LEGAL TERMINOLOGY CHALLENGES IN FOREIGH LINGUISTICS

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Abstract

Legal terminology represents one of the most intricate and institutionally conditioned subsystems of language. Despite its normative function and aspiration toward precision, legal terminology often generates semantic ambiguity, pragmatic inconsistency, and interpretative difficulty, particularly in multilingual and cross-jurisdictional contexts. This article examines the key challenges of legal terminology in foreign linguistics from a forensic linguistic perspective. Special attention is paid to polysemy, terminological vagueness, system-bound legal concepts, and problems of legal translation and interpretation. The study adopts a descriptive-analytical and comparative methodology, drawing on examples from Anglo-American legal discourse and integrating insights from Uzbek linguistic scholarship. The findings demonstrate that inaccurate interpretation or translation of legal terminology may lead to serious judicial consequences, including evidentiary distortion and procedural injustice. The article highlights the crucial role of forensic linguistics in ensuring terminological clarity, legal certainty, and fairness in judicial practice.

Keywords

legal terminology, forensic linguistics, legal discourse, terminological ambiguity, legal translation, judicial interpretation.

Introduction

The increasing globalization of legal relations and the expansion of international judicial cooperation have intensified scholarly interest in legal language and legal terminology. Legal texts, courtroom discourse, and procedural documents rely heavily on specialized terminology that functions not merely as linguistic units but as carriers of legally binding concepts. However, the apparent precision of legal terminology often conceals underlying semantic and pragmatic complexity.

In foreign linguistics, legal terminology poses particular challenges due to cultural specificity, systemic differences between legal traditions, and the absence of full conceptual equivalence across languages. From a forensic linguistic perspective, legal terms acquire special significance, as their interpretation may directly influence judicial decisions, the evaluation of evidence, and the protection of legal rights (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007).

Uzbek linguistics has also devoted considerable attention to issues of terminology, functional styles, and legal language. Scholars such as A. Hojiyev, Sh. Rahmatullayev, and N. Mahmudov emphasize that terminological accuracy is a fundamental prerequisite for effective legal communication. This article seeks to integrate international forensic linguistic approaches with Uzbek terminological scholarship in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of legal terminology challenges in foreign linguistics.

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Legal Terminology as a Linguistic and Legal Phenomenon

Legal terminology differs fundamentally from general vocabulary in both function and structure. While ordinary lexical units primarily serve communicative purposes, legal terms encode normative meanings established by legal institutions. As Tiersma (1999) notes, legal terms are inseparable from the legal concepts they represent and cannot be fully understood outside their institutional context.

One of the central problems of legal terminology is **polysemy**. Many legal terms possess meanings that diverge significantly from their everyday usage. For instance, the English term *consideration* refers to a specific legal requirement in contract law, whereas in general language it denotes thoughtfulness or reflection. Such semantic divergence complicates interpretation for non-specialists and non-native speakers.

Another characteristic feature of legal terminology is **terminological vagueness**. Legal drafters may intentionally employ vague terms to allow judicial discretion and adaptability. However, from a forensic linguistic standpoint, vagueness creates interpretative risks, particularly in criminal proceedings where linguistic ambiguity may affect the rights of defendants (Bhatia, Candlin, & Gotti, 2005).

Uzbek linguist Sh. Rahmatullayev emphasizes that terminological systems must maintain internal coherence and semantic stability in order to function effectively within legal discourse. Failure to ensure such stability results in ambiguity and inconsistency in legal interpretation.

Forensic Linguistics and the Interpretation of Legal Terminology

Forensic linguistics is an interdisciplinary field that applies linguistic theory and methodology to legal contexts. Its scope includes authorship attribution, discourse analysis, interpretation of legal texts, and examination of spoken interaction in legal settings. Legal terminology occupies a central position in forensic linguistic analysis, as disputes over meaning frequently arise in judicial practice.

Shuy (1998) demonstrates that suspects and witnesses often misunderstand legal terminology during police interrogations, especially when legal language is used without adequate explanation. Terms such as *waiver*, *consent*, or *right to remain silent* may be interpreted incorrectly, thereby undermining the validity of confessions and procedural guarantees.

From a forensic perspective, legal terminology must be analyzed not only at the semantic level but also at the pragmatic level, taking into account speaker intention, institutional power relations, and the communicative competence of participants. A. Hojiyev's terminological studies underline the importance of contextual analysis in determining the precise meaning of legal terms within specific communicative situations.

Cross-Linguistic and Translational Challenges of Legal Terminology

In foreign linguistics, legal terminology presents additional challenges due to **system-bound legal concepts**. Šarčević (1997) argues that many legal terms are embedded in specific legal traditions and therefore lack direct equivalents in other legal systems. As a result, literal translation often fails to convey the intended legal meaning.

For example, the Anglo-American concept of *equity* has no exact counterpart in many civil law systems, including the Uzbek legal framework. Translators must therefore seek functional or descriptive equivalents rather than formal lexical matches. Uzbek linguist N. Mahmudov emphasizes that legal translation requires both linguistic competence and comparative legal knowledge.

In forensic contexts, mistranslation of legal terminology may have severe consequences, including misrepresentation of evidence and distortion of witness testimony. Forensic linguistics plays a critical role in evaluating the adequacy and reliability of translated legal texts, ensuring that legal meaning is preserved across languages.

Discussion

The analysis reveals that legal terminology in foreign linguistics constitutes a multidimensional problem involving semantic ambiguity, pragmatic variability, and systemic non-equivalence. Although legal language strives for precision, it inevitably reflects the complexity of legal reasoning and institutional practice.

From a forensic linguistic perspective, terminological ambiguity is not a purely theoretical issue but a practical concern with direct implications for justice. Forensic linguistic expertise enables courts to identify hidden ambiguities, clarify disputed meanings, and assess the communicative validity of legal texts and spoken interaction.

The integration of Uzbek linguistic scholarship into forensic linguistic analysis enriches the field by introducing national terminological traditions and expanding the comparative scope of research. Such integration is particularly important in multilingual legal environments where linguistic and legal asymmetries intersect.

Scientific Novelty

The scientific novelty of this article lies in its comprehensive forensic linguistic analysis of legal terminology challenges in foreign linguistics, combined with the integration of Uzbek terminological and stylistic scholarship. Unlike studies that focus solely on legal translation or general legal discourse, this research emphasizes the forensic consequences of terminological ambiguity in judicial practice. The article proposes a multidisciplinary framework that unites semantics, pragmatics, comparative law, and national linguistic traditions, thereby extending the methodological boundaries of forensic linguistics.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that legal terminology in foreign linguistics poses complex challenges that significantly affect legal interpretation, translation, and judicial decision-making. Polysemy, vagueness, and cross-linguistic non-equivalence are inherent features of legal language that demand careful forensic linguistic analysis.

Forensic linguistics provides essential tools for addressing these challenges and ensuring terminological clarity and procedural fairness. The findings highlight the importance of interdisciplinary cooperation between linguists, legal professionals, and translators, as well as the value of incorporating national linguistic traditions into global forensic linguistic research.

Future studies should focus on empirical courtroom data and the development of standardized forensic methodologies for legal terminology analysis

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