

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND VIETNAMESE

**PRACTICES AND SOLUTIONS FOR ENHANCING
STUDENTS' INTEREST IN LEARNING LEGAL ENGLISH
OF SOME UNIVERSITIES IN HANOI****NGUYEN NHAN AI***

ABSTRACT: The article presents the results of research, which involved 366 students, 119 legal practitioners, and 115 lecturers, and has provided valuable insights into the practice of interest in learning Legal English, particularly from the perspective of students in Hanoi. The survey results not only highlight the growing awareness of the importance of Legal English but also shed light on the opportunities and challenges in promoting the development of this field. Based on these findings, the article proposes several solutions to enhance students' interest in learning Legal English in Hanoi.

KEY WORDS: Practice of interest in learning; Legal English; Interested in studying legal English; University students.

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1. Background

Interest in learning is not a new topic, that's why there are many definitions and concepts of interest. In the world, psychologist Marxist Covaliop A.G (1971) considered interest to be the result of the formation and development of individual personality, it objectively reflects existing attitudes in people. In Vietnam, according to the Vietnamese encyclopedia: "Interest is a form of expression of human emotions and cognitive needs to be enthusiastically aware of the purpose of activities, to learn more deeply, to understand know more fully about the subject of interest", and "interest improves concentration, attention and ability to work. When working in accordance with their interests, even though they have to overcome difficulties, people still feel comfortable and achieve high results." Researcher Tran Thi Minh Duc has defined "Interest as an individual's special attitude toward an object that is both meaningful to life and has the ability to bring pleasure to the individual during activities"¹. Besides, a group of scholars Pham Minh Hac, Le Khanh and Tran Trong Thuy have also affirmed "When we are interested in something, we are always conscious, we understand its meaning for our lives. Furthermore, we have a special affection for it, so our interest attracts us towards its object, creating a psychological desire to approach and go deeper into it."².

Interest in learning, both in general and specifically in acquiring foreign languages, is of paramount importance. The essential nature of enthusiasm in the educational process extends beyond the mere notion of students attentively listening to lectures. It encompasses a profound dimension wherein a learner's interest in a particular domain facilitates ease of understanding and engenders a sense of excitement, passion, and genuine enjoyment in engaging with this subject. Legal English is a specialized form of English used within the legal field, developed based on logical rules that differ from everyday English in terms of vocabulary, morphology, grammar, and semantics³. It includes a vast array of legal terms and jargon. Historically, Legal English was predominantly utilized by legal practitioners (such as prosecutors, judges, lawyers, notaries, auctioneers, legal scholars, lecturers, and law students) in countries with a Common Law tradition⁴. However, in contemporary times, as the primary language for both academic research and practical legal application⁵, coupled with the convergence of major legal systems such as Civil Law and Common Law, Legal English has become widely adopted.

In essence, Legal English has and continues to exert a significant influence on global integration, judicial reforms in Vietnam, and has become an essential medium for international communication,

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often referred to as the lingua franca. Most organizations and enterprises globally and in Vietnam necessitate personnel proficient in Legal English skills such as listening, speaking (presenting legal issues, negotiating transactions, legal consulting, and litigation), reading (scientific research, legal document retrieval, contract review), writing (drafting legal documents), and legal translation and interpretation.

Especially in the context of international economic integration, most legal research materials (monographs, reference books, specialized law textbooks, journal articles in legal science, conference papers) and legal documents such as normative legal documents (international conventions, treaties, agreements, protocols, national laws and subordinate legislation), service proposal letters/contract offers, quotations, contracts, legal correspondence, minutes, cooperation agreements, corporate charters, economic-technical justification documents for investment projects, powers of attorney, etc., are drafted or translated into English. Consequently, Legal English is a critical course in the undergraduate curriculum at law universities.

Legal English plays a pivotal role for students during their university studies and in their professional careers post-graduation. Proficiency in Legal English enables learners to listen, speak, read, write, translate, and interpret legal English, and engage in discussions on issues pertinent to their academic pursuits. They can read and research English-language materials to support their learning activities. Furthermore, by utilizing Legal English, learners can assimilate the cultural and legal values from diverse legal systems worldwide. Therefore, fostering and nurturing students' interest in studying Legal English is a crucial strategy for enhancing the effectiveness and quality of Legal English education.

It is evident that both domestic and international researchers acknowledge that interest is a crucial factor that drives individuals to have a desire to engage with objects, thereby promoting positive and effective actions. Thus, it can be observed that in the learning process in general and in the study of Legal English in particular, if students are interested in the field, they will inherently develop a proper learning motivation and a desire to achieve the set learning objectives. Interest in learning is a special cognitive attitude of the subject towards the learning activity. Thanks to interest, students can reduce fatigue and stress, increase attention, and promote active exploration and creativity in the learning process, thereby more easily assimilating knowledge.

2. Practices of students' interest in learning legal English in Hanoi

2.1. Cognitive Aspect of Students' Interest in Legal English

One of the primary questions we were interested in for this study is the level of cognitive interest in Legal English among students. The results are shown in the table below:

Table 1. *The necessity of using Legal English for those who study, research, and work in the field of law*

	Content									
	1		2		3		4		5	
In your opinion, is the use of Legal English necessary for those who study, research, and work in the field of law?	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%
	12	3,3	28	7,7	66	18	178	48,6	82	22,4

Table 2. *The main reason for the low percentage of Law students in Vietnam who can use Legal English after graduation*

	Content			
	Other reasons	No need to use	Not many	The nature of Legal

			at work		training institutions focus on teaching Legal English		English is very difficult	
In your opinion, what is the main reason for the low percentage of Law students in Vietnam who can use Legal English after graduation?	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%
	30	8,2	13,1	18	122	33,3	166	45,4

The survey data reveals a compelling narrative about the current state of interest in learning Legal English, particularly from the perspective of students in Hanoi. It underscores a growing recognition of the importance of English proficiency, especially in the legal domain, alongside a stark gap between aspiration and access to quality training programs.

The survey results indicate a promising trend: a significant portion of students recognize the value of English language skills. This is particularly evident in the legal field, where 57.9% of surveyed students expressed their intention to pursue Legal English studies in the near future. Furthermore, the fact that 95.6% of respondents were first-year students suggests that this awareness is taking root early in their academic journey, highlighting a proactive approach towards career preparedness.

However, the survey also exposes a concerning disparity between ambition and opportunity. A striking 75.3% of students reported having had little to no formal exposure to Legal English. This indicates a significant gap in the provision of adequate training programs, hindering students from realizing their aspirations and acquiring the necessary skills to thrive in an increasingly globalized legal landscape.

Furthermore, the survey sheds light on the primary obstacles students face in their English language learning journey. Vocabulary and grammar were identified as the most significant hurdles, suggesting a need for training programs that prioritize the development of these foundational language skills within the specific context of legal terminology and discourse.

The survey data underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive reevaluation of English training programs in Hanoi's universities. It calls for a multi-pronged approach that addresses both the growing demand for English language skills and the specific challenges students face in acquiring them.

Firstly, there's a clear need to expand the availability and accessibility of English training programs, particularly those focusing on Legal English. This could involve integrating Legal English courses into the core curriculum, offering specialized elective courses, or partnering with external training providers to offer a wider range of options.

Secondly, training programs need to be tailored to address the specific challenges students face. This includes a strong emphasis on vocabulary and grammar acquisition, along with opportunities for practical application of these skills in a legal context. Incorporating interactive teaching methods, real-world case studies, and simulations can enhance the learning experience and bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Finally, the survey results highlight the importance of early intervention. The fact that most respondents were first-year students suggests that introducing English language training, including Legal English, in the early stages of university education can be highly beneficial. This would allow students to build a strong foundation in English language skills and apply them throughout their academic and professional careers.

In conclusion, the survey data paints a picture of a student body that is increasingly aware of the importance of English language skills, particularly in the legal field. However, it also reveals a significant gap in the provision of adequate training programs, hindering students from realizing their full potential. By addressing these challenges and investing in comprehensive and targeted English training programs, Hanoi's universities can empower their students to thrive in an increasingly globalized world and contribute meaningfully to Vietnam's legal and economic development..

2.2. Interest of students in Legal English studied through emotional aspects

The study of students' learning interest places emotional engagement as particularly significant, as it serves as a criterion for assessing learners' motivation.

The interest in learning Legal English, as expressed through students' actions, is at an average level. The survey data shows that 12.6% of students engage in self-study, 18% learn at school, 31.7% combine their studies with their major in Law, and 25.7% participate in external classes. This suggests that students are mainly learning Legal English independently or in conjunction with their major studies, rather than relying solely on the university's curriculum.

The clearest expression of students' interest in studying Legal English through emotional engagement is evident in their strong desire to explore legal English vocabulary and its meanings and their eagerness to explore grammar and its usage in legal English. It can be said that for the students in this study, their greatest interest lies in exploring and understanding vocabulary meanings and grammar usage in legal English. These are essential study components of the Legal English course that students need to explore and master to meet the requirements of their undergraduate program. Therefore, when students are enthusiastic about exploring these aspects, it serves as a critical foundation for achieving successful outcomes in studying Legal English as stipulated.

Alongside the positive emotions students have towards studying Legal English, a certain portion of students still experience negative emotions during their Legal English studies. These negative emotions may contribute to reduced interest in studying Legal English, consequently lowering the effectiveness of their Legal English learning. Specifically, the aspect of "Always eager to speak legal English fluently as a native language" received the lowest average score among the 5 aspects considered.

2.3. Interest of students in Legal English studied through action

If cognition serves as the foundation for individuals to plan their activities, and emotions act as the driving force, then behavior is the measure of evaluating the effectiveness of individual performance in activities.

The interest in learning Legal English, as expressed through their actions, is at an average level. This result indicates that the students' interest in learning Legal English, as demonstrated by their actions during in-class activities, practical sessions, and self-study, is not very high.

The most evident expressions of interest in learning Legal English through actions are: actively participating in practical Legal English sessions and being willing to exchange and share experiences and knowledge with fellow students. It can be said that the learned studied are most interested in practical Legal English sessions. This is a very important basis, contributing to students being active, proactive, and creative in practical Legal English sessions. The activeness, proactiveness, and creativity in practical Legal English learning will help students achieve proficiency in legal English in particular and English language skills in general, as required by the university's bachelor's degree program.

Besides the positive actions towards learning Legal English mentioned above, the students studied still exhibit some less positive, proactive, and creative learning behaviors. For instance, in Legal English classes, they pay attention to the lectures and do not engage in personal tasks, and they actively, proactively, and creatively absorb knowledge and participate in Legal English lessons.

In summary, the learned studied show an average level of interest in learning Legal English through their actions. This result indicates that while students have shown positive, proactive, and creative behaviors in practical Legal English learning, they still lack attentiveness during lectures and occasionally engage in personal tasks during class. They are not truly proactive and active in

participating in classroom learning activities. Therefore, to meet the learning requirements and improve the effectiveness of Legal English learning at the university, students need to change their learning behaviors to become more diligent, proactive, and active.

Interest in learning Legal English is a positive attitude of the individual towards learning Legal English, characterized by special emotions, a desire to explore the subject, and effective actions in the process of learning Legal English. When considering the interest in learning Legal English among university students as a special form of attitude, it is expressed through three aspects: cognition, emotion, and action. Therefore, this paper will delve into the current state of interest in learning Legal English among students in the Hanoi's Universities to provide a practical basis for proposing measures to create and nurture students' interest in learning Legal English, thereby contributing to improving the quality of student training at the university.

3. Solutions to enhance students' interest in learning legal English

3.1. Regarding learning resources

It can be observed that the learning resources for some legal English subjects in Vietnam have been carefully selected and have shown a certain level of effectiveness and suitability for students in recent years. These resources are published by reputable publishers with systematic knowledge of legal English. However, the authors believe that these resources can be further improved to optimize teaching and learning outcomes for both lecturers and students.

Firstly, some legal English training institutions in Vietnam have developed their own internal materials that have been used very effectively. Therefore, it is necessary to continue developing specialized textbooks for English language students to apply in research and teaching of other legal English subjects. Having such separate resources will serve the needs of English language students to the fullest, while also consolidating legal knowledge in the context of foreign elements.

Secondly, learning resources for teaching legal English subjects need to be supplemented or compiled according to specialized content. Other materials such as legal documents, legal codes, research papers, articles, magazines, etc., should be used as teaching materials because, in addition to providing practical knowledge, these are the tools that workers will use in their future jobs.

Thirdly, some legal English training institutions in Vietnam can consider adding bilingual international conference proceedings to the list of reference materials. The knowledge in these conferences are discussions of current issues, highly practical, and summarized by reputable researchers. In addition, it is possible to consider using bilingual books related to Vietnamese law, translations by lecturers within the school to help students better understand the law and its application.

Last but not least, lecturers and students need to actively collect materials, articles, and scientific research papers by scholars and legal researchers domestically and internationally in English to diversify the resources for teaching and research. In addition, it is also necessary to guide and encourage students to search and research foreign materials related to the subject through online channels such as Oxford Scholarship Online, HeinOnline legal database at <http://heinonline.org>, and the Mutrap Project, etc., as a form of student assessment, especially for English language students majoring in legal English. Besides, at some universities, electronic technology equipment has not yet fully met the requirements in the process of learning legal English. For example, at Hanoi Prosecutors Training College, 12.3% of students who studied legal English said that the electronic technology equipment at the school such as computers, the Internet, projectors, etc., did not meet or only minimally met the needs of English language learning activities. Specifically, these devices are outdated, have not been updated with the latest technology, or the number of devices is not enough to meet the large number of students in the class.

3.2. Regarding teaching and learning methods

Amidst ongoing judicial reforms, the significance of Legal English in international affairs is undeniable. While Legal English courses equip students with essential knowledge in their field, Hanoi's

universities offering legal English programs must adopt innovative teaching and learning approaches to foster greater student engagement.

Firstly, Extracurricular Activities: Introduce more extracurricular activities to promote learners' proactivity by using current legal information sources to temporarily update their Legal English knowledge. For instance, it is necessary to organize formal annual English moot court programs and competitions with large scale and attractive prizes to attract more students to actively participate. As mentioned above, some legal training institutions in Vietnam currently have programs organized by student clubs that have applied the role-playing method; however, they are still on a small scale and have not fully exploited the effectiveness of this method. Therefore, it is necessary to build and re-plan the programs in a systematic way and create the most favorable conditions to ensure both professionalism and enhance the effectiveness of this method in legal English training.

Secondly, Positive Intrinsic Motivation: Foster positive intrinsic motivation for learning Legal English, emphasizing its relevance to students' future careers. For example, it is necessary to create a comprehensive the system of testing and evaluating the legal English proficiency of law students. The assessment of competence can be implemented as follows: Each class will conduct role-playing within two lessons, focusing on a small specific topic. After the role-playing session, students will write a report summarizing the knowledge and skills in legal English that they have practiced during the role-playing. The results will be considered as one of the components in the overall assessment of that course. Establishing such a testing and evaluation system will serve as a motivation for students to study legal English more actively.

Thirdly, Support for Students with Good English Foundation: Provide support for students with a good foundation in English but who still face difficulties in understanding Legal English. This can be addressed by qualified Legal English teachers. To illustrate, universities should expand the application of role-playing in legal English teaching such as effectively utilizing the Moot Court model in legal English teaching; having a database of cases (either self-compiled or taken from real-life cases) to ensure smooth and effective moot court sessions.

Fourthly, Investment in Infrastructure: Invest in dedicated infrastructure for English learning in general and Legal English in particular. This includes facilities for role-playing in debate situations. Good infrastructure is considered a motivating factor for practicing Legal English.

Finally, Participation in External Activities: Encourage Legal English major students to participate more in external activities related to Legal English exchange programs.

4. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, it is evident that the interest in the Legal English course among students in Hanoi's Universities is at a moderately high level. Among the three aspects of interest in this course, students exhibit a high level of cognitive interest, while their emotional and behavioral expressions are comparatively lower. This discrepancy explains the current suboptimal learning outcomes among the students. While they understand the importance of the Legal English course, they lack the intrinsic motivation and proactive approach to seek effective learning methods. Globalization trends necessitate that legal professionals use English in their work environment. As international economic relations between Vietnam and other countries expand, cross-border business and trade activities become an inevitable trend for the country's economic development. This situation underscores the need to train corporate legal officers, with one of the key qualifications being proficiency in foreign languages, particularly Legal English, to perform their duties effectively. Legal advisory services for individuals and businesses on foreign-related legal matters in economic and civil domains, such as advising on foreign-related property ownership rights, the form of civil contracts with foreign elements, and non-contractual damage compensation with foreign elements, are on the rise. Additionally, disputes involving foreign elements in areas like family law, contracts, and intellectual property are becoming more frequent, requiring court officials to have a strong command of Legal English to resolve them efficiently. The findings of this study provide an essential practical foundation for the management of

the Legal English course at the bachelor's level in Hanoi's Universities. This foundation supports the development of strategies to foster and enhance students' interest in the Legal English course, ultimately improving the overall training quality of the university's students to meet current demands.

Notes:

- ¹ Tran Thi Minh Duc (1996) - Retrieved from www.cmard2.edu.vn.
- ² Pham Minh Hac - Le Khanh - Tran Trong Thuy (1998) - Retrieved from www.cmard2.edu.vn
- ³ Richard C. Wydick (2005), *Plain English for Lawyers*, Carolina Academic Press, Durham, Page 4.
- ⁴ Law Office of Tracy C. Miller (2022), *Legal in English Grammar*, <https://tmillerlaw.com/legal-in-english-grammar/>, truy cập ngày 15/02/2023.
- ⁵ Sanja Gavrilovska (2016), "The Main Characteristics of English Legal Language", Faculty of Philology Journal, Vol.12, Page 2

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Thực trạng và giải pháp với hứng thú học tiếng Anh pháp lý của sinh viên của một số trường đại học trên địa bàn thành phố Hà Nội

Tóm tắt: Bài viết trình bày kết quả nghiên cứu, với sự tham gia của 366 sinh viên, 119 học viên luật và 115 giảng viên, đã cung cấp những hiểu biết sâu sắc về thực trạng quan tâm đến việc học tiếng Anh Pháp lý, đặc biệt là từ góc nhìn của sinh viên, học viên của một số trường đại học trên địa bàn Hà Nội. Kết quả khảo sát không chỉ làm nổi bật nhận thức ngày càng tăng về tầm quan trọng của tiếng Anh Pháp lý mà còn làm sáng tỏ những cơ hội và thách thức trong việc thúc đẩy sự phát triển của lĩnh vực này; từ đó, đưa ra một số giải pháp nâng cao hứng thú học tiếng Anh pháp lý của sinh viên, học viên trên địa bàn TP. Hà Nội.

Từ khóa: thực trạng hứng thú học tập; tiếng Anh pháp lý; hứng thú học tiếng Anh pháp lý; sinh viên đại học.