

The Syntactic Features of Islamic Legal Texts and Their Implications for Translation

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Abstract : Certain religious texts are deemed part of legal texts that are characterised by high sensitivity and sacredness. Amongst such religious texts are Islamic legal texts that are replete with Islamic legal terms that designate particular legal concepts peculiar to Islamic legal system and legal culture. However, from the syntactic perspective, Islamic legal texts prove lengthy, condensed and convoluted, with little use of punctuation system, but with an extensive use of subordinations and coordinations, which separate the main verb from the subject, and which, of course, carry a heavy load of legal detail. The present paper seeks to examine the syntactic features of Islamic legal texts through analysing a short text of Islamic jurisprudence in an attempt at exploring the syntactic features that characterise this type of legal text. A translation of this text into legal English is then exercised to find the translation implications that have emerged as a result of the English translation. Based on these implications, the paper compares and contrasts the syntactic features of Islamic legal texts to those of legal English texts. Finally, the present paper argues that there are a number of syntactic features of Islamic legal texts, such as nominalisation, passivisation, little use of punctuation system, the use of the Arabic cohesive device, etc., which are also possessed by English legal texts except for the last feature and with some variations. The paper also claims that when rendering an Islamic legal text into legal English, certain implications emerge, such as the necessity of a sentence break, the omission of the cohesive device concerned and the increase in the use of nominalisation, passivisation, passive participles, and so on.

Keywords : English legal texts, Islamic legal texts, nominalisation, participles, passivisation, syntactic features, translation implications

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