

# The Integration of Legal English Education and Dramatic Elements in the Film *Chicago*

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## Abstract

This study is based on the Oscar winning film *Chicago*, exploring the deep integration of legal English education and dramatic elements, and bringing new ideas to legal English teaching. Through in-depth analysis of the embedding of legal English education and dramatic elements in the film, as well as their role in narrative promotion, it aims to demonstrate how dramatic expression can better help students understand legal concepts, inspire students to deeply interpret social fairness and justice, and inject new vitality and innovation into legal English courses. This article will summarize the significance of integrating legal English and dramatic elements in legal English education based on the case studies in *Chicago*, and propose prospects and suggestions for the future development of legal English education.

## Keywords

Legal English; Dramatic Elements; Integration; Legal English Education.

## 1. Introduction

In today's rapidly developing globalization process, the importance of legal English education as a bridge between diverse legal systems and international legal practice is increasingly prominent. Legal English has the characteristics of practicality and functionality, and the ultimate goal of teaching is to enable students to better understand foreign culture, master foreign laws and regulations, and thus achieve the correct use of legal English grammar. However, traditional teaching methods focus on terminology and translation as the key points of legal English teaching, which are often abstract and have language barriers, making it more difficult for students to learn and affecting the effectiveness of practical applications[1].

Nowadays, movies serve as a powerful medium for cultural dissemination, especially classic works like *Chicago*, not only provide rich materials for legal English teaching, but also showcase the deep intersection of law, social structure, and human nature through their unique artistic forms, becoming a rare educational resource. In *Chicago*, complex legal terms and court procedures are given life through carefully arranged music, dance, and plot conflicts, allowing students to intuitively understand these concepts and feel the charm of legal language in a tense and stimulating environment. Exploring the integration of legal English education and dramatic elements in this movie and developing innovative applications of film based educational resources in legal English teaching can deepen students' understanding of the essence of legal spirit and professional ethics, including social justice, and pave a new path for cultivating legal talents with an international perspective.

## 2. The Deep Integration of Legal English Education and Dramatic Elements in *Chicago*

The film *Chicago* deeply combines legal English education and dramatic elements, not only showcasing the glamour and darkness of Chicago in the 1920s, but also satirizing and criticizing the American judicial system through unique artistic techniques.

### 2.1. The Specific Expression and Application of Legal English Education in the Film

The application of legal English education in *Chicago* is mainly reflected in court debates, lawyer dialogues, and news reporting. From the judge's demand for "order in the courtroom" during court riots to lawyer Billy's defense in court, it is full of legal strategies and rhetorical skills. He uses legal concepts such as "presumption of innocence" and "insufficient evidence" to cleverly manipulate the emotions and judgments of the jury. When describing the case, the film has also repeatedly used legal terms such as "felony" and "murder in the first degree". These terms not only provide the audience with specific information about the case, but also deepen their understanding of the seriousness of the case. In addition, the presentation of legal procedures in the film, such as court statements, cross examination of witnesses, and closing statements, also incorporates professional expressions of legal English education, enhancing the professionalism and authenticity of the film. It also makes the court scenes in the film more fascinating, making the audience feel as if they are in a real court.

### 2.2. The Embedding of Dramatic Elements in the Film and its Narrative Role in Legal English Education

*Chicago*, as a musical and dance film, has its dramatic elements reflected in its musical performances, exaggerated body language, and carefully designed stage scenery. The dramatic climax of the movie is concentrated in a musical scene called "They Both Reached for the Gun", where Billy controls Roxie like a puppet, conveying carefully arranged lies to the public through singing and dancing. This highly creative performance showcases how Billy manipulates the media and public opinion, and the exaggerated performance hides the truth that legal procedures may be manipulated and distorted.

The embedding of dramatic elements in the movie not only showcases the protagonist's true inner world, blatantly pointing to the truth behind the case, but also exposes Chicago's imperfect judicial system at the time, in stark contrast to the rigorous legal English. The combination of relatively formal legal English education and the entertainment of dramatic elements creates a unique narrative tension, which is fascinating but also deeply criticizes the shortcomings of the legal system.

## 3. The Significance of Integrating Legal English Education with Dramatic Elements

### 3.1. Improve Students' Understanding of Legal Concepts

Dramatic expression can help students better understand and master legal concepts. After introducing dramatic expression, students are no longer simply memorizing boring laws and regulations, but can integrate these theoretical knowledge into vivid real-life scenes and characters. This process has made the originally complex and abstract legal provisions more concrete and vivid, stimulating students' interest in learning while also activating their thinking. It has also invisibly exercised their critical and innovative thinking, deepening their understanding of the connotation of the law.

### 3.2. Reflection on Arousing Students' Awareness of Social Fairness and Justice

The regulatory role of law in reality and the realization of fairness and justice in ideals have been a long-standing contradiction. Lawyer Billy's sentence became the focus of the legal issue: "The court is like a circus, the scene is just noisy, these trials, all over the world... are just acting. But child, you are paired with an acting superstar in the performance." In the adversarial litigation model in the United States, the prosecutor's responsibility is to prove the facts of the prosecution. Therefore, the passive attitude of the judge and the observation and judgment of the jury make the lawyer the main character in the "small-scale interactive scene where the legal order can be established and maintained"[2]. However, the lawyer Billy in the film is willing to fabricate a story in order to win the case, using legal loopholes to defend criminals for personal gain. This not only tarnishes the professional spirit of lawyers, but also completely subverts the last line of defense that should have been the law to maintain social fairness and justice. Fairness and justice are no longer regulated by law.

Not only that, *Chicago* also exposed the inequality between social classes. In Chicago at that time, the wealthy and famous in the upper class had the opportunity to easily wander on the edge of the law with their superior social status and wealth, and sometimes even evade legal sanctions. In contrast, people at the bottom of society have become victims of the so-called fair system due to a lack of social resources. Although they face the same laws, the lower class of society are indeed subjected to vastly different levels of heaviness and harshness. The unequal treatment caused by this social class difference strongly calls for the public's deep attention to the issue of fairness, resonates and reflects in the hearts of every audience, and reaches a consensus in seeking to establish a more fair and just society.

### 3.3. Injecting New Vitality and Innovation into Legal English Courses

#### 3.3.1. The Limitations of Traditional Legal English Teaching Models

Firstly, legal English teaching blurs the boundary between legal learning and English learning, and the goal positioning is unclear. One situation is that teachers overly focus on the language characteristics of legal English, and their explanations of the English and American legal systems, cultural backgrounds, etc. behind it are not sufficient. Students only learn English in the legal context and just have a partial understanding of the law[3]. Another situation is that the original English legal textbooks selected by the teacher are difficult and do not take into account the actual English level of the students. The teaching language is mainly Chinese, and the teacher mainly teaches English and American legal knowledge in the classroom, occasionally raising a few legal English vocabulary and translation questions. This situation leads to students having a slight understanding of English and American legal knowledge, but their legal English level does not improve[4].

Secondly, some universities that specialize in providing all English courses for legal English talent cultivation have not done enough transitional work in helping students adapt to all English legal English teaching, which seriously affects the teaching effectiveness. Some teachers have not done a good job in analyzing and introducing the characteristics of legal English, case studies, and the cultural background of English and American law in their teaching, and have placed too much emphasis on case studies. As a result, students have invested a lot of energy, but their acquired legal English skills and knowledge are limited[5].

#### 3.3.2. The Integration of Legal English Education and Dramatic Elements Brings Innovation and Transformation to Legal English Curriculum

The integration of legal English education and theatrical elements has made the previously unchanging curriculum more vivid and interesting, stimulating students' interest and motivation in learning. The introduction of dramatic elements not only helps students understand legal English expressions in different cultural backgrounds, but also helps them

actively acquire legal English knowledge and skills. During this process, communication and interaction between teachers and students become frequent, and students can actively think and express their opinions in an active atmosphere, greatly improving learning efficiency. The integration of legal English education and theatrical elements has largely broken through the constraints of traditional teaching models, injecting new vitality and innovation into legal English courses.

## **4. Prospects and Suggestions for the Future Development of Legal English Education**

### **4.1. Introducing Dramatic Expression in Legal English Teaching**

Teachers can organize students to participate in mock court activities, allowing them to play court roles such as lawyers and witnesses, and use professional legal English education knowledge to engage in debates and statements. Mock court not only allows students to immerse themselves in the process and norms of court trials, but also enhances their understanding of legal provisions and their applications. In addition, teachers can also design role-playing tasks based on legal examples, guiding students to incarnate as parties or relevant figures in the case, and showcasing the development of the case through dialogue and performance. This teaching model can help students comprehensively analyze the background of cases, cultivate their practical abilities, and develop their ability to solve comprehensive problems.

### **4.2. Deepening International Cooperation and Exchanges**

#### **4.2.1. The Importance of International Cooperation and Exchange in Legal English Education**

International cooperation and exchange can help students gain a more comprehensive understanding of the legal systems and cultures of different countries and regions, and broaden their international perspectives. By collaborating with international legal English education institutions, advanced teaching methods and concepts can be introduced to improve the teaching quality of teachers and provide students with higher quality educational resources. International cooperation and exchange can also promote academic research, promote the development of legal theory and practice, and provide strong academic support for legal English education.

#### **4.2.2. Establishing Cooperative Relationships with International Legal English Education Institutions**

Collaborate with international legal English education institutions to introduce advanced teaching methods such as blended learning and situational simulation, providing students with a more vivid and intuitive learning experience. Introduce high-quality teaching resources, such as textbooks, teaching aids, and online courses, to enrich students' learning content and improve learning effectiveness. Through international cooperation and exchange programs, provide more opportunities for teachers and students to exchange and learn abroad, allowing them to experience the legal culture of different countries and regions and enhance their international literacy.

## **5. Conclusion**

The integration of legal English education and theatrical elements has demonstrated unique and important value in legal English education. It enhances students' interest and participation in learning, cultivates their critical thinking and innovation abilities, and also broadens their international perspective and cross-cultural communication abilities. This integration model

injects new vitality into legal English education, making the learning process more vivid, interesting, and effective.

With the deepening development of globalization, strengthening legal English education is crucial for cultivating legal talents with international perspectives and cross-cultural communication skills. The integration of legal English education and theatrical elements can make teaching services more precise and personalized, significantly improving teaching effectiveness and learning efficiency. Looking ahead to the future, legal English education needs to better adapt to the needs of the times, continuously explore new teaching models that integrate legal English education with theatrical elements, actively expand cooperation and communication channels with international legal English education institutions, and jointly pave the way for cultivating outstanding legal English educators.

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