

Stylistic Study Of English Notarial Discourse

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Abstract: This article systematically analyzes the stylistic features of English notarial discourse. Notarial discourse is a special type of legal language style, distinguished by its specific lexical, grammatical, and textual features. The main aim of the study is to describe the stylistic devices constituting notarial discourse on the basis of register theory (field, tenor, mode) and to reveal their communicative functions. The study uses stylistic analysis, linguistic description, and comparative methods. As a result, the following stylistic layers of notarial discourse were identified: at the lexical level – archaisms (witnesseth, hereunto, aforesaid), Latinisms (jurat, ex parte, prima facie), French borrowings (attorn, estoppel, lien), highly formal vocabulary, and doublet and triplet expressions (null and void; give, devise, and bequeath); at the grammatical level – nominal style and nominalization, the predominance of passive constructions, complex and extended sentences (up to 95 words), and the strict obligatory meaning of modal verbs (shall, must); at the textual level – high standardization and stereotypicality, repetition and redundancy (tautology), strategies of impersonality and objectivity, contrast, antithesis, and enumeration. The article also discusses the influence of the Plain Legal Language movement and electronic notarization on notarial discourse, namely simplification, reduction of archaisms, and the introduction of new technological terms (electronic signature, remote notarization). In conclusion, the stylistic system of English notarial discourse serves to ensure legal precision, formality, international recognition, and professional identification; modern tendencies are gradually developing toward simplification and technological renewal. The article has theoretical and practical significance for specialists engaged in legal linguistics, stylistics, and discourse analysis.

Keywords: Notarial discourse, stylistics, register, archaisms, Latinisms, doublets, passive constructions, nominalization, standardization, plain legal language, electronic notarization.

Introduction: Notarial discourse, as a special type of legal language style, has a number of distinctive stylistic features. The stylistic study of English notarial discourse means the systematic study of the specific stylistic features of notarial documents and the linguistic units that constitute them, the choice of language means, text structure, and the ways in which these elements serve communicative purposes. Crystal and Davy described legal language as a “register” and analyzed its lexical, grammatical, and stylistic aspects. The stylistic analysis of notarial discourse makes it possible to understand the interrelation between the communicative aims, social functions, and language means of this type of discourse.

Halliday described the concept of “register” through three main dimensions: field, tenor, and mode. Analyzing notarial discourse according to these

parameters reveals its stylistic nature.

Field — notarial discourse belongs to the legal-administrative sphere and is connected with the official certification of documents, authentication of signatures, and formalization of legal acts. According to Bhatia, field determines the terminological composition of discourse and requires a special conceptual domain.

Tenor — in notarial discourse, there are formal, hierarchical relations between the participants. The notary, as a legal executor, occupies a higher status than the client. Halliday notes that in legal discourse, notarial relations are manifested through language choice and the rigidity of formulas.

Mode — notarial discourse is mainly a written monologic text and is highly standardized. Biber’s scientific studies in this regard described the

differences between written and spoken language and showed the high level of formality of written legal texts.

After identifying the register features of notarial discourse, there arises a need to analyze more deeply the lexical-stylistic nature of this type of discourse. Leech notes that the stylistic specificity of any type of discourse is manifested primarily in lexical choice, because word choice determines the register level, communicative purpose, and social context of the text. The lexical layer of notarial discourse embodies elements of several historical periods: Anglo-Saxon, Norman-French, and Latin, and this feature was called “historical layering” by Crystal and Davy. Lexical-stylistic analysis makes it possible to understand the historical development, social function, and communicative effectiveness of discourse. Therefore, the systematic study of the lexical-stylistic features of notarial discourse — archaisms and historical layers, Latinisms and French borrowings, formal vocabulary, two- and three-component combinations, and terminological precision — is necessary for creating a complete linguistic description of this type of discourse. Each of these aspects is analyzed in detail below.

1. Archaisms and historical layers. The most noticeable stylistic feature of notarial discourse is the wide use of archaic lexical units. Mellinkoff emphasized the conservative nature of English legal language and showed that many archaic words and expressions have been preserved in modern practice.

Elements preserved from Old English: “Witneseth” — the third-person form of an old English verb meaning “bears witness.” According to Black’s Law Dictionary, “witneseth” is “an archaic word meaning ‘bears witness’ or ‘takes notice,’ once common in legal documents but now obsolescent.” This word is not used in modern speech, but it is still found in notarial and other legal documents:

“This Indenture Witneseth that the party of the first part...”

“Hereunto” — an archaic adverb meaning “to this, to it.” Black’s Law Dictionary notes: “hereunto (adv.) — To this place, thing, or document; used especially in deeds and legal documents.” It is used as a standard expression in notarial certificates:

“In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and official seal”

“Hereinafter” — a formal word meaning “later, below.” According to Black’s Law Dictionary: “hereinafter (adv.) — Later in this document.” This term is used when referring to subsequent parts of a document:

“John Smith (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Principal’).”
“Aforementioned” and “aforesaid” — words meaning

“mentioned above, previous.” Black’s Law Dictionary: “aforesaid (adj.) — Mentioned or recited before or above; previously named.” These words are used to avoid repetition and to refer back to an object or person previously mentioned:

“The aforesaid document was executed in the presence of two witnesses”

“The aforementioned party acknowledged the signature”.

According to Tiersma, the preservation of archaisms gives notarial discourse solemnity and creates a sense of legal continuity. However, he also notes that such language elements may make understanding difficult for ordinary citizens.

Latin language elements. In notarial discourse, there are many lexical units derived from Latin and Old French. This phenomenon is connected with the Norman Conquest and the development of the legal system in the Middle Ages. Terms derived from Latin:

“Jurat” — derived from the Latin word *juratum* (“sworn”). Black’s Law Dictionary: “*jurat* (n.) — A certification added to an affidavit or deposition, typically by a notary public, stating when, where, and before whom the affidavit or deposition was made.” This term denotes a formula of certification under oath.

“Ex parte” — a Latin expression meaning “from one party.” Black’s Law Dictionary: “*ex parte* (adv. or adj.) — On or from one party only, usually without notice to or argument from the adverse party.”

“Per se” — a Latin expression meaning “in itself.” Black’s Law Dictionary: “*per se* (adv.) — Of, in, or by itself; standing alone, without reference to additional facts.”

“Prima facie” — a Latin expression meaning “at first sight.” Black’s Law Dictionary: “*prima facie* (adj.) — Sufficient to establish a fact or raise a presumption unless disproved or rebutted.”

French language elements. “Attorn” — a verb from Old French meaning “to appoint, to represent.” It is the root of the modern word “attorney.”

“Estoppel” — a legal term derived from Old French. Black’s Law Dictionary: “*estoppel* (n.) — A bar that prevents one from asserting a claim or right that contradicts what one has said or done before.”

“Lien” — derived from the French word *lien* (“to bind”). Black’s Law Dictionary: “*lien* (n.) — A legal right or interest that a creditor has in another’s property.”

Mellinkoff notes that the preservation of terms derived from Latin and French is connected with the historical development of English legal language and professional identification.

High formal style vocabulary. Notarial discourse is distinguished by the predominance of highly formal style vocabulary, and in this discourse emotional or figurative expression is not used; a neutral, detached, legal tone predominates. In his stylistic studies, Leech

showed that word choice plays a decisive role in determining the register level of a text. The following table presents the formal equivalents of ordinary lexical units in notarial discourse.

Table 1
Words with formal equivalents in notarial discourse

Ordinary vocabulary	Equivalent in notarial discourse	Meaning in Black's Law Dictionary
show	demonstrate, prove	"to prove or establish by evidence"
before	prior to	"earlier than; in advance of"
after	subsequent to	"following in time or order"
about	concerning, regarding	"relating to; with respect to"
get	obtain, acquire, receive	"to come into possession of"
give	grant, convey, transfer	"to confer or bestow by formal act"
buy	purchase, acquire	"to obtain by paying money"
sign	execute, subscribe	"to perform all formalities necessary to make valid"

For example, in ordinary language, the sentence "Lola showed me his ID before he signed the paper" should preferably be expressed in notarial discourse as follows: "Lola Abdullaeva demonstrated satisfactory evidence of identity prior to executing the instrument."

Another example: the sentence expressed in ordinary language as "I give this property to my son" should, according to the linguistic rules of notarial discourse, be as follows: "I hereby grant, convey, and transfer all right, title, and interest in said property to my son."

In Black's Law Dictionary, the word "execute" is defined as follows: "execute (vb.) —

1. To perform or complete (a contract or duty).
2. To change (as a legal interest) from one form to another.
3. To make (a legal document) valid by signing; to bring (a legal document) into its final, legally enforceable form."

Doublets and triplets. A distinctive stylistic feature of notarial discourse is combinations consisting of synonymous or closely related words. Gustafsson studied the historical origin of such combinations in English legal language and found that many of them appeared during the period of the Norman Conquest.

Doublets:

"Acknowledge and confess" — to acknowledge and confess:

"I acknowledge and confess that I owe the sum of..."

"Null and void" — invalid and void. In Black's Law Dictionary: "null and void (adj.) — Having no legal effect; invalid":

"This agreement shall be null and void if not executed within 30 days".

"Force and effect" — force and effect:

"This power of attorney shall remain in full force and effect".

"True and correct" — true and accurate:

"I certify that this is a true and correct copy of the original".

"Made and entered into" — made and entered into:

"This agreement, made and entered into this 15th day of March..."

"Due and payable" — payable and obligatory:

"The sum shall become due and payable upon demand".

"Keep and maintain" — to keep and maintain:

"The trustee shall keep and maintain accurate records"

"Terms and conditions" — terms and conditions. In Black's Law Dictionary, it is given as follows: "terms and conditions — The provisions and requirements in a contract":

"Subject to the terms and conditions set forth herein".

Triplets:

"Give, devise, and bequeath" — to give, devise, and bequeath. In Black's Law

Dictionary, each is defined separately:

- “give (v.) — To voluntarily transfer (property) to another”
- “devise (v.) — To give (real property) by will”
- “bequeath (v.) — To give (personal property) by will”. For example: “I give, devise, and bequeath all my property to my children”

“Right, title, and interest” — right, title, and interest. In Black’s Law Dictionary: “right, title, and interest — A common phrase in deeds and other conveyances denoting the grantor’s entire interest in the property” — it is a common phrase used in property documents, for example sale contracts and conveyance documents, and it means that the grantor is transferring all rights and interests in the property in full. For example, “The grantor hereby conveys all right, title, and interest in the property”.

“Rest, residue, and remainder” — rest, residue, and remainder: this is a legal phrase usually used in wills and sometimes in other conveyance documents. For example, “I give all the rest, residue, and remainder of

my estate to...”

“Grant, bargain, and sell” — to grant, bargain, and sell: this phrase means that the owner of the property is legally transferring and selling the property to another person. For example, “I hereby grant, bargain, and sell the following described property”.

2. The grammatical-stylistic features of notarial discourse include complex and long compound sentences, the wide use of the passive voice, the use of noun forms instead of verbs (nominalization), and the repeated use of pre-formed legal formulas and fixed expressions. These ensure precision in the text and reduce the possibility of interpretation.

Nominal style and nominalization. Notarial discourse is distinguished by a high level of nominalization, that is, the transformation of verbs into nouns. Banks emphasized the dominance of the nominal style in legal texts and described this phenomenon as a strategy of “packing information.” The following table presents the nominalization of some of the most frequently used verbs in notarial discourse.

Table 2.

The transformation of verbs used in notarial discourse into nouns.

Verb	Nominalization	Use in notarial discourse
acknowledge	acknowledgment	“the acknowledgment of the signature”
execute	execution	“the execution of the instrument”
certify	certification	“certification is required”
identify	identification	“satisfactory identification”
appear	appearance	“the personal appearance of the signer”
subscribe	subscription	“subscription to the oath”
attest	attestation	“attestation of the document”
verify	verification	“verification of identity”
notarize	notarization	“notarization of the deed”

The stylistic functions of nominalization may include the following:

1. Objectification and depersonalization. According to Halliday, nominalization makes it possible to present actions as objects and makes the text impersonal. For example, the verb form (personal): “Lola signed the document.” The nominal form (impersonal): “The execution of the document by Lola Abdullaeva.”
2. Increasing information density: three actions (appearance, identification, execution) are expressed in one complex sentence. For example, a simple sentence: “The person appeared personally. The notary

identified him. Then he signed the document.” In the nominal form: “The personal appearance, identification, and execution by the signatory were completed before the notary public.”

The predominance of passive constructions. In notarial discourse, passive constructions are used much more frequently than active constructions. Biber statistically proved that the passive voice is used 8–10 times more often in legal texts. The main forms of passive constructions are:

1. Be + passive (ordinary passive):
“The document was executed in the presence of two witnesses”

"The signature was acknowledged before me on this date"

"The oath was administered by the notary public".

Black's Law Dictionary uses the passive form in defining the verb "acknowledge": "acknowledge (vb.) — To recognize (something) as being factual".

2. Performative passive:

"It is hereby certified that..."

"It is affirmed that..."

"It is declared that..."

According to Hodge and Kress, passive constructions are used to make responsibility unclear or to focus attention on the action itself. The stylistic functions of the passive voice are as follows:

1. Hiding the agent and focusing attention on the action:

The active sentence "She signed the Power of Attorney" becomes "The Power of Attorney was signed" in the passive voice.

2. Impersonalization and formalization:

Personal: "I saw John sign the document"

Impersonal: "The execution of the document was witnessed".

3. Focus on the document:

"This instrument was acknowledged before me on January 15, 2024"

In this sentence, the document (instrument) is the grammatical subject, while the person's participation is not obligatory.

4. Use in standard formulas. In the standard formulas of notarial certificates, the passive is obligatory:

"Subscribed and sworn to before me this ____ day of ____"

"Acknowledged before me on this date"

"Certified to be a true and correct copy"

Complex and extended sentences. Notarial discourse is distinguished by complex syntactic structures. Solan found that the average length of legal sentences is 29–35 words, which shows that it is much longer than the 15–20 words in ordinary speech. In notarial discourse, simple nouns often turn into complex nominal groups. In a simple case, the lexical unit "the document," when expanded, becomes "the duly executed notarial instrument of conveyance."

In notarial documents, complex sentences that combine several conditions, descriptions, and actions are often found: "On this 15th day of January, in the

year 2025, before me, Ezozkhon Ortikova, a Notary Public in the city of Jizzakh, personally appeared Lola Abdullaeva, known to me (or proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence) to be the person whose name is subscribed to the within instrument, and acknowledged to me that she executed the same in her authorized capacity, and that by her signature on the instrument the person, or the entity upon behalf of which the person acted, executed the instrument." This sentence consists of 95 words, and such complex sentences create difficulty in understanding for ordinary citizens.

Modal verbs and modality. In notarial discourse, modal verbs play an important role in expressing legal obligation, permission, and necessity. Palmer defined modality as "expressing the speaker's attitude toward the proposition." For example, according to Black's Law Dictionary, "shall" denotes strict obligation and a legal requirement: "shall (v.) — Has a duty to; more broadly, is required to... In most legal contexts, shall is imperative." "The notary shall verify the identity of the signer", "The certificate shall include the date of notarization", "The seal shall be affixed to each page".

3. Text-level stylistic features of notarial discourse. While the analysis of stylistic features at the word and sentence levels has revealed the micro-linguistic nature of notarial discourse, stylistic research at the text level makes it possible to understand the macrostructure, global organizational principles, and mechanisms of textual coherence of this type of discourse. De Beaugrande and Dressler note that a text is not a collection of separate sentences, but an integral communicative unit with special organizational principles. In notarial discourse, this integrity is ensured through a high degree of standardization, a clearly defined macrostructure, and specific textual strategies. While Halliday and Hasan distinguished two main mechanisms of text creation — cohesion, that is, grammatical and lexical linking devices, and coherence, that is, semantic and logical consistency — notarial discourse has its own specific ways of realizing these mechanisms. Bhatia emphasized the importance of text-level features in the analysis of professional and notarial discourse and showed that each genre has the principle of "generic integrity." The text-level stylistic features of notarial discourse — standardization and stereotypicality, strategies of repetition and redundancy, and means of impersonality and objectivity — are the main factors ensuring the professional identification, legal force, and international recognition of this type of discourse. Therefore, text-level stylistic analysis is necessary for creating a complete linguistic description of notarial discourse and evaluating its communicative

effectiveness.

Standardization and stereotypicality. An important stylistic feature of notarial discourse is its high degree of standardization. The types of standard formulas may include the following:

1. Opening formulas:

"State of _____
County of _____"

This formula appears at the beginning of every notarial certificate and has an unchangeable character.

"Know all men by these presents that..."

"Be it known that..."

"This is to certify that..."

2. Certification formulas:

"Personally appeared before me..."

"Proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence..."

"Acknowledged to me that he/she executed..."

3. Closing formulas:

"Witness my hand and official seal"

"In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand"

"Given under my hand and seal of office this ____ day of _____"

Kurzon indicated the following functions of standardization:

1. Legal security: standard formulas have been tested in courts

2. Efficiency: it is not necessary to create a new text every time

3. Reduction of errors: the probability of error in a standard formula is low

4. Professional identification: formulas are a linguistic marker of the notarial community.

Repetition and redundancy. In notarial discourse, repetition and redundancy occur much more frequently than in ordinary speech. Mellinkoff called this feature of legal language "emphatic redundancy." The forms of repetition may be as follows:

1. Lexical repetition. Unlike ordinary language, in notarial discourse the main word is repeated instead of using pronouns: "Alibek Temirov appeared before me. Alibek Temirov proved his identity. Alibek Temirov acknowledged the execution of the instrument." In fact, instead of repeating proper names, the ordinary sentence should have been as follows: "Alibek Temirov appeared before me. He proved his identity. He acknowledged..."

2. Synonymic redundancy or tautology. Tautology as a stylistic device is one of the distinctive features of

notarial discourse. Leech defined tautology as "the repetition of words with the same or very close meaning." In notarial discourse, tautology is mainly manifested in the form of two-component combinations (binomial expressions), and they create a specific type of semantic redundancy. For example, in the combination "free and clear," both words mean "without any restriction" and emphasize that the property is free from encumbrances, debts, and any legal claims. Similarly, in the pair "final and conclusive," the words final and conclusive are synonymous in the meaning of "final, not subject to change," and by emphasizing the firmness of the decision through both words, they strengthen legal precision.

Impersonality and objectivity. One of the central stylistic features of notarial discourse is a high degree of impersonality and objectivity. In his analysis of academic and professional discourses, Hyland proved that the impersonal style performs the functions of focusing attention on the content of the text and expressing objective truth. In notarial discourse, impersonalization is realized through several strategies: formal designations (the grantor, the undersigned, the notary public) are used instead of first- and second-person pronouns (I, you); passive constructions ("The document was executed") create a focus on the process while the agent is hidden; nominalization and abstract nouns ("The execution of the instrument") present actions as objects; impersonal it-constructions ("It is hereby certified that...") completely remove the speaker. Objectivity is ensured through evidential markers ("on the basis of satisfactory evidence"), precise time-place indicators ("On this 15th day of January, 2024, in the County of Los Angeles"), and numerical precision ("Ten million Uzbek sums (10,000.000)", "Driver's License Number: A1234567"). In notarial discourse, impersonality and objectivity are a functional necessity that ensures the legal force of the document, its generally accepted status, and its quality of being accepted as evidence in court.

Contrast and antithesis. In notarial discourse, the two sides of legal relations are clearly distinguished through the creation of contrast.

Contrastive pairs:

"The grantor and the grantee"

"The principal and the agent"

"The testator and the beneficiary"

"Rights and obligations"

Antithesis:

"Not only to use but also to enjoy"

"Neither to sell nor to encumber"

“Either by will or by intestacy”

Enumeration is one of the important rhetorical-stylistic devices of notarial discourse, performing the function of ensuring legal precision and completeness. Leech called enumeration “rhetorically marked listing” and showed that it creates an emphasizing and systematizing effect in the text. In notarial discourse, enumeration is manifested in two main forms: simple enumeration (“real property, personal property, tangible assets, intangible assets, and all other property of whatsoever kind or nature”) lists elements of the same level in sequence and realizes the principle of “all-inclusiveness”; hierarchical enumeration (“First, the debts shall be paid; Second, the bequests shall be distributed; Third, the residue shall be divided”) arranges elements in order of importance or sequence and creates a logical structure. In notarial discourse, the formula “including but not limited to” is especially widely used, for example: “all rights, including but not limited to: the right to use, the right to sell, the right to lease, and any and all other rights” — according to the definition in Black’s Law Dictionary, this formula means “a nonexclusive list” and emphasizes that the listed elements are only examples and that other elements also exist.

4. Modern stylistic tendencies of notarial discourse. At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Plain Legal Language movement began an attempt to simplify notarial discourse. Asprey indicated that the main purpose of Plain Language is to make legal texts more understandable for the general public. The main principles of the Plain Language approach consist of short sentences (20–25 words), the predominance of the passive voice, reduction of archaisms, a clear logical structure, and improvement of visual presentation. For comparison: if in the traditional style it is written as “Know all men by these presents that I, Fotima Abdullaeva, being of sound mind and memory, do hereby make, publish, and declare this to be my Last Will and Testament,” in the Plain Language style it is expressed in a simple and clear form as “This is the will of Fotima Abdullaeva. I revoke all previous wills. I am of sound mind.” However, according to Tiersma, the full application of Plain Language in notarial discourse causes a number of problems: plain language may sometimes lose legal precision, court precedents may require traditional formulas, and the need for international standardization and the preservation of professional identification limit such changes.

In the twenty-first century, the development of digital technologies and electronic notarization has introduced new terminological and stylistic elements into notarial discourse. In modern notarial practice,

new terms such as electronic signature, digital certificate, remote notarization, video conference authentication, and blockchain verification have appeared. Traditional notarial formulas have been adapted to the digital environment; for example, new standard expressions such as “This notarial act was performed via two-way audio-video communication in compliance with [State] law regarding remote online notarization” or “The signer’s identity was verified through knowledge-based authentication and credential analysis” have emerged.

The stylistic analysis of English notarial discourse shows that this type of discourse has a multifaceted and complex stylistic system. At the lexical level, the preservation of archaisms and historical layers, terminology derived from Latin and French, formal style vocabulary, doublets and triplets, and terminological precision are observed. At the grammatical level, the nominal style, the predominance of passive constructions, complex sentences, and the specific use of modals stand out. At the textual level, high standardization, repetition strategies, impersonality, objectivity, parallelism, and enumeration are the main features. These stylistic elements ensure the functions of legal precision, official status, and international recognition of notarial discourse. Modern tendencies, namely the Plain Legal Language movement and electronic notarization, show that notarial discourse is gradually developing in the direction of simplification and technological renewal.

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