

Enhancing Legal English Education in Georgia: Comparative Analysis of Teaching Methods in Legal and Language Education

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyses teaching methods utilized in legal and language education across the UK, EU, US, and Georgia, focusing on Legal English. It examines how teaching methods and, generally, didactic strategies shaped by regional educational frameworks and cultural contexts integrate civil and common law traditions and multilingual educational approaches. The study highlights the adaptability of these methods for teaching legal language to non-native English speakers and evaluates how multidisciplinary approaches, experiential learning, and reforms contribute to legal education. The findings aim to enhance educational practices, better prepare legal professionals for a globalized environment, and suggest directions for future development in Legal English education in Georgia.

KEYWORDS: Legal English, English for specific purposes, teaching methodologies, legal education

Introduction

The objective of the present analysis is to evaluate and contrast the teaching methods employed in legal and language education in the UK, the EU, the US, and Georgia. This study focuses specifically on Legal English, identifying how different educational frameworks and cultural contexts influence didactic strategies. By examining the integration of civil and common law traditions, multilingual approaches, and legal context in these regions, the analysis seeks to identify the most effective methods for teaching legal English to non-native speakers to better prepare legal professionals for a globalized legal environment.

Proficiency in Legal English has become one of the priorities in legal education as practitioners from diverse legal systems and cultural backgrounds must communicate complex legal concepts effectively. Accordingly, in the process of teaching these courses aim to equip non-native speakers with the high-level knowledge of legal terminology and the necessary skills to operate within international legal frameworks. Each jurisdiction discussed provides a unique perspective on legal education influenced by their legal traditions and cultural contexts, accordingly, the paper will examine the effectiveness of various teaching methods identified by the Legal English students in Georgia.

Having specialized structures and terminology, legal language poses significant challenges as teaching language and law is inseparable and requires a specific methodological approach. By exploring how different regions adapt their educational strategies to accommodate these challenges, this study aims to identify multidisciplinary and experiential teaching methods that can enhance legal language education, especially in Georgia. The paper presents a survey of law students in Georgia, along with theoretical research and the author's teaching experiences. The findings intend to optimize teaching methods by tailoring them to diverse educational landscapes, ensuring more efficient and effective instruction.

Studying law through the lens of language involves diverse interdisciplinary methods, focusing on the role of language in legal contexts. This is especially relevant in EU and international law, which frequently encounter multilingual issues. This paper examines how various educational and legal frameworks support non-native English speakers pursuing legal careers, emphasizing the integration of legal content with language learning to enhance educational outcomes, particularly in the Georgian context.

Methodology, Research Objectives, and Questions

The study employs a two-part methodology to evaluate the efficiency of teaching methods for legal English education across different regions and specifically within Georgian universities. The first part of the study aims to identify the key differences and educational approaches in the EU, the UK, the US, and Georgia by reviewing the scientific literature in the selected regions. The review focuses on identifying teaching methods and theoretical frameworks employed in Legal English and ESP Law education. The impact of regional legal traditions and cultural contexts on the teaching methods is highlighted.

The second phase of the study evaluates the effectiveness of identified Legal English teaching methods within Georgian universities, focusing on students' perceptions and learning outcomes. The study develops a structured questionnaire comprising scaled questions to evaluate the importance of different teaching methods, while multiple-choice questions assess students' familiarity with legal concepts and terminology. Open-ended questions capture students' experiences, challenges, and suggestions. The study administers the survey to first- and second-year law students enrolled in Legal English courses at two state universities and four private universities in Georgia. It provides a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of Legal English teaching methods in Georgian universities and draws relevant conclusions.

Research Objective and Question

The study aims to identify the most effective teaching methods from the students' perspective in Legal English courses and assess the impact of integrated content and language teaching on learning outcomes in Georgia. The research questions are: 1) What are the perceptions of students regarding the effectiveness of different teaching methods in Legal English courses? 2) How do integrated content and language teaching methods impact learning outcomes in Legal English courses?

Legal English and ESP Law: Understanding Key Differences and Educational Approaches

Given the varying terminologies and audiences, it is essential to distinguish between ESP Law and Legal English. This paper examines the importance of legal and language education, highlighting similarities in educational methodologies. In the process of legal studies and language acquisition, two distinct but interrelated areas often arise - English for Specific Purposes in law and Legal English, though in most cases the terms 'ESP Law' and 'Legal English' are used interchangeably. These fields serve different audiences and functions and play essential roles in the broader context of legal language learning.

In the process of teaching law and language, content learning, practical skills, technology integration, and real-world scenarios are used. Legal English courses are designed for the legal community, including lawyers, paralegals, law students, and judges, focusing on drafting documents, litigation language, understanding legal jargon, and effective courtroom communication. Legal English pays significant attention to understanding complex legal concepts and specialized legal terminology, while language education is focused on general language proficiency and communicative competence. In Legal English, the case method is used to analyze judicial decisions, developing critical thinking and legal reasoning skills, while in language education, methods like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are used to improve language proficiency through structured practice and interaction. Generally, the guiding principle of ESP teaching and learning is communicative: "Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English you need" (Hutchinson and Waters 1987, 8). Legal English syllabi focus on language used in a professional context rather than grammar and vocabulary. In contrast, ESP Law syllabi are typically structured around language skills and may include cultural and contextual understanding relevant to language use.

In legal English, assessment methods mostly include exams and practical evaluations like moot courts and legal drafting assignments. ESP teaching assessments involve standardized language tests, oral exams, and practical language use tasks to measure proficiency in linguistic skills. In US law schools, emphasis is made on experiential learning and Legal English courses focus on the US legal system and culture, equipping students with essential legal skills through practical simulations and real-world activities, by visiting legal institutions. For instance, American University Washington College of Law offers a Legal English program designed to introduce international law students and practitioners to legal English concepts and US legal culture, judicial systems, and fundamental lawyering skills, including document drafting and oral advocacy to improve legal communication skills.

The EU's expansion and the Bologna Process have increased the demand for multilingual professionals, especially in the field of law. In Legal English and ESP law syllabi, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is widely used, enabling students to acquire legal terminology and making it valuable for understanding multiple legal systems across the EU (Dalton-Puffer 2011, 189).

In the UK, Legal English courses adapted to both common and civil law traditions in higher education settings. The UK approach integrates legal theory with practical experiences such as mooting, internships, and placements, ensuring that students are fluent in legal English and deeply understand the legal principles and frameworks that govern UK law (Kennedy 2017, 18). Since integration into the Bologna Process in 2005, Georgian universities integrated both Legal English and ESP Law courses in the study curricula more intensely, following Western practices of using experiential learning and practical law applications, preparing students for academic and practical legal practice. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and global trends in online education, all regions mentioned, have adopted digital platforms to enhance legal English and ESP learning, which is increasing. However, the present research does not analyze the methods used in online or hybrid learning models. It only focuses on the real classroom activities.

Teaching Methods in Legal Education - Integrating Language and Content in Legal English Syllabi - Diverse Approaches in Four Regions

A) United States – Experiential Learner Focus

Teaching methods in the US Legal English Syllabi are diverse and tailored to the specific linguistic and professional needs of law students. These methods include: a) Case Method, initiated by Christopher Columbus Langdell at Harvard Law School, which involves analyzing case law to develop critical thinking and legal reasoning skills; b) Content-Based Instruction, which integrates language learning with legal content, helping students acquire legal terminology and concepts alongside enhancing language proficiency; c) Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), regarded as one of the most significant methods from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) by Brown (2007, 15) and as “a logical development of CLT” by Richards and Rodgers (2014, 223). TBLT involves completing specific tasks that mirror real-life legal activities, providing practical language use experiences within a legal context; d) Problem-Based Learning (PBL), which tackles complex legal problems in a collaborative setting, where students apply their knowledge and language skills to propose solutions; e) Simulation and Moot Courts, where students participate in simulated legal proceedings or mock trials, applying legal language and procedures to enhance their legal vocabulary and presentation skills in English (Dou, Chan, and Win, 2023; and f) Technology-Enhanced Learning, which incorporates digital tools to complement traditional methods, enhancing accessibility and engagement.

The US prioritizes experiential learning in its Legal English courses, aligning with its tradition of practical legal education. Scholars like Redding (2020, 577) and Curran (2019) highlight the emphasis on real-world legal scenarios through clinical education. Law students,

as mentioned, are mostly engaged in mock trials, legal clinics, and other practical activities. Refinement of legal drafting and research skills, and oral advocacy are core components through practice and feedback (Redding 2020, 577). Additionally, the courses provide numerous social and academic opportunities for students to practice their English skills, including social events and visits to various legal institutions. The Socratic method, as detailed by Todd D. Rakoff in “The Socratic Method in the Modern Law School (instructionalmoves.gse.harvard.edu/todd-rakoff),” is a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue that stimulates critical thinking through questioning and discussion. This method is particularly effective in legal education, fostering a deeper understanding of legal principles and enhancing both language proficiency and legal reasoning skills. By requiring active use of legal English, it improves fluency, reinforces vocabulary, and encourages critical thinking regarding legal issues, thus developing essential analytical skills and oral advocacy. Implementing the Socratic method engages students, promoting active participation and equipping them with the necessary skills for legal practice (Roberts and Ryrie 2014, 65).

Content-Based Instruction (CBI) is widely adopted in the US for teaching legal English, integrating legal content with language learning to prepare students for real-world legal practice (Brinton, Snow, and Wesche 2020, 13). This approach is also gaining recognition in the EU, where it supports the development of both legal knowledge and language proficiency, which is particularly important in the multilingual and multicultural landscape of the region (Cammarata and Tedick 2018, 18). CBI is less commonly the primary focus in the UK, though its elements are incorporated into broader teaching strategies. Using a multifaceted approach and adopting competency-based education by focusing on practical skills such as negotiation, litigation, and client interaction ensure the high level of preparation of students for the diverse challenges of the legal profession in the US.

B) European Union - Multilingual and Multicultural Adaptation

The EU’s approach to legal education, as identified by the Legal English course syllabi, emphasizes the integration of language learning with legal education, applying innovative methods like Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). This teaching method imparts legal concepts in multiple languages, accommodating linguistically diverse nations within the EU. Research by Lasagabaster and Sierra (2014, 17) highlights CLIL’s effectiveness in enhancing language skills and subject knowledge, making it valuable for understanding multiple legal systems across the EU. Comparative legal analysis is crucial in the EU to help students navigate its diverse legal systems (Siems and Síthigh 2018, 18). The syllabi incorporate comparative legal analysis, crucial for interpreting and applying legal principles across diverse jurisdictions. Like the US, the EU increasingly integrates digital tools into Legal English education, focusing on platforms supporting multilingual education and providing access to various EU legal databases. These tools facilitate broader access to legal education, preparing students for the practical demands of the legal profession in a multilingual context. Activities such as moot courts and legal clinics offered along with the theory, enhance the practical skills of EU law students. The Lexical Approach, which is actively used, helps students identify complex legal terminology across different languages.

The terminology used in EU legislative texts is becoming more uniform across different languages, aligning to foster a new European legal culture. Genew-Puhalewa (2011, 70) notes that “this is, on the one hand, the result of an initial observation and, on the other hand, a well-known extralinguistic fact: EU legislation is harmonized”. This means that the essential differences among the legal systems of the EU member states have been minimized. “Identical content of the legislative texts (the unification of the content) involves unification of the language form,” the author states. Experts have been consciously seeking to abolish the differences in terminology: different legal terminology forms an obstacle to European integration (Heutger 2003, 19). Recent research projects and methodologies focus on creating clear, simplified, and comprehensible legal language to make legal texts accessible to both

professionals and the general public. A new European legal culture is emerging that requires law to be understood not only by legal experts but also by laypersons without any legal training.

The unification of EU legislative terminology across different languages made the learning process more efficient for EU law students as they can more easily grasp legal concepts that apply across various jurisdictions, reducing the complexity traditionally associated with studying different legal systems. This standardization helps create a cohesive legal education framework that can be adopted by law schools throughout the EU, enhancing the mobility of legal education. After the initiative of making legislative language more comprehensible to non-lawyers, Legal English courses were developed in a way to encourage interdisciplinary approaches by engaging fields such as linguistics, communication, and European studies, teaching students to draft legal documents and communicate legal concepts. This approach supports legal integration among member states, equipping future legal professionals to understand a unified European legal system effectively.

C) The United Kingdom - Comprehensive Legal Training

In the UK, Legal English courses are distinguished by a comprehensive approach that integrates theoretical understanding with practical skill development, designed to the specificities of the British legal system. British legal education emphasizes the practical application of legal principles, incorporating moot courts, internships, and other experiential activities to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Much like the CLIL approach dominant in the EU, British legal education incorporates language learning into the Legal English syllabi, based on the British legal system. This method is particularly advantageous in the UK, where the legal system encompasses distinct legal traditions from England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Students gain a detailed understanding of these diverse legal systems, enhancing their ability to operate across different jurisdictions. The Lexical Approach is prominent in the UK in the process of teaching legal English, emphasizing vocabulary acquisition and contextual usage. British institutions often integrate this approach to enhance students' legal terminology skills, focusing on natural usage within legal contexts (Lewis 2019, 16).

The TOLES (Test of Legal English Skills, toleslegal.com) exam, developed by the Law Society of England and Wales, is a specialized assessment for non-native English speakers aiming to master legal English. TOLES study resources (Mason 2013), particularly at the higher/advanced levels, incorporate case method elements for developing legal linguistic competencies. These materials include drafting model legal documents based on case facts, to enhance lexical, grammatical, and overall linguistic skills through various comprehension exercises. The exam does not test speaking skills, which can be developed through class discussions using the provided study materials. The design of TOLES tasks benefits both single-level and multi-level classroom settings, promoting the effective teaching of Legal English across varying degrees of proficiency within the UK educational context. Teaching Legal English is possible not only at the single level but also in multi-level classes (Inesa 2019).

British legal education places a strong emphasis on practical skills development, reflecting the experiential learning model of the US. UK law schools are known for their moot courts, internships, and legal clinics integrated into the curriculum along with theoretical knowledge. Students study comparative legal analysis, where the legal systems of England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland coexist, fostering a comprehensive understanding of UK law as a whole. This prepares graduates for a legal career, providing them with a competitive advantage while adhering to traditional values and adapting to modern challenges.

D) Georgia - Transitional Legal Education System

The Georgian legal education system, as it is observed, aligns with educational models from the mentioned regions. Undergraduate-level Law Programs curriculum in Georgian universities mostly

offer legal English courses for two to three semesters, aiming to introduce first and second-year students to legal concepts and terminology, enhance their comprehension of legal texts in English, and acquaint them with the general aspects of legal systems. The syllabi include various teaching methods for developing legal competencies and familiarizing them with the general aspects of the legal systems in the UK, the EU, and the US.

The adoption of technology in Georgian legal education is emerging, with online resources and digital tools being utilized to support legal education at a pace reflective of the country's technological and infrastructural capabilities. In previous decades, teaching methods focused heavily on reading and translating texts related to the US or British legal systems, often dominated by the Grammar-Translation Method, emphasizing grammatical rules. Although less favored now, it remains in use in certain contexts to highlight grammatical accuracy. The Audio-Lingual Method, involving repeated listening and speaking practice through drills, has also been favored for its emphasis on pronunciation and grammar.

Currently, Legal English courses are designed to meet the specific language needs of professionals, focusing on legal vocabulary, communication practices, and the cultural aspects of law necessary for practicing law efficiently in both local and international contexts. Georgian students have increasing opportunities to engage in moot courts, exchange programs, or other international activities to enhance their practical legal skills.

According to the Subject Benchmark Statement in Law, Levels I of the Higher Education, Levels VI of the National Qualifications Framework (n.d.), undergraduate-level law curriculums in Georgia include courses on substantive law as well as legal skills such as legal writing and research, preparing students for both academic study and practical legal practice. Legal English education in Georgia aims to develop students' proficiency in English and Law while providing them with a solid foundation in substantive law, similar to the EU and the US. An increasing use of English courses in law schools can be observed, reflecting the growing importance of English language skills in the global legal profession.

Teaching Methods in Language Education

Scholars have long been interested in learners' attitudes toward their courses, as evidenced by numerous studies, e.g., Genc and Aydin (2017, 21), Pae (2017, 171). Some earlier research in this field has also examined the attitudes of both students and instructors towards various aspects of learning English. For example, Moussu (2008, 327) explored how native and non-native English speakers in the United States perceive English learning and the influence of their first languages on this process. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, the concept of attitudes has similarly been a focus of various studies. Inspired by these findings, the current study aims to investigate the attitudes of both learners and instructors regarding the nature of their courses.

Methodology, Target Groups, and Survey Instrument

The methodology involves a descriptive survey targeting first and second-year law students enrolled in legal English courses at two state and four private universities in Georgia. This survey aims to capture students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the teaching methods employed and the importance of integrating substantive legal content in language instruction. A total of 224 students participated, equally divided between first-year students who had two semesters of legal English and second-year students with a year and a half of similar coursework.

In secondary-level education, English is taught as a second language, having replaced Russian as a priority. Competency in a foreign language is defined by the National Center for Evaluation and Examinations (NAEC, <https://naec.ge/ge/post/3153>), with a requirement of at least A2/B1 level for university entry. In universities, the prerequisite to study Legal English is at least a B1 level of English, and the courses are structured on a 'spiral curriculum' principle, developing competencies from simple to complex. Undergraduate law programs in Georgia are instructed only in Georgian, as law is a state-regulated profession, with graduates required to

pass specialization exams in Georgian. Legal English courses are typically offered in the first four semesters and are prerequisites for other legal courses conducted in English. These courses are also essential for students to participate in international moot court competitions, exchange programs, or other international activities requiring good knowledge of Legal English.

The survey included a structured questionnaire exploring students' attitudes toward their preferred instructional approaches for acquiring Legal English based on their classroom activities' observation. The survey also intended to identify how integrated content and language teaching methods impact learning outcomes in Legal English courses. It utilized scaled and multiple-choice questions to evaluate the importance of different knowledge sources and learning methods for legal terminology, supplemented by open-ended questions to identify challenges encountered during their studies. All teaching methods included in the survey were derived from the Legal English Course Syllabi prepared by the author. In the first week of studies, the students were instructed on the course content, teaching-learning methods, evaluation criteria and components, etc. The students were familiar with all teaching-learning methods and it was easy for them to identify what was meant by every method mentioned in the survey. They could also reflect on the impact of the integrated content and language teaching methods on their learning outcomes in Legal English courses.

Data Collection and Analysis

Student responses were statistically analyzed to identify patterns and extract qualitative data from open-ended responses. This analysis was enriched by theoretical research and the instructor's extensive teaching experience, blending empirical findings with scholarly insights. Students rated the questionnaire on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 for unimportant and 5 for extremely important). All respondents agreed that knowledge of Legal English was essential for their career development and should be studied as a core component for at least four hours per week. As expected, students preferred engaging in classroom activities rather than doing text-based home assignments focused on grammar and lexis. With the rise of digital tools, it has become challenging for lecturers to assign homework as students increasingly use AI tools for their assignments. Therefore, more emphasis is placed on developing legal competencies within the classroom. In this regard, the students knew that the only assignments they could do at home would be preparing for specific activities that would evaluate their preparation, presentation, and producing skills.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1. The Most Efficient Methods of Legal Terminology Acquisition

Method	%
Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)	88%
Simulation and Role Play	94%
Socratic Method	82%
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	99%
Moot Court	78%
The Lexical Approach	86%
Content-Based Instruction (CBI)	83%
Explaining an English term in the context of English or US law	60%
Case Method	72%
Project-Based Learning (PBL)	69.8%
Defining in Georgian /English	61%
Some other way	44%

The analysis of the collected data provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of various teaching methods. The students identified the most useful methods for acquiring Legal English, as crucial for fostering a deep understanding of legal concepts, critical thinking, practical skills, and proficiency in Legal English communication. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was the most favored method with 99% of students appreciating its focus on real-life communication and interactive learning. Simulation and Role Play were highly regarded by 94% of students for being effective in providing practical and interactive learning experiences. The majority (88%) favored CLIL, as, according to them, it enhances both language skills and legal knowledge.

The Lexical Approach was recognized by 86% of students for its focus on vocabulary acquisition and contextual usage. 83% of students considered content-based instruction effective in integrating language learning with subject matter content. 82% of students considered the Socratic Method for its role in engaging students in critical thinking and deep analysis through instructor-led questioning about specific legal cases or issues. Moot Court was valued by 78% of students for its role in practicing oral advocacy and legal argumentation. The students commented that participation in moot court, especially in the final exam format, enhanced their legal research, writing, and especially oral communication skills within a structured and competitive environment. It should be noted that some students did not favor this method as they were still shy in expressing their opinions in front of the large auditorium.

The Case Method was perceived as important by 72% of students, as it emphasizes real-life cases to develop interpretative skills and an understanding of legal reasoning. Project-Based Learning was valued by 69.8% for engaging students in real-world projects, promoting active learning, critical thinking, and effective communication. The students admitted that each of these methods provides a dynamic and interactive learning environment that not only improves students' proficiency in Legal English but also deepens their understanding of legal systems, enhances critical thinking, and develops practical skills that are key aspects of legal practice. These methods directly address the specific needs of law students learning English, making them especially valuable in educational settings where English is used as the medium of instruction for law.

Translating terms into Georgian was identified as important by 61% of students, and 60% noted that comparing legal terminology between Georgian and English legal frameworks markedly enhanced their learning experience. Explaining and defining English legal terms within the context of law was deemed essential by 55.6% of participants for a proper grasp of legal terminology in its authentic setting. Defining terms directly in English was considered a useful method by 46.2% of the students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the research highlight the essential role of integrating comprehensive legal content with language instruction to enhance the efficiency of Legal English courses. The research revealed that students favored interactive and practical teaching methods, such as Communicative Language Teaching, Simulation and Role Play, and Content and Language Integrated Learning. The study also confirmed that these methods not only improve language proficiency but also enhance students' legal knowledge, making them better prepared for the challenges of the international legal environment.

For Georgia, adopting a hybrid educational model that draws from the successful practices in the US, the EU, and the UK will foster a more comprehensible Legal English course syllabi in line with the demands of the international legal environment. This approach will not only address immediate educational needs but also enable a long-term assessment of the most suitable teaching methods and strategies, ultimately impacting students' professional success in the field of law.

To achieve these goals, several actionable strategies can be implemented. Firstly, there is a need for the development and integration of a Legal English curriculum across Georgian universities, with a particular emphasis on CLIL and CLT. A collaborative approach involving lawyers and linguists will be essential in designing and implementing this unified syllabus. Furthermore, expanding experiential learning opportunities, such as moot courts, legal clinics, and simulations, is critical for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Supporting these initiatives requires continuous professional development for educators.

By implementing these strategies, Georgia can better equip its legal graduates with the competitive professional knowledge and skills needed for employment in an international context, ensuring that Legal English education in Georgian universities is comprehensive and practical.

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