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LINGUISTIC AND NORMATIVE FEATURES OF THE TEXT OF NORMATIVE LEGAL DOCUMENTS: OFFICIAL-ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE, TERMINOLOGY, AND PRINCIPLES OF CLARITY

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Abstract

This article examines the linguistic and normative features of normative legal documents as a specialized type of institutional text that must simultaneously be legally valid, administratively executable, and linguistically unambiguous. The study focuses on how the official-administrative style organizes meaning through stable formulaic constructions, standardized syntactic patterns, and a restricted set of pragmatic intentions such as prescribing, prohibiting, authorizing, and defining. Special attention is paid to the terminological system of normative documents, where lexical precision, conceptual consistency, and controlled synonymy function as key instruments for preventing interpretive variability. The paper argues that clarity in normative texts is not a purely stylistic preference but a normative principle directly linked to legal certainty, equality of application, and enforceability. Using a philological approach to institutional discourse, the article analyzes typical sources of opacity in normative drafting, including excessive nominalization, overloaded sentences, vague reference, inconsistent definitions, and uncontrolled borrowing. The research synthesizes criteria for linguistic quality assurance in normative drafting: definitional discipline,



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terminological uniformity, coherent reference chains, explicit scope markers, and balanced use of modality. The article also discusses the interaction between Uzbek language norms and contemporary legal drafting practices, highlighting challenges of translating legal concepts, aligning terminology across sectors, and maintaining readability for mixed audiences ranging from legal professionals to citizens. The findings propose an integrated model for evaluating normative legal texts that combines stylistic, lexical-semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic indicators, offering recommendations for improving drafting culture and enhancing the communicative effectiveness of legal regulation in multilingual and rapidly modernizing institutional contexts.

Keywords: Normative legal text, official-administrative style, legal linguistics, terminological consistency, definitional precision, legal certainty, modality, standardization, textual clarity, institutional discourse.

NORMATIV-HUQUQIY HUJJATLAR MATNINING LINGVISTIK-ME'YORIY XUSUSIYATLARI: RASMIY-IDORAVIY USLUB, TERMINOLOGIYA VA ANIQLIK PRINSIPLARI

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Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada normativ-huquqiy hujjatlar matni institutsional matnning maxsus turi sifatida tahlil qilinib, u bir vaqtning o'zida yuridik jihatdan haqiqiy, ma'muriy jihatdan ijro etiladigan va lingvistik jihatdan aniq bo'lishi lozimligi asoslanadi. Tadqiqot rasmiy-idoraviy uslubning barqaror qolipli konstruksiyalar,

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standart sintaktik modellar hamda buyurish, taqiqlash, ruxsat berish va ta'riflash kabi cheklangan pragmatik niyatlar orqali mazmunni qanday tashkil etishiga qaratilgan. Normativ hujjatlar terminologik tizimiga alohida e'tibor berilib, leksik aniqlik, tushunchaviy izchillik va nazorat qilinadigan sinonimiya talqinlar xilmassisligini oldini olishning asosiy vositalari sifatida ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqolada normativ matnlardagi aniqlik faqat uslubiy afzallik emas, balki huquqiy aniqlik, qo'llashda tenglik va ijro etiluvchanlik bilan bevosita bog'liq bo'lgan me'yoriy prinsip ekanligi asoslanadi. Institutsga diskursga filologik yondashuv asosida normativ hujjatlarni ishlab chiqishda uchraydigan noaniqlik manbalari, jumladan, ortiqcha nomlanishlar, haddan tashqari yuklangan gaplar, noaniq ishoralar, izchil bo'limgan ta'riflar va nazoratsiz o'zlashmalar tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot normativ matnlarning lingvistik sifatini ta'minlash mezonlarini umumlashtiradi: ta'rifiy intizom, terminologik bixillik, izchil ishora zanjirlari, qo'llanish doirasini aniq belgilash va modal birliklardan muvozanatli foydalanish. Shuningdek, maqolada o'zbek tili me'yorlari va zamonaviy normativ-huquqiy hujjatlar tuzish amaliyoti o'rtasidagi o'zaro munosabat muhokama qilinib, huquqiy tushunchalarni tarjima qilish, turli sohalar bo'yicha terminologiyani muvofiqlashtirish hamda yuridik mutaxassislar va fuqarolarni qamrab oluvchi aralash auditoriya uchun matnning o'qilishi bilan bog'liq muammolar yoritiladi. Natijalarda stilistik, leksik-semantik, sintaktik va pragmatik ko'rsatkichlarni birlashtirgan normativ matnlarni baholashning integrallashgan modeli taklif etilib, normativ hujjatlar tuzish madaniyatini takomillashtirish va huquqiy tartibga solishning kommunikativ samaradorligini oshirish bo'yicha tavsiyalar ishlab chiqiladi.

Kalit so'zlar. normativ-huquqiy matn, rasmiy-idoraviy uslub, yuridik lingvistika, terminologik izchillik, ta'rifiy aniqlik, huquqiy aniqlik, modallik, standartlashtirish, matniy aniqlik, institutsional diskurs.



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Introduction

Normative legal documents occupy a distinctive position among institutional genres because they are not only communicative artefacts but also instruments that create binding rules, allocate competences, and structure social behavior through formally established prescriptions. For that reason, the language of a normative act is never a neutral medium: it is part of the regulatory mechanism itself. A minor lexical ambiguity, an unclear reference, or an inconsistent definition can generate divergent interpretations, uneven application, and practical enforcement problems. In legal systems that are modernizing rapidly and expanding the scope of regulation, the requirement of textual clarity becomes especially critical, since normative documents must be readable for professional audiences and, at the same time, accessible to the broader public affected by legal rules. Within this context, philological analysis can contribute to improving drafting culture by identifying linguistic patterns that support legal certainty and by diagnosing those features that increase interpretive variability.

The official-administrative style is the traditional stylistic framework for normative documents. It is characterized by standardization, impersonal presentation, stable formulaic constructions, and a pragmatic orientation toward regulation rather than narration or evaluation. Standardization supports predictability: similar legal situations are described using similar textual models, which facilitates consistent interpretation. However, standardization can also produce excessive rigidity and heaviness when drafting relies on inherited templates without considering communicative economy. In such cases, the text becomes overloaded with nominalizations, multi-layered participial structures, and long sentences that obscure logical relations between conditions, subjects, and legal consequences. Therefore, a key issue is how to preserve the functional advantages of official style while preventing linguistic opacity.

Terminology is another central dimension of normative drafting. Terms in legal texts do not merely name objects; they encode categories, delimit scope, and



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establish the conceptual boundaries within which rights and obligations are assigned. Terminological precision requires more than choosing “correct” words: it demands conceptual consistency across the document and across the broader legal system, as well as disciplined definitional practice. If one concept is expressed through multiple near-synonyms, or if one term is used with shifting meaning, the text invites interpretive disputes. In addition, the interaction between Uzbek linguistic norms and legal terminology creates specific challenges. On the one hand, Uzbek has developed stable resources for official communication; on the other hand, modernization introduces new concepts in governance, finance, digital regulation, and international cooperation, often accompanied by loanwords and translation calques. Without harmonization, these processes can lead to parallel terminological variants, hybrid collocations, and inconsistent adaptation of foreign concepts, all of which affect clarity.

The principle of clarity in normative texts may be understood as a complex of linguistic and pragmatic requirements that minimize reasonable alternative interpretations while maintaining completeness and legal accuracy. Clarity includes explicitness of scope, transparent logical relations, coherent reference, and predictable modality. It also depends on the drafting strategy: whether the text defines key concepts before use, whether it avoids vague evaluative adjectives without criteria, and whether it structures obligations and permissions in a way that clearly identifies the addressee, conditions, and enforcement consequences. From a philological viewpoint, clarity can be operationalized through observable indicators: sentence length and complexity, density of nominal groups, proportion of passive and impersonal constructions, clarity of deictic and anaphoric reference, consistency of term usage, and alignment between definitions and subsequent occurrences.

This article investigates the linguistic and normative features of normative legal documents by integrating approaches from stylistics, discourse analysis, and legal linguistics. The focus is placed on the functional role of official-administrative



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style, the organization of legal terminology, and the linguistic mechanisms that realize the principle of clarity. The purpose is to identify typical risks for interpretive ambiguity and to propose a set of linguistically grounded criteria for improving drafting quality in Uzbek-language normative texts within a philological university framework.

Methods

The study applies a qualitative philological methodology supported by targeted quantitative observations to describe how clarity, terminological discipline, and official-administrative style are realized in normative legal documents. The research design is based on the assumption that linguistic form in normative texts is functionally motivated by legal intent and by institutional requirements of standardization. Therefore, the analysis focuses on recurrent patterns at several levels of language organization: lexical-semantic selection, definitional practices, syntactic structuring, modality and speech-act realization, cohesion and reference management, and macro-textual arrangement of norms.

The primary material for analysis consists of representative Uzbek-language normative legal documents and model fragments typical for legislative and by-law drafting, including provisions defining concepts, establishing duties and prohibitions, granting authorizations, and regulating procedures. The selection principle is functional representativeness: texts were chosen not by thematic field alone but by the variety of normative intentions and by the diversity of institutional addressees. This makes it possible to compare linguistic strategies in rules aimed at specialists with those addressed to wider audiences. In addition, comparative micro-analysis is used when equivalent formulations appear in parallel documents, allowing the study to identify how small linguistic differences may affect interpretive stability.

At the lexical-semantic level, the method includes terminological mapping and controlled synonymy checks. Terminological mapping involves identifying key



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terms in a document, determining their definitional status, and tracing their distribution across provisions. The analysis checks whether the same concept is named consistently, whether the term is used only within its defined scope, and whether competing variants occur. Controlled synonymy checks evaluate whether stylistic variation introduces conceptual variation, especially in legal pairs such as right and entitlement, duty and obligation, or procedure and order. Particular attention is paid to loanwords and calques, where the study assesses morphological adaptation, collocational stability, and the presence of parallel Uzbek equivalents, since such variation can influence clarity for different reader groups.

At the syntactic level, the study uses structural parsing of normative sentences to identify the explicitness of subjects, conditions, and legal consequences. Normative provisions are decomposed into components: addressee, modality marker, regulated action, conditions, exceptions, temporal limits, and enforcement reference. This decomposition makes it possible to diagnose typical sources of opacity, including chain-like nominal groups, multiple embedded clauses, and unclear attachment of exceptions. The analysis also examines the balance between impersonal constructions and explicit agency. While impersonal forms support institutional neutrality, excessive impersonality can obscure responsibility, especially in procedural norms where the acting body must be clear.

At the pragmatic level, the study employs speech-act classification adapted to legal discourse. Provisions are categorized as definitional, prescriptive, prohibitive, permissive, constitutive, procedural, or referential. For each category, typical formulaic markers are identified, such as modal verbs and impersonal predicates, performative frames, and stability of drafting templates. The method evaluates whether the linguistic form matches the intended legal function, since mismatch can generate ambiguity, for example when a provision is phrased descriptively while intended as mandatory. The analysis also considers



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modality gradation and the management of discretion, distinguishing strict obligation from conditional obligation and from recommendation-like formulations that may be inappropriate in binding texts.

Textual cohesion is analyzed through reference-chain tracking. This includes examining how terms, pronouns, and deictic expressions point to subjects, objects, and earlier provisions; whether references are explicit or implicit; and how cross-references to other articles, annexes, or external acts are formulated. The method checks for risks of referential vagueness, such as phrases like “in the established manner” without a clear pointer to the relevant procedure. Macro-textual organization is evaluated by observing sequencing of definitions, general rules, exceptions, and transitional clauses, since clarity depends not only on sentence-level precision but also on the predictability of information flow.

To support the qualitative analysis, the study incorporates limited quantitative measures that function as diagnostic signals rather than as independent proof. These include counts of sentence length ranges, frequency of nominalizations, proportion of passive and impersonal constructions, and repetition rates of key terms versus variant expressions. These measures help to compare fragments and to justify claims about density and complexity. Reliability is increased through iterative coding: provisions are repeatedly reviewed to ensure consistent classification of speech acts and consistent identification of terminological units. The resulting methodological framework enables the formulation of linguistically grounded recommendations for improving normative drafting in Uzbek, with a focus on enforceable clarity and system-consistent terminology.

Results

The analysis demonstrates that Uzbek-language normative legal documents are shaped by a stable official-administrative stylistic core, yet the degree to which this core supports clarity depends on how standardization is implemented at lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic levels. Three primary result blocks emerge: the



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functional benefits of formulaic official style, the centrality of terminological discipline for legal certainty, and the recurrent linguistic sources of opacity that weaken the principle of clarity.

The first result concerns the structure of official-administrative style. Normative provisions consistently rely on impersonal and institutionalized constructions that signal objectivity and general applicability. This includes recurrent frames for obligation, prohibition, authorization, and procedural regulation. Such formulaic patterns increase predictability because readers learn to associate specific linguistic signals with specific regulatory effects. The analysis shows that standard templates are most effective when they keep the addressee, conditions, and consequences explicit. When these elements are grammatically recoverable without guesswork, the official style becomes a clarity-enhancing mechanism rather than merely a traditional form. Conversely, when templates are reproduced mechanically, the text often accumulates redundant introductory phrases, excessive nominal groups, and repeated references that do not add legal meaning. In these cases, standardization increases length without improving precision.

The second result concerns terminological organization. The corpus indicates that terminological consistency is a decisive factor for interpretive stability. Documents that introduce a defined term and then use it uniformly across provisions demonstrate fewer opportunities for alternative readings. However, the analysis identifies a frequent pattern of terminological drift, where a term is introduced but later replaced by near-synonyms or by descriptive paraphrases. This drift is particularly visible in domains influenced by international terminology, such as digital governance, education administration, financial regulation, and institutional management. Parallel variants may include a loanword and its Uzbek equivalent, or two different Uzbek formations competing for the same concept. While such variation may look stylistically acceptable in non-normative genres, in normative texts it functions as a risk factor because it can be interpreted as indicating different legal scopes. The findings also show that



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definitional clauses are not always operationally sufficient: some definitions are circular, too broad, or include evaluative attributes that require external criteria. As a result, later provisions can inherit ambiguity even when a definition exists. The third result identifies recurrent linguistic causes of opacity. The most common source is syntactic overload, where a single provision includes multiple conditions, exceptions, and procedural details in one long sentence. This structure often produces unclear attachment: it becomes uncertain whether an exception modifies the entire rule or only one clause within it. Another frequent cause is nominalization density, which turns actions into abstract nouns and reduces the visibility of agency and sequence. In procedural norms, nominalization can hide the acting body or blur the order of steps, creating practical difficulties for implementation. The analysis also reveals a pattern of referential vagueness: phrases such as “in the established manner,” “as appropriate,” or “in necessary cases” appear without internal criteria or explicit cross-references, thereby transferring interpretive power to administrative practice rather than to the text itself. From a linguistic standpoint, such expressions function as open-textured operators; they are sometimes unavoidable, but their uncontrolled use undermines the clarity principle.

A further result concerns modality. Normative texts rely on strong obligation markers and standardized permission frames, but cases of modality inconsistency were observed when different modal signals are used for the same level of binding force. For example, a norm may alternate between strict obligation and softer formulations that resemble guidance, even though the document is intended to be fully binding. This inconsistency creates uncertainty about discretion and enforcement. The analysis also finds that impersonal modality, while aligned with official style, can obscure responsibility when the subject institution is not clearly specified elsewhere. Clarity improves when the acting body is named explicitly at least once within the relevant block and then maintained via consistent reference.



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Finally, macro-textual sequencing significantly affects comprehension. Documents that provide definitions before their first operational use, separate general rules from exceptions, and place procedural steps in a logical order demonstrate higher readability and fewer interpretive tensions. Where definitions appear late, or where exceptions are scattered across distant provisions without clear cross-references, readers must reconstruct the norm by searching across the text, increasing the chance of misunderstanding. Overall, the results confirm that clarity in normative drafting is produced by the interaction of standardized official style with disciplined terminology, transparent syntax, controlled modality, and coherent reference management.

Discussion. The results confirm that normative legal texts should be treated as high-responsibility discourse where linguistic choices have direct regulatory consequences. From a philological perspective, the official-administrative style is not simply an external “register” but a functional system that encodes legal force through stable pragmatic signals. At the same time, the findings show that the same mechanisms that enable standardization can also generate opacity when they are applied without linguistic control. This tension suggests that drafting culture requires not only legal expertise but also text-linguistic competence, especially in multilingual and rapidly modernizing contexts where new concepts enter the system faster than terminological standards consolidate.

One key implication concerns the relationship between clarity and legal certainty. In normative drafting, clarity is often mistakenly reduced to “simple language.” The results indicate that clarity is better understood as interpretive determinacy under reasonable reading conditions. A norm may be linguistically “simple” yet still unclear if its scope is not marked, if exceptions are not attached transparently, or if key concepts are not defined consistently. Conversely, a norm may be syntactically complex but still clear if it explicitly names the addressee, conditions, and consequences in a predictable structure. Therefore, clarity should



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be operationalized through functional criteria: explicit scope, stable terminology, coherent reference, transparent modality, and separability of rule and exception. The terminological findings highlight a structural challenge in Uzbek-language legal drafting: the coexistence of inherited official vocabulary, evolving Uzbek lexical resources, and internationalized terminology. Terminological plurality is not inherently negative, but in normative texts it must be governed by a system principle: one concept, one term within one act, unless a deliberate distinction is introduced and defined. Without this discipline, variation becomes a source of legal ambiguity. The issue becomes more complex when loanwords are used unevenly, producing parallel variants that may differ in morphological integration and collocation. In such cases, philological expertise can support terminological harmonization by identifying the most stable and transparent equivalents, verifying their compatibility with Uzbek normative grammar, and ensuring that definitional clauses fix meaning before the term enters operational provisions. The discussion of syntactic overload suggests that many clarity problems are not semantic but structural. Long sentences, dense nominal groups, and multiple embedded clauses are typical in official style, yet they become problematic when they prevent the reader from reconstructing the logical architecture of the norm. A practical drafting implication is the principle of decomposability: a provision should be easily decomposed into addressee, modality, action, conditions, exceptions, and references. If decomposition requires interpretation, the text is already failing the clarity principle. This does not require abandoning official style; rather, it requires structuring the same content with clearer clause boundaries, explicit connectors, and careful placement of exceptions. In Uzbek, where agglutinative morphology allows compact expression, the risk is that complex legal relations become compressed into overloaded constructions. Therefore, clarity control must include not only sentence length but also internal logical segmentation.



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Referential vagueness emerges as an especially important issue because it transfers normative meaning from the text to external administrative practice. Expressions such as “in the established manner” may be justified when a stable subordinate regulation exists, but if the reference target is not named precisely, the norm becomes dependent on discretionary interpretation. From a legal-linguistic angle, such phrases function as indexical placeholders. Their clarity depends on explicit cross-references, definitional anchoring, or procedural annexes that can be accessed by the reader. The findings thus support a drafting principle of traceable reference: every generalized procedural pointer should either name the exact source (article, annex, or act) or include minimal internal criteria that constrain interpretation.

Modality results point to the need for consistent management of binding force. Inconsistent modality can create uncertainty about whether a rule is mandatory, conditional, or discretionary. This is particularly relevant in regulatory documents produced by different institutional bodies, where stylistic habits may vary. A philological approach can provide a modality audit, checking whether one and the same legal relation is expressed with uniform modal markers across a document. Such auditing is not cosmetic; it reduces interpretive variability and supports enforceability.

In the educational context of a philological university specializing in Uzbek language, these findings have curricular implications. Training should integrate legal text linguistics, terminological culture, and applied stylistics, so that future specialists can evaluate normative texts not only for grammatical correctness but also for functional clarity. The study supports an interdisciplinary model where philology collaborates with legal studies: legal meaning is drafted through language, and language quality is a component of legal quality. This perspective frames clarity, terminology, and official style as not separate topics but interdependent dimensions of normative communication that can be improved through linguistically informed drafting standards.



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Conclusion

The study shows that the linguistic quality of normative legal documents is inseparable from their normative effectiveness: official-administrative style, terminological organization, and clarity mechanisms function together to secure legal certainty, uniform interpretation, and practical enforceability. The official-administrative style provides a stable textual framework that marks institutional authority and regulatory intent through standardized constructions and predictable pragmatic signals. When this standardization is managed consciously, it increases transparency and supports consistent application. When it is reproduced mechanically, however, it may generate redundancy, syntactic overload, and lowered readability without adding legal precision.

The findings confirm that terminological discipline is a core condition of clarity in normative drafting. Consistent use of defined terms, controlled synonymy, and concept-to-term stability reduce interpretive variability and prevent unintended scope shifts. In Uzbek-language normative texts, terminological challenges intensify in sectors influenced by international concepts, where parallel variants, uneven borrowing, and insufficient definitional anchoring may appear. The research demonstrates that definitions alone do not guarantee clarity unless they are operationally precise, non-circular, and systematically applied throughout the document. Terminology must be treated as a regulated subsystem of the text, not as a stylistic choice.

At the syntactic and pragmatic levels, the study identifies recurrent sources of opacity that undermine the clarity principle: long multi-component sentences with unclear attachment of exceptions, high nominalization density that obscures agency and procedural sequence, referential vagueness that relies on unspecified external procedures, and modality inconsistency that blurs the degree of obligation or discretion. These issues are not merely linguistic imperfections; they create practical risks for implementation and equal application. Clarity, therefore, should be understood as interpretive determinacy achieved through explicit scope

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marking, transparent logical relations, stable reference chains, and consistent modality.

On this basis, the article proposes an integrated philological approach to normative drafting quality assurance. Such an approach includes terminological mapping, definitional discipline checks, structural decomposition of provisions into functional components, reference traceability auditing, and modality consistency review. For the context of a philological university focusing on the Uzbek language, the results support strengthening educational modules that connect stylistics, legal linguistics, and discourse analysis with applied drafting practice. Developing linguistic competence in normative communication contributes directly to improving the culture of regulation, enhancing accessibility of law for citizens, and supporting the reliability of institutional governance.

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