

LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF WRITING AN ENGLISH ABSTRACT FOR A PHD THESIS IN LAW

Zaiarna Inna

*PhD in Education, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at Foreign Languages Department of Educational
and Scientific Institute of Law
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
Kyiv, Ukraine*

Stupenko Maria

*Teacher at Foreign Languages Department of Educational
and Scientific Institute of Law
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
Kyiv, Ukraine*

The abstract of a PhD thesis in law is crucial for summarizing complex legal arguments, methodologies, and findings, making them accessible to an international academic and professional audience. Writing an effective English abstract for a legal thesis requires adherence to specific linguistic conventions that ensure clarity, precision, and coherence, particularly given the specialized nature of legal terminology. This paper explores the key linguistic aspects involved in crafting an English abstract for a PhD thesis in law, with practical examples illustrating the challenges and solutions.

In this study, we focus on the following aspects: Clarity and Conciseness; Tense and Voice; Lexical Precision and Cohesion, as they are essential for producing high-quality legal abstracts that effectively communicate complex ideas. These aspects are further elaborated in our other research papers [1; 2].

1. *Clarity and Conciseness.* In legal abstracts, clarity involves the precise articulation of legal issues, arguments, and conclusions, while conciseness ensures that the abstract succinctly presents the research without unnecessary detail.

Example:

Less clear and concise: «*The research endeavors to scrutinize the legal implications of various frameworks regulating international trade, with particular emphasis on the potential ambiguities that might arise from differing interpretations of treaty obligations.*»

More clear and concise: *«The research examines the legal implications of international trade frameworks, focusing on ambiguities in treaty interpretations.»*

In legal writing, it is particularly important to avoid convoluted sentences and excessive legal jargon that might obscure the key points [4].

2. *Tense and Voice*. The use of tense and voice in a legal abstract should reflect the nature of the research. The present simple tense is often used to state the purpose and findings of the research, while the past simple or present perfect tense is used to describe the analysis or case studies.

Example:

Stating the purpose (present simple): *«This thesis analyzes the impact of human rights treaties on domestic legislation.»*

Describing the analysis (past simple): *«Case law from various jurisdictions was examined to identify patterns in judicial interpretation.»*

Describing the findings (present perfect): *«The analysis has demonstrated inconsistencies in the application of international norms.»*

The passive voice is frequently used in legal writing to maintain objectivity, but excessive use can lead to vagueness [3].

Example:

Overuse of passive voice: *«It has been observed that the principles of equity are frequently misinterpreted.»*

Balanced use of active and passive voice: *«The principles of equity are frequently misinterpreted, as observed in several landmark cases.»*

3. *Lexical Precision and Cohesion*

Legal abstracts require high lexical precision to accurately convey complex legal concepts and arguments. The correct use of legal terminology is essential to ensure the abstract is meaningful to legal professionals and scholars.

Example:

Less precise: *«The study looks into how the law deals with international contracts.»*

More precise: *«The study investigates the enforcement of international commercial contracts under the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (CISG).»*

Cohesion is achieved through the logical flow of ideas and the use of linking words that guide the reader through the legal arguments [6].

Example:

Less cohesive: *«The thesis discusses contract law. It also explores dispute resolution.»*

More cohesive: *«The thesis discusses contract law, particularly focusing on dispute resolution mechanisms within international arbitration frameworks.»*

All of the abovementioned aspects are mastered by PhD students in law at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv while taking the compulsory course in English Academic Writing. For that purpose, *Introduction to Academic Writing: Reference and Practice for PhD Students in Law* [5] was designed.

Conclusion. Writing an English abstract for a PhD thesis in law demands careful attention to linguistic details, particularly in ensuring clarity, precision, and cohesion. By focusing on these aspects, legal scholars can create abstracts that effectively communicate their research to a global audience. Non-native English speakers, in particular, may need to practice and refine their abstracts to meet the linguistic standards required for legal discourse.

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