

well as the growing importance of international governmental and non-governmental institutions flourishes the business of translating legal texts.

To this end, it is worthwhile to present the characteristics of the legal discourse, its layout, and the different approaches to translating it as it could serve as an important theoretical background for MT researchers who are aiming at developing current systems as well as inventing new ones.

### **3.2. Characteristics of Legal Language**

Research into the English legal register has focused on syntactic and lexical characteristics. Findings show that structures are formulaic, and they abound with archaisms which often defy rules of modern writing. In addition, sentences are identified by being long (50 words in average), which significantly contributes to an impersonal style with typical legal vocabulary. Thus, Danet (1985:297-280) proffers the following features as characteristics of legal register: technical terms, common terms with uncommon meanings, archaic expressions, doublets, formal items, unusual prepositional phrases and a high frequency of *any*.

Syntactic complexity accounts for many hurdles lay persons are surmounted with in comprehending legal English. Gustafsson (1975) reports an average of 2.86 clauses per sentence, and nominalization is considered a prominent use in the legal register (Crystal & Davy, 1969). A high frequency of passive constructions and a high incidence of prepositional phrases are also a main feature in legal discourse which further complicates the legal language (Charrow & Charrow, 1979).

In addition to lexicon and syntax, Cao (2007) adds two more features which differentiate legal language from any other language, i.e. pragmatics and style of such language. As to pragmatics, law depends upon the performative function of language, i.e. legal utterances perform acts, creating facts, rights and institutions.