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USING THE MOTHER TONGUE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING SPECIALIZED TERMINOLOGY – A CASE OF BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSES AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL

Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of the attitudes of non-native English-speaking students of business and economics towards the use of Slovene as the mother tongue in the acquisition of specialized business and economics related terms in English. The research questions posed in this paper address the students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness and necessity of the teachers' use of Slovene to explain specialized terms in English and their use of Slovene when learning specialized terms. The present study was quantitative, with data being gathered via a questionnaire. 174 students of economics and business participated in the survey. The results of our analysis are of value to Business English teachers and as they suggest ways in which students' mother tongue may be used in teaching and learning of specialized terminology in English.

Keywords: Business English, specialized terminology teaching, specialized terminology learning, use of mother tongue, Slovene.

1. Introduction

English language as a foreign language (EFL) is taught to and learned by learners whose mother tongue is not English. This holds true for both English for general purposes and English for specific purposes. Since the learners bring the knowledge of their mother tongue into the English language classroom, scholars have addressed the role which students' mother tongue plays in the process of teaching and learning EFL for different purposes in different contexts, at different levels of learners' English language proficiency by adopting different approaches, including translation (e.g., Atkinson, 1987; Cook, 2010; Malmkjær, 1998).

English for specific purposes (ESP) can be broadly divided into English for academic purposes and English for occupational purposes (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 6). No matter which professional field or purpose we focus on, we can argue that ESP comprises specialized language and content (Räsänen & Fortanet, 2008) and that specialized terminology should be one of the components of English for specific purposes courses. This also holds true for English courses in the field of economics and business; i.e., Business English courses. In tertiary-level Business English courses, students are generally required to master business and economics related terms in English. These terms usually denote more or less specific concepts which students learn about in their other economics or business courses in their mother tongue. To integrate students' knowledge of specific field-related concepts, thus connecting it with the topics covered in Business English lectures, and to facilitate their learning of specialized terms in English, teachers can use students' mother tongue in the process of teaching and learning specialized terms in Business English courses delivered to non-native speakers of English.

The overall aim of this paper is to report on the research which was carried out to determine the perceptions and the attitudes of a group of Slovene economics and business students regarding the use of their mother tongue (i.e., Slovene) in the process of teaching and learning specialized business and economics related terms in English¹. More specifically, the paper focuses on the results of the analysis of the students' views (a) regarding the teacher's use of Slovene in the process of teaching (e.g. presenting, explaining) specialized terms in English, and (b) regarding the students' own use of Slovene when dealing with economics and business terminology in English.

The remaining part of the paper proceeds as follows. The first section delivers a brief presentation of the theoretical framework for our study. The second section presents the study design and study implementation. This section is followed by the presentation and the discussion of the results obtained via a quantitative study. The final section draws together major findings of our study and includes the implications of the results obtained for teaching practice as well as some suggestions for further research.

1 The work presented in this paper is a section of a more extensive study of the students' perceptions regarding the use of Slovene as their mother tongue in Business English courses (a part of the study was described in Gajšt, 2017).

2. Theoretical framework

To date, the importance and the benefits of using the students' mother tongue in EFL teaching and learning have been explored by a substantial number of studies from different aspects, in different settings and at different levels of students' language proficiency, (e.g. Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Burden, 2000; Cook, 2001; Carrió-Pastor & Vallés, 2015; Cianflone, 2009; Debrelj & Oyman 2015; Dujmović, 2007; He, 2012; Kelleher, 2013; Kovačić & Kirinić, 2011; Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Mežek, 2013; Nation, 2003; Peters & Fernández, 2013; Poljaković, 2016; Schweers 1999; Tang 2002; Tuyen & Van, 2019). The context of ESP has also been addressed in a number of studies. For example, Fakharzadeh and Rasekh (2009) deliberated on a number of facts supporting the inclusion of the students' mother tongue in ESP instruction (e.g. code-switching as a communication strategy, the benefits of mother tongue as a consciousness-raising device, the benefits of using the students' mother tongue in mixed-level classes, etc.). Researching the role of the mother tongue in studying ESP, Kavaliauskienė (2009) found that learners in general need the mother tongue as a support in English classes with the observation that the extent of this support depends on their proficiency in English. The study by Taylor (2014) suggests that the use of the mother tongue in small talk and humour contributes to relationship building among students in the class. Laviosa and Cleverton (2015) advocate a translation-based approach for learning ESP vocabulary and grammar via real-life mediating of communicative activities. Xhemaili (2016) established that although it is important to expose students to as much L2 as possible in class, the use of the students' mother tongue for English language instruction should be used to focus on similarities and differences between the L1 and the L2.

The use of Slovene as mother tongue in the process of teaching and learning foreign languages has also been researched by Slovene scholars both in the context of foreign languages for general purposes as well as for specific purposes (e.g., Gajšt, 2017; Grosman, 2001, 2008; Holc, 2010; Koletnik, 2012a; Koletnik, 2012b; Plos & Puklavec, 2015; Sešek, 2009; Skela, 1994, 2010; Stare Pušavec, 2013).

The main findings from the research into the use of students' mother tongue in EFL classes are the following. Atkinson (1987) writes that the mother tongue can be used to elicit language, to give instructions, to check comprehension and to test students' L2 knowledge. Similarly, Cook (2011) advocates a deliberate and systematic use of the students' mother tongue in the classroom as a means for giving explanations and instructions (in order to save time or make them more efficient), to prepare the students for future real-life code switching situations, and to create a link between the students' knowledge of different language-related concepts in their mother tongue and in L2. Deller and Rinvulucrí (2002, p. 10) find that students can exploit their knowledge of their mother tongue to help them learn English. In addition, they establish that by juxtaposing their students' mother tongue and L2, teachers may develop their students' linguistic awareness of different aspects of both languages (ibid.).

As regards vocabulary teaching and learning, Carter (1987), for one, sees the presentation of the mother tongue equivalents of L2 words as useful for memorizing new vocabulary items. Also, by incorporating students' mother tongue into the teaching and learning of a foreign language, the students can more easily integrate their knowledge of the world and their experiences with what they learn in an English language course (Auerbach, 1993). We can

argue that this applies not only to general English courses but also to ESP courses, as in the latter the students connect the input (information) they receive in these courses with their knowledge of a specialized field of study.

2.1. Specialized vocabulary – definition, teaching and learning

In any language, we distinguish between general language and special or specialized language, and lexical items of a language can have different degrees of specialization (Cabré & Sager, 1999, p. 73). Specialized language is “characterized by [...] subject field, type of interlocutors, situation, speakers’ intentions, the context in which a communicative exchange occurs, the type of exchange, etc.” (Cabré & Sager, 1999, p. 59) Terminology, as part of a specialized language “is used [by experts in a specific subject field] to designate concepts pertaining to special disciplines and activities” (Cabré & Sager, 1999, p. 81, p. 114). Similarly, Nation (2001) defines specialized terms as those words and phrases which are “recognisably specific to a particular topic, field or discipline” (Nation, 2001, p. 198). Although they may have different degrees of specificity, they all denote some specific concepts belonging to a specific professional or scientific field (Chung & Nation, 2004). Regarding their frequency of occurrence or usage, they may have low frequency in general language, but they are highly frequent in specialized discourse (i.e., discourse of a specific field) (Nation 2001; Nation & Hwang, 1995; Chung & Nation, 2004).

Specialized vocabulary is important in ESP (Coxhead, 2018) and as such also in tertiary-level ESP courses where students are required to learn (among other things) a substantial number of specialized terms related to their professional or scientific field of study. In her work on quantitative and qualitative perspectives of vocabulary and ESP research, Coxhead (2018) raises awareness about teaching specialized vocabulary in the specific context by focusing on specialised lexis identification, specialised word lists and multi-word units research and places the importance of this research in different education contexts. Further, she explores effective ESP vocabulary teaching and learning and the integration of corpora or corpus-based resources into language teaching (i.e., curricula, materials design and testing). Similarly, Gavioli (2005) advocates students’ exploration and use of corpora in ESP vocabulary learning.

The presentation of new specialized terms within an ESP course may be done in different ways (e.g., Bhooth, Azman & Ismail, 2014; Gavioli, 2005; Koletnik, 2012a, Koletnik 2012b; Laviosa & Cleverton, 2015; Tuyen & Van, 2019). This depends both on students’ proficiency in English and on the purpose of the course. For example, by taking into account the appropriate level of students’ English language command, the teacher may adopt a monolingual approach and explain these terms in English only (e.g., provide only English definitions) and may encourage students to use monolingual specialized and general dictionaries rather than bilingual ones. However, by adopting a bilingual approach, the teacher could give mother tongue equivalents of English specialized terms, she may provide definitions of terms either in mother tongue or in both the mother tongue and English, and she may encourage students to use bilingual specialized dictionaries when they encounter new terminology in English (e.g., when studying, reading professional texts), etc. Thus, the students may derive the opportunity to connect the information they receive in an ESP course with the information they receive in their other courses.

Since the acquisition of new knowledge is always based on the existing knowledge one possesses, we may argue that a direct link should be made between the knowledge students have of the concepts (and the related specialized terms) pertaining to their selected professional or scientific discipline (as learned in their mother tongue within their study-field courses) and the same concepts (and the related specialized terms) learned within their ESP courses. Students should thus know the equivalents of lexical items (specialized terms) in both L2 and in their mother tongue.

To conclude, the inclusion of the mother tongue may be a good, effective and efficient tool for explaining the differences in language structures between the students' mother tongue and English (as L2), and it may be used to highlight sociolinguistic elements and culture-related concepts, etc. Also, the use of the students' mother tongue for teaching and learning specialized terms may prove especially beneficial due to the fact that students may relate their existing knowledge of their selected field of study with specialized terminology they are expected to master within their ESP courses.

Based on these theoretical foundations, the research presented here focused on the use of Slovene as students' mother tongue within Business English courses with the emphasis on its use for teaching and learning specialized terms. The study's aims were to address the following research questions:

Research question 1: *What is the students' attitude towards the teacher's use of Slovene to explain specialized economics and business terms in class?*

Research question 2: *In which circumstances do students use Slovene when they are learning specialized economics and business terms in English?*

3. Method

3.1. Study participants

The participants in our study were 174 students of undergraduate (Bologna 1st cycle) study programmes 'Economics and Business' (university programme – BUN) and 'Business Administration' (higher professional education programme – BVS) at the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Maribor. In the academic year 2015/2016, when this study was conducted, they were enrolled in the 1st, the 2nd or the 3rd year of their studies, respectively. The number of students per group was the following: BUN1 – 31 students, BUN2 – 24 students, BUN3 – 14 students, BVS1 – 31 students, BVS2 – 31 students, and BVS3 – 43 students. 111 students were female and 63 students were male (the students' average age was 21.05 years). All students taking part in the survey took Business English courses as their selected foreign business language courses. On average, students in BUN classes had a higher level of English language proficiency than students in BVS classes. All students in BUN classes had passed the secondary school general 'Matura' examination (at CEFR B2 level)

while BVS students had passed the secondary school vocational 'Matura' examination in English (at CEFR B1 level)². It has to be pointed out that our groups were mixed-ability groups.

3.2. Data collection

We collected the data for our study via a questionnaire based on the existing questionnaires on the use of students' mother tongue in foreign language teaching and learning (Liao, 2006; Al Sharaeai, 2012; Calis & Dikilitas, 2012; Mutlu, Bayram, & Demirbüken, 2015). We had to adapt these questionnaires for our study so that we focused on Business English and not on general English. Due to our research goals, we also added questions related to specialized terminology teaching and learning in line with various aspects of vocabulary teaching and learning.

The students were asked to provide their opinions regarding the use of their mother tongue (i.e., Slovene) in the process of teaching and learning specialized economics and business terms in English. Apart from that, they were asked to give their opinions on their overall attitude towards the use of their mother tongue within their Business English course.

The number of statements in the entire questionnaire focusing on specialized terminology was 27. For attitude statements, a 5-point Likert scale was used (5 = *totally agree*; 4 = *agree*; 3 = *partially agree*; 2 = *disagree*; 1 = *totally disagree*). In addition, they also had to state their perceived level of Business English knowledge (on a scale from 1 to 5: 1 = *very bad*; 5 = *excellent*). Age and gender were the only demographic questions.

We administered the questionnaire in the summer semester of the academic year 2015/2016 (end of May 2016 /beginning of June 2016).

The statistical analysis was performed by using SPSS software (version 24). The internal consistency of the questionnaire (the selected 33 items from the entire questionnaire) was calculated by using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The questionnaire was reliable since the Cronbach's Alpha was .688. Also, a set of ANOVA tests were run in order to establish the potential presence of any statistically significant differences in the responses among the six groups of students answering the questionnaire; i.e., BUN1, BUN2, BUN3, BVS1, BVS2, BVS3. To find possible correlations between the statements, two-tailed correlation analyses were performed (i.e., Pearson product-moment coefficient).

As regards ANOVA tests, statistically significant differences were established ($p < .05$) only with some statements. That is why we present the results for these statements per six groups.

2 Study materials for Business English courses are selected based on students' required level of English language knowledge and their difficulty progresses with the year of study. In the year when this study was performed, CEFR B2 level Business English textbooks were used in BUN1 and BUN2 courses; the BUN3 course was based around a C1 level textbook; the BVS1 course was based on a B1 level textbook; and BVS2 on a B2 level textbook.

4. Results and discussion

The results and discussion of our statistical analysis of the student's attitudes towards the use of Slovene (as the students' mother tongue) in the process of teaching specialized Business English terms and in the process of learning these terms are divided into two parts, corresponding to the two research questions mentioned above.

4.1. Research question 1

With the first research question we aimed to determine *the contexts in which students would see fit that the teacher uses Slovene for teaching English language business and economics related terms* (i.e. presenting new terms, explaining the terms, etc.). For this, the students had to appraise the degree of their agreement with 10 statements (see the Appendix for the list of statements from the questionnaire):

- students' need for knowing Slovene-English equivalents for specific (more or less) idiomatic expressions and set phrases (S5) (e.g., 'Yours sincerely' – 'S spoštovanjem'; 'Make yourself at home' – 'Počitite se kot doma'; 'level playing field' – 'enaki pogoji'; 'to be in the red' – 'imeti finančno izgubo' / 'biti v minusu');
- students' perception regarding the teacher's use of Slovene in class (overall – different contexts; different purposes) and how this affects their learning of specialized terms in English (S15, S18);
- students' opportunity to connect the information (terminology) received in Business English classes with other courses (S7) (e.g., 'economies of scale'– 'ekonomija obsega'(macroeconomics); 'exchange rate' – 'menjalni tečaj' (international trade/banking); 'branding – 'znamčenje' (marketing); 'balance sheet' – 'bilanca stanja'(accounting));
- the explanation of specialized terms in English in particular with the focus on the ways and the languages in which the teacher should use Slovene:
 - explaining the terms in English only (S14);
 - always giving Slovene equivalents of English terms (S19),
 - giving only Slovene definitions (S20);
 - giving definitions in both languages (S21),
 - giving definitions in English only (S22), and
 - the perceived overall need for the use of Slovene in specialized terms instruction (S10).

Descriptive statistics for this set of statements are given below (Table 1).

Table 1Mean values and standard deviations for *Research question 1* statements.

	BUN_1 (n = 31)		BUN_2 (n = 24)		BUN_3 (n = 14)		BVS_1 (n = 31)		BVS_2 (n = 31)		BVS_3 (n = 43)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
S5: SLO* / ENG** idiomatic expressions	4.10	.831	4.08	.974	4.71	.611	4.39	.882	4.32	.748	4.49	.768
S7: SLO translations _ contents of other courses	3.97	.752	3.88	.992	4.57	.756	4.29	.864	4.19	.910	4.21	.861
S10: No use of SLO translations of specialized terms	2.42	1.177	2.75	1.113	2.00	.555	2.48	1.061	2.39	1.022	2.33	.993
S14: In class, unknown term, teacher should explain in ENG	3.45	.888	3.83	.963	4.29	.825	3.45	1.121	3.58	1.025	3.47	1.008
S15: Teacher's use of SLO in class interferes with learning terms in English	2.42	1.119	2.13	.850	1.79	.893	1.97	.795	1.90	.831	2.05	.925
S18: Teacher's use of ENG only - my knowledge of terms improve faster	3.16	.779	3.71	.955	2.36	.745	2.81	1.138	2.77	1.023	2.86	1.125
S19: Teacher should always give SLO equiv. terms in ENG	3.55	.888	3.21	.721	4.21	.893	3.84	1.036	3.94	.892	3.95	.925
S20: Teacher should give definitions of new terms in SLO only	2.45	.995	1.75	.897	2.07	.730	2.77	1.309	2.58	1.089	2.65	1.021
S21: Teacher should give definitions of new terms both in ENG and SLO	4.03	1.048	3.67	1.049	4.43	.646	4.23	.956	3.97	1.169	4.19	.982
S22: Teacher should give definitions of new terms in ENG only	2.65	.877	3.00	1.142	2.50	1.019	2.55	1.150	2.61	.989	2.28	.908

Note: * SLO stands for the Slovene language; ** ENG stands for the English language.

As Table 1 shows, all groups of students agreed that it is very important to *learn Slovene equivalents for specific (more or less) idiomatic expressions in English (S5)* as the overall mean

for all groups for this statement was 4.33 (SD = .828). In fact, this statement received the highest average score out of the statements related to this research question. Also, high overall average levels of agreement were reported for the statement that *the teacher should give definitions of new terms both in English and in Slovene* (S21: overall mean for all six groups = 4.07; SD = 1.020). Students also agreed that *if Slovene translations of English specialized terms are provided, they can connect this knowledge more easily with the contents of their other courses* (subjects) (S7: overall mean for all six groups = 4.16; SD = .872).

On the other hand, students, on average, disagreed that *Slovene translations of English specialized terms are not needed* (S10: total mean for all six groups = 2.41; SD = 1.037) and that *the teacher's use of Slovene in class would interfere with their learning of specialized terms in English* (S15: total mean for all six groups = 2.06; SD = .938). They would also tend to disagree that *the teacher should explain English terms in Slovene only* (S20: overall mean for all six groups = 2.45; SD = 1.089). Similarly, they would also *rather not get the explanation of specialized terms in English only* (S22: overall mean for all six groups = 2.57; SD = 1.106). However, these results show only the overall score without taking into account the differences between groups as established by the ANOVA tests. A more detailed analysis of between-groups differences is given below.

The post hoc ANOVA tests (Turkey HSD) for this set of statements revealed that students in all six groups had, overall, quite the same views as regards the teacher's use of Slovene for the explanation of specialized terms. That is, for statements S5, S7, S10, S14, S15, S21, S22 there were no statistically significant differences in the mean scores of their answers. Other statements - i.e., S19, S20 - showed statistically significant differences among the six groups of students.

For statement S19 (i.e., *During lessons, the Business English teacher should always give Slovene equivalents of specialized terms in English.*), there was a statistically significant difference between groups as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F [5, 168] = 3.481, p = .005$). A post hoc test (Turkey) revealed that these differences occurred between the BUN2 group and the BUN3, BVS3 and BVS2 groups. What this means is that the BUN2 students who took part in this survey agreed, on average, to a much lesser degree than BUN3, BVS2 and BVS3 students that the teacher should always give Slovene equivalents of specialized terms in English. The reason for this could be that in the 3rd year courses, the economics and business related terms are more specialized than in the 2nd year courses (i.e., concerning the BUN programme). However, although the post-hoc test revealed statistically significant differences, the actual effect size was small. Hence, we can conclude that the majority of the students are of the opinion that Slovene equivalents of specialized economics and business related terms should be provided in class.

Statement S20 (i.e., *During lessons, the Business English teacher should explain (give definitions of) new specialized terms in Slovene only.*) received the lowest agreement from the BUN2 group (mean = 1.75, SD = .897) and this was statistically significantly lower than the scores for two BVS groups - i.e., BVS1, BVS3 (one-way ANOVA test: $F [5, 168] = 3.488, p = .005$). Here we need to point out that for all BVS groups the mean score was 2.67; that is, the BVS students would also generally tend to disagree that only Slovene explanations should be given. Similar to statement S19, the effect size of these statistically significant differences was small.

Concerning students' degree of agreement or disagreement with the questionnaire statements pertaining to this research question in relation to their own perceived level of their English language knowledge (ranging from 'very bad' to 'excellent') we found no statistically significant differences (post hoc ANOVA tests [Turkey HSD] at 0.05 level) in their responses with the exception of statement 18 (S18: *If the BE teacher used only English in class, my knowledge of specialized terms would improve faster than if he/she also used Slovene.*). For this statement, students who perceived their level of English as 'very bad' exhibited statistically significant mean difference in the degree of disagreement with the statement from those students who perceived their English language knowledge as either 'very good' or 'excellent'. What this signifies is that those students who feel that their English language knowledge is insufficient would need some Slovene language input (support) to learn specialized terminology more quickly.

We can conclude from this set of statements that, on average, students approve of the use of Slovene in Business English classes when specialized terminology presentation and explanation is concerned. Indeed, they would prefer to be given definitions (explanations) of terms both in English and in Slovene. They also do not see this as a hindrance to their learning of English specialized terminology. It was also established that by being given Slovene equivalents of specialized terms students more easily connect the knowledge they acquire in different economics and business courses with the terminology they learn in the Business English course.

4.2. Research question 2

The areas explored under the second research questions were:

- students' perceptions regarding how long it takes for them to learn the materials covered in Business English courses and the exclusive use of English (S8);
- students' motivation and encouragement for learning English terms if they know their Slovene equivalents (S17);
- students' attitudes to Slovene when learning Business English terms:
 - general (S11),
 - in class (asking the teacher to provide translations/equivalents of terms in Slovene) (S23);
- student's ease of learning English terms:
 - if they know their Slovene equivalents (S12),
 - if they know their definitions in English (S13),
 - if they know their definitions in Slovene (S16);
- students' use of dictionaries/online tools for dealing with unknown terminology (reading; homework, etc.);
 - use of monolingual dictionaries when reading professional texts (S25),

- use of bilingual dictionaries when reading professional texts (S24, S26, S28),
- use of online translation tools to find Slovene equivalents (S29);
- students' techniques for learning English terms:
 - always translating Business English terms into Slovene (S27),
 - writing them in their notes with their definitions in English (S30),
 - writing them in their notes with their Slovene equivalents (S31),
 - repeating the terms and their English definitions out loud (S32),
 - repeating the terms and their Slovene equivalents out loud (S33).

Descriptive statistics for this set of statements are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Mean values and standard deviations for *Research question 2* statements.

	BUN_1 (n = 31)		BUN_2 (n = 24)		BUN_3 (n = 14)		BVS_1 (n = 31)		BVS_2 (n = 31)		BVS_3 (n = 43)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
S8: Learn BE contents faster – teacher uses ENG only	3.16	.860	3.67	.917	3.21	.802	2.65	1.082	3.00	1.125	2.74	1.115
S11: Never resort to SLO when learning BE terms	2.29	.938	2.50	1.142	1.86	.949	2.39	.989	2.29	.973	2.05	.950
S12: Easier memorize ENG terms if know their SLO equiv.	3.97	.752	3.83	1.090	4.14	.770	3.97	1.224	3.61	1.086	4.28	.826
S13: Easier memorize ENG terms if know definition in ENG	3.23	.845	3.96	1.160	3.93	1.141	3.61	1.022	3.10	1.221	3.16	.949
S16: Easier memorize ENG by learning definition in SLO	3.35	.877	2.92	1.316	3.57	1.284	3.77	1.203	3.48	1.029	4.05	.785
S17: Knowing SLO equiv. of ENG terms – motivation to learn ENG terms	3.26	.893	3.17	1.167	3.79	.699	3.77	1.117	3.29	.938	3.42	.852
S23: If do not understand the meaning of ENG term – ask teacher SLO equiv.	3.16	.820	3.46	1.250	3.64	1.393	3.52	.996	3.23	1.055	3.53	1.099
S24: Homework, look up unknown ENG terms in dict. (find SLO transl.)	3.23	1.117	3.13	1.191	4.36	.929	3.52	1.288	3.65	1.142	4.09	.868

S25: Reading ENG prof. texts, use monolingual dict. for meaning of terms	2.55	.995	3.21	1.285	2.50	1.019	2.84	1.003	2.68	1.166	2.56	1.053
S26: Reading ENG prof. texts, use bilingual dict. for meaning of terms	3.61	1.022	3.21	1.414	4.14	1.167	3.55	1.028	3.71	1.006	3.63	1.176
S27: Learning BE terms, always translate them into SLO	3.23	1.087	2.88	1.227	3.64	1.151	3.90	1.193	3.35	1.082	3.91	1.087
S28: Tend to use bilingual ENG-SLO dict. to help myself learn terms	3.45	1.150	2.96	1.367	4.21	.893	3.71	.973	3.90	.831	3.93	.985
S29: Learning terms, use online tools (e.g. Google translate) to help myself find their SLO equiv.	3.90	1.012	3.50	1.180	4.00	.784	3.94	1.237	3.94	.929	3.81	.982
S30: Learn meaning of terms, write them in notes with their ENG definition	3.06	1.153	2.92	1.283	3.79	1.311	3.23	1.230	3.26	1.094	3.49	1.009
S31: Learn meaning of terms, write them in notes with their SLO equiv.	3.39	1.116	2.67	1.167	3.79	1.369	3.81	1.250	3.26	1.264	3.86	.915
S32: Learn meaning of terms, repeat them and their ENG definition out loud	2.74	1.264	2.92	1.248	3.57	1.158	3.03	1.197	3.03	1.048	3.26	.978
S33: Learn meaning of terms, I repeat them and their SLO equiv. out loud	2.74	1.125	2.17	1.007	2.79	1.188	2.74	1.182	2.58	1.148	3.02	1.058

We can see from Table 2 that, among other things, students *tend to resort to Slovene when learning Business English terms* as they show, on average, relative high levels of disagreement with statement S11 (S11: overall mean for all six groups = 2.24, SD = .991). Further, they would, on average, *likely ask the teacher (in class) for the Slovene equivalent of an unknown term* (S23: overall mean for all six groups = 3.41, SD = 1.075).

As regards their opinions concerning *the ease of learning Business English terms*, we observed that, on average, the easiest way for them to learn English terminology is *by knowing the Slovene equivalents of terms* (S12: total mean = 3.98, SD = .991), followed by *knowing the definitions of terms in Slovene* (S16: total mean = 3.58, SD = 1.097), and by *knowing the definitions of terms in English* (S13: total mean = 3.41, SD = 1.081).

The use of different reference tools (i.e., dictionaries and online translation tools) was as follows.

Overall, students stated that they would more likely use a *bilingual dictionary for finding the meaning of an unknown term* (S26: overall mean for all six groups = 3.61, SD = 1.136) than a *monolingual dictionary* (S25: overall mean for all six groups = 2.71, SD = 1.096) *when reading professional texts in English*. Even higher average scores were observed with *the use of online translation tools (e.g., Google translate) to find Slovene equivalents* (S29: overall mean for all six groups = 3.84, SD = 1.039). Bilingual (English-Slovene) dictionaries were also preferred for *finding the meaning of unknown terms when doing homework for Business English* (S24: overall mean for all six groups = 3.64, SD = 1.153) and for *learning specialized terms in English* (S28: overall mean for all six groups = 3.69, SD = 1.089).

For statements referring to *students' techniques for learning English terms*, the average scores for all groups of students were as stated below. They tend to *always translate Business English terms into Slovene* (S27: overall mean for all six groups = 3.52, SD = 1.176), are more likely to *write the terms in the notebooks with their Slovene equivalents* (S31: overall mean for all six groups = 3.49, SD = 1.206) rather than *writing the terms with their definitions in English* (S30: overall mean for all six groups = 3.27, SD = 1.164). Although the students would put down in their notebooks the *English terms + Slovene equivalents* more likely than *English terms + English definitions* when they are learning the terms, they would tend to *repeat out loud the terms and their English definitions* (S32: overall mean for all six groups = 3.06, SD = 1.144) more often than *repeat out loud the terms and their Slovene equivalents* (S33: overall mean for all six groups = 2.71, SD = 1.128). The reasons for this could be that in their exams, students are asked to explain specialized terms in English (they are not required to know their Slovene equivalents). In our classes, we tend to give them the English definition plus the Slovene translation (equivalent) of the terms.

Also, *students' motivation and encouragement for learning English terms if they know the Slovene equivalents of these terms is high* (S17: overall mean for all six groups = 3.43, SD = 0.975).

Focusing on students' degree of agreement and disagreement with the statements connected to this research question in relation to their perceived level of their English language knowledge, we found statistically significant mean differences (at 0.05 level) in their responses (post hoc ANOVA tests [Turkey HSD]) for three statements. For statement S8 (*I learn the contents of BE classes faster if the teacher uses English only.*), students with 'bad' knowledge of English exhibited the highest degree of disagreement. Based on this, we can conclude that the teacher's use of Slovene in class would facilitate their learning of BE course related contents. In relation to students' learning of BE terminology (i.e., S27: *When I learn BE terms related to economics and business, I always translate them into Slovene.*; S28: *I tend to use bilingual English-Slovene dictionaries to help myself learn BE terms.*), we found that students with perceived 'bad' English language knowledge would use English-Slovene dictionaries more readily than students who thought their English language knowledge was 'very bad' or 'excellent' (S28). On the other hand, students with perceived 'very bad' English language knowledge stated that they tended to always translate BE terms into Slovene, which was different from students whose perceived English language knowledge was 'excellent' (S27). These results lead us to conclude that students could be given instructions on using relevant (specialized) bilingual dictionaries to help them learn BE terminology. Also, these results show that students with lower levels of English language knowledge need the support of their L1 when learning BE

terms, which points to the usefulness of students' L1 use as a scaffolding tool for learning English.

4.3. Correlations between individual statements

In order to gain insight into our students' attitudes towards the use of Slovene when dealing with specialized terms in English, we searched for all statistically significant positive and negative correlations between the statements in the questionnaire (i.e., all correlations significant at .01 level [2-tailed] and at .05 level [2-tailed]). The total number of such correlations was 197 (see Table 3).

Table 3

The number of statistically significant correlations per strength of correlation and per type of relationship (positive or negative).

	Positive correlations	Negative correlations
p < .01 (2-tailed)	119	45
p < .05 (2-tailed)	24	9

As the number of all the correlations established in our study is quite high, we present here only one example.

Example: Statement 21 – *During lessons, the Business English teacher should explain (provide definitions of) new specialized terms both in English and in Slovene* (and a selection of significant correlations):

- **positive correlations with statements**

- *I memorize Business English specialized terms better by remembering their definitions in Slovene (r= .390, p < .01).*
- *It is easier for me to remember specialized terms in English if I know their Slovene equivalents (r=.385, p < .01).*
- *If the Business English teacher gives Slovene translations of specialized terms, I can more easily connect this knowledge to the contents of my other courses (r= .383, p < .01).*
- *It is important that we learn Slovene equivalents for specific (more or less) idiomatic expressions in English (r= .367, p < .01).*
- *I tend to use bilingual English-Slovene dictionaries to help myself learn Business English terms (r= .354, p < .01).*
- *When I read professional texts (articles, books) in English, I always use bilingual (English-Slovene) dictionaries to find the meaning of unknown Business English terms (r= .310, p < .01).*

- *When I learn Business English terms, I always translate them into Slovene* ($r=.259$, $p < .01$).
- **negative correlations with statements**
 - *During lessons, the Business English teacher should explain (provide definitions of) new specialized terms in English only* ($r= -.381$, $p<.01$).
 - *I see no use of my teacher giving me Slovene translations of Business English specialized terms during class – it is an English course after all* ($r= -.281$, $p < .01$).
 - *I never resort to Slovene when I learn Business English terminology* ($r= -.281$, $p < .01$).
 - *The use of Slovene in class by my teacher interferes with my learning of specialized terms in English* ($r= -.276$, $p < .01$).
 - *I learn the contents of Business English classes faster if the teacher uses English only* ($r= -.232$, $p < .01$).
 - *If the Business English teacher used only English in class, my knowledge of specialized terms would improve faster than if he/she also used Slovene* ($r= -.229$, $p < .01$).

These correlations clearly show that students think that Slovene as their mother tongue should be used in class when the presentation and the explanation of economics and business related terms in English is concerned. Also, their opinion is that the teachers' use of Slovene for explaining and presenting specialized English terms does not interfere with their learning of these terms. Overall, there is a positive attitude among our students that Slovene is welcome in class (as regards our research focus) and that they do use it when they learn economics and business related English terms.

5. Conclusions and implications for teaching practice

In this study we have presented economics and business students' opinions and attitudes regarding the use of Slovene as their mother tongue in teaching and learning specialized terminology for economics and business as well as their actual use of Slovene when they encounter and/or learn new specialized terms.

Our study has shown that, overall, our students are not against the use of Slovene as their mother tongue when given the explanation or the presentation of English specialized terms by their teacher. Actually, they welcome the inclusion of Slovene in this respect. One of the main findings as regards the teacher's use of Slovene in class is that the students prefer that they are given Slovene equivalents of English specialized terms rather than be given explanations of these terms in English only. In fact, they would prefer the explanation both in English and in Slovene. We support this view as we know that specialized terms denote specific concepts and that by giving Slovene equivalents of English terms students receive this specific information. Further, as argued by Cook (2011), this is efficient and, as we may add, also effective because the students can immediately connect their knowledge of economics

and business related concepts acquired in their economics and business courses and the specialized terms they learn in their Business English courses. The students are also aware of the importance of knowing the Slovene equivalents of English specialized collocations (e.g., *'the bottom line'* – *'finančni rezultat'* (in a balance sheet), *'to be in the black'* – *'biti v plusu'* (*'imeti dobiček'*). The second major finding was that our students believe that the teacher's use of Slovene in class when specialized terminology is concerned does not interfere with their learning of Business English.

Concerning the students' own use of Slovene for dealing with new specialized terms in English, our study found that our students quite strongly rely on the use of bilingual (specialized) dictionaries and online translation tools. This was especially true for their reading of business and economics related texts in English as they tend to use bilingual dictionaries for determining the meaning of terms. Another significant finding to emerge from this study is that knowing the Slovene equivalents of specialized terms in English is considered by our students as the motivating factor to learn these English terms.

The empirical findings of this study provide an insight into the students' perceptions about the use of Slovene as their mother tongue for the acquisition of economics and business related terms in English. Despite the main limitations of our study - i.e., the study was carried out only in one higher education institution and on a relatively small number of study participants - our findings add to the existing body of research which addresses the inclusion of students' mother tongue in foreign language courses with the emphasis of ESP courses.

Another limitation of this contribution is fact that we asked our students only to estimate their level of English language knowledge. That is, we did not perform any tests which would objectively assess their actual level of English (e.g., based on CEFR scales). The reason for that lay in the fact that we only wanted to explore our students' perceptions regarding the use of Slovene in our teaching of economics and business related specialized terms in English and their practises in learning them. Also, as we teach mixed-ability classes and BE courses at different levels, there will always be students in our classes who are either good in English or not. The correlation results concerning the variable 'students' perceived level of English' and the use of Slovene in the context of our research nevertheless clearly show that no matter which course students participating in this survey attended, their attitudes towards the use of Slovene were rather close to unanimous.

The main implication of our study for teaching practice is that the use of the students' mother tongue either in class or during their individual work is beneficial for students' learning of a foreign language and should be used for a number of purposes. The most important one, in our opinion, should be in the context of teaching specialized terms as the introduction of L1 equivalents of English terms facilitates students' learning of these terms and motivates them to learn. Also, it gives students the opportunity to connect the knowledge obtained in different courses within their tertiary education. Another relevant use of the students' mother tongue can be for the purpose of scaffolding (especially with students whose English language proficiency level is not high). Although marginal, using the students' mother tongue can be used in class management and non-content's related issues dealt with in the class. However, the latter is not the focus of this paper. All in all, as stated by Cook (2011), a judicious use of the students' mother tongue is advised and this varies from one class to another, from one teaching situation to another, depending on the purpose of the ESP course itself.

In terms of directions for future research, more studies concerning the topic presented in this contribution could be undertaken in other ESP or LSP contexts. In terms of methodology, new research can stem from that presented in this paper as other questionnaires can be developed based on the one prepared for this study. When developing or adapting their own questionnaires, the researchers should take into consideration their own specific teaching situation and the objectives and goals of their LSP courses. Also, a mixed method approach could be undertaken to study the issues presented here. That is, by integrating quantitative data with qualitative data, researchers can gain further insights into the topic which may not be captured with only quantitative study.

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Appendix

The statements from the questionnaire

S5: It is important that we learn Slovene equivalents for specific (more or less) idiomatic expressions in English (e.g. Yours sincerely = S spoštovanjem; Počutite se kot doma. = Make yourself at home, etc.).

S7: If the BE teacher gives Slovene translations of specialized terms, I can more easily connect this knowledge to the contents of my other courses.

S10: I see no use of my teacher giving me Slovene translations of BE specialized terms during class – it is an English course after all.

S14: If in class I do not understand the meaning of some specialized term in English, I prefer that my teacher explains this term in English.

S15: The use of Slovene in class by my teacher interferes with my learning of specialized terms in English.

S18: If the BE teacher used only English in class, my knowledge of specialized terms would improve faster than if he/she also used Slovene.

S19: During lessons, the BE teacher should always give Slovene equivalents of specialized terms in English.

S20: During lessons, the BE teacher should explain (give definitions) of new specialized terms in Slovene only.

S21: During lessons, the BE teacher should explain (give definitions) of new specialized terms both in English and in Slovene.

S22: During lessons, the BE teacher should explain (give definitions) of new specialized terms in English only.

S8: I learn the contents of BE classes faster if the teacher uses English only.

S11: I never resort to Slovene when I learn BE terminology.

S12: It is easier for me to memorize specialized terms in English if I know their Slovene equivalents.

S13: It is easier for me to memorize specialized terms in English if I know their definitions in English.

S16: I memorize BE specialized terms better by remembering their definitions in Slovene.

S17: Knowing Slovene equivalents (translations) of BE terms in English motivates me and encourages me to learn specialized terminology in English.

S23: If in BE class I do not understand the meaning of some specialized term in English, I ask my teacher to give me its Slovene translation (equivalent).

S24: When I do my homework for BE course, I (always) look up unknown specialized terms in dictionaries and find their Slovene translations.

S25: When I read professional texts (articles, books) in English, I always use monolingual (English) dictionaries to find the meaning of unknown BE terms.

S26: When I read professional texts (articles, books) in English, I always use bilingual (English-Slovene) dictionaries to find the meaning of unknown BE terms.

S27: When I learn BE terms related to economics and business, I always translate them into Slovene.

S28: I tend to use bilingual English-Slovene dictionaries to help myself learn BE terms.

S29: When learning BE specialized terms, I tend to use online translation tools (e.g. Google translate) to help myself find their Slovene equivalents.

S30: To learn the meaning of BE terms, I write them down in my notes with their definitions in English.

S31: To learn the meaning of BE terms, I write them down in my notes with their Slovene equivalents.

S32: To learn the meaning of BE terms, I repeat them and their English definitions out loud.

S33: To learn the meaning of BE terms, I repeat them and their Slovene equivalents out loud.