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## Foreword

Volume 7 of *ESP Across Cultures* is the first issue to be devoted to a specific theme within the world of English for Specific Purposes. The theme chosen here is ‘legal English across cultures’. In many ways this issue complements the volume that we co-edited on *Legal Discourse across Languages and Cultures* published by Peter Lang in 2010 (vol. 117 of the Linguistic Insights series edited by Maurizio Gotti). One difference between the two volumes is that all of the contributions in this special issue of *ESP Across Cultures* are concerned with legal English seen from a cross-cultural perspective, whereas three of the papers comprising the volume on *Legal Discourse across Languages and Cultures* referred to languages other than English.

Of the seven papers constituting this special issue, five are of an essentially theoretical nature, while two are more concerned with pragmatic matters.

The paper by Marina Bondi and Giuliana Diani is the first of two articles in this volume which examine English and Italian legal texts. Bondi and Diani compare the deontic use of modal auxiliaries in English and Italian legal contracts. Their quantitative overview of data on modal verbs reveals a heavy concentration of one particular deontic modal in each language – *shall* in English and *dovere* in Italian. They observe, however, that Italian texts are generally characterized by a wider range of forms and by greater variation in signals of deontic meanings than texts in English.

Olga Denti and Michela Giordano analyse from an intracultural perspective two websites providing Online Dispute Resolution which is becoming increasingly popular within the sphere of Alternative Dispute Resolution. They reveal how texts, images and symbols synergically convey both verbal and non-verbal communication, and how information technology devices exploit conventions which are peculiar to both the genre of mediation and that of online/electronic texts.

Christopher Goddard provides a detailed practical study of how to educate and train non-native speakers of English in legal contexts and how different didactic approaches need to be used according to the varying needs and expectations of different groups of learners. The results and analysis are based on the author’s wide experience in the field in Latvia at the Riga Graduate School of Law.

Shaeda Isani offers a very different dimension to the concept of legal English across cultures by examining the semiotic dialectics of legal courtroom attire, comparing the situation in England and Wales with that of the United States. She concludes that in recent years there has been an erosion of professional identity and that, even in the generally more conservative milieu of legal court wear in England and Wales, “the overall scene sometimes results in a semiotic cacophony”.

Meizhen Liao offers a comparative study of Chinese and American criminal sentencing discourse, highlighting the fact that while American judges concentrate on legal reasoning, Chinese judges tend to combine legal sentencing with some “passionate moralizing”. The author reveals how this difference can be explained by delving deep into China’s past as the millennial battle of rule of law versus rule by moral virtues continues to be played out even in today’s criminal courtrooms.

Elisa Mattiello investigates nominalization in English and Italian legal discourse. Her analysis shows that, although in Italian there is a greater tendency towards nominal style than there is in English, nominalization is a common feature of legal Italian as well as legal English. She also demonstrates how nominalization meets many of the requirements of legal writing and how “the complexity of nominalization can be viewed as a means to maintain cohesion among the members of the specialist community”.

Colin Robertson takes a practical look at the way texts are written in the European Union from the perspective of someone who has worked in the field of drafting EU texts in English for many years. He considers “the drafting context, useful preliminary information which assists a drafter, the structure of the EU act and a range of language points on particular aspects to bear in mind, including terms and expressions to avoid”, and he provides a number of suggestions on how to improve the way EU legal texts are drafted.

This brief synopsis of the papers constituting this special issue testifies to the diversity in approaches as well as in topics that exists in the field of legal English when seen from a cross-cultural perspective. We hope our readers will enjoy the selection of papers we have chosen out of the many proposals that we received. We also wish to express our thanks to a number of scholars who acted as referees. They will be duly acknowledged in a future issue of *ESP Across Cultures*.

### **The Editors of this special issue**

Maurizio Gotti  
Christopher Williams