Challenges Faced by the Legal Translators

W. H. M. S. M. Wijesinghe[1]
Department of Linguistics

The arena of Legal Translation faces some unique problems in the use of language. Unlike literary translations, legal texts are to be translated without any aesthetic effects. The vocabulary, grammar and the style of the legal documents being different than the other documents is the main reason behind the issue. Comprehensibility of the language in legal documents is an issue to be taken into account. On one hand it is argued that the language used by lawyers is incomprehensible to non-lawyers, because of the reason that the lawyers need to be precise. And on the other hand it is argued that legal language should be comprehensible to non-lawyers. Though richness is added to the legal language used, this issue is aggravated by the use of Latin terms which acts as a rhetorical tool in the legal writing arena. Hence legal translators must be well adept in Latin terms. The objective of this study is to explore the challenges faced by the legal translators, reasons for such challenges, and to identify the impact of such challenges on the quality of the translation. The study was conducted via a mixed method approach, which consisted questionnaires distributed among the legal practitioners combined with an online survey done through the social-media platforms. The analyzed data leads to the conclusion that the language used in legal documents causes comprehensibility issues for legal translators in the process of translation. Also the vocabulary and sentence structures being different than literary translations, legal translators face challenges in relation to the translation with the precise word, despite the subtle differences in meanings. Use of Latin terms and unfamiliar legal terms make the translation process difficult to legal translators. Hence the study recommends the use of simple legal language instead of the archaic legal language, and familiarizing the legal translators with the legal language.

Key words: archaic, challenges, comprehensibility, Latin terms, legal language.

---

[1] *senandiw@gmail.com*