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## EVALUATING EMPLOYERS' DEMANDS FOR UNIVERSITY GRADUATES' LEGAL ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN EMPLOYABILITY

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**Abstract.** *Assessing university graduates' legal English proficiency in workability is a vital activity in legal English language teaching to meet the job requirements. This quantitative empirical study investigated 35 participants from standing legal organs operating in Vietnam, using a researcher-made questionnaire to evaluate employers' requirements for school leavers, major in legal English for workability. There were seven dimensions relating to employers' requirements, namely the evaluation of legal English language skills, the prevalence of legal English language skills applied, the effective level of English language skills at workplace, the proficiency of legal English language requirement, legal English proficiency meeting employees' requirement for positions, methods of organizations evaluating the English language skills of applicants, and organization's schemes for applicants with good English proficiency. The results reveal that the employers have high opinions on using legal English at workplace, mainly reading and speaking skills. The findings indicate that employers implement a rigorous process when recruiting new graduates with legal English proficiency and formal tertiary qualifications. In addition, employers carry out a prioritized policy for employees who demonstrate their good English proficiency during their working practices. The findings would benefit employers recruiting right employees, university stakeholders adjusting their training policies, and students preparing well before graduation to satisfy employers' expectations and the society's demand accordingly.*

**Key words:** *legal English proficiency, workability, standing legal organs, university graduates, employers' expectations*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Global integration boosts the world economy to be more and more developed. Giant conglomerates span their presence everywhere without boundaries and limitations. This situation reflects that an increasingly globalized workforce demands an international language to be used for exchanging information at workplaces. As a result, the overwhelming use of

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English as a de facto working language has created significant demand for workplace-specific courses. Understanding the role and practice of English at workplace is an important concern in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Meredith, 2013). If ESP is considered as the conduit between the academic activity and practical applications, then this growing concern could bridge the gap between the practice of teaching and learning ESP at school and employers' expectations in regard to workability. Most employers are facing skill shortages and find it difficult to recruit approximately skilled graduates (Su-Hie et al. 2017; Brikena & Gezim, 2011). In this study, employers were questioned to identify key attributes that they expected when recruiting newly-graduated school leavers for employability. The results yielded that four most common attributes employers nominated were English language competency, effective communication skills, the ability to work as part of a team, and effective problem-solving skills. Among these factors, employers showed their high dissatisfaction with graduates who failed to use their legal English competence to overcome challenges at work, which suggested that employers had to concentrate their recruitment on those with relevant qualifications and a good command of English, especially using ESP for workability.

The growth in ESP practice and research has been affected by global industries and related professions (Brewer, 2013; Tevdovska, 2017; Clement & Murugavel, 2018). Legal transactions are seen as crucial determinants for ensuring the global integration favourably and successfully. Understanding employers' expectations for using legal English for any legal transaction equates with English language education to help second language law professionals operate in academic and professional contexts requiring the use of English. Actually, the far-reaching influence and practical application of ESP override other aspects of language learning. In fact, every position at workplace requires a certain level of understanding and using ESP, which is widely acknowledged without discussing at length about the necessity of ESP. When researching what legal professionals mostly need to deal with English legal language for their job requirements, similar to general English, the frequent use of spoken and written legal English is not the same. While spoken English legal genres have been paid less attention, written English legal genres have been more commonly accessed (Muravev, 2020, Northcott, 2013). Because of higher involvement in the labour market, unemployment reduction, professional development, and the opportunity to get promoted in the professional hierarchy, ESP has become an appealing attraction to many school leavers entering the world of work. However, Ranasuriya and Herath (2020) state that the student competence of English language skill fails to satisfy industry requirements. Therefore, research in ESP has contributed greatly to the development of both the comprehension and practice of legal English.

Concerning employers' needs and expectations for new graduates in terms of employability, this resource of qualified workforce plays a decisive and vital part in the global socio-economic integration. Sloka (2015) points out that employers starve to hunt qualified, motivated, and loyal staff to ensure the sustainable development of their organizations. In reality, the dominant perspective of graduate employability places emphasis on objective employment outcomes and the development of human capital to provide favourable labour market outcomes for a university graduate. When questioning what characteristics, qualities, knowledge, and skills constitute employability for graduates, most employers express their viewpoints that graduates should not only possess technical and discipline competency from their degrees, but have many skills and attributes which encompass soft skills, such as critical thinking, team-working, problem solving, managerial abilities, and communication (Lowden, 2011). Opinions about the importance of the skills

and capabilities that higher education graduates should have, foreign language skills are reported as higher requirement when employers recruit new staff (Velden et al., 2015). Soft skills such as communication, interpersonal or management skills are received a great deal of employers' concerns for graduates, especially employees' English competency to use it for daily work exchanges (Hani et al. 2017; Ilhaamie & Rosmawarni, 2020; Cheang & Yamashita, 2020).

Although there have been many studies (e.g. Clement & Murugavel, 2018; Ilhaamie & Rosmawarni, 2020; Rumalessin & Farah, 2021) investigating employers' perspectives on the importance of English competency, particularly ESP, these studies have focused on ESP in general, not specifically on subject. The paper was conceived to examine employers' viewpoints of recent graduates, major in legal English to assess whether their legal English competency meet the requirements of workability. This study basically addressed the following questions:

1. What are the employers' requirements for university graduates' legal English competency at work?
2. What are the advantageous edges for employees with a good command of legal English?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the core issues to assess employers' expectations for new graduates is very important to compromise both what new graduates have to prepare at training institutions and higher education programs to satisfy the needs of employers. Together with a fast-track global integration, employers' needs and expectations are more and more challenging for skilled and well-educated workforce to keep up with a socio-economic development which has a great influence on the research field concerning employers' requirements for new graduates.

### 2.1. Employers' expectations

The challenge of work requires employees to educate themselves to meet the requirements of the positions they take on. Generally speaking, graduates are thought the prerequisite in their soft skills as specified in the study conducted by Hani et al. (2017) who investigated the relationship between communication, interpersonal and management skills with employee productivity. They conclude that the most needed element for soft skills is communication skill, they further curtail it as its scope being too broad and concentrate mainly on English language for communication medium. Besides, they state the insufficient English fluency as primary cause of discrimination between an employer and employee regarding international scenario. Lack of soft skills, especially communication skill, has been the focus in many studies (i.e. Ilhaamie & Rosmawarni, 2020; Cheang & Yamashita, 2020; Su-hie et al., 2017). In particular, Ilhaamie and Rosmawarni (2020) conducted a qualitative research to find out employers' expectation and preference of graduates in Malaysia. They claim that the main cause of unemployability of Malaysian graduates is lack of soft skills, particularly communication skill. This is similar to the research finding of Hani et al. (2017), but they do not specify English language competency as the weakness of communication skill. Relating to soft skills, Cheang and Yamashita (2020) did a mixed-method study on work readiness, they

disclose that soft skills are regarded equally important as discipline specific knowledge and technical skills according to employers. Their study also indicates the mismatch between university students and prospective employers in that university graduates believe that getting excellent grades help them easily get recruited while employers expect their employees to possess soft skills, personal attributes, and qualities as predictors of workplace and career success. Su-Hie et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study on Malaysian employers to investigate their perspectives on the importance of English proficiency and communication skills for graduates at workplace. They discovered close relationship between the threshold level of English competence needed for developing good communication skills and the use of English language fluency for relevant communicative purposes in the workplace. They claim that good communication skills, together with a good command of English proficiency can increase graduates' employability and opportunities for career advancement.

Slova et al. (2015) carried out a mixed method study on employers' needs and expectations for qualified employees with four subjects, namely employers, teaching staff, students, and recent graduates. They suggest that prospective employees should have social competence, motivation to work, and responsibility in addition to professional skills and competence. Their research concentrates on 11 factors, particularly ability for self-contained work, plan work time, involvement, co-operation, intelligence, solidity and allegiance to company, initiative and creativity, willingness in skills improvement, computer literacy, knowledge skills, specific professional knowledge. Unfortunately, they do not include ESP in their study to contribute to the panoramic research picture of employees working in a multinational environment. In another mixed-methods study conducted by Mahbub et al. (2016) in comparing views of recent science graduates and employers, they examined 20 areas of knowledge and skills important for employability. Their research finding discloses that both employers and graduates consider generic skills as having a higher level of usefulness in workplaces compared to discipline-specific knowledge and skills. Remarkably, verbal and written skills are not highly appreciated by recent employees, whereas employers focus on these skills very much. Besides, this study does not mention English language skills, which requires recent graduates to use at their workplace.

In a large and comprehensive project commissioned by the Edge Foundation in charge of Lowden et al. (2011), they carried out a mixed-methods study to explore employers' perceptions of the employability skills of new graduates at local, national, and international level. They examined what qualities, characteristics, skills and knowledge secured recent graduates with employability. Their research results show that although employers really need new employees to gain the technical and discipline competences from their degrees, recent graduates have to prove their self-efficacy in a variety of broader skills and attributes, for example critical thinking, communication, problem solving, or team-working. Their finding also points out that the main skills and attributes employers expect from new employees are a good degree from an accredited university, work experience, participative, and their practical performance at current workplace. They, nevertheless, do not explore the requirement of English language competency with new graduates. According to the report on the employability of higher education graduates conducted by Humburg et al. (2013), they carried out research on skills enhancing graduates' possibilities to get jobs. The study results present employers' preference for recent graduates' chances to get recruited for the job ranking from the highest to the lowest, that is, professional expertise, interpersonal

skills, commercial/entrepreneurial skills, innovative/creative skills, strategic/organizational skills, and general academic skills. Surprisingly, among these skills, employers ranked general academic skills as the bottom list of the important criteria for new employees whereas new graduates strongly believe that they have to achieve good academic grades at university to demonstrate well at workplace. In particular, the result of the report reveals that foreign language skills are crucial in the interpersonal skills, but employers did not specify whether ESP or general English skills should be more emphasised. In one large-scaled survey by Cambridge English and QS (2016) carried out in 38 countries/territories and 20 different industries with 5,373 employers, the survey evinces that English language skills play a vital role for recent graduates under the view of over 95% of employers in many countries and territories where English is not used as an official language in communication, which is the basis for employees meeting ESP requirements at work.

## **2.2. Recent graduates' perspectives towards career development**

When considering how employees view the importance of English competence at workplace with the hypotheses that ESP improves job performance and yields the prospects of promotion, many studies (e.g. Clement & Murugavel, 2018; Meredith (2013); Tevdovska, 2017; Tran, 2016) have proved that these assumptions are possibly true. Clement and Murugavel (2018) conducted a research on employees of different companies in India, with the claim that the requirements of English language become more and more challenging at work due to the global market, and employees who lack adequate English language skills seem to be difficult to demonstrate their capabilities to grow professionally. Meredith (2013) investigated how employees used English, especially ESP in the workplace. The research finding stresses employees' opinions on the role and practice of English at work because a demanding, globalized workforce and the highly needed use of English as a de facto working language requires employees to be proficient in ESP for the workplace in globalized environments. Similarly, Tevdovska (2017) implemented a study enhancing employability skills in ESP context. The results indicate that new graduates recognize the essential role of using ESP at a multi-lingual environment. They expect that teaching ESP at a higher education should match the requirement and necessity of employability skills of potential employers. In other words, recent graduates feel dissatisfied with current ESP programs at universities as ESP does not meet the needs of actual practices at workplace. Interestingly, Tran (2016) evaluated the collaboration between universities and enterprises to supply the labour market with a well-qualified workforce. The finding points out the fact that based on close collaboration with well-established companies, higher education institutions are supplied with updated source of information to formulate and orient the mission statement of education settings to avail the best educational programs. Although graduates recognize the benefits of the university – enterprise collaboration, they still express their doubts on the influence of corporate cultures on higher education programs. New graduates even complain that they have a limit choice of job opportunities as a consequence of being trained to meet certain types of companies, so they do not have a chance to learn ESP at universities. The report, however, fails to reflect the detailed ESP that the companies need their employees to be proficient basing on employers' perspectives.

Additionally, Northcott (2013) states that recent graduates complain that it is challenging to understand legal English language. They should have been instructed by

legal specialists or lawyers working in standing organs while they are at universities. Besides, they stress the important role of authenticity of legal English materials which are linguist-friendly but updated for preparing school-leavers to comprehend the knowledge of legal English language. In other words, new graduates suggest that educators should reform the syllabus to make a difficult area more accessible, and pedagogical principles for legal English practitioners to succeed in their current jobs. These perspectives are, to a certain extent, in line with the research findings done by Brikena & Gezim (2011). In this study, recent graduates reflect to be fully aware of the important legal English necessity at workplace. They suppose that specific terminology deters them from fluent communication in exchanging their daily conversations in addressing legal English matters at work. In addition, they hopefully believe that their viewpoints can contribute to educational institutions with resourceful reference in redesigning and renovating the ESP curricula, especially legal English curriculum to match theory to practice. Similarly, Rumalessin and Farah (2021) conducted a mix-methods study on legal English necessity of graduates. They emphasize the needs of student access authentic legal materials relating to law cases. They also underline that to ease graduates in later work, university programs should be reformed and updated to combine student expectations of acquiring legal English knowledge with professional practices so that new employees quickly get used to applying their legal English language skills in solving their actual tasks at work. Therefore, learning legal English at university provides sufficient workability for new graduates working in environments needing ESP competency.

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1. Research design

This descriptive, empirical research was primarily designed to evaluate employers' perspectives on the requirements for university graduates' legal English proficiency in workability. 35 participants were randomly chosen, utilizing the stratified random sampling method. This was because of the impossibility for the researcher, within the constraints of time and the COVID-19 pandemic, to collect the information directly from Vietnamese law firms and legal organizations, the questionnaire was floated via active Google form in the emails within a 4-week period. The researcher's email content, together with the questionnaire instruction, explained the objectives and relevance of the study, assured their anonymity, and gave them the willingness of not participating in the study if the respondents felt inconvenient. Finally, the data was screened before using SPSS statistics application for data treatment.

#### 3.2. Participants

Among 35 respondents, the results presented that 7 participants, equivalent to 20%, worked as managers, 4 people (11.4%) were deputy managers, 2 senior investigators (5.7%) participated in this study, 5 lawyers (14.3%) expressed their stances, 3 staff or 8.6% took part in the survey, 4 heads of legal department (11.4%) returned their responses, 5 chief justices of the Provincial People's Court (14.3%) partook in the study, 5 partners (14.3%) for law firms turned in their opinions. Regarding the educational

levels, 16 participants accounting for 45.7% had tertiary diplomas, 14 people (40%) had post-graduate degrees, and 5 respondents (14.3%) gained doctoral degrees.

### 3.3. Research instrument

The study exploited the researcher-made questionnaire, which was constructed basing on factual and behavioral criteria proposed by recommended by Dornyei and Taguchi (2010). The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher, then sent to 5 experts on recruitment for the content validation. After that the questionnaire was implemented a dummy run with 7 volunteers for the validity and liability to select the items which were within the acceptable Cronbach alpha reliability estimates ( $0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$ ). The final version was again returned to 3 experts from law firms to examine and validate the liability.

### 3.4. Statistical tools

The study used the summated rating scale, commonly referred as the Likert scale, had equal attitudinal value. Thus, the quantitative data was treated using descriptive statistics. Specially, frequency count and percentage were employed to analyze the demographic information, the importance of Legal English language in organizations, required legal English language ability for employees, and the offers from organizations to support their employees with better legal English ability. Descriptive mean was used to reflect an attitude towards the issue in question, particularly the amount of senior positions in the organization with legal English ability meeting job requirements, the frequency of legal English skills carried out at work, the importance of legal English skills for the organization, such as very low (1 - 1.8), low (1.9 - 2.6), normal (2.7 - 3.4), high (3.5 - 4.2), and very high (4.3 - 5.0).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. The importance of legal English language skills

To evaluate the necessary degree of using ESP at workplace, particularly legal English skills, the results from the survey point out that the majority of the respondents ( $n = 15$ , equivalent to 43.0%) confirmed that it was important to master legal English language to implement English at work. Following this rank, an astonishing batch of surveyed people ( $n = 13$ ; accounting for 37.1%) expressed their stances that legal English language was very important to handle their daily tasks. Only 5 participants, equal to 14.3% reckoned that they thought legal English language was extremely important for recent graduates to succeed in dealing with their duties at work. Surprisingly, among two employers sharing 2.8% each, one regarded legal English skills as unimportant and the other held an opposite idea when remarking that English was the main language used in their working environments. Similar to the assessment in Meradith's research (2013), ESP is regarded as the conduit between academic research and practical applications. In legal field, it emphasizes the importance of synchronous domestic and international collective business transactions, which requires common laws to be interchanged in nature. To avoid possible awkward situations relating to law cases, legal English practitioners are those who can determine and settle down the potential problems in international co-operations (Su-Hei et al., 2017; Clement & Murugavel,

2018; Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017). From this research finding, it can be concluded that employees with high proficiency in ESP, especially legal English language skills considered as vital human resources in business activities in terms of the legal field, especially the current situation where there are more and more multinational companies and giant corporations choosing Vietnam as the melting pots for them to settle down their businesses. This research finding provides resourceful information for future graduates as they know what to prepare, not just their professions or general English, but more importantly a good command of ESP. Stakeholders, moreover, set their criteria for recruitments and have favourable policies for employees who have good educational qualifications and soft skills, especially proficient ESP employees at work. Therefore, there is an increasing demand for high-skilled workforce with a good command of ESP.

#### 4.2. The frequency of legal English practices in business activities

The need to investigate actual legal English practices is very resourceful to contribute to the overall picture of what ESP really happens at work. Table 1 presents what aspects of legal English language skills are frequently used under the view of employers' assessment. As clearly seen from Table 1, the respondents incline to acknowledge that speaking and reading skills are much more prioritized than writing or listening skills. In particular, legal English language skills are indispensable in presenting, negotiating, and discussing legal issues ( $M = 4.64$ ;  $SD = 0.36\%$ ). Reading legal documents and contracts ( $M = 3.61$ ;  $SD = .031\%$ ), together with communicating with foreign customers ( $M = 3.79$ ;  $SD = .854\%$ ) are reported high according to the current employers. For the other legal English skills, the results indicate that employers require their employees normally when translating legal documents from English to Vietnamese ( $M = 3.06$ ;  $SD = .036$ ) and vice versa ( $M = 3.09$ ;  $SD = .117\%$ ), respectively. Likewise, employers evaluate normally the following perspectives, such as drafting legal documents or contracts ( $M = 3.10$ ;  $SD = .232\%$ ), and writing legal correspondence ( $M = 3.03$ ;  $SD = .317\%$ ). Overall, the standard deviation percentage is below 1.0, which means that there is a little difference among the respondents' choices.

Table 1 The prevalence of legal English language skills applied at work

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
1. Translate legal documents from English to Vietnamese	35	3.06	.036	Normal
2. Translate legal documents from Vietnamese to English	35	3.09	.117	Normal
3. Draft legal documents, legal contracts.	35	3.10	.232	Normal
4. Read legal documents, legal contracts	35	3.61	.031	High
5. Communicate with foreign customers	35	3.79	.854	High
6. Write legal correspondence	35	3.03	.317	Normal
7. Present, negotiate, discuss legal issues	35	4.64	.036	Very high
Valid N (listwise)	35			

From the research outcomes, it is clear that employers acknowledge the forensic linguistics, which has the most influence on employees in workability, are spoken legal English genres, more attentive than written English ones (Northcott, 2013). Concerned



with legal translation, participants claim that legal language is one kind of specialized language which legally qualified translators are fully competent in this area because a substantial part of legal English skills is inherited from the nature and properties of legal English (Muravev, 2020; Su-Hei et al., 2017; Ezihaslinda, 2011). This explains why employers do not think that written and translation legal English skills are less attentive than spoken and reading legal English genres. To account for the emphasis to be placed on spoken and reading legal English abilities, it might be emphasized practical aspects of legal English in the form of socio-pragmatic competence rather than grammatical accuracy.

#### 4.3. The legal English language position in organization operation

When assessing the most important English language skills, particularly reading, writing, speaking, and listening, the results indicate that the most important English language skill is reading legal materials ( $M = 4.57$ ;  $SD = .920\%$ ), which means very high and most participants acknowledged their close choices by looking at the low standard deviation of below 1.0%. The second rank remarked by employers is speaking skill, which has the high mean (3.64) and the respondents' stance is not much different. Writing skill accounts for the third position under the view of employers ( $M = 3.17$ ;  $SD = .685\%$ ), these figures denote that the employers showed normal requirements for this skill. Surprisingly, the participants ranked listening skill ( $M = 3.13$ ;  $SD = .690$ ) as the least necessity among four micro-skills of English language. In practice, reading in English plays a noteworthy part in maintaining professional knowledge. The fact points out that English is viewed as the most popular medium of communicating information in international journals, legal contracts, and instructions. Meanwhile, speaking skill is an effective means of conveying understanding and ideas to others. The interchanging position between reading and speaking skills takes place in different territories. Reading in English becomes the most important skill in countries where English is used in non-native English-speaking countries, but speaking skill is regarded as the most essential skill where English is employed as a second language or mother tongue (Cambridge English & QS, 2016). This finding is somehow similar to the conclusion presented in the study conducted by Clement and Murugavel (2018). They claim that speaking is, among other micro-English skills, regarded as the most important skill in workplace.

Table 2 The effective level of English language skills at workplace

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
1. Reading skill (legal documents, legal reports)	35	4.57	.920	Very high
2. Writing skill (legal document, legal reports, legal correspondence)	35	3.17	.685	Normal
3. Speaking skill (consulting, negotiating, presenting in legal fields)	35	3.64	.989	High
4. Listening skill (meetings, conferences in legal fields)	35	3.13	.690	Normal
Valid N (listwise)	35			

As clearly seen from Table 2, writing and listening English skills are not as important as the aforementioned skills. Employers pay normal attention to writing and listening English skills as they suppose that their staff spend time reading English documents and expressing their thoughts using the speaking skill. Employers stress the necessity of writing English skill in certain work positions, in particular, for staff involved in research and development (Cambridge English & QS, 2016; Muravev, 2020).

#### 4.3. Employers' Legal English language requirements

To highlight the self-efficacy of employees' legal English competence meeting the requirement of their standing positions compared with the six-scaled English proficiency levels, namely elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, advanced, and proficiency. The outcomes disclose that employers generally expect their employees to have a good command of English capabilities. In particular, employers recruit recent graduates with the lowest intermediate level ( $n = 9$ ; equivalent to 25.8%), these figures are also the same as the advanced level. For the upper-intermediate level, 6 employers equal to 17% expect their new graduates to be at this level. The majority of employers ( $n = 11$ ; similar to 31.4%) hopes to hire new school-leavers with a proficient English level – the highest capability of English competency. Nowadays, large multinational companies are possibly franchised and set up their branches in many different geographical locations. Staff have to use English to exchange at work. Specially, legal English demands exact terminology to address juridical cases. It also acquires co-workers to have proficient English language skills in a professional context with realistic legal scenarios and materials to successfully accomplish their duties. This finding shares the similarities with that in the report implemented by Cambridge English & QS (2016) when it reports that 49% employers require their staff to have advanced English. However, this percentage reflects ESP in general, not specified in legal English. As suggested by Muravel (2020), employers look for new graduates who have gained their English competency ranging from intermediate to proficient levels to develop professional cross-cultural communication skills in handling legal matters at workplace.

#### 4.4. Existing employees' English proficiency

To illustrate different positions in a legal organization requiring legal English proficiency, Table 3 clearly displays the result specifying the requirements of different job titles to have a distinguished legal English fluency to successfully accomplish their challenging responsibilities.

Table 3 Legal English proficiency meeting employees' requirement for positions

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
5. Top Management	35	4.57	.829	Very high
6. Head of Department	35	3.72	.756	High
7. Legal Department	35	3.57	.903	High
8. Customer Consulting Department	35	3.59	.897	High
9. Customer Service Department	35	3.89	.897	High
Valid N (listwise)	35			

The figures point out that it is demanding to work in this sector because employees in each position must have high and very high levels of legal English competence. Moreover, as glimpsed from Table 3, the result discloses that the higher position requires more proficient legal English capabilities. In this circumstance, top management needs to have very high level of legal English competency ( $M = 4.57$ ;  $SD = .892\%$ ). One more thing, the employers also expressed their stances closely by looking at the standard deviation below 1.0%. These results are quite unique and different from other research findings relating to the acceptable levels of legal English fluency at workplace. For example, Meradith (2013) does not specify the English competence as long as employees can use their knowledge of English to do their duties. Recent graduates should take English mastery tests to demonstrate their abilities (Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017). Staff should learn specific terminology in terms of legal English language in addition to a university learning outcome English test (Brikena & Gezim, 2011). As such, top multinational companies need to set a good example to master legal English proficiency levels to meet the requirements of the companies (Clement & Murugavel, 2018).

#### **4.5. Evaluating Legal English language skills during recruitment**

To understand the process of company recruitment in regard with the evaluation of legal English language skills, it is noteworthy to examine the preliminary steps of employability for new graduates. The outcomes reveal that employers prioritize to hire recent graduates the most if seeing an applicant to study and graduate with a formal university degree major in legal English program ( $M = 4.46$ ;  $SD = .432\%$ ). The successive rank is for those who hold a bachelor of law, together with a second diploma degree in English language ( $M = 4.03$ ;  $SD = .520\%$ ). Besides, employers confess to have a normal preference with applicants who present an international English certificate to prove their English capability ( $M = 3.29$ ;  $SD = .879\%$ ), with whom agree to conduct a part or the whole interview session in English ( $M = 3.19$ ;  $SD = .917\%$ ), and who are willing to take an English test designed by in-house organization ( $M = 3.14$ ;  $SD = .945\%$ ), or a tailored English test by outside organization ( $M = 2.96$ ;  $SD = .902\%$ ). From the aforementioned data, employers understand and evaluate very high how important and sensitive legal knowledge combined with legal English language skills are, which accounts for the reasons employers give the prime favour for recent graduates who are trained and recognized by higher institutions with equivalent degrees for their efforts. So, the importance on the right and famous qualifications help recent graduates manage and succeed in their roles at workplace (Velden et al., 2015; Su-Hei et al, 2017; Cheang & Yamashita, 2020). It is advisable for employees to have qualified, professional expertise in their working positions with both good academic degrees and soft skills, specially ESP such as legal English language competence (Oliver, 2011; Rumalessin & Farah, 2021). Shockingly, employers evaluate moderately those graduates who obtain an English certificate or passing corporate English proficiency tests. This might be the fact that legal knowledge is so difficult and complicated to comprehend that it is ironically called "Legalese", that is, its complexity and sensitivity are understood by those who have an intensive and formal training specialized in it. Furthermore, the nature of legal terminology is only understandable in case someone has a good background knowledge of law. As a result, this relationship acquires the serious combination of professional academics with legal English mastery. Overall, a proficiency test cannot guarantee the demanding knowledge of legal English language under the view of employers (Brikena & Gezim, 2011; Meredith, 2013).

#### 4.6. Benefits for employees with a good command of legal English mastery

To merit and encourage employees to develop their professional careers, it is necessary to inquire employers for what benefits competent employees receive from their achievements at workplace.

Table 4 Organization's incentive schemes for employees with good English proficiency

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Faster career promotion	18	51.4	51.4	51.4
Higher salary	12	34.3	34.3	85.7
Financial support for professional training expense	3	8.6	8.6	94.3
Praise	2	5.7	5.7	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 illustrates four materialistic and spiritual rewards staff receive when they satisfy the criteria clearly set by one organization as an employee motivation. The majority of employers ( $n = 18$ , same as 51.4%) claims that personnel with a competent legal English language skill get a faster opportunity of career promotion at work. Meanwhile, 12 employers equal to 34.3% present their employees with a higher salary. The modest number of employers ( $n = 3$ , equivalent to 8.6%) awards a financial support for employees' professional training expenses. The bottom list of the incentive scheme policy is some forms of praise employers grant their staff. As glimpsed from Table 4, the support and material grants from employers serve as a huge and potential encouragement for employees to do their best to be advanced in both their specialized knowledge and legal English language aptitude, which is now regarded as an indispensable tool for integrated business transactions. In general, skills development is very necessary for increasing corporate productivity and sustainability, as well as improving working conditions and the employability of workers. Recognizing the importance of developing skilled, qualified workforce, employers wisely invest in their personnel with realistic, materialistic incentive schemes for those meeting certain criteria, not only spiritual encouragement (Brewer, 2013; Lisá et al., 2019). Seeing Table 4, it is obvious to recognize that the highest prospect of an employee with a good command of legal English language skills is fast promotion, which is in line with the perspectives of Fallatah and Syed (2018) in a critical review of Maslow's hierarchy of needs for employee motivation. The second rank is about high salary, which is consistent with many researchers (e.g. Su-Hei et al., 2017; Soka et al., 2015; Mahhbab et al., 2016). Overall, a competent legal English capability collaborated with professional law qualifications increases graduates' employability and yields opportunities for the potential career advancement at workplace.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

One of the most remarkable functions of higher education is to provide societal workforce with professional knowledge and soft skills relevant to the labour market. Although universities keep reforming their programs and syllabi which sound to feature theoretically inclined nature, the current working environments increasingly require

employees to have higher-level skills and up-to-date knowledge. This study investigated employers' expectations in the legal field to find out how employers thought about the employees' ESP ability, particularly legal English language competency in addition to their qualified degrees. The results disclose that employers apply a rigorous recruitment process in selecting and hiring new workforce. In addition, staff not only have at least one bachelor degree, preferably a bachelor of Law, but they should have a second diploma degree, major in legal English or in English. Besides, employers have a normal attitude to English certificates or corporate English competency tests as they suppose that legal English knowledge is something inquiring people to have intensive, formal education to understand the nature about it. This is the reason why the present employees who work in legal organizations must be in the intermediate English proficiency level. To encourage and promote employee motivation to develop their professional career during their work life, legal organizations invest in their workforce self-development with lavish rewarding privileges. For example, fast promotion is the most popular form of rewards for personnel meeting the requirements of the organization policies. Then, a successive merit is to give deserved staff with a higher pay. As such, the compensatory payment of the legal organizations has a washback effect on the efficiency and productivity at workplace. Employees must have an effective and realistic plan to get promoted in their career ladders.

Although the research sample size exploiting the employers' viewpoints is modest during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the cross-sectional, descriptive approach was carefully implemented to ensure the accuracy and liability of the results. This research functions as the springboard for the future studies in the relationship between ESP with academic degrees for employee professional developments. Moreover, the findings may bring back the helpful benefits for the university-enterprise collaboration to generate a qualified workforce for satisfying the needs of the global economic integration.

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