

# Light Verb Constructions in Legal Discourse

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light verb, nominalization, legal technical terms, legal discourse

## Abstract

*Let's walk.* and *Let's take a walk.* are basically the same in meaning. The latter sentence with a light verb and a nominalized verb form of *walk* is traditionally called a light verb construction. This construction is popular in legal discourse, but it is used in a particular way with some legal technical terms. This paper uses corpus linguistics and investigates what kind of light verbs are frequently employed and what kind of nouns collocate well as an object noun with those light verbs. A legal lexical term network consisted of typical light verbs and legal nouns are introduced at the end of the discussion section. The ultimate goal of this paper is to compile a corpus-based production-oriented English legal dictionary for non-native speakers of English; thus a sample dictionary description of the headword *enter* is shown in the conclusion.

## 1. Introduction

The English language, as well as others, has an interesting pair of parallel grammatical constructions expressing almost the same proposition. The following are typical examples.

- (1) We agreed to import 2,000 tons of rice from the company.
- (2) We made an agreement to import 2,000 tons of rice from the company.

In (1) the main verb of the sentence is “agreed” while in (2) the main verb is “made” followed by “agreement”, the nominalized form of the verb “agree”. The main verb in (2) is named ‘light’ verb by Jespersen (1942: 117). He explained the characteristics of this construction as follows:

The most usual meaning of sbs derived from and identical in form with a vb is the action or an isolated instance of the action. This is particularly frequent in such everyday combinations as those illustrated in the following paragraphs after *have* and similar ‘light’ verbs. They are in accordance with the general tendency of ModE to place an insignificant verb, to which the marks of person and tense are attached, before the really important idea—of combinations with *do*, *can*, etc., ... Such constructions also offer an easy means of adding some descriptive trait in the form of an adjunct: we had *a delightful bathe*, *a quiet smoke*, etc.

This construction using a light verb and a nominalized form has been discussed by many linguists, including Wierzbicka (1982, 1988), Dixon (1991), and Kageyama (1996). A *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (hereafter *CGEL* for short) (1985: 750-1) names the object noun in this construction as ‘eventive object’ and explains as follows:

A frequent type of object generally takes the form of a deverbal noun preceded by a common verb of general meaning, such as *do*, *give*, *have*, *make*, *take*. This EVENTIVE object...is semantically an extension of the verb and bears the major part of the meaning. ...

The construction with the eventive object provides greater weight than the corresponding *SV* type, especially if there are no optional adverbials, and is often preferred to the *SV* construction in informal English.

Recently, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (2002: 290) (hereafter *CamGEL* for short) explains as follows:

[1] ASSOCIATED VERB ALTERNANT	LIGHT VERB ALTERNANT
i a. <i>She kissed him.</i>	b. <i>She <u>gave</u> him a kiss.</i>
ii a. <i>I calculated the costs.</i>	b. <i>I <u>made</u> a calculation of the costs.</i>
...	...

...the underlined verbs are semantically 'light' in the sense that their contribution to the meaning of the predication is relatively small in comparison with that of their complements. ... The main semantic content is located not in the light verb, but in the noun functioning as head of the direct object.

The *CamGEL* (ibid: 291) also explains that the light verb construction is syntactically more flexible, thus semantically it could be more productive than that of its alternative construction as follows:

The use of a light verb and noun tends to yield a significant increase in syntactic versatility over that of the associated verb construction. Most importantly, it generally allows for dependents to be added to the noun, allowing a considerably greater range of elaboration by modifiers and determiners.

In legal discourse this combination is rather common. For example, the combination of a light verb *make* and *decision*, the derived noun from *decide*, occurs 346 times in our four legal corpora, ranking No. 1 in this type of constructions in UK LJ, in US JDG and in US LJ, and No. 5 in UK JDG. The following are typical examples of *make* + *decision*:

#### Extracts 1

not only an appraisal of their ability to make an informed decision about the need for treatment, (UK LJ)

employees are not getting the information they need to make rational economic decisions about union representation (US LJ)

The first question is whether the challenged decision was made initially by a state court or by a state administrator (US LJ)

The definite and indefinite articles, an adjective and a past participle pre-modify the head noun, *decision*, and a prepositional phrase post-modifies it too. It is almost impossible to rephrase the above examples using the associated verb construction.

The *CamGEL* calls the verb in (1) 'associated verb' and names the construction (1) 'ASSOCIATED VERB ALTERNANT' and the construction (2) 'LIGHT VERB ALTERNANT'. In this paper I will call the verb in (1) 'associated verb', the predicate construction of (1) 'associated verb construction', the predicate construction of (2) 'light verb construction', and the object noun in (2) 'associated object noun'. Thus, the above (1) and (2) will be described as follows:

- (1) We agreed to import 2,000 tons of rice from the company.  
**associated verb:** agreed  
**associated verb construction:** agreed to import 2,000 tons of rice from the company
- (2) We made an agreement to import 2,000 tons of rice from the company.  
**light verb:** made  
**associated object noun:** agreement  
**light verb construction:** made an agreement to import 2,000 tons of rice from the company

The *CamGEL* (ibid: 293-6) listed five major light verbs with additional four verbs: *give, make, have, take, do; offer, pay, put, raise*. I will add three more light verbs — *bring, enter* and *file* — which are frequently used in legal discourse, and investigate how these 12 light verbs are used in legal discourse in this paper.<sup>1)</sup>

## 2. Objectives, Data, and Methodology

### 2.1. Objectives

The objectives of this paper are to investigate how the light verb constructions are actually used in legal discourse. More specifically, I will investigate 1) how the 12 light verbs are actually used, 2) what kind of associated object nouns are commonly taken by these light verbs, and 3) the uniqueness of light verb constructions in legal discourse.

### 2.2. Data

I am going to use the following corpus data which Tamaruya and I collected for the project of compiling a corpus-based, production-oriented legal dictionary. This project is supported by the Japanese government fund for scientific research (#90180207). The corpora I am going to use in this paper are as follows:

UK Supreme Court Judgments issued in 2008 (shortened by UK JDG): 1,451,263

words

US Supreme Court Judgments issued in 2008 (shortened by US JDG): 1,574,403

words

UK Law Journals issued in 2008 (shortened by UK LJ): 1,267,048 words

US Law Journals issued in 2008 (shortened by US LJ): 1,303,223 words

We downloaded the above data from the following official sites:

<http://www.supremecourt.gov.uk/>

<http://www.supremecourt.gov/>

UK law journals we used to compile our UK Law Journal corpus are:

Cambridge Law Journal (2008), Oxford Journal of Legal Studies (2008), Law Quarterly Review (2008), Edinburgh Law Review (2008), Modern Law Review (2008)

US law journals we used to compile our US Law Journal corpus are:

Harvard Law Review (2008), Stanford Law Review (2008), Columbia Law Review (2008), Yale Law Journal (2008), The University of Chicago Law Review (2008), New York University Law Review (2008), Michigan Law Review (2008), University of Pennsylvania Law Review (2008), California Law Review (2008), Virginia Law Review (2008), Duke Law Review (2008), Northwestern University Law Review (2008), Cornell Law Review (2008), Georgia Law Review (2008)

## 2. 3. Methodology

I am going to use the corpus software *Sketch Engine* and some statistical indexes built into the software.

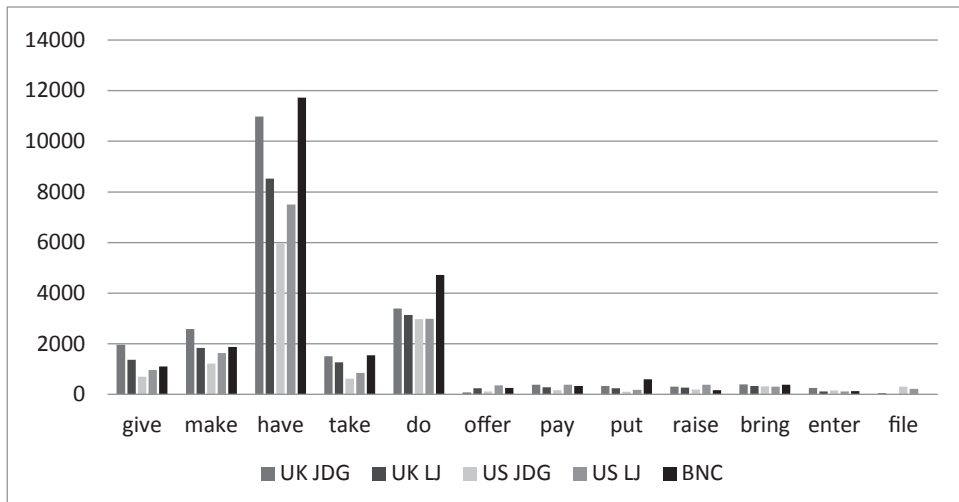
## 3. Data analysis

### 3. 1. How frequently are the 12 light verbs actually used in legal discourse?

In order to find the answer to this question, I researched the frequencies of these 12 verbs in our four legal corpora. I also researched the frequencies of the same verbs used in *the British National Corpus* (hereafter *BNC* for short) to compare the frequencies of these

**Table 1** Frequencies of the 12 Light Verbs

	UK JDG	UK LJ	US JDG	US LJ	BNC
give	1963	1363	692	962	1100
make	2587	1838	1214	1636	1874
have	10982	8525	5970	7501	11722
take	1504	1260	625	845	1545
do	3392	3138	2978	2984	4720
offer	73	241	116	359	256
pay	378	285	169	377	333
put	332	239	105	173	600
raise	308	263	196	385	170
bring	394	328	317	302	376
enter	257	115	150	109	124
file	45	7	299	217	12

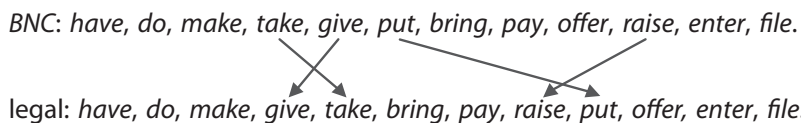


**Figure 1** Frequencies of 12 Light Verbs

12 verbs in the general corpus with those in the legal corpora. The research results are shown in Table 1. (All the frequencies are normalized per million in this table.)

The 12 light verbs in the *BNC* and in the legal corpora are arranged from the most frequent to the least in Chart 1 below:

Chart 1



*Have* and *do* which are classified as “primary verbs” in *CGEL* (1985: 64) are far more frequent than other verbs both in the legal corpora and the general corpus. The frequency order of these 12 verbs is basically the same, except that *give* is ranked higher than *take* in legal corpora, *put* drops from 6th place to 9th and *raise* goes up from 10th place to 8th.

### 3. 2. How frequently are the 12 verbs used in light verb constructions in legal corpora?

I investigated the frequencies of the object nouns these 12 verbs take in the S (subject) + V (verb) + O (object) construction. I used *Sketch Engine* and calculated the total number of objects each light verb takes in each legal corpus. Table 2 below shows the research results.

Table 2 Frequencies of 12 Light Verbs in the SVO Construction

	UK JDG	UK LJ	US JDG	US LJ
give	1904	1306	763	955
make	2282	1487	1028	1386
have	2943	2437	1944	2377
take	1347	1032	660	724
do	312	447	293	387
offer	57	227	124	349
pay	227	189	134	314
put	180	118	63	104
raise	318	271	206	389
bring	275	233	237	238
enter	83	37	144	70
file	23	6	357	208

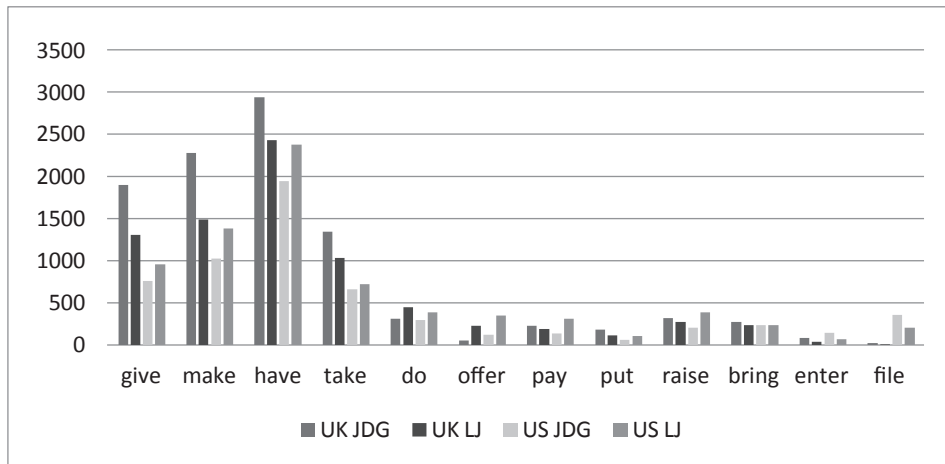


Figure 2 Frequencies of 12 Light Verbs in the SVO Construction

Next, I extracted all the object nouns of these light verbs from the legal corpora to see what kind of nouns are actually used as the object of these light verbs. The research results are shown in Table 3 to 14 in the Appendix. (Due to the space limitations, the object nouns lower than 10 in frequency are omitted from the tables. The frequencies of these object nouns are not normalized. Due to the software limit, 25 object nouns are the maximum that can be extracted.)

Table 3, for example, shows the top 25 frequent object nouns the verb *have* takes in the SVO construction in UK JDG, in UK LJ, in US JDG and in USLJ. We can understand from the table that in UK JDG *have* takes *advantage* as its object noun most frequently (208 times) followed by *regard* (179 times). Likewise, Table 4 shows the top 25 object nouns the verb *make* takes in each legal corpus. We can understand that *order* is taken as the object of the verb *make* 344 times in UK JDG, followed by *claim* (116 times). The least frequent verb which takes the object noun in the SVO construction among the 12 verbs is *offer*. It takes only three different kinds of object nouns (totally 43 times): *reason* (20 times), *account* (10 times) in UK LJ and *product* (13 times) in US LJ. The second least frequent verb is *put* with also three different kinds of object nouns: *case* (23 times) and *point* (16 times) in UK LDG and *way* (13 times) in US LJ.

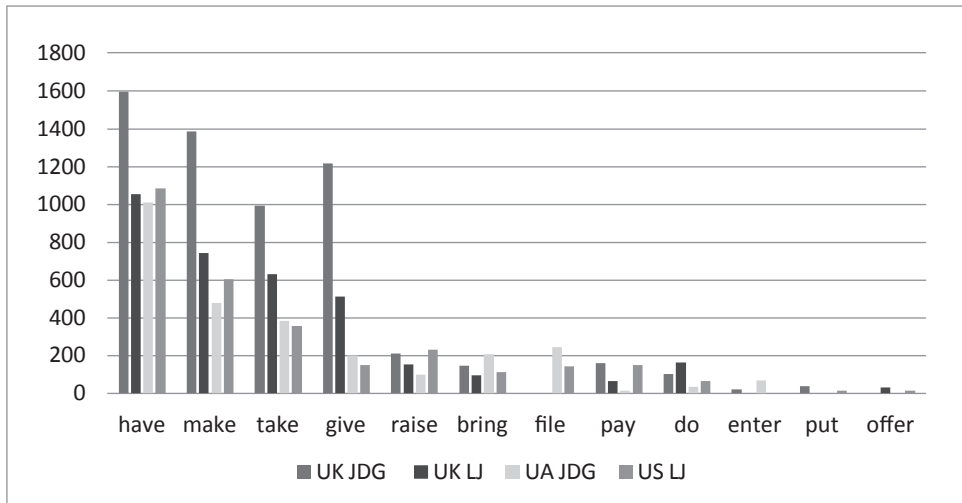
I added all the frequencies of the object nouns in these tables each light verb takes in the four legal corpora. The research results are shown in Table 15 and Figure 3. We can understand at least two important aspects on the use of these 12 verbs with major object nouns in the SVO construction in legal corpora. The first is: that *have* is most frequently used (4743+ times) followed by *make* (3209+ times), *take* (2364 times) and *give* (2076 times) and the rest of the verbs are rather low in frequency. The second is: that these four



verbs, namely *have*, *make*, *take*, *give*, are constantly used well with major object nouns in the SVO construction in UK JDG, while in other legal corpora the number is constantly decreasing after *have*.

**Table 15 Total Number of Object Nouns taken by 12 Light Verbs**

	UK JDG	UK LJ	UA JDG	US LJ
have	1594	1053	1011	1085
make	1384	742	479	604
take	994	631	384	355
give	1217	510	201	148
raise	210	152	98	231
bring	147	94	208	112
file	0	0	245	141
pay	158	63	12	150
do	102	163	34	63
enter	19	0	67	0
put	39	0	0	13
offer	0	30	0	13

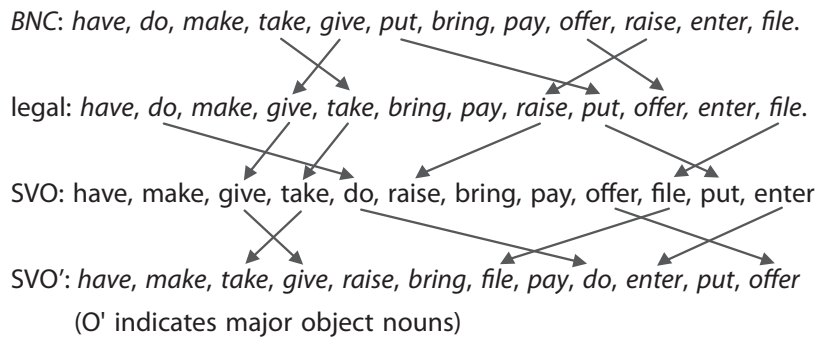


**Figure 3 Total Number of Major Object Nouns**

**Figure 4 Total Number of Object Nouns taken by 12 Light Verbs**

I arranged below the ranking orders based on the research results so far:

Chart 2



*Do, put* and *offer* drop the ranking widely from the *BNC* to *SVO'* while *raise, file* and *enter* improve their ranking. This indicates that some light verbs are more likely to be used in legal discourse than in general discourse or vice versa.

### 3. 2. The nature of associated object nouns in the legal corpora

As you may have already noticed, not all these object nouns appeared in Table 3 to 14 are associated object nouns. For example, one of the most frequent object nouns, *decision*, is morphologically derived from the verb, *decide*, thus it can be an associated verb object noun. Object nouns like *order* and *claim* are the same in form as their associated verb, but they are the nouns derived from the verbs *order* and *claim*. On the other hand, object nouns like *right, jurisdiction* and *power* are obviously not derived from any verbs, but they are legal technical terms. The object nouns like *point, effect, sense, opportunity* and *nothing* are non-legal technical terms. They are nouns from the beginning. Some other object nouns are rather difficult to classify. For example, the object noun like *information* is morphologically derived from the verb *inform*, but we do not feel any kind of action in this noun. Putting all the above discussion together, we can categorize the object nouns as follows:

[1] derived from the associated verbs

[1-1] the same form

[1-1-a] nouns used in the light verb constructions

(e.g. *order, claim*)

[1-1-b] nouns not used as associated object nouns

(e.g. *interest*)

[1-2] with suffixation

[1-2-a] nouns in the light verb constructions

(e.g. *decision, statement*)

[1-2-b] nouns not used as associated object nouns

(e.g. *information* )

[2] legal technical terms

(e.g. *jurisdiction, right, power, authority*)

[3] other nouns

(e.g. *point, effect, sense, opportunity, nothing, incentive*)

I will discuss some unique features of light verbs, *have, make, bring, file, and enter*, and an associated object noun, *provision*, in detail in the next section.

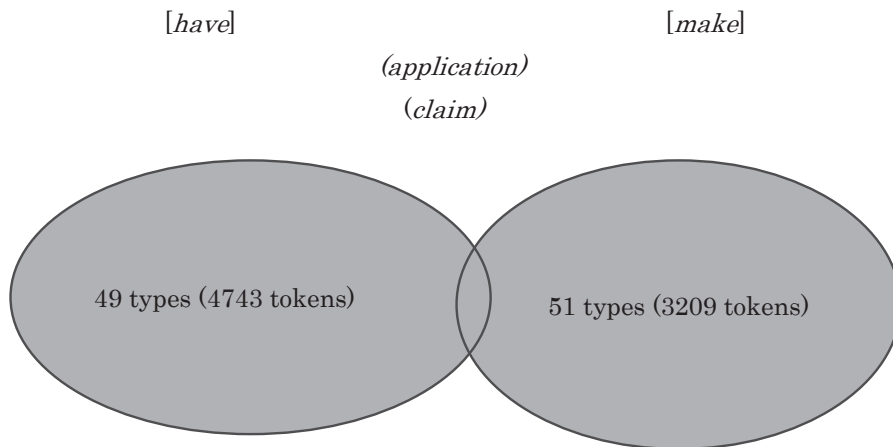
## 4. The uniqueness of legal discourse in the use of light verb constructions

### 4. 1. *Have* and *make*

*Have* is the most frequent verb in the legal corpora and in the *BNC*, and the most frequent verb in the SVO construction in the legal corpora. *Make* is the third most frequent verb in the legal corpora and in the *BNC*. It is the second most frequent verb in the SVO construction in the legal corpora. I will compare these two frequent verbs and see how differently they codify the legal concepts in legal discourse.

First, I compared Table 3 with Table 4 to see if there is any difference in the choice of the object nouns between these two light verbs. The findings are quite interesting. In terms of word types, *have* takes 49 different types of words totaling 4743 tokens, while *make* takes 51 different types of words totaling 3209 tokens in our legal corpora. The interesting thing is that these object nouns are almost complementarily different. The object nouns taken by both *have* and *make* are only *application* and *claim*. *Have* takes *application* as its object noun 66 times and *claim* 32 times while *make* takes *application* 87 times and *claim* 180 times. The relationship of the object nouns these two verbs take can be shown in Chart 3:

Chart 3



$$have \cup make = 98 \quad have \cap make = 2 \text{ (application and claim)}$$

The nouns in Table 16 are the top most frequent 10 nouns *have* and *make* take in our four legal corpora.

**Table 16 Top 10 most frequent object nouns with *have* and *make***

	have	freq	make	freq
1	effect	536	order	392
2	right	506	decision	274
3	jurisdiction	337	sense	224
4	power	315	statement	181
5	regard	252	claim	180
6	interest	211	point	136
7	advantage	208	provision	124
8	authority	173	use	101
9	opportunity	168	difference	97
10	reason	137	reference	94

Listed below are typical examples. Each example is taken from the legal corpus in which the object noun appears most frequently of the four. Thus, it is safe to say that they show the typical usage of each object noun in legal discourse.

Extracts 2 *have*

the HRA will have the effect of restricting the likelihood of change in common law (UK LJ)

At common law, any subject of the Crown has the right to enter and remain in the United Kingdom (UK JDG)

The Court of Appeal raised the question of whether they had jurisdiction to entertain this argument, (UK JDG)

They have power to provide housing accommodation by building or acquiring it (1985 Act, s 9). (UK JDG)

the court must have regard to the definition in subsections (1), (4) to (8) and (11) of section 447 of POCA. (UK JDG)

However, given that politicians will also have an interest in the outcome of the democratic process (UK LJ)

I have had the advantage of reading in advance the opinion prepared by my noble and learned friend Lord Hope of Craighead (UK JDG)

the Tribe had authority to regulate the business conduct of persons who “voluntarily deal with tribal members;” (US JDG)

The House has had the opportunity of considering the Framework Decision on two previous occasions: (UK JDG)

we have reason to be confident that well-functioning constitutional orders are a necessary element in realizing those goals. (UK LJ)

As we argued in Section 3.2, not all the object nouns in the above examples are associated object nouns. Among the 10 most frequent object nouns *have* takes, *effect*, *right*, *power*, *authority*, *opportunity* and *reason* are ordinary nouns used in a general sense. They are not etymologically derived from any verbs. *Jurisdiction* is a legal technical term used in a legal sense. *Interest* and *advantage* are general nouns. They have the verb usage in the same form but their noun usage is more dominant. *Regard* is the only object noun that also has a good etymological background of a verb. Thus, it could be considered as an associated object noun. But it is quite unnatural to use *regard* as an associated verb as follows:

? the court must have regard to the definition in subsections (1), (4) to (8) and (11) of section 447 of POCA.

the court must regard the definition in subsections (1), (4) to (8) and (11) of section 447 of POCA. (UK JDG)

In sum, among the top 10 most frequent object nouns, only *regard* could be classified as the associated object noun in the light verb construction. The rest of nine object nouns are either general nouns or legal technical terms.

I did the same analysis with the object nouns *make* takes. The examples are as follows:

Extracts 3 *make*

I would make the order that Lord Hoffmann proposes. (UK JDG)

the President makes executive decisions that engender widespread condemnation; (US LJ)

This made sense in the era of the old-fashioned telephone network, (US LJ)

A number of statements made by the Attorney General on behalf of the Government were relied on in argument. (UK JDG)

Nast had not made a claim within a reasonable time from (at latest) 5 August 2002, (UK JDG)

This was a point made by Lord Keith in Hill (UK JDG)

Articles 8 and 9 make provision for the duration of a life prisoner's licence on release (UK JDG)

he asserted that lawyers make use of social science methods.

It can...make no difference if A and B agree to kill their victim by beating him to death with baseball bats, (UK JDG)

Reference was made to four authorities in particular. (UK JDG)

Among the above 10 object nouns, *order*, *decision*, *statement*, *claim*, *use* and *reference* are all associated object nouns. *Sense*, *point* and *difference* are general nouns used in a general sense. An interesting noun is *provision*. Morphologically, *provision* derives from the corresponding verb, *provide*, but the meaning of this verb in legal discourse is different from the general use. The *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* (2006) defines *provide* and *provision* as follows:

① VERB

If you **provide** something that someone needs or wants, or if you **provide** them **with** it, you give it to them or make it available to them.

② VERB

If a law or agreement **provides that** something will happen, it states that it will happen. [FORMAL]

① N-UNCOUNT

The **provision of** something is the act of giving it or making it available to people who need or want it.

② N-VAR

If you make **provision for** something that might happen or that might need to be done, you make arrangements to deal with it.

③ N-UNCOUNT

If you make **provision for** someone, you support them financially and make sure that they have the things they need.

④ N-COUNT

A **provision** in a law or an agreement is an arrangement which is included in it.

⑤ N-PLURAL

**Provisions** are supplies of food [OLD-FASHIONED]

The second definition of the verb *provide* and the fourth definition of *provision* are legal use. The meaning of *provision* in Table 4 and 16 derived from this *provide*. Thus, we could conclude that *provision* in Table 4 and 16 is an associated object noun.

It seems that there are some light verbs that are more likely to be used in the light verb construction than others. *Make* is probably one of the light verbs that constitutes a light verb construction very well. Seven out of 10 most frequent object nouns in Table 4 are used as associated object nouns; frequency-wise, it is 1346 times out of 1803 times (75%). Meanwhile, as for *have*, associated object noun is one out of 10; frequency-wise, it is 252 out of 2843 (9%). This difference seems to be attributed from the core meaning of

these two light verbs. The very basic core meaning of *have* signifies 'possession or existence'. The *OED* explains the original meaning of *have* as follows:

**B. Signification.**

From a primitive sense 'to hold (in hand)', *have* has passed naturally into that of 'hold in possession,' 'possess,' and has thence been extended to express a more general class of relations, of which 'possession' is one type, some of which are very vague and intangible.

The very first meaning of *have* listed in the *OED* is:

1. a. *trans.* To hold in hand, in keeping, or possession; to hold or possess as property, or as something at one's disposal.

Thus, *have* indicates that the subject of the sentence 'holds or possesses in hand' the object of the verb. Here, we do not feel any sense of dynamic action of obtaining or capturing the object item with effort. The object item is just there within the subject's domain from the beginning. The object nouns listed in Table 16 are not something we obtain or capture with effort, but something already there legally and all we need to do is to make use of it. On the other hand, *make* express a more dynamic sense. The *OED* lists the very first meaning of this verb as follows:

**I. Senses in which the object of the verb is a product or result.**

\* To bring into existence by construction or elaboration. ...

1. *trans.* a. To produce (a material thing) by combination of parts, or by giving a certain form to a portion of matter; to construct, frame, fashion.

The above definition of *make* suggests that the object of the verb is the product or result brought into existence by working hard to make it happen. That is why we feel a sense of dynamic action in this verb, which we do not in *have*. Linguistically, all the seven associated object nouns *make* takes are categorized as either the product or result of the action conducted by the subject noun of the sentence.

## **4. 2. *Bring, enter and file***

These three light verbs are not included in the list of the *CamGEL*, but they raised their ranking higher as their use becomes more legal in Chart 2. This indicates that they are relatively more frequent in legal discourse. Since the frequencies of these verbs are



rather low in comparison with *have* and *make*, I checked all the object nouns they take and listed them in Table 17, Table 18 and Table 19. The object nouns whose frequencies are lower than two times are omitted from the tables. The numeral number right to each corpus title indicates the total frequency of the verb in that corpus.

#### 4. 2. 1. *Bring*

*Bring* appears 573 times in UK JDG (395 times per million), in UK LJ 416 times (328 times per million), in US JDG 500 times (317 times per million), and in US LJ 394 times (301 times per million).

The meaning of *bring* in legal discourse is different from the one in general discourse. The *OED* and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009) (hereafter *LDCE* for short) define *bring* in legal discourse as follows:

**6. a.** To prefer or lay (a charge or accusation); to institute, set on foot (an action at law); to advance, adduce (a statement or argument).

**7.** bring charges/a lawsuit/a court case/a prosecution/a claim (against sb) to begin a court case in order to try to prove that someone has done something wrong or is legally responsible for something wrong:

The total number of the top four object nouns *bring* takes in our four legal corpora are, from the top, *claim* (141 times), *action* (128 times), *proceeding* (82 times) and *appeal* (31 times). The details are listed in Table 17 below.

Table 17 Frequent object nouns of *bring*

UK JDG	573	UK LJ	416	US JDG	500	US LJ	394
proceeding	57	action	44	suit	116	claim	37
claim	37	proceeding	25	claim	42	suit	30
action	30	claim	25	action	31	action	23
appeal	23	case	8	case	19	lawsuit	11
application	7	charge	6	lawsuit	7	case	11
charge	5	litigation	5	charge	5	charge	9
case	5	prosecution	4	prosecution	4	challenge	4
complaint	4	law	4	petition	2	appeal	4
prosecution	2	suit	3	appeal	2	litigation	4
		petition	3			law	4
		application	3			complaint	3
		appeal	2			information	3
						motion	2

The examples of *bring + proceeding/suit/claim/action* are shown below:

#### Extracts 4

He brought proceedings for judicial review, claiming that the decision to remove him was unlawful both at common law and under the Human Rights Act. (UK JDG)

Here, respondents are authorized to bring suit on behalf of the payphone operators, (US JDG)

None of the exonerates brought federal claims directly challenging forensic evidence, (US LJ)

In parallel, Mr. Sison brought a separate action seeking the annulment of the Council Decisions relating to his inclusion on the list. (UK LJ)

#### 4. 2. 2. *File*

The original meaning of *file* meant 'thread' to keep pieces of paper or documents together. Later, this word was used as a verb, meaning 'to put papers and documents together with a string of thread'. This original meaning is still retained in the following *OED* definition.

**b. spec.** To place (a document) in a due manner among the records of a court or public office; esp.

*Black's Law Dictionary* (1999) defines *file* as follows.

1. To deliver a legal document to the court clerk or record custodian for placement into the official record.
2. To commence a lawsuit.
3. To record or deposit something in an organized retention system or container for preservation and future reference.

We can understand that the above definitions are arranged from the old or original one to the extended one. The present day meaning of *file* in legal discourse is given in the following *LDCE* definition.

3 [I always + adv/prep, T] *law* to give a document to a court or other organization so that it can be officially recorded and dealt with **file a complaint/lawsuit/petition etc (against sb)**

For the historical reason of this verb, the associated object nouns in Table 18 indicate papers or documents to be submitted to the court or delivered by the legal authorities.

Table 18 Frequent object nouns of *file*

UK JDG	66	UK LJ	10	US JDG	472	US LJ	284
notice	9			motion	43	notice	49
appeal	3			suit	41	petition	24
affidavit	2			petition	37	suit	16
				complaint	23	appeal	14
				action	20	claim	14
				claim	19	complaint	12
				notice	18	lawsuit	12
				brief	16	motion	9
				appeal	16	report	5
				lawsuit	12	brief	3
				charge	9	charge	2
				application	8	challenge	2
				cross-appeal	5	statement	2
				counterclaim	5		
				affidavit	5		
				notification	4		
				cross-motions	3		
				exception	3		
				grievance	2		
				indictment	2		

Table 18 reveals that *file* is predominantly used in the US and quite rare in the UK. The following are typical examples:

#### Extracts 5

Courts are split on whether the ten-day deadline to file a notice of appeal in Rule 23(f) is jurisdictional. (US LJ)

Petitioners filed a motion to compel arbitration of respondents' claims pursuant to § 3 and § 4 of the Federal Arbitration Act, (US JDG)

Respondent filed his own suit under the Jones Act and general maritime law, alleging negligence, (US JDG)

Petitioner then filed a federal petition for a writ of habeas corpus on July 19, 2005.(US JDG)

#### 4. 2. 3. *Enter*

The original meaning of this verb is as defined in the *OED* below:

1. To go or come into a place, building, room, etc.; to pass within the boundaries of a country, region, portion of space, medium, etc.

Then, it is used in an extended sense in legal discourse as the *OED* and the *LDCE* indicate below:

6. To make a beginning, engage (in any action, course of conduct, discourse, etc.)

#### 10 OFFICIAL STATEMENT

[T] *formal* to make an official statement:

(EX) ♦ *Wilson entered a plea of not guilty* (=said that he was not guilty at the beginning of a court case).

*Black's Law Dictionary* (1999) lists three definitions of this verb with very simple but clear example use.

1. To come or go into; esp., to go onto (real property) by right of entry so as to take possession <the landlord entered the defaulting tenant's premises>.

2. To put formally before a court or on the record <the defendant entered a plea of no contest>.

3. To become a party to <they entered into an agreement>

The sequence of these examples indicates how the meaning of *enter* has developed historically in legal discourse.

The object nouns taken by *enter* are listed in Table 19. They are either legal documents or actions.

Table 19 Frequent object nouns of *enter*

UK JDG	373	UK LJ	146	US JDG	237	US LJ	143
agreement	5	contract	7	judgment	22	judgment	8
plea	3	partnership	2	plea	19	agreement	4
contract	3	transaction	2	injunction	13	order	4
transaction	2			order	13	decree	2
negotiation	2			award	4		
arrangement	2			agreement	4		
				stay	2		

The example use is shown below:

#### Extracts 6

the Tribal Court entered judgment awarding the Longs \$750,000 plus interest.  
(US JDG)

At trial, he entered pleas of not guilty and not guilty by reason of insanity (NGI).  
(US JDG)

On remand, the District Court entered a new preliminary injunction allowing ...  
(US JDG)

Courts may enter protective orders to prevent “unreasonable annoyance, ... (US  
JDG)

### 4. 3. Three frequent object nouns: *proceeding*, *suit* and *plea*, and their collocations

Collocations often reveal the nature of the collocated words which we cannot observe directly when they stand alone. Collocations also help us understand how the legal concepts referred in legal discourse are perceived by the English speakers. I will choose three frequent object nouns, *proceeding*, *suit* and *plea*, and investigate what kind of nouns, adjectives and verbs they collocate, so that we can understand even better the lexico-grammatical properties of these frequent object nouns in legal discourse.

#### 4. 3. 1. *Proceeding*

Etymologically, *proceeding* is obviously derived from the corresponding verb *proceed*. It is defined with some example use in the *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* (2006) as follows:

1 N-COUNT [usu pl]

Legal **proceedings** are legal action taken against someone. [FORMAL]

(EX) ♦ [+ against] ...*criminal proceedings against the former prime minister.*

♦ *The Council had brought proceedings to stop the store from trading on Sundays.*

The definitions of *proceeding* Black's Law Dictionary (1999) lists are as follows:

1. The regular and orderly progression of a lawsuit, including all acts and events between the time of commencement and the entry of judgment.
2. Any procedural means for seeking redress from a tribunal or agency.
3. An act or step that is part of a larger action.
4. The business conducted by a court or other official body; a hearing.
5. *Bankruptcy*. A particular dispute or matter arising within a pending case — as opposed to the case as a whole.

The first two definitions are commonly applied in legal discourse.

The word *proceeding* is rather a neutral term. In UK JDG this word occurs 1,023 times (704.90 per million), and pre-modified by nouns and adjectives 551 times. That is, more than half of them are pre-modified by a noun or an adjective. Table 20 shows those nouns and adjectives. Among these pre-modifiers, *criminal*, *civil* and *legal* indicate basic categories of *proceeding*. *Possession*, *confiscation* and *extradition* indicate more specific categories of *proceeding*. Two interesting pre-modifiers are *judicial* and *review*. All of the 16 instances of *review* are used together with *judicial* as shown below:

Extract 7

In the present case, the judicial review proceedings, like the possession proceedings, did not provide any opportunity for an independent tribunal to examine whether...(UK JDG)

Table 20 Pre-modifiers of *proceeding*

modifiers	
possession	55
confiscation	49
criminal	49
civil	39
early	25
judicial	22
legal	20
review	16
such	16
extradition	15
present	15
English	13
care	12
first	11

We can also understand the nature of *proceeding* when we look at the verbs that take *proceeding* as its object noun. In legal English *proceeding* is something we *bring, take, commence, institute* and *issue*. This is particularly so in UK JDG where *proceeding* is most highly used as Table 21 shows.

Table 21 Frequent Verbs of the Object Noun *proceeding*

UK JDG	366	UK LJ	90	US JDG	108	US LJ	32
bring	57	bring	25	include	16	initiate	4
take	39	stay	5	conduct	12	state	3
commence	30	commence	5	reopen	10	institute	2
institute	25	be	5	stay	6	prefer	2
issue	19	total	3	be	4	affect	2
be	13	initiate	3	initiate	3		
raise	12	start	3	institute	2		
begin	11	issue	3	commence	2		
settle	10	include	3	list	2		
initiate	9	institute	2	entertain	2		
start	9	relate	2	begin	2		
adjourn	7	require	2	mandate	2		
pursue	7	take	2	exclude	2		
stay	6			continue	2		
control	4			underlie	2		
conduct	4			avoid	2		
enable	4			involve	2		
treat	4						
dismiss	4						
serve	4						
concern	4						
hold	4						
defend	3						
render	3						
include	3						

Among those five verbs, *bring* and *take* are light verbs, while *commence*, *institute* and *issue* are not. But The last three instances in Extract 8 could be rewritten in light verbs like *bring*, *bring* and *give* respectively.

#### Extracts 8

the appellant was entitled to bring the present proceedings on behalf of her daughter. (UK JDG)

The applicant took civil proceedings against those who were responsible for the nursing home and against the Minister of the Interior, (UK JDG)

On 16 October 2002, the claimant commenced new proceedings against APSA (UK JDG)



If the claimant has instituted proceedings against someone whom he describes as the producer, (UK JDG)

the Ofulues issued fresh proceedings in the Bow County Court for possession of the property against Ms Bossert (UK JDG)

#### 4. 3. 2. *Suit*

*Suit* and *sue* are etymologically related. Both derived from a Latin word '*sequēre*', meaning 'to follow'. This associated object noun *suit* is an interesting noun in the sense that it is used predominantly in the US legal discourse and the two light verbs *bring* and *file* also predominantly collocate.

Table 22 Frequent Verbs of the Object Noun *suit*

UK JDG	2	UK LJ	8	US JDG	265	US LJ	84
		follow	4	bring	116	bring	30
		bring	3	file	41	file	16
				entertain	9	follow	7
				bar	7	initiate	3
				allow	7	base	3
				permit	7	allow	3
				base	7	be	3
				hear	5	preclude	2
				authorize	5	dismiss	2
				maintain	4	encourage	2
				dismiss	4	maintain	2
				follow	4		
				be	4		
				prosecute	3		
				pre-empt	3		
				damage	2		
				comprise	2		
				face	2		
				settle	2		
				preclude	2		
				pend	2		
				recognize	2		
				find	2		

## Extracts 9

Respondents in fact brought a fair representation suit against the Union based on its withdrawal of support for their age-discrimination claims. (US JDG)

Respondents filed this diversity suit in the Eastern District of Kentucky against Bricolage, Arthur Andersen and others, (US JDG)

There are some other legal terms meaning the same as or similar to *suit*. *The Concise Oxford Thesaurus* (2004) lists synonyms for *suit*. Typical examples are as follows:

*legal action, lawsuit, suit at law, case, court case, action, cause, legal/judicial proceedings, litigation, trial, legal dispute/contest, indictment, prosecution*

All the terms except *case* are derived nouns from the corresponding verbs.

*Black's Law Dictionary* (1999) quotes Edwin E. Bryant, *The Law of Pleading Under the Codes of Civil Procedure* 3 (2d ed. 1899), and explains the difference between *action* and *suit* as follows:

"The terms 'action' and 'suit' are nearly if not quite synonymous. But lawyers usually speak of proceedings in courts of law as 'actions,' and of those in courts of equity as 'suits.' In olden time there was a more marked distinction, for an action was considered as terminating when judgment was rendered, the execution forming no part of it. A suit, on the other hand, included the execution. The word 'suit,' as used in the Judiciary Act of 1784 and later Federal statutes, applies to any proceeding in a court of justice in which the plaintiff pursues in such court the remedy which the law affords him."

Table 23 Frequencies of verbs taking *action* as its object noun

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
take	61	bring	44	take	68	take	46
bring	30	take	37	bring	31	bring	23
raise	9	be	12	file	20	base	14
allow	9	pursue	9	enjoin	17	challenge	10
base	8	base	6	dismiss	17	review	8
govern	5	give	5	propose	13	prohibit	8
institute	4	ground	4	challenge	13	require	7
found	4	continue	4	maintain	8	be	7
dismiss	4	justify	4	base	8	file	6
vest	3	see	4	prosecute	7	include	5
accrue	3	involve	4	bar	7	undertake	4
commence	3	consider	4	entertain	5	preclude	4
settle	3	sanction	3	encompass	5	motivate	3
pursue	3	bar	3	commence	5	allege	3
propose	3	warrant	3	pre-empt	4	evaluate	3
conform	2	assign	3	pend	4	pursue	3
entertain	2	defend	3	allow	4	maintain	3
defend	2	perform	3	stay	3	permit	3
bar	2	govern	3	relate	3	determine	3
prosecute	2	support	3	preclude	3	allow	3
foresee	2	determine	3	motivate	3	involve	3
render	2	raise	3	initiate	3		
maintain	2	require	3	imply	3		
authorise	2	use	3	forbid	3		
avoid	2			defer	3		

Compared with *suit*, *action* is constantly used in the four legal corpora. It collocates with the same kind of verbs in each corpus. *Take* collocates very well with *action* in all the four legal corpora while it does not collocate with *suit* at all in any of the legal corpora.

#### 4. 3. 3. *Plea*

According to the *OED*, this word meant ‘agreement, decision, decree, lawcourt, suit, action’ in Middle English, and in Latin it meant ‘which pleases or is agreed upon, a decision, decree, etc.’ The very first definition of this term in the *OED* is as follows:

1. a. A suit or action at law; the presentation of an action in court. Now *Hist.* and *Sc.* (esp. in phr. **a law-plea**).

The meaning became more specific later, as *Black’s Law Dictionary* (1999) shows:

1. An accused person's formal response of "guilty," "not guilty," or "no contest" to a criminal charge.
2. At common law, the defendant's responsive pleading in a civil action.
3. A factual allegation offered in a case; a pleading.

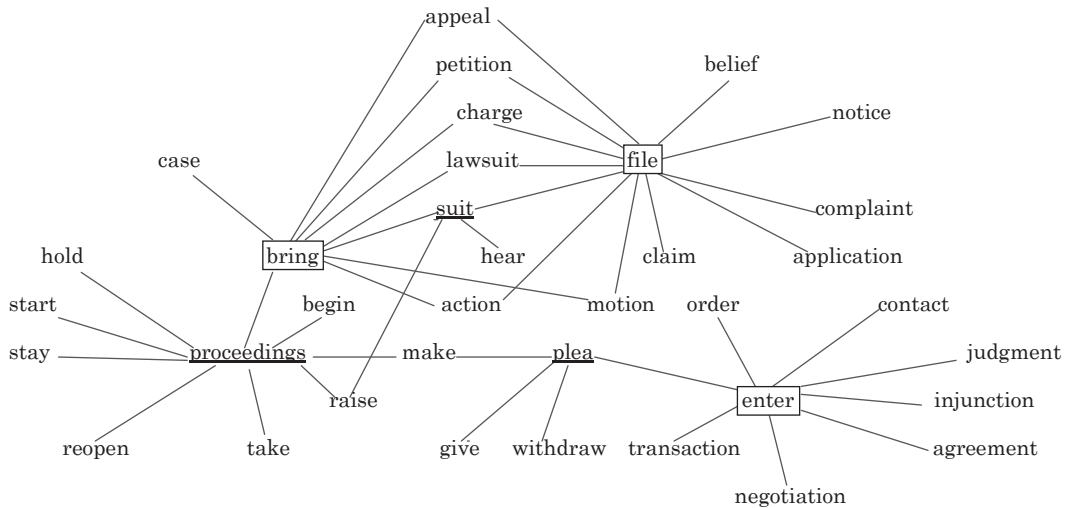
Table 24 shows the frequent collocates with *plea*. *Enter* is the most frequent collocated verb, followed by *withdraw*, *raise* and *vacate*.

Table 24 Frequent verbs of object noun *plea*

UK JDG	27	UK LJ	27	US JDG	46	US LJ	4
vacate	5	raise	9	enter	19		
accept	5	tender	4	withdraw	5		
enter	3	uphold	2	be	3		
	111	be	2	accept	3		
				mention	2		
				give	2		
				change	2		

#### 4. 4. The network of legal terms

I investigated 12 light verbs to see how they are used in legal discourse. I chose three common associated object nouns and analyzed how they collocate with the light verbs. By investigating and analyzing light verb constructions from the light verb side and from the associated object noun side, it became clear that particular light verbs collocate almost exclusively with a particular group of associated object nouns. It also became apparent that some associated object nouns often take numerous light verbs and express a delicate but important difference in professional legal discourse. This interrelationship between the light verbs and the associated object nouns forms a kind of network in legal discourse. I will illustrate this lexical network of light verbs and associated object nouns below to summarize the discussion so far.

Chart 4 An image of the network of *bring*, *file*, *enter* and their object nouns

## 5. Conclusion: Sample *enter*

The ultimate purpose of our project it is to compile a corpus-based, production-oriented legal English dictionary for non-native speakers of English. Therefore, as the conclusion of this paper, I think it would be appropriate to show a sample image of the headword *enter*, one of the light verbs we took up in this paper.

### *enter*

#### 1. (V+(into)+objects) **legal technical terms**

1. 1. **Definition:** officially start, officially state

#### 1. 2. **regional and genre info**

*judgment* (US JDG: 22, US LJ: 8), *plea* (US JDG: 19, UK JDG: 3, UK LJ: 1), *order* (US JDG: 13, US LJ: 4),

*agreement* (UK JDG: 5, US JDG: 4, US LJ: 4), *injunction* (US JDG: 13), *contract* (UK LJ: 7, UK JDG: 3), *transaction* (UK JDG: 2, UK LJ: 2)

#### 1. 3. **structures**

*enter* a *summary/final* judgment (US JDG), *enter* judgment *awarding/ordering* (US JDG), *enter* (a) judgment *in favor of/against/for* (US JDG); *enter* plea of *guilty/not guilty* (US JDG), *enter* a *guilty* plea (US JDG); *enter* *appropriate/clarifying/consent/protective/such* orders (US JDG), *enter* an order *to protect/prevent* (US JDG), *enter* an order *granting* (US JDG), *enter* an order *of removal* (US JDG); an agreement *was entered into*, agreements *were entered into for/between*; (UK JDG), *enter* a *preliminary/permanent/nationwide* injunction (US JDG), *enter*

an injunction *allowing/imposing/requiring* (US JDG); at the time the *contract was entered into* (UK LJ)

## 2. (V+objects) legal technical terms

2. 1. **Definition:** move into

### 2. 2. regional and genre info

*port* (US JDG: 9), *market* (US JDG: 8), *country* (UK JDG: 19), *hospital* (UK JDG: 3), *territory* (UK JDG: 3), *house* (US LJ: 7), *home* (US LJ: 4)

### 2. 3. structures

*ships entering the port* (US JDG), *cement/private/interstate/competitive/nonmonopolized market* (US JDG), enters the/a *intermediate/safe country* (UK JDG), *unlawfully enter a country* (UK JDG), enter the country *illegally* (UK JDG), enter this country *at Heathrow Airport* (UK JDG), enter this country *via* (UK JDG), enter a house *when/where* (US LJ), Policemen can and should enter homes *when* (US LJ), enter the home *of an individual* (US LJ)

## Note

- 1) The theme of this paper is based on the presentation done by the present author at the 36th ICAME conference at Trier, Germany, together with Masayuki Tamaruya of Rikkyo University. The present author revised his part of the presentation and added more detailed legal data.

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## Appendix

Table 3

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
have		have		have		have	
advantage	208	right	153	jurisdiction	160	effect	141
regard	179	effect	152	authority	114	power	94
right	175	regard	73	right	107	incentive	84
effect	137	interest	70	effect	106	right	71
power	114	power	59	interest	57	jurisdiction	61
jurisdiction	91	impact	54	opportunity	56	information	60
benefit	76	reason	40	power	48	authority	59
opportunity	52	intention	37	reason	33	interest	55
control	50	access	32	impact	26	impact	44
application	45	claim	32	meaning	25	opportunity	39
nothing	44	nothing	29	bearing	23	force	33
difficulty	39	potential	28	nothing	23	value	33
reason	36	consequence	28	cause	22	access	32
privilege	35	implication	27	standing	21	reason	28
discretion	35	duty	26	duty	21	implication	27
doubt	32	capacity	25	application	21	consequence	26
prospect	31	obligation	25	knowledge	20	benefit	25
duty	30	jurisdiction	25	occasion	19	ability	24
knowledge	29	discretion	22	discretion	19	advantage	23
meaning	29	opportunity	21	basis	19	duty	23
interest	29	connection	20	obligation	16	control	22
access	27	role	20	force	16	potential	21
responsibility	25	bearing	19	present	14	nothing	21
need	25	meaning	19	potential	13	role	21
excuse	21	title	17	option	12	difficulty	18

Table 4

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
make		make		make		make	
order	344	decision	98	decision	69	decision	107
claim	116	sense	58	sense	64	sense	77
provision	98	point	55	statement	53	law	59
application	87	statement	48	argument	33	choice	34
decision	72	order	48	determination	29	claim	32
statement	61	use	41	finding	26	appointment	26
point	57	contribution	35	choice	25	payment	26
submission	53	reference	35	difference	23	argument	24



reference	46	claim	32	arrest	23	mistake	21
declaration	43	difference	27	effort	19	determination	21
payment	40	choice	26	use	17	use	21
assumption	35	provision	26	expenditure	16	treaty	21
difference	34	change	24	confession	14	statement	19
request	34	mistake	22	reference	13	judgment	18
finding	33	payment	19	showing	12	threat	17
amendment	32	gift	18	point	12	difference	13
representation	30	gain	18	request	11	effort	13
sense	25	distinction	18	contribution	10	change	12
assessment	24	profit	15	error	10	point	12
contract	23	restitution	15			mention	11
use	22	transfer	15			distinction	10
allegation	20	judgment	14			disclosure	10
attempt	19	investment	13				
regulation	19	effort	11				
supply	17	assessment	11				

Table 5

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
take		take		take		take	
place	200	place	124	place	69	place	62
step	187	view	104	action	68	advantage	49
view	105	account	75	account	54	step	47
account	78	approach	57	step	38	action	46
action	61	form	38	position	30	position	28
measure	59	action	37	land	29	form	25
part	43	decision	37	care	22	approach	25
decision	42	step	33	advantage	20	measure	17
proceeding	39	position	26	approach	17	effect	17
care	27	advantage	22	effect	15	view	16
life	24	care	21	part	12	care	13
effect	23	measure	16	view	10	appeal	10
advantage	22	part	16				
approach	21	example	13				
course	18	risk	12				
point	14						
precaution	11						
statement	10						
value	10						

**Table 6**

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
give		give		give		give	
effect	200	rise	138	rise	47	rise	67
rise	186	effect	96	effect	44	effect	31
reason	164	reason	34	weight	32	weight	19
evidence	127	consideration	27	notice	28	way	16
notice	98	weight	25	reason	18	opportunity	15
judgment	81	evidence	21	power	11		
assurance	35	notice	20	party	11		
consideration	35	power	16	consideration	10		
answer	31	example	14				
weight	30	priority	13				
guidance	28	name	13				
power	26	consent	13				
protection	23	way	13				
direction	22	answer	12				
meaning	19	value	12				
preference	15	guidance	11				
detail	15	information	11				
example	15	judgment	11				
permission	13	meaning	10				
care	12						
opportunity	11						
leave	11						
explanation	10						
assistance	10						

**Table 7**

UK JDG		UK LJ		US LDG		US LJ	
raise		raise		raise		raise	
issue	109	question	65	question	29	question	61
question	53	issue	52	claim	25	claim	51
point	21	concern	15	issue	16	concern	47
argument	15	objection	10	concern	15	cost	39
proceeding	12	problem	10	argument	13	issue	22
						problem	11

Table 8

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
bring		bring		bring		bring	
proceeding	57	action	44	suit	116	claim	37
claim	37	proceeding	25	claim	42	suit	30
action	30	claim	25	action	31	action	23
appeal	23		94	case	19	lawsuit	11
						case	11

Table 9

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
file	111	file	111	file		file	
				motion	43	notice	49
				suit	41	petition	24
				petition	37	suit	16
				complaint	23	appeal	14
				action	20	claim	14
				claim	19	complaint	12
				notice	18	lawsuit	12
				brief	16		
				appeal	16		
				lawsuit	12		

Table 10

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
pay		pay		pay		pay	
rent	27	money	23	taxis	12	tax	26
sum	26	attention	20			fee	22
VAT	24	compensation	10			attention	21
tax	21	damage	10			chaplain	19
amount	21		63			taxis	15
price	15					chaplaincy	13
attention	14					salary	12
money	10					debt	11
						compensation	11

**Table 11**

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
do		do		do		do	
act	25	justice	32	nothing	23	nothing	25
something	19	nothing	22	business	11	work	15
nothing	18	thing	20			thing	13
thing	14	work	20			business	10
anything	13	something	17				
work	13	anything	15				
		act	14				
		harm	13				
		job	10				

**Table 12**

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
enter		enter		enter		enter	
country	19			judgment	22		
				plea	19		
				injunction	13		
				order	13		

**Table 13**

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
put		put		put		put	
case	23					way	13
point	16						

**Table 14**

UK JDG		UK LJ		US JDG		US LJ	
offer		offer		offer		offer	
		reason	20			product	13
		account	10				