
THE ROLE OF INTERRELATION BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND LAW FOR MASTERING LEGAL ENGLISH

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Abstract. This article deals with the problem of legal language mastering and the importance of interrelation between language and law for teaching and learning legal English. It specifies the importance of legal content knowledge on successful teaching and learning of legal terminology. The paper also indicates the best teaching method of English legal language dependable on content and points out how much context information should be given to students. In proof of it, the author analyses the results of survey given to English learning students complementing them with theory and personal teaching experience. As the results of the survey show, the participants cognize particular role of legal content for studying legal English.

Keywords: legal English, content, legal terms, teaching methods.

INTRODUCTION

While teaching and learning English for legal purposes one of the most difficult tasks is to master specific terminology. Despite the fact that some legal terms are widely used in everyday language, there are words and phrases that can have unexpected meaning. Moreover, terms having specific meanings in legal language exist and it implies that a part of legal content knowledge is completely understandable. On the other hand, since legal language is formed by legal system where it is used, legal terms reflect certain legal systems and differences between them.¹ As a result, terms are indistinguishable from law.

Legal language is difficult to teach and learn owing to its nature. In order to raise learners' linguistic abilities and secure successful transfer of information in legal sphere, a teacher of legal language is confronted with specialized text structures, formal language of legal documents, long and complicated sentence structures and notably problem-oriented vocabulary. In the process of legal language teaching special attention to the meanings of notably problem-oriented vocabulary has to be paid. Applying on content knowledge we can make a logical assumption about certain preconceived notion on legal knowledge. Namely law and its specialists have structured unique legal concepts that can be effectively expressed

¹ Slatter, T., Gleason, J. (2012). *Integrating Language and Content: The Knowledge Framework*. Conference proceedings of Mid TESOL: Gateway to global citizenship. University of Saint Louis.

applying legal slang.² Whereas legal concepts are formed by certain legal system where they have been developed and used, they reflect not only a content but also certain legal culture and differences between them: that is why they are indistinguishable from law.³ Such close contact between law and legal language influences language mastering inevitably strongly and requires special teaching methods.

The **aim** of the article is to investigate the role of relationship between language and legal content knowledge for teaching and learning legal English.

The **tasks** of the article are:

- 1) to find out students' perceptions about the importance of legal content on studying legal English;
- 2) to indicate the best teaching method of English legal language;
- 3) to point out the most effective source to master legal English.

The **methods** used in the research are observation, questionnaire and the analysis of scientific works.

With reference to students' questioning survey results, theory and author's teaching experience, the article proves the importance of content knowledge on successful mastering of legal language and the demand of integrated language and subject content while teaching legal English.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE AND SUBJECT CONTENT INTEGRATION

One of the essential special language features is close correlation between language and subject content teaching. Language courses are based on contents of different educational subjects. Whereas interdisciplinary is undoubtedly key feature of foreign language courses, it is not surprising that the integration of language and subject content is one of the main problems in discussing and planning the programme of specialty foreign language courses.⁴

The demand of interdisciplinary in legal English course is significantly higher than in other courses because legal language due to its specificity is indistinguishable from law and legal system where it is used. Therefore, learners have to understand content and meaning of

² Gibbons, J. (2006). *Language and The Law*. The Handbook of Applied Linguistics. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

³ Pukienė, A., Sedliorienė, R. (2012). *Turinio ir kalbos integravimo efektyvumas mokant verslo anglų kalbos gramatikos*. Šiuolaikinio specialisto kompetencijos: teorijos ir praktikos dermė. IV-osios tarptautinės mokslinės-praktinės konferencijos straipsnių rinkinys. Kaunas. 6(1).

⁴ Mačianskienė, N., Bijeikienė, V. (2012). *Integruoto dalyko ir užsienio kalbos mokymo didaktinių kompetencijų ugdymas*. Mokomoji medžiaga. Kaunas.

law itself so that to understand exact meaning of legal language. They have to understand the development of legal concepts and to know how they are used in foreign legal system as well as to compare with mother-country legal system. Consequently, legal language courses in a foreign language are successful if learners are skilled in the sphere of law from former studies or working experience and if they learn a foreign language applying on content and context.⁵ The main issues rising from above mentioned facts are the following: how a language and subject content have to be integrated into specialty foreign language course and what methods are the most suitable in teaching and learning of the language that is dependable on content.

Teaching referring on content can be the answer to both the issues. It is comparatively new methodical attitude towards the mastering of the second language that applies on the simultaneous investigation of language and subject essence⁶, and is different from traditional attitudes towards foreign language teaching. Teaching models are adapted to different teaching surroundings, however, they have become especially popular in the sphere of language teaching and learning.⁷ Applying this method of teaching and learning a certain amount of subject content is integrated into the process of language learning as well as linguistic abilities are taught, i.e. syntax, morphology and semantics are investigated applying on specific context.

During the course of content teaching and learning the attention is applied to from the language itself to the language learning based on actual teaching context. Students achieve the abilities of communication while learning specific topics.⁸ Such teaching model refers to language teaching applying specific content in original context; herewith it is possible that it is the most suitable way to teach a foreign language.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING BASED ON CONTENT

Taking into consideration all the mastering specificities of legal language teaching and learning in the Faculty of Public Security at Mykolas Romeris University, teaching based on content knowledge was accepted as the most suitable method of English language teaching in two semesters. The main purpose of this course is to present general conceptions and terms of

⁵ Liubinienė, V. (2010). *Užsienio kalbos gebėjimų, integruotų su dalyko turiniu, lavinimas aukštojoje mokykloje: KTU atvejis*. Kalbų studijos. 2010; 16(1), p. 101-105.

⁶ Pessoa, S. (2007). *Content-based Instruction in the Foreign language classroom: A discourse Perspective*. Foreign Language Annals. Vol. 40, No1.

⁷ Yoshida, I. (2010). *Teacher vs. Student: The Perspectives on cognitive skills in foreign language learning*. Proceedings, the 24th JLTANE.

⁸ Juez, M. (2006). *Linking language and content: ESL instruction through legal topics*. Proceedings of the 5th International AELFE conference.

law to the first and second year students, to improve their abilities to read and understand legal texts in foreign language and to acquaint students with general aspects of legal systems in foreign countries. Since these courses, first of all, are language courses, they are taught by language teachers and not by content teachers. Although knowledge transfer is secondary matter, teaching that appeals on content has been applied as the most effective way of teaching.

The course of specialty English language is based on topics and involves 14 topics with 90 minutes practice related to different spheres and aspects of English and American law during two semesters. Within specific context different tasks related to English and American legal systems are offered to the learners; it means they study law concepts and terms, syntax, morphology, as well as develop their linguistic abilities in certain spheres of law. During trainings considerable attention is paid to the main features of English and American court system (e.g. court scheme, institutions, legal principles, etc.). Students are acquainted with legal terms in English language; moreover, possible equivalents in Lithuanian legal system are discussed. The aim of such presentation is perfection of meaningful skills of language usage and legal terminology with the help of context and content. While learning about legal principles, traditions, institutions, legal procedures and other significant matters students confront with important Anglo-Saxon factual and linguistic legal attributes, consequently, they develop their knowledge in similarity and difference between Lithuanian and English/American legal systems, conceptions and terminology. After intensive training based on content, students direct their efforts to the text in a student's book that investigate the same topics or the aspects of these topics. In this part the attitude towards language learning is more traditional because students learn text perception, investigate terms and discuss upon structural and stylistic language aspects.

The presented methods proved to be the most suitable because starting learning specialty English language in the first course students do not have knowledge of legal systems both of their country and of foreign countries.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Methods of investigation. In order to evaluate the effectiveness and future possibilities of course perfection it is very important to know students' opinion on content based teaching and learning of English language and ascertain the importance of legal terminology implementation on content knowledge. For this purpose the questioning of the first and

second year students was carried out. There were 89 respondents majoring in Law and Police Activities participating in the questioning.

Questioning survey. In three-part questionnaire the respondents had to answer to open questions and questions that require choosing one answer from several given. In the first part of the questionnaire students indicated the duration of general English language learning and self-assessed their knowledge of general English. Before starting legal English course at university the participants were asked to self-assess the knowledge of Lithuanian and English legal terms. In the second part of the questionnaire the respondents expressed their opinion on the importance and suitable method of teaching and learning in mastering legal English terms. Also, students indicated the importance of general English, legal terms and legal systems as well as various references in order to successful implementation of legal terms. In multiple choice answers the respondents indicated the most effective method of legal terms learning, while, answering to an open question, wrote about the difficulties they had had to face learning legal terms. In the third part of the questionnaire the students indicated when, in their opinion, it is the best time to start learning legal English language at university.

Review of survey results. Data collected from the first part of the questionnaire showed that the group is notably homogeneous with regard to both study duration and self-assessment of general English. Therefore, most respondents have been studying English language for 9 years (34,6%), 12 years (29%) or even longer (26,2%). They assessed their knowledge of English language as follows: good (29,4%), very good (47,2%), and excellent (20,1%). The implication is that their level of General English is not an obstacle studying legal English. Speaking about investigated students' legal knowledge before starting studies, most respondents asserted that they had been acquainted with some most general legal concepts that had been used in everyday language (75%), whereas 77,5% of students indicated that they had never been confronted with legal English language. Somewhat smaller part (18,7%) knew several legal English terms that they had learnt watching criminal films and programmes on legal topics on TV. It shows that the majority of students studying legal English and legal content were beginners.

The data of the second part of the questionnaire in table 1 show that 29% of respondents think that for good mastering of legal English language terminology it is important to know legal system of the home country before starting learning specialty foreign language at university. 40% of all participants summed up the fact as very important, and 23,4% assessed it as a particularly important thing. It means that more than 90% of all respondents realize that

if you want to master legal system and terminology of a foreign country you have to cognize legal system and terminology of your own country. Similar number of all respondents assess the knowledge of English legal system and terms as important (40,2%), 25,7% of respondents considered them as very important and 11,7% of investigation participants pointed that such knowledge is particularly important. Totally, 77,6% of all students participating in the survey think that such knowledge is important on purpose to study legal English language successfully.

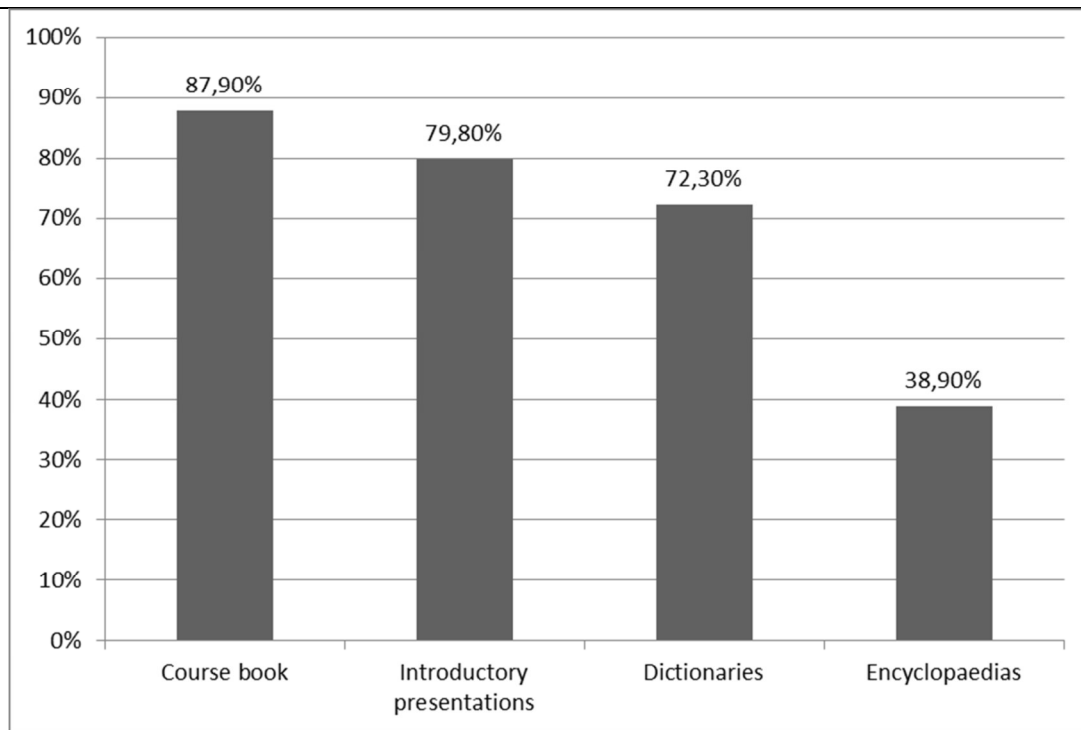
Therefore, it can be concluded that knowledge of legal system and terms of both mother country and a foreign country is important to students. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that students prefer their mother country knowledge of legal system and terminology.

Table 1. The Importance of Students' Perceptions in Mastering Legal English Terms

Legal knowledge	Important	Very important	Particularly important
Legal system and terms of the home country	29%	40%	23,4%
English legal system and terms	40,2%	25,7%	11,7%

In answer to other question students were asked to name particular source of knowledge helping them to study legal English language terminology successfully. The answers to the question showed that a course book is the most important source of knowledge (87,9%) , whereas dictionaries are less important (72,3%). The data in picture 1 show that encyclopaedias of legal terms were indicated by 38,9% of students. However, the results of the survey present that almost 80 % of students appreciate introductory presentations on Lithuanian and English law systems, structures, regulations, etc. made by a teacher. As a result, students highly value the importance of content knowledge in the process of introductory practice for further implementation of legal terms.

Speaking about the most efficient methods of implementation of legal terms, the majority of students understood that the combination of two or more methods of legal terminology learning allowed mastering to be more effective. Collected facts in table reveal that translation of certain terms into mother tongue, for example, finding the equivalent of English legal term in Lithuanian language, is very important to students (62,2%).



Picture 1. Students' Opinion on the Most Effective Sources to Learn Legal Terms

The majority of students also asserted that comparison of Lithuanian and English legal terms facilitated their learning. 45,8% of respondents indicated that this method is particularly rewarding.

According to the survey, the second effective method is explanation of English terms in the context of English law and orders. Even 55,6% of all respondents indicated that it is necessary to learn terminology in original context. Definitions are also popular with students. 23,8% of respondents indicated them as an effective way to learn terms.

Table 2. The Most Effective Methods of Legal Language Mastering

Method	%
Translation of legal terms	62,2
Explanation of English terms in the context of English law and order	55,6
Comparison of Lithuanian and English legal concepts	45,8
Definition of legal terms	23,8

The difficulties that students are confronted with in studying legal terminology prove the conclusion that was drawn according to above mentioned documents. Students emphasize the following three problems:

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1. Lack of legal knowledge;
 2. Absence of English terms in Lithuanian language;
 3. Differences in legal systems of different countries.

It reasserts the importance of legal context in legal language mastering and shows how firmly students value ability to learn using context of English law. The respondents also emphasized that it is very important to know proper Lithuanian equivalents of English terms and to know legal system of their country before starting to learn legal English language.

In the third part of the questionnaire the students expressed their opinions on the most suitable time of starting learning specialty English language course at university. After analyzing students' answers it became clear that 28,3% of students think that the most suitable time to start learning specialty English language is after getting basic knowledge about Lithuanian legal system, whereas 69,9 % of respondents indicated that it would be better to achieve legal knowledge and learn terms at the same time studying English during lessons.

To the last question about students' success in learning legal English language they answered that, in their opinion, they succeeded in integrated language learning and efficiency of content teaching way, which could be applied in future. They also indicate themselves as successful learners of legal English. Almost 40% of all respondents self-assessed themselves as successful learners of legal English, 27% of respondents mentioned as particularly successful and 25% of students as successful.

CONCLUSIONS

As the results of the survey show, the participants of the investigation cognize particular importance of legal content in studying legal English terminology. Precise and accurate mastering of legal vocabulary of a foreign language is facilitated by studying terms and comparing them with legal system and terms in mother country. As a result, it is necessary to link legal language teaching with foreign legal system attributes in order to have possibility to learn using context. In such case, language teaching with reference to content seems to be the most suitable way of legal language teaching. According to the survey, the most effective source to learn legal terms is a course book. What concerns the best time to start legal English course, it can be deduced that if only basics of legal language (that do not need thorough legal knowledge) are taught students can master much more learning from presented content and using parallels with law of mother country. Whereupon, legal language studies can be

sufficiently successful even at the beginning of studies (especially, if the same spheres of law are discussed in other legal courses). However, on the ground of students' answers to many questions and on author's experience, content knowledge is extremely useful, that is why, it is recommended to transfer legal English language course to the middle of study programme. Having better awareness of law legal English would be studied more comprehensively and general success of teaching and learning would be more considerable.

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RYŠIO TARP KALBOS IR TEISĖS VAIDMUO MOKANT(IS) TEISĖS ANGLŲ KALBOS

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Santrauka

Mokant(is) teisės anglų kalbos viena iš sunkiausių užduočių yra specifinių terminų įsisavinimas. Nepaisant to, jog kai kurie teisiniai terminai yra plačiai naudojami kasdienėje kalboje, yra žodžių ir frazių, galinčių turėti netikėtą reikšmę. Be to, teisės kontekste yra specifinę reikšmę turinčių terminų, kurie leidžia manyti, jog dalis su teisės turiniu susijusių žinių yra visiškai suprantamos. Kita vertus, teisės terminai atspindi tam tikras teisės sistemas ir tarp jų esančius skirtumus. Taigi, terminai yra neatskiriami nuo teisės.

Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kokią reikšmę ryšys tarp kalbos ir teisės turi anglų teisės kalbos mokymui(si) ir terminų įsisavinimui. Aptariama teisinio turinio žinojimo svarba sėkmingam teisės terminų mokymui(si). Koks tokios nuo turinio priklausomos kalbos mokymo būdas būtų geriausias ir kiek kontekstinės informacijos turėtų būti suteikiama studentams? Tam, kad atsakytų į šį klausimą,



autorė analizuoja teisės anglų kalbos besimokančių studentų apklausos rezultatus, papildydama juos teorine medžiaga ir asmenine mokymo patirtimi.

Tyrimo duomenys parodo, kad dalyviai suvokia ypatingą teisinio turinio svarbą besimokant teisės terminų anglų kalba. Studentai supranta, kad studijuojant terminus teisinės sistemos kontekste ir lyginant juos su gimtosios šalies teisine sistema bei joje vartojamais terminais lengviau įsisavinti teisinių terminų žodyną anglų kalba. Šiuo atveju dalyko turiniu besiremiantis kalbos mokymas yra tinkamiausias teisės anglų kalbos mokymo(si) būdas.

Remiantis studentų atsakymais į anketos klausimus bei autorės mokymo patirtimi, dalyko turinio žinios yra nepaprastai naudingos, todėl rekomenduojama perkelti teisės anglų kalbos kursą į studijų programos vidurį. Tuomet, jau turint geresnį supratimą apie teisę, teisės anglų kalbos būtų galima mokytis daug išsamiau ir mokymas(is) būtų sėkmingesnis.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: teisės anglų kalba, teisiniai terminai, mokymo(si) metodai.

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