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## THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC YEAR IN TEACHING LEGAL ENGLISH FOR LAW MAJORS

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**Abstract.** This article seeks to provide a detailed overview focusing on the significance of an academic year in teaching legal English for law majors at tertiary level. Case study is used to analyze observation data as it is an empirical investigation of contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts. The study is within Tashkent State University of Law (TSUL). One group of first-year students and one group of second-year students of TSUL participated in the study. Two groups were chosen and their classes were observed. After classroom observations, some volunteers were invited to the interview. The data was analyzed based on the Grounded theory as it preserves the holistic nature of the data. The study suggested that starting teaching Legal English from the second academic year would be more useful and practical as the students are likely to have less knowledge on the legal topic when they are freshmen.

**Keywords:** legal English, ESP, legal slang, legal terms of art, case study.

### HUQUQSHUNOS TALABALAR UCHUN YURIDIK INGLIZ TILINI O'QITISHNI BOSHLASHDA O'QUV YILINING AHAMIYATI

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**Annotatsiya.** Ushbu maqolada huquqshunoslik yo'nalishidagi talabalar uchun yuridik ingliz tilini o'rgatishda o'quv yilining ahamiyati haqida umumiy ma'lumotlar berish ko'zda tutilgan. Ma'lumotlar real kontekstga oid zamonaviy hodisalarning empirik tadqiqi hisoblangan case study metodidan foydalangan holda tahlil qilingan. Tadqiqot Toshkent davlat yuridik universiteti (TDYU)da aynan tanlab olingan ikki guruh: birinchi va ikkinchi kurslarda olib borildi. Tanlangan guruhlar darslari kuzatildi, kerakli ma'lumotlar yig'ildi va yakunda ko'ngilli talabalar intervyuga taklif etildi. Ma'lumotlar ularning yaxlit xususiyatini saqlaydigan asosli nazariyaga tayangan holda tahlil qilingan. Tadqiqot natijasi shuni ko'rsatdiki, talabalar bir yil mobaynida huquqiy bilimlarini oshirgani uchun ikkinchi o'quv yili, ya'ni ikkinchi kursdan boshlab yuridik ingliz tilini o'qitish foydali va samarali bo'ladi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** yuridik ingliz tili, ESP, yuridik sleng, yuridik terminlar, keys tahlil qilish metodi.

### ЗНАЧЕНИЕ АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОГО ГОДА В ПРЕПОДАВАНИИ ЮРИДИЧЕСКОГО АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА ДЛЯ ЮРИДИЧЕСКИХ СПЕЦИАЛЬНОСТЕЙ

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**Аннотация.** В этой статье делается попытка предоставить подробный обзор, посвященный значению академического года в преподавании юридического английского языка для юридических специальностей на уровне высшего образования. Тематическое исследование используется для анализа данных наблюдений, поскольку это является эмпирическим исследованием современных явлений в контексте реальной жизни. Обучение проводится в Ташкентском государственном юридическом университете. В исследовании приняли участие две группы студентов первого и второго курса Ташкентского государственного юридического университета. Наблюдение проводили на занятиях этих двух групп. После наблюдений на занятиях некоторые добровольцы из числа студентов были приглашены на интервью. Данные были проанализированы на основе теории обоснованной методологии, поскольку она сохраняет целостный характер данных. Исследование показало, что было бы более полезно и продуктивно начинать преподавание юридического английского языка со второго академического года обучения, поскольку студенты-первокурсники чаще всего не имеют достаточных знаний по юриспруденции.

**Ключевые слова:** юридический английский язык, ESP, юридический сленг, юридические термины, тематическое исследование.

## Introduction

The necessity of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has been prevalent these days. This article focuses on teaching legal English for law majors and the importance of academic year to start teaching at Tashkent State University of Law. In order to be successful in their fields, more and more law major students are being eager to learn legal English so that they can open up more doors of future opportunities. However, having good knowledge in General English is not enough for ambitious students, as they do not have enough chance to learn legal language well. Therefore, the need of being good at legal language has become more prominent than ever before among law students and lawyers who are willing to improve their language for job purposes. Teaching legal English professionally might not be a serious problem with appropriate methods and techniques, but the academic year to commence to teach legal English is supposed to be a challenging case for teachers and instructors. The aim of this article is to investigate the significance of an academic year in teaching legal English for law majors at tertiary level and provide

some suggestions based on the analysis of the data.

In most non-English major Uzbek universities, English for Specific Purposes is a compulsory subject. Students are required to attend the classes, be active, participate in different debates, deal with different assignments etc. In these classes students are given a chance to master their knowledge in English for Specific Purposes. Students of Law Faculties study Legal English. In this faculty students know the importance of Legal English. Therefore, they try to make a lot of efforts to acquire specific terminology as the process of learning this specific language requires time, hard work, practice and persistence as well. Their primary aim is to become successful lawyers, judges or prosecutors.

Law students encounter several obstacles during the learning process of Legal English. The first challenge is related to understanding the content of the subject and expressing this understanding in a manner accepted by the teacher. The reason behind this issue might be connected with the lack of experience as they do not use legal English before [1]. Therefore, this

task can be very challenging for students to study legal terms and understand the deep meaning of them with limited knowledge in General English. They tend to make grammatical or spelling mistakes and in most of the cases they lack vocabulary to express their ideas. Students face many unknown words [2]. In a similar way, Inesa claims that they do not have knowledge regarding legalese which are terms of art used in legal profession, that are not known by people who are specialized in other professions [3]

What makes Legal English so difficult?

In some cases, understanding legal language is difficult, because it is very different from ordinary English. Rupert Haigh postulates [4] [5]two issues:

1. Sentences often have peculiar structures, punctuation is used insufficiently, foreign phrases are sometimes used instead of English phrases, unusual pronouns are employed (for example the aforesaid) and unusual set of phrases are to be found (null and void).

2. A large number of difficult words and phrases are used. These are main categories:

- A. Legal terms of art

Legal terms of art are technical words and phrases that have precise and fixed meanings which cannot usually be replaced by other words. These terms of art in the legal profession are known as legalese. It is easy to use legalized words and phrases among lawyers and law specialists. If a reader is trained in law, using legal terms or phrases is much easier than providing a definition or explanation [6] & [7]. Communicating with other people whose majors are not law related might bring about some failures in understanding the utterances. Therefore, the use of these terms should be avoided. These terms must be defined when communicating with non-lawyers if the meaning of the term is not obvious [8].

- B. Legal jargon

Legal jargons are the words used by lawyers, which are difficult for others to understand. They might be certain obscure words which have complicated meanings and are therefore not often encountered in legal documents. They also include several archaic words which are no longer in use of ordinary English. Some of these are aforesaid, hereinbefore, hereinafter, henceforth, the said party [7].

### **Meaterials and methodology**

#### **1. Research methodology**

Case study is used to analyze observation data as it is an empirical investigation of contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts. Qualitative case studies are typically longitudinal which enables researchers to collect large amounts of data over a long period of time. Data collection and analysis are done simultaneously and recursively [9]. The study is within Tashkent State University of Law (TSUL). All students except those whose major is Public Administration study legal English. Both legal English and general English classes are delivered by the teachers of Foreign languages department. The students have those types of classes three times a week. The aim of the course is to prepare students to use English for their professional studies and consequently for their professional needs in real life and work. This course will further give the students the opportunity to improve their speaking on general topics and communicate in legal environment and to understand texts on basic legal aspects. In this course, three main coursebooks which are The Lawyer's English Language Coursebook (C. Mason & R. Atkins), International Legal English (A. K. Lindner), and Navigate Intermediate level.

First, the researcher observed several classes to see the whole process of the classes; how the classes are organized and

conducted by the teachers and how the students participate in them. By doing so, all necessary data were collected to create interview questions to ask for volunteer students during the interview. All collected data were analyzed based on discourse analysis as it is a tool for understanding authentic spoken interaction.

## 2. Research participants

One group of first-year students and one group of second-year students of TSUL participated in the study. Both groups were controlled groups and they were taught legal topics throughout the whole academic year. First-year students were given legal topics with simple explanations of the words and phrases, with simple tasks and activities, while the second-year students were taught more complicated topics as they had studied the course before. The language proficiency levels of the participants are nearly similar, they only had foundation of English grammar as they were required to take the test in university entrance exams. Only one teacher's classes for both groups were the research focus.

## Research findings

Observation data provided insights into understanding what was happening in the classes. Although the topic and the language were quite easy, it became a bit difficult for the teacher to explain the topic in first group. Then, I observed the lesson of the second group, that is second-year students, with the same teacher. Based on my observations I assumed that the main obstacle that the first group had is the lack of knowledge related to the topic, one example the language of Employment law. As they were freshmen, they were not aware of the some of the topics which were included into the syllabus of the legal English course. However, the second group showed their active participation and understanding the given topics by

translating the terminology in the topics into their native language (Uzbek). It led me to assume that having the basic knowledge about the topic that is being discussed is crucial in ESP learning. In order to find out if my hypothesis was true or not, I invited only volunteer participants to the individual interviews so that I could get much deeper and fuller understanding of the case. 7 students, 4 from the first group and 3 from the second, had an interview with me and I asked very few questions such as "Has the topic been easy or difficult to understand for you? Why?". Below I will present their answers. The name of the participants have been coded.

Participants from the first group

Participant 1

"Today we talked about Contract law. It was a bit difficult to understand for me, because we did not study this topic in our main subjects"

Participant 2

"Today's topic has been difficult for me, because I did not understand the words well like hereinafter, therein...I have never seen these words before".

Participant 3

"not so difficult, because I watched some videos about contracts a week ago, if I'm not mistaken".

Participant 4

"I can say I understood the topic, but not so deeply. Our teacher explained four main elements of a contract, but I didn't understand well the last two elements although my teacher explained it twice. I think I don't have enough knowledge".

Participants from the second group

Participant 5

"Our topic was Real property law, and I understood well. Because we talked about this topic in our major subject a month ago and I have some basic knowledge about it, that's why, maybe I understood well".



**Participant 6**

"Today we talked about Real property law. It is one of the familiar topics that we had discussed before. It has been very easy to remember the words because I saw the translations of some words in our main subject".

**Participant 7**

"Topic is easy to understand, I think we need to learn the words and remember them. We learned them by doing some activities in the class. It will be useful if I use them a lot".

**Review of research findings**

Based on the participants' answers, I can assume that having a basic knowledge about a new topic in legal context is very important as it helps to grasp what the students are learning and what they are talking about. It gets them to be engaged with topic and activities well and they can participate actively in the classes. Moreover, it helps students to give their opinions and prove them with articles or precedents, and elaborate on their answers for the given questions. It also gives an opportunity to work collaboratively. Through collaborative learning, students participate more. They learn how to compromise and how to encourage one another. Therefore, students should make use of other students' help as language resources. Sometimes giving students' responsibilities by assigning them roles is the best solution [10]. By having roles, students become more responsible and aware of their purpose by staying concentrated most of the time.

**Conclusions**

The need for English for Specific Purposes has become a necessity nowadays. Many people are eager to become successful in different fields. English has become a key component in helping them achieve professional and career development. Law

students encounter many challenges during the learning process of Legal English. They face difficulties understanding the content of the subject and they lack vocabulary to express their ideas. Some students have limited knowledge in General English [11]. Teachers as well face many challenges while teaching Legal English. Teaching Legal English is a huge challenge for teachers who are not experts in law. Teachers face problems since they have to teach content in an area of study about which they have little knowledge, [12]; [13]. Team-teaching proves to be very helpful for ESP teachers. In this case the ESP teacher collaborates with a subject specialist. Legal English teachers can effectively cooperate with Law teachers. Legal English is characterized by a special language, which included legal terms of art, legal jargon, word with and different meaning in General English in Legal English, words that are used in a peculiar context, lack of punctuation and the use of doublets and triplets [14]; [15]. The suggestions from this study can be that starting teaching Legal English from the second academic year would be more useful and practical as the students are likely to have less knowledge on the legal topic when they are freshmen. Then, the teachers will not need to explain the topic from the legal side which is not their duty. Conversely, language teachers will teach only the language of the legal topic and encourage the students to use legal vocabulary in real-life contexts. Finally, Legal English teachers can be effective in multilevel classes by showing enthusiasm, managing the classroom, involving all the students in the lesson, using a variety of teaching styles and methodologies, paying attention to individual needs, providing frequent feedback to students and motivating students to keep improving their knowledge.

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