

EXPERTS' PERSPECTIVES ON LEGAL COMMUNICATION MULTIMEDIA MATERIALS

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- This interdisciplinary project combines the expertise of lawyers and language teachers/applied linguists to develop a digital multimedia resource for legal English based on an analysis of the language needs of Hong Kong law students.
- This resource targets the most common tasks and genres for law students, in particular legal problem questions and oral mooting, and provides input in two forms:
 1. edited video interviews with legal experts providing advice on legal writing and legal argument;
 2. instructional videos created by applied linguists providing language-focused extensions on experts' observations.



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MOTIVATING QUESTIONS

How do we design a resource that effectively combines experts' perspectives with those of applied linguists? How do we link those perspectives?

DESIGN OF THE MULTIMEDIA RESOURCE

To combine the views of legal experts with insights from applied linguistics, we designed two kinds of videos



EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Learn about legal writing and oral advocacy by watching interviews with expert legal professionals

Video interviews by legal experts



QUICK GUIDE TO LEGAL WRITING

Watch our training videos and learn how to write like a lawyer

Instructional videos by applied linguists



QUICK GUIDE TO ORAL ADVOCACY

Watch our training videos and learn how to talk like a lawyer

EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Rationale

As the name suggests, expert interviews are interviews with legal academics and legal professionals, who are asked questions like 'What makes good legal writing?'; 'What makes good oral advocacy?'. In this way, students gain access to the view of legal experts on these topics in a way that they are unlikely to be able to do otherwise.

Participants

We have collected a wide range of perspectives, including from judges, solicitors, barristers and from very senior people to very junior people as well. This should provide an interesting range for viewers.

Questions asked

- What makes good legal writing?
- What makes good oral advocacy?
- What makes a good process?
- What advice do you have?

13 LEGAL EXPERTS; 29 VIDEOS



The Honourable Chief Justice Geoffrey Ma Tao-li
A total of 2 judges/former judges took part in the interviews
A total of 5 videos were produced



Mrs Audrey Campbell-Moffat, SC
A total of 4 barristers took part in the interviews
A total of 9 videos were produced



Ms Cammy Man
A total of 3 solicitors took part in the interviews
A total of 7 videos were produced



Professor Christopher Gane
A total of 4 legal academics took part in the interviews
A total of 8 videos were produced

INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS

Rationale

The Quick Guide to Legal Writing and the Quick Guide to Oral Advocacy are short 'how-to' videos dedicated to legal communication through writing and speaking. These serve to provide a language-focused supplement to the expert interviews. The videos are based on applied linguistic research into legal writing and address questions like how to structure legal genres and how to use language effectively. These language-focused videos flesh out topics that are addressed in the interviews, providing details about language strategies that students can use.

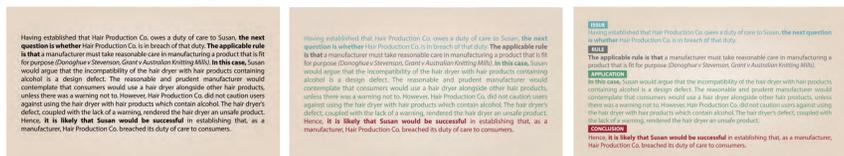
QGLW: Animation explaining the central case



Susan bought a hairdryer from a retailer, Hair Goods, made by a manufacturer, Hair Production Co. Ltd. The box included a warning label, which stating that the hairdryer must not be used with wet hands. Susan used a little bit of alcohol-based hair tonic and then dried her hair. Unfortunately, she did so with wet hands. Flames started in the hair dryer and her hair caught fire causing serious injuries. Susan decided to take legal action against the retailer and the manufacturer.

Design

The Quick Guide to Legal Writing (QGLW) and Quick Guide to Oral Advocacy (QGOA) are two distinct series of short, engaging, 'how-to' videos. They focus on two key legal genres: how to write legal problem question answers and how to construct arguments in oral advocacy. Each series is organized around a central case and provides examples of language in use, visually highlighting linguistic and discursive structures.



The genre move structure of the legal problem question genre explained visually.

EXPERTS PERSPECTIVES VS. APPLIED LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES

Rationale: Our aim is to find ways to 'unpack' experts perspectives and make them accessible to students in linguistic terms.

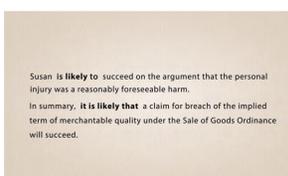
Case study 1: The Honourable Chief Justice Geoffrey Ma Tao-li and 'Clarity'



Script: "Clarity's all important when it comes to legal opinion or legal writing. [...] A lack of clarity comes about when, for example, you are not logical, when you don't address the very problem you're asked to address and go off, as I've put it before, on a frolic of your own because it distracts the reader from concentrating on what really should be the main part of the opinion, which is the answer to the problem and the reasons behind that."

In his interview, the Chief Justice emphasized the importance of the concept of 'clarity'. But for second language learners such concepts perhaps need to be unpacked. A link to episode 8 of the Quick Guide to Legal Writing (see opposite panel) helps to give a possible characterization of what clarity means, in linguistic terms.

Case study 2: QGLW - Stating the Conclusion



Script: "In those examples, the adjective 'likely' is used when expressing a tentative opinion. The common sentence pattern is either 'subject + is likely to + verb' or 'it is likely that + subject + verb'. You can also choose different adjectives such as 'unlikely' and 'possible'."



A key resource for lawyers to state legal conclusions in a precise and careful manner (i.e. clearly) is the appropriate use of hedging. In this 'how-to' video, episode 8 of the Quick Guide to Legal Writing series, we demonstrate how phrases like 'it is likely that' can be used for this purpose. Examples are animated, with labeling that shows exactly which linguistic resources are needed.

Acknowledgment The research reported here is supported by funding from a UGC-funded, collaborative, language related project: "Digital Multimedia Resource for Legal English: An interdisciplinary project"