

Culture and Discourse Participants in Agreements

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ABSTRACT

Legal English is very specific and it must be open to many social factors, on the one hand. On the other hand, legal discourse analysis may be approached contextually, thus several criteria must be taken into consideration: culture, participants, producer-interpreter relationships, setting, channel, participant-text relations, purpose and intent, topic (Chimombo, Roseberry, 1998). Two of the contextual features with the greatest impact on the understanding of legal documents we are going to analyse, namely legal agreements, are culture and discourse participants. Culture, as a contextual feature, has a very important role, reflecting values like politeness or openness. It also represents the environment or the background which can alter communication if one of the discourse participants is not familiar to at least one of them. Culture influences on legal discourse reflect in the way laws are applied, interpreted or understood. The discourse participants include the producer and the interpreter. This contextual feature of legal discourse is closely connected to culture, thus shaping the interaction, argumentation and resolution of legal issues.

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