

## LEGAL ENGLISH AND ITS MAIN FEATURES

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**Abstract:** *Whether you are a lawyer or a law student or an employee who works in this sphere as English second language learner, you will know that Legal English is significantly different from English that you have learned before.*

*As you work in the field of legal system you will have to deal with different kind of legal terms and it may cause various kinds of obstacles if you do not know English language as well. It is really important to use Legal English in a high proficiency to become a high quality specialist. Legal English is generally used in English speaking countries like United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and in a plenty of countries of commonwealth nations. This article will provide the significant features of Legal English.*

**Key words:** *and phrases: legal English, lawyer, law, historical background, language aspects.*

### INTRODUCTION

Searching for the needed information I came up to some interesting thoughts and useful websites that helped me to reveal the main features of this language.

#### **What is Legal English and why we need it?**

Wikipedia describes the language of law like this "Legal English is the type of English as used in legal writing. In general, a legal language is a formalized language based on logic rules which differs from the ordinary natural language in vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and semantics, as well as other linguistic features, first one is - aimed to achieve consistency, validity, completeness and soundness, while keeping the benefits of a human-like language such as intuitive execution, complete meaning and open upgrade. However, Legal English has been referred to as a "sublanguage", second one is - as legal English differs from ordinary English. A specialized use of certain terms and linguistic patterns governs the teaching of legal language. Thus, "we study legal language as a kind of second language, a specialized use of vocabulary, phrases, and syntax that helps us to communicate more easily with each other".

This is one of the many forms of English used in law. In other words, it is a technical term that has emerged specifically as a language for lawyers such as judges, lawyers, paralegals and lawyers. Legal English is not the first language of these professionals. So, in order to work well in the legal field, you have to learn the language in a technical context.

While I was looking for the related information to this topic I encountered some interesting facts and opinions and of course really helpful articles. Here are some passages from the articles mentioned above.

Anna Sneiderova Faculty of Law, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia in her article that is related to the above mentioned topic gives very interesting historical facts; here are some of them: It is widely known that the language of law, and not only English, is in all its complexity the result of conservatism in the legal profession and its respect for history and tradition. Bázlik and Ambrus (2008, p. 9) state that the language used by lawyers is so difficult to understand that attempts have been made to simplify it. As a result, the Plain English Movement, part of the consumer movement, grew out of the notion that people should be able to understand important consumer documents. The movement was inspired by a revised promissory note introduced by Citibank in the 1970s, and eventually led to a fair amount of plain English legislation. Similar reforms occurred in countries like Australia and the United Kingdom (Tiersma, 1999). In this connection, Vystrčilová (2000, pp. 92–93) notes that “On 26 April 1998, the legal language and traditions that have characterized the British courts for decades were rejected by a new set of regulations published in the 800-page document issued by the Lord Chancellor’s Office. Legal terms of Old Latin and French, such as writ or plaintiff have been replaced by the so-called „plain legal English“, i.e. simpler, more understandable legal terms”. For instance, by the Woolf Reforms of 1999, almost all civil actions, other than those connected with insolvency, are now commenced by the completion of a “claim form” as opposed to the obtaining of a “writ”, “originating application”, or “summons”; or the party that initiates the civil action before the court has, since the introduction of the Civil Procedure Rules in 1999, been known as a “claimant”, as opposed to a “plaintiff”.

Richard Brady a general director of British Legal Centre whose article was very helpful for me gives his thoughts about Legal English like this :

“Lawyers need to produce emails, texts, and documents that serve the needs of the client. These needs include solving existing problems efficiently, foreseeing and forestalling future problems, issues, tensions, and uncertainties, which occur in all forms of human social and economic transactions. Courts, in particular, are growing increasingly impatient with lawyers’ texts, which are so badly written that they result in litigation.

The spread of Common Law Court systems in Civil law Countries, such as the DIFC in Dubai and the newer court systems now developing in Abu Dhabi and Kazakhstan, all contribute to the requirement for lawyers to possess a high level of legal English ability to appear before the courts and to conduct cases and other legal business.

In the 21st-century, with the de-facto use of English as the language of international business, legal English has become even more important in the international legal sphere. It is the common legal language, which all non-native English speaking lawyers use in their

international transactions. This leads to the simple rule that, if you want to practice international law – you must be able to use legal English effectively.

Law students around the world are now required to study so much law in their degree courses, that they have no time to develop professional skills. Because of this, you will quickly be able to gain an advantage over your contemporaries if you can improve your legal English ability to a high level. One other point is almost certain, as well: Unless you are able to speak English and deal with legal English effectively then you have little chance of becoming an international lawyer. Clients will not wish to deal with a lawyer who can only communicate with them through an interpreter. Clients prefer the human element and want to deal direct with the lawyer who is handling their matter.”

I totally agree with his thoughts as I observe my students at my English classes they really pay less attention to Legal English than their main subjects on speciality of jurisprudence. English is playing may be not the main but significant role in the career of a lawyer. So in this case, student or the person who is in this field must be developed harmoniously because if you possess professional skills like language ability it will help you to get a job you want. And as it was said by Richard Brady clients prefer skillful specialist because they want their issue solved professionally.

Lawyers who work internationally, interacting with clients and other professionals from different cultures, need both transnational legal literacy and intercultural language awareness. Regardless of the nature of the legal document, whether it is correspondence, document or court, legal and language skills are an important part of the professional training of lawyers. Legal English is especially important in relation to the drafting of legal documents and documents. Includes contracts, court actions and judgments, legislation, and legal communications. Legal English was a traditional protected area for lawyers from English-speaking countries that share the common law tradition, but with the spread of international legal practice, the use of legal English has expanded into a global phenomenon. You need to be able to use legal English in order to practice international law.

One more author’s significant opinion is: Why is it so important for newly qualified lawyers?

Learning legal terms is important for your career if you are studying law regardless of the country. The main reason behind this is the rise in globalization. Since many people study in one country and then apply their learned skills by moving to another country, it is important that you should be able to communicate well while interacting with others.

Since learning both written and spoken legal communication skills is essential to succeed in the legal profession, you should give special emphasis to it. You can test your legal language skills yourself by enrolling in a specific program that caters to lawyers who want to polish their language skills in applying legal terminologies.

Another related author of the same topic Sergey Snigirev - founder of English legal and a co-author of our [English Contract Drafting](#) course. Sergey understands the needs and challenges that international lawyers whose first language is not English face as a Russian lawyer who regularly works on English-language transactions.

Sergey in his article “What is Legal English?” shares how to improve Legal English through the language patterns. He also writes about the various language aspects as well.

Especially he mentioned the grammar of Legal English and gave examples, he wrote that Legal English grammar differs from the grammar of general English, too and said that lawyers express their ideas using obscure or even archaic ways, as well as use well-known grammatical structures in unusual contexts. For example, unlike in general English, the verb 'shall' in contracts is used to express the obligations of the parties and not the future simple tense.

## METHODOLOGY

### How to Improve or Learn Legal English

Snigirev in his above mentioned article also explained the features of four basic language aspects. **Legal English: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening**

Unlike everyday and even business English, Legal English is mostly used in written form. While lawyers do use specialized legal vocabulary when negotiating contracts or presenting in court, English spoken by lawyers is very similar to general English. As a result, most Legal English courses and exams are focused on reading and writing skills, and rightfully so. As an international lawyer, you are expected to be able to read and write documents in English. If you work on M&A transactions or international supply of goods or services, you are expected to read and write contracts. If you practice international dispute resolution, you are expected to read and write court documents, research evidence and prepare opinions in English. Although the majority of your work will involve reading and writing, you may need to participate in calls or meetings in English. It means that you should be able to understand spoken English and to speak English, too. To achieve mastery with spoken language, you should work on your listening and speaking skills, including your English pronunciation.

Of course that is really true thoughts that to master English one should do more practice than ever before. Doing language practice we try to improve strong points and strengthen our weak points. Practice helps us to learn and use new vocabulary as well. When we draft contracts or write emails we learn to construct sentences correctly. We learn how to express our thoughts thoroughly. Listening gives the ability to understand the people’s speech and conversation, to memorize details and be more attentive as in reading. Reading as other aspects demands a lot practice as this section makes us look through details, know how to find required information in order to do the given task. All aspects are necessary in learning and improving language skill.

The best way to learn Legal English is to use it at work, preferably under the supervision of a native speaker or a highly advanced lawyer from your own country. You will be working on actual legal tasks while having your mistakes emended by a competent supervisor.

Nevertheless, in order to have desirable job, you must have a good starting level of Legal English. Suppose you have intermediate or higher general English, you should concentrate on expanding your legal vocabulary and writing legal documents in English.

Try to listen carefully podcasts that are related to law issues and download your favorite TV shows which have legal content. Gratefully, the law is cherished by TV systems and you will be able select from hundreds of hours of legitimate dramatizations. A fun way to go over a couple of minutes is to play a YouTube clip of a TV attorney and attempt to mimic what is being said (in a perfect world, select something from a continuing or client meet). For included esteem, record what you said or shoot and play it to see in case you were right or off-base.

Make attempts to think in English. Make it a habit. For example, let's say you are studying for a criminal law exam and are currently revising case law. Instead of repeating it in your native language, try it in English. You can practice memorizing the facts of a case as a story and repeating the story in English or discussing the case in English. It can help you prepare your exam cases and improve your speaking skills for mock trials and class presentations.

By developing a better understanding of your own language, you should be able to develop curiosity about the language you are learning. This phoneme happens all the time to language teachers. As we train and learn the language we teach, we almost develop a sixth sense for other languages as well.

By practicing and analyzing English may be a stressful language in additional ways than one! If you are trying pronounce words correctly, you may should hear plenty of the language because the sounds change from word to word. Good speakers of English also put a stronger emphasis on key words so try exercises regarding this after you are able.

In order to improve teaching and learning Legal English it should be taken into consideration that there must be held training courses both for teachers and students of Law schools.

### **CONCLUSION**

Trying to understand Legal English we go through various types of language aspects and historical facts that helps us to learn more about this marvelous language of law. And we should not be afraid of difficulties and obstacles that we encounter in the way of exploring the brighter sides of the lawyer profession.

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