### A GENRE-BASED APPROACH TO TEACHING LEGAL ENGLISH

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Abstract: The article examines an innovative approach to teaching legal English based on a synthesis of genre analysis of textbook materials, critical analysis of media texts and the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI). This work is relevant due to the necessity of training lawyers for the global stage, requiring skills in legal translation, discourse analysis, critical thinking, and effective multicultural communication. The authors propose a model of educational system that integrates traditional textbook materials, an analysis of the genre characteristics of political and legal news in foreign media, and a technology for generating queries to neural networks to solve professional problems. It is demonstrated that this integrated approach overcomes the limitations of traditional methods focused on vocabulary and grammar and develops genre competence in students – the ability to understand, create and interpret texts in accordance with the conventions of a specific professional community. The theoretical basis of the study was provided by the research of works in the fields of genre analysis and discourse analysis, as well as the works developing issues of language for specific purposes (LSP) and legal English. The

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practical significance of the article lies in the development of specific tasks and methodological recommendations for the implementation of the proposed complex in the educational process of law schools and faculties.

**Key words:** legal English, genre approach, discourse analysis, media literacy, generative artificial intelligence, artificial intelligence in education, educational complex, professional communication, political discourse.

### Introduction

The modern challenges of globalization and digitalization place new, increased demands on the training of lawyers. Proficiency in legal English has ceased to be merely a competitive advantage and has become a prerequisite for professional fulfillment. However, traditional teaching methods, focused on memorizing terminology, translating archaic texts and studying grammatical structures are often ineffective in developing the real communicative competence required in a dynamic international environment.

Professionally oriented English language teaching, or the study of English for specific purposes, emerged as a research field in the 1960s and remains relevant today. According to UNESCO, 45 percent of the world's scientific and technical literature is currently published in English [6].

Today, law school graduates must be able not only to read contracts and laws but also to analyze the legal implications of political events presented in the media, formulate persuasive queries in English, correspond with foreign colleagues and clients, and quickly extract and verify information from digital sources. This multifacted activity is associated with various genres of professional discourse, each with its own goals, audience and stylistic and structural characteristics.

The study of legal discourse is a pressing issue in modern linguistics, which, due to its social and cultural significance, requires special scientific understanding [4].

In this regard, the problem of this study is to find effective pedagogical tools for the development of genre competence in students of legal English, which would go beyond the passive recognition of terms and involve active, critical and creative use of language in professional contexts.

The object of the research is the process of teaching legal English to students of legal specialties.

The subject of the research is the methodology for constructing a training complex based on a genre approach with the integration of the analysis of news media texts and generative AI technologies.

The aim of this article is to theoretically substantiate and develop a model of a training complex that combines genre analysis of educational texts, political news, and the practice of composing prompts for neural networks.

# Research objectives:

- 1. To analyze the theoretical foundations of the genre approach in teaching languages for specific purposes (LSP).
- 2. To identify the didactic potential of analyzing political and legal news and using generative AI technologies in the context of teaching legal English.
- 3. Propose the structure and content of an educational complex that integrates the three specified components.
- 4. To develop examples of practical tasks within the framework of the proposed model.

## Literature review

The genre approach which originated within functional linguistics and social constructivist theory views genres not as formal classifications of texts but as typified responses to recurring communicative situations within discourse communities. As John Swales notes, a discourse community is a group of people united by common goals and mechanisms of communication, using genres to achieve these goals [23]. The legal community is a classic example of such a conglomerate with strict genre conventions.

K. Bhatia, developing Swales'ideas in relation to professional discourses [18,19], emphasizes that mastery of professional language is, first of all, mastery of its genres.

For a lawyer, for example, this means the ability both to understand the meaning of the word "tort" and to draft a statement of claim in English, as well as to interpret a court judgment and write a legal opinion or conduct an interrogation of a witness. Each of these genres has its own macrostructure (general composition), stylistic features (formality, impersonality, precedent), and lexical and grammatical repertoire.

The genre approach is also reflected in the Russian linguodidactic tradition. I.A. Sotova points to the need to develop "genre competence as the ability of a linguistic personality to consciously predict the genre organization of speech, understand and generate texts/utterances of different genres depending on the communicative situation, and manage the communicative situation" [15].

Thus, the genre approach shifts the focus from language as a system to language as an action. The teacher's task is not simply to impart vocabulary, but to immerse the student in a communicative situation, revealing the purpose of the text, its addressee, and the strategies the author uses to achieve this goal.

### Materials and methods

The methods of this study were theoretical analysis of linguistic, methodological and legal literature, discourse analysis of texts, as well as modeling of the pedagogical process.

The authors draw on their extensive teaching experience at the Kutafin Moscow State Law University (MSAL), their pedagogical observations, and the results of method testing to present their findings.

The study is focused on modern approaches to teaching legal English, based on the integrative approach that allows to introduce professional competencies into the process of acquiring foreign language skills by law students. This facilitates the successful development of future lawyers' ability to work with foreign-language legal documents, participate in international negotiations, and use English in professional communication.

In this regard, it can be concluded that, in general, the main goal of modern approaches to teaching legal English remains to teach students both the ability and readiness for intercultural communication.

Therefore, today it is relevant to talk about the formation of general cultural competencies and communicative foreign language professional competencies, which include:

- linguoprofessional competence, that defines the process of mastering a foreign language as a tool for solving specific professional problems;
- discursive competence as a process of mastering international legal discourse;
- socio-cultural (intercultural) competence that allows for effective professional interaction in an international context;
- strategic competence necessary for achieving foreign language communicative goals in a professional environment.

Thus, modern foreign language teaching in law schools is aimed both at mastering language skills and at successfully developing a comprehensive ability to apply acquired foreign language skills in a flexible, multicultural professional environment.

#### Results

In our context, the following can be identified as specific learning objectives of a teacher when **working with the textbook:** 

mastering the educational material by enriching students' vocabulary with foreign-language legal vocabulary and terminology

development of skills in reading authentic and specialized literature development of professional communication skills in the business sphere of legal activity

development of skills in working with professional legal information in foreign languages of various genres and styles

improving skills in mastering the genre analysis of legal English

Figure 1. Teachers' tasks when working with the textbook.

One of the significant roles in modern teaching of legal English is the inclusion of students into communication situations at various levels (interpersonal, professional, academic, etc.).

For example, students can complete communicative tasks such as:

Role-playing game. Read the texts about the legal systems of Great Britain and the USA. Compose a dialogue in which you interview an expert on the legal system of Great Britain or the USA [1];

Read the dialogue and come up with a continuation of it. Present the resulting dialogue to the audience [1];

Role-playing game. "Legal advising" [1].

Of great importance is the diverse work with texts of different genres and styles, for example,

Read the Daily Mail reporter's article and answer the questions [1].

Find English equivalents for the names of the following branches of law [1].

Discuss in a group the situations given in the text "Malpractice" and give examples of malpractice cases [1].

Thus, in our opinion, modern approaches to teaching legal English are based, among other things, on an understanding of the teaching process itself as an integrated system aimed at developing comprehensive professional and communicative competence for successful activity in the international legal space in the context of globalization.

We are convinced that **the analysis of political news** today serves as a component in the formation of genre and discursive competence.

Politics and law are inextricably linked. Laws emerge from political processes, and political decisions often have far-reaching legal consequences. Therefore, a modern lawyer must be able to "read between the lines" of political news, discerning the legal underpinnings and hidden legal mechanisms.

Today, the media wield enormous influence. Denying their importance in the context of foreign language learning, in our opinion, is pointless, as each of the events discussed connects us to the external environment as a whole or serves as a channel of communication with professional activities [9].

Political and legal news articles represent a unique genre, situated at the intersection of professional legal and media discourses. Their analysis for educational purposes allows us to address several important objectives:

- 1. Expanding vocabulary in context. Unlike artificially composed texts in textbooks, news offers relevant vocabulary used in real situations (e.g., to impose sanctions, to ratify a treaty, to file a lawsuit against, to allege violations of, to reach a settlement).
- 2. Developing critical thinking and media literacy. News is not an objective reflection of reality, but an interpretation of an event, often with a specific ideological or political connotation. The law students' task is to learn to identify elements of manipulation, bias, and the use of emotionally charged language (loaded language), and also to see which legal arguments are put forward and which are omitted. This is where the method of critical discourse analysis (CDA), developed by such scholars as N. Fairclough and T. van Dijk ([21], [24]), helps out. The analysis of how linguistic means construct a certain idea of the legal reality is invaluable for a lawyer.
- 3. Understanding genre variation. Students learn to distinguish the genre of a short news article (news brief) from an analytical article (op-ed<sup>3</sup>), a report from the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Op-ed (Opinion Editorial) is an article expressing the author's opinion on a specific topic. It is usually written by an author not affiliated with the publication's editorial staff. It can be found in newspapers, magazines and online publications.

courtroom (court reporting) or an official statement from a government agency (press release). Each of these subgenres has its own specifics.

Nowadays this idea is widely understood by many experts<sup>4</sup>.

# Example of tasks:

*Task 1.* Development of analytical thinking, writing, reading and speaking in a complex.

Text: An article about filing a lawsuit in an international court, or a short news item about the introduction of sanctions or filing a lawsuit in an international court (for example, on the Reuters or BBC News website).

- 1) Highlight all legal terms describing the process (e.g., *filed a case, accused of, jurisdiction, genocide convention*).
  - 2) Fact Extraction:
- · Who are the main actors: states, organizations, individuals?
- · What action was taken? (e.g., filed a lawsuit, imposed sanctions, launched an investigation, appealed a ruling).
- · To which institution was the appeal filed? (e.g., the ICJ, the WTO, the UN Security Council, a federal court).
  - · What specific allegations or legal grounds are put forward? List them.
    - 3) Vocabulary Hunt:
- · Write out all the words and expressions that have a clear legal meaning (e.g., to accuse of, violation, jurisdiction, ruling, binding, to comply with, measures, to lodge a complaint).
- · Group them into categories. The teacher chooses the categories.
- · Make your own sentences with them.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>See, for example, Kornienko O. Yu. English language and global studies // Contents of professional training in foreign languages in a non-linguistic university: proceedings of the III International scientific and practical conference, Moscow region, Khimki, March 25, 2015. – Moscow: OOO "Izdatelskaya Gruppa "Logos", 2015. – P. 108-113.; Zemlyakova, K. V., Kulnazarova A.V. Formation of competencies in working with media texts in a foreign language among students of communication fields // Bulletin of the Faculty of Humanities of the St. Petersburg State University of Telecommunications named after Professor M.A. Bonch-Bruevich. – 2020. – No. 12. – P. 36-44.; Vladimirova E. V., Martynenko I. A. Activation of creative competencies of law students when discussing topical issues of our time // Bulletin of the Moscow State Regional University. Series: Pedagogy. – 2017. – No. 3. – P. 16-26.; Al- Shammary Z. A., Al- Aadili N. M. A Critical Discourse Analysis of Incitement in English News Reports. Indian Journal of Information Sources and Services. 2025. N 15 (1). Pp. 139–152.; Aliakbari M., Barzan P., Mofrad K.K. English in the News: Mastering Language with Daily News. London: Scholars' Press, 2024. 303 p.

## **Task 2.** Discourse analysis and determination of legal position.

Objective: to learn to see how linguistic means shape the legal assessment of an event.

Text: a more detailed analytical article or news item with quotes from officials (e.g., from "The Guardian", "Foreign Policy", etc.).

- 1. Framing the Narrative:
- · Analyze the title and the first paragraph. What words are used to describe the event: neutral (stated, said), positive (pledged, hailed), negative (slammed, accused, denounced)?

Whose point of view does the article present first? Does this create a bias?

Does the article reference international law? Which specific branches or documents are mentioned (e.g., the UN Charter, Geneva Conventions, human rights law)?

- 2. Identifying Legal Argumentation:
- · Find and write down direct quotes from official representatives. Determine what legal basis (legal justification) they cite for their actions.

Does the article present arguments from both sides of the conflict? If not, how does this affect the perception of the legality of the actions?

- · Discuss: Is the article language an objective reporting, or does it sway the reader to one side or the other? What linguistic devices are used to achieve this?
- **Task 3.** Critical evaluation and argumentation (for advanced level)

Objective: To develop critical thinking and oral legal discussion skills.

Text: An article describing the disputed situation from the point of view of international law (e.g., use of force, secession of territory, jurisdiction of an international court).

- · Divide the group into two teams: Claimant and Defendant.
- · Each team must:
- 1. Based on current legislation and your knowledge of it, formulate a legal arguments (legal arguments) in defense of one's position.
- 2. Anticipate the arguments of the opposing side and prepare counter-arguments.

3. Conduct short debate using corresponding legal terms and structures ("Our position is based on...", "We would argue that...", "The opposing party fails to consider...").

The tasks described, in our opinion, allow to transform passive news reading into an active, engaging process directly linked to the development of the professional and linguistic competencies of a competent and erudite lawyer.

Generative AI as a tool for practicing genre skills allows you to move directly from request to result.

Russia's active integration into the international legal space places increased demands on the foreign language proficiency of law school graduates. P.P. Lang asserts that the demand from society and the state for the adoption of the concept of digitalization of educational activities should be considered a constant in modern education [8].

The importance and relevance of using digital educational technologies is emphasized today by many domestic and foreign researchers (see, for example, [2], 11], [8], [14], [19], [7], [13], [20], [O. Bert], [16] and others).

It is noted that .. "in foreign language teaching, artificial intelligence is gradually beginning to occupy a significant place, creating additional opportunities for students to develop professional competencies" [10].

E. G. Shchebelskaya, V. V. Mayer et al. conclude that artificial intelligence technologies are not only capable of qualitatively updating foreign language educational material, facilitating the development of foreign language reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, but also serve as a tool for creating "sets of assessment materials in online digital format, the content of which represents various linguodidactic procedures for assessing the academic achievements of students" [14].

The Development of artificial intelligence technologies, in particular methods of natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning (Automatic Speech Recognition – ASR), opens up new possibilities for creating objective and effective assessment systems. They enable the creation of scalable, and adaptive assessment

systems capable of analyzing not only grammar and vocabulary but also the semantic adequacy, stylistic consistency and professional relevance of a statement.

M.V. Gavrilov also believes that "artificial intelligence technologies can significantly expand the ability of students to develop professional competencies during their studies at a university" [5].

The emergence of artificial intelligence models (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Deep Seek, etc.) developed by various research groups, ushered in a new era in education, including language learning. However, in the context we're studying, their potential is often limited to the role of "advanced translator" or "text generator". Within the genre-based approach, the neural network becomes a powerful interactive simulator for practicing genre-specific competencies.

The key skill is becoming not just the use of AI, but "prompt engineering", the art of formulating precise and effective requests to achieve the desired result. For a lawyer, this directly correlates with the skill of clearly formulating a legal problem.

The primary role of neural networks in the creation of language teaching materials today is to develop the professional competencies of law students related to the integration of technology into the educational process.

It should be noted that the genre approach allows for the use of various types of texts or genres when studying a foreign language, for example, legal documents, court decisions, international treaties, etc. Thereby, students competently master not only the language system, but also the structure, style, and context characteristic of professional legal communication. The genre approach synthesizes areas of functional linguistics and rhetoric, which promotes the creation of an integrated model of professional training.

The didactic potential of neural networks within the framework of the genre approach includes the following aspects of training:

No.	Aspect	Example

1	Generation and adaptation of edu-	A neural network can create the same
	cational materials	content in different genres on request.
		Query: Based on the following facts [de-
		scription of the situation], write a short,
		sensationalist news headline and a lead
		paragraph. Then, rewrite the same facts
		as a neutral legal memo for a law firm.
		Highlight the key differences in vocabu-
		lary, sentence structure, and tone be-
		tween the two texts.
2	Development of discursive linguis-	Students can instruct AI to create a tem-
	tic and professional competence	plate for a specific legal document (e.g.,
		a lease agreement, NDA), and then crit-
		ically analyze it for compliance with
		genre standards, identify potential pit-
		falls or shortcomings
2	D 11 C1	
3	Personalization of learning	Neural networks offer tasks that target
		students' weaknesses (for example,
		working with contracts for those who
		have difficulty with this genre). In this
		case, there are no students who have
		failed the task and have not learned the
		material; when they re-commit to the
		task, they can achieve a successful re-
		sult.

4	Visualization and interactivity	Simulation of specific professional situ-
		ations that combine text, audio, and
		video, which is useful for studying legal
		genres that require visual support, such
		as role-playing and simulations. The
		neural network can act as a virtual cli-
		ent, colleague, or opponent. Query: Act
		as a client who has received a cease-
		and-desist letter regarding alleged cop-
		yright infringement. Describe your situ-
		ation to me, your lawyer, in a short
		email. Be emotional and provide incom-
		plete information.

Table 2. Didactic aspects revealed by a neural network.

At the same time, a critical assessment of AI is extremely important. A valuable skill in the modern era is not to blindly trust the results of a neural network. Generated text may contain errors, simplifications, or "hallucinations" (fictitious facts or precedents). One of the most common assignments for students, therefore, is to conduct a legal fact-check and genre analysis of AI-generated text, identifying and correcting inaccuracies.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Thuswise, here we propose a *model of a synthesized educational complex*, *its structure and content*, which are designed for one lesson (2 academic hours). This is an example of a practical lesson structured according to a thematic principle (e.g., "International Trade Law", "Criminal Law", "Human Rights"), in which each topic is explored through *a trinity of components*.

Here is an example structure of the complex titled "International Commercial Arbitration":

## Stage 1: The Basics of the Genre (Study Guide).

- · Objective: To master basic terminology and understand the macrostructure of key genres.
- · Materials: Traditional ELP textbooks (e.g., "International Legal English" by Amy Krois-Lindner, TransLegal). Texts for readings: arbitration clause, excerpts from regulations of arbitration institutions (ICC, LCIA), fragments of an arbitration decision (arbitral award).

#### · Tasks:

- 1. With structural analysis: Analyze this arbitral award; make a detailed outline of it (Headings), highlighting all the standard parts (e.g., Introduction, Facts, Issues, Reasoning, Operative Part).
- 2. Language Pattern Mining: write out cliches from texts to express responsibilities (*The parties shall submit to...*), permissions (*The tribunal May appoint...*), assumptions (*Unless otherwise agreed...*); analyze the use of the passive voice for impersonal and formal presentation.
- 3. Lexical and grammar practice: do exercises to transform sentences from active to passive voice to make them more formal; fill in the gaps with modal verbs (*shall, may, must*).
- Stage 2: Genre in real context (News analysis).
- · Objective: To teach students to see the application of studied genres in real political and economic contexts and to develop critical thinking.
- · Materials: A selection of current news articles from the "Financial Times", "The Economist", "Bloomberg" on high-profile international arbitration proceedings (e.g., between corporations and states under ICSID<sup>5</sup> rules).
- · Tasks:

1. Discourse analysis: How does the journalist represent the parties to the conflict? Who is the "victim: and who is the "aggressor"? Which legal terms are used correctly, and which are simplified or distorted?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes

- 2. Legal interpretation: Retell the essence of the dispute, relying only on legal criteria, discarding emotional coloring.
- 3. Genre transformation: Create a bullet point based on the news Memo for a partner in law firm with a statement of facts and legal issues.
- Stage 3: Genre development through interaction with AI (Prompt engineering).
- · Objective: To develop the skill of actively generating genre texts and interacting with digital tools to solve professional problems.
- · Tasks:
- 1. Create a template: "Generate a draft arbitration clause for a long-term supply contract between a German manufacturer and a Brazilian distributor. Consider and include provisions for the seat of arbitration, governing law, number of arbitrators, and language of proceedings".
- 2. Compare and evaluate: "I will provide you with two arbitration clauses. Analyze them and list the potential advantages and risks of each for the buyer side".
- 3. Find errors: "Act as a junior lawyer who has drafted a notice of arbitration. Here is my draft. Review it and point out any formal, stylistic, or substantive legal inaccuracies. Then, provide an improved version".
- 4. Simulate a dialogue: "You are a client whose contract has been breached. I am your lawyer. Based on the facts [description], simulate a conversation where I explain to you the advantages of arbitration over litigation in national courts. Ask me clarifying questions".

Stage 4: Reflection and integration.

- · Objective: Understanding the acquired knowledge, critically assessing the capabilities and limitations of AI, integrating skills.
- · Format: Seminar-discussion.
- · Tasks:
  - 1. Group reflection: Compare the results obtained from different neural networks and AI instruments (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity) on the same

- prompts. Discussion: Which findings were most useful? Where did the AI make factual or legal errors? How could the prompts be improved?
- 2. Critical analysis: Discussion of ethical issues: data privacy when working with AI, the risk of generating plagiarism, blind faith in AI conclusions.
- 3. Final integrative task (optional): write a Memorandum to Partner (2-3 pages) on the case, having analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the client's legal position, provide recommendations for further actions, using the knowledge and materials from all stages.

This structure creates a holistic educational ecosystem where traditional text-based learning and innovative AI-powered interactions not only coexist but also mutually reinforce each other, preparing students for the real-world challenges of legal practice.

### Conclusion

The model of the educational complex proposed in this article represents an attempt to address the challenges of modern education and professional legal practice. The integration of a genre-based approach, critical analysis of media texts and generative AI technologies creates a synergistic effect, enabling the training of lawyers who not only know the language but also think within its categories, understand the social and political contexts of its use, and effectively utilize digital tools.

This approach bridges the gap between abstract textbook exercises and real-world professional communication. Students are immersed in a multifaceted linguistic environment, where they act as analysts, critics, creators, and interpreters of texts, which fully supports the development of genre and professional competence.

Implementing this system requires teachers to possess not only high linguistic qualification but also a certain level of digital and media literacy, as well as a willingness to shift from the role of knowledge transmitter to that of facilitator and mentor in the learning process. Further research in this area could focus on experimentally testing the effectiveness of the proposed model and developing specific criteria for assessing the development of genre skills using AI.

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