

Innovation
in Methodology
and Practice
in Language Learning

Innovation in Methodology and Practice in Language Learning:

*Experiences and Proposals
for University Language Centres*

Edited by

Christopher Williams

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-8015-9

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-8015-2

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CHAPTER EIGHT

ONLINE CASE-BRIEF BANKS IN ELP CLASSES: AUTHENTICITY, RELEVANCE AND TASK DESIGN

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Introduction

Previous studies have discussed why case briefs are one of the disciplinary tools American Law School students are required to master in the first year of their course curriculum (Sullivan / Colby / Wegner / Lloyd / Shulman 2007; Giordano 2012). Not only can case briefs be considered an academic genre promoting out-of-class preparation to gain background knowledge, but they can also provide useful practical training for the apprentice to the legal profession. Moreover, they endow students with the ability ‘to think like lawyers’ and develop the skill to reason and argue as professionals do in the context of the various branches of Common Law practice (Bhatia 1993; Hyland 2000; Candlin / Bhatia / Jensen 2002; Sullivan *et al.* 2007). The present study endeavours to investigate whether and to what extent American online student case briefs could be employed in English for Legal Purposes classes in university and language centre environments as authentic materials through which L2 students can acquire the necessary skills which would enable them to compare different legal systems and practices. Exploring the various branches of law will help students gain an understanding of difficult legal cases, as well as master the appropriate generic behaviours and discursive conventions of the legal community. Taking into consideration the concept of the *authenticity* of materials not written for pedagogic purposes, their *relevance* to the discipline and the features of the discourse community within which such texts are produced (Dudley-Evans / St. John 1998; Swales 1990), this study investigates how a learner-focused approach

based on both genre and corpus analysis can be a valuable guide to teacher *task design*. Customised tasks, based on a case-method of learning and matched to learners' needs, might effectively help students to improve their language skills while simultaneously fostering their assimilation of the epistemology of their future professional discipline (Berkenkotter / Huckin 1995).

A brief is a summary of an appellate court opinion. However, a distinction must be made between two types of brief: an *appellate brief* or *brief* is a long written document, sometimes twenty pages long, put forward by attorneys or lawyers to the appellate court. The appellant tries to convince the court that errors were made by the trial court in reaching its judgment and the appellee will try to demonstrate there were no significant errors. The parties' arguments are presented through the appellate brief. A *law student brief* or *case brief*, on the other hand, is a learning tool, generally a single page document that analyses "one particular case opinion in a formulaic way" (Schelin undated). It succinctly summarizes "the relevant facts, the legal issue presented, and the reasoning the court used to reach a decision" (Garner / Newman / Jackson 2002: 333).

In North American Law Schools, students usually study cases by briefing or summarizing them, especially while attending the first semester modules. The case briefs, or summaries, follow the structure of professional appellate law briefs. The practice of briefing cases as a learning and teaching tool began at Harvard Law School in 1870 when Professor Christopher Columbus Langdell introduced the case method. Case briefing is nowadays a widely accepted pedagogical method among law instructors in the majority of American Law Schools. Some lecturers assign case briefs as preparation before class, so that students can gain understanding of a particular case before discussing it in class using the Socratic case-method training.

During the course of this study, many American university websites were investigated to ascertain whether instructors actually use this kind of learning tool and whether or not a single standard for case briefing exists. Among the numerous definitions, one was chosen to better explain what case briefing represents in American Law Schools. The webpage of Donald L. Carper, Professor Emeritus of Business Law and Conflict Management at California State University Sacramento includes an appendix on case brief and gives the following explanation:

Its purpose is to have students identify the rules of law found in court cases and analyze how courts apply these rules of law to the facts of a case

in an objective and rational manner. Case briefing hones analytic skills and heightens understanding of the role of courts in defining, interpreting, and applying law (<www.csus.edu/indiv/c/carperdl/Briefing_Cases.htm>).

For the analysis in question, a corpus of American students' case briefs will represent the textual material on which an English for Legal Purposes module can be built and developed for L2 students, taking into account various factors such as their value as authentic and relevant instances of specific discourse and their adaptability and flexibility for task design. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 92) explain that even Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995: 2-3) "argue for an approach based on 'case research with insiders' investigating the ways in which writers use the genre knowledge that they acquire 'strategically' to participate in a discipline's or a profession's activities".

Theoretical framework, aims and data

The present study will be based on some seminal works on genre and academic discourse such as Swales (1990), Bhatia (1993), Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), and Hyland (2000), which provide useful insight into disciplinary communication and academic writing. Essential understanding of the nature of students' case briefs was gained from the work *Educating Lawyers. Preparation for the Profession of Law* by Sullivan, Colby, Wegner, Lloyd and Shulman (2007) and from a previous investigation on contract case briefs in American Law Schools (Giordano in Berkenkotter / Bhatia / Gotti 2012: 377-396) which entailed an analysis of the situational and institutional context and the generic move structure of these types of texts.

Taking the previous studies as a starting point, the several tasks and activities created for this study are based on the influential works on ESP by Robinson (1991) and Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) and on legal writing materials for English learners by Candlin, Bhatia and Jensen (2002). Additional knowledge on the use of corpora in the ESP classroom was gathered from works that deal with corpus-based teaching methodologies such as Gavioli (1997), Thurstun and Candlin (1998) and the integration of corpus-based and genre-based approaches applied to text analysis in ESP such as the work by Flowerdew (2005).

As Belcher (2009: 3-4) points out, ESP course designers collect and examine data, usually in the form of sample texts, from the target community or from community insiders. Then ESP specialists proceed with discourse-sample analysis by considering, ideally, both macro- (rhetorical, whole text) and micro- (lexico-grammatical) level characteristics

of the written or spoken genres, i.e. routine communicative events. As is widely known among L2 teachers and instructors, chosen materials should meet the general objectives of the lesson and, equally importantly, might be slightly beyond the learners' level to increase their motivation, awareness and curiosity. Additionally, the data which will be used as materials in class should be chosen according to the learners' interests and should be relevant to their needs. ESP course designers should also look at the potential adaptability of materials so that no difficulty is encountered in task design and text manipulation for the creation of learning activities. Once the data is selected, the tasks to be created should be sequenced and differentiated and should include both communicative and cognitive procedures. In order to ensure the students do not become discouraged or demotivated, the length of the texts selected should not be intimidating or unapproachable.

The present study aims to investigate whether and to what extent American online students' case briefs can be employed as authentic materials in English for Legal Purposes classes in university and language centre environments. It will be argued that through their analysis in class, L2 students can attain the skills that are necessary to properly explore differences and similarities between the legal systems and practices in the USA and in their own country and achieve a sound knowledge and awareness of the various discursive strategies at work in such texts. L2 students in countries where the legal system is not Common Law are certainly not expected to produce such types of texts, case briefs or other texts typical of the American Law School tradition and curriculum. However, exploring the various branches of law will help students gain an understanding of difficult legal cases, as well as master the appropriate generic behaviours and discursive conventions of the legal community.

Taking into consideration the concepts of the *authenticity* of materials and their *relevance* to the discipline and the features of the discourse community within which such texts are produced (Dudley-Evans / St John 1998; Swales 1990), this study will endeavour to investigate whether a learner-focused approach based on the integration between genre and corpus types of analysis can be a valuable guide to teacher *task design*. It is argued here that customized tasks that are tailor-made by instructors who bear in mind the case method of learning and learners' specific needs might in actual fact help students to both improve their language skills and assimilate the epistemology of their future profession (Berkenkotter / Huckin 1995).

The website <www.4lawschool.com> is the source for the data under scrutiny here. It contains 1,974 case briefs in total, summarizing cases

from several specific legal fields, and in particular from common first year courses such as Contracts, Torts, Property, Criminal Law, Civil Procedure, Trusts and Wills, and Constitutional Law. The website includes other resources for students such as a career centre, a legal reference section, some information on student life and important resources for the Bar Exam.

The K case briefs corpus	
1. 1st Baptist Church v. Barber Contracting Co.	27. Callano v. Oakwood Park Homes Corp.
2. Acme Markets Inc. v. Federal Armored Express, Inc.	28. Capital Dodge Sales v. Northern Concrete Pipe
3. Acme Mills & Elevator Co. v. Johnson	29. Carbtree v. Elizabeth Arden
4. Agricultural Insurance Co. v. Constantine	30. Carlill v. Carbolic Smoke Ball Co.
5. Allied Steel and Conveyors, Inc. v. Ford Motor Co.	31. Carter v. Sherburne
6. Anglia Television Ltd. v. Reed	32. Centex v. Home Corp. v. Boag
7. Austin Instrument, Inc. v. Loral Corporation	33. Central Adjustment Bureau, Inc. v. Ingram
8. Bailey v. Ewing	34. Channel Home Center, Division of Grace v. Grossman
9. Bailey v. State of Alabama	35. Cheney v. Jemmett
10. Bailey v. West	36. Cirafici v. Goffen
11. Bain v. Gillispie	37. Clark v. Elza
12. Batsakis v. Demotsis	38. Cohen v. Clayton Coal Co.
13. Beall v. Beall	39. Cohen v. Cowles Media Company
14. Beard Implement Co v. Krusa	40. Colonial Dodge v. Miller
15. Blair v. Anderson	41. Continental Laboratories v. Scott Paper Co.
16. Board of Control of Eastern Michigan University v. Burgess	42. Corinthian Pharmaceuticals v. Lederle Labs
17. Board of Ed District No. 220 v. Village of Hoffman Estates	43. Corthell v. Summit Thread Co
18. Boone v. Coe	44. Cotnam v. Wisdom
19. Bovard v. American Horse Enterprises, Inc.	45. Cousineau v. Walker
20. Branco Enterprises v. Delta Roofing	46. Cumbest v. Harris
21. Bright v. Ganas	47. Cyberchron Corp v. Calldata Systems Development, Inc.
22. Britton v. Turner	48. D & G Stout, Inc. v. Bacardi Imports, Inc.
23. Burger King v. Family Dining	49. D&G Stout Inc. v. Bacardi Imports, Inc.
24. Burger King Corp. v. Weaver	50. Dalton v. Educational Testing Service
25. C. Itoh v. Jordan	
26. C. Itoh & Co. v. Jordan Int'l Co.	

Table 1. The K case briefs corpus

The Kcorpus (K stands for contract) selected for the present study includes 50 contract case briefs. The case briefs selected were the first 50 in a list of 213 contract case briefs submitted to the website by different students, as shown in Table 1. The K case briefs are numbered progressively following the actual order on the website as it was up to March 2013. Some of the case briefs in this corpus were already part of the above-cited previous study (Giordano 2012): the present study analyses and utilizes them with a different, didactic aim.

Word count in the K case briefs corpus					
Case brief	# of words	Case brief	# of words	Case brief	# of words
K01	545	K19	235	K37	417
K02	390	K20	465	K38	233
K03	358	K21	490	K39	200
K04	200	K22	218	K40	526
K05	420	K23	897	K41	385
K06	262	K24	210	K42	802
K07	389	K25	410	K43	313
K08	538	K26	263	K44	270
K09	231	K27	361	K45	545
K10	519	K28	563	K46	212
K11	404	K29	461	K47	392
K12	298	K30	219	K48	413
K13	559	K31	562	K49	290
K14	332	K32	338	K50	271
K15	432	K33	393		
K16	518	K34	165		
K17	559	K35	545	TOTAL	19,516
K18	251	K36	247	Average	390.32

Table 2. Word count in the K case briefs corpus

Although created and developed with a first language context in mind, the case briefs in the online bank can represent a very useful computer-mediated resource bank from where ESP teachers and instructors can draw

texts containing many features of potential value in second language contexts (Candlin *et al.* 2002: 302). Regarding data produced by native speakers, Robinson underlines that “what native speakers produce in the appropriate situations is truly authentic and thus suitable as a model and target” (1991: 32).

Table 2 shows the number of words for each case brief. The data were computed by using Wordsmith Tools 5.0, devised by Mike Scott at Liverpool University. The shortest case brief in the subcorpus contains 165 words ([K34]), and the longest 897 ([K23]). This difference in length is due to the type of case, of course, but also to the fact that students uploading case briefs on the websites attend different law schools, and case briefs can follow a number of formats and have different lengths depending on the level of analysis required by the instructor. The data amount to about 19,000 words and the average length for a case brief is 390 words. As can be seen from Table 2, the texts under investigation are relatively short, the majority being shorter than one page. This represents a motivating and encouraging factor for L2 students who are thus not intimidated by lengthy, elaborate or intricate texts.

Integrating genre-based and corpus-based analysis in task design

Giordano (2012) observed that case briefs can be considered as an independent genre, inasmuch as they exploit specific characteristics and rhetorical features typical of both academic practice in American Law Schools and professional legal practice. They clearly show a consistent use of shared rules and conventions and common textual features, such as a specific (though flexible) move structure, based on the IRAC legal method of analysis where Issue, Rule, Application and Conclusion are the main moves. Candlin *et al.* (2002: 303) explain that there are many variations on this approach; drawing on their work, Giordano (2012) shows various examples of different formats. Nevertheless, the IRAC structure remains the standard for case briefs and this confirms its value and usefulness as an analytical and organization tool. Case briefs as writing assignments allow law students to develop their cognitive competence by dwelling on conceptual models, schemata, logic or causal relationships, by analysing, ordering, ranking, and matching elements. Writing assignments such as case briefs force law students to read the case carefully in order to analyse it in writing and explain it to their classmates and lecturers. In this sense case briefs can be seen as a pedagogic genre.

As regards their content relevance in an L2 context, case briefs contain terminology, concepts and linguistic complexity that reflect the ESP students' background knowledge and meet the general objectives and students' individual goals along with their practical, skill-building requirements. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 27) "The exact meaning of authenticity has often been unclear." They explain that "Many have used it with reference to unsimplified or 'genuine' texts that were used in ESP materials but were originally written for purposes other than language teaching. Others have recognized that genuineness of the text does not guarantee relevance and that a text is only truly authentic if it is exploited in ways that reflect real world use" (*ibid.*: 27-28).

Therefore, when considering case briefs as authentic materials to be used in the classroom, certain factors have to be taken into consideration, such as their level of applicability and adaptability in terms of task design and ease of text manipulation. The case briefs bank affords the opportunity to focus not only on the organization and content of the legal document (genre), but also on the crucial issue of the link between particular lexicogrammatical and discursive choices and organization and content (Candlin *et al.* 2002: 308), building a bridge that connects law to language.

One of the greatest advantages of utilizing these types of authentic texts is that a large number of tasks can be designed. The tasks proposed here are intended for B2 level students, preferably studying Law at university or attending an ELP course to improve their competence in the language and acquire specific discourse which will be useful in their professional career. But how can a case brief be exploited in an ELP classroom? The tasks can be organized into various steps:

- 1) Pre-reading or warm-up stage including preview questions relating to personal background or personal knowledge of the topic;
- 2) While-reading activities such as filling in the blanks, word search, matching of definitions, rephrasing exercises, cloze procedures, contextual reference;
- 3) Post-reading tasks such as reading comprehension questions, multiple choice, true/false, wrap-up and concluding summaries.

These are traditional tasks and activities which can certainly be utilized to provide a sense of familiarity given the novel nature of the materials being presented. Some exercise examples can be provided by matching and gap-filling tasks to boost the use of new and unknown lexical items and the understanding of their specific meaning in the context of contract case briefs, as is shown in Task 1 and Task 2 below. Task 1 was created

utilizing case briefs [K04], [K15], [K17], [K35], [K48] and [K49] in the corpus. Task 2 is based on [K04].

Task 1

Matching: Match the words in the first column with their definition in the second column.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1. bailee | a. property owner, landlady or landlord in a lease agreement |
| 2. bailor | b. the person who has become obliged through a promise towards another |
| 3. lessee | c. the person who receives property through a contract of bailment |
| 4. lessor | d. the person who temporarily transfers possession of property, under a contract of bailment |
| 5. promisee | e. resident, rentee, renter, tenant in a contract of lease |
| 6. promisor | f. the person who is to be the beneficiary of a promise, an obligation or a contract |

Task 2

Gap Filling: Fill in the gaps in the text below with the missing words.

[K04]

Summary of Agricultural Insurance Co. v. Constantine

Parties:

Plaintiff: Agricultural Insurance Co.

Defendant: Constantine

<i>contract of bailment</i>	<i>bailed property</i>
<i>Bailee</i>	<i>bailor (x2)</i>

Reasoning: *The court states that lacking the assent of (1) _____ to the conditions printed on the ticket before delivering her car to the (2) _____, it cannot be a part of the (3) _____. And (4) _____ only considered the ticket is a token or receipt ostensibly for later identification of the (5) _____, which cannot constitute a part of the contract.*

While Task 1 and Task 2 focus on lexical items and their definition and meaning in the specific context and thus work on the lexical and semantic level, Task 3 and Task 4 below are more discourse-based and engage students in the reordering of events narrated in the introductory Facts category of the case briefs, emphasizing the importance of coherence and cohesion in text. The Facts utilized are drawn from [K22] for Task 3 and [K09] for Task 4. The two tasks require the students to use certain cognitive skills when chronologically sequencing the various events. This is carried out both on the basis of logical or temporal connectors when present, or on that of the Facts content, which explains the several legal steps of a particular lawsuit that will eventually lead up to the appeal.

Task 3

Re-order the Facts of the case brief below in the right chronological sequence.

[K22]

Britton v Turner Case Brief

Plaintiff: Britton (worker)

Defendant: Turner

Facts:

- *Britton sued for the work he had done, and the jury awarded him \$95.*
- *But plaintiff, having no good cause, left that service without defendant's consent.*
- *Plaintiff contracted defendant to work one year, from March 1831 to March 1832, for the payment of \$120.*
- *But no evidence offered of any damage arising from the plaintiff's departure.*

Task 4

Re-order the Facts of the case brief below in the right chronological sequence.

[K09]

Summary of Bailey v. State of Alabama

Parties:

Plaintiff: Bailey

Defendant: State of Alabama

Facts:

- *The Supreme Court confirmed the judgment.*
- *Riverside paid \$15 as a consideration.*

- *Bailey sued.*
- *Bailey ceased the work without just cause after working through January and three or four days of February and refused to refund the money.*
- *Plaintiff contracted The Riverside Co. (Riverside in brief) to be farm hand from Dec. 30, 1907 to Dec. 30, 1908 for the sum of \$12.00 per month.*
- *The Montgomery City Court found the accused guilty under the statute, fixed the damages sustained by Riverside at \$15 and assessed a fine of \$30.*

The above are just some examples of how case briefs or parts of them can be manipulated in order to create challenging tasks for students. Nevertheless, the advantage of using such authentic materials lies in the possibility to experiment other ways of analysing and interpreting the texts, i.e. tasks can be derived from the combination of genre-based and corpus-based text analysis. This results in a new approach which is

- 1) learner-focused
- 2) data-driven
- 3) tailor-made
- 4) discovery-oriented.

The approach is learner-focused and tailor-made in that it implies the creation of tasks which are calibrated to the type of students in class, to their level and their specific knowledge of the content matter. To make materials more interesting and more effective for L2 law students it would be desirable to “introduce more creative rhetorical devices. These might include writing samples, examples, exercises, diagrams, figures, charts, illustrations, or tables” (Candlin *et al.* 2002: 306) where students are required to fill in missing information that can be gleaned from skimming and from an intensive reading of the materials. Additionally, corpora and corpus analysis techniques based on data can be exploited in an L2 classroom to draw students’ attention to real examples of language use and “foster discovery learning by autonomous exploration and principled analysis of authentic evidence” (Pinna 2006: 57).

The data-driven procedure can certainly be based on the students’ investigation of concordance lines which would “enhance their knowledge of English and awareness of the complex interplay between words and their co-texts” (Pinna 2006: 58). Being a bottom-up approach, it is more inductive. Flowerdew (2005: 324) explains the criticism against this type of “somewhat atomized” investigation which could be seen as being at odds with the top-down process based on the genre approach to text analysis which the students would undertake through the exploration of whole texts and their generic features. It is strongly believed that the

integration of the two approaches, genre-based and corpus-based, will promote students' autonomy by putting them at the centre of the learning process and simultaneously raising both their linguistic and legal content awareness.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 31) state that “[w]ith the advent of computer-based corpora and the development of the ideas of genre analysis, it is possible to relate the quantitative data that emerge from computer analysis, especially from the use of concordancing programs [...] to discoursal features of text.” Thus the novel approach for ESP students can be the integration of genre analysis and corpus analysis to the analysis of texts: ‘novel’ in the sense that we can get students themselves to conduct such (guided) analysis on the available material. This does not mean simply giving students direct access to the data produced by the computer, but the aim is to make the students become “research workers”, adept at categorizing occurrences, identifying regularities and making generalizations from them (Gavioli 1997: 33-34).

Case brief generic moves

Looking at the organizational structure of a case brief, students can discover that there are some fundamental elements which are common to all briefs, namely:

1. **CASE NAME:** names of the parties that are suing each other, name of the court rendering the opinion, the year in which the decision was rendered;
2. **FACTS:** circumstances which occurred between the parties;
3. **ISSUE:** the legal question to be answered by the court;
4. **DECISION:** what was decided by the court.

The basic structure has been labelled as IRAC, as seen earlier in this paper, from the initials of its main sections, which correspond to the following:

1. **ISSUE:** accounts for the legal problem presented by the facts of the case;
2. **RULE:** represents the applicable law to the particular case;
3. **APPLICATION:** regards the court analysis and rationale;
4. **CONCLUSION:** expresses the outcome of the case.

The IRAC method is a widely recognized approach to legal analysis in many contexts, both academic and professional. Since there are many

variations to this method, L2 students can be invited to discover the occurrences and frequencies of the various moves in the Kcorpus.

The following is the layout of a case brief where the various moves are set out over several paragraphs, so that their identification and classification is made easier and more straightforward.

[K04]

Agricultural Insurance Co v Constantine Case Brief

Parties:

Plaintiff: *Agricultural Insurance Co.*

Defendant: *Constantine*

Facts: *On May 7, 1942, at about 11:45 a.m., Mrs. Joseph Bova, Jr., parked her car at defendant's parking lot, under the custody of defendant and received a ticket, which exempts defendant's liability for loss or damage of cars, while Mrs. Bova denied she read the same or ever agreed to the terms printed on the ticket. At about 3 p.m. Mrs. Bova's demanding the return of car was refused and on May 10, the car was delivered to the owner in a damaged condition. Plaintiff compensated Mrs. Bova \$154.69 under the contract of insurance and sued defendant.*

Issue: *Was the printed matter on the ticket a part of the contract of bailment?*

Reasoning: *The court states that lacking the assent of bailor to the conditions printed on the ticket before delivering her car to the bailee, it cannot be a part of the contract of bailment. And bailor only considered the ticket as a token or receipt ostensibly for later identification of the bailed property, which cannot constitute a part of the contract.*

Holding: *Judgment is for plaintiff.*

Scanning several examples of case briefs in the corpus can help students to highlight recurring patterns, which can thus show regularities in the distribution of information and also in the use of certain rhetorical structuring. Flowerdew (2005: 325) underlines that many “corpus linguists have designed tagging systems for coding the generic ‘move structures’ of the ESP texts under investigation.” Luckily, case briefs in the Kcorpus already include tags indicating the move structure, as shown in Table 3. Therefore, identification of the various parts in the case briefs is quite straightforward and can be done manually or even through Wordsmith Tools, by calculating the frequency of a certain label in the corpus. The computed analysis needs to be followed by and integrated with an

intensive reading of the texts, since the move tags are often abbreviated or bear a slightly different denomination from case brief to case brief. For example Facts can also be called Relevant Facts; Procedure can also be denominated Procedural History or even Procedural Setting; Application can sometimes acquire different names such as Court Rationale or Reasoning. Some other moves may be present but they are not introduced by any tag at all, such as Date of the Case, Citation and Court. Students are both personally and actively engaged in both the computed investigation and the manual tagging and both procedures represent moments in the discovery process. Even if the concordance lines of the item “Reasoning” in Table 3 show the presence of just nine occurrences, a more detailed investigation of the case briefs will show that the same generic move is often introduced by tags such as Application or Court Rationale.

N	Concordance
1	g for a hearing on the merits. Reasoning: Although the gener
2	/patents it accepted from him. Reasoning: If parties manife
3	itute a contract in this case? Reasoning: There was no forma
4	t is needed for consideration. Reasoning: The covenants were
5	formance can be an acceptance? Reasoning: The court reckons
6	\$95 for the work he had done? Reasoning: To the service tha
7	e under the statute of frauds? Reasoning: The statute of Fra
8	of a debt, is constitutional? Reasoning: The Thirteenth Ame
9	t of the contract of bailment? Reasoning: The court states t

Table 3. Concordance lines of the move ‘Reasoning’

Table 4 shows how students can summarize the occurrences and frequencies of the various moves at the end of the investigation. As underlined by Flowerdew (2005: 326), move structures “should not be seen as a rigid set of labels for coding text but instead should accept variations of the prototypical move structure patterning of a genre.” Iedema (1993: 87) adds that “EAP programs, in order to deal adequately with the language requirements of a particular ‘discourse community’ (cf. Swales 1990), should be sensitive to the rhetorical conventions prevalent in such discourse.” Therefore, guiding the students through the linguistic analysis and deconstruction of a certain genre and its conventions is a first step in the process towards helping them to deal with a particular discourse and to become aware of its organizational structure, norms and conventions (Iedema 1993: 88). Moreover, it also makes students aware of

the possible variations or slight deviations from the fixed pattern, which actually occur and must be taken into consideration.

Moves in the case briefs	Frequency	%
Date of the Case	39	78%
Citation	12	24%
Court	34	68%
Avoidance of the K	3	6%
(Relevant) Facts	49	98%
(Legal) Issue(S)	49	98%
(Court's) Holding	45	90%
Procedure/Procedural History/Procedural Setting	35	70%
Law or Rule(S)	32	64%
Court Rationale/Reasoning/Application	46	92%
Plaintiff's Argument	24	48%
Defendant's Argument	23	46%
Outcome/Conclusion	4	8%
Plaintiff/Appellant	7	14%
Defendant/Appellee	7	14%
Dissent	3	6%
Concurrence	1	2%

Table 4. Moves occurrences and frequencies in the Kcorpus

As ascertained by Flowerdew (2005: 327), the identification of the several moves and the tagging would be impossible to carry out on large-scale corpora. In fact, it requires intensive reading and close scrutiny of each text, and since this can be very time-consuming only small specialized corpora should be considered for pedagogical purposes within an ESP module. For a pedagogy of discovery to be efficient and productive, the objectives must be clear and confusion or lengthy and complex procedures should be avoided.

An example of the variety that can characterize moves in case briefs is given by the use of the subordinating conjunction 'whether' to introduce an indirect question in the Issue(s) or Legal Issue(s) category, which is

present in 98% of texts. The corpus analysis will reveal that thirty case briefs out of fifty in the corpus utilize ‘whether’ with some variations, as shown by the concordance lines in Table 5.

N	Concordance
1	nd for \$93,000. Legal Issue(s): Whether Df was entitled to r
2	graph 5 of the contract. Issue: Whether the court can excuse
3	Pl’s property. Legal Issue(s): Whether the tr ct erred in r
4	e judgment. Bailey sued. Issue: Whether a statute of punishi
5	Bain Fan Club. Legal Issue(s): Whether the store owners wer
6	5 U.S. dollars. Legal Issue(s): Whether the consideration wa
7	Cox for the same model. Issue: Whether a valid contract ex
8	ng the assault. Legal Issue(s): Whether a federal prisoner
9	he 5 yr period. Legal Issue(s): Whether the Owners and Villa
10	he damages of \$1,387.80. Issue: Whether the plaintiff can re
11	as \$18500 more. Legal Issue(s): Whether there was a contract
12	pl’s behavior. Legal Issue(s): Whether faithfully and conti
13	he jury awarded him \$95. Issue: Whether the plaintiff, party
14	heir agreement. Legal Issue(s): Whether BK was entitled to h
15	refused to pay. Legal Issue(s): Whether a contract had been
16	up for the Pl. Legal Issue(s): Whether the Df’s actions can
17	iled an action. Legal Issue(s): Whether there was a memorand
18	and defendant appealed. Issue: Whether plaintiff’s performa
19	inated in June. Legal Issue(s): Whether time was of the esse
20	re Centex could cash it. Issue: Whether equitable remedy of
21	r- Acceptance- F: (SEE BOOK) I: whether a property owner’s p
22	of encumbrance. Legal Issue(s): Whether the Pls can unreason
23	from eating solid food. Issue: Whether a specialized or spe
24	eviously known. Legal Issue(s): Whether the verbal settlemen
25	fused to fill the order. Issue: Whether the part performance
26	nwide shortage. Legal Issue(s): Whether failure to include s
27	terminated the meeting. Issue: Whether the parties had ente
28	g specific performance. Issues: Whether a valid K to sell wa
29	ent to rescind. Legal Issue(s): Whether Buyers of property u
30	sed, Appellant appealed. Issue: Whether the unique, sentimen

Table 5. Concordance lines for ‘whether’ in the Kcorpus

From a closer reading and qualitative analysis of the case briefs in the corpus, students can deduce that ‘whether’ can introduce different types of questions followed by different types of answers.

Let us consider the following excerpt from [K12]:

Legal Issue(s): *Whether the consideration was legally adequate to constitute a legally binding contract?*

Court's Holding: *Yes* [K12]

‘Whether’ introduces a yes/no question in the example just given as in the majority of cases, and the Court’s Holding is simply signalled by the answer *yes* or *no*. In other cases such as in [K21] below, the Legal Issue(s) category is introduced by ‘whether’, implying doubt or choice between two alternatives. The answer is of course provided by the immediately subsequent Court’s Holding.

Legal Issue(s): *Whether “faithfully and continuously” was a condition precedent or a promise for the payment of \$20,000?*

Court's Holding: *Promise* [K21]

Some other times the Legal Issues are made up of two indirect questions introduced by ‘whether’ and the Court’s Holding that follows provides answers for both questions as in [K23]:

Legal issue(s): *Whether BK was entitled to have the condition protecting its promise strictly enforced; Whether giving strict effect to the termination provision which would involve divesting the Family Dining of territorial exclusivity would amount to a forfeiture?*

Court's Holding: *No, Yes.* [K23]

Some other case briefs employ direct yes/no questions in the Issue category, without having recourse to the conjunction ‘whether’, as in [K44]:

Issue: *1. Can the plaintiffs recover for their professional services that they rendered to the deceased? 2. Was the trial court correct in instructing the jury that it can consider the finances of the deceased in order to determine the compensation of the plaintiffs?*

Holding: *1. Yes 2. No.* [K44]

The close textual investigation of case briefs confirms what Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 31) stated, i.e. “[a]nalysis of spoken and written texts, especially under the influence of Swales’ *Genre Analysis* (1990), has assumed an important position in ESP.” The authors themselves consider genre analysis an “extremely useful tool of analysis that is of relevance to EAP, Business English and the other smaller branches of ESP such as Legal English” (1998: 31). Similarly Robinson (1991: 27) stated that “[g]enre analysis is an exciting and fruitful development within ESP. It

exemplifies the current importance of content, particularly the social and institutional aspects of that content.”

Conventional abbreviations

A simple frequency list obtained through Wordsmith Tools will show the presence of several abbreviations and symbols which indicate that the case briefs’ authors in the <www.4lawschool.com> online bank performed a rhetorical task organizing and shaping the knowledge to suit various purposes and conventions of the specific discourse (Sullivan *et al.* 2007: 108). As Candlin *et al.* (2002: 309-310) have highlighted: “in order to function effectively within their own legal discourse community, they need to understand and master not only its discourses but also the conventions and socio-legal practices that shape it.”

Students in the ESP classroom can be engaged in the identification, decoding and interpretation of the several abbreviations, for example of function words and expressions of time, and they will find out that certain abbreviations of words can assume a different grammatical function in the sentence. An example can be the use of ‘amount’ used as a verb or as a noun as seen in the following excerpts:

Court Rationale: [...] *The mistake did not **amt** to negligence preventing equitable relief (...)* [K01]

Relevant Facts: *Pl. 1st invited bids to construct a music, educational and recreation bldgs. The bids were to be accompanied by a bid bond in the **amt** of 5% of the bid.* [K01]

Similarly, the abbreviation “w/d” indicates both ‘withdraw’ as a verb and ‘withdrawal’ as a noun.

Plaintiff’s Argument: *Rescission is improper b/c by written agreement Df agreed not to **w/d** the bid for a period of 35 days after the bids were opened and the language forbid **w/d** based on negligence.* [K01]

The suffix *-ed* for the past participle can even be added to the abbreviation K to mean ‘contracted’.

Defendant’s Argument: *Df and representative **Ked** under MM that the boundary was located other than where it was.* [K08]

Students can be also engaged in the search for the most frequent abbreviations and in their distinction between those standing for function words and those related to content words. As a matter of fact, a number of function words are often abbreviated in the case briefs. The following list shows those most frequently used:

fr	from
w/	with
w/i	within
w/o	without
b/c	because
btwn	between

Other abbreviations are used for expressions of time, as shown by the following list:

hrs	hours
mos	months
yrs	years
morn	morning

Content words are of course specific terms belonging to the general legal field or to the specific context of contract law. The various names for the several types of court can be abbreviated:

Ct-cts	Court-Courts
Ct of App- Ct of Appeals-App Ct	Court of Appeal
C. Law	Court of Law
Circuit Ct	Circuit Court
D. Ct.	District Court
S. Ct - Sup. Ct	Supreme Court
Tr Ct	Trial Court

Consider the following example:

Procedure: *Pl* filed action for breach, **trial ct** found for *pl* and against *df* (\$14000); **App Ct** affirmed. Affirmed with costs. [K29]

Words referring to quantities and measurements can also be abbreviated and may be easily identified by L2 students, such as *yds* standing for ‘yards’, *ft* meaning ‘feet’ and *K* meaning ‘thousand’ in the following example:

Relevant Facts: *Df Walker purchased 9.1 acres for \$140K, then listed it w/ a realtor stating that [...] and requested \$245K. [...] The subsequent listing stated “minimum 80K cubic yds of gravel,” 580 ft of Hwy frontage, and 2.6 acres had been zoned for commercial use. The price was increased to \$470K [...] [K45]*

Specific legal terms can be also abbreviated and several acronyms and initialisms can be used for content words which are often repeated in the case briefs. Some of the recurrent contract terminology is abbreviated as follows:

K	contract
MM	mutual mistake
PER	Parole Evidence Rule
PO	Purchase Order
prom/estp	Promissory Estoppel
TPB	Third Party Beneficiary
TRO	Temporary Restraining Order
UCC	Uniform Commercial Code
S/F	Statute of Frauds
judicial hx	judicial history

Consider the following examples:

Court Rationale: *[...] “PER may be admitted to show by reason of MM the parties’ intent was not expressed in K. PER can be used to show true intent. [K08]*

Law or Rule(s): *TPB have enforceable rights under Ks made for their benefit. The person who procures the promise (Pee) has no legal right to release or discharge the person who made the promise (Pr), from his liability to the beneficiary b/c the rights of the TPB vest immediately upon execution of the K. [K17]*

The names of the several participants in the trial can also be abbreviated, as in *D-Df* for *Defendant* and *P-Pl* for *Plaintiff*. Additionally, participants can take on a different role according to the type of contract entered into. Therefore, as seen in the excerpt from [K17] above, *Pee* can stand for *promisee* and *Pr* can be used to abbreviate *promisor* in a promise agreement.

The instances shown above are just some examples of how frequent abbreviations and acronyms are in case briefs and this therefore justifies the need to make students aware of their presence and utilization in this particular genre. Iedema points out that consciousness-raising of highly

specific discourse conventions “is of course inseparable from the content these conventions apply to.” In this way, students “are given the opportunity to ‘look behind the scenes’ of the discourse in which they are expected to become experts – not in an ‘English language’ environment that ignores discipline specific conventions and content, but within the context of their own discipline” (1993: 110).

Corpus analysis and lexical variety

As is widely known, corpus analysis very often provides unexpected outcomes, i.e. results and answers which were not actually looked for. Confirming and contrasting hypotheses is part of the students’ research process. So, for example, the qualitative analysis of case briefs can reveal the presence of certain lexical patterns that are not so common in the frequency list.

Students will discover that, according to the type of contract mentioned in the case brief, the contracting parties acquire different names: if the case brief deals with an *obligation* the contracting parties will be *obligee* and *obligor*; in the case of a *purchase agreement*, *vendee* and *vendor* can be found, along with *buyer* and *seller*; a franchise agreement will be signed between a *franchisee* and a *franchisor* and a contract of bailment between a *bailee* and a *bailor*, as shown in Table 6.

Contracting parties in different types of contracts or agreements	
Bid	bidder
Obligation	obligee
	obligor
purchase agreement	vendee/buyer/customer/purchaser
	vendor/seller
contract of bailment	bailee
	bailor
Offer	offeror
	offered/offeree
option contract	optionor
Promise	promissee
	promisor
franchise agreement	franchisee
	franchisor
lease/sublease agreement	lessor
	lessee

Table 6. Contracting parties in different types of contracts or agreements

According to Candlin *et al.* (2002: 306) it is very important “not to violate the integrity of the written legal genre being taught by, for example, misrepresenting or oversimplifying it.” So the magic words should be *elaborate* and *expand* not *reduce* or *oversimplify* if the aim is to allow students to become aware of the variety of terms utilized in the texts. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis can thus provide vocabulary expansion, both through lexical cohesion devices such as repetition, reiteration and synonyms, given by the relative frequency of certain items, and through lexical variety resulting in a more articulated knowledge of the specific terminology in contract case briefs.

A quantitative and statistical analysis can reveal the occurrence of repeated utterances or chunks that provide a source of opportunities to observe and analyse. Keywords and key-phrases can then be sorted into categories, making the resulting information relevant to the specific ESP learning context. Thurstun and Candlin (1998: 269) underline that “by drawing students’ attention to collocates of the key word, concordance-based study has considerable potential for expanding student vocabulary while dealing in detail with selected items.” Long lists of corpus findings are not necessarily useful for ESP students, and large corpora or long texts can often discourage them. As underlined earlier, in order to counterbalance the complexity of the passages, it is advisable to work on smaller corpora.

Some tasks may only require recognition of superficial regularities, therefore students can be engaged in a search for collocational patterns. Concordance lines usually display a list of occurrences of a word or phrase in a given corpus including its surrounding co-text. As Gavioli (1997: 90) explains, engaging the students in the analysis of a concordance list implies a three-stage reading process: (a) the concordance as a list; (b) a closer reading of particular lines from the list; and (c) a reading of some texts containing the examples. The results of the concordance analysis will reveal some of the most frequent uses of the word *contract* and its various collocates in the specialized professional legal community, such as *bilateral contract*, *enforceable contract*, *oral contract*, or *void contract*, and *avoidance of the contract*, *enforcement of the contract* or *termination of the contract* as summarized in Table 7.

Concordance-based materials certainly offer students a rich experience of language and specific discourse. Students are presented with the “opportunity to condense and intensify the process of learning through exposure to multiple examples of the same vocabulary item in context, and to promote awareness of collocational relationships” (Thurstun / Candlin 1998: 270). In other words, corpus analyses allow and encourage students “to become sensitive to the patterns of language frequently surrounding

the key word” (*ibid.*: 273) and keywords can surely become the link between genre-based and corpus-based analyses as proposed by Mike Scott in the XIX Seminário Nacional de Inglês Instrumental, in Sao Paolo, Brazil, in 2005.

‘Contract’ and its collocations	
bilateral	contract
binding	
collateral	
enforceable	
implied	
oral	
parole	
unformalized	
valid	
verbal	
void	
acceptance	
acknowledgement	
avoidance	
consideration	
duration	
enforcement	
execution	
formation	
performance	
rescission	
termination	

Table 7. The keyword ‘contract’ and its collocations in the case briefs

The outcomes of corpus analysis do not merely mark a point of arrival in determining the distribution of specific lexical and grammatical features within and across texts but they can be further utilized by instructors and ESP practitioners for the creation of matching, gap-filling and problem-solving tasks to consolidate the understanding, acquisition and use of new lexical items.

Conclusions

The present study has aimed to show how American online student case briefs can be employed in English for Legal Purposes classes at university and in language centre environments. Case briefs can be used as

authentic materials through which L2 students can acquire the necessary specific language skills and have the opportunity to compare different legal systems and practices. Exploring the various branches of law can help students gain an understanding of legal cases as well as master the appropriate generic behaviours and discursive and rhetorical conventions of the legal community.

Technology certainly facilitates the archiving and analysis of data, but it can also help ESP practitioners and instructors in the relatively easy creation of tailor-made materials and tasks. In an ESP classroom, instructors should bear in mind that the goal of tasks is not just to serve as vehicles for developing linguistic and communicative competences but they should also aim to equip students with problem-solving skills, such as the ability to edit, classify and interpret data and even formulate and verify hypotheses. In this way, students can be involved in a discovery process and their learning can be both inductive and deductive. Both genre analysis and corpus analysis can be utilized in any linguistic investigation and the creation of tasks so that the integration of top-down and bottom-up exploration of texts can help raise students' rhetorical and lexicogrammatical consciousness and increase their awareness of how texts accomplish what they aim to do.

The use of both genre-based and corpus-based approaches allows students to explore text and context even in small specialized corpora and, as Gavioli (1997: 97) underlines, "in so doing to build their own mental constructs about how language works." In this way, students are exposed to real language and its use in its own community, and this facilitates the acquisition of a metacognitive awareness that learners can carry with them into their target professional community.

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