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SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LEGAL ENGLISH

Legal English and general English are not identical languages, and in most cases a good command of general English does not mean a mastery of legal English. Its distinctiveness may be seen in a number of characteristics that differentiate it from the language of ordinary use.

What makes the language of law different from other types of language use? Legal English style and lexicon originate from various

languages: Anglo-Saxon, Latin and French. Legal language was originally oral [7, p. 36]. These are the main differences: *speakers*; *style*; *lexis*; *syntax*.

Speakers. The type of speaker influences the particular style of the legal language: there is a difference between the language of an Act of Parliament and the language used by lawyers when talking to one another about legal matters. Lawyers seem to have developed some linguistic quirks that have little communicative function and serve mainly to mark them as members of the legal sphere [7, p. 51].

Style. Legal style results from cultural and legal traditions. Its chief characteristics are impersonality, extensive use of declarative sentences, negative and passive constructions. The language of law has a strong tendency towards certain mannerisms such as being wordy, unclear, pompous. Legal texts tend to use number of words instead of one (e.g. *annul and set aside* instead of *annul*; or *totally null and void* instead of *void*). As Cao [3, p. 21] writes, legal utterances perform acts, creating facts, rights and/or institutions: they are speech acts.

Syntax. Legal language is highly formal and impersonal. This is achieved by passive constructions, complex and long sentences, multiple negations and prepositional phrases (e.g. *in what follows*, *by virtue of which*). Legal English is full of archaisms, and this tendency may be seen in syntax as well. The old-fashioned syntax still makes the legal text dense; though, mainly thanks to the Plain English Movement, there can no longer be found grammatical archaisms like the old *-th* endings [1, p.7] in legal texts. A slightly archaic tone is achieved by the use of certain prepositional phrases such as *pursuant to* (very often used in contracts) or *subject to*.

Lexis. Although numerous words of Latin, Anglo-Saxon origin may be found in legal English, it may be argued that the main influence for the development of legal language is to be attributed to Norman and later to French. French used to be once the language of royal courts. French influence may be seen in some legal phrases following the French way of putting an adjective after the noun (*attorney general*, *fee simple*) or in creating neologisms by adding an

–ee ending (*lessee, condemnee*) to a verb [6].

Written legal texts do not necessarily contain all the features outlined above though many of them do, and the compound effect often makes them extremely difficult without specific training [8, p.111-113]. Every national legal system uses terminology that does not necessarily correspond with the legal languages of other countries. Concepts vary to such an extent in different legal systems that a literal translation is misleading. Legal translation creates some problems, and only legally qualified translators are fully competent in this area [5, p. 220].

From what has just been said might follow that teachers of legal English face a wide range of challenges. Some teachers have the point of view that obtaining a legal qualification is the best solution. If the teacher is new to legal English, it's easier to start with a course book (if it is available). They are written by experienced writers (often with subject specialists). The teachers can cooperate to help each other prepare lessons, share materials. More experienced colleagues can create their own courses based on syllabus and students' needs. After a few years of teaching a legal English course, the teacher feels more confident. The key to overcome incompetence is preparation. Before every lesson a teacher should study the course materials thoroughly, do exercises and try to predict what might cause problems and provoke difficult discussions. It is advisable to take time to research the relevant topics in the Internet.

One more solution could be to collaborate with subject teachers. Teachers have to take part in different trainings, visit conferences, workshops, seminars on the topic of teaching ESP (legal English). In the article "Teaching English for Specific Purposes and Teaching Training", the author Morena Bracaj [2] argues that training of teachers is very important for ESP courses because teachers should be well specialized so that they can meet students' needs.

The use of Internet sites is vital. On youtube.com, ted.com the wide range of videos on different topics is available. Teachers can find lectures of professors from famous British or American

universities on law themes. On site www.edx.org teachers can take courses and get certificates in any subject including jurisprudence.

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