

STUDENTS' VIEWPOINTS OF CHALLENGES IN UTILIZING INTERNET RESOURCES FOR AUTONOMOUS LEARNING OF LEGAL ENGLISH

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Received:	25/3/2024	Learner autonomy can be facilitated by providing access to materials, resources, and asynchronous learning modules online that cater to different levels of English proficiency under the age of the fourth industrial revolution. This study aimed to delve into the challenges and methods of using Internet resources for the self-study of legal English major students at Hanoi Law University during the first term of the 2023-2024 academic year. The descriptive study employed a mixed-methods research with a sample of 71, particularly 51 respondents answering the researcher-made survey questionnaire, and the other 20 students participated in semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that the participants in the survey questionnaire found it challenging to understand the meaning and use of legal terminology without immediate guidance from teachers. Although armed with the ease of having access to Internet resources, students still need teachers' support. As such, the questionnaire results are somehow consistent with those in semi-structured interviews in that teachers' assistance brings valuable help for the students in utilizing the Internet resources for their self-study of legal English. The research findings would possibly provide resourceful references for teachers and learners concerning the use of Internet resources for autonomous learning of legal English.
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QUAN ĐIỂM CỦA SINH VIÊN VỀ KHÓ KHĂN TRONG VIỆC SỬ DỤNG NGUỒN DỮ LIỆU INTERNET CHO HOẠT ĐỘNG TỰ CHỦ HỌC TIẾNG ANH PHÁP LÝ

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	25/3/2024	Tự chủ học tập của người học được hỗ trợ các điều kiện thuận lợi để truy cập tài liệu, tài nguyên, và đồng bộ các mô-đun môn học trực tuyến phù hợp với các trình độ tiếng Anh khác nhau của sinh viên trong thời đại cách mạng công nghiệp lần thứ tư. Mục đích của nghiên cứu này khảo sát những khó khăn và các phương thức sinh viên chuyên tiếng Anh pháp lý tại trường Đại học Luật Hà Nội trong học kỳ 1 năm học 2023 – 2024 sử dụng nguồn dữ liệu Internet trong việc tự học của mình. Nghiên cứu miêu tả áp dụng phương pháp hỗn hợp định tính, định lượng với mẫu nghiên cứu 71 sinh viên, cụ thể 51 sinh viên tham gia trả lời bảng câu hỏi, và 20 sinh viên tham gia vào phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc. Kết quả cho thấy rằng khi khảo sát sinh viên qua phiếu trả lời câu hỏi, sinh viên cho rằng khó để hiểu được các thuật ngữ tiếng Anh pháp lý nếu không có sự hướng dẫn từ giảng viên. Mặc dù sinh viên rất dễ dàng sử dụng nguồn Internet nhưng sinh viên vẫn cần sự hỗ trợ từ phía giảng viên. Như vậy, kết quả từ phiếu trả lời câu hỏi có sự tương đồng với kết quả từ phỏng vấn ở chỗ sự hỗ trợ của giảng viên mang lại những giá trị hữu ích cho sinh viên trong việc sử dụng nguồn Internet cho việc tự học của mình. Những phát hiện của nghiên cứu cung cấp nguồn thông tin hữu ích cho giáo viên và sinh viên trong việc sử dụng nguồn dữ liệu Internet cho việc tự học tiếng Anh pháp lý.
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1. Introduction

Learner autonomy (LA) in English language teaching and learning (ELT) refers to the principle that learners should be encouraged to take the most responsibility for what and how they are expected to learn it [1] - [3]. The collocation words “learner autonomy” can be used synonymously as autonomous learning, or self-directed learning [4]. For autonomous learning, learners account for the approaches to needs analysis, content selection, and choice of teaching materials and learning methods to achieve their aims. In the digital age, university students have a wealth of Internet resources at their fingertips to facilitate their self-study, particularly for learning legal English [5] - [7]. Self-directed language learning empowers students to take control of their learning outcomes and allows them to customize their learning experience to meet their needs. To achieve their legal English studies effectively, tertiary students must have access to a diverse range of resources suitable for independent learning, so the availability of such resources is crucial because it provides the flexibility to select materials that align with their interests and learning goals [6], [8]. At present, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, commonly so-called Industry 4.0, is fundamentally reshaping the education sector, necessitating a reevaluation of teaching methods, curriculum, and the skills required for the future workforce [9]. For this reason, educational institutions need to adapt and respond to the changing demands of Industry 4.0 to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve their expectations. As law students are encouraged to develop their autonomous language learning in legal English, their readiness and adaptability to technological advancements are essential because the integration of technology into legal English education has significantly transformed the learning experience for law students [10], [11]. Industry 4.0 has revolutionized the classroom experience for law students because it has provided easy access to vast information, facilitated new-age learning and classrooms, and allowed for the development of new ways of LA in acquiring legal English [2], [6]. Learning legal English requires students’ patience, perseverance, and eagerness to learn as legal English learners are expected to have the knowledge and deep understanding of its terms or their meaning in a particular context. Since English legalese is known for its professionalism, complexity, and vagueness for learners in general, autonomy is believed to be one of the efficient ways to improve legal English learning. Legal English is considered difficult to understand even for native speakers because of its archaic linguistic features. Therefore, students may experience difficulties in learning legal English when there is no supervisor or particular instruction [12]. In other words, legal English has its own linguistic features, which possibly causes a misunderstanding in legal terms for learners. The main reasons are English legal terms based on context, understandings, and cultures, and there is no such thing as called “universal legal language” [11], [12]. Butler [13] asserts that most teachers of legal English are language teachers, not legal experts. Consequently, students and teachers may encounter many challenges in ELT. Although LA in acquiring legal English is a remarkable research field for many people, there is still a lack of empirical studies on this aspect in terms of legal English study [14], [15]. In reality, LA is particularly important in higher education, where students may have limited classroom contact time for learning English but need to rapidly increase their knowledge and skills. Because of that, this study aimed to investigate the general view of LA of legal English major students on utilizing Internet resources for legal English learning to clarify how legal English major students can take advantage of Internet resources to improve their learning [16]. On account of this, school administrators, teachers, students, and those who are concerned about the application of the Internet for learning can have a deeper insight into the practical use of Internet resources for educational purposes and what challenges students must confront when using the self-study methods for legal English learning in the age of Industry 4.0. The study aimed to answer two questions as follows:

1. What difficulties do legal English major students encounter while utilizing the Internet resources for their autonomous legal language learning?

2. Which tools or methods are predominantly used by legal English major students for their autonomous learning of legal English exploiting online resources?

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Research design

The descriptive, mixed-methods research focused on a cross-sectional analysis of 71 representative legal English major students enrolling in courses K46 and K47 at Hanoi Law University (HLU). Due to the constraints of time and money, a sample of 71 respondents was selected using a simple sampling method of Slovin's formula. The active Google form link was used to float the questionnaire to the participants' email addresses within two weeks. The study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with 20 student participants over the phone with their consent to record the semi-structured interviews solely to transcribe their responses for this research. Following that, the IBM SPSS v.25 application was utilized to analyze the questionnaire data, and the NVivo application v.12 was employed to transcribe the interview recordings. By integrating the outcomes from these two sources, the researchers strengthened the validity of the research findings.

2.2. Research instrument

A five-point Likert scale survey questionnaire consists of 36 statements, categorized into two groups: one addressing the difficulties that students may encounter while using the Internet for learning legal English, and the other offering suggestions for exploiting the Internet resources for autonomous learning. For the question regarding the clarification of individual difficulties, 17 statements were generated. The participants were expected to indicate (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree for each statement. In addition to inquiring about students' learning methods, the researcher also provided 19 typical statements outlining strategies to enhance student autonomy. Concurrently with administering the questionnaire, 5 semi-structured questions were posed to 20 learners, randomly varying in number. The questionnaires were initially developed internally and then conducted a pilot survey with 15 other students for content validation. The researchers kept the statements based on the confidence level range ($\alpha = 0.77 - 0.96$; [17]). The final survey included two survey questionnaires and was sent to the three legal English experts for their review and validation of liability.

2.3. Participants and procedures of data collection

The sample of the study included 71 legal English major students at HLU, specifically 29 participants from the course K46, and 42 respondents from the course K47, using the random sampling technique of Slovin's formula ($n = N/1 + N \cdot e^2$; with $e = 0.05$). Following the necessary preparations and obtaining permission for the research instruments, the study was conducted using a Google form online survey questionnaire via the participants' email addresses. A phone number is added in case respondents have any other questions. The questionnaire included clear instructions, outlined the study's objectives and relevance, ensured anonymity, and allowed participants to withdraw from the study if desired. The responders were requested to return the questionnaire within two weeks of receiving the researcher's email. Additionally, participants who agreed to take part in the semi-structured interview provided their responses privately, with each interview lasting approximately ten minutes. The required data was then processed by the applications NVivo v.12 for the interview recordings and IBM SPSS v.25 for the questionnaire. Out of the total participants exceeding 100 in the recent survey, the researcher selected 51 individuals with valid responses, forming the dataset utilized for analysis and interpretation. The primary reason for this selection was the failure of some respondents to submit their responses within the researcher's specified deadline, rendering their submissions invalid.

2.4. Data analysis

The data collected was organized, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using descriptive statistics. Specifically, frequency counts and percentages were utilized to present the profile of the respondents. Descriptive statistics were also applied to address five-point Likert-scale statements to determine means and standard deviations relevant to the interval scales, such as: strongly disagree/almost never (1.0 - 1.80), disagree/seldom (1.81 - 2.60), neutral/sometimes (2.61 - 3.40), agree/frequently (3.41 - 4.20), and strongly agree/always (4.21 - 5.0). To ensure the reliability of the qualitative data, the NVivo v.12 application was utilized to analyze the frequency of occurrence of respondents' perspectives in the semi-structured interviews.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The analysis of challenges encountered by students while learning Legal English online through self-study methods

Table 1 includes three aspects of the challenges of using Internet resources for autonomous learning. As noted in Table 1, the participants sometimes underwent some problems with their self-motivation. They acknowledged experiencing difficulties keeping motivated for self-directed legal English learning ($M = 2.90$); this signifies that their ability to learn alone somewhat appears to be low. In this regard, details from Table 1 reveal that the participants had slight problems staying concentrated while learning legal English study online ($M = 2.94$; $SD = 0.728$), which indicates that the students need to be trained on how to stay focused even if they might endure the annoying surroundings. Another challenge with their self-motivation originates from feeling isolated without peer interaction and support in legal English learning ($M = 2.82$; $SD = 0.761$). Another viewpoint also supports this stance, which states that it is challenging to stay focused and disciplined in self-paced legal English learning ($M = 2.92$; $SD = 0.819$). This situation is reported in previous studies [4], [10], [12]; these researchers share similar thoughts about the obstacles learners encounter while experiencing self-study on the Internet. Their neutral self-motivation blames them for not formally assessing their progress and proficiency level ($M = 3.02$; $SD = 0.808$). This is because the students are not well-programmed and lack formal assessment tools; they exploit Internet resources to compensate for misunderstanding any information they come across. Thus, they have yet to have one consistent evaluation for their achievements; this is quite different compared with the previous studies [3], [7], which assert that students could choose online assessment to measure how progressive their online self-studying might be. The last factor affecting their self-motivation accounts for their impatience in solving technical issues with online platforms or tools used for legal English learning ($M = 2.88$; $SD = 0.643$). In fact, the interruption caused by the Internet discourages the learners. While their self-esteem is high, they cannot access Internet resources due to technical issues such as a Wi-Fi connection or the malfunction of their gadget devices.

Concerning intrinsic motivational factors, most participants recognized the need to receive instructors' guidance in utilizing Internet resources to learn legal English ($M = 3.14$; $SD = 0.832$). Teachers usually are experts in the field of legal English, so they know what Internet resources are resourceful in relation to the legal knowledge concerned; consequently, they could provide their learners with the best knowledge relative to legal English knowledge. Although Internet resources supply an abundance of knowledge sharing freely, the respondents admit the hardness of thoroughly understanding legal concepts in their autonomous learning mode ($M = 2.84$; $SD = 0.765$). This finding proves that the role of teachers with specialized knowledge of legal English is necessary to assist the students as Internet resources seem too general for them to concentrate on the specific legal English feature, so teachers' direct guidance would be helpful for the students to understand some legal English obstacles right away. Similarly, in the same situation with the understanding of complex legal terminology, the students experienced some challenges in comprehending complex legal terminology ($M = 2.69$; $SD = 0.707$). Commonly, lexical meanings are denoted in specific circumstances; however, the combination of archaic words in

legal English causes much demand to understand the equivalent meanings, and this complexity might be understood only by those who are experienced in the field of legal English. This finding is also reflected in the previous study [11] investigating the difficulties of learning legal English. The students felt a bit demanding to keep up with updates and changes in legal terminology and practices ($M = 3.02$; $SD = 0.857$). This difficulty connotes the changes in legal knowledge in daily life, together with the different legal systems coming into contact. The result shares some similarities with the previous study [8] in that it emphasizes the need to update or even forecast the diversity of legal English as global ecology becomes stronger. Besides, the students found it hard to balance comprehension of legal theory and practical application in legal English learning ($M = 2.88$; $SD = 0.827$). Their concern is that there is likely to be an implicit conflict between the theory of legal English and its practicality in workplaces. This finding disproves the claim in the study [11], which opines that the theory of legal English is still practical until now. The participants felt it hard if they used Internet resources to develop their legal English writing skills ($M = 2.84$; $SD = 0.765$). Despite the availability of online resources, regular instructor feedback would serve as resourceful encouragement and guidance in using Internet resources for learning legal English. In reality, teachers of legal English are qualified in their fields so that they could certify what Internet resources are suitable for their students to promote their learner autonomy in regard to improving legal English writing skills. Overall, the participants, to some extent, have some trouble with utilizing Internet resources to learn legal English autonomously online.

When considering the extrinsic motivational factors, the results indicate that they had difficulties overcoming language barriers ($M = 2.92$; $SD = 0.930$). Although the participants were legal English major students, they confessed to have the challenging language barriers while using Internet resources autonomously to improve their legal English. This reflects the fact that English major students also encounter difficulties when studying English for specific purposes, particularly legal English, even though they have a good command of general English. In reality, legal English has distinctive characteristics which constitute significant challenges for not only native English speakers but also non-native English speakers. Thus, the participants found it troublesome when learning legal English due to language barriers. Another challenge in this regard is illustrated by the fact that the students had difficulties navigating through vast online legal English materials ($M = 2.86$; $SD = 0.784$). Online resources might be either controlled by respective institutions or organizations or published by individuals; therefore, the participants were puzzled about whether different Internet resources possibly provide different legal English information. The finding is consistent with the implication of the study [6], which gives a mild warning that Internet users have to be careful when choosing official and accredited websites to take advantage of the research information. Likewise, the students expressed their worries about finding reliable legal English resources online ($M = 3.16$; $SD = 0.606$). As a matter of fact, the Internet provides the platform for all kinds of information published; the students panic about choosing reliable legal English resources; this requires the scrutinization of information they search from the Internet to avoid misinformation in legal English materials ($M = 3.14$; $SD = 0.820$). The ease of accessing online resources brings much convenience for Internet users, but it also poses many dangers because the information is certified or uncertified. It is necessary for students to synchronize and analyze the legal materials carefully before arriving at final consideration when doing self-study of legal English. When doing self-study of legal English with online resources, the participants stated that they experienced difficulties finding interactive and engaging legal English learning resources online ($M = 3.04$; $SD = 0.731$). This obstacle stems from the fact that legal English is classified into English specific subjects so that the number of students pursuing this major is small, it gives few chances for those who go online to exchange verbally in legal English. On the whole, legal English often exists in the form of written documentation; it is necessary for those who utilize Internet resources to promote their learner autonomy of legal English to participate in their relevant groups for the purpose of properly sharing legal English knowledge.

Table 1. Difficulties students may face when studying Legal English online using self-study method

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Self-motivational factors				
Maintaining motivation for self-directed legal English learning can be challenging.	51	2.90	0.711	Sometimes
It is hard to assess my progress and proficiency level without formal assessments.	51	3.02	0.808	Sometimes
Students might feel isolated without peer interaction and support in legal English learning.	51	2.82	0.761	Sometimes
Staying focused and disciplined in self-paced legal English learning is difficult.	51	2.92	0.819	Sometimes
It is impatient to overcome technical issues with online platforms or tools used for legal English learning.	51	2.88	0.643	Sometimes
It seems challenging to overcome distractions and maintaining concentration during online legal English study.	51	2.94	0.728	Sometimes
Intrinsic motivational factors				
It is challenging to identify and address gaps in legal English knowledge without instructor guidance.	51	3.64	0.832	Agreement
Clarifying legal concepts without immediate feedback from instructors is challenging.	51	2.84	0.765	Sometimes
Understanding complex legal terminology is challenging without direct guidance.	51	2.69	0.707	Sometimes
Balancing comprehension of legal theory and practical application in legal English learning is difficult.	51	2.88	0.827	Sometimes
Developing strong legal English writing skills without regular feedback from instructors is hard.	51	2.84	0.765	Sometimes
Extrinsic motivational factors				
Overcoming language barriers in legal English materials poses a significant challenge.	51	2.92	0.930	Sometimes
Navigating through vast online legal English materials can be daunting.	51	2.86	0.784	Sometimes
Finding interactive and engaging legal English learning resources online is difficult.	51	3.04	0.731	Sometimes
Finding reliable legal English resources online can be difficult.	51	3.16	0.606	Sometimes
Identifying credible sources and avoiding misinformation in legal English materials might be troublesome.	51	3.14	0.820	Sometimes
Weighted means		2.94		

3.2. The analysis of students' semi-structured interviews regarding their experiences with learning legal English online

Table 2 reveals the summative analysis of students' semi-structured interviews. In response to the first question regarding their preferred methods for online information searching methods, most of the students acknowledge the effectiveness of search engines as they usually have access to some search engines such as Google, or Bing ($n = 18$; same as 90%). Additionally, the students also search for information through online libraries ($n = 6$; similar to 30%). They have subscribed to become readers on many websites to access online information ($n = 5$; equivalent to 25%). Only 4 students like listening to legal English podcasts to search for legal English resources online (20%). Surprisingly, most participants claim to use multiple methods rather than just one. The result from Table 2 shows that the experience of the students with using online resources is high, which is presented in the question on students' opinion of specific experiences they have faced. Specifically, the students find it convenient and efficient to utilize online resources for learning legal English ($Freq = 10$; accounting for 50%). This is because of the satisfaction level of students as mentioned earlier in Table 2. Furthermore, the results also indicate that the students find online resources as a

significant role in enhancing language learning skills (*Freq* = 4; relative to 20%). Besides, three respondents out of 20 people participating in the survey acknowledge that online resources are helpful in expanding legal vocabulary (representing 15%). Two respondents, constituting 10% of the total, find online resources flexible for their schedule. This finding reflects the reality that many students today balance work with their studies, making flexibility essential. Lastly, 1 out of 20 respondents considers online webinars to enable them to learn from legal experts and practitioners (5%). The third question exhibits the challenges that students have encountered. Up to 10 responses which account for 50% have struggled with understanding complex legal terms. This is similar to the findings in Table 1, indicating that individuals encountering difficulty in comprehending legal terminology are relatively consistent. Surprisingly, during semi-structured interviews with some specific students, understanding complex terminology emerged as one of the most frequently reported challenges among respondents. “Staying motivated during independent study sessions was tough”; “Complex case studies were challenging” and “Finding credible sources for research was hard” are the three least options, which serially constitute a frequency of 9 (45%), 8 (40%) and 7 (35%) respectively. The last question discusses the method of managing studying time effectively for legal English major students. The study reveals that 6 out of 20 responders (*Freq.* = 6; 30%) manage their focus by turning off notifications while studying on their own. This method is considered efficient and commonly utilized by the students during their autonomous learning. Otherwise, productivity applications also help to track students’ study time (*Freq.* = 6; 30%). Typically, setting reminders on their phones is a method that 5 students, comprising 25% of the respondents, consider effective in managing their study time. Otherwise, 2 responders often set a time limit for each task they schedule for their studying (10%), and only 1 responder uses techniques such as PomoDone, PomoFocus, and Pomodoro Tracker for their studying schedule (5%).

Table 2. Summarized analysis of students’ semi-structured interviews

How do you typically search for legal English resources online?	Frequency	Percent
Using search engines like Google or Bing	18	90
Directly on university websites or legal education platforms	5	25
Through online libraries	6	30
Listen to legal English podcast	4	20
Subscribed to legal newsletters or following reputable legal blogs	5	25
What is one of your experience with using online resources for learning legal English?	Frequency	Percent
Using online resources for learning legal English has been convenient and efficient.	10	50
I've found online resources to be incredibly helpful in expanding my legal vocabulary.	3	15
Online resources have played a significant role in enhancing my legal English skills.	4	20
Online webinars have allowed me to learn from legal experts and practitioners.	1	5
Online learning is flexible for me.	2	10
What specific challenges have you encountered?	Frequency	Percent
I find it hard to understand complex legal terms.	10	50
Staying motivated during independent study sessions is tough.	9	45
Complex case studies are challenging.	8	40
Finding credible sources for research is problematic.	7	35
Which of the following strategies you use to manage your time effectively when studying legal English online?	Frequency	Percent
I minimize distractions by turning off notifications.	6	30
I use productivity apps to track my study time.	6	30
I use techniques like the Pomodoro.	1	5
I set the reminders on smartphone.	5	25
I set specific time limits for each task.	2	10

4. Conclusion

Legal English major students face a number of challenges when using Internet resources for autonomous legal language learning. These challenges include adapting general research skills to

legal databases, overreliance on technology, barriers to deep analysis, and accessing quality information. Additionally, the need to balance autonomy with community, overcome technological and emotional barriers, and maintain motivation and engagement are significant hurdles. As technology continues to evolve, it is imperative to address these challenges to enhance the effectiveness of autonomous legal English language learning. The landscape of legal English education is evolving with the integration of technology, providing students in general and legal English major students in particular with a plethora of tools and methods for autonomous learning of legal English. The results indicate that legal English major students employ a diverse array of tools and methods for autonomous learning of legal English using online resources. These tools/methods include educational videos, interactive learning platforms, legal blogs, podcasts, and learning management systems. Textbooks and legal writing resources remain fundamental, while machine learning tools are gaining prominence for their efficiency and advanced capabilities. The flexibility and accessibility of these resources are critical for them to successfully engage in and benefit from autonomous legal language learning. Educators and institutions should direct them by providing support, guidance, and resources to help students overcome obstacles and achieve their learning goals. Moreover, there is a necessity for more research and the creation of customized interventions to boost the efficiency of online legal English learning methods.

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