

THE INTEGRATED PROCESS OF TEACHING LEGAL ENGLISH TO LAW STUDENTS

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Taking into consideration an increasing importance of English in international business and law, non-native English-speaking law students and professionals are seeking specialized legal English training. This training is now offered by universities and colleges, as well as through specific courses. Traditional English language lessons may not be enough for lawyers, as it often neglects the specific language requirements of legal practice and the conventions of legal English itself, a global phenomenon also known as “legalese”.

Undoubtedly, the advantages of legal textbooks are an important resource for teachers in assisting students to learn legal English. Textbooks allow teachers to easily design a syllabus with a clear organization and division into units or sections. The continuity of the units makes the course of legal English well organized, integrated and coherent. It is possible to efficiently progress from learning easier legal vocabulary in context to more complicated one using the same textbook. Textbooks provide opportunities for students to develop their language competence and skills through diverse activities: reading legal texts, listening, writing, learning legal vocabulary and necessary phrases for communication, language of negotiation and presentations. Thus, graded texts from textbooks can be safely and efficiently used while teaching legal English [1].

In teaching legal English, the legal vocabulary is usually found in texts which seem to be the greatest lexical source. Legal textbooks provide texts which are frequently written specially for learners and can be defined as legalized texts. They can be concise, based on certain topics. Texts are usually supplemented by a glossary, comprehension questions, various tasks, comments, notes, which considerably facilitate the understand of the message, ideas and language of the text. The textbook strives to provide a framework for practicing use of legal language. Thus, even though most legal textbooks oversimplify the law, they still retain legal vocabulary and teach the legal language [2].

Authentic legal texts have many advantages. First of all, learners of legal English feel comfortable in the familiar subject area, the texts are relevant to their studies, they are interesting to the students as they deal with the specific area of their profession – law. While reading the texts written by native speakers, the students get a better idea about how language is used in their profession in real life, outside the classroom. They are

simultaneously provided with cultural and professional background. A very suitable texts corresponding to the level of the students may not always be readily accessible to the teacher. Many learners could agree that authentic texts are sometimes very difficult highly technical, written for a specialist audience with insider knowledge and can be very difficult even for the teacher to understand. Moreover, these texts frequently need to be supplemented by useful tasks, which is the teacher's concern to design them in comparison, the textbooks provide a great variety of ready-made exercises [3].

The Internet is one of the most invaluable sources of authentic materials. As the Internet has transformed communication around the world, it is natural that it plays a major role in the foreign language classroom. The Internet, as a modern-day reality, seems to be one of the most useful sources of working with authentic legal texts. For most teachers of legal English, the newspapers and any other printed material date very quickly, the Internet is continuously updated, more visually stimulating as well as being interactive, therefore promoting a more active approach to reading rather than a passive one. First, nowadays most students enjoy working with computers and find this way of learning highly motivating and attractive. Furthermore, looking for materials in the Internet costs nothing, only time. Additionally, the Internet provides versatile sources of authentic legal texts. Students can read the cases of the European Court of Human Rights or the European Court of Justice, the websites of distinguished law schools, articles written and edited by professional legal analysts providing concise assessments of recent judicial opinions and legislative and regulatory actions, feature articles contributed by law firm partners, in-house counsels, and law professors, regulatory and legislative matters, legal documents: contracts, licenses, memorandums, court pleadings: summonses, briefs, judgments, Acts of parliament and subordinate legislation, EU legislation and other law-related issues.

Teachers could easily enrich their classes by designing interactive exercises on legal vocabulary themselves by using special computer programs whose suite includes six applications, enabling the teachers to create interactive multiple-choice, short-answer, jumbled sentence, crossword, matching/ordering and gap-fill exercises for the World Wide Web. This program is invaluable for teaching vocabulary, developing reading skills. Even students themselves can create tasks based on authentic texts or recordings. Both reading and listening are considered as receptive skills, as well as writing and speaking are productive abilities. In the teaching process the development of listening skills is the part of effective communication as listening develops not only competence in listening and speaking, it leads to critical thinking as well. However, very often students know and recognize the legal terms and other semi-technical words when they are presented

visually but they do not recognize them in a spoken utterance. The main cause of this communication problem is the disability of listeners to recognize the words in the pace they are spoken, they are unable to use their legal vocabulary knowledge under the time pressure. The awareness of the difference between the text which is meant to be heard and the one to be read is of the greatest importance. Speech has such features as different accents and pronunciation, hesitations in speech delivery, incomplete utterances, rephrasing, unconventional syntax. Readers normally deal with the final product of writing and have little or no difficulty with recognition of words as they have clearly expressed beginnings and endings whereas listeners have to process a speech stream consisting of series of words. By using authentic legal or legalized listening materials the students are given the possibility to develop the skills needed to comprehend and to use the language that is commonly found in real life situations, they are assisted in understanding the content and the purposes of the different types of spoken genres in a legal context, such as job interviews, lawyer-client interviews, providing advice, professional discussions with colleagues, negotiations, seminars and conferences [4].

Legalized listening texts are usually provided by the authors of modern legal language in textbooks, whereas, authentic legal texts have not been specially prepared for legal English learners and they are delivered via technologies like radio, television, video, the Internet. The Internet offers a wide range of listening practice for students. It is particularly useful for teachers teaching professional English in a very precise area – law, as Internet users can access variety of material produced by native speakers. The greatest advantage of the Internet is that audio material that is available is much more up-to-date than podcasts or recorded materials, it takes into account not only recent language reforms but also forthcoming changes to the legal system in the United Kingdom, The USA and other English speaking countries – for example, there is access to the latest news as many radio stations offer the possibility to listen to live broadcast. As well as offering live broadcasts, there are opportunities to listen to recorded audio and video clips on the Internet or DVD, which means that students can work at their own pace and listen to more complicated sections of the recording several times, and to read accompanying transcripts before, after or during the listening. The authors of the course books created tasks based on listening to legal issues, the tasks are of great help for teachers and students to develop listening and speaking skills on topics such as types and sources of law, international treaties, the European Union and state governing issues, constitution, human rights and democracy, civil and criminal procedures, contracts and corporations, etc. Moreover, listening to legal texts is

successfully used as an alternative way of introducing a new topic or new legal terms (rather than using a text) and developing note-taking skills [2; 3].

Writing is also an important part in the professional life of a lawyer. It is a very complicated productive skill in which the lawyer or the paralegal has to practice a lot. Writing in a professional context doesn't make the life of the writer easy and it becomes even more difficult when this writing occurs in a second language, since while writing the writer has to take into consideration the social and the cultural context or aspect in which it occurs. The reasons might be different starting from the fact that the mother tongue and the second language do not have the same structures. Legal writing as one of the types of ESP writing is one of the most complicated ones, since the writing process here doesn't imply only the physical aspect of it but also the legal reasoning that is behind it. A good piece of writing in Legal English means a lot of practice in learning how to write it, after the writer has gathered the information done the reasoning and at the putting everything into black on white. Legal writing has undergone through a long way to become what is now, in the sense that it has changed through time, since different approaches have been used. On the other side, the modern tendencies toward legal writing might be considered as revolutionary, since at the very foundation of these modern tendencies stays the Plain English that differently from the previous practices bases on simple, precise and understandable writing for the average citizen [5].

The purpose of teaching legal English writing or legal writing even in mother tongue, since the problem is found even here, is not to make these students get accustomed to the pompousness of the legal jargon or the legal English, the purpose is not to urge the students to be average legal writers with a wordy stuffy, artificial, and in most of the cases with an ungrammatical style of writing, but to make them learn the subtleties of legal writing in order not to be a mediocre writer that might be derided for the haughty writing he has produced.

The most challenging and difficult aspect of using authentic legal texts seems to be designing effective tasks as authentic materials have not been meant for learning. It was mentioned above that usually the teacher has to design multipurpose tasks for authentic texts to enhance the use and value of such texts. One of the greatest advantages of reading authentic texts is drawing vocabulary from texts. For this reason, a great number of tasks can be designed: multiple choice, gap fills, matchings, definitions, crosswords, word search, etc. which would enable law students to easier learn legal terminology. The Internet has endless possibilities to develop coherent and fully combined and interactive authentic materials. Additional materials expand the legal knowledge of the subject area and

include legal materials from around the world on this topic – authentic legislation of different countries. Legal vocabulary exercises include scrambled words and sentences, definitions and a crossword. Grammar exercises are quick reviews of the grammar the students have been exposed to in this unit. There also are listening tasks followed by comprehension exercises. Recordings of native speakers help to develop listening skills of the students. Reading exercises include filling in the gaps, rearranging passages or multiple-choice tasks having read extracts from authentic cases. Writing, one of the most important skills for practicing attorneys, is taught through various tasks concerning letter writing. Moreover, there is the glossary for checking the basic words for the module and adding the new words that law students learn as they go through the materials. All the tasks are interactive; thus, the results and the progress are visible immediately. The developers of such courses aimed at teaching legal English not only by introducing legal terms but also other words related to law, the so-called semi-technical words. The multimedia course illustrates endless possibilities of designing effective integrated tasks based on authentic texts via the Internet [6].

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