



Developing Legal English Vocabulary for Students Specialized in Law at Nam Can Tho University in Viet Nam

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ARTICLE INFO

Published Online:
19 September 2024

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ABSTRACT

Today, English is the language of international communication. As a global language, English is not only a communication tool but also brings many important benefits in students' learning, research and personal career development. From learning English well, students can read and understand international documents with important information, thereby being able to communicate and participate in collaborative projects, seminars, and work conferences with students from other countries. At Nam Can Tho University, in addition to basic English courses, students majoring in Law and Economic Law also have access to Legal English subjects in the training program. In order to enhance the ability to learn English for students in general, specialized in Legal English, we focus on developing diverse vocabulary through different topics to help students be motivated to study. From there, determine your goals for their next academic years.

KEYWORDS: Legal English, developing vocabulary, Nam Can Tho University

1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary knowledge is considered an important tool for foreign language learners. If learners possess a rich and abundant vocabulary, they will communicate more successfully and express themselves better, whereas those with a limited vocabulary will have difficulty communicating and expressing themselves worse. With limited vocabulary, there will be many obstacles in reading and understanding, and it will be difficult to use grammatical structures well to express the issues you want to convey. This confirms that vocabulary knowledge is at the heart of foreign language learning, playing an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts. Furthermore, building a complete and diverse vocabulary "bank" is necessary to use a second language successfully. Dominican University of California believes: "To teach vocabulary effectively, teachers must learn the necessary skills to apply the best methods. Because teaching students vocabulary is an art that will help students remember new terms to help them develop better." However, for the majority of students who do not major in foreign languages, including students majoring in Law, learning a foreign language will encounter certain difficulties. One of the barriers that makes students feel afraid and unconfident when learning English and foreign language-related subjects like Legal English is the lack of necessary

vocabulary. Therefore, the issue of vocabulary learning and methods to improve vocabulary for non-foreign language students are of interest to many experts.

In this article, the authors will focus on clarifying related issues to clarify the importance of building vocabulary, especially Legal English. Thereby helping students plan to improve and enhance their Legal English vocabulary. At the same time, the article also focuses on analyzing different methods and techniques in the Legal English teaching process to support effective word learning for students.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING LEGAL ENGLISH VOCABULARY FOR LAW STUDENTS

2.1. The definition of vocabulary

Defining the term "vocabulary" is essential because it is the basic foundation of any language, playing a big role for learners in acquiring a new foreign language. Through consulting some documents, the author found some definitions of vocabulary as follows: Vocabulary is the collection of words as a individual knows" (Linse 2005, 121). Vocabulary is a set of words known to an individual). According to Hornby, "Vocabulary" is understood as: "Vocabulary as all the words that a person knows or uses when they are talking about particular subject in particular

language". they talk about a particular subject in a particular language) (Hornby 2006, 1945). Besides, there are also some other views that "Vocabulary" is "Vocabulary can be defined as words someone must know to communicate effectively: words in speaking (expressive vocabulary), and words in listening (receptive vocabulary)". (Vocabulary can be defined as a word that someone must know to communicate effectively: speaking words (expressive vocabulary) and listening words (Neuman and Drawyer as cited in Bintz 201, 44).

In addition, it can be seen that vocabulary is one of the basic elements of language that learners need to accumulate in learning a foreign language, especially to express and communicate effectively with others. Learners cannot read, write, listen and speak a foreign language if they do not have enough vocabulary. Learning new vocabulary not only means memorizing the form of the word, but also understanding the meaning of these words to use them appropriately in the context and context. Thus, it can be generally understood that vocabulary is all the words in any language that have meaning and are used by people to express themselves in different situations and are an important part of their lives. every language and every communication skill (Khoe, T. T., & Phuong, N. T., 2024)

From the definitions above, it can be concluded that vocabulary is the total number of words that are needed to communicate ideas and express the speakers' meaning. That is the reason why it is important to learn vocabulary.

2.2 Importance in vocabulary

Linguist D. A. Wilkins once commented: "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." This shows that vocabulary plays an important role in learning English. To be able to master language with the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, learners need to have a good, rich vocabulary in many different contexts.

Firstly, research has shown that having a well-developed vocabulary provides individuals with the tools for success in several areas of life, including academic achievement, career opportunities, and communication ability. High-school student knowledge of vocabulary is a strong predictor of their university level reading achievement, and students with strong vocabularies tend to have higher high-school grade point averages. A person's vocabulary is also a predictor of their job performance. Individuals' communication and speaking skills are generally enhanced when they have a well-developed vocabulary.

Secondly, if one is only good at grammar but does not have words to express, it will be difficult for language users to do well in daily applied tasks related to foreign languages. Therefore, learners cannot only communicate through grammar or complex structures but need a certain amount of vocabulary knowledge to express their own feelings and wishes. In the foreign language approach, vocabulary creates meaning in conversation. Therefore,

cultivating knowledge related to foreign languages, specifically learning more vocabulary is a necessary issue, instead of only focusing on knowledge related to grammar.

Furthermore, when we have a relatively stable knowledge base, our reading comprehension and listening skills are also greatly improved. A problem that most readers have encountered is not having enough vocabulary to understand when reading a text, a book with many vocabulary words we do not know the meaning of, we will see the importance of vocabulary. In fact, grammar and vocabulary always have a certain connection. In the grammatical structure, there will be new words included and vice versa. Vocabulary creates grammar and these two elements need to be flexibly combined for English learning to be effective.

Finally, vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. Underscoring the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language" p. 55). Nation (2001) further describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. The importance of vocabulary is demonstrated in and out the school. In classroom, the achieving students possess the most sufficient vocabulary. Researchers such as Laufer and Nation (1999), Maximo (2000), Read (2000), Gu (2003), Marion (2008) and Nation (2011) and others have realized that the acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful second language use and plays an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts. In English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) learning vocabulary items plays a vital role in all language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Nation,2011).Rivers and Nunan (1991), furthermore, argue that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful second language use because without an extensive vocabulary, we will be unable to use the language as well as what we wish.

2.3 The definition of Legal English

There are many views on the concept of legal English, however there are two approaches to this content as follows:

To begin with, Legal English, also known by countries around the world as the Language of the Law, can be understood as words and terms that are conventional and widely used in activities. in the field of law such as contract drafting, inheritance, litigation, etc. These words will have to satisfy the following characteristics: distinctness, flexibility, unique language, universality, etc. and be widely accepted for use in the legal industry.

From another perspective, Legal English is a specialized form of English that is used in the legal profession, encompassing the language, terminology, and writing style used in legal documents, contracts, court proceedings, and legal communication. It plays a crucial role in facilitating effective communication and comprehension within the legal field. Understanding and utilizing legal English is essential for both aspiring law students and practicing lawyers to succeed in their professional endeavors.

It can be understood from many different perspectives, but Legal English is an essential skill for students and people working in the legal industry. It is not only academic but also a practical need for effective communication and career success. By understanding its nuances and practicing it regularly, students and workers can significantly enhance their legal expertise and career opportunities.

2.4. Importance in the Legal English vocabulary

It cannot be denied that it is very important for a law student to enhance her knowledge of Legal English vocabulary which helps them at every step, every day. The communication between lawyers and their clients, lawyers and judges, a lawyer with another lawyer needs deep insight of Legal English. The concepts of laws, understanding of judgments, drafting of a petition and preparing notes for arguments in a court need, both, understanding and fluency in Legal English. We cannot develop expertise or proficiency in legal language in a short time. We need constant and regular practice. It is often seen that students are taught courses in Communicative English rather than in Legal English in our Law institutions. In this part, we will discuss the importance of learning legal English as a non-native speaker.

The first point, it plays an crucial role in Legal Education and Research. It shows that Law students must develop a solid foundation in legal English to achieve high academic achievements. Legal research requires the ability to understand and analyze complex legal documents, includes international and national statutes. Proficiency in legal English enhances a student's ability to conduct thorough legal research, which is important for producing high-quality assignments and participating in legal discussions.

The following learning legal English vocabulary will help students develop comprehensively in their profession: When law students enter the legal profession, they need to adapt to the conventions and requirements of practicing law. Therefore, mastering legal English during their studies will equip them with the necessary skills to communicate effectively with legal experts and foreign businesses. Students can understand legal documents as well as draft memoranda and summaries in English easily.

Moreover, in client communications: we always communicate legal concepts, advice and information clearly and accurately to our clients. Because the clients often have limited legal knowledge so using simple language or

explaining legal terms in everyday language is essential. Proficiency in legal English allows us to communicate effectively with clients, ensuring that they fully understand their legal rights, obligations and options.

The final point is that English vocabulary helps us in drafting legal documents: Lawyers often draft contracts, agreements, pleadings and other legal documents. Expert knowledge of legal English is vital to drafting these documents accurately and clearly. The use of appropriate legal terminology, concise language, and precise syntax help create legally binding documents that can withstand close scrutiny and avoid misinterpretation.

2.4 Teaching and learning Legal English vocabulary

In Vietnam, teaching and learning methods foreign languages in general and English in particular at all educational levels, including at the university and college level. Currently, it is still mainly focused on grammar. As a result, many students still finish high school do not speak English (or speak no who understands). This causes difficulties when students approach the subject of Legal English in university level. One of the reasons is due to lack of vocabulary, making it struggle to express words and read documents. During the training process, instructors have an essential role in helping students improve their English vocabulary in general and legal English in particular. However, current vocabulary teaching is inadequate and instructors do not realize the great importance of helping students develop a rich vocabulary. If we look back at the past, we see that for a long time English has used teaching methods that emphasized the primary importance of teaching grammatical structures.

Since the focus is on grammar, very few words are introduced in such courses and most of them are limited in their ability to express themselves and foreign language learning is mainly concerned with the grammatical structures taught.

Realizing that limitation, English teaching methods at Vietnam educational and training establishments have changed many times. (Hoang Trung, 2018 Teaching and learning foreign languages: Teachers and students must change) The structure of the English curriculum is organized not only around vocabulary and grammar but also focuses on other skills such as speaking (through answering questions related to the reading) and writing. Furthermore, The Ministry of Education and Training has issued a training program and issued training certificates for foreigners teaching English at foreign language and information technology centers in Vietnam (according to Decision No. 4159/QĐ-BGDĐT) aims to improve the quality of foreign language teaching and learning in Vietnam, including the quality of English teaching and learning at foreign language and information technology centers.

At higher education institutions in Vietnam, teaching and learning English is mandatory. Most students take foreign language courses throughout their studies. At Nam Can Tho University, students take 4 English courses and specialized English courses. For students majoring in Law and Economic Law at Southern Can Tho University, in addition to 4 basic English subjects, students also learn 45 hours of Legal English (3 credits) in the training program.

The important content of the module is to provide students with vocabulary used in law enforcement practice and typical grammatical elements. Through each lesson, students are exposed to many different legal topics. Besides, the design of lessons ensures the following skills: reading comprehension, listening, speaking and writing; From there, creating a foundation of specialized English knowledge and skills so that students can access specialized learning resources easily, effectively, and confidently in daily English communication.

Besides that, learning vocabulary is one of the most basic and essential activities of the foreign language learning process. To learn vocabulary effectively, learners need to apply it all what is possible (methods, means, learning environment, motivation...) to achieve learning goals. Therefore, if we apply appropriate vocabulary learning methods, students can achieve get good results. However, not all vocabulary learning methods are the same effective for all learners, so learners also need to choose the best suit method with them.

In practice, most learners are aware of the importance of vocabulary (Dung, N. C., Phuong, N. T., Van, T. T. T., & Nhien, N. T. K, 2024), because to express their own feelings and needs they need to use vocabulary to express themselves. During the teaching process, the author noticed that students often have difficulty expressing their wishes and feelings. When practicing English in speaking and writing activities, most students always feel tired and pressured, while others are not interested in the subject. If forced to practice, students only use the given expressions and words in the same way until the conversation begins when communication is suddenly interrupted. The main reason comes from students' lack of vocabulary. In fact, students can still use dictionaries to look up words, but this method does not bring high efficiency in communication, moreover, students become You should have a mentality of relying on using dictionaries or supporting tools and software on available platforms. This is also another reason why students pay little attention to adding vocabulary and are completely dependent on translation means.

In general, the process of teaching and learning foreign languages in general and English in particular is to help students understand the meaning of the topic. Students as learning objects are the starting point in teaching and learning, it measures the success of the teaching and learning process (Tran, T. T. V., Duong, Q. T., Le, V. L., Nguyen, T. P.,

&Phan, T. N. (2024). Foreign language teaching and learning can be successful when students experience it directly. The benefit of studying a subject is experiencing and studying it seriously and impassioned.

3. SOME APPROACHES FOR DEVELOPING LEGAL ENGLISH VOCABULARY FOR LAW STUDENTS AT NAM CAN THO UNIVERSITY

Vocabulary is knowledge about words and their meanings. Vocabulary knowledge is not simply a matter of being able to completely master it. Accordingly, vocabulary is a category that can expand and continue to deepen throughout a learner's life. Therefore, teaching and learning vocabulary does not just stop at looking up words in the dictionary and using that word in sentences, but vocabulary is acquired accidentally through indirect contact with words and on purpose ideas through explicit instruction on specific words and word learning strategies. Within the scope of the article, the author proposes some methods to develop English vocabulary for Law students at Nam Can Tho University in particular and Law students in general as follows:

Firstly, each vocabulary is one of the most discussed parts of teaching English as a foreign language. When the teaching and learning process takes place, problems would appear to the teachers. They have problems of how to teach students in order to gain satisfying results. The teacher should prepare and find out the appropriate techniques, which will be implemented to the students. A good teacher should prepare himself or herself with various and up-to-date techniques. Teachers need to be able to master topics in order to be understood by students, and make them interested and happy in the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

Secondly, teachers can flexibly integrate exercises in lessons, such as guessing words using pictures and real-life situations. This is a method that teachers can implement in class by preparing one or several images related to the lesson topic. Then suggest to students the vocabulary that may appear in the suggested image. Students can guess or find out the meaning of a new word or expression in the text by thinking about the topic and observe other information around from there. In other words, by observing a given image, learners can infer meaning from the context and this can be an effective way that teachers can develop the vocabulary of their students. After the activity ends, the lecturer will provide exact vocabulary related to the pictures for students to record in documents, instructing students to remember carefully key words and phrases to be able to use them for the next exercises. Additionally, instructors can use real-life situations, texts, or conversations to introduce and reinforce vocabulary instead of providing isolated lists of words. By seeing words used in context, students can understand and remember vocabulary more effectively. Difficulty can be increased through each lesson, instructors

can ask students to provide more and more in-depth words to develop vocabulary over time.

Thirdly, applying techniques to clarify the meaning of words.

- **Word definition:** This is a method where the lecturer will use words to accurately describe the concept and content of a phenomenon that the lecturer is aiming for. When giving vocabulary definitions, the instructor can also include a statement or statement containing the clarified word. Normally, lecturers use English to define words, motivating students to think and judge the meaning of words. However, in cases where learners do not understand and cannot guess the meaning, lecturers can apply Use definitions in your mother tongue to help students find new words in English. This method is only used as a last resort when the above methods are not effective.

For example: The word to be defined is: “Lawyer”

Definition: Someone whose job is to give advice to people about the law and speak for them in court.

Example: 1. She is hired a famous lawyer who specializes in criminal cases

2. Lawyer is a profession associated with human destiny and the application of the law.

3. The lawyer defends the accused in court.

- **Synonym:** A word that has the same or similar meaning to another word in a certain context (different spelling and pronunciation). Synonyms are also understood as relationships that exist between vocabulary words that have closely related meanings. In short, we can briefly imagine that English synonyms are almost similar to Vietnamese synonyms. The teacher can give one or several vocabulary words, then ask students to find synonyms. Students can look up words in the dictionary or recall words they already know. This can help learners understand meanings and develop their vocabulary without needing to translate.

Besides, in speaking and writing skills, using a variety of vocabulary and synonyms correctly will help students gain coherence and flexibility in writing, making communication more convenient by using appropriate words, making speech become fluent, clear, and fluent. Many studies also show that vocabulary is acquired best if it is similar to what has been learned (e.g. Rudska et al., 1982, 1985), not surprisingly, learning synonyms is one way to Expand vocabulary. Learning about synonyms is also important because this is how the dictionary is organized. Bilingual dictionaries aside, monolingual dictionaries use words to explain words, synonyms are often used (Ilson, 1991).

For example: Find synonyms of Law.

We can find the words: Rule, Regulation – Rule – Principle

1. The company has a regulation that employees must wear uniforms.

2. The game has a rule that each team must have 11 players on the field.

3. This principle applies to all kinds of selling.

- **Antonyms:** These are words that have completely opposite meanings to the given words, those words have opposite and contrasting meanings. Therefore, antonyms in English are often used to compare things, events, and phenomena in life. Besides, antonyms have the effect of highlighting opposing activities, states, and colors of things and phenomena. Learners clearly express their emotions, moods, evaluations, and comments about that object or phenomenon during the process of communication and exchange. Similar to synonyms, the teacher can give one or several vocabulary words, then ask students to find antonyms. Students can find words, then write them down and apply them to the next tasks.

For example: Find antonyms of Good, Private, Fact, Build...

We can find Good-Bad, Private-Public, Fact-Fiction, Build-Destroy...

Fourthly, work in groups and demonstrate using mind maps. This is a method that lecturers can apply to classes with a large number of students. To attract students' attention, lecturers can allow students to choose their own groups and fulfill the lecturer's requests. pellets. Groups will arrange the given words into related vocabulary groups. Word groups can include homophones, or word classes such as nouns, adjectives and adverbs; or root words and derivatives; Groups of words are in scale form like adverbs of frequency. Using mind maps can be extremely useful as it allows students to gain more vocabulary, not only from their own group but also from other groups in the class. This method, done regularly at the end of each class or as homework, will increase students' ability to research and develop vocabulary.

Finally, immediately apply the vocabulary you just learned. Learning words is an important learning task in any language learning. Through many different ways of organizing and arranging, teachers can let students immediately apply the vocabulary they have just learned, so as not to let the vocabulary drift into oblivion. Immediate application of words and simple sentences containing content to remember contributes significantly to engraving learned knowledge into the student's subconscious. This method is considered highly effective, helps remember vocabulary for the longest time and does not cause much pressure.

However, to achieve the best results from this learning method, instructors should start with simple, common topics in daily life or let students watch a short video and read random status lines. on social platforms... and practice right after the lessons.

4. CONCLUSION

In the current context of integration, people working in the legal field and legal consultants not only work with

Vietnamese people but also have foreign clients and conduct litigation at international courts. Therefore, besides writing skills to draft contracts and legal documents, it is more important to have communication, negotiation and debate skills in legal English. Although there are still many difficulties and obstacles in the process of teaching and learning legal English, as well as quite a few reference materials, there are only short-term legal English courses, so providing students with basic knowledge, vocabulary or terms in the industry is not guaranteed to teach theory and support communication skills or solve practical situations but the teaching and learning of legal English is still implemented at educational institutions. It can say that Legal English is very important for law students. It makes a significant contribution to their success on the professional front. The value of Communicative English is enhanced if a lawyer is well equipped with proficiency in legal English. Right from the beginning, law students should concentrate on language skills so that they can impress the clients, the judge and fellow professionals. The law colleges of our country should also focus on the teaching and tailoring of courses of English language which can be instrumental in the success of their students.

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