congolese or African faculties of law. None of these limits reverses the main pattern, but together they define how far it can be pressed.

6.2 Conclusion

This article set out to establish which teaching methods law students and legal professionals at UNILI consider most effective for learning English for legal purposes. The evidence supports the hypothesis, in the qualified sense that suits a cross-sectional survey of moderate size: respondents prefer active, simulation-based formats to lecturing, and that preference is strongly tied to an advocacy-oriented goal. Debates, presentations and teacher–student interaction are each endorsed by large majorities, French is wanted as a controlled resource, and the main obstacles named are anxiety, time and class size.

The study contributes an empirical case from a French-medium African faculty to a literature drawn largely from other regions, and it shows how perceived-effectiveness data can be reported with explicit intervals and a sensitivity check. For course design, the findings point to simulation anchored in legal content, staged presentations, planned use of French, and teachers able to teach both language and law. Whether such a course improves learning

remains an open question, which comparisons of interactive and lecture-based sections should address next.

Declaration on the Use of AI

Generative AI tools were used to assist with drafting, statistical recalculation and formatting of this manuscript. The author reviewed and edited all content and takes full responsibility for it.

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