

The Impact of Language Structure on Legal Drafting: A Study of Kyrgyz and English Imperatives*

Nurbek Kokonbai uulu¹, Aliyakhon Toktonazarova², Elvira Kushbekova³,
Roza Aliyeva⁴, Minavarhan Matkarimova⁵, Orunkan Abdykaimova⁶

¹Modern International University, Jalal-Abad, Kyrgyz Republic

²Institute for Advanced Training and Retraining of Teachers under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, Kyrgyz Republic

³Silk Road International School, Kyrgyz Republic

⁴Osh Technological University named after M.M. Adysheva, Kyrgyz Republic

⁵Jalal-Abad State University named after B. Osmonov, Kyrgyz Republic

⁶Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University named after B.N. Eltsin, Kyrgyz Republic



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Abstract

This article examines how imperative constructions and numerals function in Kyrgyz and English legal texts to shape legal obligations, precision, and the interpretation of norms. Using a qualitative and comparative methodology, the study analyzes a corpus of 100 legal documents—50 from each language, encompassing statutes, contracts, and court rulings—to identify syntactic and semantic patterns relevant to legal drafting and translation. The results reveal significant cross-linguistic differences: English relies heavily on explicit modal verbs (such as shall and must) and isolated numerals to assert clear legal boundaries. Conversely, Kyrgyz integrates obligations and quantities through narrative structures, grammatical suffixes, and specific expressions (such as милдеттүү and тийиш). The study concludes that these structural distinctions directly affect legal certainty and the applicability of norms. Consequently, these differences must be carefully addressed in bilingual legal drafting, professional translation practices, and legal linguistic education to prevent ambiguous interpretations of rights and obligations.

Keywords: Legal Discourse; Imperative Sentences; Kyrgyz Language; English Language; Comparative Analysis

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¹ Nurbek Kokonbai uulu, Modern International University. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0209-8922>. E-mail: nurbek.kokonbai.uulu@mymail.academy

² Aliyakhon Toktonazarova, Institute for Advanced Training and Retraining of Teachers under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7118-4969>. Email: aliyakhon.toktonazarova@mymail.academy

³ Elvira Kushbekova, Silk Road International School. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1556-278X>. E-mail: elvira.kushbekova@mymail.academy

⁴ Roza Aliyeva, Osh Technological University named after M.M. Adysheva. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3056-9129>. Email: roza.aliyeva@mymail.academy

⁵ Minavarhan Matkarimova, Jalal-Abad State University named after B. Osmonov. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3769-2146>. Email: minavarhan.matkarimova@mymail.academy

⁶ Orunkan Abdykaimova, Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University named after B.N. Eltsin. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9556-0390>. E-mail: orunkan.abdykaimova@mymail.academy

**Corresponding Author: nurbek.kokonbai.uulu@mymail.academy

A. INTRODUCTION

The analysis of legal texts has long been a focus of linguistic and interdisciplinary studies due to the unique structure and function of legal discourse (Kirillova et al., 2021; Togaibayeva et al., 2021; Grudtsina et al., 2025). Legal language is characterized by its precision, formality, and the frequent use of specific syntactic constructions and terminologies. Among these, imperative sentences and numerals play a pivotal role in conveying instructions, obligations, and rights within legal documents. These elements not only reflect linguistic features but also embody the cultural and legal traditions of a society (Bhatia, 1993; Lipen, 2022).

Imperative sentences are widely used in legal texts to prescribe actions, enforce rules, and articulate prohibitions (Kjær, 2020; Maley, 1994). For instance, phrases such as “must,” “shall,” and “is required to” dominate legal documents in English, providing clarity and authority. In Kyrgyz legal texts, similar constructions include the use of verbs in the imperative form or expressions such as “милдеттүү” (obligatory) and “тигиш” (should). These structures are not merely grammatical forms but also tools for enforcing compliance and establishing legal norms (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Tiersma, 2012).

Numerals are equally significant in legal texts, often used to quantify obligations, define legal thresholds, and specify timeframes (Mattila, 2016). For example, in contracts and legislative documents, numbers indicate deadlines, fines, and conditions, ensuring precision and unambiguity. The way numerals are structured and used in Kyrgyz and English legal texts may differ due to linguistic and cultural nuances, which can lead to challenges in translation and interpretation. Addressing these differences is crucial for fostering effective communication in multilingual legal contexts (Polovchenko, 2024).

Comparative studies of legal languages help identify both universal and language-specific traits in legal communication (Felici, 2010; Gibbons, 2003). For Kyrgyz and English, imperative sentences and numerals serve similar purposes but are expressed through distinct grammatical and stylistic means. Understanding these differences is essential for language educators and legal professionals, as it aids in enhancing cross-cultural competence and ensuring the accuracy of translations (Sapfirova et al., 2025).

To effectively study imperative sentences and numerals in legal texts, it is important to adopt methodological approaches that combine linguistic, cultural, and practical perspectives. Such approaches allow researchers to not only identify structural patterns but also understand the functional roles of these

elements in legal discourse. Previous studies have emphasized the need for integrated methodologies that consider both theoretical and applied aspects of legal linguistics (Šarčević, 1997).

The purpose of this article is to conduct a comparative analysis of imperative constructions and numerals in Kyrgyz and English legal texts in order to identify their syntactic and semantic features, determine their functional roles in legal communication, and assess how linguistic differences influence legal drafting, translation, and the interpretation of rights and obligations. By examining these elements across two legal languages, the study aims to generate insights that enhance the precision, clarity, and professional applicability of multilingual legal documents and support legal practitioners, translators, and educators in improving cross-linguistic legal communication.

B. METHODS

This study employs a combination of qualitative and comparative methods to examine the use of imperative sentences and numerals in legal texts in Kyrgyz and English. The methodology is designed to address three key objectives: identifying syntactic and semantic features of the studied elements, comparing their functions across the two languages, and developing practical recommendations for their application in teaching and professional contexts.

In addition to its academic objectives, the analysis was conducted with a clear focus on professional applicability. The comparative examination of imperative constructions and numerals in Kyrgyz and English legal texts was designed to support practical needs in legal drafting, legal translation, and cross-linguistic interpretation. The findings aim to assist legal practitioners, translators, and policymakers in improving the accuracy, consistency, and legal certainty of multilingual documents. Emphasis was placed on identifying linguistic features that may affect the enforceability of legal norms, the interpretation of rights and obligations, and the clarity of statutory or contractual provisions in professional legal practice. This practical orientation ensures that the methodological approach not only contributes to legal linguistics theory but also provides tools and insights directly relevant to applied legal work.

The corpus for this study consists of 50 legal documents from each language, including laws, contracts, and judicial decisions. The Kyrgyz-language texts were sourced from official government websites, such as *Zakon.kg*, while the English-language texts were selected from databases like *Legislation.gov.uk*. The

documents were chosen to ensure diversity in content and representativity of both private and public legal texts.

The study adopts a linguistic-functional approach to analyze imperative sentences and numerals within the legal texts. This approach focuses on the dual aspects of form and function, examining both the grammatical structures and their communicative roles in legal discourse (Tiersma, 2012).

1. Analysis of imperative sentences

- Imperative sentences were identified based on their syntactic markers, such as modal verbs (*must, shall*) in English and corresponding imperative forms in Kyrgyz (*мүлдетимүү, музун*).
- Semantic analysis focused on their functional roles, such as prescribing duties, granting rights, or prohibiting actions (Mattila, 2016).
- A comparative analysis was conducted to highlight the similarities and differences in the use of imperatives across the two languages.

2. Analysis of numerals

- Numerals were categorized based on their syntactic positions (e.g., quantifiers, ordinal numbers) and contextual use within legal provisions.
- Particular attention was paid to the way numerical expressions influence the interpretation of legal norms, such as deadlines, amounts, and limits (Kjær, 2020).
- Cross-linguistic analysis examined how cultural and linguistic conventions shape the use of numerals in legal discourse.

The comparative analysis involved mapping equivalent structures and functions of imperative sentences and numerals in Kyrgyz and English legal texts. The following steps were taken:

1. Identification of common grammatical patterns in both languages.
2. Analysis of culturally specific features that impact the use and interpretation of these elements.
3. Evaluation of challenges in translating imperative sentences and numerals between the two languages (Šarčević, 1997).

To ensure practical applicability, the findings were used to develop recommendations for teaching legal language. These recommendations focus on helping legal professionals and language educators address challenges related to imperatives and numerals in multilingual contexts. Teaching methods include:

- Contextual analysis exercises using authentic legal texts.

- Translation tasks emphasizing equivalence and cultural sensitivity.
- Interactive workshops focusing on the functional roles of imperatives and numerals in legal discourse.

The validity of the findings was ensured by triangulating data from diverse legal documents and cross-referencing linguistic features with existing research (Gibbons, 2003). Reliability was enhanced by using a consistent analytical framework and systematic coding of linguistic features.

C. RESULTS

The results of the study are presented systematically to ensure clarity and alignment with the objectives of the research. The analysis covers the frequency, functional roles, and comparative insights regarding the use of imperative sentences and numerals in legal texts in Kyrgyz and English. The section also includes visual data representation through tables and graphs to support key findings.

Frequency Analysis

The frequency analysis provides insights into the prevalence of imperative sentences and numerals in legal texts in Kyrgyz and English. This quantitative approach allows for a detailed understanding of linguistic patterns and stylistic preferences in the legal discourse of the two languages. Imperative sentences were identified as a critical component of legal texts, given their role in prescribing actions, enforcing obligations, and prohibiting behaviors. In English legal texts, they appear 150 times, compared to 120 occurrences in Kyrgyz texts, as shown in Table 1. This difference can be attributed to the drafting conventions of English legal documents, which prioritize explicit and direct instructions using modal verbs such as *must* and *shall*. These verbs are employed to ensure clarity and leave minimal room for interpretation (Tiersma, 2012).

In Kyrgyz legal texts, imperative sentences often utilize culturally rooted expressions like *мүлдетимүү* (obligatory) and *мурун* (should), which, while effective within the cultural context, may not always convey the same level of directness. The slightly lower frequency in Kyrgyz texts suggests a greater reliance on implicit contextual understanding and culturally embedded legal norms (Kjær, 2020). Numerals, as another focal point of analysis, are integral to the precision and unambiguity required in legal documents. They define quantities, specify timeframes, and outline numerical limits or obligations. In English legal texts, numerals occur 95 times, compared to 85 instances in Kyrgyz

texts. This slight prevalence in English reflects the language’s tendency to isolate numerical expressions for emphasis and clarity, especially in contracts and statutory provisions (Mattila, 2016).

In Kyrgyz texts, numerals are often embedded within broader narrative contexts, a stylistic choice that reflects the oral traditions and narrative styles prevalent in the culture. While this approach can make legal texts more accessible to native speakers, it may pose challenges for precision, particularly in cross-linguistic legal interpretations.

The differences in frequency reveal underlying stylistic and functional variations between the two languages:

1. English legal texts: Prioritize explicitness, with frequent use of modal verbs and standalone numerical expressions.
2. Kyrgyz legal texts: Incorporate cultural and contextual nuances, with a tendency to embed linguistic features within broader narratives.

The data in Table 1 highlights these trends and underscores the importance of understanding linguistic preferences when working in multilingual legal contexts.

Table 1. Frequency of imperative sentences and numerals in Kyrgyz and English legal texts

Category	Kyrgyz Frequency	English Frequency
Imperative Sentences	120	150
Numerals	85	95

These findings emphasize the need for tailored approaches in legal translation and teaching, where linguistic and cultural differences are addressed systematically.

Functional Analysis

The functional analysis of imperative sentences and numerals in Kyrgyz and English legal texts highlights the distinct ways in which these elements contribute to the precision, clarity, and enforceability of legal discourse. While both languages use these linguistic tools to prescribe actions and define legal boundaries, their construction and interpretation vary significantly due to linguistic and cultural factors.

Imperative sentences in legal texts play a central role in prescribing actions, issuing commands, and enforcing compliance. However, the specific linguistic mechanisms used in Kyrgyz and English differ:

1. Kyrgyz legal texts

In Kyrgyz legal discourse, imperative sentences frequently incorporate culturally embedded expressions such as *милдеттүү* (obligatory), *тузун* (should), and *карак* (to be reviewed). These expressions often carry implicit contextual meaning, reflecting the oral traditions and collectivist cultural norms of Kyrgyz society (Kjær, 2020). For example: *Жооптуу тарап милдеттүү түрдө отчеттуу берүүнү керек* (The responsible party is obligated to submit the report). Here, the term *милдеттүү түрдө* implies both a legal requirement and a cultural expectation of duty.

2. English legal texts

English legal texts rely on modal verbs such as *must*, *shall*, and *is required to* for constructing imperative sentences. These constructions are highly formalized and unambiguous, prioritizing legal clarity and enforceability (Tiersma, 2012). For example: *The applicant must file the appeal within 30 days.*

The use of *must* explicitly defines the legal obligation without room for interpretation, a hallmark of the common law tradition.

Key difference: While Kyrgyz legal texts embed imperatives within culturally nuanced expressions, English texts opt for directness and universality to minimize ambiguity.

Numerals are indispensable in legal texts, serving to quantify obligations, define timeframes, and establish legal thresholds. However, their usage differs significantly between Kyrgyz and English legal drafting traditions:

1. Kyrgyz legal texts

Numerals in Kyrgyz legal texts are often presented within narrative contexts, blending seamlessly with descriptive clauses. This approach reflects the oral storytelling tradition in Kyrgyz culture, where context and flow are prioritized (Mattila, 2016). For example: *Мөөнөтү он беш күндүн ичинде аякташы керек* (The period must be completed within fifteen days). Here, the numeral *он беш* (fifteen) is integrated into a narrative-style sentence, requiring contextual interpretation.

2. English legal texts

English legal texts, by contrast, often isolate numerals in clauses or lists for enhanced precision and clarity. This stylistic choice aligns with the formal and structured nature of legal English. For example: *The penalty shall not exceed \$10,000.*

The numeral *10,000* is presented as a standalone value, ensuring unambiguous interpretation.

Key difference: Kyrgyz texts embed numerals within a descriptive flow, relying on context for meaning, whereas English texts isolate numerals to ensure precision and prevent misinterpretation.

The functional differences between Kyrgyz and English texts reflect broader cultural and linguistic influences:

- Kyrgyz legal texts: Prioritize cultural relatability and contextual nuance, making them more narrative-driven.
- English Legal Texts: Emphasize clarity and standardization, aligning with the globalized nature of common law systems.

These findings highlight the importance of understanding functional roles when teaching or translating legal language. Incorporating such insights into pedagogical and professional contexts can enhance cross-cultural competence and ensure accuracy in multilingual legal communication.

Comparative Insights

The comparative analysis of imperative sentences and numerals in Kyrgyz and English legal texts highlights both universal and language-specific features. These insights are crucial for understanding how legal languages function across cultures and systems, providing a foundation for effective teaching, translation, and application in legal contexts.

Certain features of imperative sentences and numerals are shared across Kyrgyz and English legal texts, reflecting the inherent requirements of legal language:

1. Imperative sentences:

Both languages use imperative sentences to prescribe actions, impose obligations, and ensure compliance. These constructions are vital for establishing rules and guidelines within legal frameworks. For example, phrases like “*must*” in English and “*мүлдетмүү*” in Kyrgyz serve as linguistic markers of obligation.

2. Numerals:

Numerals are universally employed to define quantities, establish limits, and specify deadlines in legal texts. Their presence ensures the precision and clarity needed to avoid ambiguity in legal interpretation. While the overarching functions of imperative sentences and numerals are similar, their linguistic and stylistic expressions differ significantly between Kyrgyz and English legal texts, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparative features of imperative sentences and numerals

Category	Common Features	Distinct Features
Imperative Sentences	Prescriptive, Obligation	Kyrgyz uses culturally rooted terms; English uses modal verbs
Numerals	Quantification, Precision	Kyrgyz uses narrative integration, English prioritizes isolation

3. Imperative sentences: Kyrgyz legal texts:

Imperative sentences in Kyrgyz texts often rely on culturally embedded expressions, such as *милдеттүү* (obligatory) and *тугуш* (should). These terms convey not only legal obligations but also cultural expectations, reflecting the collectivist values of Kyrgyz society (Kjær, 2020). For example: *Тараптар милдеттүү түрдө келишимдин шарттарын аткарышы керек* (The parties are obligated to fulfill the terms of the contract).

The phrase *милдеттүү түрдө* adds a layer of cultural context, emphasizing responsibility within a communal framework.

- English legal texts:

In English, modal verbs such as *must* and *shall* dominate legal discourse. These constructions provide direct, standardized instructions, leaving little room for interpretation (Tiersma, 2012). For example: *The tenant shall pay rent on the first day of each month*. The use of *shall* ensures uniformity and legal enforceability, reflecting the common law tradition's emphasis on clarity.

1. Numerals: Kyrgyz legal texts: Numerals in Kyrgyz legal texts are often integrated into narrative contexts, which align with the oral storytelling traditions of Kyrgyz culture. For instance: *Он күндүн ичинде арыз каралат* (The application will be reviewed within ten days). The numeral *он* (ten) is embedded within a descriptive clause, requiring contextual interpretation. This style enhances relatability but may introduce ambiguity in cross-linguistic contexts.

- English legal texts: Numerals in English texts are typically isolated for precision and clarity. This approach ensures that quantitative details stand out, reducing the likelihood of misinterpretation. For example: *The penalty shall not exceed \$5,000 or three months of imprisonment.* Here, *5,000* and *three months* are explicitly stated, leaving no room for doubt about the legal stipulations.

These differences are rooted in broader cultural and legal traditions: Kyrgyz legal language reflects a more context-dependent and culturally integrated approach, which aligns with its narrative style and oral heritage. English legal language emphasizes universal clarity and precision, catering to the globalized and codified nature of the common law system.

Understanding these differences is essential for:

1. Legal translation: Translators must balance cultural nuances and legal precision when interpreting imperative sentences and numerals between Kyrgyz and English.

2. Teaching legal language: Educators should focus on the functional distinctions, providing context-specific examples to help students grasp the nuances of both languages.

3. Drafting multilingual legal texts: Legal professionals must consider the stylistic preferences of each language to ensure the text is effective and culturally appropriate.

Graphical Representation

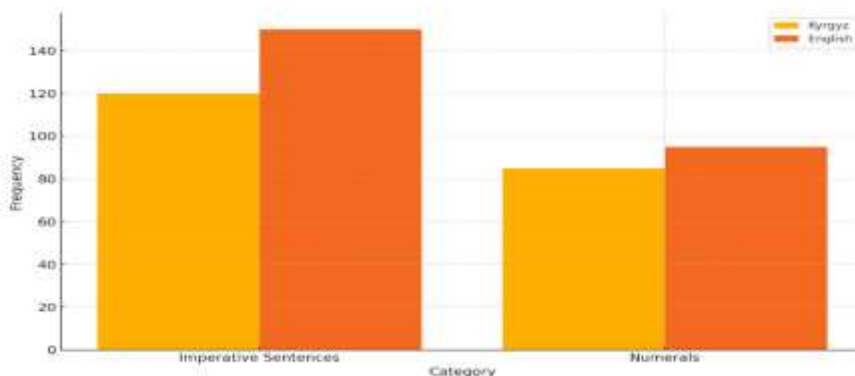


Figure 1. Frequency of imperative sentences and numerals in legal texts

The analysis of the frequency of imperative sentences and numerals in Kyrgyz and English legal texts is visually summarized in **Figure 1**, providing a clear comparison between the two languages. This graphical representation

highlights the observed trends and supports the quantitative findings presented earlier.

The bar chart was designed to:

1. Illustrate the frequency differences of imperative sentences and numerals between Kyrgyz and English legal texts.
2. Highlight the higher prevalence of these linguistic features in English legal texts.
3. Provide a visual reference for the quantitative data, making the comparison more accessible and intuitive.

1. Imperative sentences:

- The frequency of imperative sentences in English legal texts (150 occurrences) surpasses that in Kyrgyz texts (120 occurrences).
- This aligns with the English legal system's reliance on direct and explicit instructions using modal verbs such as *must* and *shall*. These verbs are pivotal in ensuring unambiguous legal communication.

2. Numerals:

- Numerals appear 95 times in English texts compared to 85 instances in Kyrgyz texts.
- English legal texts often isolate numerals for clarity, whereas Kyrgyz texts tend to integrate them into narrative structures, reflecting cultural and stylistic preferences.

The trends shown in the bar chart emphasize:

- The formal and explicit nature of English legal language, which prioritizes precision and standardization.
- The context-driven and culturally nuanced style of Kyrgyz legal texts, which often embeds linguistic elements within broader descriptive narratives.

The bar chart reinforces the importance of understanding these linguistic patterns for:

1. Legal translation:

Translators must consider the frequency and context of imperative sentences and numerals to maintain the original text's intent and function.

2. Language education:

Educators can use the chart to illustrate the functional differences between the two legal languages, aiding students in grasping their unique characteristics.

3. Drafting and interpretation:

Legal professionals drafting or interpreting multilingual texts can rely on such data to align their work with the conventions of each language.

The figure visually complements the tabular data by providing an immediate, comparative understanding of the analyzed features, making it a vital tool for both research and practical application.

The findings underscore the need for targeted pedagogical approaches in teaching legal language, especially in multilingual settings. Practical recommendations include:

1. Incorporating exercises that focus on interpreting culturally specific imperative expressions in Kyrgyz legal texts.
2. Developing comparative translation activities to highlight the functional differences in the use of numerals.
3. Organizing workshops for legal professionals to enhance their understanding of cross-linguistic nuances in legal drafting.

E. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the use of imperative sentences and numerals in Kyrgyz and English legal texts, highlighting both linguistic commonalities and culturally driven differences. The discussion focuses on interpreting these findings in light of their implications for legal linguistics, translation, and education.

Imperative sentences serve as the backbone of legal communication, ensuring clarity in the articulation of obligations, rights, and prohibitions. Both Kyrgyz and English legal texts utilize imperative constructions to achieve these prescriptive functions, demonstrating their universal significance in legal drafting (Tiersma, 2012).

Despite this shared purpose, the mechanisms for expressing imperatives differ significantly between the two languages:

- Kyrgyz legal texts:

Culturally embedded expressions such as *милдеттүү* (obligatory) and *мурун* (should) provide nuanced meanings that reflect societal norms and expectations (Kjær, 2020). While these terms are effective within a Kyrgyz cultural framework, they may introduce ambiguity in translation due to their context-dependent interpretation. For instance, *мурун* might imply both a legal requirement and a moral expectation, depending on the context.

- English legal texts:

The use of modal verbs such as *must* and *shall* emphasizes directness and formality. These constructions leave little room for interpretation, aligning with the precision-oriented nature of the English legal system. This difference underscores the need for cross-linguistic awareness when translating Kyrgyz imperatives into English, as the latter requires greater specificity to convey equivalent meanings. Numerals play a critical role in legal texts by quantifying obligations, defining limits, and specifying deadlines. Their universal function underscores the need for precision in legal drafting across both Kyrgyz and English texts (Crystal, 2008; Mattila, 2016).

Narrative vs. Isolated Usage:

- Kyrgyz legal texts: Numerals are often embedded within narrative-style clauses, which aligns with the oral traditions and storytelling practices of Kyrgyz culture. While this integration can enhance readability and relatability for native speakers, it may reduce precision in legal contexts where isolated numerical expressions are more appropriate.
- English legal texts: English legal texts typically isolate numerals to ensure clarity and avoid ambiguity. For instance, contractual provisions often present numerical data in bullet points or separate clauses, making the information more accessible and reducing the risk of misinterpretation.

The differences in how imperative sentences and numerals are used reflect deeper cultural and linguistic influences:

- Kyrgyz legal language: Prioritizes cultural context and narrative integration, which can make legal texts more relatable but potentially less precise in certain contexts.
- English legal language: Emphasizes universality and standardization, aligning with its global legal applications and the codified nature of common law.

The findings highlight challenges in translating legal texts between Kyrgyz and English:

1. Imperative sentences: Translating culturally rooted terms like *милдемиγγ* into English often requires additional clarification to ensure legal precision.
2. Numerals: Translating narrative-style expressions in Kyrgyz texts into the concise numerical format of English texts requires careful adaptation to preserve legal intent without losing cultural context.

The findings have significant implications for legal professionals and educators:

- Legal translation: Translators need to be aware of the structural and functional differences between the two languages to ensure accurate and contextually appropriate translations. This includes adapting Kyrgyz imperatives and numerals to the more formalized conventions of English legal language.
- Teaching legal language: Educators should incorporate comparative analysis into their teaching methodologies, using real-world examples to illustrate the differences in legal drafting styles. Interactive workshops focusing on translating culturally specific terms can help students develop practical skills.
- Drafting multilingual legal texts: Legal professionals drafting texts in both languages must consider the cultural and linguistic conventions of each language to ensure the text is effective and accurate in its respective legal system.

The study also sheds light on broader issues in legal linguistics, including:

- The balance between cultural specificity and universal clarity in legal texts.
- The role of linguistic features in shaping legal norms and interpretations.
- The importance of integrating linguistic and cultural perspectives in legal education and practice.

The differences in the use of imperative sentences and numerals between Kyrgyz and English legal texts underscore the importance of cultural and linguistic awareness in legal communication. While both languages share universal features, their distinct strategies reflect broader cultural and legal traditions. These insights provide a foundation for improving translation practices, enhancing legal education, and fostering cross-cultural understanding in multilingual legal contexts.

F. CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the use of imperative constructions and numerals in Kyrgyz and English legal texts, revealing both shared functions and distinctive linguistic patterns shaped by cultural and legal traditions. Although both languages employ these elements to prescribe duties and ensure precision, Kyrgyz legal texts embed them within contextual and culturally grounded structures, while English relies on explicit modal verbs and isolated numerical expressions to enhance clarity and legal certainty.

These differences create notable challenges for legal translation and multilingual drafting. Ensuring accuracy requires careful consideration of how linguistic forms influence the enforceability and interpretation of legal norms. The findings therefore hold practical value for legal practitioners, translators, and policymakers working across linguistic boundaries.

The study also underscores the need to integrate comparative legal linguistics into legal education. Teaching approaches that incorporate functional analysis, cultural context, and applied translation tasks can better prepare professionals for multilingual legal communication.

Overall, this research contributes to understanding how language shapes legal meaning and highlights the importance of linguistic awareness in drafting, interpreting, and translating legal texts. Future studies may broaden this analysis to additional linguistic features or other language pairs to further support the development of precise and culturally informed legal communication.

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