Major Problems in Legal Translation

By
Dassim Muhammad Abu-Ghazal

Licence in Law, Beirut University, 1982
B.A. English Language & Literature,
Yarmouk University, 1987

Diploma in Education,
Yarmouk University, 1991

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Translation), in the Department of English at Yarmouk University.

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Muhammad Saraireh .................................................. Chairman
Dr. Abdullah Shunnaq ................................................... Member
Dr. Yousef Bader ......................................................... Member

December, 1996
Abstract

This study will tackle the legal translation as a problematic phenomenon to translators. Legal translation is a kind of technical translation which should be dealt with very accurately and carefully in order to avoid any mistakes that may occur because translators may not have understood the SL text or used equivalents that do not give the same meaning and hence create a problematic situation as legal texts must be understood as carrying the same meaning to all those concerned with the text. This is why translation should not be ambiguous, but clear, brief and accurate.

The study will also show that legal translation is a unique phenomenon in that legal texts have special attributes that a translator should stick to either in form or in content so, this will also pose extra difficulty to translators.

Also, the study aims at showing what distortions or failures committed by translators when dealing with legal texts and will try to find the reasons behind that and will suggest some solutions.

Moreover, Arabic and English are two languages that are remote linguistically and culturally. They have different word order and different stylistic methods to achieve many goals. So it is very important to legal translators to be well competent in both languages, and in both cultures in order to render flawlessly.

Practice and experience, with an ability to write well can also be very important to translators dealing with legal texts.
As legal translation is very delicate, any kind of innovation that can improve or help achieve the goal of translators, is very plausible so translators should always be aware of the whole situation and always try to do their best.

Finally, legal translation is different from other kinds in at least one very important feature: It is a moral commitment on the part of translators who are always asked to take oaths before doing their jobs. This attribute along with competence, skill, cleverness are but few attribute to name for legal text translators.