

Arabic-English Translation of Legal Binomials: The Case of the Moroccan Family Code

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Abstract

Legal Translation requires precision and the preservation of the intended legal effect of original texts. However, this process is often challenging due to the specialized nature of law and the disparities between legal languages, which stem from differences in their respective legal systems. One particularly complex aspect of legal Translation is the transfer of legal binomial expressions, syntactic pairs frequently used in legal texts to enhance precision and ensure direct interpretation. This study examines the Translation of legal binomial expressions in the Moroccan Family Code, locally known as the "Al-Moudawana". A total of 74 legal binomials were identified in the document. The analysis explores the structural and semantic shifts these expressions undergo in their rendition from Arabic into English. Prior to examining these shifts, the binomials were analyzed based on their syntactic structure and the semantic relationships between their lexical constituents. To investigate these changes, two models were applied: Catford's Translation Shifts Model was adopted to analyze formal shifts, and Cyrus's Semantic Shifts Model to identify semantic transformations. Findings indicate that translators rendered a substantial portion of binomials literally. However, a considerable number of binomial expressions underwent formal and semantic modifications, which were necessary to convey the intended legal meaning while ensuring that the translated Text aligns with the patterns of the target language.

1. INTRODUCTION

Legal Translation is a highly specialized field concerned with rendering legal documents across languages while preserving their meaning, function, and legal effect. In an increasingly globalized world, marked by the growing movement of people, goods, and services, the demand for skilled legal translators has gained remarkable momentum. Like other forms of Translation, legal Translation presents concrete challenges, but it also requires a distinct set of skills and competencies due to the complexity of legal language and the intricacies of legal systems.

Translating legal texts involves addressing the unique features of legal discourse, the formal rigidity of legal documents, and the conceptual depth of law itself. Given the critical importance and potential ramifications of legal texts, precision in drafting and Translation is paramount. This emphasis on accuracy gives rise to one of the most characteristic features of legal language: the use of word pairings known as binomial expressions. These lexical doublets, frequent and culturally embedded in legal discourse, pose a particular challenge for translators tasked with rendering them into a target language.

This article examines the Translation of Arabic legal binomial expressions into English, with a specific focus on the Moroccan *Family Code*. Known locally as *Al-Moudawana*, this foundational legal Text governs family-related matters, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, and plays a central role in defining the rights of women and children within the Moroccan legal system. The current version of the *Family Code* dates back to 2014, and a revised edition is currently in development and expected to be released in the near future.

2. BACKGROUND AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGAL TRANSLATION

2.1. The importance of legal Translation in international law and cultural communication

According to the latest Legal Translation Services Market Report, “The global legal translation services market size is projected to grow significantly, reaching approximately \$2.8 billion by 2032 from \$1.4 billion in 2023, driven by a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.1%”. The report explains that three major factors fuel this rise in the demand for legal Translation: firstly, the surge in the globalization of businesses, with more and more companies expanding their businesses in different countries; secondly, the need of business-hosting countries to impose regulations on companies moving in, enforcing them to provide legal documents in the local languages. Thirdly, the increasing number of cross-border conflicts and litigations between countries requiring international arbitration has prompted the demand for specialized Translation dealing with the transfer and interpretation of legal documents.

Legal Translation plays a crucial role in international legal and cultural communication by bridging the gap between different languages and legal systems. While it is often associated with economic contexts, its importance goes beyond financial matters. The global effort to regulate relationships among nations and international institutions has led to the creation of numerous organizations responsible for drafting and implementing legal texts worldwide. Examples of such entities include the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization (WHO), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The existence of these international legal bodies further amplifies the demand for legal Translation.

Even within individual countries, the Translation of legal texts remains a priority, particularly in bilingual nations, such as Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland. In these countries, governments are in the obligation to provide legal documents in multiple languages in support of democratic principles and human rights. Highlighting this necessity, Šarčević (2012) states:

The need for legal Translation has increased over the centuries, as has the variety of text types translated for normative, informative, or judicial purposes. Today, hundreds of thousands of pages of legal translations are churned out daily across the globe, confirming that legal Translation plays a key role in our age of globalization, where the mobility of persons, goods, services, and capital across borders has changed the dynamics of law, forcing legal professionals to communicate in a wide variety of multilingual and multicultural settings. (p. 187)

In the quote above, Šarčević emphasizes that the transformations that have occurred in the modern world have made legal and cultural communication indispensable for the prosperity

and coexistence of societies. This essential communication is only made possible through the extensive efforts of legal translators. However, the challenges that arise in the process of transferring legal texts across languages are immense.

2.2. Specific Challenges in Translating Legal Documents

Scholars and translation professionals have widely recognized the translation of legal texts as a highly demanding task. In his book "Justice as Translation, James Boyd White (1994) describes legal Translation as "the art of facing the impossible, of confronting unbridgeable discontinuities between texts, between languages, and between people" (p. 257). Due to its specialized nature, legal Translation is not merely about transferring legal texts from one language to another in isolation. Rather, it is a complex act of communication that involves two distinct legal systems, two linguistic frameworks, and two cultures.

In the same vein, Šarčević (2012) argues that "the challenges to the legal translator [are] caused by the inherent incongruity of legal systems, culture, and languages" (p. XX). The fact that legal Translation intertwines law, language, and culture makes it particularly demanding, requiring legal translators to be highly knowledgeable in all three areas in order to be able to produce an accurate and effective translation.

Another explanation of the origins of the difficulty of legal Translation is provided by Deborah Cao (2007). She notes that "in general, the complexity and difficulty of legal translation are attributable to the nature of law and the language that law uses, and the associated differences found in intercultural and interlingual communication in translating legal texts" (p. 13). Both authors focus on the fact that the nature of legal language, the complexity of law as a subject matter, as well as the interconnectedness of culture and law, make legal Translation a challenging endeavor.

2.2.1. Incongruity of Legal Systems and Laws

Legal Translation involves rendering legal texts into a target language. However, legal texts derive their meaning from the local or national legal systems within which they are drafted. These legal systems often differ across nations. Cao (2007) posits that "legal systems are peculiar to the societies in which they have been formulated" (p. 24). Thus, the formulation, classification, and application of legal rules vary across different legal systems.

In fact, legal systems vary across the world. In their seminal book "Major Legal Systems in the World Today", David and Brierley (1988) categorize legal systems into three major families: the Romano-Germanic family, the Common Law family, and the Socialist Law family. However, these classifications, according to the authors, do not encompass all legal systems existing worldwide. Other legal systems exist outside these families, including Islamic, Hindu, and Jewish laws, Far Eastern laws such as the Chinese legal system, and the legal traditions of Black Africa and the Malagasy Republic. Each of these legal systems is culturally distinct and reflects the social structure of the society in which it operates.

2.2.2. Conceptual Asymmetries

The differences between legal systems across nations lead to conceptual incongruities. Legal concepts are formulated differently within each legal system, making it difficult for translators to find direct equivalents in the target language. In some cases, legal concepts may be entirely untranslatable because "each national law constitutes an independent legal system with its own terminological apparatus" (Šarčević 2012, p. XX). Consequently, faced with the absence of legal equivalents in the target language, translators often resort to techniques such as borrowing, paraphrasing, or even coining new terms. In addition to the conceptual challenges, linguistic differences, including syntactic structures, stylistic conventions, and

pragmatic features, further widen the gap between legal languages. Therefore, the degree of translatability and the effectiveness of legal communication between languages depend much on the degree of affinity or divergence between their respective legal systems.

2.2.3. Cultural Differences

One more major challenge in legal Translation arises from the cultural differences between the source and target languages. Law and culture have always been deeply intertwined. In his essay "Three Approaches to Law and Culture", Menachem Mautner (2010) explains that "legal scholarship contains at least twelve approaches that connect the concepts of law and culture" (p.841). While he discusses all twelve, he places particular emphasis on three major approaches: first, the Historical School Originating in Germany, which views law as a product of a nation's culture, embedded in the daily practices of its people. Second, the Constitutive Approach, which is part of the American legal tradition, sees that law forms culture by influencing people's thoughts, practices, and social relationships. Third, the Anglo-American Jurisprudential Approach, which considers the law created and applied by courts as a distinct cultural system, internalized by legal practitioners during their studies and professional activities. Over time, this internalization directs and constrains how these professionals think, argue, resolve cases, and justify legal reasoning.

3. THE FAMILY CODE IN THE MOROCCAN LEGAL SYSTEM

3.1. Overview of the Moroccan Legal System

The Moroccan legal system is dynamic and has undergone a series of transformations both before and after the protectorate era. Shortly after the country had gained independence in 1956, the adoption of the 1962 constitution marked a turning point in Moroccan legal history, laying the foundation for the nation's modern legal framework. Several constitutional reforms ensued, framing the key principles and structure of the current legal system. Today, the Moroccan judiciary is governed by four core principles and consists of multiple institutions.

3.1.1. Principles of the Moroccan Legal System

Over the years, Morocco's legal system has evolved constantly, establishing four fundamental legal principles. The first principle is the rule of law. It ensures that all individuals, institutions, and entities are accountable and equal before the law. It is essential for promoting justice and fairness in society. The second principle is the separation of powers. It clearly defines the responsibilities of the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judiciary. It aims at preventing excessive concentration of power within one branch at the expense of the others, functioning as a system of checks and balances. The third principle is the protection of human rights. This principle has gained increasing importance in Morocco's legal framework, guaranteeing individuals' freedoms and civil rights. Many legal reforms, including the modernization of the Family Code, have been enacted, driven by Morocco's commitment to upholding human rights. The last principle is the incorporation of Sharia as a source of legislation. Although various sources influence Moroccan law, Sharia remains a fundamental component, particularly in matters related to personal status. It also serves as a guiding force in shaping values, ethics, and social norms.

3.1.2. Structure of the Moroccan Legal System

The Moroccan legal system is hierarchical, and comprises three primary levels: firstly, Local Courts (Tribunaux de Première Instance) which serve as the first point of contact for citizens, handling civil and criminal cases. Secondly, Courts of Appeal (Cours d'Appel) whose role consists in reviewing decisions made by lower courts, allowing litigants to challenge verdicts they deem unsatisfactory. Finally, Cassation Court (Cour de Cassation) which, serving as Morocco's Supreme Court, ensures legal consistency by verifying that lower court rulings

align with the legal standards in use. Additionally, Morocco also has specialized courts, including administrative and commercial courts, which oversee matters specific to their respective areas of expertise. This specialization strengthens the judiciary and enhances the efficiency of legal proceedings.

3.1.3. Introduction to the Family Code

The adoption of Morocco's Family Code in 2004 marked a critical juncture in the country's human rights history. Following his accession to the throne, King Mohammed VI initiated a series of reforms aimed at enhancing Morocco's social and democratic environment. These reforms led to the implementation of various changes, with a focus on human rights, driven by Morocco's international commitments. It was within this dynamic that the Family Code emerged as a response to the momentum generated by these reforms, addressing the need for a legal framework governing family matters such as marriage, divorce, child custody, nationality, and inheritance. The Text came as the outcome of extensive consultations with a large number of legal, social, economic, and religious stakeholders. When introduced, the law received great support and approval from women's associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and intellectuals. Officially titled *Mudawanat Al-Usra* (translated as *the Family Code*, or *Code de la Famille* in French), it represented a remarkable divergence from the previous Personal Status Code (PSC), which had been in use since Morocco's early years of independence.

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network succinctly summarizes the transformative changes introduced by the new Family Code in the following points:

- The minimum age for marriage was raised to 18 for women.
- Property division between married couples was recognized.
- Polygamy became strictly regulated and controlled.
- Women gained the right to initiate repudiation and divorce, both subject to judicial supervision.
- Women were granted the possibility of retaining child custody.
- Inheritance rights were improved for women.
- Recognition of children born out of wedlock was established, with a simplified proof of paternity procedure.
- Degrading language toward women was removed from legal provisions.
- Children's rights were reinforced in accordance with international instruments ratified by Morocco.

3.2. Legal Binomial Expressions

Different labels have referred to binomial expressions. While Gustafsson (1975) uses the term "binomial expressions", Mayoral Asensio (2003) refers to them as "doublets", and Mellinkoff (1963) calls them "doublings." Bakir (1999) opts for the label "joined lexical pairs", and Johnstone (1983) introduces them as "couplets". The variety of labels, however, doesn't necessarily mean that binomials as a linguistic and discursive phenomenon have been subject to comprehensive study. In fact, they are still an under-researched topic both in linguistic and legal literature.

3.3. Defining Binomial Expressions

A range of scholarly definitions have been proposed to elucidate the term "binomial" or "binomial expression". Malkiel (1959), who appears to have been the first to coin the term "binomial" and use it in academic literature, provides a preliminary definition, stating that a binomial is "a sequence of two words pertaining to the same form-class, placed on an identical level of syntactic hierarchy, and ordinarily connected by some kind of lexical link" (p. 113).

Although this definition seems simplistic, it remains primary and pioneering in defining binomial expressions.

However, Kopczak and Sauer (2017), commenting on Malkiel's definition, argue that "this structural definition is not enough" to differentiate between coordinated pairs that qualify as binomials and those that do not (p. 1). Instead, they suggest a more restrictive definition, describing binomials as "a coordinated pair of linguistic units of the same word class that exhibit some semantic relations" (p. 3). Echoing this perspective, Bhatia (2013) portrays binomial or multinomial expressions as "a sequence of two or more words or phrases belonging to the same grammatical category, having some semantic relationship, and joined by some syntactic device such as 'and' or 'or'" (p. 197). The last two definitions appear to be more elaborate, and this is logical since they reflect the development that happened in the understanding of binomials post-Malkiel.

Compared to that of Malkiel, the interpretations suggested by Kopczak (2017) and Bhatia (2013) show two key distinctions: First, both scholars extend the scope of the binomial expression beyond the limit of "two words". While Malkiel limits the structure to "two words", Kopaczkyk employs a more inclusive expression, namely "two linguistic units", and Bhatia broadens it further to include "two or more". Second, as opposed to Malkiel's, both definitions insist on the existence of a semantic connection between the components of the binomial expression. Furthermore, Bhatia (2013) adds one more important detail by distinguishing between single-word binomials and coordinated-phrase binomials, illustrating his classification with the following instances drawn from legal discourse:

- **Single-word binomials:** signed and delivered, act and omission, sold or transferred
- **Coordinated-phrase binomials:** consist of or include, in whole and in part, the freehold conveyed or long lease granted.

The specificity shown by both definitions reflects the development realized in the understanding of binomial expressions. Research in the area has shed light on more aspects of these linguistic pairs and their role in discourse, especially in legal texts.

3.4. The Importance of Binomials in Legal Texts

Binomials are a key feature of legal language, strategically employed by legal drafters to fulfill several critical discursive functions:

- *Marking legal discourse:* Legal texts frequently contain binomial expressions, which makes them a defining characteristic of legal language. Studies indicate that legal texts feature binomials at five times the rate of other lexicons. In her research on the distribution of binomials and multinomials in early modern English parliamentary acts, Lehto (2017) concluded that "their normalized frequency is 75.99 tokens per 1,000 words" (p. 267). Given this high distribution, legal discourse can be qualified as binomially marked.
- *Enhancing precision:* In their pursuit of accuracy and clarity, legal drafters make use of binomial expressions quite frequently. Thanks to their syntactic structure and the semantic relationships between their elements, binomials have proved highly effective in circumscribing meaning, minimizing ambiguity, and reducing instances of misinterpretation. Bhatia (2013) praises this quality of binomials by noting that binomials "are an extremely effective device to make legal documents precise as well as all-inclusive" (p. 198).
- *Calling for action:* The double structure of binomials, and sometimes the more extended composition of trinomials or multinomials, lends emphasis and rhetorical force to legal phrasing. This heightened emphasis adds force to legal provisions and mandates, particularly in normative legal texts.

- *Achieving all-inclusiveness:* The ability of binomial expressions to convey a complete, comprehensive, and precise meaning plays a major role in legal drafting, as legal texts providing room for multiple interpretations are liable to lead to unintended legal consequences. To mitigate such risks, legal drafters use binomial expressions to enhance clarity and anticipate potential scenarios that may emerge during the law's implementation.

3.5. Classification of Binomial Expressions

Binomials have traditionally been regarded as a subtype of collocations, with most definitions emphasizing their lexical aspect as two words joined by a conjunction. However, some scholars, Malkiel (1959) and Gustafsson (1981), have attempted to classify binomials based on different criteria.

3.5.1. Semantic Classification

Adopting a semantic approach, Gustafsson (1984) categorizes binomials according to the semantic relationships between their components. According to her, binomials can be

1. **Synonymous:** testament, cease and desist, null and void.
2. **Antonymous:** in person or by proxy, rights and wrongs, privileges and immunities, loss and gain.
3. **Mutually complementary:** soul and spirit, law and order.

Within the same semantic framework, Malkiel (1959) proposes a similar classification, identifying four specific semantic relationships that can bind the components of a binomial expression:

1. **Synonyms:** aid and abet
2. **Near synonyms:** breach and violation, infringements and contravention, annul and revoke
3. **Complementary:** assault and battery
4. **A division and its subdivision:** years and months (p.125-129)

3.5.2. The Syntactic Structure of Binomial Expressions

Syntactically, the structure of a binomial expression may take the following forms:

- **Noun + Noun:** terms and conditions, husband and wife, losses and gains.
- **Verb + Verb:** shot and killed, transfer and convey.
- **Adjective + adjective:** real and personal, null and void.
- **Adverb + Adverb:** jointly and severally.
- **Preposition + Preposition:** by and between, with or without.

As shown above, various syntactic structures are possible in the formation of binomial expressions. However, adherence to the principle that states that both components must belong to the same grammatical category remains essential. The distribution of these structures varies, with **noun + noun** and **verb + verb** binomials being the most frequent. In terms of conjunctions, “*and*” and “*or*” are the most commonly used, while other conjunctions, though existent, are relatively rare. However, some binomials may not contain any conjunction at all.

Whereas the two members of the binomial expression must always belong to the same syntactic category, their order can be either reversible or irreversible. This feature yields two distinct categories of binomials:

- 1) **Reversible binomials**, also called ‘flexible’, are binomials in which “speakers are at liberty to invert the succession of its members” (Malkiel, 1965, p. 113). The order of the two constituents of the binomial expression is flexible and allows for reversal. The following examples illustrate this category: *Action or proceeding* (or Proceeding or action), *agreement or obligation* (or obligation or agreement).
- 2) **Irreversible binomials**, on the other hand, refer to a binomial where “the succession of its constituents has hardened to such an extent that an inversion of the two kernels [...] would be barely understandable to listeners caught by surprise” (Malkiel, 1965, p. 113). The following examples fall under this category: *terms and conditions* (not conditions and terms), *null and void* (not void and null), *cease and desist* (not desist and cease).

3.6. Binomials in Legal Arabic and Legal English

3.6.1. Binomials in English Legal Language

Binomials are generally a major linguistic phenomenon in the English language, particularly in Old English poetry, where they were valued for their alliterative features and mnemonic function due to the oral tradition of early English poetry. In her book “*Binomials in the History of English*”, Kopaczky (2017) compiled a collection of studies analyzing binomial expressions throughout Old, Middle, Early Modern, and Present-Day English, providing tangible evidence of their deep-rooted presence in English phraseology.

Legal English, as a specialized register for legal discourse, is characterized by its frequent use of binomial expressions. According to Gustafsson (1984), binomials occur **five times more frequently in legal texts than in other prose genres** (p.123). While poetry has often used binomials for rhetorical and aesthetic purposes, legal language has incorporated them for **their fixedness and formulaic nature**, in addition to their precision and inclusiveness. Legal drafting relies heavily on standardization and repetition, both of which binomials effectively provide.

Gustafsson (1984) illustrates the importance of binomials in legal English by reporting the following introductory clause featuring in all British Acts of Parliament:

“Be it enacted by the Queen’s most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows: (text of the Act).”

As a sample of legal discourse, this clause demonstrates both the **pervasive and repetitive nature** of binomial expressions in legal documents. Despite its brevity, the clause contains three distinct binomial expressions: “by and with”, “the advice and consent”, spiritual and temporal”. This succinctly reflects the extent to which legal discourse relies on such linguistic constructions to communicate precision and core meaning.

3.7. Binomials in Legal Arabic

Due to its long history of dependence on orality, Arabic is abundant in binomial expressions because of the ability of these constructions to be easily remembered. Arabic poetry frequently employed alliterative binomials to create vivid imagery and rhythmic elegance. Furthermore, binomial expressions appear frequently in the Qur’ān, the most revered Text in Arabic.

In her PhD research on the Translation of binomials in the Qur’ān, Al-Otaibi (2017) identified **120 binomials** that occur **two or more times** within this text. The actual number of binomials appearing only once may be much higher. Beeston (1970), in his book “*Modern Arabic Today*”, claims that the use of binomial expressions in Arabic stems from “the Arab

fondness for the use of two or more terms which, while not 'synonyms' in a strict sense, are so close to synonymy as to do little towards developing the author's thought, producing a much more rhetorical style than is usual in current English" (p. 113). This reflects that poets and writers of Arabic consciously resorted to the use of binomial expressions for the linguistic, rhetoric, and alliterative qualities that these linguistic pairs offer.

The following examples, drawn from the Moroccan Family Code and the 2011 Constitution of Morocco, illustrate the use of binomial expressions in legal Arabic. The constitutional excerpts are taken from the official English translation of the Moroccan Constitution, while the Family Code passages are translated by the Human Rights Education Associates (HREA)

Original Arabic:

"الزواج ميثاق تراضٍ وترتبط شرعاً بين رجل وامرأة على وجه الدوام، غايتها الإحسان والغفاف وإنشاء أسرة مستقرة برعاية الزوجين طبقاً لأحكام هذه المدونة" (مدونة الأسرة، المادة 4)

English Translation: "Marriage is a legal contract by which a man and a woman mutually consent to unite in a common and enduring conjugal life. Its purpose is fidelity, virtue, and the creation of a stable family, under the supervision of both spouses according to the provisions of this *Al-Moudawana* ." (Article 4, *The Family Code*)

Original Arabic:

"السيادة للأمة، تمارسها مباشرةً بالاستفتاء، وبصفة غير مباشرةً بواسطة ممثليها. تختار الأمة ممثليها في المؤسسات المنتخبة بالاقراغ الحر والنزيه والمنتظم" (دستور المغرب 2011، الفصل 2)

English Translation: "Sovereignty belongs to the Nation, which exercises it directly by way of referendum, and indirectly through its representatives. The Nation chooses its representatives from among the institutions elected by way of free, honest, and regular suffrage." (Article 2, *Constitution of Morocco 2011*).

Original Arabic:

"القانون هو أسمى تعبير عن إرادة الأمة. والجميع، أشخاصاً ذاتيين أو اعتباريين، بما فيهم السلطات العمومية، متساوون أمامه، وملزمون بالامتثال له". (دستور المغرب 2011، الفصل 6-)

English Translation: "The law is the supreme expression of the will of the Nation. All, physical or moral persons, including public powers, are equal before it and held to submit themselves to it". (Article 6, *Constitution of Morocco 2011*)

3.7.1. Syntactic Structure of Arabic Legal Binomials

The structural composition of Arabic legal binomials closely parallels that of their English counterparts. In Arabic as well, such expressions typically comprise two lexical units from the same grammatical category, linked by a coordinating conjunction. In a study of binomials in Iraqi and Jordanian Arabic, Gorgis and Al-Tamimi (2005) found out that nominal binomials, comprising *verbal noun + verbal noun* or *noun + noun* accounted for 75.33% of the corpus, whereas adjectival doublets represented 13.33% of the data. However, it is important to note that this study focused on colloquial Arabic, meaning its findings may not fully apply to legal binomials, which are formulated in standard Arabic.

The conjunctions most frequently used in Arabic legal binomials are "و" (wa, meaning and), as illustrated in the following examples from the Moroccan family code:

- العدل والمساواة /Al-'adl wa al-musāwāh/ (*justice and equality*)
- التصويت والترشيح /At-taṣwīt wa at-taršíh/ (*the right to vote and run for office*)
- الإيجاب والقبول /Al-ījāb wa al-qabūl/ (*offer and acceptance*)
- الأصول والفروع /Al-uṣūl wa al-furū/ (*ancestors and descendants*)

The second most frequent conjunction is "أو" (*aw*, meaning *or*), as seen in:

- واقف أو فاسخ /Wāqif aw fāsikh/ (*valid or void*)
- بالكتابة أو الإشارة /Bil-kitāba aw al-ishāra/ (*in writing or by gesture*)
- يأكراه أو تدليس /Bi-iqrāh aw tadlīs/ (*by coercion or fraud*)

Other connectors such as "بـ" (*bi*, meaning *by*), "بعد" (*ba'd*, meaning *after*), and "لـنـ" (*lakin*, meaning *but*) are also occasionally used, as in:

- العين بالعين والسن بالسن /Al-'ayn bil-'ayn wa as-sinn bis-sinn/ (*eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth*)
- يوماً بعد يوم /Yawman ba'da yawm/ (*day after day*)

Unlike in English binomials, conjunctions are not always necessary in Arabic binomials, particularly in Qur'ānic discourse, as exemplified by the following instances:

- سميع بصير /Samī'un baṣīr/ (*all-hearing, all-seeing*)
- غفور رحيم /Ghafūrun rahīm/ (*forgiving, merciful*)

3.7.2. Semantic Structure of Arabic Legal Binomials

Semantically, the pairing of the components of Arabic legal binomials is most often motivated by synonymy, antonymy, and complementation. This yields three semantic groups of binomials:

- Synonymous Binomials**

They consist of words with similar meanings as in:

- كل ما أنت به الزوجة من جهاز وشوار يعتبر ملكاً لها (*All dowry and trousseau brought by the wife remain her property*)

- Antonymous Binomials**

These binomials involve opposing meanings, such as:

- تأجيل أو تعجيل /Ta'jil aw ta'jīl/ (*postponement or acceleration*)
 - يجوز الاتفاق على تأجيل الصداق أو تعجيله (*It is permissible to agree on the postponement or acceleration of the dowry payment*)
- رسمية أو عرفية /Rasmīyya aw 'urfīyya/ (*official or customary*)
 - تحرير وكالة الزواج في ورقة رسمية أو عرفية (*The marriage authorization may be drafted on an official or customary document*)
- مؤبدة ومؤقتة /Mu'abbada wa mu'aqqata/ (*permanent and temporary*)
 - موانع الزواج اثنان: مؤبدة ومؤقتة (*Marriage impediments are of two types: permanent and temporary*)
- مباشرة أو بطريقة غير مباشرة /Mubāsharatān aw bi-tarīqatīn ghayru mubāsharatīn/ (*directly or indirectly*)

- Complementary Binomials**

These binomials feature elements that complement one another, such as:

- **تغيير وإتمام** /Taghyīr wa itmām/ *modification and completion)*
 - يمكن بقرار من وزير العدل **تغيير وإتمام** لائحة المستندات التي يتكون منها ملف عقد الزواج
 - (By decree of the Minister of Justice, the list of documents required for the marriage contract may be modified or completed)
- **الحقوق والحریات** /Al-ḥuqūq wa al-ḥurriyyāt/ *rights and freedoms)*
 - يتمتع الرجل والمرأة، على قدم المساواة، بالحقوق والحریات المدنیة والسياسیة

3.8. Studies on Translation Strategies of Legal Binomials

A review of existing literature on the Translation of binomial expressions is essential as a preliminary step toward gaining deeper insight into this linguistic phenomenon. Scholars widely acknowledge a notable paucity of research specifically devoted to examining the strategies employed in translating binomial constructions. Hejazi, S. H., & Dastjerdi, H. (2015) note that “only few studies have been conducted on the translation of binomials” (p. 512). This scarcity may be attributed to the relatively recent scholarly interest in this linguistic phenomenon, as well as to the fact that binomials do not maintain the same frequency or significance across languages. In his article on corpus-based studies of legal language, Biel (2009) argues that simplification is an effective translation strategy for addressing what he refers to as “doublets and synonym strings”, an expression he uses to refer to binomials. According to him, these linguistic structures are particularly prevalent in legal languages, such as English, which tend to favor repetition. He further suggests that an English synonymous binomial expression “would be translated into Polish as a single word, given that the Polish linguistic system does not favor synonymous strings, rendering such translations unnecessary and redundant.” (p.10). this suggests that the strategy used to translate binomial expressions is sometimes dictated by the syntactic and semantic patterns of the target language.

Similarly, Chroma (2011) examines the Translation of synonymous and polysemous binomials in legal texts. Regarding synonymous binomials, the researcher notes that “the two terminological units may be translated by one TL equivalent where the target law seems to be deficient in synonyms for the same legal institution” (p. 44). The conclusion to make from this statement is that the legal context and the nature of the legal languages involved in the translation act shape the choices made by the translator of legal binomial expressions. Using a corpus-based approach to investigate the Translation of legal binomial expressions from English into Portuguese, Carvalho (2008) argues that in order to achieve the intended legal effect in the target language, translators must approach binomial expressions as cohesive units. Consequently, translators should avoid translating each individual element separately, as this may compromise the intended legal meaning (p. 13). Thus, the approaches to the Translation of binomial expressions are varied and impacted by different variables.

3.9. Translation Universals

The Translation of legal binomial expressions from Arabic into English, like any form of Translation, should adhere to general principles that govern quality translation practices, irrespective of the languages, content, or text type involved. These principles are commonly referred to as translation universals. In addition to the analytical models employed in this study, translation universals play a crucial role, serving as evaluative criteria for assessing the procedures adopted by the translator. The concept of translation universals was first introduced by Mona Baker in her 1993 seminal paper, “Corpus Linguistics and Translation Studies: Implications and Application”. Since its introduction, the concept has been extensively discussed within the field of translation studies. In her study, Baker(1993) introduced what she termed “universal features of translation”, and defined them as “features which typically occur in translated text rather than original utterances and which are not the result of interference

from specific linguistic systems" (p. 243). She argues that these universal features were identified by translation scholars through small-scale studies or mere observation.

Even-Zohar (1979), for his part, alluded to such features by noting that "we can observe in translation patterns which are inexplicable in terms of any of the repertoires involved" (p. 77). Baker (1993) explains that Even-Zohar's reference to "patterns" denotes phenomena that are not attributable to interference from the source or target language but are intrinsic to the act of Translation itself, irrespective of the languages involved (p.245). In line with this, Chesterman (2012) elaborates on the underlying premise of translation universals, asserting that "the assumption that any translation shares characteristics with other translations is essential, as otherwise no generalization about typical weaknesses could be made in the first place" (p.175). The previous statements establish the fact that common features do exist between translations regardless of the languages or systems involved.

Baker identifies five universal features that are observable in every Translation:

1. A marked rise in the level of explicitness compared to specific source texts and to original texts in general.
2. A tendency towards disambiguation and simplification.
3. A strong preference for conventional grammatical structures.
4. A tendency to avoid repetitions found in the source text by either omitting or rewording them.
5. A general tendency to exaggerate features of the target language.

Another classification of translation universals is offered by Chesterman (2012), dividing them into two groups:

- Potential Source Universals (S-universals): Including lengthening, interference, standardization, and explicitation.
- Potential Target Universals (T-universals) : Including simplification, untypical lexical patterning, and underrepresentation of target-language-specific items (Chesterman, 2012, p. 176).

Translation universals are pertinent to this study as they provide a framework for evaluating whether binomial expressions are amenable to commonly applied translation procedures. It is not expected that all universal features will manifest in the Translation of legal binomials from Arabic into English, nor are they likely to appear simultaneously in any given translation. However, key universals, particularly simplification and explicitation, offer valuable analytical tools for interpreting the findings. As will be demonstrated, several procedures employed by the translator align with these two features.

3.10. Translation Shifts

Catford first introduced the concept of translation shifts in his influential work "A Linguistic Theory of Translation" (1965). He used this term to describe the structural changes or "departures from formal correspondence" that occur during Translation due to inherent differences between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) (Catford, 1965, p. 27).

In his theory, Catford (1965) distinguishes between *formal correspondence* and *translational equivalence*. He defines *formal correspondence* as "any TL category (unit, class, structure, element of structure, etc.) that can be said to occupy, as closely as possible, the 'same' place in the 'economy' of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL." He further describes *translational equivalence* as "any TL text or portion of text observed on a particular occasion... to be the equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text" (p. 27).

According to him, Translation shifts fall into two major types:

1. Level shifts: Occur when "an SL item at one linguistic level has a TL translation equivalent at a different level" (p.73). These shifts typically involve a transition between grammar and lexis, such as when a verb in the SL is translated into an adverb or noun in the TL.
2. Category shifts: or "Departures from formal correspondence in translation" (Catford, 1965, p. 76), including:
 - Structure shifts: Changes in clause structure.
 - Class shifts: When a word is translated into another word from a different grammatical class.
 - Unit shifts: When a phrase in the SL becomes a clause in the TL.
 - Intra-system shifts: Adjustments in aspects such as number, even when both languages share the same number system.

Catford's concept of translation shifts holds significant importance in translation studies, as it represents the first systematic attempt to generalize and classify the linguistic changes that occur during the translation process. However, Cyrus (2006) critiques Catford's framework, contending that it "relies heavily on the structuralist notion of system" (p. 1). As an alternative, she introduces a two-fold model that categorizes shifts into two principal types

- **Grammatical shifts**

- Category change: occurs when the source and target items belong to different syntactic categories, such as the Translation of a verbal predicate with a nominal predicate
- Depassivisation: as the counterpart of passivisation, depassivisation occurs when a passive verbal predicate is translated as an active predicate.
- Pronominalization: occurs when a lexical material or a pronoun is rendered as a pronoun
- Depronationalisation: it is the opposite shift of pronominalization. It occurs when an item is realized in the source text as a pronoun and is rendered as a lexical material or a proper noun.
- Number change: this shift results when a change in number occurs in the transfer process, as in the Translation of a singular noun as a plural noun and vice versa. (Cyrus, 2006, p. 3).

- **Semantic shifts**

- Semantic Modification: When tangible semantic differences occur between the source and target text, creating notable divergence.
- Explicitation: The target text becomes lexically more specific than the source text.
- Generalization: The target text becomes less specific, omitting certain details present in the original.
- Addition: New information, absent from the source text, is introduced into the target text.
- Deletion: A segment from the source text is left untranslated in the target text.
- Mutation: When two translated segments maintain equivalence, yet their lexical meanings differ in a substantial way. (Cyrus, 2006, p. 3)

4. METHODOLOGY

This study investigates the Translation of legal binomial expressions in the Moroccan Family Code from Arabic into English. Legal Translation poses substantial challenges due to

the highly specialized and formal nature of legal language. One particular difficulty in Arabic-English legal Translation arises from the frequent use of binomial expressions—paired terms that convey nuanced legal meaning.

Adopting a corpus-based, qualitative approach, this research analyzes the Translation of these binomials to identify the most commonly employed strategies for rendering them into English. The process begins with the identification of binomial expressions, followed by a syntactic and semantic analysis. Their English translations are then examined to uncover the techniques used in their linguistic transfer. The analytical models applied in this study are outlined later in the section.

4.1. Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What are the predominant syntactic patterns of binomial expressions used in the drafting of the Moroccan Family Code?
2. How are the semantic relationships within these binomial expressions structured?
3. What formal and semantic transformations occur in the Translation of binomial expressions from Arabic into English within the Moroccan Family Code?

4.2. Research Approach and Corpus

This study employs a corpus-based methodology, integrating both descriptive and analytical techniques to explore the issues outlined in the research questions. The corpus comprises two parallel texts: the original Arabic version of the 2004 Moroccan Family Code and its corresponding English Translation. It is worth mentioning that the translated version omits Book Five (concerning wills) and Book Six (concerning inheritance). The rationale behind this exclusion remains unspecified, and as such, these two books are not considered in the present analysis.

The Translation used in this study was produced by the Global Rights Organization. According to information provided on its website, the Translation was carried out collaboratively by a team of bilingual lawyers proficient in both Arabic and English, in partnership with a professional Moroccan translator specializing in Arabic-English legal Translation. The project was supervised jointly by the Global Rights headquarters in Washington, D.C., and its field office in Morocco.

4.3. Analytical Models Applied

To examine the Translation of binomial expressions, this study employs three analytical models: firstly, the Semantic Analysis Model proposed by Sauer and Schwan (2017). This model is used to study the structural composition of binomials. Secondly, Catford's model of Translation Shifts is applied to analyze the formal transformations that occur in the process of translating binomial expressions. Thirdly, Lea Cyrus's Semantic Shifts framework is applied to identify the semantic alterations occurring during the Translation from Arabic to English of these constructions.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS DISCUSSION

This study explores the Translation of binomial expressions found in the Moroccan Family Code from Arabic into English. Prior to examining the translation strategies, the binomial expressions were analyzed in terms of their syntactic configurations and the semantic relationships between their components. The selection criteria for inclusion in the analysis were based on frequency: only expressions appearing at least twice within the corpus were

considered. In total, 74 legal binomial expressions were identified and subjected to detailed examination.

The following section presents the findings, offering insights into the structural, semantic, and translational patterns that emerged from the analysis.

5.1. The Syntactic Structure of the Arabic Legal Binomials

The analysis of legal binomial expressions in the Moroccan Family Code reveals a range of syntactic patterns. Among the 74 expressions examined, a significant majority, 51 binomials, accounting for 69% follow a noun + noun structure. This marked preference for noun pairings underscores the tendency of legal discourse within the Code to rely on nominal constructions for precision and clarity in conveying legal meaning.

An illustrative example of this syntactic pattern is the following binomial expression:

- **إيجاب وقبول /*ījāb wa Qubūl*/** – (Offer and Acceptance)

The second most prevalent syntactic pattern among the 74 binomial expressions is the adjective + adjective structure, represented by 12 instances (16%). These adjectival binomials serve a critical function in legal discourse by qualifying legal terms and delineating their precise legal implications. Expressions such as **صحيحة وملزمة /*sa'hiḥa wa mul'zima*/** ("valid and binding") and **واقف أو فاسخ /*waqif ʔaw fa:six*/** ("suspensive or nullifying") exemplify this syntactic category.

The frequent use of adjective + adjective binomials reflects the legal drafter's intent to articulate concepts with clarity and precision, thereby reducing ambiguity and limiting the potential for misinterpretation. These constructions contribute to the meticulous definition of legal parameters, reinforcing the exactitude required in legal language.

Following the adjective + adjective category, the next most common syntactic pattern among the binomial expressions is adverb + adverb, comprising 10 instances (14%). These adverbial binomials play a pivotal role in modifying legal actions by specifying the manner, conditions, or circumstances under which such actions are to be executed.

An illustrative example is **باللفظ وبالكتابة /*bil-lafzī wa bil-kitābah*/** ("by explicitly spoken words and in writing"), which demonstrates how adverbials enhance the precision of legal directives. Through the use of such constructions, the legal drafter clarifies not only the procedural requirements but also the intensity or frequency of the action, thereby ensuring accurate interpretation and consistent application of the law by legal practitioners.

The verb + verb category is the least represented among the binomial expressions in the corpus, with only a single instance identified:

- **آلی أو هجر /*ʔa:lī ʔaw hajra*/** ("takes an oath of abstinence from or abandons")

This scarcity can be attributed to the tendency of the Moroccan Family Code to express actions through verbal nouns rather than finite verbs. Binomials composed of verbal nouns were classified under the noun + noun category. For example, **اكراه وتدعيس /*ikrah wa-tadlis*/** ("under duress or fraud") consists of two nouns that convey legal actions without relying on verb-based constructions.

This preference reflects a broader pattern in Arabic legal discourse, as noted by Barbara J. (1983), who observed that "noun couplets predominate" in Arabic binomial expressions (p. 4). One plausible explanation for this stylistic choice is that noun + noun constructions allow for

the expression of actions without requiring an explicit subject, which enhances clarity and practicality in legal drafting. Such structures contribute to the impersonal and objective tone characteristic of legal texts, ensuring precision and minimizing interpretive ambiguity.

These results provide valuable insights into the syntactic choices made by legal drafters in the Moroccan Family Code to convey legal meanings with precision. The dominance of noun + noun binomials aligns with the findings of Johnstone, B. (1983) who, in her analysis of Arabic lexical couplets, observed that “There are very few examples of couplets of adverbs or adjectives; this is partly because there are very few adverbs or adjectives in Arabic. Most modification is accomplished with nouns or participial forms of verbs” (p.4). Thus, this seems to be systematic in Arabic legal texts.

The preference for noun + noun pairings underscores the drafters’ deliberate effort to achieve precision in legal terminology. In legal discourse, where clarity and specificity are essential, nominal binomials are employed to enhance legal accuracy and minimize the potential for ambiguity or misinterpretation. Regardless of the semantic relationship between the two constituent nouns, their combination to express a single legal concept contributes to the precision and stability of legal language. The table below presents a summary of the syntactic structures observed in binomial expressions:

Overall number of binomials	Noun+ noun	Adj+adj	Adv+ adv	Verb+ verb
74	51 -- (69%)	12-- (16%).	10--(14%).	1--about1%

Figure1: the syntactic structure of binomials

5.2.Semantic Structure of Binomials

The analysis of the semantic structure of legal binomials in the Moroccan Family Code was conducted using the Sauer and Schwan (2017) model which classifies binomial expressions into three main semantic relationships:

1. **Synonymy:** Words with similar meanings.
2. **Antonymy:** Words with opposite meanings.
3. **Complementarity:** Words that do not fit into the previous two categories, but function together to fully convey the legal concept

The results indicate that a large portion of the identified legal binomial expressions are connected by a relationship of complementarity. For instance:

- المصاهرة أو الرضاع /*al-muṣāharah wa-al-riḍā‘* / *Kinship and breastfeeding relations*
- بالتوقيع والحضور /*bi:tta:wqi:f wa alḥu:ḍu:r* " (by signing and being present)

Kopaczyc (2013) defines complementary binomials as lexical pairs in which “both elements, coordinated lexical items, denoting objects, people, concepts contribute to the overall meaning of a pair” (p. 192). In such cases, the two components are neither synonymous nor antonymous; rather, they function together to convey a unified and comprehensive legal concept.

In this study, 55 binomial expressions, representing 74% of the corpus, fall into this category, highlighting the legal drafters' heavy reliance on complementary terms to achieve precision and inclusivity in legal language. The use of complementarity serves to broaden the scope of legal provisions, ensuring that all relevant scenarios are encompassed and that the intended legal effect is fully captured.

Additionally, 18 binomial expressions, accounting for 24% of the corpus, feature antonymous components, indicating that legal discourse often employs contrasting terms to delineate opposing legal situations or scenarios. This strategy serves to reduce ambiguity and enhance interpretive clarity for legal professionals. A representative example is the binomial expression **تعجيل أو تأجيل** /ta'jil aw ta'jil/ ("expedition or postponement"), which exemplifies the use of antonymy to capture the full spectrum of legal possibilities.

Synonymous binomials represent the least frequent category in the corpus. Notably, only two such expressions have been identified. One example is **تصرف أو سلوك** /taṣarruf aw sulūk/ (behavior or act), a pair whose constituents carry closely related meanings.

The limited number of synonymous binomials suggests that Arabic legal drafting tends to avoid redundancy. This may reflect a deliberate stylistic choice aimed at preserving precision and minimizing interpretive ambiguity. Alternatively, it may stem from the linguistic nature of Arabic, where perfect synonyms are rare; once a term adequately conveys the intended legal meaning, introducing a near-equivalent may risk diluting clarity rather than enhancing it.

The following table provides a summary of the semantic structure of binomial expressions in the Family Code.

Overall number of binomials	Complementary binomials	Antonymous binomials	Synonymous binomials
74	54 – 74%	18- 24%	2-About1%

Figure2: The Semantic Structure of Binomials

The distribution of semantic structures in the *Family Code* reveals a marked preference for complementary binomials, with comparatively limited use of antonymous constructions. This strategic emphasis on complementarity serves key legal functions, including:

- Enhancing legal precision: Ensuring that legal provisions convey their intended meaning with clarity and accuracy.
- Supporting sound interpretation: Assisting legal professionals in minimizing ambiguity and ensuring accurate application of legal provisions.

By prioritizing complementary relationships, legal drafters ensure that paired terms work in tandem to convey the full scope of a legal concept. When the two components of a binomial expression complement one another, they effectively capture the majority of the concept's semantic features, thereby minimizing ambiguity and reducing the risk of misinterpretation.

In contrast, antonymous pairs are employed to delineate opposing legal situations or scenarios, an essential function in both the interpretation and application of the Code. The inclusion of contrasting terms within a single binomial expression allows the drafter either to acknowledge alternative legal outcomes or to explicitly exclude them, thereby guiding legal professionals toward accurate and context-sensitive interpretation.

5.3. Form Shifts in the Translation of Binomials

The Translation of Arabic legal binomials from the Moroccan Family Code into English led to notable formal shifts. These changes can be attributed to the translator's effort to preserve the intended legal meaning of the source text, which often requires adapting binomial expressions to align with the structural and stylistic norms of the target language. To examine these transformations, Catford's model of Translation Shifts was employed, which categorizes shifts into two primary types: level shifts and category shifts.

Before examining the Translation shifts in detail, it is important to highlight a key finding from the analysis: of the 74 identified binomial expressions, 38 (51%) were rendered through formal correspondence. In this context, formal correspondence refers to the Translation of each individual component of the binomial into its direct lexical equivalent, rather than treating the binomial as a unified semantic unit. This approach typically results in a literal translation of the legal expression. For instance, the Arabic binomial /الظروف والملابسات al-zurūf wa-al-molābasāt/ was translated as “the conditions and circumstances,” reflecting a word-for-word rendering of each term

Turning to the translation shifts observed in the process, the findings indicate that 26 binomial expressions (35%) underwent category shifts. These include changes in structure, class, unit, or inter-system relationships. A clear example is the Translation of the Arabic binomial جهاز أو شوار jihāz aw shiわr as “possessions”, a structure shift in which a phrase comprising two nouns joined by a conjunction is condensed into a single lexical item.

Additionally, 10 binomial expressions (14%) were found to have undergone level shifts, involving a transition between grammatical and lexical categories. For instance, the binomial زياررة أو استزارة ziyārah aw istizāra/ was rendered as “to visit and to be visited,” where the translator employed a grammatical construction consisting of an infinitive and a passive infinitive to translate a pair of nouns.

The predominance of category shifts highlights the translator's strategic effort to address the structural divergences between Arabic and English. These form-based adaptations are summarized in the table below.

Table : The Formal Shifts of Binomials

Overall number of binomials	Formal correspondence	Category shifts	Level shifts
74	38 - (51%)	26 - (35%)	10 - (14%)

5.4. Semantic Shifts

To examine the semantic shifts that binomial expressions underwent during their Translation from Arabic into English, this study adopts the Semantic Shifts Model proposed by Cyrus (2006). This framework categorizes translation shifts into six distinct types: semantic modification, explicitation, generalization, addition, deletion, and mutation. Each category reflects a specific way in which meaning may be altered, expanded, or reduced in the process of cross-linguistic transfer.

It is worth noting that some binomial expressions were subject to more than one type of semantic shift; however, for the purposes of this analysis, only the most prominent shift was

considered. The findings reveal that out of the 74 binomials extracted from the corpus, 35 (47%) underwent no semantic alteration and were translated literally into the target language. In these cases, each component of the binomial was rendered into its direct lexical equivalent, resulting in a literal translation. A representative example is the Arabic expression *عَلَى عَلَاءِ الْعَزْلِ* /al-i'fā'aw al-'azl/, translated as “discharged or removed.”

Conversely, 26 binomials were translated through explication, producing English equivalents that are lexically more specific than their Arabic counterparts. This strategy reflects the translator’s intent to enhance clarity and ensure the meaning is accessible to the target audience by making implicit content more explicit.

Additionally, generalization was applied in the Translation of 9 binomials, accounting for approximately 9% of the total. In cases where no precise equivalent exists in the target language, the translator opted for broader legal terminology to convey the intended meaning. For example, the Arabic binomial *لغة أو عرفًا* /lughatan aw 'urfan/ was rendered as “in any accepted expression,” illustrating the use of a generalized phrase to encompass both linguistic and customary dimensions

Finally, deletion and mutation were the least frequently employed procedures, each applied only twice, accounting for approximately 3% of the binomial expressions analyzed. The translator’s restraint in using these strategies demonstrates a deliberate effort to preserve the original semantic content and legal function of the binomials, thereby avoiding potential distortions in legal interpretation. The full range of semantic shifts identified in the corpus is summarized in the table below.

Overall number of binomials	Literal Translation	Explication	Generalization	Deletion	Mutation
74	35—(47%)	26—(35%)	9—(12%)	2—(3%)	2—(3%)

Figure4: The Semantic Shifts of Binomials

The semantic modifications observed in the Translation of binomial expressions from Arabic into English underscore the complexities inherent in cross-linguistic legal transfer. These shifts reflect the translator’s effort to produce a target text that conforms to the linguistic norms of English while preserving the legal meaning and functional intent of the original. By applying such modifications, the translator effectively addresses the linguistic and cultural disparities between the source and target languages, ensuring both accuracy and interpretive integrity.

The frequent use of explication in the Translation reflects a key feature of what has been previously identified as a translation universal, thereby lending credibility to the translation process. Similarly, the adoption of generalization to facilitate the target reader’s understanding aligns with the principle of simplification, another recognized Translation universal. Despite the semantic shifts that affected the binomial expressions, the Translation remains consistent with widely accepted principles in translation studies.

The predominant reliance on literal Translation, simplification, and explication suggests that the Translation was guided by an informative purpose. Evidently, the translator’s *skopos* was to convey the substantive changes introduced in the Family Code to the reader, rather than to produce a legally binding document for judicial application. Accordingly, the translator’s choices were shaped by the communicative function of the target text.

6. CONCLUSION

Translating legal binomial expressions from Arabic into English presents considerable challenges due to the linguistic, structural, and semantic complexities involved. This study examined seventy-four binomial expressions extracted from the Moroccan Family Code; with the aim of tracing the structural and semantic transformations they undergo in Translation. To analyze these shifts, two established frameworks were employed: Catford's model of translation shifts to identify formal changes, and Cyrus's semantic shift model to uncover meaning-related alterations.

The findings revealed that while a substantial number of binomials were translated literally, often at the expense of their collocability, the translations nonetheless succeeded in preserving the intended legal meaning. The study demonstrated that structural and semantic shifts were necessary to reconcile the asymmetries between Arabic and English, both linguistically and legally. These challenges stem from two key factors: the source and target legal systems belong to distinct legal traditions, and the languages themselves originate from different linguistic families. In legal Translation, the degree of affinity between legal systems and languages has a marked influence on the translator's approach. Where such affinity is lacking, adaptive strategies become essential to ensure that the translated text aligns with the conventions of the target language and legal framework, while maintaining the clarity and precision required in legal drafting.

Another crucial factor shaping the Translation was its purpose. The translator's choices were guided by the informative function of the target text, which aimed to communicate the substantive changes introduced in the Family Code rather than produce a legally binding document. Consequently, the translator relied on simplifying procedures such as literal Translation, explicitation, and generalization.

The findings of this study contribute to developing a deeper understanding of the strategies used in translating legal binomial expressions, as well as the syntactic and semantic shifts they undergo. These insights are of practical relevance to legal translation practitioners working with Moroccan legal texts and to students of translation studies. While the study does not claim to offer exhaustive solutions, it sheds light on a critical issue in legal Translation and highlights the need for further research into the Translation of Arabic legal binomials, particularly to support both informational and cross-jurisdictional translation efforts.

It is also worth noting that this study focused on the only available English Translation of the Moroccan Family Code, in which two sections, Book Five (Wills) and Book Six (Inheritance), are left untranslated. Future research may benefit from examining these untranslated sections to provide a more comprehensive view of binomial translation strategies across the entire document.

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