

REVIEWS

Stanisław GOŹDŹ-ROSZKOWSKI, *Patterns of Linguistics Variation in American Legal English. A Corpus Based Study*. Łódź Studies in Language vol. 22, edited by Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Publishing House, 2011, ISBN 978-3-631-61581-2, 277 pages.

reviewed by **Aleksandra MATULEWSKA**, PhD
ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ
LABORATORY OF LEGILINGUISTICS
Al. Niepodległości 4
61-874 Poznań
aleksandra.matulewska@gmail.com

Introductory remarks

In 2011 Peter Lang published the second book on legal language and legal linguistics in the series edited by Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk *Łódź Studies in Language*. The first monograph was published in 2007 and was a collection of topically diversified papers.

General book overview

The monograph published in 2011 is written by Stanisław Goźdź-Roszkowski and is devoted to the analysis of linguistic variation patterns in American legal English. The book is composed of seven chapters with the first being the introduction and the last the conclusions. What should be emphasised here is the fact that it is one of the few works devoted to research in legal language, in which corpus-based methodology has been applied.

In the first chapter the author reveals why he has decided to investigate legal language used in seven different genres of legal texts instead of investigating legal language as such. He draws readers' attention to some important and often disregarded, aspects of legal language being the fact that stylistic, grammatical and collocation features of texts of different legal genres vary. After a brief presentation of previous research on legal language and legal linguistics mostly undertaken abroad, he directs his attention to some terminological problems concerning the differentiation between the following terms: 'register', 'genre', 'style', 'discipline', to some extent 'discourse'

(also referred to in the second chapter) and finally 'legal language'. Although the considerations are brief and not exhaustive, they provide some insight into potential problems, which may arise with their interpretation. Finally, the overview of the book is provided.

The second chapter addresses the research methods applied by the author and the corpus. The research corpus was the American Law Corpus (ALC) containing over 5,500,000 words. The ALC was composed of the following seven genres of legal texts: (i) academic journals (71 texts amounting to a total of 552,487 words), (ii) briefs (64 texts amounting to a total of 763,222 words), (iii) contracts (177 texts amounting to a total of 1,178,616 words), (iv) legislation (60 texts amounting to a total of 1,178,516 words), (v) opinions (114 texts amounting to a total of 1,182,246 words), (vi) professional articles (100 texts amounting to a total of 201,404 words), and (vii) textbooks (104 texts amounting to a total of 519,116 words). As the size of the collected corpus for each genre was different the results were standardised to make them comparable. Each document was kept as a separate file. Documents were tagged for parts of speech and semantic categories. The Biber tagger tool was used for that purpose. In order to process the corpus the Wordsmith Tools 5.0 software was used. The research methodologies were the standard corpus linguistic ones applied for analysing tagged corpora and included the following: the Key Word Analysis, the analysis of lexical bundles and Multi-Dimensional Analysis. In this study the author compared the analysed legal genre with the reference corpus composed of the other six selected legal genres to obtain results revealing features typical of that specific genre in contrast to other legal genres and not in contrast to general English.

In the third chapter the author presented vocabulary use across the selected seven legal genres. First the pertinent literature is referred to. Next the corpus research results are presented with the number of tokens and word types given for each analysed genre. The juxtaposition of high frequency words (specifically verbs) including words occurring >200 times per million words is included with words occurring over 500 and over 1000 times per million marked in the table (pp. 62-63). Additionally, the verbs occurring with high frequencies in a few genres were also marked. Goźdz-Roszkowski assigns excerpted keywords to categories, which he has created for each genre for the purpose of more in-depth analysis (pp. 65-66). The author provides a characteristic of each selected genre by focusing on detected legal and general language keywords classified into listed functional categories. The discussed results of the research are illustrated with 86 examples on (pp.66-105).

Chapter four concentrates on multi-word patterns in legal English. The author concentrates on the distribution and functions of multi-word expression in the seven analysed text genres. After discussing the applied methodology, the overall distribution of linguistics units, called lexical bundles (p. 111) and high-frequency lexical bundles (p. 112) broken into the genres in question were then juxtaposed in two tables. Then, having analysed the results, the lexical bundles are divided into nine structural categories, each of which is illustrated with examples. The proportional breakdown of lexical bundles is provided across those nine major structural categories (pp. 114-115) and compared. Next, the author discussed the following types of legal bundles in more

detail: (i) legal reference ones (temporal ones, location ones, attributive ones, participative ones, institutional ones, terminological ones and procedure-related ones), (ii) text-oriented ones (causative/resultant ones, condition ones, clarification/topic elaboration ones, focus ones, framing ones, structuring ones and transition ones) and lastly (iii) stance ones. The above-listed three categories of bundles are illustrated with 72 examples from the analysed corpus.

In chapter five the author focuses on multi-dimensional variation among disciplines (law, history and ecology) and selected genres. He analyses the features of legal genres with reference to five dimensions being (i) involved and informational production, (ii) narrative and non-narrative discourse, (iii) explicit and situation-dependent reference, (iv) over-expression of persuasion/argumentation and finally (v) impersonal and personal style. The results provide some quantitative information on the linguistic composition of the discourse.

Chapter six touches upon multi-dimensional patterns of variation across legal genres in respect to three dimensions. The research provides some insight into the co-occurrence of linguistic features in analysed legal genres. The conclusions drawn are that legal discourse is an extremely complex phenomenon, which actually verifies the thesis put forward at the very beginning of the book that it is more appropriate to talk about legal language of a given legal genre rather than about legal language as a whole.

Chapter seven brings the book to a conclusion.

Editorial problems

In fact the editing is far from perfect. This is a critical remark addressed to the publishing house rather than the author. There are numerous problems with text formatting. Although they do not affect the overall quality of the research results presented and do not affect the comprehensibility of the book, they are slightly annoying and indicate the lack of final technical revision of the book. The second edition of the book would gain from the removal of these technical deficiencies. They include unnecessarily bolded commas, unnecessarily italicized commas, grammatical problems: 'might to expect', lack of space separating words, unnecessary space after opening brackets, not uniform formatting of 'et al.' as well as clumsily formatted tables (especially on pages 47-48, 49, 59 and 65). However, the editing does not diminish the value of the research results discussed in the book.

Final remarks

In general, the book provides a new and refreshing insight into research on legal language variation with reference to American English. As far as chapter one and three are concerned it should be stressed here that the literature discussed is by no means exhaustive. The author fails to provide some insight into publications devoted to legal language, legal linguistics and legal English published especially in Eastern Europe and Asia just to mention the monographs of Yankova (2004) and Malinowski (2006). The book by Galdia (2009) titled *Legal linguistics* also has not been included. The typology of legal languages provided by Zieliński (1999) is also among those ignored despite the

fact that it is a valuable extension of Wróblewski's typology. Additionally, when discussing the Polish term coined by Pieńkos *jusryslingwistyka*, the author has failed to point out that the term is incorrectly coined. On the other hand, in the light of the information flood one witnesses today, one can hardly expect any author to discuss all publications in the field and it is understandable that a selection is offered. To sum up, the author is a trailblazer in the corpus linguistic studies of legal genres and as this research methodology is currently becoming more and more important there is no denying that he has paved the way for new developments in the field.

Bibliography

- Galdia, Marcus. 2009. *Legal Linguistics*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Publishing House.
- Malinowski, Andrzej. 2006. *Polski język prawny*. Warszawa: LexisNexis.
- Yankova, Diana. 2004. *Statutory Provisions in English and Bulgarian*. Sofia: Tip-Top Press.
- Zieliński, Maciej. 1999. Języki prawne i prawnicze. In Pisarek Walery (ed.), *Polszczyzna 2000. Orędzie o stanie języka na przełomie tysiącleci*. Kraków: Ośrodek Badań Prawoznawczych. Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 75-96.