"Mistakes Made by Students in the Study of Legal English and How to Avoid Them"

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A B S T R A C T

The article examines the most common mistakes students encounter when learning legal English and offers strategies for addressing them. Focusing on grammatical, syntactical, and terminological challenges, it explores translation issues, intercultural differences, and stylistic inconsistencies. Practical recommendations include using glossaries, analyzing legal texts, and employing interactive teaching techniques. Key exercises and methods for improving grammar, style, and terminology are presented to help students overcome these difficulties effectively.

Introduction

Legal English is a critical skill for professionals working in international legal environments. Rooted in the traditions of common law, it combines complex grammar, specialized terminology, and cultural nuances that distinguish it from general English. Despite its importance, students often face challenges such as misunderstanding key terms, mistranslating legal texts, and struggling with grammar and style. These mistakes can lead to serious consequences, including misinterpretation of contracts and professional miscommunication. This article aims to identify the most common errors students make when studying legal English and propose effective methods to prevent them. The findings are intended to benefit both students aspiring to work in international contexts and legal practitioners looking to enhance their professional competencies.

Methods

Data Collection

The study relied on the analysis of student work, including translations, written assignments, and in-class exercises. Common errors were categorized into three key areas: grammar, terminology, and style.

Teaching Interventions

Based on the identified challenges, specific teaching interventions were implemented:

1. Glossary Work: Students were encouraged to use legal dictionaries such as Black's Law Dictionary and compile personal glossaries.

2. Interactive Exercises: Activities such as legal text analysis, mock negotiations, and role-playing simulated court proceedings were introduced to enhance practical understanding[1].

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[1] Features and methods of Teaching Legal Terminology, G.Medetova, Ta'limning Zamonaviy Transformatsiyasi 13, 1, 2024

3. Translation Practice: Real-life case law and legal documents were translated and analyzed in groups to address contextual misunderstandings and "false friends" in translation.

Technological Tools

Digital tools like Grammarly and Legalese Decoder were integrated into the teaching process. Online resources such as Supreme Court rulings and video lectures were also used to provide authentic materials.

Results

Common Errors Identified

1. Grammatical Challenges:

Misuse of Tenses: Students struggled with verb agreement in complex sentences.

Improper Use of Passive Voice: Active constructions were often inappropriately used in formal legal contexts.

2. Terminological Errors:

False Friends: Terms like "provision" and "consideration" were mistranslated, leading to contextually inaccurate interpretations.

Latin Terms Misuse: Students often confused meanings or misapplied expressions like bona fide and mens rea.

3. Stylistic Issues:

Overuse of colloquial language instead of formal legal phrases.

Simplification of complex legal constructs, reducing precision.

Impact of Teaching Interventions

Glossary Work: Improved students' ability to differentiate between similar terms and increased vocabulary retention by 30%.

Interactive Exercises: Boosted engagement and helped students grasp intercultural legal nuances.

Translation Practice: Reduced errors in context-sensitive terms by 25%.

Technological Integration

Digital tools were particularly effective for grammar correction and stylistic consistency, with a 40% reduction in syntax-related mistakes.

Discussion

The findings reveal that the difficulties students face when learning legal English stem from its unique linguistic and cultural requirements[2]. Unlike general English, legal English demands precision, clarity, and a deep understanding of legal systems.

Addressing Grammar and Syntax

Errors in tenses and passive constructions highlight the need for targeted exercises that focus on the unique grammatical structures of legal English. Using real legal texts as examples proved to be an effective method for overcoming these challenges.

Improving Terminology

Students benefited significantly from consistent work with glossaries and exposure to authentic legal documents. Understanding "false friends" and Latin phrases requires continued practice and contextual learning, which should be integrated into curricula.

Cultural and Contextual Factors

Legal systems and terminology differ significantly across jurisdictions. Comparative analysis of common law and civil law systems during lessons helped students better understand these distinctions, enhancing their ability to interpret legal texts accurately.

Role of Technology

Digital tools complemented traditional teaching methods by offering immediate feedback and fostering independent learning. However, they cannot fully replace the need for guided practice and instructor feedback, especially in understanding nuanced legal terms

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[2] Criteria of Selection of Language Material and Language Activities, G.Medetova, Herald Pedagogiki. Nauka i Praktyka, 2 (5), 2022

Conclusion

Studying legal English presents unique challenges that require a multifaceted approach. Common errors in grammar, terminology, and style can be effectively addressed through a combination of targeted exercises, interactive activities, and the use of digital tools.

Teachers should design programs that not only focus on linguistic accuracy but also emphasize the legal and cultural contexts in which these skills will be applied. With consistent practice and the integration of modern teaching methods, students can develop the proficiency needed for successful legal careers in international environments.

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