Designing and Evaluating Digital Multimedia Resources for Legal English
— An Interdisciplinary Approach to Innovation

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Abstract
Learning "legal English", the specialized language that students encounter in law school, is particularly challenging as law students must learn to use English forms and structures to meet the expectations of the legal academic and professional community. Learning legal English is thus a process that involves elements of both legal and language expertise. Collaboration between legal and applied linguistic scholars can contribute to this learning process. By integrating both legal and linguistic expertise in the collaborative evidence-based research initiative "Digital Multimedia Resources for Legal English: An Interdisciplinary Project", digital multimedia legal resources were specifically designed, developed and assessed to enhance the legal English language skills of law students. The development and use of digital multimedia teaching resources has the potential to help students improve their legal writing, as well as their analysis and evaluation of a broad range of legal genres, particularly those that draw upon conventional forms of legal reasoning. Qualitative thematic analysis of student feedback on the digital multimedia resources indicates that the resources help students learn to manipulate legal language strategically to achieve various desired linguistic and legal reasoning effects. The students also note the value of learning these written analytical skills and techniques for their future professional careers, whether it is giving advice to lay clients in opinion letters or writing for legal professionals.

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1. Introduction

Learning "legal English", the specialized language that students encounter in law school, is a particularly challenging process which involves elements of both legal and language expertise. Law students must learn to use English forms and structures in such a way as to meet the expectations of members of the professional legal and academic community, consistent with the conventions of the legal discipline. Given this close relationship between language and law, both legal and applied linguistic scholars have worked to describe legal texts and associated legal literacy practices, particularly in the context of academic legal education (Northcott, 2009; Hafner, 2010).

A recent innovative research project entitled "Digital Multimedia Resources for Legal English: An Interdisciplinary Project" integrates both legal and linguistic expertise and recognizes the value of embedding digital literacy resources in teaching legal education. The collaborative interdisciplinary research team consisted of one applied linguistic and four legal scholars and sought to address the specific legal English needs of Hong Kong law students, most of whom are not native English language speakers. Based on this needs analysis, the team developed digital multimedia legal resources, including a bank of video-based learning materials specifically designed to enhance the English language skills of law students. The bank consists of approximately fifty videos, to be used by students independently or in university courses addressing issues of legal English writing and legal analysis and problem-solving skills development. These videos are now available on the project's YouTube channel and can be accessed through the project website at www.legalenglish.hk.

This article explains the background and theoretical basis of this interdisciplinary research project and utilizes a qualitative interpretive approach to analyse and evaluate the project in light of student feedback and reflections.

2. Project Background and Theoretical Basis

2.1. Impact of Applied Linguistics in Academic Legal Education

It has been observed that language plays a central role in legal processes. As noted by Maley (1994: 11), "Language is medium, process and product in the various arenas of the law, where legal texts, spoken or written, are generated in the service of regulating social behavior". The ability to use language effectively is also central to a number of so-called "lawyering skills", such as legal interviewing, client counseling, advocacy and legal drafting, to name just a few. Two reviews of legal education in Hong Kong in 2000/01 and in 2017/18 have both emphasized the important connection between legal English language proficiency and professional lawyering skills and competencies. The

Redmond & Roper Report (August 2001) recognized the inextricable link between legal education and language and emphasized the need for persuasive teaching in legal English, as well as assessment of language proficiency. More recently, the October 2017 Interim Report of the Consultants on the Comprehensive Review of Legal Education and Training in Hong Kong recognized the need for a balanced law school curriculum involving knowledge, legal skills and professional values along with English language competency and professional skills and capacity. The Report also stressed important professional legal competencies: advocacy/persuasive oral communication; case and matter analysis; legal research and written advice; and legal drafting (Standing Committee 2017: 37 and Standing Committee 2018: 138–143).

In seeking to address the established English language needs of law students in Hong Kong, this research project draws its theoretical underpinnings from a perspective of literacy advanced by "new literacy studies" scholars. These scholars maintain that literacy in both first and second languages is more than a "mere" set of cognitive skills located in individuals' minds and needed for effective reading and writing. Instead, they see literacy as socially situated in the context of literacy events, which involve the goal-directed interaction of individuals through the medium of reading and writing (Street, 1984; Barton, 1994; Gee, 2008). In this view, literacy in legal English can be seen as "socially situated" and learning legal English as a process of "situated learning" (Gee, 2004). Consistent with this theoretical orientation, we argue that, in teaching and learning language skills for law, it is helpful to adopt a discourse approach to language. A discourse approach also sees language as socially situated: Language always occurs in a particular social context and is always used in order to achieve particular social goals or actions. Taking this perspective on language, one moves from a focus on linguistic forms alone (i.e., the systematic patterns of grammar and vocabulary) and begins to consider how particular linguistic forms can be used as a strategic resource, for example, in order to argue or persuade. In this way, the emphasis shifts from the formal features of language to its functional properties. In essence, a discourse approach looks at the way that people use language to "get things done". As literacy is multiple with different literacy events calling for different kinds of reading and writing, so too must lawyers learn to draw on different discursive forms or "genres" when they write for a specific legal audience.

For the purposes of this article, we focus on how such established genres and languages can be acquired by law students and novice lawyers, thereby allowing them to exercise agency. Therefore, our primary interest is in the way that discourse serves particular strategic and goal-oriented functions. One particular discursive tool that legal professionals use when they want to get things done with language is "genre" (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990). On the one hand, a genre is associated with a particular type of legal text: legislation, judgments, and law review articles are all examples of genres. On the other hand, a genre is much more than just a type of text. Genre can be defined as recurrent, staged, goal-oriented, social processes (Martin, Christie & Rothery, 1987). A

genre is recurrent in the sense that it is regularly used by members of a discourse community like the legal profession, in order to meet communicative needs that arise from time to time. So, for example, a law review article is used by members of the legal academy and profession in order to convey findings from their research to their colleagues. Furthermore, a genre is staged because it is organized in a conventional way; goal-oriented because it aims to fulfill community purposes; a social process because it is a way of getting things done with language and involves writers, readers and the broader community. Studying the genres of a particular discourse community gives insight into the strategic language use of the members of that community.

As an example of strategic language use, consider the barrister's opinion genre, common in Hong Kong and other jurisdictions where the legal profession is split into two different kinds of practitioners: solicitors (who deal with commercial transactions but generally do not appear in court) and barristers (trial lawyers). A barrister's opinion is a kind of legal opinion that is written when a solicitor, perhaps believing that his/her client's case will go to trial, requests advice from a barrister, or expert trial lawyer. It involves a mixture of communicative purposes, which include:

> "1) to provide an objective assessment of the lay client's legal position; and 2) to provide (subjective) advice on the steps to be taken to solve the lay client's problem" (Hafner, 2010: 410).

One challenge in writing this genre relates to the way that barristers present their conclusions and opinions. While it is usually not possible for barristers to provide opinions that are one hundred percent certain, they must nevertheless arrive at a clear conclusion to satisfy the needs of their audience. Barristers use language in a strategic manner in order to overcome this challenge, as illustrated in the following extract, where a Hong Kong barrister summarizes her overall opinion:

> "Having perused the correspondence between the parties, I believe that there is an enforceable tenancy despite the lack of a written lease." (Hafner, 2010: 434).

Here, the barrister uses *metadiscourse,* that is, expressions that modify the speaker's commitment or attitude to what she is saying, in order to provide a clear conclusion. First, notice the use of the epistemic verb "believe", which is used in order to hedge the conclusion. By using this word, the barrister reduces her commitment to the truth of what she is representing. It is not categorically true that there is an enforceable tenancy, rather, this is the writer's belief. Secondly, it is also important to note that the amount of hedging is quite minimal. In particular, the main clause ("there is an enforceable tenancy...") itself is not modified in any way. One could say "there *may be* an enforceable lease" and weaken commitment to the proposition further, but the barrister does not do that here and that is consistent with the way other barristers write as well. Finally, a kind of boosting strategy is employed in the first part of the sentence, "Having perused the correspondence..." Here the barrister refers to her research process as a way of drawing the reader's attention to the work that has gone into the opinion. The aim here is to boost the credibility of the opinion. Other barris-

ters were even more assertive, for example writing, "I have taken all of the circumstances into account".

This brief example of language in use demonstrates how something relatively straightforward like the statement of a legal opinion can involve quite complex linguistic strategies. In this case a careful balance of hedging and boosting resources is used in order to project just the right degree of confidence in the opinion. While expert barristers are adept at using these meta-discursive resources, research has shown that law students learning to write barrister's opinions may encounter difficulties (Hafner, 2013, 2014). For example, students may employ an excessive number of hedging devices (epistemic verbs like *suggest,* and modal verbs like *may, might, can, could*), thereby overly softening their claims and producing a text that lacks a clear and definite opinion. Another common problem is a tendency to provide lengthy academic discussions of legal principles with repeated appeals to legal authorities and, in so doing, fail to properly engage with the client's circumstances as is required of a professionally written barrister's opinion. Therefore, it would seem to be desirable to raise students' awareness of strategic use of language as a part of legal education and training practices. Doing this is one of the key aims of the digital multimedia resources reported on here.

2.2. Legal Education in Hong Kong: Non-Native English Speakers Learning the Law in English

Hong Kong is a former British colony, administered by Britain from 1841 to 1997. The vast majority of Hong Kong people are ethnically Chinese (92 %) and speak Cantonese as their usual language (88.9 %) (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2017). With the return of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997, the Hong Kong government reviewed its education policy, especially with respect to medium of instruction and language and literacy education goals. As part of this review, the number of schools that were permitted to use English as the medium of instruction was reduced and the number of schools that were required to use Chinese as the medium of instruction increased. The overall goal of this policy was to promote "biliteracy" and "trilingualism" in all school graduates. In other words, graduates of the Hong Kong school system were expected to be biliterate, i.e. able to use both English and Standard Written Chinese writing systems, and trilingual, i.e. able to speak Cantonese (the local language), Putonghua (the Chinese lingua franca, also referred to as Mandarin), and English (the international lingua franca and the language of commerce and science).

Whilst the majority of Hong Kong people speak Cantonese as their first language, the primary language of the law in Hong Kong has been English.[1] Given the importa-

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[1] There are signs that this is gradually changing, with the laws of Hong Kong translated into Chinese, a process of bilingual legislative drafting now in place, and common use of Cantonese in lower courts. Nevertheless, in legal education and practice a strong command of English remains indispensable.

tion of the common law into Hong Kong by its British colonial governors from as early as the mid-19th century, this disjunction between the predominant daily language of the residents of Hong Kong and the language of the law is perhaps unsurprising (Wesley-Smith, 1994). Moreover, the retention of English as one of the two primary languages of the law following the 1997 handover of sovereignty to the People's Republic of China (art. 9 Basic Law) and as the language most commonly employed in the law-making superior courts of the territory has maintained the significance of English in the practice of law in Hong Kong (Hafner, 2008). The three university law schools in Hong Kong all teach and assess at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in English, although there are limited opportunities now to study elective courses in Chinese in the professional qualification program, the Postgraduate Certificate in Laws (PCLL).[2]

Given that the majority of undergraduate and postgraduate law students in Hong Kong are native Cantonese speakers with English as their second language[3], the preference within Hong Kong's legal discourse for English does create specific challenges for Hong Kong law students (Cheung, 1997). The Redmond & Roper Consultation Paper in 2000 noted that frequent responses given when consulting stakeholders included:

> "A bilingual educational system poses challenges to many law students, especially those for whom it is the first time they are required to use English in class";

> "Even though law attracts many of the best students linguistically, English language proficiency remains a problem";

> "No matter how clever one is, it is very hard to put together an argument cogently without good English language skills"; and

> "The common law is a set of principles developed essentially around the language and springing out of the culture of England. So if a person does not have a facility with both, they cannot operate effectively. Language is the tool of the trade" (Redmond & Roper, 2000: 12).

The authors went on to report that the perception most frequently expressed in the consultations was that there has been a marked decline in the language skills of law graduates, generally English but also Chinese. This was considered especially serious, both "because of the extent of the decline and its serious impact" (ibid.: 14). The subsequent Redmond & Roper Report also emphasized the important link between legal English language proficiency and professional lawyering skills:

> "The common law is traced back in time, and it built up over time, by means of the written word. Accordingly, as was emphasized by one of those consulted, a lawyer in a common law jurisdiction especially needs a good set of language skills. English and its nuances are needed to master the common law. Moreover, much of the common law is case law, expressed in English and in precise language. Without proficiency in the English language, one cannot explore and engage with that body of law" (Redmond & Roper, 2001: 93).

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[2] For example, the Chinese University of Hong Kong offers courses in Drafting Commercial Documents in Chinese and Commercial Litigation in Chinese.

[3] A survey of 670 law students in Hong Kong, carried out as part of this research, found that 510 (76.1 %) reported Cantonese as their first language (L1), followed by 79 (11.8 %) L1 Mandarin speakers, and 64 (9.6 %) L1 English speakers (see Hafner, 2015).

2.3. Development of Digital Multimedia Resources for Legal English

This interdisciplinary project combined the expertise of legal and applied linguistic scholars in Hong Kong to develop and evaluate digital multimedia resources for legal English based on an analysis of the language needs of students. Applied linguists bring a unique focus on language – both as a formal system and as a social process – to the enterprise of legal skills development. Christoph Hafner, the Lead Investigator for the project, noted that the idea for this kind of interdisciplinary approach came out of his own teaching at City University of Hong Kong, where he co-ordinates a course in legal English. One of the problems faced by language teachers is getting students to see the connection between what they are doing in their English class and what they need to do in the "real" world of academic legal communication. By working with legal experts, Hafner was hoping to develop materials that would be very relevant to students' English language needs. Applied linguistic and legal scholars from the Department of English, City University of Hong Kong, as well as from all three of the Law Schools/Faculties in Hong Kong which are based at The University of Hong Kong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and City University of Hong Kong collaborated on the design and evaluation of the multimedia digital learning resources. The focus is on creating and sharing multimedia digital resources which are evidence based and thereafter investigating potential benefits for teaching and learning Legal English in Hong Kong law schools.

The first objective of this evidence-based research project was to undertake an in-depth analysis of the English language needs of Hong Kong law students. In order to assess perceived needs of law students in Hong Kong, a survey of faculty and students at the three Schools/Faculties of Law was conducted with 670 law students responding and 46 faculty responding.[4] The needs analysis survey was supplemented with interviews with 14 faculty staff and 24 students drawn from all three institutions.[5] The needs analysis suggests there is a need for focused language and skills input integrating both higher-level skills like organization with lower-level skills like appropriate use of grammar and vocabulary (Hafner, 2015).

The second objective was to develop two distinct types of video-based materials to address those needs. The first type of videos comprise interviews with legal experts, including judges, barristers, solicitors and legal academics, on their views on achieving "good legal English skills". These lawyers answer questions like: "What makes good legal writing/oral advocacy?" and "What advice do you have for students?" The videos

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[4] The students responding came from The Chinese University of Hong Kong (214), City University of Hong Kong (228), and The University of Hong Kong (228). Faculty responses were as follows: The Chinese University of Hong Kong (13), City University of Hong Kong (12), and The University of Hong Kong (21).

[5] The research project utilized semi-structured focus group interviews with both law students and law teachers and a student questionnaire (with both open and closed items).

aim to provide a stimulus for discussions about some of the taken-for-granted norms of legal communication.

The second category of videos designed by the team focuses on more overtly "teaching oriented" genre-based instructional videos, both for independent use by students and use by legal and/or language practitioners in legal English, legal skills and substantive law courses. Two series of teaching-oriented videos were developed:

1. "The Quick Guide to Oral Advocacy" (11 episodes focused on arbitration mooting); and

2. "The Quick Guide to Legal Writing" (8 episodes focused on answering legal problem questions).

In these videos, a presenter provides language-focused instruction on aspects of legal writing and oral advocacy supported by examples and animations.

The design of the instructional videos draws on principles from the field of computer-assisted language learning, as well as applied linguistic research into academic legal genres. For example, Pat M. Howe identified the legal problem question as a genre where the discourse is tightly controlled by the traditional methods of professional legal argumentation (Howe, 1990). This research provides empirical evidence of the conventional organizational structures adopted, and the associated lexical and grammatical resources used for particular language functions. Based on this research, the videos present examples of the strategic use of language within a context (a legal case) that is familiar to law students, and using genres (e.g. the legal problem question answer) directly relevant to legal studies. Therefore, the creation of these instructional videos follows a number of important design principles:

1. Each series consists of a number of short and engaging videos (rarely longer than 5 minutes) that make up a unified whole.

2. The videos are research-based, drawing on applied linguistics research into academic and professional legal communication.

3. The videos introduce key legal genres, like the problem-question answer.

4. The series is organized around a central case, a fact situation described in the first episode and used in later episodes in order to illustrate language strategies.

5. The episodes are clearly signposted and all include an introduction and review section.

6. The videos are based on authentic examples of language in use, i.e., actual student writing and mooting performances.

7. Examples of language in use are visually highlighted, so that viewers are more likely to "notice" target language structures (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

8. Where meta-language is used, i.e., terminology to describe linguistic structures, it is always combined with clear examples: One does not have to be a linguistics expert to understand the videos.

Both the "expert interviews" and the two series of instructional videos have been freely available since January 2016 on the specially designed website www.legalenglish.hk ("Legal English in Hong Kong: Promoting Effective Communication and Advocacy Skills for Law Students"). Contributors to the professional videos include The Honour-

able Chief Justice of Hong Kong, Deans of Hong Kong's three Law Schools/Faculties, senior counsel and other distinguished barristers and solicitors, and eminent law professors, as well as more junior members of the profession. The website has served as an important resource providing access for both law students and lecturers to an array of multimedia learning/teaching materials and it has been utilized in a range of undergraduate and postgraduate law courses in Hong Kong.[6]

3. Evaluating Digital Multimedia Resources

This article is concerned with the evaluation of one of the two series of teaching-oriented videos: "The Quick Guide to Legal Writing", which focuses on answering legal problem questions.

3.1. Introducing the "Quick Guide to Legal Writing" Videos

In a legal problem question, instructors provide a simulated set of facts (usually a dispute of some kind) and ask students to respond by providing legal advice to parties involved (see Howe, 1990, for a full description of the genre). "The Quick Guide to Legal Writing" series consists of eight episodes, namely:

1. An overview
2. Organizing the structure
3. Raising the issue
4. Stating the rule
5. Citing precedents
6. Citing legislation
7. Applying the law
8. Stating the conclusion

Episode 1 gives a brief overview of the legal problem question answer genre and introduces the fact situation used throughout the series (about Susan's unfortunate encounter with a hair dryer that catches fire, and her subsequent attempts to sue manufacturers and retailers, see Box 1, below). Episodes 2–8 focus on structure, particular language functions and the linguistic choices that are used to realize these.

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[6] For example, it has been used in a variety of courses within the LLM in Arbitration & Dispute Resolution and the LLM in Human Rights programs at the University of Hong Kong, as well as in undergraduate courses in English language and in law at HKU, CityU and CUHK.

Box 1: Case Material For "Quick Guide to Legal Writing" Videos.

Susan purchased an expensive hair dryer from a shop called "Hair Goods". The hair dryer was manufactured by Hair Production Co. Ltd., which had advised retailers that they should test the efficiency and safety of these hair dryers before selling. The hair dryer is a new kind of hair dryer which generates a lot of heat so it dries hair very quickly. The box of each hair dryer contains a warning which says,

"User must not use the hair dryer with wet hands.

For further information and advice on this product, please contact Hair Production Co. Ltd".

In fact, Susan purchased the hair dryer to be used together with a hair tonic which consisted of a small percentage of alcohol. She also purchased the hair tonic from Hair Goods. Susan used the hair tonic together with the hair dryer after she washed her hair when she got wet hands. Flames started in the hair dryer and her hair caught fire causing serious injuries. One of the weaknesses of the hair dryer was that it could not be used together with any substance that contained alcohol.

Susan wants to bring an action against Hair Goods and Hair Production Co. Ltd.

In terms of visual design, the series has two on-camera presenters who act as hosts and speak directly to the audience, explaining the discursive strategies that can be used at different stages of the text (Screenshot 1).

Screenshot 1: Presenters introduce the series.

In addition, the fact situation is visually introduced by animations that portray Susan purchasing the hair dryer and her unfortunate accident (Screenshot 2).

Screenshot 2: Animated case description: Susan contemplates legal action.

The videos in the series also make use of multiple modes to convey language-focused teaching points. For example, in Episode 2, "Organizing the structure", students are presented with a full paragraph of text, with important functional lexical phrases (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992) highlighted in bold type to facilitate "noticing" by learners. As an example, the phrase "the next question is whether" frequently functions to introduce an issue and so is presented in bold type (Screenshot 3).

Screenshot 3: Animated description of organization strategies with 'moves' highlighted by colour and labelled, and functional vocabulary highlighted in bold.

The text shown in Screenshot 3 gradually appears on the screen typewriter style at the same time as it is voiced over aurally. Different structural elements (Issue, Rule, Application, Conclusion – a common argument structure in law) are first indicated by different colours, and then labelled. These structural elements are then visually re-organized to follow a different sequence (Issue, Conclusion, Rule, Application). In this way, the full potential of multimedia is utilized to support learning. Such design strategies can also be used to highlight structural elements at the sentence level, as in Screenshot 4, where students learn about the strategic use of hedging devices when giving opinions, in particular, how an opinion can be introduced by a hedging phrase (e.g., "it appears that") but still use a strong (unhedged) main verb (e.g., "there is an implied term").

Screenshot 4: Animated description of opinion statement with hedging phrases highlighted in red, and strong main verbs labelled in blue.
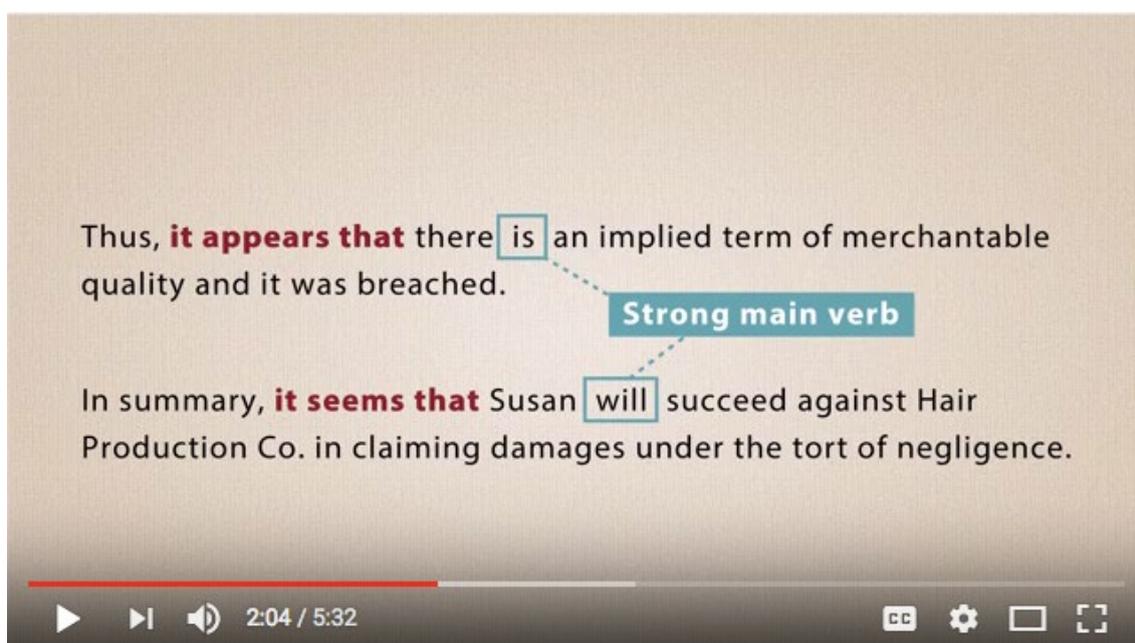
3.2. Gathering Student Feedback on the "Legal Writing" Videos

The "Quick Guide to Legal Writing" video series was piloted in the 13-week Legal English course offered by the Department of English, City University of Hong Kong, in collaboration with the School of Law. The video-based teaching materials were used in class tutorials, after which the students were asked to reflect on the ways the videos impacted on their learning by engaging in out-of-class online discussion forums related to key concepts on the course. The students in the Legal English course are assessed on their participation in the online discussion forums where they are required to comment and respond to each other's replies. Any concerns that this may impact on the objective nature of their feedback were addressed in the instructions to students

which made it clear it was the extent to which they engaged and participated rather than the content of their contributions which would be assessed. The online discussions took place over a three-week period during weeks 8 to 10 of the Legal English course. Each week focused on a different topic. Prior to week 8 the students had considered the features of legal English, including cognitive structuring as well as the lexical and grammatical features, and writing for a non-specialist audience. In week 8 the discussion topic was *"Writing for a specialist audience"*. The following questions were posed to the students for discussion:

1. How does writing for specialist readers differ from writing for non-specialists?

2. What do you think are the main difficulties that you encounter in writing for your teachers?

3. What do you hope to learn over the next few weeks?

The week 9 discussion topic was *"How to write like a lawyer."* In class, the students had been shown episode 2 of the "Quick Guide" videos referred to above. In this episode, the video demonstrated how to organize an answer to a problem question at the macro level, by reference to legal actions or parties; and at the micro level, using the structure of Issue, Rule, Application, Conclusion ("IRAC") flexibly. At this micro level, the video showed how an issue could be resolved following: 1) the expected structure of Issue, Rule, Application and Conclusion; or, alternatively 2) a less commonly employed structure using a "foregrounded conclusion" and following the pattern Issue, Conclusion, Rule, Application. The video also demonstrated how some issues could be dealt with briefly, without the need of a full legal analysis, by following an Issue, Conclusion structure. The students were asked to reflect on the following questions in their online discussion:

1. Do you find the video useful? What aspect of the video in particular do you find useful?

2. How does the video help you understand how to organize your answer to a problem question at a macro and micro level by employing IRAC flexibly? What questions about organization do you still have?

3. Does the video reflect what you do when you answer problem questions? What other organizational strategies do you use when you answer problem questions?

The discussion topic for week 10 was *"How to raise issues."* Using the same hypothetical legal problem question that was introduced in the previous video, the students were shown episode 3 of the "Quick Guide" series of videos. In this episode they were taught the language used to raise issues in an answer to a legal problem question. The students learn to raise an issue explicitly, using an indirect question with the word "whether" (e.g. "the issue is whether"); and implicitly, using the modal "may" and other tentative phrases (e.g. "Hair Production Co. may be liable in negligence for Susan's injury"). The students were asked to comment in their online discussions on the following questions:

1. Do you find the video useful? What aspect of the video in particular do you find useful?

2.   How does the video help you understand how to raise issues in a legal problem question?

3.   In the video, two strategies for raising issues are discussed. Issues can be raised either explicitly or implicitly. Do you follow these strategies when raising issues in a problem question? What other strategies do you use?

There were 50 first-year students[7] enrolled on the course. To ascertain their views as to the value of the "Quick Guide" videos, their online discussions over weeks 8–10 were collated and a thematic analysis was undertaken to identify their common themes.

3.3. Qualitative Interpretive Analysis of Students' Feedback on Videos

This study utilized a qualitative interpretive paradigm aimed at gathering a rich data set in order to gain insights into the complexity of the digital multimedia project process (Hafner, 2015; Davis, 1995). Multiple perspectives were elicited by drawing data from students' weekly comments on a course discussion forum (where they were asked to comment on and reflect upon the use of the videos). This qualitative analysis entailed a number of stages of reading and thematic coding. The preliminary stage of the process involved repeated reading of the students' responses in the three online discussion forums to become familiar with the content. Repeated rounds of reading and categorizing the data made it possible to derive the common themes emerging from students' online discussion forums, rather than adopting themes from prior theory or research (Boyatzis, 1998; Potter & Weatherell, 1987). The putative themes were refined through repeated investigation both of patterns of commonality and of anomalous examples (Potter & Weatherell, 1987). In this stage, possibilities were marked for coding as the online discussion forums were read through and after discussion amongst the research team, an initial list of themes was generated.

In the next phase, data from the students' online discussion forums was imported into MaxQDA12, a software program, to help organize and manage the data. Using the software, different color codes were generated and categorized into various themes and sub-themes. The use of the MaxQDA12 software allowed coding of the data with a simple drag and drop method and also provided for quick retrieval of coded segments. The software also makes it easier to keep track of the data and pick up themes which are worth taking note of even though they may not be the dominant ones. Although quantitative analysis was not performed, the software tracks the number of times a particular code is mentioned, thus providing some indication of the prevalence or frequency of a particular theme within the data. The researchers worked systematically through the entire data set to generate initial codes. The approach was to code for as many potential themes as possible and to code extracts of data inclusively and as many times as relevant (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 77).

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[7] In Hong Kong as in the UK, it is possible to study law as an undergraduate degree. The first year students referred to here are all first year undergraduate students.

The next phase involved re-reading the data to make sure that all data extracts were properly coded and reviewing the initial codes to search for potential themes across the entire data set. The codes that were generated for each week were collated and developed to form a common set of codes that would be used across the entire data set. The codes were then refined and grouped by different color to indicate different potential themes. The coding process continued throughout with repeated reading of the data to ensure that each extract was coded inclusively and consistently. If an extract fit into more than one theme, the approach was to code them twice or more as relevant and then reading the data again to make sure this was done consistently across the entire data set.

One of the benefits of doing qualitative thematic analysis is that researchers retain the flexibility to decide what constitutes a theme. However, the important rule is to be consistent in how a theme is determined throughout the entire data set. In this respect, the prevalence of a theme was determined by the number of different students who articulated the theme across the entire data set, as opposed to each individual occurrence of the theme. This was to prevent double counting and to avoid the complex questions about where a single occurrence begins and ends within a student's feedback. Once a set of potential themes was identified, it was further reviewed and refined to develop a thematic map that identifies and captures the essence of the entire data set. Direct quotes from students were then grouped under the thematic headings which helped to illustrate each theme in the students' own words and also gave some indication of the number of students who raised each theme (Breakwell, 1995). This helps to offer an idea of the degree to which a particular experience was commonly shared among the students:

Screenshot 5: Example of thematic coding process using MaxQDA12 software.

The coding process resulted in the following thematic structure:

1. Usefulness of digital multimedia teaching resources in addressing students' legal English needs
   a. Identifying and raising issues in legal problem questions
   b. Organizing structured logical legal analysis
   c. Benefits of digital multimedia teaching resources
   d. Enhancing linguistic awareness of law students

2. Students' feedback and self-reflection on their legal English needs
   a. Challenges of writing exams and assignments
   b. Need for more classroom teaching and teacher feedback

3.4. Evaluation of Qualitative Thematic Analysis

In general terms, the results of the qualitative thematic analysis showed that the "Quick Guide" video materials appear to have helped the students develop their legal English writing, analysis and problem-solving skills, particularly in terms of logical structured analysis, concise succinct organization, and effective argumentation. As a whole, the students were very positive about the overall value and general usefulness of the videos on how to raise issues and write answers to legal problem questions. The main themes emerging from coding of the students' online discussions are:

1. Usefulness of video-based learning materials in addressing the students' legal English needs

2. Students' feedback and self-reflection on their legal English needs

We address these themes in sections 4. and 5. below. For each theme we describe the students' perceptions as evidenced by extracts from the students' comments in the online discussion forums. For purposes of this article, the student quotes are identified by their date of posting on the online discussion forum, the week of the discussion topic and the numbered paragraph(s) in which the coded segments appeared.

4. Students' Perception of the Usefulness of Digital Multimedia Teaching Resources

The coding analysis identified four sub-themes concerning the usefulness of the video materials in addressing the law students' legal English needs: Raising issues in legal problem questions (4.1.); organizing and structuring logical legal analysis (4.2.); benefits of digital multimedia teaching resources (4.3.); and enhancing the linguistic awareness of law students (4.4.). We now address these sub-themes in turn.

4.1. Raising Issues in Legal Problem Questions

The majority of students stated they found the video on how to raise issues useful as it introduced or reminded them of new and different ways of identifying and raising issues when answering problem questions. Students found the explanation in the video of the two linguistic strategies for raising issues, explicitly and implicitly, beneficial:

> "This video is useful, especially it shows me that the ways of raising issues can be classified into two main categories. I have never had this concept in my mind though being a law student." (student post, March 26, 2016, week 10, par. 94)

> "The video taught me something I have never thought about and now I am able to understand not only how to raise an issue but also the rationale and technical explanation of the explicit or implicit structure." (student post, March 29, 2016, week 10, par. 162)

> "This video provides me with some alternatives when raising a legal issue which makes my essay less repetitive in terms of the format." (student post, April 8, 2016, week 10, par. 414)

Many also found the videos useful for adding variation to their writing, making it more engaging and interesting:

> "I found the video helpful because I have always applied what the video describes as the 'explicit' method, but have never considered the 'implicit' method. Going forward, I will implement both methods, which I hope will add depth to my writing…" (student post, March 24, 2016, week 10, par. 38)

> "After watching this video, I would proceed to use both strategies in raising an issue, in order to provide more variations to my essays." (student post, March 31, 2016, week 10, par. 253)

Some of the students also considered beyond the academic context and reflected on applying the two strategies for raising issues in the professional context:

> "I do understand that in an examination/assignment context, the explicit approach would better help the marker understand your answer and help them grade your work, but our legal writing does not stop at school. When writing an intra-office memo, for example, more often than not, a tentative opinion would be written when raising an issue. Therefore, I think both approaches are equally valuable." (student post, March 27, 2016, week 10, par. 71)

4.2. Enhancing Linguistic Awareness of Law Students

For many students the "Quick Guide" videos enhanced their awareness of vocabulary, phrases, and grammar and the importance of linguistic choices in their legal analysis. Students commented on the strategic value of linguistics and law working together helping them to be more aware of vocabulary, phrases and grammar within a legal text:

> "The video is useful…it shows the way of using functional lexical phrases along with IRAC and hedging the tone of conclusion as well." (student post, March 26, 2016, week 9, par. 356)

> "The video teaches me to understand how to organize my answer by providing a simple and clear example but not just stating out all the methods I can use with a big chunk of words. It also teaches me

what words I can use to indicate the transitions of different parts of my answer." (student post, March 20, 2016, week 9, par. 176)

The video materials improved the students' understanding of using grammar and making functional lexical phrase choices (the combinations of vocabulary that they use for strategic effect) in order to help convey stance, commitment, certainty, and strength of argument. Students stated the videos were useful for highlighting the use of words and phrases such as "hence", "the next question is", "whether", "the applicable rule", and "in this case":

> "One thing I learnt is to answer precisely with the use of functional lexical phrases." (student post, March 26, 2016, week 9, par. 362)

> "I find the explanation of functional phrases most useful for me as I have learned to use the methods of 'whether' and model [modal] verb but not for this one." (student post, March 24, 2016, week 10, par. 13)

> "[T]he introduction of the use of tentative opinion with a modal verb may provide some variations to our answers as well in terms of sentence patterns." (student post, April 1, 2016, week 10, par. 223)

Because of their emphasis on the audience and purpose of communication, and because of similarities between legal genres, the videos have the potential to help students better analyze and evaluate the broad range of legal linguistic genres which they will encounter both academically in law school, as well as in their future professional legal practice. These include law exams, assignments and essays; legal memoranda; contracts and agreements; barrister's opinion letters; statutes, laws and regulations; judicial case decisions; law journals and legal textbooks (Hoffman, 2011).

4.3. Organizing and Structuring Logical Legal Analysis

Another way in which students found the "Quick Guide" videos useful was in providing a clear framework to help improve students' analytical skills and develop logical structured answers. The video demonstration of the four elements of the "IRAC" technique (Issue, Rule, Application and Conclusion) and the "Foregrounded Conclusion" technique (Issue, Conclusion, Rule, Application) helped students enhance and expand their legal analysis "toolkit":

> "[T]he step-by-step analysis makes the flow of the video very clear and comprehensible. I am able to understand the logic of the answering structure very easily which is useful for me in applying my answer in the future." (student post, March 20, 2016, week 9, par. 208–210)

> "Through providing us ways to organize our answers to problem questions in a structural manner, we are able to present our arguments effectively." (student post, March 27, 2016, week 9, par. 202)

The majority of the students also valued the video materials for reminding them about the flexible applications of IRAC, for example, structuring their answer to a problem question at both the macro and micro levels or by using the "foregrounded conclusion" approach (with Issue and then Conclusion):

> "The video is useful in the way that it introduces other methods for resolving sub-issues. The introduction of foregrounded conclusion which I have never thought of can cause emphasis by having conclusion right after the issue within IRAC." (student post, March 20, 2016, week 9, par. 45)

Students recognized that while they are introduced to the theory of IRAC, they often struggle with the application of this legal analysis technique and the videos usefully demonstrate to the students a more flexible application of the IRAC approach:

> "One crucial point that was mentioned in the video is that the IRAC structure cannot be applied in all types of questions. Sometimes I might employ the structure too rigidly but the video has reminded me of the importance of flexibility when using the IRAC structure." (student post, March 20, 2016, week 9, par. 210)

> "On the macro level, the video reminds me to use the IRAC in a flexible manner, to first scan through the facts of the case, identify the relevant area of law, and to organize the facts by each legal action. This method is effectively [sic] solves some of the problems I encounter when I am faced with pages of facts and stakeholders…It reminds us that we should utilize the structure flexibly such that we can reap the most advantage in a limited scope." (student post, March 16, 2016, week 9, par. 35–36)

4.4. Benefits of Using Digital Multimedia Teaching Resources as Opposed to Other Types of Resources

The students' online discussions indicate that addressing the IRAC method by means of digital multimedia videos with engaging graphics and animation was particularly helpful. The students appreciated the combination of a clear explanation of the IRAC approach followed by the practical application of IRAC to the analysis of a factual problem while finding also that the audio-visual aids and animations on the videos enhanced their learning experience and ultimately increased their understanding of the IRAC approach:

> "The video clearly illustrates how to use this structure of organization through easy to follow instructions and an effective mix of audio-visual aids…ultimately, I think the video is a great tool to both (where applicable) teach the concept from scratch and also to enhance the knowledge students already have [sic]." (student post, March 18, 2016, week 9, par. 106)

> "Also, the use of visual techniques employed in the video were particularly eye-catching so that also helped to grab my attention." (student post, March 20, 2016, week 9, par. 243)

> "These types of problem questions are the most common and this video can help students remember how to use IRAC because of the animations." (student post, March 25, 2016, week 9, par. 345)

At a deeper level of learning, the link between good organization skills, logical analytical structure and effective legal analysis, as demonstrated in the videos, is also mentioned many times by the students:

> "The second video depicts a step-by-step guide to answering a problem question. I found the video extremely clear and useful for any law student taking an exam for the first time, as it explains the classic IRAC structure in a short and concise manner. In particular, the use of a simple contract/business law example was helpful. Instead of introducing general theories and writing methods, the video outlined

a legal issue using the IRAC structure, supporting it with precedents." (student post, March 16, 2016, week 9, par. 33)

"[T]he step by step guide makes the flow of the video very clear and comprehensible. I am able to understand the logic of the answering structure very easily which is useful for me in applying my answer in the future…The use of highlighting the four sub-sections of the IRAC structure enables me to grasp the idea more easily of how to structure my answer in an organized fashion." (student post, March 20, 2016, week 9, par. 208–210)

"This video shows me how to recognize the issues which are written implicitly in a judgment, aiding me to understand precedents and case judgments more readily." (student post, March 26, 2016, week 10, par. 111)

5. Students' Feedback and Reflection on Their Legal English Needs

When students discussed the usefulness of the instructional video materials, their reflections on their analytical and other academic abilities often revolved around the challenges they faced learning and using legal English (5.1.), as well as the areas in which students expressed a need for more detailed guidance from their teachers (5.2.).

5.1. Challenges in Writing Examinations, Essays, and Assignments

An important theme emerging was the challenges facing students in writing examinations within time limits, writing assignments with word limits, and in applying the taught concepts during examinations and in assignments. The students were quite reflective of the problems they encounter in developing and applying strong legal analytical skills and the way effective use of language can assist.

Managing Time and Word Constraints: Many students mentioned the usefulness of the video materials in helping them learn legal analysis and linguistic techniques to manage the time and word constraints in writing examinations and assignments.[8]

"Having word limits for writing essays, we need to summarize our ideas and arguments in a concise manner. While summarizing, we may exclude less significant issues in satisfying the word limit requirements. However, it is difficult in identifying issues according to their significance. Sometimes we may end up focusing on trivial issues while the more significant ones are left out." (student post, March 16, 2016, week 8, par. 250)

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[8] A number of students also mentioned difficulties with finding sources to support their legal analysis. For example, "Sources have to be cited in order to support an argument. However, it is not always easy to find useful sources." (student post, March 18, 2016, week 8, par. 356) and "On the other hand, most essays require wide range of sources to support our own stance. Frankly, it is difficult for me to collect useful secondary materials and apply it." (student post, March 20, 2016, week 8, par. 447).

"Apart from testing our ability on knowledge of applicable law, exams and assignments also test us on our time management. Through providing us ways to organize our answers to problem questions in a structural manner, we are able to present our arguments effectively." (student post, March 27, 2016, week 9, par. 202)

"Indeed, the foregrounded conclusion method may sometimes be difficult to apply in exams due to the strict time limit, however I believe this method is quite useful for us to answer assignment questions of which the time limit is less strict." (student post, March 29, 2016, week 9, par. 29)

"This teaches me to prioritize my time better when answering exam questions, as well as helps me cut down on the unnecessary information so that I can allocate more wordings in order to develop other crucial issues of the essay." (student post, March 16, 2016, week 9, par. 33)

Coping with Various Forms of Assessments: Students felt they could use the IRAC and foregrounded conclusion methods demonstrated in the videos to cope with the various forms of assessment they encounter in law school (e.g., examinations, essays and assignments):

"I think that the video has clearly addressed my concerns over structuring essays. I used to feel compelled to use the IRAC method to address every issue in the question. Consequently, I find myself faced with very little time to address every problem in an exam setting quite frequently. Using the brief analysis method, I can now recognize which are the more minor issues in the problem, and better organize my writing." (student post, March 16, 2016, week 9, par. 7)

"On the micro-level, the video taught me to adopt the IRAC method with flexibility. In the past, my biggest constraint is the fact that I often failed to explain all possible issues during exams as I tended to employ the IRAC method in every issues. Hence, the shortened version of IRAC is of great importance to me." (student post, March 17, 2016, week 9, par. 74)

Self-Reflection and Legal Analysis Skills: The students' review of the videos and responses to questions about these videos in the weekly online discussions allow self-reflection by students which helps to reinforce their good linguistic and analytical practices while highlighting their weaker ones:

"The video does reflect my way of answering problem questions to a large extent. Often, I do not follow the sample structure when I present my answer which one might find it unorganized..." (student post, March 20, 2016, week 9, par. 213)

"While the video has introduced a variety of ways where we can address a question, I think I am more prone to using the IRAC and the brief analysis methods, rather than the foregrounded conclusion method." (student post, March 16, 2016, week 9, par. 39)

Participating in the weekly online discussion forum also allows students to engage and share directly with each other the specific challenges they face in learning and acquiring good legal analysis skills. Students can provide advice and support to each other about developing their legal English skills:

"We share the same view that the video is clear and comprehensive in introducing the IRAC structure. Moreover, I face the same problem as you in answering the problem by employing the IRAC structure too rigidly whenever I encounter problem questions. I also agree that it is crucial to use the IRAC structure more flexibly." (student post, March 21, 2016, week 9, par. 216)

> "The identification of the issues is also a difficulty for me and I believe most students. Due to the time limit, it is often impossible for us to mention every issue deeply and comprehensively." (student post, March 15, 2016, week 8, par. 184)

5.2. Need for More Classroom Teaching Time and Teacher Feedback

It is clear from the online discussions that the students found the video materials useful even though they had already been taught the application of the IRAC technique in previous classes. However, the next student post suggests this may be due to a desire for more detailed classroom discussion about applying IRAC to a factual problem:

> "[T]he video teaches us how to present our answers in IRAC (although we have learned it in Semester A, yet we haven't learned it in such a detailed way)." (student post, March 29, 2016, week 9, par. 415)

Students indicated their concerns about the process of learning within the current structure of the law school curriculum. Some students commented on the lack of classroom time for detailed teaching, demonstration and in-depth learning of legal analysis approaches and linguistic and other techniques:[9]

> "I believe that mainly because of the lack of time, professors do not have much time to introduce us to the different ways of applying IRAC, we are still more prone into adhering straightly to the normal IRAC way. I believe that with the learning points of the video in mind, it could definitely allow our essays to be less dull. The different approaches that we learn could allow us to tackle the different situations or different questions in exams." (student post, March 17, 2016, week 9, par. 41)

Some students stated they want more opportunities for direct guidance from teachers to help them further develop their legal English and analysis skills:

> "However, I am still not sure about when IRAC structure applies or not as hypothetical cases vary in different situations." (student post, March 20, 2016, week 9, par. 211)

> "On the other hand, I want to know more about how to make short but effective introductions and conclusions as this will perfect the structure of my answer, to make it more complete." (student post, March 20, 2016, week 9, par. 187)

> "Since sample essays are hard to come by in real life, feedback from teachers regarding our mistakes would be very helpful and would certainly help us improve our writing in the future." (student post, March 23, 2016, week 9, par. 25)

This raises the potential for reform of the law school curriculum and teaching practices to provide more classroom time for intensive teaching of legal English. Such teaching practices could be employed, not only within dedicated Legal English or Legal Research and Writing courses (as was the case here), but more broadly across the law school cur-

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[9] There were a few students who found the videos quite basic – while they acknowledged that they provided a common structure to deal with problem questions in a flexible manner what they really wanted was more detailed examples to demonstrate the flexible application of IRAC and foregrounded conclusion techniques. For example, "I find the video not very useful. Although it provides a common structure for legal problem questions which should be used flexibly as emphasized, it does not give several examples to illustrate the its flexibility in depth." (student post, March 22, 2016, week 9, par. 288).

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riculum, with an integrated focus on legal analysis and communication skills provided even in so-called "black letter law" subjects. Also of importance is providing more opportunities for direct teacher feedback to students on the progressive development and refinement of their legal analysis skills (despite the teaching resource implications of doing so). It also points to the need for greater focus on developing the students' legal linguistic and analytical skills, not just in the first year or two of law school studies, but also integrated throughout the upper years of the law school curriculum and within various substantive courses as well.[10]

6. Conclusion

This collaborative interdisciplinary research project integrates both legal and linguistic expertise in order to develop digital multimedia resources to help students improve their legal writing and communication. Qualitative thematic analysis of one part of the multimedia digital resources developed – the "Quick Guide to Legal Writing" videos – indicates that these resources help students learn to manipulate legal language strategically to achieve various desired linguistic and legal reasoning effects. The students also note the value of learning these written analytical skills and techniques for their future professional careers, whether it is giving advice to lay clients in opinion letters or writing for legal professionals.

A particularly encouraging finding is the repeated references in students' feedback to the increased repertoire of organizational and linguistic choices that they became aware of through watching the videos and which allowed them to vary their writing in a range of appropriate ways. Furthermore, students have specifically recognized the value of these video materials in helping them develop strong legal writing and analysis skills for use in various assessment forms (e.g. examinations with time constraints and assignments with word count constraints).

Overall, the use of the digital multimedia resources ultimately helps students better navigate the legal discourse community they will encounter in their future academic and professional legal practice.

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[10] See examples of innovative legal research and writing curriculum reform by Hoffman (2011) who proposes a curriculum focused on raising students' linguistic awareness through rigorous discourse analysis and reflective writing in a legal context.

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