FEATURES AND METHODS OF TEACHING LEGAL ENGLISH: A PRACTICAL APPROACH IN THE AI ERA

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Abstract
Teaching Legal English has become a key aspect of preparing students for global legal practices. This article delves into the distinctive characteristics of Legal English and explores practical teaching strategies, with a focus on keeping the learning process personal in an age where artificial intelligence (AI) tools are increasingly present. By sharing experiences from teaching at a university, the article suggests methods that blend traditional, interactive techniques with new technologies in a balanced way. The aim is to help students master the complexities of Legal English while keeping human interaction central to their learning journey.

Keywords: Legal English, AI in education, interactive teaching, law students, language learning, higher education, legal discourse, practical methods, human-centered pedagogy.

Introduction
Legal English, as a specialized language for the legal field, presents unique challenges, particularly for non-native speakers. It involves more than just learning vocabulary—it's about mastering the precise, formal, and sometimes archaic nature of legal communication. Given its complexity, effective teaching strategies are critical, especially in a university setting where students are preparing for professional legal careers.

Literature review
In recent years, AI tools have been introduced into educational spaces, helping students with grammar checks, translations, and even legal research. But can these tools replace the nuanced, human aspects of learning? Drawing from my experience teaching Legal English at the university level, this article argues for a balanced approach: using AI as a supportive tool but keeping the human teacher at the heart of the learning process.

1. What Makes Legal English Unique?
1.1. A Language of Precision. Legal English is often referred to as a language of precision. Words like tort, plaintiff, writ, and jurisprudence carry very specific meanings. Students need to understand these terms within the context of legal systems, where a slight misunderstanding can have major implications.

1.2. Long and Complex Sentences

Legal writing tends to favor longer, more complex sentences. These can be intimidating for learners, but breaking them down into manageable parts and understanding their function within legal texts is an essential skill.

1.3. Formality and Structure

Unlike conversational English, Legal English maintains a formal tone, with a rigid structure and format. Teaching students to navigate this formality, especially when drafting legal documents, is key to their success in professional settings.

1.4. Historical and Archaic Elements

Terms like hereinafter or aforesaid, while old-fashioned, are still part of legal texts. Students must learn to deal with such archaic language, understanding both its meaning and its continued relevance in modern law.

2. Effective Methods for Teaching Legal English
2.1. Context-Based Learning

One of the most effective ways to teach Legal English is by placing it in real-world contexts. Case studies, contracts, and court rulings allow students to see how legal language functions in practice. For instance, analyzing real case decisions helps students understand the precise use of legal terminology in action.

2.2. Role-Playing Activities

Engaging students in simulations, such as mock trials or legal negotiations, provides a practical, hands-on way to use Legal English. Role-playing encourages students to practice legal vocabulary and formal expressions in a way that mimics actual legal work.

2.3. Group Work and Collaboration

Collaborative activities foster peer-to-peer learning. By working in groups, students can discuss, explain, and analyze legal terms together, deepening their understanding. Encouraging students to draft legal documents or analyze cases as a team promotes both language acquisition and critical thinking.

2.4. Integrating AI Tools Thoughtfully

AI tools, such as legal databases and language correction software, can assist students in learning Legal English. However, these tools should be seen as a supplement, not a replacement for classroom interaction. For example, AI can help students practice grammar, but human teachers provide the deeper feedback needed to understand legal concepts in context.

3. Keeping the Human Element in Legal English Teaching with AI Support
3.1. The Role of the Teacher in an AI World

AI tools are undoubtedly useful, but they cannot replicate the teacher's role in guiding students through complex legal material. At the university where I teach, we use AI to assist students with exercises, but the bulk of the learning comes from face-to-face interaction, discussion, and feedback. Teachers can respond to the unique challenges each student faces, something AI cannot do.

3.2. Encouraging Active Participation and Critical Thinking

AI tends to offer pre-programmed responses or automatic corrections. In contrast, teachers engage students in deeper critical thinking, guiding them through the process of analyzing legal arguments, drafting precise legal documents, and participating in discussions. This interactive engagement is what truly helps students master Legal English.

3.3. Personalizing the Learning Experience

Each student has different strengths and weaknesses, and AI tools, though adaptive, are limited in their ability to fully cater to these needs. A human teacher can adjust lessons, provide extra help where needed, and motivate students in ways that AI cannot match. As a professor, I often adapt my teaching to accommodate different learning styles and levels of comprehension, ensuring that no student is left behind.

4. Adaptive Teaching Techniques in Legal English
4.1. Gradual Introduction to Complexity

One useful method is scaffolding, which means introducing difficult concepts step by step. For example, I might start with basic legal terminology, and then move on to more complex sentence structures and cases as students build confidence. This gradual approach helps students absorb the material more effectively.

4.2. Interactive Tools and Exercises

Using interactive platforms or AI-supported quizzes can enhance learning by providing students with additional practice. These tools offer instant feedback, helping students identify areas of improvement while maintaining a connection to classroom discussions.

4.3. Continuous Feedback and Revision

Feedback plays a key role in language learning. While AI can offer immediate corrections on language use, it cannot provide the kind of personalized, detailed feedback that helps students understand why their legal arguments need refining. In my experience, ongoing feedback from a teacher, paired with opportunities for revision, makes a big difference in student progress.

5. Preparing Students for Professional Legal Practice

5.1. Applying Classroom Learning to Real

World Situations. The ultimate goal of teaching Legal English is to prepare students for real-world legal work. Assignments that mimic professional tasks—such as drafting contracts, analyzing legal cases, or preparing for court presentations—help bridge the gap between classroom learning and legal practice.

5.2. Communication as a Key Skill

In the legal world, being able to communicate clearly and precisely is essential. Teaching Legal English is not just about understanding terminology, but also about helping students develop the ability to convey complex legal ideas in both written and spoken forms.

5.3. AI in the Legal Field

Benefits and Ethical Considerations. As AI becomes more integrated into legal work, students should understand both the benefits and the limitations of these tools. While AI can assist with legal research and drafting, human judgment remains crucial, especially when interpreting laws and ethical dilemmas.

Conclusion

AI provides new possibilities for enhancing language learning, including Legal English. However, the teacher's role in guiding, supporting, and interacting with students remains irreplaceable. By using a balanced approach—where AI supports human instruction—Legal English can be taught effectively, preparing students for the professional world while maintaining a personal, engaged learning experience.

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