

Administrative and legal styles

Administrative and legal styles of English use linguistic means at the levels of discourse, syntax, word groups and vocabulary, serving to enable and facilitate transmission of information in the most accurate way and avoid ambiguity. The means to achieve this aim are as follows:

- postmodification in nominal groups (particularly frequent in legal English)
- zero or low determination
- rare use of intensifiers
- marked or unusual word order
- use of a limited range of verbs
- abstract nouns and verbs
- modal verbs

Language of law: frequent occurrence of archaisms, formal words and phrases, pair synonyms and words of Romance (i.e. French and Latin) origin in its lexis.

Administrative style and its genres (such as announcements and advertisements) overlaps with the **journalistic or newspaper style**. These texts share with typically administrative genres (such as instructions, directives, etc.) the emphasis on clear, unambiguous formulation and use of modal verbs and imperative forms.

Language of business is a subtype of the administrative style. Several different **genres** can be distinguished within it depending on their medium (spoken or written), domain or field of discourse, tenor (although neutrality and formality prevail) and function. E.g. commercial correspondence comprises variety of texts such as offers, enquiries, orders, invoices, claims and complaints, forms, etc. Other: e.g. application forms, requests, questionnaires, etc.

At the **lexical level**, the necessity of maintaining terms must be highlighted because explicitness, clarity and stability of expression are essential for the coherence of administrative discourses.

Administrative texts are

- rather traditional
- bookish
- syntactically and lexically stereotypical
- unambiguous
- non-expressive, i.e. neutral or formal
- stressing visual markers

Scientific or technical style

It aims to communicate message which is lexically dense, with high information value, complex structure and standardised form. Mistrík¹ distinguishes two types of technical (*odborný*) style:

- **administrative**

¹ cf. Knittlová, D.: *Funkční styly v angličtině a češtině*, p. 26.

- **didactic** (*naučný*) (further divided into **scientific** and **popular** varieties).

The **written (and monological) form** predominates. Its main function is to express ideas **accurately, excisely** and **fully**. There is no feedback, no reliance on support provided by prosodic features (stress, intonation, loudness, etc.) or paralinguistic means (e.g. gestures).

Texts must be linguistically and stylistically obvious, clear and transparent so that the process of communication is made smoother and the message is unambiguous.

Typically:

- strict organization of expressions (i.e. syntax)
- structure of a text (its division depending on the content)
- order within a sentence (to show relations between ideas)

Tools used:

- connectors
- referential and deictic expressions
- subordinating/hypotactic conjunctions (to achieve hierarchical organization, to show relations between clauses).

Tools avoided:

- other than the objective/unmarked word order
- alternation of verbal categories serving for topicalization
- substitution of pronouns for other pronouns
- unusual or expressive constructions.

Sentences (which the **scientific style** shares with the **administrative/official style**) are:

- relatively independent,
- rather stereotypical,
- schematic,
- more condensed (i.e. include non-finite clauses and constructions), and have
- condensed syntax,
- logical internal structure,
- high objectiveness (i.e. use impersonal constructions and passive voice).

Lexis – based on **terms**. Typical word classes are **nouns** and **adjectives**. Terms must be **unambiguous** (but not necessarily monosemous).

Subjective and expressive/emotive expressions are avoided.

The more scientific the style is, the narrower the terms are.

Individual scientific disciplines make use of a **rather limited vocabulary**. Lexemes are subject to **high repetitiveness** (absolutely highest compared with other styles).²

Lexis is stereotypical (and so is syntax), but the stereotype suits the functions of the style – in consequence, it allows easier, more accurate and unambiguous understanding.

² Knittlová, D.: *Funkční styly v angličtině a češtině*. Olomouc: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého, 1990. P. 27.

The main aim of scientific texts – to define things accurately and organize ideas logically and clearly. The principal technique is **explanation**, consisting of the functions of explanation, clarification, provision of arguments, examples, following a strictly logical approach.

Two branches of the **style of science**:

- **objective, matter-of-fact** (*věcný*), concise
- **popular didactic**, close to prose, essay

Popular technical/scientific style: close to the **conversational and publicistic styles**.

Attempts to be attractive, to characterize things and their properties. Bigger segmentation of texts. Descriptive techniques. Shorter sentences, not very specialised terminology. Terms explained, paraphrased.

Galperin – distinction between the styles of **humanities** and **exact/natural sciences** – in impersonal expression (passive constructions or general subject *we*), typical for the latter.

Condensation of expression: semantic condensers - noun groups.