

Researching the uses of the english language in the law job market in the sultanate of oman: implications for policy-practice improvement

Ali S. M. Al-Issa

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Abstract The Sultanate of Oman is a developing country that has accepted the English language as a significant tool for modernization. This was best interpreted in the opening of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in 1986, which has delivered its different academic programmes totally or partially through the English language. One of the colleges of SQU has been the College of Law. It was opened in 1997 to help contribute to effective implementation of nationalisation and national development in the Sultanate of Oman, which English language proficiency is a part and parcel of. However, graduates exiting the College so far have been unable to fulfil this strategic aim due to policy-practice drawbacks. Evident weaknesses in their English language and legal knowledge have provoked repeated complaints from the employers in both sectors. Accordingly, a decision was made to introduce a bilingual programme through which approximately 30 % of the subjects at the College of Law would be taught in English. This study, therefore, researches the uses of English language in the Law job market in the Sultanate of Oman and its implications for policy-practice improvement. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to 182 graduates of the College of Law, SQU. Findings have shown that while the new programme has the potential to serve national development and Omanisation, the College faculties have a pivotal role to play in influencing a positive implementation of the plan.

Keywords College of Law · Sultan Qaboos University · International Review and Assessment Committee Report · Content infused language teaching · English language · Faculty

1 Introduction

Giving attention to human resources, including the provision of the various tools required to enhance their performance, incentives to develop their capabilities, diversifying their creative talents and improving their scientific and practical qualifications,

A. S. M. Al-Issa (✉)
College of Law, Sultan Qaboos University, P.O. Box 3058, Ruwi 112, Sultanate of Oman
e-mail: dralialissa@yahoo.com; ali2465@squ.edu.om

is the basis of real development and the cornerstone in its structure which is based on solid foundations. The human element is the maker of a renaissance and the builder of a civilisation. Therefore, we are sparing no effort and will continue to spare no effort to provide our human resources with all the help they will need to develop, hone and train. We will also provide educational opportunities for them in order that they may acquire useful knowledge, the required experience and the necessary technical skills that will be needed in the labour market and as are required by the sustainable development programmes in the various fields. (From a speech for His Majesty the Sultan in 2008)

The Sultanate of Oman is an oil-producing developing country in the Gulf, which has decided to pay attention to education to help diversify its economy and rely more on its national manpower for development. In a number of different speeches over the past few years, His Majesty the Sultan repeatedly stressed the role of national human resources and the importance of developing them to their full potential through educating and training them to play their effective role in building modern Oman and advancing Omanisation—replacing the skilled and qualified foreign labour with the national force.

English language in the Sultanate of Oman is a *lingua franca* and the only official foreign language in the country. It has been receiving legislative support and has institutionalized domains like business, education and the media. Al-Issa (2007) found that English in Oman is a tool for achieving multiple significant purposes like cultural analysis and understanding, pursuing higher education, finding a white-collar job in the public and private sector, acquiring science and technology, conducting business and communicating inland and abroad with non-Arabic speaking foreigners.

English language education has been at the fore since His Majesty came to the throne in 1970. The government has invested heavily in developing English language teaching (ELT) at the general and higher education levels. Students joined the College of Law after being formally exposed to English language for nine years until 2009 and for 12 years from then onwards. In addition, they were required to attend two compulsory General English Language courses at the College in the first two semesters of the eight-semester programme. The assumption was that this amount of exposure to formal English language instruction would help students graduate with sufficient adequacy of English to join the job market and perform up to the expectations. However, students graduating from the College of Law since its opening in 1997 have failed to demonstrate the necessary practical competence in English and Law. While no research has been pursued to provide evidence to support this claim, a large number of the College graduates have been informally in touch with the researcher, who has been at the College since its opening and was an Assistant Dean of the College for five years. Their complaints have mainly centred round their feeling of lack of competence in English and Law, which has hampered their chances of performing better and hence getting better jobs. This has triggered repeated complaints and concerns from different employers in the public and private sectors and reflected negatively on the image of the College in specific and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in general.

Accordingly, a decision was made in 2008 to shift to a partially bilingual programme to meet the demands of the job market. Recent research in Applied Linguistics has supported the positive impact of content infused language teaching (CILT) on students' linguistic, cognitive, social, psychological, cultural and academic development (Marsh 1994; Wiesemes 2005; Coyle 2006; de Graaff et al. 2007; Lorenzo et al. 2009; Gaballo 2010).

Sherris (2008) broadly defines CILT as '...task-based instruction and assessment of knowledge, skills, and academic language within a content area' (p. 1). Pistorio (2009) and

[Nordmeyer \(2010\)](#) argue that CILT empowers learners through engaging them in purposeful activities that stimulate their creativity, thinking and interaction through using the four skills of the target language in a communicative way. This is bound to reflect positively on the learner's motivation and linguistic proficiency, regardless of whether they are elementary school or university learners. This is viewed by [Lasagabaster \(2008\)](#) as genuine preparation for 'internationalisation' with all its demands and challenges, which is representation of the concepts and practices of education at present. CILT has been thus found consistent with the recent approaches to foreign language teaching, which promote using the target language in different contents and for completing different tasks ([de Graaff et al. 2007](#)).

Within the context of this study, reference can be made to [Knowles \(1975, 1980\)](#) theory about adult learning, where learners at a higher education institution like the College of Law, for example, are driven by their internal motivation. Hence, they should be given ample opportunities to take charge of their learning through discovery, where there is more negotiation and interpretation of meaning with direct relevance and interest to their life. Adults' learning, according to Knowles, is most productive when based on strategies like role playing, simulations, solving problems and case studies that require processing information and data, than memorising them.

As a construct, CILT, therefore, is complex and stresses the pivotal role of teachers as professionals in ensuring success of a programme through the design and provision of activities that challenge and develop their learners' communicative and cognitive abilities. Their awareness about and competence in the target language and content subject matter learning related issues is central to the success of the programme ([de Graaff et al. 2007](#); [Gabbalo 2010](#); [Koppe and Nijsten 2012](#)). Teachers in CILT, therefore, have substantial challenges and complications about course design, lesson planning and assessment to cope with ([Nordmeyer 2010](#)).

Almost like any other discipline and branch of education, Law thus entails different theories and skills. Faculties have to be sufficiently competent in the subject matter to establish the necessary link between these two complementary elements through proficient use of the target language. English language in CILT is a powerful tool for bridging the gap between theory and practice and hence presenting legal materials to the students in a coherent and comprehensible manner to help them come into grips with the subject matter and achieve academic success.

[Marsh, Marsland and Nikula \(1999\)](#), cited in [Costa and D'Angelo \(2011\)](#), thus stress that CILT implementation should not be understood as simply changing the medium of instruction, and that it requires adopting a whole new approach to teaching. [Koppe and Nijsten \(2012\)](#) warn that while delivering lectures and asking students to read in the foreign language literature are necessary in CILT for providing students with facts and information, they are insufficient for natural and innovative language production.

Exposure to Law, therefore, and as it is the case with any other scientific field, cannot be solely confined to the faculty and the mandated textbook. In the age of knowledge explosion and information technology, this selection of pedagogical traditions is critically questioned, scrutinized, resisted and rejected, as knowledge does not have boundaries. Exercise of control and authority over the quality and quantity of knowledge and its mode of delivery can lead to stressing the receptive role of the learners and marginalising and belittling their cognitive abilities. It additionally gives certain skills an edge over others, defeats the purpose of preparing a graduate with ability to use the language communicatively. It further limits the students' right to practice using the target language interactively for meaning creation and negotiation, which has negative implications for the students' attitudes, perceptions, motivation, confidence and target language development.

Pinkley (2012) claims that subject areas teachers experience difficulties in methodology, understanding the difference between language learning and language acquisition, and English language adequacy, where interaction is limited, largely teacher-fronted, and delivery and transmission-governed. This is typically the case at general and higher education academic institution in the Arab World in general. On the other hand, language teachers have the knowledge about promoting interaction and maximising their students' language input and output through engaging them in pair and group work, while they lack familiarity with and knowledge about the content area.

Nordmeyer (2010), Pastor and Perry (2010) and Costa and D'Angelo (2011) thus advocate collaboration between language and content teachers to support student learning and facilitate professional growth. Coyle (2006) perceives collaboration between both categories of teachers as fostering motivation and having positive implications for students' motivation too. Nordmeyer (2010) quotes 'critical friends groups protocols' as a means 'to support collaborative inquiry and embedded professional learning' (p. 7–8). Areas of collaboration, which should lead to reflection and affective, cognitive, and social development (Nowak 2011), can entail sharing and exchanging knowledge and ideas about the nature of language, teaching strategies, communication strategies, learning concepts, designing and developing syllabus, and discussing applications of information and communication technology.

Like any other dynamic discipline with specific theoretical, linguistic and discursive dispositions, Law has evolved and witnessed the rise of new theories and fall of others. Sources of acquisition of legal knowledge have diversified at an age characterized by frequent production and reproduction of knowledge, which has been continuously subject to critical scrutiny, acceptance and rejection. Sources of knowledge acquisition like colleagues and technology have come into play recently in education and can have a direct bearing on the faculty's thinking, decisions and performances. At the heart of this lies the target language as a living entity and its pivotal role in facilitating knowledge acquisition, selection, construction and reconstruction. A language of wider communication like English has bridged distances and gaps between individuals, disciplines and contexts and facilitated achieving various aims like acquisition of science and technology, for example, and with a particular reference to this work.

Pistorio (2009) thus proposes pre-service and in-service teacher training for teachers in Argentina, where English is a foreign language, as it is the case in Oman. This is to develop the theoretical and methodological competences of the academic staff to ensure effective CILT teaching. Ludbrook (2006) additionally proposes a performance language test to assess the language proficiency of the CILT instructors. He bases his proposal on a case study through which he collected data through classroom observation of and interviews with CILT Science teachers in Italy. He also examined various teaching materials produced by those teachers to determine their second language proficiency. Although the two proposals produced by these authors are associated more with CILT at the school level, they have significant implications for higher education.

Within the same vein, Ludbrook (2006) writes that France has been awarding certification of competence for in-service training in CILT for non-language subjects teaching since 2003. Moreover, Germany has introduced additional teacher qualifications for bilingual teaching in a number of its states. In addition, the University of Nottingham in U.K. administers a programme for teachers in CILT, which deals with principles of teaching a content subject through a foreign language and strategies and material design for a CILT classroom.

Taken together, these are important attempts to define what standards, skills, knowledge and qualifications are needed for the academic staff to enrol in CILT, due to the complexity of

the assignment and the central role teachers play in the success of a CILT-oriented programme implementation, or otherwise.

This study, therefore, sets out to research the uses of the English language in the Law job market in the Sultanate of Oman and the implications this has for the roles and responsibilities of the College faculties in influencing the implementation of the new degree plan through helping their students to develop their linguistic and legal knowledge to a level that meets the requirements of the job market.

2 Significance of the study

While the Omani context may not be unique in itself, and other contexts exist that share variable degrees of similarity with it, it has to be stressed that this study is unique and significant at different levels—domestic, regional and international. This is particularly the case as a thorough survey of the pertinent literature has revealed that no other studies have researched the uses of the English language in the Law job market and its implications to policy-practice improvement.

Domestically, SQU has invested heavily in planning for this policy change at the College of Law. It is important, therefore, that a copy of this study is presented to SQU administration to help the decision makers perceive the crucial role the College faculties can play in making or breaking the new degree plan. This should subsequently help SQU make important decisions about the quality of the existing faculties and about whether there is any need to improve on this and through what ways to guarantee a smooth policy implementation.

Moreover, SQU has been implementing a ‘high exposure’ CILT programme (Nowak 2011) at all the science-based colleges and a ‘medium exposure’ CILT programme (Nowak 2011) at the College of Economics and Political Sciences ever since its opening. However, no information has generated from those programmes about the impact of CILT on the students’ attainment. SQU, like all other universities in the region, hires faculties from different parts of the world due to a shortage in highly qualified Omani manpower. Such faculties bring multiple linguistic and professional backgrounds to the Omani context, which undoubtedly has its implications for policy implementation.

Furthermore, all private colleges and universities in Oman have adopted CILT as an approach to help prepare their students for the job market. However, no research as yet has been conducted to reveal the impact of this adoption. This study should help enlighten these universities and colleges about the different problems that can arise from implementing CILT, especially that these colleges and universities have been appointing faculties from all over the world with variable linguistic abilities and teaching skills.

Regionally, three of Oman’s neighbouring countries—Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, have been implementing a largely similar plan to the College’s for the past few years. English language in these countries serves more or less identical purposes to the ones served by English in the Sultanate. Colleges of Law at the University of Bahrain, University of Qatar and University of the United Arab Emirates share a large number of characteristics with the Omani College of Law. This is represented in the choice and content of courses to be taught in English, the hours allocated to teaching such courses and the backgrounds of the faculties recruited for the job.

In addition, the University of Cairo and University of Alexandria in Egypt have been implementing a similar plan to the Gulf universities, with more courses being taught in English than their Gulf universities counterparts. However, once again no research has been documented about teaching Law at these universities to date. It is hoped that findings of

this study will contribute to these five universities' decision makers' knowledge about the implications of their faculties' practices to the success of their bilingual education plans, or otherwise.

Internationally, CILT evolved in Europe and has fairly recently emerged as a bilingually-oriented educational approach. It is still being tested in a number of European contexts and beyond. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the theory and practices underlying CILT at the higher education level. Much of the work published so far has been about implementing CILT at schools.

In addition, many of the contexts implementing CILT at the higher education level in Europe and beyond hire non-native English speaking faculties and ones with different educational and training backgrounds. Such faculties have variable English language competence and personal beliefs about teaching and learning through English as an international language. Other equally significant aspects this study can have implications for are allocations of resources, curriculum and material design and selection and training and education of faculties.

3 Research questions

This study was designed with an aim to collect responses from the College graduates about the professional field of Law in Oman, which are expected to have significant implications for the College faculties' practices. Put differently, information generated by this work is expected to contribute to the implementation of the new degree plan, which is in its early stages.

The following questions are hence to be pursued:

1. What are the weaknesses of the old College of Law degree plan?
2. What are the recommendations of the members of the International Review and Assessment Committee (IRAC) about the new College of Law degree plan?
3. What are the perceptions of the College of Law graduates about the uses of English language in the Law job market?
4. How can the College of Law faculty positively influence the implementation of the new College of Law degree plan?
5. How can infusing English within the legal studies at the College of Law help prepare competent graduates in English and Law?

4 IRAC report

SQU made a decision in 2007 to invite an International Review and Assessment Committee (IRAC) to conduct a review of the College of Law. The IRAC comprised of three experts in the field representing different universities from Canada, U.K. and Singapore. The members of the IRAC held meetings with different senior leaders and stakeholders at the College and SQU and in the legal profession in the Sultanate.

The three authors of the IRAC report emphasize the pivotal role the College of Law can play in national and economic development and diversification through preparing its graduates for careers in Oman and beyond. However, the three authors do not perceive the design and content of the existing programmes as instrumental in achieving these aims.

Furthermore, the three authors are critical of the mode of delivery implemented by the faculty at the College, which is dominantly teacher-fronted where lecturing is the preferred

mode of delivering content and students are passive recipients of the teacher's knowledge, and which is typical of teaching practices and approaches followed in the Arab World education in general. The three authors advocate combining acquisition of legal theories and principles with professional preparation to help produce a Law student for today's changing, demanding and challenging world.

SQU has been running short courses for faculties, who come from a non-educational background about the principles of teaching and learning at higher education to help them develop as better practitioners and deliver with more efficiency inside the classroom. However, faculties at the College have always refrained from attending these courses.

The authors of IRAC are thus stressing the fundamental role of the CILT approach in helping redefine and transform the mission and practices of the College of Law with respect to equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills and preparing competent graduates with an ability to perform in the job market and to satisfy its requirements and expectations. They perceive receiving training in and teaching through CILT as an important solution for problems of delivering legal knowledge in an international foreign language like English due to its growing power today as a tool for science and technology acquisition, pursuing higher education and finding a white-collar job.

The IRAC Report authors thus highly recommend implementing a peer evaluation system, which they describe as 'objective', where colleagues from other SQU colleges are invited to sit in classes on a periodic basis and use their experience to advise their College of Law counterparts about meeting the objectives. The three authors view this as an essential part of a '...well-defined scheme of quality assurance' (p. 50), developed to assess the progress of the College reconstitution. Quality assurance has been a top priority for SQU for the last decade or so as a Quality Assurance Office was established to assess the University's different programmes to ensure development and maintenance of very high standards of excellence leading to achieving international recognition and accreditation and improvement in the University's world ranking. SQU has recently decided to respond to this suggestion and opted for a peer observation and evaluation system, which is expected to be effective in the near future and should partly decide the faculties' future at the University.

In addition, the authors of the IRAC report recommend that the Dean of the College of Law conducts a formal annual 'performance evaluation for every member of faculty, in the areas of teaching, research and service' (p. 51) and reports his/her conclusions to the Vice-Chancellor.

The three authors thus criticize the College faculties for their evident lack of engagement in research and their quantitatively limited and qualitatively uneven scholarly output, which has largely affected the development and sustainability of an 'intellectually stimulating environment' (p. 25), impeded undergraduate students from contributing to the College's research mission through working as research assistants and affected the College's poor stature and profile within SQU and amongst other legal schools regionally and worldwide. It is important to note that refraining from publishing does not affect the tenure of the local or expatriate faculties at SQU.

Teaching legal subjects at the College has been almost entirely conducted in Arabic and dominantly theory-based. Faculties have been taking their places at the front of the classroom and transmitting massive chunks of theoretical knowledge to their students about the different areas of Law. Since 1997, faculties teaching Law at the College have been mainly divided into three categories. The first category comes from different parts of the Arab World—North Africa and Asia—and holds a doctorate degree in different branches of Law. Very few of these expatriate faculties are Associate Professors and Full Professors. Almost all of these faculties have been teaching at their universities for many years and had received their post-

graduate education in France. Those specialized in Commercial Law vary in their command of English language. The second category is the Omani faculties, who have been teaching at the College for a variable number of years as Assistant Professors with a doctoral degree from Egyptian and Jordanian Universities, and a lack of operational command of the English language. The third category is Omani Assistant Professors with a doctoral degree from top ranked U.K. Universities in Law and a varying command of English language and teaching experience.

The authors of IRAC recommend implementing CILT at a higher education institution like the College of Law to help the faculty get out of their comfort zones and rid themselves from their traditional and ineffective pedagogical approaches. They would like to see them collaborating and critically reflecting on their current knowledge and practices, addressing, challenging and confronting their beliefs and adopting more informed, dynamic and efficient approaches to content area teaching.

The three authors further report on the fact that the College graduates lack an operational command of English language. This has resulted in giving the few graduates of Law from English-speaking countries an edge over their College counterparts with regard to job recruitment and has reflected badly on the reputation of the College.

Since the first day of its opening, the College offered two core courses on its curriculum—English Language One and English Language Two, which are ‘general’ English language courses. Both courses have been taught in Semester One and Semester Two, respectively. Students, who have always been driven by exam results, have hardly seen the relevance of these two courses for their future. Problems pertinent to insufficient contact time on the curriculum, class size (45–55 students per class) and lack of print materials have characterized English language teaching at the College and negatively impacted students’ language acquisition and development chances (Al-Issa 2007). The three authors thus highlight the role of English language as a significant tool for acquiring science and knowledge and carving one’s professional future and a means of facilitating ‘internationalisation’ and ‘modernisation’.

Central to the achievement of the College’s objectives, according to the three authors, is an introduction of a bilingual degree programme, which gives English language a special importance. They perceive this achievable through delivering 25–40% of the programme courses in English. The three authors additionally recommend training students in a set of fundamental skills in learning, researching, writing, presenting and advocating.

Acquisition of this integration of linguistic and legal skills will thus allow the College faculty and students to establish active links, partnership and collaboration with international faculty and institutions with an aim to improve and diversify the research culture, and to help ‘...create opportunities for students to gain international exposure during their law studies’ (p. 13).

5 The new degree plan

In 2009, the College of Law initiated the design of the new bilingual degree plan. Approximately 30% of the courses offered in the new degree plan would be delivered in English. Students would be required to complete 132 credit hours spread over eight semesters to be eligible to graduate with a Bachelor of Law degree from SQU. The English-medium courses would be associated with International Law, Commercial Law and Economics, as knowledge generating from these courses was associated with domestic and international legal relations. The plan took into account equipping students with English language and legal practical skills as a response to the needs and demands of the job market. The new degree plan was

inspired mainly by the Francophone Quebec province in Canada, where higher education is bilingual using English and French side by side and where the Latin Law or Civil Law and the Anglo-American Law or Common Law are combined. While the former system provides exposure to theoretical knowledge, the latter system pays attention to acquisition of professional skills.

By contrast, the old plan included two compulsory General English Language courses (English Language One and English Language Two) in the first two semesters, with each taught for three contact hours a week. Faculties of English were responsible for designing and implementing the syllabus. Students could not see the relevance and rationale of these two courses, as they hardly, if ever, equipped them with any linguistic knowledge across the legal curriculum (Al-Issa 2007). On the contrary, this situation continuously triggered questions amongst the students about the unsatisfactory status of English at the College and ways of improving it.

6 Methodology

6.1 Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 182 graduates of the College of Law. Each of these participants has a different job and works in a different place and sector, which requires a variable degree of English language use, depending on the nature of each one's responsibilities and duties.

6.2 Research instrument

Data were collected through a survey. Questions were inspired by and derived from the extremely limited literature available about the topic of the study and the IRAC report.

A questionnaire was designed and distributed to the former graduates of the College. The questionnaire consisted of 15-rating scale questions aiming at identifying the frequency of use of legal language at the respective graduates' workplaces. To each statement, the participants were asked to indicate whether they 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes' or 'always' use English language in a certain activity at work. While the questionnaire was originally prepared in English, it was translated into Arabic prior to its distribution to the students, taking into consideration the lack of linguistic competence of most of the participants. At the end of the questionnaire space was provided for the participants to provide any additional relevant comments.

To improve questionnaire quality, reliability and validity, the questionnaire was sent to a panel of experts from ELT and Law at the College of Law and beyond. This process subsequently helped with refining some of the questions and adding and omitting others to meet the aims of the study.

6.3 Data collection and analysis

Data collection and analysis took almost three months. The former part took most of the time due to problems pertinent to reaching the participants, since neither SQU nor the College

of Law have a database for their alumni. The data were analysed descriptively in SPSS to compute the participants' responses.

7 Results and discussion

Through the analysis of the data, a number of significant challenges emerged for the College faculties to take on to help develop their students' linguistic, psychological, social, cognitive, cultural and academic aspects, and hence contribute effectively to the implementation of the new degree plan. In order to achieve this, the findings have been divided into six themes (linguistic development, psychological development, social development, cognitive development, cultural development and academic development) that have been inspired by the pertinent literature.

Such themes, when taken together, are interwoven and contribute to preparing linguistically and legally competent graduates, who can contribute to their country's national development and advancement. CILT is an approach that aims at preparing the student from all aspects to embark on the job market and perform well. These are key issues that the literature has highlighted and the participants brought to the fore through answering the questionnaire about their experiences and practices in the job market. In other words, the pertinent literature and findings share a substantial amount of notions and meanings between them that have influenced the portrayal of these six themes.

7.1 Linguistic development

The possible reasons for the relatively high percentage of the participants not reading legal references, books and research in English at their respective workplaces (see Appendix Table), can be due to the nature of their jobs and workplaces. The discussion earlier showed that the participants represent different jobs and workplaces. Certain Law-related jobs in Oman require a variable range of English language use, especially those performed at the ministries like a Legal Researcher, for example. On the other hand, English is much more needed and used in companies and Law firms. This is in addition to places like the Capital Market Authority, SQU College of Law, Electricity Regulation Authority General Federation of Oman Trade Union, State Audit Institution, which are all state-owned organisations.

Another possible reason for the high percentage of students not reading such materials (references, books, and research) can be attributed to their unavailability. It is far much easier to find Arabic-medium legal print materials in the market than English-medium. As far as research articles are concerned, only SQU, being an academic institution, has subscription with online specialized Law journals restricted to its faculties.

A further likely reason for this can be the high specialized language level found in these materials as opposed to the poor linguistic adequacy of the graduates. Such materials require a good command of general and legal English language. The vast majority of the College graduates are below 5 on the IELTS when they graduate. One of the participants commented on the strong link between English proficiency and the tasks completed within his/her Law-related job by writing *one of my current job prerequisites was to obtain a 5.5 on the IELTS. Most of my work is about formulating and revising contracts in English and communicating with the different parties concerned.* Another participant commented on his/her lack of knowledge about legal English by asking: *How can I read stuff in English, if we lack it? We have knowledge of general English, but not legal English.* A third participant justified not

reading legal correspondences and references in English by saying *lack of English language knowledge is preventing me from reading legal correspondences and references in English*. The analysis of the data has shown that a relatively high percentage of the participants read legal correspondences in English at variable times.

CILT cannot achieve its aims with one of the two complementary parts missing—language and content and the two complementary discourses—general and legal English. English here has placed itself at the centre of conducting business and justified its choice by the College and SQU as a powerful tool for science and knowledge acquisition. Hence, maximum attention needs to be paid to its means of implementation to ensure equipping students with language and content.

One can also argue that such materials are very rarely read because students at the College are seldom, if ever, trained to read materials other than the notes occasionally prepared by some faculties and in most cases the mandated textbooks. Textbooks to some faculties at the College are considered sacred and the sole source of knowledge and information. In other words, a good number of the faculties prefer choosing and strictly adhering to teaching from a certain textbook, finishing it and basing all the tests on it. Religious adherence to teaching from a single textbook has been justified in the literature as a sign of the instructor's incompetence in the subject matter and his/her lack of confidence and security to move beyond the prescribed texts (Skehan 1996). This strict adherence puts the instructor in a comfort zone and prevents him/her from receiving any embarrassing questions s/he may not know the answers for. This is best achieved through confining students to a single prescribed source of interested and selected knowledge sufficiently known to the instructor. One can argue that students not trained to read such materials find it hard to appreciate the value of these materials. In fact, there have been different and repeated verbal and written complaints by some students over the past years about the poor level of some of the Omani and expatriate faculties in the content area.

Reading the aforementioned texts, thus allows for the development of the target language implicitly. This is one of the aims of the CILT approach. Reading authentic texts and materials exposes students to different kinds of grammar, vocabulary, and styles, which has positive implications for the students' overall language development. Krashen (2003) argues that 'many studies confirm that those who read more write better' (p. 4) and that '...it is reading, not instruction, that helps us develop a good writing style' (p. 4).

It is worth mentioning that four different high achieving students are being selected every year to participate in the International Commercial Arbitration Competition held annually in Vienna, Austria since 2009, where everything is conducted in the English language. Over 300 Law colleges from more than 70 countries round the world compete against each other. The competition aims at developing students' knowledge about International Commercial Law and trains them to deal with arbitration as an internationally recognized and commonly used method of dispute resolution. The first phase of the competition requires students to write legal memoirs about certain selected cases, while in the second phase the competing teams produce a verbal pleading. The competition obviously requires students to work collaboratively, draw on their receptive and productive linguistic and content knowledge in a creative, innovative and reflective manner, interact meaningfully with each other and prepare extensively through integrating the four language skills.

However, the reasons for the high percentage of participants never writing pleadings, legal memoirs, legal consultations, responses to legal and non-legal correspondences, and to their colleagues, as shown by the analysis of the data, could be attributed to the lack of need to carry out such activities, as the language of official correspondences in Oman is Arabic. Writing in English is practised widely in different private sector workplaces like Law firms,

banks and companies, where large numbers of non-Arab expatriates are found and where international business relations are most active. The government has occasionally stressed the role of the private sector as a strategic partner in advancing the economy of the Sultanate through creating white-collar jobs for the graduates. Therefore, proper implementation of CILT can help contribute to achieving this aim.

It is important to mention that while jobs related to Law are available in the local market, employers rightly have their criteria and conditions, which pose a great challenge for the College about how to prepare its students. It is interesting to know that some of the very few more linguistically capable graduates accepted offers from different Law firms in the neighbouring countries (Qatar and the UAE), on the basis of their English language adequacy and due to better financial benefits. One of the participants commented on the very close relationship between English proficiency and economic benefits by saying *if you have English competence, your salary will be doubled*. Ashworth (1985) writes that 'improved language skills may be the key to jobs for the unemployed or to better jobs for the employed' (p. 101). In Higher Education (HE), as it is the case in this study, 'globalisation influences both language use and the economics of HE' (Coleman 2006, p. 1). Coleman comments that 'while the global status of English impels its adoption in Higher Education, the adoption of English in Higher Education further advances its global influence' (p. 4). Proper implementation of CILT can ensure, however, that the contribution of the distinguished Omani graduates is made to their local contexts, rather than exported to other places and contexts.

Most of the private sector companies and the Law firms thus recruit non-Omani personnel with an operational command of and skill in English who are usually assigned producing these written texts for their employers. The large number of skilled expatriate labour force is an impediment to Omanisation.

The writing activities discussed here are important and relevant for the students' future. The analysis of the data has shown that there are variable percentages of participants, who write legal and non-legal texts and documents, with the latter being more practised. Faculties are responsible for engaging students in such activities and striking a balance between the two types of language. The uses of English language extend beyond professional and vocational purposes. Students, therefore, have different levels of interest in the target language and purposes for learning it, which need to be attended to and developed.

7.2 Psychological development

The analysis of the data has revealed that a high percentage of the participants never or rarely speak English to their colleagues and non-Arabic speaking clients. Participants could be conscious about their poor command of English and, hence, lack confidence and feel embarrassed to orally communicate in English. Certain individuals suffer from fear of evaluation and hence are sensitive about their oral output and prefer to avoid making mistakes and being corrected. Tallon (2009) points out that one of the most important affective variables in learning a foreign language is foreign language anxiety. Crookall and Oxford (1991) assert that serious language anxiety may adversely affect students' self-esteem, self-confidence, and ultimately hamper proficiency in language acquisition.

Faculties, therefore, have a responsibility to adopt good-quality learning design through providing opportunities for authentic learning, which are situated in a real-life context and simulates the learning activities of the students' potential employment area. Faculties need to reinforce the uses of the target language through engaging students in activities like role plays and simulations, which have been applied as a common pedagogical tool for decades,

and which according to [Poorman \(2002\)](#), increase students' interest in the subject matter and understanding of the course content and rid students from being passive recipients of their instructors' knowledge, generate greater student participation ([Hensley 1993](#)), promote better relations between the student and the teacher ([Newmann and Twigg 2001](#)), provide student progressing mechanism ([Wheeler 2006](#)) and increase student participation and motivation ([Shellman and Turan 2006](#)). [Dörnyei \(2001\)](#) thus considers making learning stimulating and enjoyable, presenting tasks in a motivating way and building learners' self-esteem and confidence as fundamental classroom strategies needed to foster students' motivation in a CILT-governed system. [Li and Pan \(2009\)](#) suggest that 'teachers should concentrate on increasing students' motivation and developing the skills or strategies to make them more competent so that they are able to take ownerships of their own learning (p. 127).

The so-called 'legal' version of these activities that corresponds to role plays and simulations is workshops, seminars, debates, moot courts, arbitrations and legal clinics. It is noteworthy that as a part of the new degree plan, the College of Law Board submitted a suggestion to SQU regarding establishing a Centre for Legal Aids, Centre for Reconciliation and Arbitration and an Academic Centre for Legal Aids (Legal Clinic) to introduce and enhance the practical aspect of the programme. However, while the third Centre received the initial approval from the Academic Council, certain legal restrictions have inhibited the establishment of the first two Centres where some amendments to the University's bylaw have to be made.

While the aforementioned are advantages of role plays and simulations, as reported by authors who are external to the legal field, they perfectly apply to activities like workshops, seminars, debates, moot courts, arbitrations and legal clinics in terms of the purposes served by each type within the context of this study. The resemblance between both types of activities is substantial due to the interrelatedness of disciplines today.

These activities are thus mainly found in a foreign/second language classroom. Nevertheless, faculties of Law can consult their ELT counterparts at the College about the design and implementation of such activities. Collaboration within the context of the College of Law will support learning, enhance professional development, and subsequently positively impact the implementation of the new degree plan.

Looking at it from a different angle, such activities further reduce the teacher's control and authority over knowledge provision and talking time, and redefine his/her roles and responsibilities inside the SQU College of Law classroom as a facilitator, manager, and supervisor of learning.

On the other hand, the aforementioned discussion has shown that there is a good level of awareness about the uses and values of English in the Law job market. Along with this comes motivation to learn and perform well in the target language. This appears evidently in the analysis of the data where almost one third of the participants either sometimes or always speak English to their colleagues at work and to non-Arabic clients and respond orally to legal consultations. Within the premises of the College of Law, an English Language Group that was established in 2007 and comprised of around 25–30 'autonomous' students, who were 'intrinsically' motivated. This Group used to produce activities pertinent to English language. Examples are acting English plays on the College stage, giving public awareness talks about the importance of English language, and participating in the annual College Cultural Forum held in April with different printed materials pertinent to legal English that reflect the importance of English as an international language and significant tool for science acquisition. [Oxford and Ehrman \(1993\)](#) state that research shows that '...students who are more motivated develop stronger overall L2 proficiency' (p. 191). [Deci and Ryan \(1985\)](#) claim that learners who are interested in learning tasks and outcomes for their own sake rather than for rewards are likely to become more successful and effective learners.

Furthermore, a number of graduates and students, who are 'instrumentally' motivated, join the different private English language institutions found in the Sultanate like The British Council, The English Language Services, Australia Hawthorne and Polyglot, while the more financially capable others travel to U.K. and Australia during the summer holiday to enrol in language improvement courses. Such students are driven by their instrumental motivation and awareness of the significant role English plays in the job market. One of the participants wrote in support of this saying *you need to travel to an English-speaking country to improve your English. You also need to practice it in different contexts and with different people.* Exposure to authentic and different levels of the target language in multiple contexts and practising it for genuine purposes and in authentic contexts is an important strategy adopted by learners of English as a foreign language, and one which CILT faculties should take into account inside the classroom.

However, this is not the only out-of-class strategy which drives students' instrumental motivations and through which students attempt to improve their general and legal linguistic abilities. One of the participants wrote saying *I am working in translation at present to increase my exposure to legal terminology.* Another participant wrote *I read stories and watch English-medium programmes like the news, films and dramas to improve my English language.* A third participant wrote *I watch a lot of American drama about courts and crimes to help me improve my legal terminology.* Another participant commented *I would like to advise every College graduates to take intensive English language courses to improve their professional output.* A fifth participant commented saying *I am asking my employer to help me enrol in English language improvement courses.* Scarcella and Oxford (1992) state that 'motivation often leads learners to use a variety of learning strategies that can develop greater skill in language learning' (p. 191).

There is an interesting combination of out-of-class strategies here that highlight the importance of the cultural dimension in learning a subject matter like Law through a dominantly international language like English. English is playing a significant part in the global village and in bridging any geographical gaps between the world's different cultures so as to equip citizens with global awareness. If properly implemented, CILT can achieve the transition and breakthrough SQU and the College have been pursuing in terms of language and content acquisition, especially that the adoption of most of these strategies is driven by the students' motivation and involves integrating language and content to learn language through content and content through language.

7.3 Social development

The analysis of the data has revealed that a relatively high percentage of participants never speak in English at work with their colleagues. This could be due to the fact that their colleagues are Omanis or Arab expatriates, where communication in Arabic is more efficient and meaningful. This is mostly the case in the public sector organisations.

In addition, the relatively high percentage of participants not responding orally to legal consultations in English or using English in meetings at work, is possibly attributed to their jobs and workplaces, where Arabic is the medium of communication. Examples of these workplaces are some ministries, while examples of these jobs are Court Executive Officer, Public and Deputy Public Prosecutor, and Bayliss.

However, the analysis of the data has shown that the participants speak English more than they read or write it. This is particularly the case with Items 12 and 13, which are associated with speaking to colleagues at work and to non-Arabic speaking clients, respectively.

Colleagues here could be non-Arabic speaking or Arabs who prefer to code mix and code switch between Arabic and English. Hussein (1999) and Taha (2008) found that code mixing and code switching between Arabic and English by many educated Arabs is becoming a trend. One of the participants wrote about the centrality of English language for contact with non-Arabic speaking clients by saying *English is important for those working in Law firms as they come into close contact with non-Arabic speaking clients*. Another participant asserted that *English language is important for communicating with non-Arabic speaking clients*. A third participant provided a complementary comment to the aforementioned ones by saying *many of our office clients are non-Arab expatriates who have legal problems*.

The role of the CILT classroom is to equip students with the ability to fluently send and receive messages in real-life situations, which within the context of this study, entail English for everyday use and legal English. Law firms are thus specific contexts, which require a specific language genre, discourse and vocabulary that can be carefully integrated with the general English discourse to ensure its development.

Role plays and simulations have been highlighted as activities that help improve interpersonal skills (Teahan 1975), improve communication skills (Huyack 1975), enhance communication (Ettkin and Snyder 1972), trains students to take responsibility (Jones 1982), help students draw on their background knowledge and acquire new information and knowledge (Lloyd 1998), allow students to experience content directly (Rockler 1978), engage students in complex social processes (Shellman 2004), improve knowledge retention and long-term student learning (Hertel and Millis 2002), bring real-world learning to the classroom (Lunce 2006) and engage students actively in their own learning (Campbell and McCabe 2002).

7.4 Cognitive development

The analysis of the data has shown that there are graduates who read different legal print materials in English at variable degrees. This particularly applies to cases and correspondences, which are the most practiced legal reading activities in the job market in Oman and perhaps worldwide. Faculties are responsible for selecting their materials to include such texts and others, as the analysis of the data has shown that there are variable percentages of participants, who sometimes read references, books, and research articles in their work places. It is pivotal that faculties are aware of these reading activities and, hence, think and work towards establishing a solid link between their practices and the job market's. Students at the College need to see the relevance of what they are doing in the classroom and its direct relationship to their future to be able to appreciate its value and significance. This is bound to make education meaningful to them.

Faculties are also expected to design activities that promote thinking analytically about such texts. Students at the College repeatedly complained about being asked to read texts that range from relatively long to very long and memorize them for the exam. While texts provide information and facts about a certain topic and subject, they also contain hidden messages and meanings that require mining, link to other relevant aspects in a similar or different area or branch of study due to the interrelatedness of different academic disciplines, entail significant knowledge acquired by the students earlier and related to the topic being discussed. Through careful choice of texts that are rich in language and content, students can be asked, for example, to look for certain key information through skimming and scanning a text. Furthermore, they can be asked to read a text intensively and answer different kinds of subjective and objective language and content-related comprehension questions. Moreover, students can be asked to read a text critically and discuss it in groups and/or pairs, as academic

work is naturally open to different interpretations. They can also be asked to read more than one text at the same time and compare and contrast between the two in terms of discourse and content. In addition, students can be asked to read to solve a problem and summarize and present the main ideas in the text in front of class using PowerPoint slides, as all classrooms at SQU are equipped with this facility.

It is thus unfortunate to know that PowerPoint slides are used occasionally by some faculties to lecture their lessons through repeating the content of the slides verbatim, which causes boredom to the students, does not significantly add to their knowledge and reflects a misleading picture about the use of technology in education. This can unfortunately have negative implications for student thinking and attitudes.

Apart from the first two aforementioned activities (look for certain key information through skimming and scanning a text and read a text intensively and answer different kinds of subjective and objective language and content-related comprehension questions), the rest, which require higher-order cognitive skills, unfortunately do not have a place even on the Omani school curriculum, despite their importance for the job market. While these activities take reading as their departure point, they integrate the four skills in a meaningful way that allows substantial exposure to and practice of the target language in its general and subject content forms. Faculties through implementing these activities are thus required to pay as much equal attention as possible to the language and content aspects in the selected texts, as [Gabbalo \(2010\)](#) reminds us, to help students make the most of the experience.

Activities like role plays and simulations thus facilitate the development of innovative and creative thinking ([de Freitas 2006](#)), prepare students for workplace challenges through providing a mean for students to directly experience problem solving episodes ([Brow et al. 1989](#)), increase learning ([Fogg 2001](#)) and 'encourage critical thinking ... and allow students to apply key concepts and knowledge gained through readings and lectures to real problems' ([Raines 2003](#), p. 432).

7.5 Cultural development

As a language of wider communication, English at present is a powerful tool for facilitating internationalisation, globalisation and cultural fusion. One of the aims of teaching Law through English at the College and adopting CILT has been to achieve this aim, as Oman and Omanis cannot live in isolation from the rapidly shrinking world. Language and culture are interwoven; and culture is a central component of any social science and Law is no exception. Particular reference here is being made to the Commercial Law, International Law and Human Rights Law, which require international relations and interaction. Reading legal books and research, which have been found rarely conducted by the research participants, about the theory and practice of Law in other countries can expose the students to legal knowledge pertinent to other (English-speaking) cultures. Put differently, Law is not practised in the same way in all countries, nor are the theories governing those practices constructed as a one-size-fits-all. Hence, reading texts from different contexts is bound to contribute to broadening and deepening the students' legal cultural and global knowledge and awareness. It further puts the students in a strong position to critically reflect on and make informed and independent decisions about the means of applying any relevant theories and adapting practices for their future job and be responsible for such decisions. In the current era of globalisation and internationalisation, a fundamental aim of education at the College of Law should be to prepare students with linguistic and legal ability to help them function in any sector, organisation and context.

7.6 Academic development

The analysis of the data has revealed that a high percentage of the participants hardly write different legal texts in English at work. One can attribute this to the way they have been trained at the College. The students' written output at the College of Law has always been poor quantitatively and qualitatively. Throughout their four-year programme, students hardly produce any written texts that require using higher-order cognitive skills. They are usually confined to taking notes during most of their lectures and produce an assignment for some courses. A large number of these assignments are copied and pasted from online sources or different hard copy references. Academic writing is fundamental for college students. It is important, hence, that students are trained to produce original pieces of writing that reflect their thinking skills.

Thus, different College graduates have opted for pursuing their postgraduate studies in English-speaking countries. They were either self-financed or awarded a scholarship from their employers. A second category of graduates are those selected and appointed by SQU as demonstrators and sent to read for their Master and Ph.D. degree programmes in one of the top ten universities in one of the English-speaking countries. Research shows (Naqvi 2001) that education in the English-speaking countries is demanding and challenging for Arab learners as it stresses the use of higher-order cognitive skills, which Arab learners are not trained to do. The vast majority of these students also attend a language improvement course for 6–12 months to raise their level in general and academic English to 6.5–7.5 on the IELTS, which is the requirement of most of the universities in the English-speaking countries for pursuing a postgraduate programme. These courses cost approximately U.S. \$30,000–40,000. It is important, therefore, that education at the College of Law, prepares students for partly achieving this aim, as Oman is short of highly qualified personnel in Law with a bilingual ability, who can facilitate Omanisation and contribute to the welfare of the local economy.

CILT also involves integrating more than one productive and receptive skills simultaneously in meaningful and authentic language input and output contexts to facilitate 'academic communication' (Nordmeyer 2010). Language here should be seen as a complete system, which entails knowledge of relevant structural and lexical items and discourse rules (Sherris 2008) drawn on interactive real-life situations. This is particularly the case when some of the aforementioned examples like watching English-medium programmes and translating from Arabic to English are taken into account, as they require full operational command of English and as much complete understanding of general and legal English in different contexts as possible, since accuracy and fluency in the former mode of language is prerequisite for achieving the latter.

8 Conclusion

This study aimed to research the uses of the English language for the College of Law graduates in the job market through administrating a questionnaire on 182 of the College graduates working in different places and sectors in the Sultanate of Oman. The findings have had their implications for the faculties' practices, whose role is pivotal in implementing the new degree plan at the College.

The analysis of the data and discussion revealed that the decision to shift to a partly bilingual programme is commendable as there are multiple significant uses of English in the Law-related jobs in the local job market and beyond. Therefore, the new degree plan has the potential to be successful provided careful and close attention is paid to implementation to

ensure adoption of pedagogical approaches, methods and practices that are in harmony with the philosophy and principles of CILT.

The College faculties are in a powerful position to make or break the new degree plan through the pedagogical choices and practices they opt for. They hence pose a great challenge for SQU. This study has thus brought to the fore the crucial impact faculties can have on policy implementation, or otherwise. College faculties, like teachers, are powerful socialisation and enculturation agents, who can affect their students' thinking for good or bad. No studies prior to this, at least according to the author's knowledge, have tackled such a topic.

Thus, considerable time, energy, effort and financial resources have been invested in the formulation of the new degree plan, so as to yield satisfactory results that would fix the University's and College's extensively distorted image and reputation and better influence the higher education and economy sectors of the Sultanate. This study brought to the fore the important and crucial decision and much awaited one by a large number of students and a few faculties at the College, regarding integrating English language and Law so as to prepare the graduates to serve their country and themselves better. This appears evidently in some of the comments made by some of the study participants in the space provided on the questionnaire, which were almost unanimously critical of the status of English on the College curriculum and the negative effect that has had on their recruitment and career growth. This should provoke further research in the near future through which responses of the first cohort are collected about different implementation aspects with an aim to identify additional implications for policy-practice improvement.

9 Appendix: Uses of English at workplace

No.	Statement	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Always (%)
1	I read legal cases in English	36.7	27.1	32.5	3.6
2	I read legal correspondences in English	32.5	25.9	27.7	13.9
3	I read legal references in English	42.2	31.3	20.5	6
4	I read legal books in English	48.8	29.5	18.1	3.6
5	I read legal research in English	56.6	27.7	11.4	4.2
6	I write pleadings in English	72.9	13.9	12	1.2
7	I write legal memoirs in English	69.1	14.5	12.7	2.6
8	I write legal consultations in English	64.8	13.3	15.8	6.1
9	I write responses to legal correspondences in English	56	18.1	15.1	10.8
10	I write responses to general/non-legal correspondences in English	48.2	16.9	21.7	13.3
11	I write in English to my colleagues at work	50	21.1	22	7.9
12	I speak in English to my colleagues at work	35.4	23.8	28.7	12.2
13	I speak in English to the non-Arabic speaking clients	27.1	25.3	35.5	12
14	I respond orally in English to legal consultations	44.2	26.1	22.4	7.3
15	English is the medium of communication at meetings	47	24.7	21.1	7.2

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