

4 Designing and implementing ESP courses in French higher education: a case study

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Abstract

This chapter reports on the design, implementation and evaluation of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course for dental students at the University of Bordeaux. We give an overview of the ‘English for Dental Studies’ courses taught from second year through to fifth year before focussing on the fifth year course in which the students’ task is to present a case treated on clinical attachment. By following the schema of Cheng’s (2011) ‘basic considerations’, we will briefly describe the process from needs analysis and identification of learning objectives, to designing materials, learning tasks, and assessment criteria, with a focus on methodologies. Feedback from students via questionnaires is analysed in order to compare their perceived needs and expectations pre-course with their impressions after the course. Finally, we explore the gains that can be made by both ESP specialists and disciplinary teachers in the context of internationalisation in the French higher education system.

Keywords: ESP, course design, CLIL, feedback, tasks.

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1. Introduction

ESP has traditionally been considered as a “practitioner’s movement” (Johns, 2013, p. 6) focussing on learner needs and pedagogical applications and Hyland (2013) has referred to it as “research-based language education” (p. 107). Learner needs are established by discourse analysis, genre analysis, and study of professional communities, with much work carried out on identifying the rhetorical and linguistic characteristics of various types of specialised discourse and on describing the way in which different discourse communities function (Hyland, 2013; Swales, 1990). In France, ESP has often been separated into two strands: a teaching strand (*LANGues pour Spécialistes d’Autres Disciplines*) and a discourse strand (*anglais de spécialité*), with the latter drawing more attention from research communities. However, Swales (2011) has argued that “we have had, over the 50 year history of ESP, all too little careful research in what actually happens in our classes” (p. 273). Belcher (2013) confirms that “some in ESP might well argue that the community that ESP professionals know the least about is its own” (p. 544). Descriptions of course design and material development are often dated and as new courses are put in place, it could be argued that ESP specialists do not always take the time to reflect on their practice and build on this experience within the frame of action research. Belcher (2013) points to this lack of analysis when she questions “How do ESP specialists know that what they do results in the learning outcomes that they and their students desire?” (p. 544). It may be that student needs, and course design and materials, have been less researched than specialist discourse yet both domains are closely linked and indeed the former stems from the latter. Johns (2013) refers to the early work of Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) where the key roles of the ESP specialist are described as being teacher, course designer, materials provider, collaborator (with subject specialist), researcher, and evaluator. Here, we view an ESP course from these multiple perspectives. Indeed, ESP course design goes hand in hand with research as the ESP specialist assesses needs, analyses target genres and language use in the community of practice and designs appropriate materials from specialised corpora which will draw attention to certain linguistic conventions. While it has been pointed out that not all ESP teachers are prepared or trained for this (Belcher, 2006; Van der Yeught, 2010; Wozniak, Braud, Sarré,

& Millot, 2015), in the *Département Langues et Cultures* (DLC) there is a strong ethic of team-teaching, reflective practice, and research-driven pedagogy, enabling ESP novices to ‘train on the job’ and encouraging more experienced ESP teachers and ESP researchers to share their expertise.

ESP courses traditionally begin at undergraduate level with general English for academic purposes or study skills and then move to more subject-specific conventions as students acquire more disciplinary expertise. Hyland (2013) describes the ESP teacher’s role as “identifying the specific language features, discourse practices and communicative skills of target groups” (p. 6). This begs the question then of how much actual domain-specific expertise is required of ESP teachers? Indeed, this question was asked in the early days of ESP. Robinson (1991) argued that ESP teachers should not try to be ‘pseudo-teachers’ of subject matter and in the first volume of the French ESP journal, *Asp*, Tony Dudley-Evans (1993) entitled his article *Subject Specificity in ESP: How much does the teacher need to know of the subject?*. He comes to the conclusion that knowledge of a community, its discourse, and genres is more important than very specific content knowledge although the teacher obviously needs to take an interest in and be curious about the subject matter. As we will see below, the role of the ESP teacher in the ‘English for Dental Studies’ courses at the University of Bordeaux moves from providing disciplinary-related materials accompanied by scaffolding activities to increased collaboration with the subject specialists and investigation of more specific disciplinary discourse.

In this chapter, we aim firstly to explore how needs analysis can inform task design and evaluation formats to respond to what Hyland (2002) has termed the students’ ‘demand for personal relevance’. Wozniak and Millot (2016) have also emphasised the need for professional relevance and acquisition of a disciplinary and professional culture in English. We also focus on materials, activities, and tasks to explore how an ESP course can raise awareness of specialised language through noticing tasks (Ortega, 2015) and enable students to express their “already established disciplinary expertise” (Whyte, 2016, p. 14). Hyland (2011) points out that learners acquire features of the language as they need them and therefore this type of specific approach is more motivating. Finally,

we also investigate whether a student's expertise in the discipline can influence their language competence. Whyte (2013) describes how the level and currency of content knowledge and its centrality in the life of the user can influence the development of the discourse domain. A questionnaire was thus used to gather the students' perceptions on how they had achieved the task and their opinion on other aspects of the course. Their answers also enable us to analyse how teacher feedback on performance can be provided without impairing the students' motivation and self-confidence.

2. Needs analysis

2.1. The context

The DLC at the University of Bordeaux provides English courses for a cohort of some 100 students admitted into the School of Dentistry after a first medical foundation year³. Dental studies are divided into three stages in France: the first undergraduate stage covers first to third year, the second postgraduate stage fourth to fifth year, and the third clinical stage sixth year and beyond (a maximum of four years). Ministry guidelines⁴ stipulate that by the end of the undergraduate stage, dental students should be able to read and present scientific texts written in English and that they should attain a B2 level of competence according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). At the beginning of their English course at the DLC, second year dental students take a language placement test⁵. Out of the 96 students who took the test in 2017, only 19% attained this level or above, indicating that the English programme should cater for their needs in general English as well as English for specific purposes. It should be noted that the students' levels in English were above the national average in France, where,

3. Première année commune aux études de santé (PACES)

4. http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/pid20536/bulletin-officiel.html?cid_bo=71552&cbo=1

5. The Oxford Quick Placement Test

according to a European Commission's (2012) survey, only 14% of students attain a B1 level or above by the time they leave high school.

Before discussing the fifth year English course and the focus of this chapter in detail, it is necessary to situate it within the wider programme of courses in 'English for Dental Studies' that are provided in the second to fourth years of study. There is no provision for English in the first medical foundation year of dental studies during which students in France from across the health sciences take a cross-disciplinary competitive entry exam into medicine, midwifery, pharmacy as well as dentistry. Table 1 sums up the changing focus of the 'English for Dental Studies' courses at the University of Bordeaux. As students gain disciplinary knowledge and skills and move toward their future profession, the English courses thus progress towards more disciplinary and professional objectives. Whereas the second and third year courses aim at developing a broad range of communication skills, with the emphasis shifting from understanding and interacting in second year to expressing oneself at length in third year, the fourth and fifth year courses are project-based courses. In fourth year, students have the task of assembling a small corpus of research articles that respond to a specific problem encountered in clinical practice. They must read and review the literature before presenting it to an examining panel and their peers. This task runs parallel to a disciplinary course the students follow in their fourth year entitled *Lecture Critique d'Articles*, where they learn to read research articles critically. Finally, in fifth year, students present a clinical case that they have treated during hospital attachments. As we shall see later, these tasks were devised by the English teachers in collaboration with disciplinary lecturers.

The organisation of the 'English for Dental Studies' courses reflects this shift towards disciplinary competence and autonomy, with weekly structured contact hours in second and third year, divided between the classroom and the language centre, where resources and activities are tailored to individual learner profiles (there is no ability grouping for the classroom hours). In fourth and fifth year, students have fewer structured contact hours to allow them to work on their English projects in the language centre, and the contact hours they have are both in a classroom and tutorial setting, spread over the semester.

Table 1. ESP Courses from first to fifth year dentistry

	Organisation and Objectives	Tasks and Assessment	Class materials
Year 1	Medical foundation year; no English instruction		
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-hour blended learning course • Developing communication skills for dentists • Interacting orally with disciplinary peers • Learning to learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive skills test (reading, listening, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) • Continuous assessment of productive skills (written learning diary, oral interaction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video and text (popular sources) provided by teacher with accompanying tasks and communicative scenarios
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-hour blended learning course • Informing patients about a dental condition • Presenting a dental topic to peers • Discovering disciplinary resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productive skills tests (written blog post and oral presentation) • Continuous assessment of productive skills (oral interaction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video and text (popular sources) and disciplinary texts provided by teacher with accompanying tasks and communicative scenarios
Year 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20-hour blended learning course • Using disciplinary texts to explore a problem encountered in clinical practice • Communicating on and discussing findings with disciplinary peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productive skills test (oral presentation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary texts/ figures provided by students and teacher. Accompanying tasks and communicative scenarios
Year 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20-hour blended learning course • Reflecting on clinical practice • Telling the story of a clinical case • Discussing treatments with peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productive skills test (oral presentation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary texts (case studies and photos) provided by students and teacher • Accompanying tasks and communicative scenarios

2.2. Learning objectives (fifth year)

As we have just seen, the objective for fifth year students is to be able to present a clinical case to their peers and dentistry lecturers. To discuss the needs of the students for this new course, the team of ESP teachers met with the dentistry lecturers. This gave us the opportunity to take stock of the courses and materials used with second, third and fourth year students. We were also able to underline the specificity of the ESP courses and the complementarity of blended learning where time spent in the language centre could be dedicated to more personalised objectives, discussion workshops, cultural events, tandem pairings, activation or consolidation of specific language skills, general English, and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) preparation, etc.

Our colleagues from the school of dentistry were able to give us an insight into the hospital context and the students' work there. These expert members of the community gave their perception of the student's academic and professional needs and were able to draw parallels with the academic tasks which were required of the students in French that year (notably the 'CSCT'⁶ oral exam in which students are given a case which they must analyse and present to their teachers). The consensus was that the students should work on tasks related as much as possible to their clinical practice as this was to be the main focus of their fifth year of study and seemed to be a logical progression from the tasks carried out in fourth year. Indeed, in the fourth year, when students were asked to mingle with their peers and recount 'an interesting/difficult/original/challenging case, etc.' seen at the hospital, we had noted their motivation and enthusiasm and this seemed to be what students enjoyed talking about most. The ability to discuss cases in an English lingua franca context or being able to present a case study at a conference are part of the students' disciplinary and professional socialisation. The dentistry colleagues agreed that the rhetorical and communicative skills gained in the ESP course might assist students in their French CSCT exam. At the same time, for the ESP specialists, it was hoped that this task-based approach would enable the students to draw on and express their disciplinary knowledge.

6. Certificat de Synthèse Clinique et Thérapeutique.

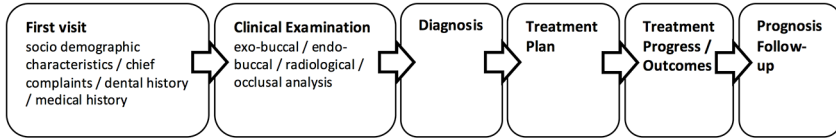
It was decided that the examining panel for the case study presentation would consist of both the ESP teacher and the dentistry lecturer and that a session of team-teaching with the dentistry colleagues presenting a case to the students would heighten the latter's motivation. In terms of timetabling English instruction, students would have to be allowed enough time in their already dense schedules to work on their English projects and hospital placements remained the priority. Consequently, we decided to see the students for two input sessions at the beginning of the course and then two tutorial sessions where the students, in pairs, could report on the progress made on their project and receive individualised feedback by rehearsing their presentation. A final input session was programmed in the weeks leading up to the final presentation. For the rest of their 20-hour course, students could work semi-autonomously in the language centre.

3. Materials, activities, and tasks

3.1. A genre approach

The objective of the first session is to familiarise the students with the top-down structure of a case study – the elements which are to be presented and the typical order in which they are found. The students thus examine the practices of their community and discover the conventions of the case study genre. The input is accompanied by activities, for example students work collaboratively to re-order several 'jumbled' case reports taken from the *British Dental Journal* and match them to their figures. Analysis of the different steps, rhetorical functions, or 'moves' can then be checked against a template provided by the dentistry teachers which advises students on conventions (Figure 1). Hyland (2015) has warned against 'constraining templates', but at this level the scaffolding provided enables students to structure their information, follow the norms of their community, and imitate these highly conventionalised productions. From this perspective, genre analysis "provides non-native speakers with the linguistic and rhetorical tools they need to cope with the tasks required of them" (Dudley-Evans, 1997, p. 62).

Figure 1. The typical macro-structure of a case study



Now aware of the framework, the students need to analyse how these steps are achieved linguistically. They mine the mini-corpus of case studies for frequently occurring language clusters, searching for lexico-grammatical patterns and linguistic conventions used for the rhetorical functions (describing the patient's profile, giving the reason for referral, charting the medical history, etc.). Students work collaboratively to enter their findings into a shared file online, leaving by the end of the session with a lexicon for presenting a clinical case. The students examine and report back and this explicit analysis of examples contributes to raising awareness of certain patterns.

3.2. The written to oral register

After working on examples of written case studies, students are encouraged to think about how they could convey similar information orally to both dentists and non-dentists, as they will have to do in their final presentations. Students are given the task of sorting cards containing similar information into three categories of register: (1) what you might write in a scientific journal, (2) what you might say to another dentist, and (3) what you might say to a non-dentist (for one example, see [Table 2](#)). In their current and future practice, French dental students are most likely to find themselves in situations of the third type, in explaining treatments to non-Francophone patients. Due to the difficulty in accessing authentic examples of utterances of the last two types, we formulated oral alternatives to excerpts from the written case studies read in a previous class by the students. Based on observations made by [Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet \(2003\)](#) on the syntactic differences between the written genre of a proceedings article and the oral genre of a conference presentation, our suggested paraphrases include a higher frequency of active structures, personal pronouns,

there structures, pseudo-clefts, and shorter, less dense syntactic chunks than are present in the written case reports. Our paraphrases for non-dentists endeavour to offer alternatives to medical jargon that lay people would understand. Once the students have classified the items according to register, they are invited to notice the syntactic differences between the three styles, which leads to a discussion. For some written excerpts, we offer no oral paraphrases, leaving cards blank for students to put forward their own suggestions once they have finished classifying the items we provide. In this way, students are sensitised to the differing styles of the oral and written register in English, and are given linguistic strategies to avoid ‘talking like texts’ during their final presentation.

Table 2. Register activity

what you might write in a scientific journal	what you might say to another dentist	what you might say to a non-dentist
The patient was prescribed a course of prophylactic antibiotics (amoxicillin 500 mg TDS and metronidazole 200 mg TDS) for one week and sent home.	We prescribed the patient a week’s course of prophylactic antibiotics – amoxicillin 500 mg TDS and metronidazole 200 mg TDS, to be more specific. Then we sent her home.	We put the patient on antibiotics for a week to prevent any infection and sent her home.

3.3. Peer-to-peer instruction and feedback

In addition to raising awareness of the distinct language forms of the oral genre, the classroom sessions also encourage the students to reflect on the linguistic features that accompany another semiotic mode of oral presentations: visuals. For the communicative task at hand, students will have to walk the audience through their interpretation of X-rays and photographic images to help them see the salient parts related to treatment choices. To this end, we developed a series of communicative activities that elicit the language seen previously (Ortega, 2015) and give students a chance to practice and consolidate appropriate language forms while the teacher guides and facilitates interaction by monitoring the students as they complete the tasks with their peers. The group work also allows for peer feedback on subject content as students will comment and ask questions about each others’ cases and indeed help each other with language difficulties. These

activities also exploit resources provided by class members, who are as Belcher (2006) says “the most significant subject-area resources in an ESP class” (p. 172).

3.4. Phonology issues

Phonology issues are another essential aspect of oral presentations in the target language that the English course for fifth year dental students seeks to address. In the time available for the course, it would be over-ambitious to aim to remediate all the phonological difficulties encountered by our French-speaking students. It was therefore decided that one session should focus on awareness-raising of critical pronunciation issues for French speakers of English and providing the learners with the tools they needed to overcome them. They are thus introduced to online pronouncing dictionaries like www.howjsay.com and www.youglish.com and shown how to use them, before checking the words they will need for a micro-speaking task. The concept of shadowing, whereby learners listen to and imitate the prosodic patterns of native speakers, is also explained to them as a way of improving prosody over time. We identified the key areas of difficulty where transfer from the L1 is likely. These included vowel sounds, word stress in transparent words (highly abundant in dental English), and prosody, which tends to be flat. To tackle these issues, we designed a series of scenarios that culminate in a micro speaking task, where students record their own productions, using their smartphones, to be sent to the teacher for personalised feedback during one of the tutorial sessions.

3.5. An example of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Another phase in the course is team-taught by the ESP teacher and dentistry teacher in a CLIL format; for more discussion of the varying degrees of CLIL see Taillefer (2013) and the Lanqua Project⁷. During this phase the dentistry teacher presents a clinical case to the students and engages in discussion with them. Although the students listen with interest to the case, they seem to pay

7. http://www.celelc.org/projects/Past_Projects/lanqua/index.html

little attention to how things are done linguistically. The ESP teacher's role is therefore to give more explicit guidance on how to produce the genre. As Hyland (2011) says, "ESP teachers cannot rely on subject specialists to teach disciplinary literacy skills as they generally have neither the expertise nor the desire to do so" (p. 9). However, the participation of the dentistry teachers in the ESP classroom also has the advantage of creating an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) environment where the focus is on communicative competence. The students, who will be more likely to interact with other non-native speakers rather than native speakers in their professional practice, are thus in a more realistic and less threatening situation where clarity and effective communication take precedence over native-like competence. The students are motivated to see their dentistry teachers 'playing the game' and are possibly reassured to see that their own level of English can compare quite favourably with these researchers who participate in international conferences.

3.6. Tutorial sessions: individualised feedback

Individualised feedback is given in the tutorial sessions. For the first session, the students come with the materials they have gathered on their case (photos, x-rays) and describe it informally to their teacher. In the second tutorial, the students give a complete run-through of their presentation and are thus given feedback on structure, content, slides, pronunciation, delivery, accuracy of grammar and vocabulary, and overall clarity. As Whyte (2013) notes, "it is often the case that feedback on student performance in ESP and other language courses comes too late for reflection and improvement" (p. 15). It was therefore decided that feedback in the form of progress checks should be fully integrated into the course.

4. Assessment

For the final presentation, the examining panel is composed of the ESP teacher and a dental researcher, and the students deliver their presentation in front of their peers. The assessment criteria for the oral presentation are provided to

the students in the penultimate class of the course. The criteria aim to take into account the multimodal nature of an oral presentation (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2003) by evaluating the accessibility and intelligibility of the English, the scope and accuracy of the grammar and vocabulary, the content and structure, the student's communication skills, the quality of their slides, and how well they deal with questions. Students are also assessed on how well they have applied the communication strategies highlighted by the course. The assessment grid⁸ not only aims to harmonise grading practices among the eight different teachers on the examining panels, but is also designed to provide an itemised feedback report for the students on their performance. The criteria are broken down into five main areas, with each area earning the student a maximum of four points. The items reflect the objective of 'non-native fluency' rather than 'native likeness' (Pilkinton-Pihko, 2013). According to these criteria, students who give a B2 level performance or above and who fulfil all the content and communication criteria can achieve a mark of 20. Students in the audience are encouraged to ask questions after each presentation, with the incentive of earning 0.5-1 bonus points toward their own presentation grade. The presentations usually generate many questions from the peer audience as well as rich discussions with the dental professional on the examining panel. The latter's perspective is invaluable for assessing the disciplinary content, but it is the ESP specialist who focusses on the linguistic and communicative dimensions.

5. Course evaluation

At the end of the first class, the students completed an online questionnaire⁹. This pre-course questionnaire focussed in part on what Cheng (2011) has termed 'social milieu', that is to say the students' expectations of the course, their attitudes towards English, and the pertinence of the task, etc. Questions on their pre-course knowledge of clinical cases (structure, grammar, vocabulary, communicative strategies, and use of PowerPoint, etc.) would then allow us to

8. Supplement, part 1: <https://research-publishing.box.com/s/adeudwl4uz7fh38g2qs1rjzmeccqs08k>

9. Supplement, part 2: <https://research-publishing.box.com/s/adeudwl4uz7fh38g2qs1rjzmeccqs08k>

compare with the post-course responses as students are led to reflect on how they accomplished the task. The post-course questionnaire was completed at the end of the final presentations¹⁰.

5.1. Analysis of student feedback

The feedback from the post-course questionnaire showed that in general the course was a positive experience for learners (Table 3). A majority of students had a positive opinion of the course and felt that they had succeeded in the final task, progressing both in English, in general, and, more especially, in scientific and professional communication.

Table 3. Post-course student feedback

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	TOTAL
Positive course experience	48	4	10	62
ESP progress	47	8	7	62
EFL progress	35	13	12	60
Success in final task	49	6	6	61
Disciplinary boost	36	12	14	62
Tutorials helpful	50	7	5	62
Course materials helpful	46	6	10	62
Collaboration beneficial/ motivating	52	1	9	62

The students’ responses also highlight the importance of the ‘discourse domain’, as we saw earlier. They felt that their disciplinary proficiency had helped them overcome difficulties in English and successfully complete the task. This was particularly apparent among the students who perceived themselves as ‘weak’ (Table 4). The weaker students felt their content expertise compensated for difficulties with English. However, almost half the group saw themselves as average and were divided equally in considering content knowledge only, or language and content skills combined as equally important in task success.

10. Supplement, part 2: <https://research-publishing.box.com/s/adeudwll4uz7fh38g2qs1rjzmeccqs08k>

Almost half of the more proficient students also thought language and content strengths contributed equally. These students were also much more likely than other students to attribute their success to their language skills, with just under a third of them choosing this option. This was the only group to include students who thought language skills more important in their success, though a similar number chose the content option.

Table 4. Attribution of task success according to EFL proficiency

ATTRIBUTION of TASK SUCCESS	language only	%	language & content	%	content	%	TOTAL	%
strong students	6	29	10	45	5	24	21	34
average students	1	4	14	54	11	42	26	44
weak students	0	0	2	18	9	82	11	19
TOTAL	7	12	26	44	26	44	59	

It also appears that the course itself also helped the students overcome their difficulties. Table 5 clearly shows that the students felt more able to present a clinical case to their peers at the end of the course than at the beginning.

Table 5. Self-assessed skills before and after the course

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	TOTAL	
Ability to present a clinical case	29	22	20	71	pre-course
	44	10	7	61	post-course
Knowledge of clinical case structure	29	24	19	72	pre-course
	56	2	4	62	post-course
Vocabulary proficiency	15	35	22	72	pre-course
	42	4	16	62	post-course
Phonology proficiency	12	44	16	72	pre-course
	35	13	14	62	post-course
Grammar proficiency	14	45	12	71	pre-course
	33	14	15	62	post-course
Communication skills	17	34	20	71	pre-course
	37	8	17	62	post-course
Confidence	17	45	10	72	pre-course
	29	23	10	62	post-course

The materials and tasks used appear to have contributed to this outcome, as we will now see.

At the outset, the students' knowledge of the structure of a clinical case presentation seemed sketchy and perhaps limited. However, by the end of the course, the vast majority felt they understood the organisational norms of this type of presentation, suggesting that our genre approach was effective. Similarly, they felt more able to use the appropriate lexical, grammatical, and to a lesser extent phonological features of this type of discourse at the end of the course than at the beginning. This improvement in their self-evaluated skills would seem to indicate that tasks such as mining corpora and pronunciation awareness activities do have a positive impact. The English course also seemed to be the context where communication skills were given special attention and students felt better equipped in these cross-disciplinary skills. The ELF classroom environment seemed to encourage communication and peer-to-peer interaction as the gains in confidence show. The CLIL element and our collaboration with our dentistry colleagues was also perceived in a positive light by the students (Table 3). This collaboration had a further beneficial effect for our dentistry colleagues as for some, it was a first step towards EMI (English Medium Instruction). Four of them were encouraged to follow the Teaching Academic Content in English (TACE) course run by the DLC for *Défi International* at Bordeaux University, as internationalisation becomes a key strategy for the university. However, overall, we are cautious not to over-extrapolate from these results given that our questionnaire was based on a seven-point Likert scale that could have induced a bias.

One particularly valuable aspect of the course, according to the students, was the tutorial sessions (Table 3). The students indicated that the progress checks and individual feedback provided in this setting played a key role in their performance, an opinion which was shared by the ESP teachers who taught the course. In summary, the combination of classroom instruction, personalised feedback, and semi-autonomous project work was coherent and effective for these students and their context. The efficacy of this blended format is in line with Hattie's (2008) meta-analysis:

“ideally, teaching and learning move from the task to the processes and understandings necessary to learn the task, and then to continuing beyond it to more challenging tasks and goals. This process results in higher confidence and greater investment of effort. This flow typically occurs as the student gains greater fluency and mastery” (p. 177).

6. Conclusion

If we refer back to the research questions that guided our study, it would seem, first of all, that the needs analysis helped in designing a course with academic and professional relevance, enabling students to draw on and communicate their disciplinary expertise. The programme from first year to fifth year is thus characterised by a shift in focus and input as students gain more disciplinary specialisation and play a more active role in their professional community.

Secondly, the post-course questionnaire indicates that the students had integrated the specific language features targeted in the activities and tasks. This, together with their disciplinary expertise, helped students successfully complete the task.

Finally, students perceived the individualised teacher feedback in the tutorial sessions to be highly beneficial. The development of this course has also led us to reflect on our role as ESP specialists, our domain of expertise, and how we can collaborate with subject specialists. From an institutional point of view, the collaboration with our dentistry colleagues has given us greater visibility and recognition within the faculty.

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Edited by Cédric Sarré and Shona Whyte

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