

Accuracy and Cultural Sensitivity in the Translation of Legal Terminology

Yuting Wang ¹, Guifang Wang ^{2,*}

¹ Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing, China

² Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing, China

* Corresponding Author

Abstract

This paper aims to explore how to ensure the accuracy of legal term translation while taking into account the cultural sensitivity of legal terms. First, the introduction will introduce the background and significance of the research problem, and propose the purpose and overview of the research. Secondly, the article elaborates on the definition and importance of the accuracy and cultural sensitivity of legal terms in the field of legal term translation. Subsequently, it analyzes the strategies and challenges of balancing the two in legal text translation. Finally, through practical case studies, it demonstrates how to successfully achieve this balance in practice, enhance persuasiveness and credibility, and propose some measures and suggestions for resolution, making the article more authentic and rigorous.

Keywords

Legal term translation, accuracy, cultural sensitivity, balancing strategies and challenges.

1. Introduction

The translation of terms in legal translation holds particular significance. Whether the translation of terms is accurate often affects the quality of the translation, and improper translation can even lead to legal disputes (Zhang Fa Lian, 2022). Therefore, the accuracy of legal term translation is very important. English legal terms reflect the legal culture and historical background of the common law system, which requires translators to have a certain understanding of it. If they only pay attention to the literal meaning and ignore the cultural and historical background implied by the legal terms, then incorrect translation is inevitable (Zhang Kai Gong, 2011). Therefore, legal term translation must also focus on cultural sensitivity. With the advancement of globalization, legal exchanges between countries are becoming increasingly frequent, and legal activities are also increasing. Accurate translation of legal terms has become a necessary condition. It plays a decisive role in ensuring the correct understanding and application of legal texts. At the same time, legal terms often contain profound cultural connotations. The differences in legal systems and cultural backgrounds of different countries and regions pose huge challenges to the translation of legal terms. Therefore, researching the accuracy and cultural sensitivity of legal term translation can not only help improve the quality of legal translation and promote international cooperation, but also help enhance understanding and respect among different cultures, and promote the exchange and prosperity of world culture.

2. Principles of Legal Term Translation

2.1. Legal Term Translation Accuracy

The accuracy of legal term translation refers to the terms used in legal documents must be able to express specific legal norms authentically and appropriately, with clear meanings and without ambiguity or unclear categories (Liu Ruiling, 2011). The accuracy of legal term translation requires translators to have a thorough understanding of relevant legal knowledge, to comprehend the nuances in the meanings of legal terms influenced by different cultures, and to carefully analyze and deliberate on each term's specific meaning and its connotations and denotations within the law. In doing so, translated legal terms can be accurate, rigorous, and persuasive, leaving no room for errors. The accuracy of legal terms is an important feature of legal language and directly relates to the realization of legal standardization and legal effectiveness. The accuracy of legal term translation not only demands precision in the translation itself but also requires correct understanding and appropriate application of these legal terms in conjunction with different legal cultural backgrounds to ensure the standardization of the law and uphold legal order.

Accurate legal terms help ensure the correct conveyance of legal norms and the realization of legal efficacy. The standardization and accuracy of legal terms contribute to ensuring legislative unity, reflecting the authority and stability of the law, ensuring successful implementation of the law, and maintaining the stability of the legal system. Moreover, the accuracy of legal terms plays a significant role in promoting international legal cooperation and exchange (Jia Lijuan, 2009).

2.2. Legal Term Translation Cultural Sensitivity

Legal term translation cultural sensitivity means that during the translation and use of legal texts, translators need to fully consider the differences between source and target languages' cultures, as well as how these differences affect the meaning and usage of legal terms (Zhu Wenjing, 2012). This involves having a profound understanding and full respect for different national legal systems, traditional legal cultures, and legal thinking styles, to ensure that legal term translations accurately convey their original meaning across cultural backgrounds while avoiding unnecessary misunderstandings and conflicts due to cultural differences.

The cultural sensitivity in legal term translation is crucial for legal translation and international legal communication. It helps enhance the quality of legal services, enabling them to better adapt to globalization needs, protecting the legitimate rights and interests of parties from different cultural backgrounds, providing more humanized services, meeting their needs, increasing their satisfaction and sense of gain, enhancing their experience, and making them feel respected, understood, and recognized.

3. Challenges in Accuracy and Cultural Sensitivity of Legal Terminology Translation

3.1. Challenges to the Accuracy of Legal Terminology Translation

The accuracy of legal terminology plays a crucial role in legal translation. However, it faces multiple challenges:

Complexity of Legal Terminology: Legal terms are highly specialized and complex. Legal documents often contain numerous professional terms and intricate legal provisions, each representing specific legal norms with clear connotations, allowing no ambiguity or vagueness. Inaccurate translation may lead to serious legal consequences, adverse social impacts, and potentially compromise the fairness and justice of the law.

Disparities in Legal Systems: Different countries have unique legal terms and concepts that may not have direct equivalents in other legal systems, making it difficult to find accurate equivalents during translation. Legal systems are also dynamic, with new laws replacing old ones and updating existing systems. The legal systems of Anglo-American countries vary significantly under different cultural backgrounds, affecting the accuracy of legal terminology translation.

Special Nature of Legal Documents: Legal documents are authoritative and normative, requiring translations to maintain the rigor and consistency of the original text. This demands that translators remain faithful to the original while conforming to the expression habits of the target language, ensuring consistency throughout the document—a very challenging task.

3.2. Challenges to the Cultural Sensitivity of Legal Terminology Translation

Cultural sensitivity in legal terminology translation is a significant influencing factor that involves accurately conveying the meaning of legal terms across different cultural contexts. Here are some specific challenges:

Differences in Cultural Psychology and Thinking Modes: Legal terms are not only a matter of language but are deeply influenced by culture. Different ethnic cultural backgrounds have nurtured different understandings and usages of legal terms, complicating their translation. The thinking modes formed under the influence of different ethnic cultures profoundly affect the cultural sensitivity of legal terminology translation.

Disparities in Legal Cultural Traditions: Legal terms reflect legal culture, with specific legal significance in different countries and regions, embodying various cultural traditions. To adhere to the formality and solemnity of legal language and achieve legally equivalent effects, translators should strive to find formal terms in the target text that are equivalent or nearly equivalent to those in the original. However, the existence of legal cultural differences has created many instances of non-equivalence (Li Sen, 2012). Different cultural traditions profoundly interpret cultural sensitivity, adding difficulty to translation.

Specificity of Legal Terminology: Legal terminology is the basic unit of legal language, and its translation affects the quality of legal translation. Legal language is a product of culture, deeply influenced by the political, social, historical, and customary aspects of a specific legal system (Li Sen, 2012). Terms from different legal systems vary due to cultural differences and require consideration of cultural sensitivity in translation and modification.

4. Strategies and Successful Cases for Balancing Accuracy and Sensitivity in Legal Terminology Translation

4.1. In-depth Understanding of Legal Background and Consideration of Cultural Factors

Before translating legal terminology, it is essential to deeply understand and analyze the legal background, culture, and context of the original text. This helps us accurately grasp the legal meaning of the original text and find appropriate translation methods. During translation, special attention must be paid to legal concepts and expressions under different cultural backgrounds, avoiding the use of words and phrases that may cause misunderstanding or conflict. Using correct and appropriate terminology ensures the accurate translation of the legal content intended to be conveyed.

4.2. Use of Professional Dictionaries and Tools, Seeking Professional Help

Utilize professional legal dictionaries and online translation tools to ensure the accurate translation of legal terminology. Avoid relying on general dictionaries or internet search results, as they may be inaccurate or misleading. If encountering difficult issues, collaborate with legal

experts or professionals in the translation field. Their expertise and experience can assist us in better addressing challenges in translation. Consistency in the translation of the same legal term throughout a legal document should be maintained to preserve the document's rigor and professionalism.

4.3. Successful Cases Balancing Both

Regarding successful cases of balancing accuracy and cultural sensitivity in legal terminology translation, we can refer to the following examples: In 2020, the State Council issued regulations related to the China (Hainan) Free Trade Pilot Zone. To promote this policy, relevant regulations needed translation into English. Throughout the process, the team paid special attention to consistency in legal effectiveness and semantic equivalence of terms. They consulted professional legal dictionaries and tools to ensure accurate translation of terminology. Also, considering Sino-Western cultural differences, the translation team focused on the appropriateness of expressions, ensuring target readers could comprehend accurately. This translation project provided an accurate and culturally sensitive English representation of the regulations for the China (Hainan) Free Trade Pilot Zone, supporting international exchange and cooperation effectively.

In a technology collaboration agreement between a Chinese enterprise and a French company, a Shenzhen contract translation firm needed to translate the Chinese contract into French. Due to legal differences between France and China, the translation team had to adjust certain clauses to comply with French legal requirements. The team demonstrated a keen grasp of legal norms and cultural differences. They conducted in-depth research on French law, understood the characteristics and requirements of French contracts, then made appropriate modifications and adjustments before translating. During translation, they also paid special attention to the accuracy of legal terminology and clarity of expression. Ultimately, the translation team provided a contract that complied with the legal regulations of both countries, ensuring the protection of both parties' rights and the smooth progress of cooperation.

The above cases illustrate successful practices in balancing accuracy and cultural sensitivity in legal terminology translation. These cases involve not only the translation of legal documents but also encompass various fields including international business cooperation. Through these cases, the translation teams ensured accuracy and met bilateral requirements by conducting thorough research, professional translation, and multiple communications. These successful cases offer valuable experiences and insights: when translating legal documents, it is crucial to fully consider cultural differences and variations in legal provisions, adopting suitable translation strategies and methods to ensure the accuracy and professionalism of the translation results.

5. Conclusion

In this era of diverse integration, balancing the accuracy and cultural sensitivity of legal terminology is particularly crucial. Our journey of exploration has revealed a truth: law is not only a collection of rules but also a carrier of culture. The accuracy of law ensures the stability and authority of the legal system, while cultural sensitivity serves as a bond connecting different legal cultures, promoting understanding and respect among all parties. At the same time, we have learned that balancing these two aspects is no easy task; it requires us to embrace cultural diversity and consider sensitivity while adhering to the professional accuracy of law. This demands that legal translators and practitioners possess exceptional professional competence and cross-cultural communication skills. Through carefully selected case analyses, we have seen successful examples that prove in navigating the sea of legal terminology, it is essential to adhere to the lighthouse of accuracy and heed the winds of cultural sensitivity. Ultimately, our goal is to create a legal language environment that is both rigorous and inclusive,

allowing the power of law to be fully effective on a global scale. Let us continue to explore at the intersection of law and culture with this insight and determination, contributing to the construction of a more just and harmonious international community.

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