RESEARCH ARTICLE

Pedagogy in Legal Terminology Translation: A Corpus-based Approach

Chenjie Zeng

The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, China
Email: chenjiezeng@link.cuhk.edu.cn
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0488-8839

Lidi Wang

The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, China
Email: wanglidi@cuhk.edu.cn

━━━

Abstract:

This paper explores effective pedagogical practices to train high-end foreign legal professionals in China's Greater Bay Area by answering two research questions. First, can corpus-based teaching be applied as a productive pedagogical method? Second, how can beginner professionals be cultivated in legal translation capabilities in the legal domain? The paper proposes a module entitled "Introduction to Legal Terminology Translation," which includes sessions on legal systems and legalese, corpus approach, and group presentation. A sequential mixed-method survey was conducted using qualitative methods, such as focus groups and interviews, followed by quantitative research using a questionnaire. A preliminary pilot study involved a focus group, questionnaire, and interview. Two identical questionnaires were distributed to two groups of students: one control and one experimental. In the ten-student experiment group, an instructor taught legalese and distributed a follow-up questionnaire. In the twenty-two-student control group, the instructor (more knowledgeable other) did not teach legalese but used a corpus-based questionnaire to assess student entry into the zone of proximal development. In the questionnaire, entry-level Latin legalese examples were provided. During interviews, junior university students preferred a mixture of all three pedagogical methods, while senior university students preferred the corpus approach due to its enhanced efficiency and accuracy.

Keywords: legal translation pedagogy, legal translator training, corpus-based translation studies

1. Introduction

As of 2022, nine cities[1] in China's Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (hereinafter referred to as Greater Bay Area) welcome Hong Kong legal practitioners to practice law in the Chinese Mainland. It is foreseeable that the demand for domain-specific translators (primarily legal translators) will increase significantly soon. Meanwhile, under the backdrop of COVID-19 and China's "Double Reduction" education policy, education industries have transformed from traditional to computer-

---

[1] Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen, and Zhaoqing.

assisted teaching and learning. It is thus essential to prepare future legal practitioners with sophisticated legal knowledge, sufficient English communication skills, and basic corpus-based proficiency.

In order to cultivate high-end, multi-talented, and foreign-related legal professionals in the Greater Bay Area, this paper explores the answers to the following two questions. First, can corpus-based teaching be applied as a productive pedagogical method? Second, how can beginner professionals be cultivated in legal translation capabilities in the legal domain? In the hope of answering the first research question, this paper designed a pilot study and distributed corpus-based questionnaires to collect students' feedback. After analyzing the collected data and reconsidering comments from students, a pedagogical module was proposed to answer the second question with the aim of cultivating legal professionals with excellent language skills in the Greater Bay Area. The goal of answering these two questions is driven by Vygotskiĭ's theory (1986) on the *More Knowledgeable Other* (MKO) and *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD). As the study is of an interdisciplinary orientation, the literature review starts with an exploration of previous studies through Vygotskiĭ's thought and language theory (1986), specifically the MKO and ZPD. Next, this paper explores recent updates in translation pedagogy, such as Kelly's (2014) and Pym's (2013) translation competence; in connecting the recent updates in blended learning and teaching, this paper reviews the use of corpus in teaching and learning, especially the blended corpus-based approach in the legal domain.

Vygotskiĭ (1986) believed that learners could develop expertise primarily through what might be described as an apprenticeship – we are guided by more knowledgeable individuals who help us understand more about our world and develop new skills (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2014). According to Vygotskiĭ (1986), a *more knowledgeable other* (MKO) is someone who understands better than the learner. The MKO could be a physical human helper (teacher, parent, peer, sibling) or a computational device. In contrast, the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) refers to the difference between what a beginner can achieve independently and what can be achieved with supervision by a knowledgeable and experienced guide. For example, if a beginner cannot independently solve a simple mathematical problem, s/he can become more skilled with peer, teacher, or computer guidance. The social interaction and help-seeking skills are then developed and applied to future constructions of a new problem (Vygotskiĭ, 1986). The MKO theory can be pragmatically exploited in the pilot study of this paper, for example, by having high achievers as role models for underachievers in the classroom. In tackling the second question, using the ZPD theory can evaluate students' improvement using different learning methods, such as in-class instructor-led teaching, dictionary-aided teaching, and/or corpus-based teaching.

One form of MKO practice in today's educational institutes is the teacher-oriented teaching method, which teaches specific subject content with teaching materials (Lu, 2021). In the past, teachers in China traditionally relied on one translation textbook to teach a whole course (Zhang, 2015). If the content-based approach relies too much on textbooks and courseware, the content-based approach discourages students from engaging in autonomous learning. For instance, Hafner and Wang (2018) collected various background information on students and their written assignments, including helpful information about the score achieved in each case. The result suggests that the evaluation of term papers, assignments, and examinations must effectively reflect the learning process and individual

cognitive differences. This lack of emphasis on autonomous learning leads to students lacking initiative and classroom participation (Lu, 2021).

In the domain of legal translation, pedagogy is not merely teaching how to translate words and transfer meaning. The crucial point is that the legal effect of the original legal concept must be the same or very close to the legal effect of the target legal concept (Sassani & Nassiri, 2022). In order to create a balanced legal equivalence between the source legal text and the target, the translator must master comparative law and a robust linguistic intuition and skills in both the source and target languages (Sassani & Nassiri, 2022). In translating English and Chinese legal terms, translators must consider the basic principles of the translation of legal documents. Simple terms, multiple element terms, and phraseology are viewed as representations of specific units of understanding that reveal multiple aspects and facets upon closer examination. Due to differences between legal families, specific legal concepts and categories may have no counterpart in the target legal system. Legal translation is not only the language conversion process but also a communicative activity conducted under legal mechanisms (Ji & Dong, 2017). Therefore, translators should clarify the differences between legal systems and institutions and flexibly use appropriate translation methods (Ji & Dong, 2017). For example, ancient Chinese words, such as *xingfa* 刑法 (criminal punishment) and *zishou* 自首 (the act of surrender), are classical Chinese expressions that have been inherited from Chinese legal language (Ji & Dong, 2017). English legalese also has Latin origins, such as *amicus curiae*, *stare decisis*, and *habeas corpus* (Kocbek, 2013).

In the digital society, computer-aided blended learning and teaching provide new forms of communication and increase the communicative potential of existing forms in shifting from a teacher-oriented approach to a student-driven one. We have to teach in the real world, surrounded by technologies and knowledge that are all in flux (Pym, 2013). Thus, the internet mode has become an effective method for creating teaching and learning environments with multi-party interaction. Teachers can upload all teaching materials and task requirements to e-learning management systems through these online systems. The computer-mediated blended learning platform is influential in training interpreters (Chan, 2014). It provides students with complementary home drilling that can strengthen in-class instruction and boost their attention spans, motivation, and enthusiasm for interpreting. It also helps students acquire language skills, interpreting skills, and world knowledge. Combining Vygotskiĭ's theory on MKO and ZPD can increase learning speed and enhance knowledge retention.

The translation market has imposed high-quality standards, and the competence of the legal translator is not limited only to technical issues (Păunescu & Chirițescu, 2022). Corpus-based translation studies represent a shift away from the prescriptive methods commonly found in traditional translation studies towards the descriptive methodology characteristic of empirical research (Hu, 2016). Corpus-based translation studies, initially introduced by Mona Baker (1996), explore the essence of translation both as a product and a process using corpora. It was envisioned at the time that corpus linguistics would furnish the methodology for conducting empirical investigations, while translation theory would delineate the areas of inquiry and formulate operational hypotheses in this new partnership (Laviosa, 2004). The abundant translations of existing texts on the web make the

corpus an ideal instrument for English translation (Sun et al., 2022). Studying the language of source texts using computational techniques that retrieve linguistic data makes detailed searches of words, phrases, and lexical/grammatical patterns and structures possible.

The potential of corpus-based studies as a methodology for researching legal translation and as a tool in translator training is promising (Biel, 2009). The use of corpora is no longer restricted to a small community of researchers working on language description and natural language processing. Al-Khalafat and Haider (2022) recommend using larger corpora of genres like legal texts. Because of the access and reliability of the internet, corpus has become a new mode of data integration for pedagogical purposes. Corpus provides multiple data that are both quantitative and qualitative, empirical rather than intuitive (Laske, 2022). Massive text corpora to tackle language challenges have recently become commonplace (Sun et al., 2022). For instance, Păunescu and Chiriţescu (2022) investigate lexical features and culturally specific elements in legal translation. They analyse European legal documents by using a bilingual corpus. Biel (2016) compares two English versions of the Brazilian law on arbitration law using a corpus-based approach in legal translation. Yang et al. (2022) collect bilingual legal texts in the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region) by establishing a parallel corpus and sorting out the performative verbs applied in legal texts. Nebot (2008) believes that the use of a corpus-based method in legal translator training is useful for trainees to manifest the effects of legal text and to consider the factors in the decision-making process on the translation across languages and legal systems.

2. Module Design

The course module is entitled "Introduction to Legal Terminology Translation" using a corpus-based approach. Ideally, this module should have 15-25 postgraduates and senior undergraduates who are interested in legal translation, pursuing a career in legal sector, or further study in Law and Translation Studies.

2.1 Legal database and corpora

This course relies on the following databases to access Chinese-English legal texts: Hong Kong e-Legislation (www.elegislation.gov.hk) and Peking University Law (www.pkulaw.cn). Students can choose the specific legal terms within the scope of the Criminal Law and Civil Code in Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong. The course exploits parallel and bilingual legal corpora, including Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), British National Corpus (BNC), and the zhTenTen corpus in the Sketch Engine. Two software packages are used: Wordsmith 6 and Sketch Engine (Al-Khalafat & Haider, 2022). Students generally enjoyed learning large monolingual corpora like the BNC, COCA, and the TenTen family of corpora (Frankenberg-Garcia, 2015). Al-Khalafat and Haider (2022) also conducted a keyword analysis and compared the Arabic corpus with the ArTenTen corpus through Sketch Engine.

2.2 Syllabus and assessment

The module is expected to be student-centred and consists of three sessions on legal systems, legalese, and corpus. In the first session, the MKO introduces China's Mainland and Hong Kong legal systems to familiarise students with the two essential jurisprudence and legislation systems, namely, the civil and common law systems. In the second stage, this course provides entry-level instruction on legal terminology and corpus databases to utilise corpora in learning.

Table 1. Module Syllabus

Session	Content
1	China's Mainland and Hong Kong legal systems and terminology: • Source of law and procedure (Chan, 2020); (Chan, 2011); (Tetley, 1999). • Role of lawyers, judges, and juries (Gubby, 2016). • Legal language, phrases, jargon, and terminology (Kocbek, 2013). • Translator ethics (Lipkin, 2008).
2	Introduction of corpus approach (Baker, 1995, 1996; Frankenberg-Garcia, 2015): • Corpus definition of and empirical approaches. • Looking up linguistic information in corpora (comparing it to dictionaries, Google, and asking a native speaker). • Differences between corpora and electronic libraries. • Corpus software: concordances, word lists and collocation. • Uses of corpora in translation practice.
3	Group presentation and assessment (topics include but are not limited to): • China's Mainland legal system and its legal terminology. • Hong Kong legal system and its legal terminology. • Comparison and contrast of the Mainland and Hong Kong legal terminology. • Application of legal corpus in translation studies. • Comparison between the use of different strategies (corpus/dictionary/ experts) in legal terminology translation.

As part of the course assessment at the final stage, students explore legal terminology translation through corpora in group presentations. Students deliver group presentations at the end of the course because interpersonal communication is beneficial to developing the competence of students. The module syllabus and presentation topics can be found above.

2.3 The selection of Latin words in the legal domain

Before elaborating on the details of the methodology, we would like to provide the rationale for selecting the Latin legal terminology in this paper. We selected four simple Latin legal terms, which, in alphabetic order, are *ad hoc*, *alias*, *status quo*, and *vice versa* from *Common Latin Terms in Hong Kong* (Tsou & Chin, 2021) and book review (Chan, 2022). According to Chan (2022), the unique feature of this book is that it combines the results of "Digital Humanities" research using a quantitative approach and extensive data materials to discuss the legal language of Hong Kong from an innovative perspective.

We chose these simple Latin legal terms for college-level students for several reasons. First, in a holistic sense, Latin terms can be difficult for English Language Learner (ELL) university students, especially those at the entry level and those who are not fully confident in their English capabilities. Furthermore, students (ELL or otherwise) without professional or academic backgrounds in Latin or Law may feel intimidated when they first face those many Latin words vital to functioning in the legal

domain. Hence, starting with the simplest terms can help students ease anxiety and thus catalyze the start of a long-term practice of learning Latin and legal terminology. Second, the scale of difficulties designed in the course syllabus is progressively more challenging. This is helpful when the MKO evaluates students' progress (i.e., ZPD) in learning legal words and terminology at the end of the module.

Third, these four Latin words can be considered simple to some degree. Simplicity does not mean that the words are of no significance in the legal domain. This is because lexicon meanings vary in different contexts. For example, the Chinese meaning of *alias* is as simple as "別名 *Bieming*", as shown in *Cap. 6A Bankruptcy Rules* 一*Rule 53 Registration of petition in Land Registry,*

> "When a petition is filed, the Official Receiver may register a memorial of the petition in the Land Registry against any property registered therein in the name of the debtor or in any ***alias*** of his or in his t'ong name, or in the name of any t'ong in which he has any share or interest, or in the name of any spouse of the debtor."

> "當有呈請書提交時，破產管理署署長可將該份呈請書的提要，在土地註冊處針對任何屬以下情況的財產而註冊：該等財產即以債務人的姓名或任何**別名**、債務人的堂的名義、債務人擁有份額或權益的任何堂的名義，或債務人的任何配偶的姓名，在土地註冊處註冊的財產。"

The other written form, *alias dictus*, carries the same meaning as *alias* in *Cap. 218F Travel Industry Compensation Fund (Procedure for Ex gratia Payments) Rules* but can be more difficult for students. The other similar-written Latin phrase, *Alias writ*, has the word *alias* in it, but the phrase itself holds an utterly different meaning "再度發出的令狀 *Zaidu Fachude Lingzhuang*".

Likewise, the other form of *status quo* is *status quo ante*. The meanings of these two Latin phrases are akin to but slightly different from each other depending on the context. The Chinese translation of *status quo* is "原狀 *Yuanzhuang*" and "現狀 *Xianzhuang*", as stated in *Cap. 609 Arbitration Ordinance* 一*Section 22B Enforcement of emergency relief granted by emergency arbitrator,*

> "22B(2)(a)maintain or restore the ***status quo*** pending the determination of the dispute concerned."

> "22B(2)(a)在有關爭議得以裁定之前，維持**現狀**或恢復**原狀**."

Though the Chinese translation of *status quo ante* is also "原狀 *Yuanzhuang*", the original meanings in English of *status quo* and *status quo ante* are slightly different: the former means "the state in/at which things are or were", while the latter refers to "the situation that existed before something else occurred." Again, introducing the simplest Latin words and phrases at the initial stage serves as a starter for both the MKO (i.e., instructor) and beginners (i.e., students at tertiary schools) to enter the complex world of Latin legal terminology.

Finally, being simple can be practical for students to apply Latin words and phrases when dealing with legal documents in any form (e.g., contracts, laws, ordinances) because these simple words are

most frequently used in the workplace. Take *Alias* again as an example; the frequency used in Electronic Legal Documentation System (ELDoS 香港法庭判詞) is 77.78%, and 100% in Bilingual Legislation Information System (BLIS 香港法例)[2], as indicated by Tsou & Chin (2021, pp. 14-16). The frequency of the *status quo* in ELDoS is 50%. These simple but frequently used Latin have remained in their untranslated written form in ordinary English language and continue to play a unique role in the modern legal lexicon (Tsou & Chin, 2021, p. xv).

3. Methodology

This paper uses a mixed-methods approach to investigate such a corpus-based approach in teaching and learning Latin legal terminology. The first method is a pilot study in a focus group, which is an experimental group where a teacher gives guidance in class. The second method uses corpus-based questionnaires, which will be introduced in the next section of this paper. The third method is interviews with two first-year students at a university based in the Greater Bay Area.

3.1 Focus group

The pilot study recruited ten students with different backgrounds to conduct an on-site preliminary trial of the legal terminology module. The MKO acted as a facilitator to introduce topics or elicit student explanations of legal terminology. Students were told that these are Latin words but were not notified of the meaning and genre of these Latin words. In other words, students brainstormed and guessed the meaning of the terminology according to their study and real-life experience. The pilot study was conducted in a focus group and a round table discussion for forty-five minutes. This was intended to be a carefree English conversation session consisting of two parts: warm-up (15 minutes) and discussion on legal terminology (30 minutes). This researcher acquired students' consent with signatures. Students' full names and IDs were withheld to protect their privacy

Table 2. Student's Academic Background

Student	Year	School	UG/PS
No. 1	1	SME	UG
No. 2	1	SME	UG
No. 3	1	SME	UG
No. 4	1	SME	UG
No. 5	1	SME	UG
No. 6	1	SDS	UG
No. 7	2	SDS	UG
No. 8	5	SME	UG
No. 9	5	SDS	UG
No. 10	1	SME	PG

---

[2] Starting from July 2018, the Bilingual Legislation Information System (BLIS 香港法例) was discontinued and replaced by Hong Kong e-Legislation (HKeL).

As shown in the table above, ten students participated in this trial session of in-class teaching: nine undergraduate (UG) students and one postgraduate (PG) student. Among the undergraduates, six were first-year students; one was a sophomore; two were fifth-year undergraduate students in the midst of a gap year preparing for either graduate school or an internship. Regarding the major, seven students came from the School of Management and Economics (SME), while three majored in Statistics at the School of Data Science (SDS). In other words, none of these students studied English, translation, or linguistics as a major in the field of humanities or social science. Participants from different backgrounds and perspectives provided a more multifaceted outlook (Angelelli et al., 2016).

3.1.1 First session: Warm-up (15 minutes)

The first part of the trial session was to warm up for fifteen minutes. The warming-up was to assess students' level of English competency and academic background. The session helped students get familiar with the environment and peers so as to ease the stress. The first part of the trial also served as a bench line in the experimental study. Participants cross-communicate with those who sat far from them instead of whispering with someone who sat near them. This was when the KMO functioned to help and share experiences with peers. Such behaviour showed that students are stepping out of their comfort zones. This behavioural signal was of great importance and indicated that it was time to move on to the next stage for a group discussion.

3.1.2 Second session: Group discussion (30 minutes)

In the second part of the trial session, students were given the four Latin terms that are most frequently used in legal domain. The discussion started with a lot-drawing game to make the discussion on legal terminology less tedious. The Latin terms they drew were purely based on chance. After that, once the instructor called out the Latin words, the student who drew the lot needed to assume the terms if s/he knew the meaning. Students can seek help from the MKO (either the instructor or senior group mates). Making assumptions was a process of brainstorming, which encouraged students to think before the instructor provided answers.

As the terms are comparatively simple, most students know this term but may not realise that the term can be a legal term. First of all, students were most familiar with the Latin term *vice versa*. Student 8 believed that it was too easy. Student 10, who drew a lot, responded immediately, "It means the opposite side." When the instructor asked for the Chinese meaning, student 10 answered, "相反 *Xiangfan*"; meanwhile, the other students also replied in unison, "反之亦然 *Fanzhi Yiran*". Student 9 added, "I know this term because it is in our mathematical proof." Three students who took Mathematics classes agreed.

Given hints, students were very close to the real meaning of the Latin term in the legal domain, indicating students' potential to widen ZPD. The second word was *alias*, which in legal translation means "又名 *Youming*", "别名 *Bieming*", "别字 *Biezi*" and "化名 *Huaming*" (Chan, 2022). Student 3 drew this term but had no understanding of it and thus sought help from the instructor. The instructor indicated that everyone introduced *alias* at the warm-up session. Student 8 then responded, "Nickname"; Student 9 replied, "preferred name." Students 4 and 5 said, "pen name" and "fake name".

Likewise, in In the discussion of the following Latin legal term *status quo*, students showed their potential for ZPD. Student 5 claimed that he did not know the full meaning but could, according to common sense, elaborate on the meaning of "status", which means "the position of a person in society", and its Chinese translation is "地位 *Diwei*". Student 7 added that "status" means "state" and "現狀 *Xianzhuang*". The instructor asked the students to put forward the words that begin with "quo" and soon received responses from students, such as "quotation" and "quota". Students were then asked to combine "status" and "quo" and make a guess of the meaning. Student 8 responded immediately, "Current status".

In the teaching form of group discussion, students have the initiative to help their peers to solve problems even though they may not fully understand the meaning of Latin terms in legal domain. For example, in discussing the last Latin term *ad hoc*, students 9 and 5 acted as the MKO and used their own knowledge in other disciplines to contribute their understanding to group mates. Student 9 responded, "It is a GRE word, and it means 'improvising' or 'excuse' in GRE." However, student 9 was unsure about its meaning and said they often get it confused with 'ad lib', another Latin word. "In the discipline of Statistics," student 9 added, "it is in the condition of a test, 'ad hoc' means that only this condition has a 1 (value). Others were all 0." Student 5 elaborates, "It is a control of variables in math."

3.2 Questionnaires

3.2.1 Experimental and control groups

As a quantitative method for after-class assessment, two identical questionnaires are distributed to two groups of students: the control group and the experiment group. One of the difficulties in legal English translation is how translators understand and convey legal terminology (Xuan & Xiaobo, 2017). To solve the problem, a corpus-based approach is conducted to provide practical hands-on training, emphasizing the essential knowledge and skills needed when using corpora to answer simple questions about language for practical translation purposes (Frankenberg-Garcia, 2015).

Ten students recruited in the pilot study, as the experimental group, are given teaching and guidance from the teacher in class. In contrast, the control group has twenty-two students without in-class guidance. Later, two identical questionnaires are provided to both the experimental and control groups. For the experimental group, the questionnaire serves as a review of the group discussion on legalese. In contrast, the legalese in the questionnaire is totally new to the control group (without prior instruction). In other words, for the control group, completing the questionnaires is a self-exploration process. The control group is given the examples from the COCA in the sub-section of the legal genre, selectively listed as follows:

(1) Ad hoc

Appellate Court Justice Anne Burke and William Burlelgh take questions from the press after the presentation of the ***Ad Hoc*** Committee on Sexual Abuse in November 2003 in Washington, DC.

As a policy matter, extraditions for violations of United States environmental statutes are currently handled on an ***ad hoc*** basis, coordinated chiefly through the EPA's International Activities Division, the Department of Justice and the Office of the Legal Counsel at the Department of State.

(2) Alias

In Bijeljina, the campaign was led, according to Serbian human rights organizations and UN officials, by Vojkan Djurkovic, a follower of Zeljko Raznatovic, ***alias*** Arkan, an alleged war criminal and member of the Serbian parliament.

(3) Status quo

The "Conversion Bill" would have codified the religious ***status quo*** in effect in Israel by granting the Chief Rabbinate exclusive jurisdiction over who is a Jew for purposes of marriage, divorce, circumcision, and burial in Israel.
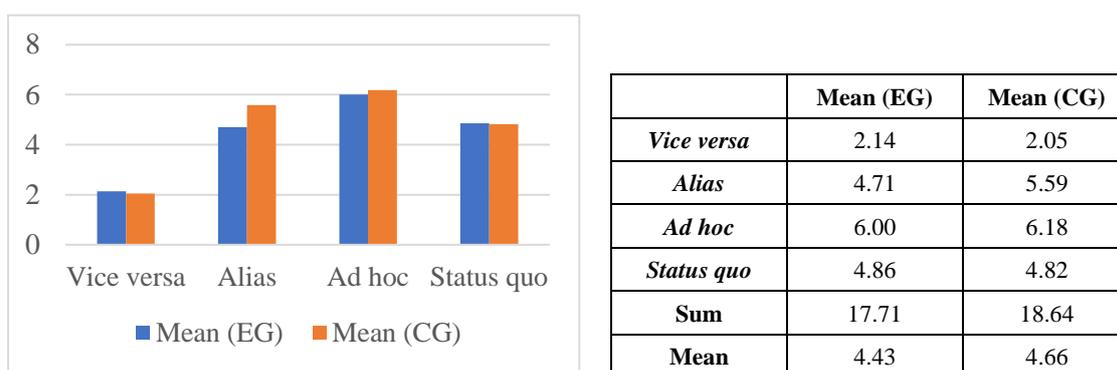
(4) Vice Versa

Because of the potential impact of environmental regulation on international competitiveness, as well as the desire of environmental regulators to influence behaviour beyond national borders through trade measures, there is now a pressing need for environmental regulators to learn from trade negotiators and ***vice versa***.

3.2.2 Pre-evaluation of difficulties

The first question, "How difficult are these words to you" is presented to both groups before the blended learning of legalese in completing the questionnaires, which use the Likert scale (0-10) to collect data. "0" means "not difficult at all", and "10" refers to "extremely difficult". "EG" is an abbreviation for the experimental group; "CG" is for the control group.

Table 3. Pre-evaluation of Difficulties

	Mean (EG)	Mean (CG)
Vice versa	2.14	2.05
Alias	4.71	5.59
Ad hoc	6.00	6.18
Status quo	4.86	4.82
Sum	17.71	18.64
Mean	4.43	4.66

From the above graphs, it is evident that both groups have a similar perception of the difficulties of the Latin legalese because the bars show the same tendency. Both groups believe that "vice versa" is the most accessible word, in which the means are 2.14 and 2.05 out of 10; "ad hoc" is considered the most difficult, and the means are 6 and 6.18 out of 10. Through comparison, the overall score and mean in the experimental group are smaller than that of the control group. Since the only variable in this pilot

study is in-class teaching, it can be reasonably concluded that in-class teaching positively affects students' learning legalese in a physical classroom.

3.2.3 Re-evaluation of difficulties

At the end of these questionnaires, when completing the learning process for the four legalese, two groups of students are asked the same question again concerning the difficulties of legalese. The results and data are shown in Table 4. Through the blended learning of in-class teaching and online questionnaires, the difficulty score decreases for both groups, indicating that the methods (in-class teaching instruction, dictionary definition, and corpus-based approaches) are effective for students to learn new legalese. Specifically, the mean difficulty score in the experimental group goes down from 4.43 to 1.88, and that of the control group reduces from 4.46 to 2.22.

Table 4. Re-evaluation of Difficulties
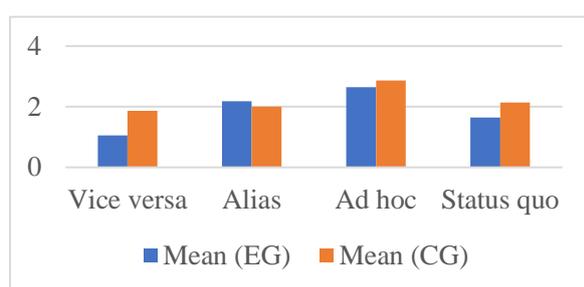
	Mean (EG)	Mean (CG)
Vice versa	1.05	1.86
Alias	2.18	2.00
Ad hoc	2.64	2.86
Status quo	1.64	2.14
Sum	7.51	8.86
Mean	1.88	2.22

All the teaching methods mentioned in this study are practical and serve different purposes in teaching and learning. Still, students show a preference for these three methods. As shown in Table 5, 71.4% of experimental students and 81.8% in the control group prefer the "corpus-based approach" that provides specific examples within contexts. The second preference is "teacher's in-class instruction": 42.9% in the experimental group and 22.7% in the control group.

Table 5. Students' Preference for Teaching Method
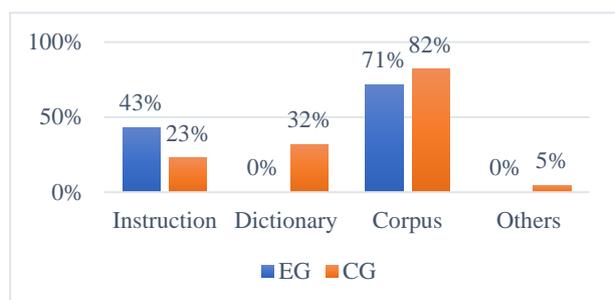
	Experimental Group (EG)	Control Group (CG)
In-class Instruction	42.9%	22.7%
Dictionary	0.0%	31.8%
Corpus	71.4%	81.8%
Others	0.0%	4.6%

Since the control group is not given in-class teaching on the legalese, more students in the control group prefer the dictionary definition over the teacher's instruction. In contrast, those who experience the in-class teacher-led dislike the dictionary definition. There are 4.6% of students in the control group believe that "more exposure" to law can be a supplementary method to learn legal terminology.

3.3 Corpus-based approach

The questionnaire has four parts. At first, students are asked to estimate the difficulties of the Latin legalese by using the Likert scale, including *ad hoc*, *alias*, *status quo*, and *vice versa*. In the second part, students are given dictionary definitions and then are required to complete multiple choices on the four Latin legalese with references to the dictionary definitions.
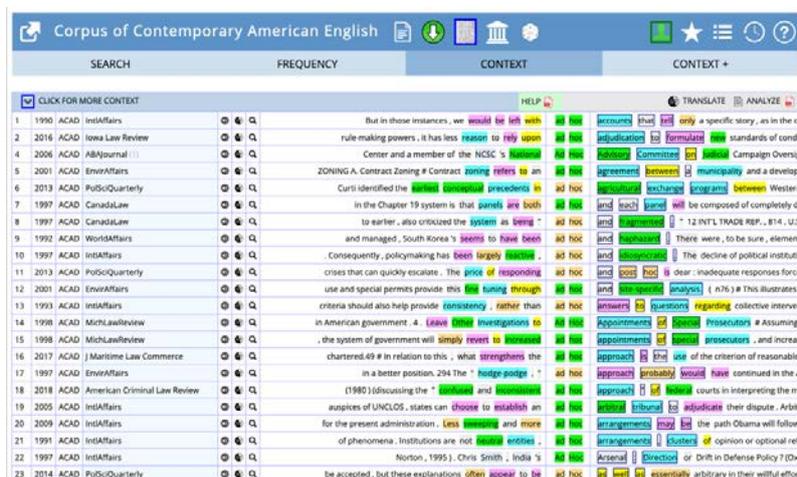

Figure 1. Example Screenshot of Legalese from the Legal Sub-section in COCA

In the third part of the questionnaire, after learning the legalese with legal texts selectively extracted from the legal sub-section of COCA (see Figure 1 above), students are required to complete the multiple choices within a legal context again, but this time, no dictionary definitions are given. Through the above self-exploration and blended learning, at the very end of the questionnaire, students need to re-evaluate the difficulties of the Latin legalese. In other words, two groups of students (experimental and control groups) complete the evaluation of legalese regarding the difficulties of legalese before and after completing the questionnaires.

3.3.1 Multiple-choice questions based on both dictionary and COCA

In the second part of the questionnaire, students learn the four Latin legalese with dictionary definitions selected from the *Oxford Learners' Dictionary* and the *Black's Law Dictionary* (Garner, 2009) as follows.

Ad hoc [adj., before noun]: made or happening only for a particular purpose or need, not planned before it happens 特別的；專門的；臨時安排的。

Example 1: an ***ad hoc*** committee/meeting 特別委員會／會議

Example 2: We deal with problems on an ***ad hoc*** basis (= as they happen).

我們應對問題的方式是只要出現就隨時解決。(*Oxford Learners' Dictionary*)

Ad hoc, adj. [Latin "for this"] Formed for a particular purpose.

Example 3: the board created an ad hoc committee to discuss the funding of the new arena. (*Black's Law Dictionary*, p. 46)

Later, in the follow-up multiple-choice questions, students are required to choose the meaning of the legalese in the specific context, and the examples are extracted from COCA.

Legal text 1 (Legal sub-section, COCA): Appellate Court Justice Anne Burke and William Burlelgh take questions from the press after the presentation of the ***Ad Hoc*** Committee on Sexual Abuse in November 2003 in Washington, DC.

Legal text 2 (Legal sub-section, COCA): As a policy matter, extraditions for violations of United States environmental statutes are currently handled on an ***ad hoc*** basis, coordinated chiefly through the EPA's International Activities Division, the Department of Justice and the Office of the Legal Counsel at the Department of State.

Table 6. The Correctness in Multiple-choice Questions (Aided with Dictionary Definitions)

	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	Wrong (%)	Correct (%)	Wrong (%)	Correct (%)
Vice versa	0	100	0	100
Alias	0	100	0	100
Ad hoc	0	100	0	100
Status quo	0	100	4.55	95.45

With the dictionary definitions, the correctness rates for both groups are summarised in Table 6. The experimental group did not make any mistakes again, given that they had been through in-class teachings and learned the definition of legalese within the questionnaire. However, the control group seems less sensitive to differentiating the meanings, and 4.55% of them still make mistakes even given dictionary definitions. Again, such a phenomenon supports the previous result in the pre-evaluation Likert scale, which states that in-class teaching and instructor guidance are important for students learning legalese.

3.3.2 Multiple-choice questions based on COCA only

In section three, students are given merely the COCA examples without dictionary definitions and then complete the multiple-choice questions. An example from COCA is as follows. The correctness of using a corpus-based approach is shown in Table 7.

Legal text 3 (COCA): Under the case-by-case method of developing rules, it will be difficult for potential informants and reporters to predict whether testimony will be compelled, since the decision will turn on the judge's ***ad hoc*** assessment in different fact settings of "importance" or "relevance" in relation to the free press interest.

Table 7. The Correctness in Multiple-choice Questions (Corpus-based Only)

	Experimental Group (EG)		Control Group (CG)	
	Wrong (%)	Correct (%)	Wrong (%)	Correct (%)
Vice versa	0	100	0	100
Alias	0	100	9.09	90.91
Ad hoc	14.29	85.71	4.55	95.45
Status quo	0	100	0	100

Table 7 shows students' *de facto* acquisition of the legalese without the assistance of dictionary definitions; thus, students seem to make more mistakes than when using both the dictionary and corpus approaches. However, if we investigate the details of the data, we can have some interesting findings. It shows that methods of teaching, dictionary-led and corpus-based approaches, serve different purposes.

On the one hand, a dictionary is an essential tool for learning new legalese for beginners. Table 4 shows that the mistake rate is minimised to 0% in both groups when completing questions for "alias" and "ad hoc". These two terms are considered the most difficult for both groups. As shown in Table 7, some students in both groups are wrong about the term "ad hoc" because they find it most challenging without teacher guidance in the control group. However, students are all correct about their meanings, given both the dictionary definitions and contexts selected from COCA, as shown in Table 6. In other words, the dictionary definition of legalese should be provided to students with corpus-based examples.

On the other hand, the corpus is especially useful to those who already know the legalese definition, which solidifies students' understanding of the legalese. This point can be supported by Table 7, where no student makes mistakes again for "status quo," which they struggled with in the dictionary-led multiple-choice question, as shown in Table 6.

3.4 Interview

As the pedagogy module on legal terminology translation provides an entry-level introduction to university students who may not have legal knowledge, this paper conducted interviews with two students. These two students (A and B) are freshmen and do not have legal backgrounds, but they showed interest in legal terminology translation. The interview was semi-formal and conducted through free talk. Upon the student's consent, the interview was recorded using a portable electronic device.

Question 1: Do you have any legal knowledge or background?

Student A: No, though I am interested in law and watch LUO Xiang[3]'s video.

Student B: Nor do I. I also watch LUO Xiang's video. When I need to choose a major in the second year of university, I plan to choose Legal English as my major.

Students A and B represent those who have a broad interest in Law, Legal English, and social phenomenon, but are insufficient in legal knowledge. For example, when the interviewer asked them about what aspect of the law they know, they mentioned a criminal case committed by LAO Rongzhi

---

[3] LUO Xiang 羅翔, a scholar and influencer at China University of Political Science and Law.

(勞榮枝案). Then, the interviewer asked if they knew any legal phrase or terms, and both students A and B said, "No." After explaining the definition of in-class teacher-led instruction, dictionary-aided teaching, or corpus-based teaching to students A and B, the interviewer asked the following question.

> *Question 2: Which way of teaching would you prefer, in-class teacher-led instruction, dictionary-aided teaching, or corpus-based teaching?*
>
> *Student A: Maybe teachers can use different ways to make their teaching colorful. I think dictionaries can be included in the homework. A teacher should teach students how to use a dictionary by showing examples of how to do something with a dictionary and corpus. The homework should be related to finding out the meaning of words, but the teacher needs to give us an exercise so we can use the dictionary and corpus as tools to solve the problems.*
>
> *Student B: Corpus and dictionary are tools. I need the teacher to teach me how to use these tools.*

In the above conversation, Student A provided a suggestion regarding the mixture of using different tools in teaching and learning, and Student B agreed. In other words, a teacher or instructor in a physical classroom plays the role of an MKO. In certain circumstances (when students were requested to finish assignments), tools like corpus and dictionary can also be an MKO, but students still rely on the human MKO (a teacher or more experienced person) to provide initial instructions. Ideally, beginners can vastly achieve a ZPD after MKO's instructions.

> *Question 3: Which way do you think is more effective in teaching and learning?*
>
> *Student A: I think the learning corpus is too complex and time-consuming because, firstly, you don't know exactly how to use the legal phrases without the teacher's help; you need to find many examples and analyze examples so that you know what they mean. For the purpose of learning, using a dictionary will be more efficient.*
>
> *Student B: Maybe the teacher's guidance would make it easier for the beginners to learn laws and legal terms.*

Speaking of the degree of effectiveness regarding the different methods among in-class teacher-led instruction, dictionary-aided teaching, or corpus-based teaching, student A believed that it depends on different scenarios and purposes. From a beginner's perspective, acquiring the meaning of legal terms was the first step in learning legal languages; thus, the use of a dictionary can be the most efficient approach. However, after the instruction on using corpus, students also agreed that it is convenient to use the corpus, especially in doing research.

4. Conclusion

In a nutshell, this study explores two teaching approaches for nurturing proficient, multi-talented, and foreign-related legal professionals in China's Greater Bay Area, addressing two primary research questions. First, it examines the efficacy of different pedagogical techniques: conventional instructor-led instruction, dictionary-guided teaching, and corpus-based teaching. Second, it investigates

strategies for effectively developing novice professionals with adept English skills in the legal domain. To tackle these queries, a curriculum module titled "Introduction to Legal Terminology Translation" is proposed, comprising three sessions: exploration of legal systems and jargon, utilization of corpus methodology, and collaborative group presentations. Additionally, a sequential mixed-method approach is employed to answer the research questions, involving qualitative methods like focus groups and interviews, followed by quantitative analysis of data gathered through questionnaires. A preliminary pilot study is conducted through a combination of focus groups, questionnaires, and interviews. Two identical questionnaires are administered to separate student groups: one designated as a control group, while the other serves as an experimental group. In the experimental group of ten students, an instructor assumes an active role as the MKO, teaching legal jargon in class before distributing a subsequent questionnaire. Conversely, in the control group consisting of twenty-two students, the instructor acts as a passive MKO, refraining from teaching legal terms but distributing a corpus-based questionnaire to evaluate students' ZPD. The questionnaire includes entry-level Latin legal terms, aided by examples from the legal genre category of COCA. During interviews, junior students express a preference for a blend of all three pedagogical methods. However, senior students, as revealed through focus group discussions and questionnaires, exhibit a preference for corpus-based learning due to its significantly enhanced efficiency and accuracy in legal terminology translation compared to traditional classroom teaching and dictionary-based learning approaches.

The pilot study indicates that the pedagogical module at the introductory level designed in this paper works for beginners both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Senior students have been exposed to some legal terms while preparing for standardized tests without knowing the origins or usage of those legalese. Students with different academic backgrounds are curious to learn more about lexical meanings and usage. This phenomenon indicates that the legal terminology course could be opened to students in other majors as long as the mixture of terminology and corpus approach will benefit their future careers, studies, and research. Second, in the pilot study and the group discussion, students show intuition in guessing the meaning of legal terminology given the teacher's guidance, dictionary definitions, and corpus examples. Such intuition is crucial in selecting the most appropriate word from corpora so as to maximize the benefit of using corpora in teaching and learning. A key is teaching students how to use the corpus to solidify their basic understanding of legalese. Third, through the data analysis, the majority of students prefer a corpus-based approach, compared to dictionary definition and in-class teacher-oriented instruction. Some students believe the example in the specific context is "clearer, easier to remember, making us understand it better." Others point out that, from a practical perspective, the corpus-based context "helps learn how to use the terms in realistic scenarios", "provides a specific circumstance which will make me remember words easier and better", and "especially learn the terms in English and use them immediately".

However, the application of technology in pedagogy, including the text and corpus mode, has both benefits and drawbacks. Specifically, the corpus mode may be less user-friendly than dictionaries in textual and electronic formats. A more comprehensive, objective, and accurate evaluation system is needed to test the teaching result and measure the ZPD students can achieve. Also, a concrete experiment on the syllabus should be conducted in a proper manner to elaborate further on the theory of MKO and ZPD. What is fundamental in teaching and learning is that students need to input and

output information and knowledge in a multimodal form and exercise their critical thinking based on traditional reading and writing modes. The other limitation is that the corpus tools are not always accessible in a blended teaching environment because the corpus software, like Sketch Engine, requires membership fees. Pym (2013) believes that there is no reason why students should be paying the prices demanded by the market leader. Teaching can be more effective if students have access to corpora. Furthermore, the limitation of this study mainly lies in the experimental arrangement, which comprises 10 and 22 participants in separate groups and may present suboptimal conditions for comparison. The limited sample sizes and the considerable diversity in backgrounds within the experimental group pose challenges to data comparison because some variables are beyond the control of the experiment. Given the small scale of the study, it would have been more suitable to use a mixed-effects linear model for data analysis instead of solely relying on mean values, which lack sufficient rigour. It is advisable for a further study to refer to supplementary empirical studies to enhance the standardization of the data reporting section.

Declarations and Acknowledgement:

References

Baker, M. (1995). Corpora in translation studies: An overview and some suggestions for future research. *Target. International Journal of Translation Studies*, *7*(2), 223-243.

Baker, M. (1996). Corpus-Based Translation Studies: The Challenges that Lie Ahead. In *Researching Translation in the Age of Technology and Global Conflict* (pp. 44-54). Routledge.

Biel, Ł. (2009). Corpus-based studies of legal language for translation purposes: Methodological and practical potential. Reconceptualizing LSP. Online proceedings of the XVII European LSP symposium,

Biel, Ł. (2016). Phraseology in Legal Translation: A Corpus-based Analysis of Textual Mapping in EU Law. In *The Ashgate Handbook of Legal Translation* (pp. 177-192). Routledge.

Chan, C. H. Y. (2011). The use and translation of Chinese legal terminology in the property laws of mainland China and Hong Kong: Problems, strategies and future development. *Terminology. International Journal of Theoretical and Applied Issues in Specialized Communication*, *17*(2), 249-273. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1075/term.17.2.10cha

Chan, C. H. Y. (2020). *Legal Translation and Bilingual Law Drafting in Hong Kong: Challenges and Interactions in Chinese Regions*. Routledge.

Frankenberg-Garcia, A. (2015). Training translators to use corpora hands-on: challenges and reactions by a group of thirteen students at a UK university. *Corpora*, *10*(3), pp351-380. https://doi.org/10.3366/cor.2015.0081

Garner, B. A. (2009). *Black's Law Dictionary*. West & Thomson Reuters.

Gubby, H. (2016). *English legal terminology: legal concepts in language* (Fourth ed.). Eleven International Publishing.

Hu, K. (2016). *Introducing Corpus-based Translation Studies*. Springer.

Kocbek, A. (2013). Legal Terminology at Arm's Length: The Multiple Dimensions of Legal Terms. *Linguistica (Ljubljana)*, *53*(2), 25-37. https://doi.org/10.4312/linguistica.53.2.25-37

Laviosa, S. (2004). Corpus-based translation studies: Where does it come from? Where is it going? *Language Matters*, *35*(1), 6-27.

Lipkin, S. L. (2008). Norms, ethics and roles among military court interpreters. *International Journal of Research and Practice in Interpreting*, *10*(1), 84-98. https://doi.org/10.1075/intp.10.1.06lip

Nebot, E. M. (2008). Corpus-based Activities in Legal Translator Training. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, *2*(2), 221-252. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2008.10798775

Nolen-Hoeksema, S., Fredrickson, B., Loftus, G. R., Lutz, C., Atkinson, R. L., & Hilgard, E. R. (2014). *Atkinson & Hilgard's Introduction to Psychology* (16th edition. ed.). Cengage Learning.

Pym, A. (2013). Translation Skill-Sets in a Machine-Translation Age. *Meta*, *58*(3), 487-503. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.7202/1025047ar

Tetley, W. (1999). Mixed Jurisdictions: Common Law vs. Civil Law (Codified and Uncodified) (Part II). *Unif. L. Rev. n.s.*, *4*, 877.

Vygotskiĭ, L. S. (1986). *Thought and Language* (2nd printing ed.). MIT Press.

About the Authors:

Chenjie Zeng is currently a full-time student who received a full scholarship for the MPhil-PhD in Translation Studies Programme, at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen.

Prof. Lidi Wang is one of the principal proponents of China's education in translation and interpreting studies. He is a member of the National Steering Committee on Master's Degree Education in Translation and Interpreting Studies in China. He also serves as a member of the Advisory Board for China Aptitude Tests for Translators and Interpreters (CATTI). He is coeditor-in-chief of Le Monde de la Traduction and a member of the Advisory Committee of Compilation and Translation Review, National Academy for Educational Research, Taiwan. Internationally, he is a member of the Executive Committee of the UN Outreach Programme with Universities and also a member of Conference Internationale permanente d'Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interpretes (CIUTI).