# Enhancing Legal English Skills for Law Students through Simulation-based Activities

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**Abstract.** Legal English, a sub-type of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), is in demand for legal practitioners in a new area of global integration. Teaching legal English has been seen as a complicated yet interesting process due to its complex features (Kamolidinovna, 2021). Consequently, several modern and innovative teaching methods are proposed to facilitate students to strengthen their legal English skills. This empirical paper focalizes on law students' viewpoints on the benefits of Simulation-based Activities (SbAs) in the legal English course; explores the efficiency of SbAs on students' legal English aspects development; at the same time, it also reveals students' obstacles when partaking in such activities. In order to achieve these aims, the study made use of a mixed-research approach with the assistance of the data collection instruments, namely survey questionnaires, interviews, paper-based tests and performance-based tests. The results revealed that the participants expressed the favorable perspectives towards the significance of SbAs in their legal English skills enhancement shown through high Mean values ($M \geq 3.40$). Also, integrating SbAs into teaching legal English brought about positive effects on students' motivation, critical thinking, research and other soft skills despite a number of obstacles during the application process. Additionally, the values Sig.2-tailed tests of all variables indicate the statistical difference in students' performance of the control and treatment groups. Accordingly, SbAs are highly recommended to effectively instruct learners to fulfill their legal English course properly.

**Keywords:** Legal English skills; Simulation-based Activities (SbAs); efficiency; law students

## 1. Introduction
Due to globalization, today's evolving tertiary education aims to equip students with high demand of specialized knowledge together with English competence as a professional requirement. This goal may be achieved through new learning and teaching approach, facilitating their interaction and developing their critical thinking rather than merely absorbing information from traditional lecturers (Archer & Miller 2011; Ramsden, 2003; Shellman &Turan, 2006). Undeniably,

acquiring English is not only a socio-cultural necessity but a cross-disciplinary phenomenon, as well (Bagchi, 2021). In case of law education, providing students with adequate legal English competence is considered as one of the main objectives determined by the standard of language proficiency required by legal profession (Mykytiuk, 2013). Specifically, it serves to train students' skills to use the English legal language in a professional manner (Belcher, 2004). In other words, legal English competence requires learners and legal practitioners to be proficient in every aspect of language, ranging from the use of words, phrases, sentences, to discourses functioning in the legal fields in legal writing and oral practice. Therefore, developing innovative pedagogical practices in teaching legal English as an element of applied English language teaching has gained a huge attention from educators and researchers (Bagchi, 2021). One of such innovative practices refers to Simulation-based Activities, also known as role-playing, has been researched and applied in law schools. Simulation-based Activities may be in the form of lawyer-client interview to solve problems or simulations of court proceedings, that is, moot courts and mock trials. The prior activity is one of the most common techniques in legal English classes (Philips, 2012), whereas Knerr, Sommerman, & Rogers (2001) assert that the latter ones have been applied as a popular form of instruction in content class in law schools (Asal & Blake, 2006; Barranowski & Weir, 2015). It is generally held in legal education literature that such simulation activities are deemed to be constructive due to its fostering learners' motivation, encouragement as well as providing them with real-life opportunities to practice legal reasoning and advocacy skills for later legal professional (Barranowski & Weir, 2015; Shellman & Turan 2006). In legal education, in Vietnam, Simulation-based Activities have been engaged in both law and legal English courses as innovative teaching pedagogies. Yet, the fact is that integrating role-playing, for example, a moot court or mock trial is such a challenging task as it requires great effort from learners and lecturers. Consequently, in the literature, a number of research focuses on the either learners' and lecturers' perspectives on the use of simulation activities or its efficacy in law content settings (Edward F. Kammerer, 2018; Gates, 2013; Knerr et al., 2001; Maranville, 2001). Hardly does empirical research exist to constructively address the stakeholders' views as well as the benefits of Simulation-based Activities to law students' legal English proficiency. Therefore, this research is an attempt to clarify the efficiency of such activities on law students' legal English skills in the academic year 2022–2023 at a higher education institution in Vietnam. Accordingly, two questions were formulated to determine the research focus:

1.      What are law students' perceptions of the magnitude of Simulation-based Activities in the legal English courses?

2.      How do simulation-based activities affect students' legal English proficiency?

## 2. Literature Review
### 2.1. Teaching/ learning Legal English
Concerning ESP area, teaching English in context is more concentrated than merely teaching grammatical and lexical English language. The ESP prime focus

is that English is taught integratedly into a subject matter. In point of fact, ESP teaching requires the combination between the subject matter and English language teaching. Such integration is highly encouraging as learners are competent in adopting the vocabulary and structures learnt in a meaningful context in their majors. In case of legal English, a specialized language in the law fields, is basically used by legal professionals such as, inter alia, lawyers; judges; prosecutors in their work (Goga-Vigaru, 2015). Northcott (2013) interprets the variations of the term legal English as English for General Legal Purposes (EGLP); English for Academic Legal Purposes (EALP); or English for Occupational Legal Purpose (EOLP). In either variation, legal English belongs to a sub-branch of ESP (Bagchi, 2021).

Clearly, law has its own complexity, calling for more effort from learners rather than other areas to acquire knowledge. Moreover, where English is used in legal fields, the challenge becomes greater not only for lay persons, but also for legal practitioners due to its complicated features. Undoubtedly, in order to master legal English, learners need to hold both good basic general English skills, and legal background knowledge (Nhac, 2021; Nhac, 2022; Saliu, 2013; Kamolidinovna, 2021). It can be seen that the modern approach of teaching ESP entails the development of teaching materials, innovative teaching pedagogy leading to the acquisition of knowledge and language, and the improvement of creative, cognitive capacities of each student in a professional orientation (Kamolidinovna, 2021). Accordingly, in legal English courses, the instructors' roles are to provide and guide learners with knowledge of every aspect of language, legal writing, and oral practice functioning in the legal fields through the authentic materials in the form of provisions, or precedents. Simultaneously, fostering learners' motivation through real-life opportunities to practice legal reasoning and advocacy skills for later legal professional is extremely necessitated (Barranowski & Weir, 2015; McCarthy 2014; Shellman & Turan 2006). Surprisingly, despite all these pertinent issues, there is few documented research on teaching legal English innovatively compared with other ESP dimensions. On the basis of this idea, the application of Simulation-based Activities as an interactive method of teaching legal English has been researched and utilized.

## 2.2. Simulation-based activities as a teaching method
*Simulation and Role-play*
Simulation refers to the imitation of real-world activities, which aims to bestow an exposure to the real world as close as possible. As an approach used in the classroom, simulation is an experiential instructional strategy to replicate for-real incidents, issues, procedures, or skills to produce desirable outcomes (Jones & Barrett, 2017). Understandably, the term "simulation-based activities" are interpreted as activities designed to engage students directly with the information or the skills being learned in a simulated authentic challenge (Frasson & Blanchard, 2012).

 In language teaching pedagogy, stakeholders are more familiar with the term "role-play" in which learners assume different roles, participating actively in the learning process. Russell and Shepherd (2010) state that experiential learning involves role-plays and simulations. Actually, simulations and role-plays are

sometimes used interchangeably, yet there is a subtle difference between them. While simulations can embody role play, leading to the term "role-playing simulation", role-playing focuses more on the intercommunication between the characters; in contrast, a simulation generally aims to provide learners with opportunities for problem-solving or issue-addressing. Despite such distinction, in the scope of this study, the terms "role play activities" and "simulation-based activities" are understood in the same dimension as they both refer to an approach enabling students to practice in definite contexts, which are considered to be effective in acquiring expected knowledge.

According to Mykytiuk (2013), in legal English lessons, Simulation-based Activities or role-plays can be classified into different categories depending on its purposes. Mini role-plays as a practice activity for real-life situations can be applied in any periods during the course. For the aim of formative assessment to evaluate learners' progress, simulation role-plays are likely to be utilized after several lessons on the same topic or as an end-of-term project. Simulation-based activities could be in either form (Mykytiuk, 2013; Philips, 2012), as follows:

*Problem solving/Lawyer-Client interview/a swappy role-play*: Such activity involves the pair-work of students who take turn playing the roles of a lawyer and a claimant/defendant. The student, acting as a prospective lawyer, is presented with a given set of facts, followed by the instruction, "advise the claimant/defendant". The problem questions raised by the claimant/defendant may be numerous (Philips, 2012).

*A Parliament debate*: In this activity, students are required to work in groups of 4 to discuss a problem in the limited time (that is, for 5 minutes), among whom, one is proposer; one acts as an opposer, one as the speaker of Parliament and one as a time-keeper.

*Political nightmares role play*: Students are divided in a group of journalists and a group of politicians (e.g., the Minister). They conduct an interview on arguing points and comment on the arguments presented.

*Consultancy presentation*: Students, working in groups of 4 or 5, act as are legal consultants for a company. Their duties are to deliver a "cutting-edge" presentation on the firm's findings to the client while the rest of the class play the role of the "clients" who may ask questions during the presentation.

*Panel discussion/forum/ talk show*: Students divided in the group, take on the different roles to participate in a panel discussion/forum or talk-show which is directed by a moderator.

*A Mock trial*: Each student is provided with a case summary and is assigned a role (that is, a judge, a lawyer, a witness) to conduct a simulated court trial using actual testimony by witnesses, cross-examination, or the presentation of evidence. This activity requires students to prepare arguments, discuss their views with other members.

*A Moot court*: It is a simulated appellate oral argument in the imaginary setting law court (Ringel, 2004; Snape & Watt 2005), in which learners are divided into two teams presenting their respective arguments and answering the questions posed by a judge panel. A round of rebuttal allows either team to refute

arguments made by the opposite side with logical reasoning. Unlike a mock trial, a moot court does not include testimony or the presentation of evidence, instead, oral argument is focused on the application of the law (Edward, F. K., 2018).

## 2.3. Efficacy of simulation-based activities in teaching and learning process

Simulation and role-play, as a teaching method, has attracted interests from scholars and educators for the past decades. In either dimension, simulation and role-play, providing students an opportunity to partake in communicative activities are considered to be effective in inspiring the learners' interests, encouraging critical thinking, creativity and simultaneously making the language acquisition efficient (Egmnazarova, 2021). Philips (2012) conducting an experimental research on the Simulation-based Activities in the form of gamification indicates that all the members in the treatment group demonstrate better performance in terms of vocabulary, speaking, listening and use of English. Such findings are in line with other studies in the literature (i.e., Kostikova, Holubnycha, Shchokina, Soroka, Budianska, & Marykivska, 2019). Not only do academic skills develop, but also students' actual knowledge integrated in experiential contexts such as interviewing skills, practical advice-giving is focused, which productively engages the students in the learning process. Moreover, since simulation-based activities basically involve the co-operation between the learners, a wide range of "soft" skills, for example, group-work, organization and communication skills, are naturally fostered (Philips, 2012). It is emphasized that by using role-play, students are able to hear, see, act the situation, hence, increasing their comprehension and coming up with new ideas. Furthermore, since students are autonomous in exploring their activities, they would be more flexible and inspired to perform their role (Amirbayeva, 2021; Weidman & Coombs, 2016;). Shariff, Ghanizadeh, & Jahedizadeh (2017) sum up several main advantages of simulations in terms of raising students' interest and motivation, making the materials more practical when compared to the traditional education approach, and experimenting new ideas that education lacks.

In case of legal education in general and legal English courses for law students in particular, Amirbayeva (2021) confirms that role-playing assists learners in enhancing the acquisition of legal English vocabulary through the act of researching, and reading the cases. The study also reveals that the language in the role-play activities in the courtroom entails legal English jargons drawing students' attention to the retention of the lexical aspects as well as its appropriate use, at the same time improving their listening and speaking skills by playing scenes. Moreover, according to Mykytiuk (2013), a simulation activity in the form of a legal trial role-play in legal English classes is beneficial for students to nurture their language of oral advocacy relating to the enhancement of legalese, "persuasive arguments and argumentation strategies". (Mykytiuk, 2013, p. 223). Sharing similar findings, Zarik and Cecille (2003) indicate that the moot court activity provides opportunities for students to rehearse advocacy skills by drafting legal arguments and other relevant documents to orally argue before the panel of judges. As a result, the students' confidence in public speaking, logical argument, legal writing and problem-solving skills develops,

which is vital to legal practitioners (Whinery, 1955; MacLeod, 1963; D'Amato, 1987; Verner, n.d.). Also, the support of communicative techniques in such teaching pedagogy promotes the interaction between the learners, hence raising their learning motivation (Daly & Higgns, 2011; Mykytiuk, 2013).

Overall, Simulation-based Activities are a form of interactive education that brings learning to life, enhancing students' language skills, interpersonal and communication skills as well as developing their critical thinking, decision making, problem solving and assertiveness skills (Mykytiuk, 2013; Turgunboy, 2022). In other words, such activities are considered as the effective pedagogy of professional legal English communicative teaching.

## 3. Research Method
### 3.1. Participants
The participants to this research were 63 law juniors enrolled in an advanced legal English course at a Law University in Vietnam, of whom there were 25 boys (39.7 %) and 38 (60.3 %) girls. Their general English proficiency level is between B1 and B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages on the basis of placement test results in order to meet required conditions for the participation in the course. It is to be noted that at the time of partake in this research, they had completed three basic legal English courses and were learning specialized law subjects.

A total of 63 students were divided into the experimental group (33) and the control group (30) based on the class assigned by the school administrator. Due to the approximate similarity in the number of the participants in each group, the sample size was deemed reasonable in the study.

### 3.2. Data Collection Instruments
In order to achieve the objective of the research, questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and tests were utilized to collect primary data.

*Survey questionnaires:* The survey questionnaire was deemed to ensure the involvement of the number of participants as expected, as well as making the process of collecting data easier. The survey questionnaire was constructed by the researcher based on theoretical framework of the previous literature and the goal of this current research. The questionnaire was made up of 2 parts, one of which seeks background information of the participants. Part 2 consists of 16 statements aiming to clarify students' views on the significance of Simulation-based Activities application in legal English classes through the opinion-based questions using 5 Likert scales: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly agree.

*Interview:* For deeper understanding of the phenomenon, semi-structured interview was added as an supplementary instrument to intensively investigate learners' evaluation. Two questions were set to interview students about the obstacles and the potentiality of Simulation-based Activities application in enhancing legal English proficiency among law students in Vietnam.

*Tests:* To measure students' development in legal English aspects, paper-based tests in the form of TOLES (Test of Legal English Skills) were constructed to

assess learners' language skills in terms of legal vocabulary, reading, listening, writing skills together with end-of-term role-play performance tests constructed to evaluate learners' presentation and oral argument skills.

### 3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure was carried out during the course duration consisting of 15 weeks for 60 periods. As noted, 63 students partaking in the legal English courses were randomly assigned to control and experimental groups. The main course-book in both classes was International Legal English by the University of Cambridge. In the control class, traditional teaching method was applied with the focus paper-based language tasks designed in the legal English course-book. In the experimental class, students were instructed in a blended teaching approach with the support of the same course-book as the control class, together with the integration of Simulation-based Activities. Notably, both English language and law lecturers were in charge of teaching both classes.

Stage 1: A paper-based pretest in the form of TOLES was mounted to measure legal learners' legal English language knowledge (vocabulary, reading, listening and writing skills) of the control and experimental classes before the application of Simulation-based Activities.

Stage 2: Integrating two types of Simulation-based Activities in the form of mini role-play problem solving/ client-lawyer interview for consultancy and moot court activity over the course of the experimental class. The mini role-play was created as communicative activity every week for learners to act as a lawyer and client/ claimant/ defendant whereas the latter was designed as a project three times during a course, after several lessons in the same law fields.

Procedures for applying mini role-play in each lesson was adapted from mini role-play: swappy role-play (Mykytiuk, 2013; Philips, 2012).

Procedures for applying moot court activity:

For each moot court activity, a case referred to as a legal problem was prepared for students working in groups. It should be noted that the case assigned to students for moot court was chosen by a Law lecturer taking part in teaching legal English course. Students, then, exploited the facts of the problem, and further research, to build legal arguments for one or more sides of the problem, which was firstly done in a written brief. Accordingly, students were required to present legal arguments before a panel of three qualified judges (including two English language instructors, and one law lecture), who graded their written documents and oral performances, as well.

Stage 3: Posttests were comprised of paper-based tests and role-play performance-based tests. The prior test aimed to evaluate the development of the participants' legal English knowledge and skills, including vocabulary, reading, listening and writing tests. The later engaged students in performance-based tests in the legal case to solve problems. Within a limited time, learners were required to present the solutions to the legal problem, making use of the presentation and oral argument skills to support their views. The results of these two tests were evaluated by the lecturers and the judges to make a comparison

between students' performance involved in the two classes.

Stage 4: The surveys and interviews were conducted to explore the participants' views on the noteworthiness of Simulated-based Activities application in legal English classes at the end of the course.

Notably, the printed survey questionnaires and interviews were carried out directly in the legal English classroom. The in-depth interview was conducted with 11 participants in their mother tongue to ensure the clarity with the assistance of audio recording for later analysis.

### 3.4. Data analysis
The quantitative data from the survey questionnaires were analyzed with the support of descriptive statistics IBM SPSS 26.0 software. To examine the satisfactory reliability of the dependent variables, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was utilized. A l s o , a frequency test was applied so as to determine the significance of simulation-based activities in the legal English course. Specifically, a paired-sample T-test was implemented to assess the effects of Simulation-based Activities on students' legal English proficiency between experimental and control classes.

*Cronbach's Alpha and EFA*
The reliability data analysis process initiated with Cronbach's alpha value of the variables in the questionnaires at 0.81 (>0.7) on average, indicating the reliability of the scale for the data treatment (Carmines & Zeller, 1979; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). In the case of EFA, the KMO value is >0.7, which illustrated the suitability and sufficiency of the correlation coefficient between the variables and the partial variables (Hair et al., 2017; Pillai & Rjumohan, 2000). Such statistics constituted a good uni-dimensionality for variables to assure proper data treatment for the research questions.

To clarify the participants' views on the significance of simulation-based activities application, descriptive analysis tool was utilized to determine mean and standard deviation values, using Likert's scale: (1.0 - 1.79) very low, (1.8 - 2.59) low, (2.6 -3.39) neutral, (3.4 - 4.19) high, and (4.2 - 5.0) very high. The qualitative data concerning students' evaluation on the potentiality of simulation-based activities in improving their legal English were treated in the form of quotations or sayings for intensive clarification.

### 4. Results and Discussion
### 4.1. Results
*Law Students' Views on the Benefits of Simulation-based Activities (SbAs) in the legal English Course*
As glimpsed from Table 1, the results indicate that the benefits of simulation-based activities (SbAs) in the legal English course gained a high rate of approval among students. Notably, the majority of the participants highly appreciated that SbAs are useful for enhancing their legal English lexical resources (i.e., legal English terms, collocations, archaic words, etc.,) (M = 4.23, SD = .678). Following this tendency, the significance of SbAs is illustrated in reinforcing students' legal knowledge with the high mean (M=4.03; SD=.926). Mean score

also strengthens the participants' satisfaction of the SbAs in fostering advocacy skills and oral arguments (M=3.72; SD=.767) Successively, the students' positive evaluation of SbAs is conveyed in reinforcing students' legal English writing/drafting skills (M=3.69; SD=.981), Developing students' problem-solving skills (M=3.65; SD=.757), Enhancing students' presentation skills (M=3.61; SD=.856), Developing students' legal English reading skills (3.56; SD=.824) Enhancing interaction among students (M=3.58; SD=.891), Developing students' research skills (M=3.57; SD=1.026, Improving group-work/ pair-work skills (M=3.52; SD=.826), Boosting critical thinking skills (M=3.47;SD=.828). Reinforcing students' appropriate use of legal language in a simulated case (M=3.42; SD=.735), Improving communication skills (M=3.41; SD=.891), with all mean values above 3.4. Regarding the benefits of SbAs in improving legal English listening skills and inspiring collaboration and cooperation, the surveyed students expressed their neutral viewpoint with the average mean score of 2.97 (SD=.796) and 3.02 (SD=.794), respectively.

**Table 1. Students' views on the benefits of simulation-based activities**

| No | Items | Mean | SD | Level |
|----|-------|------|-----|-------|
| 1. | Enhancing students' legal English lexical resources (legal English terms, collocations, archaic words, etc.,) | 4.23 | .678 | Very high |
| 2. | Reinforcing students' appropriate use of legal language in a simulated case | 3.42 | .735 | high |
| 3. | Developing students' legal English reading skills | 3.56 | .824 | high |
| 4. | Improving students' legal English listening skills | 3.02 | .794 | moderate |
| 5. | Enhancing students' presentation skills | 3.61 | .856 | high |
| 6. | Reinforcing students' legal English writing/drafting skills | 3.69 | .981 | high |
| 7. | Fostering students' advocacy skills/oral arguments | 3.72 | .767 | high |
| 8. | Promoting students' motivation and interest in learning legal English | 3.53 | .933 | high |
| 9. | Boosting critical thinking skills | 3.47 | .828 | high |
| 10. | Developing students' problem-solving skills | 3.65 | .757 | high |
| 11. | Reinforcing students' legal knowledge | 4.03 | .926 | high |
| 12. | Developing students' research skills | 3.57 | 1.026 | high |
| 13. | Improving communication skills | 3.41 | .891 | high |
| 14. | Inspiring collaboration and cooperation | 2.97 | .796 | moderate |
| 15. | Improving group-work/ pair-work skills | 3.52 | .826 | high |
| 16. | Enhancing interaction among students | 3.58 | .891 | high |

The satisfaction of the participants in the experimental groups on the blended approach with integration of simulation-based activities compared with the traditional teaching method they had been instructed through basic legal English courses was revealed more clearly in the Table 2.

**Table 2. Students' satisfaction simulation-based activities in comparison with traditional teaching approach**

| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | Blended approach with the integration of Simulation-based activities | 3,97 | 33 | 0,874 | 0,082 |
| | Traditional teaching approach | 2,62 | 33 | 0,857 | 0,077 |

Table 2 illustrated that SbAs received at a high rate of contentment with M=3.99 and SD =0.874, meanwhile the traditional teaching approach reached a lower rate of agreement (M=2.62 SD =0.857). This confirmed that the participants held their optimistic expectations on the new teaching and learning model application and feasibility. In other words, students' preference for the considerable benefits of SbAs were affirmed in the result of qualitative data analysis.

Specifically, most interviewees highly appreciated the significance of SbAs in empowering their legal English knowledge concerning lexical resources, appropriate language use in the legal context. K.M. affirmed:

> "A lot of legal terms can be learned from the course-book, yet, actually, the involvement in such activities gives me chances to experience words in its proper setting, which makes my legal vocabulary acquisition much more impressive. I know how to collocate words in simulated cases. Moreover, through reading and researching case information, lexical legal English resources is deeply enhanced."

Sharing similar points of view, N.L. expressed:

> "Being assigned a role as a counsel giving legal advice to my client forces me to read and study related documents, which not only helps develop my legal terms but also my reading and researching skills. Now, I do not feel overloaded when dealing with a case. Working out the problem is much easier and more realistic in a simulated activity."

Likewise, the majority of the interviewed participants acknowledged that they experienced meaningful SbAs in reinforcing their legal specialized knowledge in legal English, simultaneously fostering their oral skills. T.D., another student reported:

> "SbAs provide me a practical application of how law works. Undeniably, considering the legal implication from both sides of an argument is instructive. Notably, it gave me an understanding of how to build legal argument, how to present and defend the case. Instructors' comment on brief written documents before presenting legal arguments in front of panel of judges is extremely favorable as my mistakes/ errors can be realized and edited. It is clear that law and English should not be taught separate as such integration has helped me to get a better view of the

*legal aspects and its correlation to the English language, may not be found in traditional learning class."*

As regards the emergence of "soft" skills, learners, who remark that they empowered their communication skills through the interaction with teammates or partners, obtain great deal of satisfaction from SbAs application. The interviewees also shared their views on the strength of cooperation in dealing with the case, boosting their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Y.N. held that:

*"Engaging moot court activity is great in exploring the area of law in the practical manner with your partners. It makes the lesson more stimulating, exciting and interesting. The interaction between students provides a unique environment for learning. I can learn a lot from my friends in the use of language, their confidence, even their errors."*

With respect to the feasibility of SbAs in legal English classes, the students noted down several challenges aside from benefits. H.D. manifested:

*"It cannot be denied that SbAs are useful in developing my legal English competence, yet sometimes I find it hard to understand the case written in English. I have to spend much time researching the case to construct a cohesive legal argument.*

*It would be a tough task for learners with low level of English and lack of legal knowledge as it requires the practical of the study materials. Without the sufficient language and specialized knowledge, it may produce counter-effect (G.B added)."*

Additionally, time management in oral presentation, lack of confidence and distinctive English proficiency level constituted other obstacles in conducting SbAs. Despite this, most students expressed their desire in being provided more opportunities to put themselves into hands-on learning with a variety of types of SbAs.

*"SbAs in learning legal English would be much harder to experience than pure vocabulary exercises, or merely an essay or presentation work, however, through swappy role-play, moot courts I could acquire, reinforce both legal English aspects and apply law knowledge into simulated cases. Acting a role in other forms, i.e mock trials, a debate, would be also be favorable and valuable to us (Q.A)."*

### The influence of simulation-based activities on learners' legal English skills

**Table 3. Legal English skills in control and experimental classes**

| | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig.(2-tailed)) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| Mean | | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Lexical resources | .823 | 1.056 | .134 | 1.091 | .546 | 6.057 | 60 | .000 |
| Reading | .672 | 1.163 | .149 | .971 | .374 | 4.506 | 60 | .000 |
| Writing | .852 | 1.108 | .142 | 1.135 | .565 | 6.008 | 60 | .000 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Listening | | .197 | 1.195 | .153 | .503 | .109 | 1.268 | 60 | .004 |
| Speaking/ Oral argument/ problem solving | Oral cohesive argument | 1.214 | 1.185 | .151 | 1.518 | .712 | 7.997 | 60 | ,000 |
| | fluency | 1.197 | 1.077 | .138 | 1.473 | .921 | 8.676 | 60 | .000 |
| | accuracy | .508 | 1.135 | .145 | .799 | .218 | 3.498 | 60 | .001 |

As demonstrated from Table 3, the values Sig. 2-tailed tests of all variables are less than 0.05, indicating that students' performance in the control and experimental groups differs in all legal English aspects including: lexical resources, reading, writing, listening and speaking/ oral argument skills. Obviously, the clearest distinction is seen in the improvement in lexical resources (legal English terms, archaic terms, collocation, etc.,) (1,091 higher and 0.546); oral cohesive argument of speaking skills (1,518 higher and 0.712 lower); and writing skills (legal writing/ legal drafting) (1,135 higher and 0.565 lower). Conversely, there was not much difference in the listening test score of the two classes. In other words, students in the control and experimental classes were similarly competent in listening skills. However, it is clear that learners in the control class had few chances of acting a role in a simulated activity during the course, thus their speaking skills including oral cohesive argument, their fluency and accuracy of using legal English were much worse than those in the experimental class.

### 4.2. Discussions
Overall, law students in the experimental classes expressed their strong preference as well as their satisfaction for the application of SbAs in the legal English course by highly acknowledging its significance. Additionally, the difference in the tests' score between experimental group and the control group in illustrated the efficiency of SbAs. Such findings are in line with previous studies in the literature.

Specifically, the majority of the participants acknowledged that SbAs are beneficial in enhancing their language skills, including vocabulary, use of English, and reading skills. This finding is compatible with that in other previous studies (Amirbayeva, 2021; Bachi, 2021; Kostikova et al., 2019; Sharin, 2016). In a simulated environment, learners learn the technical aspect of the legal language faster and retain better (Bachi, 2021). One contrastive finding in this study concerns listening skills, which experienced little improvement from the learners whereas Amirbayeva's research (2021) revealed the advance of their listening skills. Notably, SbAs applications are effective in not only fostering students' language of oral advocacy but also their confidence in orally arguing before a judge panel. This result is in alignment with that in other studies (Mykytiuk, 2013; Zarik & Cecille, 2003; Jones & Barrett, 2017). Specially, Mykytiuk (2013) denoted that law students' advocacy skills are likely to improve when they are provided with training in oral presentations in the such activities as role-playing between a client and a lawyer. Verner (n.d) expresses that immersing students into the mock-trials offers them the opportunity to build and enhance their confidence in public speaking and logical thinking. Learners, therefore, enjoy such a purposeful and unforgettable involvement. Sharing the

similar findings, in this current study, the participants admitted being drawn attention to the use of legal jargon and the way to persuade or argue in simulated cases, which helps them improve their oral advocacy.

Also, the result regarding the learners' motivations in legal English courses with the integration of SbAs revealed congruence with studies by Daly & Higgns, 2011; Shariff, et al., 2017; Jones & Barrett, 2017; Kostikova et al., 2019), in which learners showed more interest in lessons than traditional methods. Kostikova et al., (2019) highlighted role-play games bring about worthwhile influence on learners' incentives and inspiration leading to the advancement of language skills. It is no doubt that when acting in a simulated situation, learners are required to be devoted to researching, preparing and discussing the cases with other team members, which is much more valuable than handling the aforementioned alone. Additionally, legal writing or legal drafting skills has been confirmed to improve among students in the experimental classes, who expressed the efficiency of teachers' comments on their written brief argument, and indicated in the writing scores. This finding is deemed novel in comparison with other studies just focusing on oral skills.

In terms of other soft but "complex" skills (Fischer et al., 2014) such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication skills and research, group-work/ pair work skills, this current study is parallel to the conclusion from prior studies (Chernikova et al., 2020; Mykytiuk, 2013; Philips, 2012; Turgunboy, 2022). Definitely, this research showed that SbAs has produced positive impacts on the enhancement of communication and teamwork skills, which, to some extent, are only moderately facilitate in Chernikova et al.,'s (2020). The improvement of problem-solving and critical thinking skills in legal contexts received the high rate of agreement among the participants, which affirmed that SbAs require the coordination of different skills and capability from learners. That fact, in turns, is valuable in boosting such competence.

With regard to the students' perspectives on the feasibility of SbAs, the majority of the students indicated several challenges concerning the insufficient knowledge of English language and law to understand the case, leading to the difficulties in time allocation doing research. Moreover, time management, lack of control and lack of confidence in oral argument caused great obstacles to learners, as well. Such findings are consistent with Daly& Higgns' (2011), Moizer et al. (2010). It can be seen that a number of the highlighted obstacles reflect the actuality of the integration between English and law. This fact, however, can be considered as another usefulness of the simulation activities as the students gained an insight into the use of language and the practical aspects of law, rather than just focusing on grammar and legal principles theory (Daly & Higgns, 2011). On top of that, learners expressed their expectations of being engaged in such SbAs.

## 5. Conclusion
This current study is a small-scale one, involving in two legal English classes with the participation of a total of 63 law students. However, this study enlightens law students' perspectives on the significant benefits of SbAs and the obstacles of SbAs application in the legal English course, simultaneously delves

into the effects of SbAs on students' performance of legal English skills. The results gained were quite positive through the students' viewpoints on the efficacy of SbAs over traditional teaching method and the improvement of the academic performance of the experimental group in comparison with the control group. Despite several challenges existed, students believed in the potentiality of integrating SbAs in legal English courses to reinforce legal English skills and to foster their motivation and interests in such a challenging subject. Accordingly, such kinds of activities are proposed to have a prominent place in legal English teaching and learning in the contemporary law educational program. The learning outcomes are crucial in the sense of providing learners with the accuracy in the use of legal English language, at the same time, developing learners' advocacy and legal reason skills, to some extent. Those skills are of great importance to legal practitioners in the globalized contexts. More specifically, this type of learning is acknowledged to lessen the gap between the language theory, applied linguistic and partly the practical application of law, which also make learners more active and confident in engaging in simulated activities. This assertion proves the significance in the collaboration between language and specialized subjects although they are separate ones, yet they should not be taught separately.

Undeniably, regardless of its highly efficacious benefits, SbAs are deemed to be time-consuming, leading to the unpopular application in legal English classes. Therefore, the cooperation among lecturers and educators to design, plan and incorporate such activities into the lesson is necessitated. Objectives applicable to the scenarios should be identified clearly due to the complexity of legal cases and legal language. It is assumed that creating a simplified plot of the SbAs in 5-6 minutes can still be sufficient if it engages learners to apply legal English skills to solve the legal problem in an authentic way. Furthermore, learners might be empowered to construct the legal scenario themselves, which contributes to the the development of their life skills. It is advisory that guidance and overall rules relating to learners' roles, procedures, criteria for assessment, even time leaving for reflection be fully provided prior to each activity. Such guideline plays a pivotal role in the efficacy of SbAs application. Clearly, the integration of SbAs as an innovative teaching method are likely to pose a great deal of pressure on both lecturers and learners, however, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages in equipping learners with deeper, more practical use of legal English that inspire them for future work in legal fields.

Whereas the study has provided meaningful insights, limitations are inevitable. Firstly, the restricted sample size with the involvement of merely 63 law students, 33 students of whom were engaged in the experimental groups, cannot generalize the findings. Secondly, the instructors' views have not yet been explored to clarify congruence between the stakeholders', therefore, further research should be conducted extensively to address the above limitations.

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