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Developing legal writing materials for English second language learners: problems and perspectives

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Abstract

Although in recent years we have seen a significant increase in the development of resources for legal writing, very few of them are targeted at second language learners. This article reviews currently available legal writing books in terms of their suitability for use in EALP writing contexts. It concludes that, although certain aspects of the available books can be useful, most are generally unsuitable for use in such contexts. Three approaches are then offered for developing legal writing materials that will meet the criteria of suitability. First, the materials can be customized in various ways to meet the needs of second language users studying law in the medium of English. Second, the materials can adopt a more language and discourse-based approach. Third, rather than packaging materials exclusively in book form, they can be made available as a computer-mediated resource bank. This article derives from ongoing work in a 3-year, university-

funded project entitled “Improving Legal English: Quality Measures for Programme Development and Evaluation”, based at the City University of Hong Kong.



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Keywords

ESP; EALP; Law; Legal English; Legal writing; Legal writing materials

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Vijay Bhatia a professor at City University of Hong Kong, is well known for his work on *ESP*, and *Genre Analysis* of language use in legal, academic, business and newspaper settings. His book “Analysing Genre” Language Use in Professional Settings” is widely used internationally. He is on the editorial boards of *English for Specific*

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