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The Linguistic Characteristics Of Legal Terminology In Legal Communication

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the fundamental principles, sources, and contemporary developments of International Law and highlights the significance of Legal English as an essential tool for international legal communication. The study analyzes the role of international legal norms in regulating relations among states, international organizations, and other subjects of international law. Particular attention is given to the importance of Legal English in drafting treaties, interpreting legal documents, conducting international negotiations, and resolving transnational disputes. The article also explores the linguistic characteristics of legal terminology, the challenges of legal translation, and the growing demand for Legal English proficiency in the global legal environment.

Keywords:

International Law, Legal English, international legal system, treaties, customary international law, legal terminology, legal drafting, international organizations, dispute resolution.

Introduction

International Law has emerged as one of the most influential legal systems governing relations among sovereign states, international organizations, and other international actors. The rapid globalization of political, economic, technological, and social interactions has significantly increased the importance of international legal norms and principles. Simultaneously, Legal English has become the dominant language of international legal communication, treaty drafting, arbitration proceedings, diplomatic negotiations, and transnational legal practice.

The modern framework of International Law is largely founded upon the Charter of the United Nations, which was signed in San Francisco on 26 June 1945 and entered into force on 24 October 1945. The UN Charter established the fundamental principles of sovereign equality, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-use of force, and international cooperation among

states. It also established the International Court of Justice (ICJ) as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.

Main Part

One of the most authoritative statements regarding the sources of International Law is found in Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice. According to this provision, international conventions, international custom, general principles of law, judicial decisions, and scholarly writings constitute the primary sources used in determining international legal rules. The Statute itself became effective on 24 October 1945 as an integral part of the UN Charter.

Within this framework, Legal English plays a critical role because the overwhelming majority of international treaties, arbitration awards, legal opinions, diplomatic correspondence, and international court documents are drafted or translated into English. Consequently, legal professionals engaged in international practice

must possess not only legal knowledge but also linguistic competence in specialized legal terminology.

Legal English differs substantially from ordinary English. It contains unique expressions such as *jurisdiction*, *ratification*, *sovereignty*, *customary international law*, *state responsibility*, *binding obligation*, and *pacta sunt servanda*. These terms possess precise legal meanings that cannot be interpreted according to their ordinary dictionary definitions.

One of the most significant developments in International Law was the adoption of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. The Convention was adopted on 23 May 1969 in Vienna and entered into force on 27 January 1980. It established comprehensive rules governing the conclusion, interpretation, amendment, suspension, and termination of treaties between states.

The Vienna Convention is often described as the "treaty on treaties" because it codified many customary rules that had developed over centuries of diplomatic practice. The Convention emphasizes fundamental principles such as good faith, free consent, and *pacta sunt servanda* the principle that agreements must be observed by the parties.

From the perspective of Legal English, treaty drafting requires exceptional precision. A single word may determine the legal obligations of states. For example, the distinction between the words *shall*, *may*, and *should* creates significantly different legal consequences. The term *shall* generally establishes a binding obligation, whereas *may* indicates discretion and *should* often reflects a recommendation rather than a mandatory requirement.

The contemporary international legal system is experiencing one of the most significant transformations in its history. Unlike previous periods, modern International Law is no longer limited to regulating diplomatic relations between states. Today, it addresses highly complex global issues such as artificial intelligence governance, cybersecurity, climate change, digital privacy, international sanctions, cryptocurrency regulation, transnational terrorism, migration crises, and global health security. As a result, Legal English has become

the primary language through which these emerging legal challenges are discussed, negotiated, regulated, and resolved.

One of the most notable developments in recent years has been the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI). In March 2024, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/78/265 entitled "*Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development*." This was the first global UN resolution dedicated exclusively to artificial intelligence governance. The resolution emphasized the importance of ensuring that AI technologies respect human rights, international law, and sustainable development objectives. In practice, lawyers, policymakers, technology companies, and international organizations rely heavily on Legal English terminology such as *AI governance*, *algorithmic accountability*, *digital ethics*, *transparency obligations*, and *human oversight mechanisms* when drafting regulatory frameworks and international agreements.

Another important contemporary issue concerns cybersecurity and cyber warfare. Modern states increasingly face cyberattacks targeting financial institutions, government agencies, energy infrastructure, and communication systems. According to recent discussions within the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Information and Communication Technologies (2021-2025), states have acknowledged that existing principles of international law apply to cyberspace. Consequently, legal professionals are required to interpret concepts such as *state responsibility*, *attribution*, *due diligence*, *sovereignty*, and *prohibition of the use of force* within digital environments. These legal debates are conducted predominantly in Legal English, making linguistic competence essential for participation in international cyber governance.

Climate change remains one of the most pressing legal challenges of the present era. During the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties (COP28), held in Dubai from 30 November to 13 December 2023, participating states reached historic agreements concerning

climate finance and the transition away from fossil fuels. The legal documents produced during these negotiations incorporated contemporary Legal English terminology including *climate mitigation*, *adaptation finance*, *loss and damage fund*, *net-zero emissions*, and *environmental accountability*. Such terminology demonstrates how Legal English continuously evolves to address emerging global concerns.

Conclusion

Recent developments in international criminal justice further demonstrate the relevance of Legal English. During 2024 and 2025, the international community closely followed proceedings before the International Criminal Court (ICC) concerning allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in various conflict zones. Official legal documents issued by the Court utilize highly specialized terminology including *individual criminal responsibility*, *command responsibility*, *crimes against humanity*, *war crimes investigations*, and *international humanitarian law compliance*. These proceedings illustrate how Legal English functions as the operational language of international judicial institutions.

The field of digital rights has also emerged as a major component of contemporary international law. Governments, international organizations, and human rights institutions increasingly address issues relating to online privacy, digital surveillance, data protection, and freedom of expression on digital platforms. Legal concepts such as *data governance*, *digital sovereignty*, *privacy rights*, *cyber resilience*, and *cross-border data transfers* have become central elements of modern international legal discourse. The growing significance of these concepts highlights the necessity for legal professionals to remain informed about evolving Legal English terminology.

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