



IMPORTANT POINTS in LEGAL TRANSLATION

Specialization in translation is an important issue for translators. It requires a hard, long, and demanding process to determine the field to specialize in. Medicine, construction, finance, literature, law, and so forth are among the fields translators can specialize in. Probably, the field of law is one of the most important ones, considering the watertight characteristic of legal translation. Sometimes, even the wrong translation of a word may cause disaster between people, companies or states. To minimize the possibility of making errors in translation, we - translators to be - should do research and attend as many seminars or conferences as possible, on this subject. On the 5th of October, in Marmara University, a seminar (organized by Translation and Interpreting Department – English Language) was given by İdil ÇAĞAN KUYAN, and in this article, I will share some information I learned in this seminar.



First of all, it is important for translators to know the legal systems (e.g. Civil Law, Common Law) and the differences among them so as to make proper translations. We should also know the areas under these systems such as public law or private law, and understand the type of the source text (e.g. shareholders agreement, share purchase agreement, letter of intent) to be able to choose the correct equivalences in the target language. Furthermore, we should avoid using terms which aren't included in legal terminology since they may have different meanings in different contexts.



Using ‘shall, must, may, and will’ is another important point. In translation of legal texts, we use one of these modals according to the meaning of the sentence. For example; if we want to say “is required to”, we should use “must”. If we don’t pay attention to these usages, in the target language we may produce a completely

different sentence in meaning. We should also pay attention to the use of capital letters.

While translating, the question “Should I use compound expressions or simple ones?” comes to our minds, and we generally choose compound ones considering that they sound more professional. However, in legal translation it doesn’t work. In translation of a legal text, it is mostly better to prefer simple expressions. Below are some useful examples given by Mrs. ÇAĞAN KUYAN in the seminar:

COMPOUND	SIMPLE
by means of	by
for the purpose of	to
for the reason that	because
in favor of	for
in the event that	if
subsequent to	after
in as much as	since

As translators, we should closely follow recent changes, which is quite important especially for legal translators. There may be changes in a law or in constitution, which may require different translation choices in the target texts.

Finally, in legal translation, we may have to receive approval from, for example, the notary. In such a case, we should know what to do: What are the steps of receiving approval?, Which papers should be submitted?, Should we go to the notary together with a translator?, and other similar important questions.

As we see, translating a legal text is more than writing the words in a source text in a target language. Translators play a significant role as bridges between people, companies, languages and even governments, especially in the matter of law. Therefore, to make proper legal translations, we have to make use of different sources regarding the above mentioned points, carry out activities on this specific subject, and follow the changes in the field rather than just depending on dictionaries.

REFERENCES

Adobe Style Guide

Wydick, Richard C., (5th Edition), Plain English for Lawyers