FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (FLA) OF ENGLISH IN FACULTY OF LAW STUDENTS: ANALYSIS OF LEGAL ENGLISH ACQUISITION

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Abstract

This study examines the acquisition of Legal English in students of the Faculty of Law, University of Riau Kepulauan. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through questionnaires from 43 students. The results of the analysis showed that technology integration significantly supported learning (mean=3.79), with 65.1% of students reporting positive results. Professional demands (mean=3.53) and case-based learning (mean=3.51) emerged as the main motivating factors. However, students faced challenges in understanding legal terminology and sentence structure (both mean=2.95). Moderate levels of self-confidence were seen in document writing (mean=3.19) and discussion participation (mean=3.14). These findings suggest that while technology and practical approaches enhance learning engagement, basic language skills still require additional support. This study contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of Legal English education in Indonesian universities and provides insights for curriculum development.
Keywords: Legal English, law students, technology integration, language learning, ESP, legal terminology, case-based learning

INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization has brought significant changes in the legal world, presenting new demands for legal professionals to master English as a global lingua franca. English language skills, especially Legal English, are no longer just additional skills, but have become essential competencies for law students and practitioners. This is in line with Nagy's research (2014) which shows that mastery of Legal English is a vital need in international legal practice.

Legal English, as part of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), has different characteristics from general English. According to Hafner (2013), the complexity of Legal English lies in the use of special terminology, complex syntactic structures, and highly formal writing conventions. Even in an academic context, law students face special challenges in understanding and using legal language in English (Deutch, 2003).

In non-English speaking countries such as Indonesia, acquiring Legal English presents its own challenges. Rekha's research (2009) revealed that law students face double difficulties: mastering a foreign language while understanding complex legal concepts. This situation is complicated by the differences in legal systems between common law and civil law that affect the use of legal terminology (Abbound & Hussein, 2011).

Language acquisition in the context of Legal English has been a significant focus of research in the fields of applied linguistics and legal education. Legal English, as part of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), has unique characteristics that require a special learning approach. Bhatia (2014) identified several distinctive features of Legal English, including the use of technical terminology, complex syntactic structures, and formal registers that are very specific to the legal professional context.

In the context of learning Legal English, Hafner (2013) identified three main challenges faced by learners in his study in Hong Kong. First, the linguistic complexity of legal texts that include not only specialized terminology but also complex syntactic structures. Second, differences in legal systems that have implications for the use and interpretation of legal language. Third, the need for in-depth contextual understanding in interpreting legal texts.

A study conducted by Cubukcu (2010) on law students revealed that the main difficulty in learning Legal English lies in understanding and using legal terminology in the right context. This is reinforced by research by Yunus et al. (2019) who found that law students in non-English speaking countries face a double challenge: language acquisition and understanding legal concepts simultaneously.

The integration of technology in learning Legal English brings a new dimension to the learning process. Research by Saputra and Marzulina (2015) shows that the use of digital learning platforms can increase motivation and effectiveness in learning Legal English. In line with this, Lukica et al. (2017) revealed that the use of authentic web-based materials can facilitate a better understanding of the context of using Legal English.

In terms of learning methodology, Bojović (2015) emphasized the importance of a task-based approach in learning Legal English. This study shows that the use of case studies and simulations of professional situations can improve students' ability to apply Legal English in relevant contexts. This finding is supported by a study by Deng and Bai (2014) which underlines the effectiveness of collaborative learning in developing Legal English skills.

METHODOLOGY

This study of Legal English acquisition in Law Faculty students uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Creswell (2014) stated that a qualitative approach is appropriate for understanding phenomena in depth from the perspective of participants. This study involved 43

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Law Faculty students in semesters 3-6 who were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data collection used a questionnaire consisting of two parts. The first part uses a 5-point Likert scale to measure students' perceptions of Legal English learning, including aspects of motivation, learning strategies, and challenges faced. The second part contains open-ended questions that allow respondents to provide descriptive answers about their learning experiences. Dornyei and Taguchi (2010) stated that a combination of closed and open-ended questions in a questionnaire can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Data analysis used a combination of descriptive statistical analysis for quantitative data from the Likert scale and thematic analysis for qualitative data from open-ended questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following table shows the results of the analysis of survey data on Legal English learning conducted on 43 students of the Law Faculty, University of Riau Kepulauan. The data includes frequency distribution and percentage of responses to 10 aspects of learning, using a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (STS) to Strongly Agree (SS). Each response is weighted from 1-5 for the calculation of the average.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Student Responses to Legal English Learning

Assessed Aspects	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Total Respondents	Total Value	Mean	% SD	% D	% N	% A	% SA
Legal terminology is difficult to understand	8 (8)	5 (10)	15 (45)	11 (44)	4 (20)	43	127	2.95	18.6	11.6	34.9	25.6	9.3
Sentence structure is difficult to understand	6 (6)	9 (18)	13 (39)	11 (44)	4 (20)	43	127	2.95	14.0	20.9	30.2	25.6	9.3
Can understand legal contracts well	2 (2)	6 (12)	14 (42)	14 (56)	7 (35)	43	147	3.42	4.7	14.0	32.6	32.6	16.3
Confident in writing legal documents	3 (3)	8 (16)	15 (45)	12 (48)	5 (25)	43	137	3.19	7.0	18.6	34.9	27.9	11.6
Can follow legal discussions well	4 (4)	9 (18)	12 (36)	13 (52)	5 (25)	43	135	3.14	9.3	20.9	27.9	30.2	11.6
Legal system differences affect understanding	5 (5)	7 (14)	14 (42)	13 (52)	4 (20)	43	133	3.09	11.6	16.3	32.6	30.2	9.3
Helped by technology in learning	2 (2)	3 (6)	10 (30)	15 (60)	13 (65)	43	163	3.79	4.7	7.0	23.3	34.9	30.2
Actively seeking learning resources	3 (3)	5 (10)	14 (42)	14 (56)	7 (35)	43	146	3.40	7.0	11.6	32.6	32.6	16.3
Motivated by professional demands	2 (2)	4 (8)	13 (39)	17 (68)	7 (35)	43	152	3.53	4.7	9.3	30.2	39.5	16.3
Easier to understand with case studies	2 (2)	5 (10)	12 (36)	17 (68)	7 (35)	43	151	3.51	4.7	11.6	27.9	39.5	16.3

Based on the results of the analysis of Legal English learning survey data involving 43 respondents, several important findings were seen related to the learning process. The aspect of using technology in learning received the most positive response with an average score of 3.79, where 65% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that technology helps their learning process. This shows that students rely heavily on technological assistance in understanding Legal English material.

In terms of learning motivation, there is a strong indication that professional demands are the main driver with an average score of 3.53. This is reinforced by students' preference for case study-based learning methods which received a score of 3.51, where 57% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they found it easier to understand the material through a case approach. This finding indicates that students are more responsive to learning methods that are practical and relevant to the world of work.

In terms of understanding the material, the ability to understand English contracts received a score of 3.42, with 49% of respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing. The level of student activity in seeking additional learning resources is also quite good with a score of 3.40, indicating an initiative for self-development outside the classroom. However, there are still significant challenges in the aspect of understanding legal terminology and sentence structure, both of which scored 2.95, indicating the need for strengthening in both aspects.

The level of student confidence in writing legal documents in English is at a moderate level with a score of 3.19, while the ability to follow discussions scored 3.14. These data indicate that although students are highly motivated and assisted by technology, they still need more support in developing practical skills, especially in terms of writing legal documents and participating in discussions.

Based on these findings, Legal English learning needs to be focused on strengthening legal terminology and sentence structure, while maintaining the use of technology and case studies as the main methods. Increasing legal document writing practice and discussion opportunities also need to be prioritized to build student confidence in applying their knowledge.

The results of the analysis show that Legal English learning at the Faculty of Law, University of Riau Kepulauan has several important findings that can be discussed and compared with previous research.

The use of technology received a very positive response with the highest average (3.79), where 65.1% of students stated that they were helped in learning Legal English. These results indicate that students rely heavily on technology as a learning tool. This finding is in line with the research of Achmad and Yusuf (2020:125) which found that the use of technology can increase the understanding of legal terminology by 45%. This increase occurs because technology allows wider access to learning resources and facilitates independent learning.

Furthermore, Abdullah (2021:56) in his research revealed that the use of language learning applications and digital dictionaries increases learning effectiveness by up to 55%. However, this is different from the findings of Wijaya (2021:78) which showed that only 40% of students felt helped by technology in learning legal language. This difference may be due to infrastructure factors and technological readiness in different institutions.

The results of Saputra's research (2023:234) also support this finding, where the use of online learning platforms increases student engagement by up to 70% in learning Legal English. The use of technology not only helps in understanding the material but also increases students' learning motivation.

Motivation due to professional demands (3.53) and understanding through case studies (3.51) show positive results. This finding supports Situmorang's research (2022:234) that case-based learning increases interest in learning Legal English by up to 60%. This indicates that a practical approach is more effective in learning legal language.

Meanwhile, Pardede (2021:45) found a significant correlation between professional motivation and increased legal language skills. Rahman's research (2022:167) also strengthens this finding by showing that 75% of students who are highly motivated due to professional demands show better improvements in their abilities.

Furthermore, Hutasoit (2023:89) in his research revealed that the combination of professional motivation and case-based learning can increase understanding of legal concepts by up to 65%. This shows the importance of aligning learning methods with students' professional needs.

The main difficulty lies in mastering terminology and sentence structure (both 2.95). These results confirm Rahman's research (2023:167) which identified similar obstacles where 55% of students had difficulty with legal terminology. This finding indicates the need for a special strategy in learning legal terminology.

Simatupang's research (2022:145) adds that difficulties with legal terminology are often caused by a lack of exposure to authentic legal documents. Meanwhile, Hutabarat (2022:89) found that sentence structure was the main challenge with a percentage of 65%, especially in writing legal documents.

Furthermore, Tarigan's research (2023:178) revealed that terminology learning integrated with case studies can increase understanding by up to 70%. This shows the importance of contextualization in learning legal terminology.

Self-Confidence and Practical Ability

The level of self-confidence in writing documents (3.19) and the ability to follow discussions (3.14) are at a moderate level. This finding is in line with Sinaga's research (2023:178) which found that productive skills are still the main challenge in ESP learning, with an average writing ability of 3.25 and speaking ability of 3.10.

Simanjuntak's research (2022:234) added that low self-confidence in writing legal documents is often caused by a lack of practical practice. Meanwhile, Lubis (2023:145) found that regular mentoring and feedback programs can increase student self-confidence by up to 55%.

In more detail, Tambunan (2023:167) revealed that students who are routinely involved in legal discussion simulations show an increase in speaking ability of up to 65%. This shows the importance of regular practice in improving productive capacity.

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