Legal English — What Is The Point?
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Abstract. English for specific purposes (ESP) still constitutes the minority of courses in the English language instruction at the Foreign Language Centre of Vytautas Magnus University. Among possible explanations are that it is costly, time consuming and an intellectually challenging specialisation process on the part of the teacher and a more complex and challenging subject for the student. Students generally lack the basic language skills necessary to benefit fully from such specific purpose classes.

This article focuses on the teaching of legal English to students of law and practicing lawyers in Lithuania. It touches upon the history of language for specific purposes, material used in the legal English classes, and the students themselves. It concludes with the case study investigating trends in Legal English classroom among students of legal English at Vytautas Magnus University. This article also deals with the levels of skill necessary for students attending legal English classes and the results such students achieve. It concludes that although the need for legal English in Lithuania is not yet realised, it needs to be, if the country wants to cooperate successfully internationally and contribute to the international and local legal environment.

While teaching legal English it has been noted that it is best to seek out help from the teachers or teacher organisations from other countries who teach language for specific purposes more widely and actively. This is because the demand for English for specific purposes is bigger in Western Europe, and teachers there subsequently have more experience in delivering the subject. Associations of English for specific purposes share a lot of information and can direct interested parties in their search for rare information on specific purpose language teaching. Observations reveal that Lithuanian teachers and students are still new to ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and need some guidance while finding and adapting the specific purpose material. Although this fact shows legal English as being a novelty in this country, it did nevertheless appear on the Lithuanian university instruction scene around the same time as it did in the rest of Europe. The difference lies only in the fact that in European countries like, for instance, Sweden, Germany and the UK there are strong teacher associations and information bodies such as TransLegal, EULETA and IATEFL SIG, which are responsible for spreading and sharing news, views and clues on teaching English for specific purposes.