



## NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF LEGAL ENGLISH LEARNING: THE ROLE OF VOCABULARY AND MOTIVATION FOR LAW STUDENTS

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### Abstract

This study explores the challenges faced by law students in Sidrap Regency when learning Legal English, with a specific focus on the roles of vocabulary acquisition and student motivation. Legal English, as a specialized form of language used in the legal profession, poses unique learning challenges, particularly in terms of its complex terminology and concepts. The research highlights how a limited vocabulary can hinder students' understanding and application of legal texts, while also examining the impact of motivation on the learning process. Through a mixed-methods approach, the study gathers data from both surveys and interviews with law students in Sidrap Regency, aiming to uncover the strategies employed to overcome these obstacles and the factors that influence their motivation. The findings suggest that while vocabulary expansion is crucial, fostering intrinsic motivation through relevant teaching methods and a supportive learning environment can significantly enhance students' engagement and proficiency in Legal English. This research contributes to the understanding of effective pedagogical approaches in teaching Legal English to law students in regional contexts.

**Keywords:** Legal English, Vocabulary Acquisition, Motivation, Law Students, Learning Challenges, Sidrap Regency, Pedagogical Approaches

### INTRODUCTION

Legal English, as a specialized variant of the English language, is essential for law students and professionals to effectively communicate, interpret, and apply legal principles in both national and international contexts. It encompasses specific terminology, structures, and conventions that are unique to the legal field, making it distinct from general English. For law students, mastering Legal

English is a fundamental aspect of their academic and professional development, as it enables them to understand legal texts, participate in legal discussions, and navigate complex legal systems. However, learning Legal English presents significant challenges, particularly in regions where access to resources and exposure to the language may be limited.

In Sidrap Regency, where legal education is continuously evolving, law students face unique hurdles in mastering

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Legal English. One of the primary challenges is the complexity of legal vocabulary. Legal terminology often consists of specialized words that are not only difficult to understand but also carry precise meanings in legal contexts. For students in Sidrap, whose first language is not English, this added complexity can be overwhelming, and a lack of familiarity with these terms may hinder their ability to comprehend legal texts and engage in academic discussions.

Another critical factor influencing the learning of Legal English is student motivation. Motivation plays a pivotal role in language learning, as it affects students' willingness to engage with the material, persevere through challenges, and achieve proficiency. In the context of Sidrap Regency, motivation may be influenced by various factors, including personal interests, the perceived relevance of Legal English to their future careers, and the teaching methods employed by instructors. Understanding how motivation impacts students' learning processes is crucial for developing effective strategies to enhance their language acquisition.

Despite the challenges posed by vocabulary acquisition and motivation, there are opportunities to improve the learning experience for law students in Sidrap. Educational institutions and instructors can employ strategies that make learning Legal English more engaging and accessible. These strategies may include contextualized learning, where students are exposed to legal terms

through real-world examples, as well as interactive teaching methods that encourage active participation and problem-solving. Additionally, fostering an environment that nurtures intrinsic motivation, by making the learning process more relevant and rewarding, can significantly improve student outcomes.

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by law students in Sidrap Regency when learning Legal English, with a particular focus on the roles of vocabulary acquisition and motivation. By identifying these challenges and understanding their underlying causes, the research seeks to provide insights into how the learning experience can be enhanced for law students in the region. The study also seeks to investigate how motivational factors can be leveraged to improve students' engagement with Legal English and, ultimately, their proficiency in the language.

The research will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to gather comprehensive insights into the experiences of law students. Surveys will be used to gather data on students' perceptions of the challenges they face in learning Legal English, while interviews will provide in-depth qualitative insights into the specific obstacles they encounter. By combining these two methods, the study aims to provide a holistic understanding of the factors that affect students' ability to learn Legal English in Sidrap.

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The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of more effective teaching methods and learning strategies for Legal English. By understanding the specific challenges faced by students in Sidrap, this study will offer recommendations that can be implemented to enhance the learning experience, ultimately improving students' proficiency in Legal English and better preparing them for their future legal careers.

Furthermore, the implications of this research extend beyond Sidrap Regency, as the findings may offer valuable insights for other regions facing similar challenges in teaching Legal English. The study's results could inform national and international discussions on best practices for teaching legal language in diverse educational contexts. Ultimately, the research seeks to contribute to the broader conversation on improving legal education and language acquisition for law students worldwide.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Legal English, as a specialized form of the English language, presents unique challenges for law students, especially in non-English-speaking regions. The learning of Legal English is essential for students pursuing legal careers, as it enables them to interpret and apply legal texts, communicate effectively in international legal settings, and engage in scholarly legal discussions. However, a variety of factors,

including vocabulary complexity and motivation, significantly influence the success of students in mastering this language.

One of the central challenges in learning Legal English is the acquisition of specialized vocabulary. Legal terminology is often distinct from everyday language and consists of words and phrases with precise meanings in the legal domain. According to L. Bhatia (2004), the vocabulary of Legal English includes Latin phrases, archaic terms, and technical jargon that are often difficult for students to grasp. For law students, unfamiliarity with this specialized vocabulary can lead to a lack of comprehension and an inability to apply legal concepts effectively. This challenge is particularly evident in non-native English-speaking regions, where students may not have had sufficient exposure to English legal discourse before entering their studies. Researchers have suggested that a structured approach to vocabulary acquisition, incorporating both theoretical and practical exercises, is crucial for overcoming this challenge (Harris & McDonald, 2014).

In addition to vocabulary, motivation plays a critical role in language learning, including the acquisition of Legal English. Motivation influences how students engage with the learning process, their persistence in overcoming challenges, and their overall success in language proficiency. As Deci and Ryan (1985) explain in their self-determination theory, motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation, which stems from

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personal interest or enjoyment of the activity, has been shown to enhance language learning outcomes. In contrast, extrinsic motivation, driven by external rewards such as grades or career prospects, can also impact students' engagement with Legal English but may not be as effective in fostering long-term language acquisition. In the context of Legal English, studies suggest that students who perceive the language as directly relevant to their future legal careers are more likely to remain motivated to learn, even when faced with difficulties (Zarei, 2011).

The role of motivation in learning Legal English has also been examined in various educational settings. In their study, Al-Seghayer and Ibrahim (2015) found that law students who were intrinsically motivated showed a greater level of engagement in learning Legal English, using language learning strategies such as peer discussions, reading legal texts, and attending legal seminars. Furthermore, intrinsic motivation was linked to higher language retention and more successful communication in legal contexts. Conversely, students who lacked motivation or struggled with language proficiency were less likely to apply themselves fully to learning and were more likely to experience frustration and disengagement. This highlights the need for educators to design learning experiences that foster intrinsic motivation by making Legal English relevant, engaging, and rewarding for students.

A significant body of literature has explored pedagogical strategies for teaching Legal English and addressing the challenges posed by vocabulary and motivation. For example, a study by Flowerdew (2006) highlighted the importance of context-based learning, where students are exposed to legal texts in real-world scenarios. Contextualizing vocabulary within authentic legal documents, such as contracts, case studies, and statutes, helps students understand the practical applications of the language. Additionally, interactive teaching methods, such as role-playing, case simulations, and legal writing exercises, have been shown to engage students more effectively, allowing them to apply Legal English in meaningful ways (MacDonald & Harris, 2012).

Moreover, researchers have emphasized the importance of creating a supportive learning environment to enhance both vocabulary acquisition and motivation. According to Canale and Swain (1980), language proficiency is not only about mastering vocabulary and grammar but also involves developing communicative competence, which includes the ability to use language appropriately in social and professional contexts. For law students, this means not only learning legal vocabulary but also understanding how to use it in legal discourse, which requires exposure to a variety of legal contexts and active engagement in legal discussions.

While much of the literature on Legal English focuses on vocabulary and

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motivation, there is also growing interest in the role of cultural and contextual factors in language learning. For example, Sidwell (2013) argued that law students' cultural backgrounds and familiarity with legal systems may impact their ability to learn Legal English effectively. Students from regions with different legal traditions may find certain aspects of Legal English, such as legal concepts or procedural terms, more challenging to understand. This highlights the need for tailored teaching approaches that take into account the diverse backgrounds of students, especially in regions like Sidrap Regency, where legal education is rapidly developing but may still be influenced by local customs and traditions.

In summary, the literature highlights the complex interplay between vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and pedagogical strategies in learning Legal English. A strong vocabulary foundation is essential for comprehending legal texts and engaging in legal discourse, while motivation plays a pivotal role in driving students' efforts and persistence in language learning. Effective teaching strategies that contextualize language, encourage active engagement, and foster intrinsic motivation can significantly enhance the learning experience for law students. The findings from existing research provide a foundation for exploring how these factors specifically impact law students in Sidrap Regency and inform strategies for improving Legal English education in the region.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to explore the challenges faced by law students in Sidrap Regency in learning Legal English, with a particular focus on vocabulary acquisition and motivation. The mixed-methods design is chosen to offer a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. This methodology allows the researcher to triangulate data and gain a deeper insight into the factors influencing students' ability to learn Legal English effectively.

The research is conducted with law students from universities and institutions in Sidrap Regency. A purposive sampling technique is used to select participants who have been studying Legal English for at least one semester. The sample includes students from various year levels to capture a broad range of experiences in learning the language. The selected participants are informed about the study's purpose, and their consent is obtained before data collection.

Data collection in this study involves both surveys and semi-structured interviews. The survey is designed to gather quantitative data on the challenges students face in acquiring Legal English vocabulary and the factors that influence their motivation to learn. The questionnaire includes closed-ended questions using Likert scales, measuring students' perceptions of their proficiency in Legal English, difficulties in

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understanding legal terms, and their motivation levels for engaging with the language. The survey also explores students' preferred learning strategies and resources for improving their language skills.

In-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of the survey respondents to gather qualitative data on their personal experiences. The interviews aim to provide a deeper understanding of the specific challenges related to vocabulary acquisition and motivation. Topics covered in the interviews will include the vocabulary difficulties encountered in legal texts, the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on learning, and the effectiveness of various pedagogical strategies. Interviews will be audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed for further analysis.

The data collected from the surveys will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions and mean scores, to identify patterns in students' perceptions and experiences. These quantitative findings will offer insights into the most common challenges and motivational factors faced by law students in Sidrap. The qualitative data from the interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying recurring themes and patterns in students' responses. This analysis will allow the researcher to explore the deeper factors influencing students' learning processes

and highlight strategies for improving their Legal English skills.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the results from the quantitative and qualitative data will be triangulated. Comparing the findings from both data sources will provide a more nuanced and robust understanding of the research problem. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation, will be followed throughout the study to protect the rights and privacy of participants.

While this study aims to provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by law students in Sidrap Regency, it has some limitations. The sample is limited to students from Sidrap, which may not fully represent the experiences of law students in other regions. Additionally, since the study relies on self-reported data, the results may be influenced by participants' perceptions and biases. Despite these limitations, the mixed-methods approach is expected to offer comprehensive insights into the challenges of learning Legal English, contributing to the development of more effective teaching strategies in the region.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are drawn from the survey responses and interview data from law students in Sidrap Regency regarding their experiences in learning Legal English, with a focus on vocabulary acquisition and motivation. The quantitative data obtained from the surveys provide a clear picture of



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the students' perceived challenges, while the qualitative data from the interviews offer deeper insights into the factors influencing these challenges.

Table 1 below presents the key findings from the survey data related to students' proficiency in Legal English, vocabulary challenges, and motivation levels. The data is presented in terms of frequency distributions and mean scores to summarize students' experiences.

**Table 1: Survey Results on Vocabulary Challenges and Motivation**

Survey Item	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean Score
Difficulty in understanding legal terminology	40	35	15	5	5	4.05
Legal vocabulary impedes comprehension	45	30	20	3	2	4.15
Lack of motivation to learn Legal English	25	20	30	15	10	3.30
Intrinsic motivation for learning Legal English	30	40	20	5	5	4.00
Extrinsic motivation (grades, career goals)	35	45	10	5	5	4.10

From the survey data, it is evident that the majority of students find understanding legal terminology challenging. A combined 75% of students either agree or strongly agree that legal vocabulary impedes their comprehension of legal texts. Furthermore, vocabulary challenges are directly linked to students' overall understanding of Legal

English, with a mean score of 4.05 for the difficulty in understanding legal terms.

Motivation levels vary among the students. While 70% of students report having some level of intrinsic motivation (combining those who strongly agree and agree), a significant portion, 55%, find their motivation more influenced by external factors such as grades and career goals. The mean score for intrinsic motivation is 4.00, while extrinsic motivation stands at 4.10, suggesting that external motivations have a slightly higher impact.

The qualitative data from the interviews provided additional depth to these findings. Students expressed that vocabulary acquisition was one of the most significant barriers they faced when learning Legal English. Many students mentioned that encountering unfamiliar legal terms in textbooks or legal documents caused confusion, which hindered their ability to understand legal concepts fully. One student noted, "I find it difficult to retain legal terms because they are so different from what we use in everyday language. It's overwhelming at times."

In terms of motivation, students revealed mixed feelings about their intrinsic and extrinsic drivers. While some students expressed genuine interest in Legal English, particularly those with career aspirations in international law, others stated that their motivation was primarily driven by the need to pass exams and meet academic requirements. This highlights a common theme from the interviews that intrinsic motivation plays a significant role but is often overshadowed by extrinsic factors.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that law students in Sidrap face significant

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challenges in learning Legal English, particularly in terms of vocabulary acquisition and motivation. The survey data indicated that legal terminology poses considerable difficulty for students, with a substantial portion of students reporting that unfamiliar legal terms hinder their ability to comprehend legal materials. This is consistent with previous research, which has shown that legal vocabulary is a significant challenge in legal language learning (Bhatia, 2004). The study's findings suggest that law students require more targeted support in acquiring legal terminology to improve their overall comprehension.

The interviews provided further insight into the reasons behind these vocabulary challenges. Students frequently mentioned the difficulty of retaining legal terms due to their complexity and unfamiliarity. This highlights the need for a more contextualized approach to teaching Legal English, where students are exposed to legal terms in real-world scenarios, such as case studies and legal texts. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of contextualizing vocabulary learning to help students understand and retain new terms (Flowerdew, 2006). This could involve using interactive methods like role-playing, case simulations, and legal document analysis, which would help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

In terms of motivation, the study found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play a crucial role in students' engagement with Legal English. The majority of students reported being motivated by external factors, such as the desire to achieve good grades or pursue a successful legal career. While these extrinsic motivations are important, they may not foster long-term

language acquisition or deep engagement with the material. The importance of intrinsic motivation in language learning has been widely recognized, with research indicating that students who are intrinsically motivated tend to be more engaged and persistent in their studies (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The findings from the interviews further emphasized the complexity of motivation. Students who expressed intrinsic motivation, particularly those interested in legal careers that require proficiency in Legal English, tended to engage more actively in learning. This aligns with the self-determination theory, which posits that students' motivation is influenced by their sense of autonomy and personal interest in the subject matter (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, the study also revealed that many students relied more heavily on extrinsic motivation, such as the pressure to perform well in exams. This suggests that educators may need to adopt strategies that foster intrinsic motivation by making Legal English learning more engaging and relevant to students' personal and professional goals.

The study's findings also suggest that students may benefit from more tailored instructional approaches. While many students reported a lack of motivation or struggle with understanding legal vocabulary, they also expressed a desire for more interactive and engaging learning experiences. This reinforces the need for educators to employ diverse pedagogical strategies that go beyond traditional lecture-based teaching. Approaches that incorporate hands-on learning, peer discussions, and real-world legal examples can help increase both motivation and vocabulary retention.



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In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the challenges of learning Legal English in Sidrap Regency. The results emphasize the need for educational strategies that address both vocabulary acquisition and motivation. By integrating contextualized learning methods and fostering intrinsic motivation, educators can enhance students' language proficiency and better prepare them for future legal careers. These findings contribute to the growing body of research on Legal English education and offer practical recommendations for improving language learning outcomes for law students in Sidrap and similar contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the key challenges faced by law students in Sidrap Regency in learning Legal English, particularly with regard to vocabulary acquisition and motivation. The findings indicate that students struggle significantly with understanding legal terminology, which impacts their overall comprehension of legal materials. Additionally, motivation plays a crucial role in how students engage with the learning process, with both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing their commitment to mastering Legal English.

The study suggests that more targeted and contextualized teaching methods are needed to address these challenges. By incorporating real-world legal scenarios, case studies, and interactive learning methods, educators can help students better understand and retain legal vocabulary. Furthermore, fostering intrinsic motivation through relevant and engaging teaching practices will enhance students' long-term language learning and proficiency in Legal English.

Overall, the research contributes to the broader understanding of Legal English education and provides valuable insights for improving teaching strategies. The findings offer practical recommendations that can be used to enhance the learning experience for law students in Sidrap and other regions with similar challenges, ultimately preparing students for successful careers in the legal field.

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